

The Lincolnshire Gentry
and the Wars of the Roses

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D.Phil. Thesis

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August 1999

Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the impact of the Wars of the Roses upon the people, government and landed structure of a hitherto under-studied shire. It is intended as a bridge between the numerous post-McFarlanite county studies of recent years and the specific issue of the Wars, a conflict generally approached from a central perspective. It begins by examining Lincolnshire's landed society during the later Lancastrian period, stressing the county's political isolation, the sheer size and collective wealth of its population, but also the lack of any dominant political force. It examines the nature of local government, particularly the changing social profile of local officers, and also the issue of local violence. In particular, it highlights the effects of faction and manipulation of justice in an otherwise relatively law-abiding county, and the influence of the shires upon the descent into warfare.

The thesis then addresses Lincolnshire's experience of the Wars themselves, particularly stressing the limited participation of the resident population. The Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1470 is described in detail, this shadowy episode being carefully reconstructed in order to gain a fuller understanding of its importance. This is then tied in with a discussion of how the Wars had only a limited effect on Lincolnshire's social and landed structures, yet radically altered its relationship with the Crown. It highlights the tension between the established order and the Yorkist administrative elite, and the way this became embodied in a local power-struggle which, it is argued, led to the Rebellion and ultimately contributed to Edward IV's own deposition. Finally, the thesis examines Lincolnshire's experiences after the Yorkist restoration of 1471, the gradual re-integration of the traditional elite into county affairs, and the creation of a landed society more tolerant of local sensibilities, yet also more suited to Edward's own emerging plans.

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Acknowledgements

As ever in the course of projects of this kind, debts of gratitude are owed to many people. I must express my thanks to the numerous archival and library staff who have offered their assistance in my research, particularly the staff of the J.B. Morrell Library, the York Minster Library and the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, and also the staff at the Public Record Office and at the Lincolnshire Archives Office. I would also like to thank the staff and fellow research students at the York University History Department, and at the Centre for Medieval Studies, for helping to create the friendly atmosphere which has benefited so many of us over the past few years. My thanks are due to the numerous members of the academic staff who have offered considerable help and encouragement during my time here in York: the two members of my academic panel, Dr. Sarah Rees-Jones and Professor Richard Marks; Professor Felicity Riddy, whose shared interest in the career of Sir Thomas Burgh has given me a number of insights; and particularly Professor John Bossy, Mr Peter Rycraft and Mrs Ann Rycraft for their various contributions over the years. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance of Mr T.M. Atkinson and the late Mr L.J. Atkinson, whose understanding during the first few months of my research has proved invaluable. However, by far the greatest debt of gratitude is owed to my supervisor, Professor Mark Ormrod, whose enthusiasm and assistance helped me begin this project, and without whose constant encouragement it might never have been completed.

Abbreviations

<i>B.I.H.R.</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>CCR</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
<i>CFR</i>	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
<i>CIPM</i>	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
<i>C.P.</i>	<i>Complete Peerage</i>
<i>D.N.B.</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>Ec.H.R.</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>E.H.R.</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>F.A.</i>	<i>Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids</i>
<i>FF</i>	Lincolnshire Feet of Fines - Unpublished abstract volume in the Foster Library, L.A.O.
<i>H.C., 1386-1421</i>	J.S. Roskell, L.S. Clark, & C. Rawcliffe (eds.), <i>History of Parliament; The House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , 4 vols. (Stroud, 1993).
<i>Ingulph</i>	H.T. Riley (tr.), <i>Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland</i> (London, 1908).
(C)JCP	(Chief) Justice of Common Pleas
(C)JKB	(Chief) Justice of King's Bench
<i>J.M.H.</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>L.A.O.</i>	Lincolnshire Archives Office
<i>L.H.&A.</i>	<i>Lincolnshire History and Archaeology</i>
<i>L.R.S.</i>	Lincoln Record Society
<i>Nott. Med. Stud.</i>	<i>Nottingham Medieval Studies</i>
<i>P.R.O.</i>	Public Record Office
Rogers, 'Electors', iii (iv, v, vi)	'Parliamentary Electors in Lincolnshire in the Fifteenth Century', <i>L.H.&A.</i> , iii (1968), pp.43-79; iv (1969), pp.33-53; v (1970), pp.47-57; vi (1971), pp.67-81.
<i>R.P.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i>
<i>Test. Ebor.</i>	<i>Testamenta Eboracensia</i>
<i>T.R.H.S.</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society.</i>
<i>V.C.H.</i>	<i>Victoria County History - Lincolnshire.</i>
<i>W.B.</i>	J.C. Wedgwood, <i>History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the Commons House, 1439-1509</i> (London, 1936).

Note on Spellings

Personal names have been standardised, and have retained their medieval spelling unless there is a commonly acknowledged alternative.

Place names have been given their modern names and spelling where identification is possible. For example, the Hauley residence is referred to by the modern 'Girsby', rather than the medieval 'Grisby'.

The modern spelling of 'Crowland' has been used for that town. However, the abbey has always been known by the medieval spelling of 'Croyland', and is referred to as such throughout.

Introduction

This work is not simply another fifteenth-century county study. Although it is certainly an examination of the lives, careers and relationships of the land-holding elite of one particular English shire, and an analysis of the society of which they were a part, the story of that county is by no means the only consideration. Nor is it especially a study of the Wars of the Roses. Rather, it is intended as a stepping stone between the two, an attempt to establish a link between the tortuous political machinations and sporadic conflict which dominated the high politics of fifteenth-century England, and the everyday reality of life in the shires for the men who formed the bedrock of English political society. The wider story of the latter part of the century, the failings of Henry VI, the 'new monarchy' of Edward IV, and the lives and disputes of the greater nobles, may make interesting and exciting reading, filled with battles, executions and the births and deaths of dynasties; but it was in the shires and towns of England where the majority of the population lived out their lives, and where the landed society which produced this turmoil had its broad and far more solid base.

The change of emphasis by many historians over recent years, the movement away from the study of central politics in favour of gaining a broader and deeper understanding of the basis of this society, does, of course, have a historiography all of its own. K.B. McFarlane, in his ground-breaking Ford Lectures of 1953, later published as *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, urged his colleagues and successors to look to the shires for a greater understanding of fifteenth-century political society, to move away from the excesses of high politics and concentrate on the individuals who comprised that society, towards regional power structures and influences, and to understand the motivations behind their wider actions by looking at their more immediate concerns.¹ Only then, once we have identified the key issues which concerned the landowners of this period, or indeed any other, can we even begin to make sense of their actions on the

¹ K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), esp. ch.1. Much of McFarlane's other work has been equally as influential; for instance, 'Parliament and Bastard Feudalism', *T.R.H.S.*, 4th ser., xxvi (1944), pp.53-79; 'Bastard Feudalism', *B.I.H.R.*, xx (1945), pp.161-80; 'The Wars of the Roses', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1 (1964), pp.87-119; all reprinted in *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981). His influence is also evident in many, if not most, of the medieval county studies which have appeared since his time. For details, see below, p.10, n.3.

wider, national stage. Yet for McFarlane, this meant not only the nobility, the study of whom he was specifically attempting to revolutionise, but the whole range of land-owning, political society, the vast majority of whom could be broadly categorised as 'the gentry'. As Colin Richmond has noted,² McFarlane himself never actually ventured into the study of the shires, but it is undoubtedly his influence which has permeated the field ever since. In recent years, largely as a result of McFarlane's exhortations, numerous county studies have appeared, approaching the subject from a number of different angles and with often widely differing aims and intentions.³ By studying the lives and careers of a wide range of people across English political society, examining their motivations, their concerns, and perhaps most importantly their relationships with each other, a series of individual, detailed pictures of landed society during the later Middle Ages has been built up, thus allowing historians to look at the key issues of national politics not just from the traditional, central viewpoint, but from the angle McFarlane envisaged, from the point of view of the individuals involved.⁴

Yet surprisingly, despite the proliferation of fifteenth-century county studies over the last twenty years or so, very few have looked in any great detail at the various effects of the Wars of the Roses specifically upon these localities, tending to concentrate largely on the structures, relationships and government of the area concerned.⁵ Within such

² C. Richmond, 'After McFarlane', *History*, lxxviii (1983), pp.46-60, esp. p.60.

³ For the fifteenth century, see E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century c.1422-c.1485* (Cambridge, 1992); M.J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire in the Age of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'* (Cambridge, 1983); M.C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp Affinity: A Study of Bastard Feudalism at Work', *E.H.R.*, xcv (1980), pp.514-32; M.C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992); S.J. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991); A.J. Pollard, 'The Richmondshire Community of Gentry during the Wars of the Roses', in C.D. Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Late Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), pp.37-59; S. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, 1983). For earlier periods, see also N.H. Denholm-Young, *The County Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1969); N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981); N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex, 1280-1400* (Oxford, 1986). The genre has also had numerous exponents in early-modern studies, for example, A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600-1660* (London, 1975); A. Hassell Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1974).

⁴ Some historians have expressed concerns that such re-examinations have been slow in appearing. David Morgan urged that 'having with much profit gone into provincial society, we may in due course, laden with our historical booty, consider getting out', a view echoed more recently by Rosemary Horrox. D.A.L. Morgan, 'The Individual Style of the English Gentleman', in M. Jones (ed.), *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Later Medieval Europe* (Gloucester, 1986), pp.15-35, p.27; R. Horrox 'Local and National Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', *J.M.H.*, xviii (1992), pp.391-403, p.402, which also quotes Morgan.

⁵ Notable exceptions are A.J. Pollard, *North-Eastern England during the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, 1990) and R.L. Storey, 'Lincolnshire and the Wars of the Roses', *Nott. Med. Stud.*, xiv (1970), pp.64-83, although the latter is more concerned with the involvement of the county's inhabitants in national issues. This is a concern also raised by Christine Carpenter, although her approach to the problem has, by

studies, often spanning a century or more, the immediate effects of specific individual events tend to get submerged into the wider picture, responsible for a small blip on a graph or a minor distortion in a set of figures. However, we must always bear in mind that life in the shires was far from detached from national political events, the very events for which McFarlane was looking to the localities to help explain. Robin Storey's famous proposition, that the Wars of the Roses was a consequence of 'an escalation of private feuds', highlighted the importance of regional and local affairs upon the politics of the centre.⁶ Although his arguments have attracted only limited support from modern historians as an explanation for the outbreak of the Wars, and even Storey himself has qualified his arguments,⁷ this emphasis on local affairs does help to evaluate the importance of activities in the shires upon national politics. The relationship between the two was by no means one-way, and as well as looking for causes in the localities, we must also be very aware of the effects.

In some respects, this lack of concentration upon these events in recent county studies may reflect the limited impact that warfare had on a particular area. Undoubtedly some regions felt the effects of the Wars far more than others; the citizens of St Albans, who saw two battles in the streets of their city, would doubtless have felt far more involved in the Wars than the people of, for instance, Cornwall or Norfolk, which saw only the occasional band of arrayed soldiers, or armed disputes by local notables.⁸ But regional involvement was, of course, not limited to those places unfortunate enough to host the competing armies. The very nature of the Wars of the Roses strongly suggests relatively widespread involvement, not being a specifically 'regional' conflict in any real sense, rather a clash of wills, ideas and personal interests, with the main protagonists

necessity, been rather different. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.4. For further discussion of recent historiography, see below, ch.5.

⁶ R.L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (Gloucester, 1966), p.27. For a fuller discussion of Storey's argument, see below, ch.4.

⁷ R.L. Storey, 'Bastard Feudalism Revisited', *Bulletin of the Manorial Society of Great Britain*, iii (1983), pp.7-15; K. Dockray, 'The Origins of the Wars of the Roses', in A.J. Pollard (ed.), *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1995), pp.65-88, which gives an overview of current research and opinions.

⁸ For instance, the Duke of Norfolk's dispute with the Pastons, culminating in the short siege of Caister Castle in 1469, was a significant event in Norfolk, a county which otherwise saw none of the major campaigns of the Wars. R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of the Royal Authority, 1422-1461* (London, 1981), ch.20, esp. pp.584-92; C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase* (Cambridge, 1990); C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Fastolf's Will* (Cambridge, 1996); G. Dodd, 'Central Government and Local Rule: East Anglia under the Yorkists', unpubl. M.Phil thesis (Cambridge, 1994), esp. pp.36-8. For details of the dates, routes and duration of the major campaigns, see A. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society 1452-97* (London, 1981), Appendix, pp.227-8.

drawing support from many different parts of the country.⁹ It is also important to note that the Wars were very much a *series* of different if broadly connected conflicts, rather than one continuous episode with a single theme. Not only did the personalities change, but so did the reasons for fighting. The aims and hopes of the participants, even the nature of the war itself, were very different in 1485-7, or even in 1469-71, from what they had been in 1455 or 1459. Changes in the localities must obviously be seen in the context of these changing circumstances. It is difficult to imagine any area being totally immune, particularly among the upper levels of local society, the families whose members formed the nuclei of the noble retinues which have for so long been seen as a major source of the century's troubles.¹⁰ It must therefore be important not only to follow McFarlane's lead, and approach the study of national politics with a clear idea of the situation in the localities, but equally to see local issues within the wider context.

It must also be remembered, in any study of a particular area, that the individuality of that region will undoubtedly have a significant effect upon whatever circumstances existed there, and how it was affected by national concerns, be these political, social or economic. There is no suggestion here that Lincolnshire can be seen in any way as a 'typical' English county, whatever that may mean; indeed, in many ways, Lincolnshire was extremely atypical, if not unique.¹¹ As such, it would be extremely dangerous to make any sweeping generalisations of the situation across the country as a whole based on the experiences of one county. Only when we have examined the situation in a number of sufficiently different regions can we even begin to construct any kind of wider picture, and it is hoped that this study might contribute something to a hitherto rather narrow range of recent work. As noted, very few studies of the fifteenth century have dealt with the issue of the Wars. Pollard's general examination of the North-East and Carpenter's comprehensive study of Warwickshire are the only real exceptions,¹² and in both these cases there is an important added element to the equation: the ever-present figures of the great nobles - for Pollard the Percies and the Nevilles, for

⁹ Ralph Griffiths has recently highlighted the provincial nature of much of the Wars. R.A. Griffiths, 'The Provinces and the Dominions in the Age of the Wars of the Roses', in S.D. Michalove & A. C. Reeves (eds.), *Estrangement, Enterprise and Education in Fifteenth Century England* (Stroud, 1998), pp.1-25.

¹⁰ This view has, of course, been thoroughly revised during recent years, again heavily influenced by the work of McFarlane. For a recent interpretation, and an overview of the historiography of the subject, see M.A. Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London, 1995), esp. ch.1.

¹¹ See below, esp. chs.2-3.

¹² Simon Payling has taken a similar approach towards national affairs, but only as far as 1461. Payling, *Political Society*.

Carpenter the Beauchamp and Neville Earls of Warwick.¹³ In both cases it is the nobility, and their interaction with the gentry within this context, who naturally dominate the work. It is the aim of this study to redress the balance by examining the effects of the Wars of the Roses upon the landed elite of a very different type of county.

The increased interest in the study of the shires over recent years has prompted a wide-ranging debate over the way various terms have been used in describing local society, particularly the use of the term 'community'.¹⁴ Christine Carpenter's statement that the term should be banned from all academic work is perhaps the most draconian answer, but would certainly resolve the issue!¹⁵ The idea of community has permeated recent county studies, since, as Carpenter notes, many historians tend to start from a standpoint whereby the county contains a 'community', and that therefore this is the best approach to take to look at this society.¹⁶ But is this the case? Certainly the county was, to varying extents, an administrative unit, but was it necessarily a social one? The application of the term '*county* community', much used by early-modern historians,¹⁷ to a study of the medieval shire gentry would certainly seem to be rather short-sighted, since it implies, intentionally or otherwise, both that the county is a viable unit for such analysis, and that the gentry are the only people whose interests matter in this context: this is clearly far from the reality.¹⁸ However, it would be equally mistaken to deny the existence of any sort of 'community' among the gentry of any region of medieval England, just as it would be wrong to limit that 'community' entirely to a specific group of individuals, or indeed to put strict geographical boundaries on any such description. The ties which bound them together may not necessarily have been strong, but in a

¹³ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, esp. Part II; Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, esp. chs.10-12.

¹⁴ J.R. Maddicott, 'The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England', *T.R.H.S.*, 5th ser., xxviii (1978), pp.27-43; Horrox, 'Local and National Politics'; M.C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, xxxiii (1994), pp.340-80; M.C. Carpenter, 'The Stonor Circle in the Fifteenth Century', in R.E. Archer & S. Walker (eds.), *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England* (London, 1995), pp.175-200; C.E. Moreton, 'A Social Gulf? The Upper and Lesser Gentry of Later Medieval England', *J.M.H.*, xvii (1991), pp.255-261; M.A. Hicks, 'Bastard Feudalism: Society and Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', in Hicks, *Richard III and his Rivals* (London, 1991), pp.1-40, esp. pp.18-29.

¹⁵ Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community', pp.340-80.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.345.

¹⁷ For instance, Fletcher, *County Community*, esp. ch.2; A.M. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-60* (Leicester, 1966), esp. Introduction.

¹⁸ For example, M.J. Bennett, 'A County Community: Social Cohesion amongst the Cheshire Gentry, 1400-25', *Northern History*, viii (1973), pp.24-44, appears to do just this, equating the 'county community' almost solely with the gentry.

society which placed such importance on the notion of gentility, it would seem strange if the people who had achieved such status did not have some sense of collective spirit.

Although the term 'gentry' is an often-used one, such a group is less easy to define precisely. The gentry are generally regarded as the group of landholders between the ranks of the lesser baronage and the upper yeomanry, and whose income from that land allowed them to live in a degree of luxury, largely if not entirely free from the burdens of manual labour or trade.¹⁹ However, exact divisions are difficult to define. The lesser barons may have had the status of a title, but many were barely distinguishable economically or socially from their knightly neighbours, while distinctions at the lower end of the scale were extremely fluid.²⁰ Attempts have been made to place economic boundaries on this class, but with only limited success. The income tax of 1436 recognised an income of £5 a year from land, rents and annuities as the tax threshold,²¹ but this was extremely arbitrary, a fiscal measure which made no social distinctions. £5 was a relatively modest income, and it is clear that many of the people taxed, particularly on these smallest amounts, were by no means of gentle status.²² David Morgan has noted that £10 was sometimes regarded as a lower limit for gentility, citing, among others, the 1530 criterion of Garter King of Arms that an income between £10 and £300 was the standard for the gentry as a whole.²³

However, individual wealth was by no means the sole, or even the most important factor in ascribing gentility. The holding of land, whether in chief or from other lords, was probably the most crucial element, and indeed was one of the few real differences between gentle society and the rich, urban merchant families. This distinction might seem to have been rapidly disappearing, as wealthy merchants, and others,²⁴ used their wealth to purchase land, moved into the countryside and even married into often far poorer, if longer established, landed families. However, such families were not simply

¹⁹ Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.1-2; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, ch.3; Payling, *Political Society*, ch.1; Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, ch.1. However, the differences between a landowner who engaged in trade, even of his own produce, and a merchant who also held land, were becoming increasingly small.

²⁰ Fran Bumpus, in an unpublished paper given at the 1998 Keele/York Gentry Colloquium on the theme of gentry identities, has highlighted the difficulties in categorising the people on the lower margins of gentility. See also Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.38.

²¹ H.L. Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436', *E.H.R.*, xlix (1934), pp.607-639. Gray's work has been used extensively in local studies; see Acheson, *Gentry Community*, pp.36-43; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.3-6; Payling, *Political Society*, ch.1.

²² See below, p.47, for the proliferation of Boston men on the Lincolnshire return.

²³ Morgan, 'English Gentleman', p.16. These figures were, of course, only a guide, since there was no suggestion that an income of over £300 meant automatic qualification for a peerage!

²⁴ Particularly lawyers. For Lincolnshire examples, see below, pp.64-5.

being welcomed as merchants, lawyers or suchlike, but were being integrated into the traditional structures of landed gentle society - they had to change in order to be accepted.²⁵ The right to bear arms was also a notable, if contentious issue. Armorial bearings were the traditional symbol of lordship and landed power, and Henry V's attempt to limit their use to those families who could trace an ancestral right to them could be seen as a particularly conservative action.²⁶ It was this ancestry and pedigree which the traditional landed classes relied upon for their mystique, and which newly-arrived families, anxious to play down or hide non-gentle roots, did their best to create, whether with complex pedigrees or with newly-designed coats of arms. Yet, constant renewal of the upper classes of English society was an ever-present issue. Although newcomers were often treated with caution, even contempt,²⁷ failure of the line was a continual danger and such renewal was essential. In such a situation, the ability to cross from one supposed grouping to another was vital to the continuing existence of this hierarchical society. Not only was the gentry class extremely blurred at its top and bottom, it was also more integrated with other sectors of society than most contemporaries would have been prepared to admit, and any attempt to delineate the late-medieval gentry in concrete terms would imply distinctions which were not only extremely imprecise, but becoming ever more so.

Within this exceedingly ill-defined group, other, often equally vague definitions had crept in by the fifteenth century. Morgan has stated that the English social hierarchy reached its 'definitive form' during the course of the Hundred Years War, in a five-fold hierarchy of peers and a three-fold division of lesser ranks - knights, esquires and gentlemen.²⁸ The knights were certainly the most distinct, at least nominally, since the act

²⁵ For further discussion of the issue of social mobility, see below, pp.63ff, Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, ch.4; F.R.H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1970), esp. ch.4; M.J. Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', in J. Rosenthal & C. Richmond (eds.), *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages* (Gloucester, 1987), pp.19-39, esp. pp.32-7.

²⁶ *CCR 1413-19*, p.433; discussed in Morgan, 'English Gentleman', p.16.

²⁷ Some of the hostility towards the de la Pole Earls (later Dukes) of Suffolk sprang from their rapid rise from merchant roots, while Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, the archetypal traditional baron, was not only from a junior branch of the Neville family, but he also had mercantile ancestry through his maternal great-grandmother, Maud, Countess of Salisbury, the daughter of the merchant Adam Francis (Mayor of London, 1352-4). His concentration on his family's Westmorland, Montagu and later Beauchamp roots is all the more understandable. *C.P.*, xii (i), pp.434-50; xi, pp.392-3; xii (ii), pp.385-93; P.M. Kendall, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (London, 1957); M.A. Hicks, 'Descent, Partition and Extinction: the "Warwick Inheritance"', *B.I.H.R.*, lii (1979), pp.116-28; M.A. Hicks, 'The Beauchamp Trust, 1439-1487', *B.I.H.R.*, liv (1981), pp.135-49; M.A. Hicks, 'Cement or Solvent? Kingship and Politics in Late Medieval England: The Case of the Nevilles', *History*, lxxxiii (1998), pp.31-46.

²⁸ Morgan, 'English Gentleman', p.16.

of dubbing distinguished them from their colleagues just as a summons to Parliament delineated the peerage. Yet, given the growing unwillingness to take up knighthood, it is probably valid to talk of a 'knightly family' even when its head was not officially a knight.²⁹ Distrain of knighthood was usually set at an annual income of £40 from land, a figure seen as being the minimum necessary to support knighthood, but many such men did not take up the often dubious honour, as the lists of those who failed to become knights will attest, and distrain had become little more than a fiscal measure.³⁰ Theoretically below these men were the esquires, with an expected income of between £20 and £39. Yet, as Gray points out, this is rather the income appropriate to that rank, and 'that enjoyed by most esquires who had not been ordered to become knights',³¹ rather than any official figure for people using the title. Traditionally, it is these two groups who have been considered the upper echelons of the gentry, the men who filled county offices, who represented the county in Parliament, and who formed the basis of noble households and bastard feudal retinues. This is probably a reasonable description, but must be qualified, since certainly not all men of knightly or esquire status were involved in such activities,³² and the men taking the title 'esquire' formed a very broad group.³³ While many esquires may actually have been eminently worthy of knighthood, many others had very modest incomes, often not even approaching Gray's £20 threshold. Yet while the richer, in many ways greater esquire families provided office holders more often, this was not always the case - again, the distinctions are far from clear.

Below the esquires were a large, amorphous group known to historians as the 'gentlemen', a title which had gathered a specific meaning only in the early part of the fifteenth century.³⁴ This group was a varied mixture of men of lesser rank who still ostensibly lived from the profits of their land rather than their labours, younger sons of

²⁹ See also below, pp.51-3.

³⁰ A list for the beginning of Edward IV's reign included such notable Lincolnshire men as John Tailboys, John Sothill, Thomas Blount and the Lincoln merchant Hamo Sutton. Fines ranged from 40s to £10. E370/2/22. See also M.R. Powicke, *Military Obligation in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1962); Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.47. The decline in the number of men assuming knighthood across the country is discussed below, ch.2.

³¹ Gray, 'Incomes from Land', p.627.

³² For example, the Bussy family of Hougham, despite retaining knightly status, were largely absent from county politics for much of the fifteenth century. See Appendix 6.

³³ Acheson's division of the esquire class into two highlights the differences across the group. Acheson, *Gentry Community*, Appendix 1; for further discussion of his methods, see below, pp.55-6 & n.58.

³⁴ This was at least partly in response to the requirement for defendants in legal cases to be defined by status, as set out in the Statute of Additions of 1413. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.45; Morgan, 'English Gentleman', p.16; *Statutes of the Realm*, ii, p.171.

knights or esquires, and other, more socially mobile men and families, often merchants or others attempting to gain a foothold in gentle society. Again, the edges were blurred, with some men referred to as 'gentleman' in one source, and 'yeoman' or 'esquire' in another.³⁵ The title also began to be used by men with few pretensions to landed wealth, again particularly among the urban elites. It had also become the usual title taken by members of the legal profession; however, since a large proportion of lawyers, probably the majority, were from gentry or noble families, and often younger sons, this is perhaps not especially surprising.³⁶ Furthermore, since lawyers and royal justices invariably invested the profits of their vocation in landed estates or in securing advantageous marriages, many such families rapidly rose into the ranks of the traditional gentry, often achieving high status extremely quickly.³⁷ Yet, as Morgan notes, it was only after the Statute of Additions of 1413 that the style of 'gentleman' began to be used as a defining rank of status, as opposed to the general usage of the term to denote gentility of any rank, and the term remained relatively fluid for the rest of the century.³⁸

Although the modest landed estates of many 'gentlemen' meant that their influence was often limited to a small area,³⁹ whatever their origins the small landed families were still very much part of gentry society. Recent research has tended to exaggerate the divisions between the 'upper' and 'lower' gentry, giving an impression of the lower gentry as relatively isolated from wider affairs by their comparative poverty.⁴⁰ This is one point where Payling's concentration upon the upper gentry families is rather unhelpful, since, intentionally or not, it tends to suggest a division between them and their social inferiors where, in most respects, none actually existed. As C.E. Moreton has shown, the ties of gentility, as well as other numerous ties of lordship and landholding, meant that they could not remain isolated from each other, and that the upper gentry were 'too thinly spread on the ground to have lived, had they so wished, as a

³⁵ For example, Richard Benyngton of Boston, who was seemingly only given the title 'esquire' after his death. See below, p.50 & n.31.

³⁶ Morgan, 'English Gentleman', pp.24-5; E.W. Ives, *The Common Lawyers of Pre-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 1983), p.23, quoting Sir John Fortescue, who claimed that the law was 'a career for gentlemen'. J. Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Anglie*, ed. & tr. S.B. Chrimes (Cambridge, 1942), ch.xlix.

³⁷ Notable Lincolnshire examples include the Tirwhits, Ascoughs and, later, the Husseys. See below, chs.2, 6, 7, & Appendix 6.

³⁸ Morgan, 'English Gentleman', pp.16-7; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, pp.33-4.

³⁹ The personal connections of individuals often outstripped this general trend, with lawyers, who could develop their extensive client networks, being an obvious case. Ives, *Lawyers*, ch.6.

⁴⁰ Moreton, 'Social Gulf?', p.255.

self-contained caste'.⁴¹ Such distinctions, though reasonably obvious in many ways to historians from tax returns or lists of local office holders, were far less clear cut to the people of the time.

The number of families which comprised the gentry has also been discussed at length, and is dependent largely on the criteria used for the assessment.⁴² It is generally thought that the number of gentry families was still relatively small in the fifteenth century. Less than 2000 families in the country as a whole had landed incomes of more than £20 (excluding peers), and of these, only about half were headed by knights or men eligible for distraint.⁴³ Below these were a far larger number of poorer families, impossible to put any precise number to since many have left very few records.⁴⁴ The ratio between these two groups could vary greatly from place to place, with some parts of the country containing many men of the, usually richer, upper ranks, and others with very few. For instance, according to the income tax returns for 1436,⁴⁵ Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Hertfordshire recorded only one knightly taxpayer each, compared with six for Essex and five for Warwickshire.⁴⁶ A.J. Pollard has also shown that there were about eighteen families in Yorkshire at this time with incomes of more than £100 a year, while Northumberland had nine and the far smaller County Durham had an elite of seven families.⁴⁷ But in general, each county had a small but variable proportion of greater gentry families, and a much larger number of lesser ones. Nevertheless, the standard of wealth was far from consistent across the country as a whole, and factors such as geographical location and topography would play a large part in determining not only a family's wealth, but also its social position. Although, as stated earlier, wealth was not necessarily the main factor here, a family's status would usually be reflected in its relative income compared to neighbouring families, rather than any wider, national 'scale'.⁴⁸

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.259-60.

⁴² See Gray, 'Incomes from Land', pp.623-31; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.5-6; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, ch.3; Payling, *Political Society*, pp.76-7 & ch.1; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, ch.2.

⁴³ Gray, 'Incomes from Land', pp.623-8; Payling, *Political Society*, p.76.

⁴⁴ Gray attempts to extrapolate figures from the 1436 subsidy return, estimating 1600 people with incomes between £10 and £19, and a further 3400 people between £5 and £9, but what proportion of these could be described as 'gentry' is impossible to judge from these figures. Gray, 'Incomes from Land', p.629.

⁴⁵ These returns are far from reliable, particularly when recording status, but the ratios between the counties recorded are valid. See below, ch.2; Gray, 'Incomes from Land', pp.626-7.

⁴⁶ Gray notes 13 in Lincolnshire. Gray, 'Incomes from Land', pp.631-9.

⁴⁷ Pollard, *North-Eastern England*, pp.89-90.

⁴⁸ For instance, Lincolnshire's elite families appear to have been individually poorer than their social equivalents in many other counties. See below, pp.48ff.

The existence of a 'community spirit' in the counties of fifteenth-century England is a point much disputed by historians. Rosemary Horrox, in her review article of fifteenth-century politics, has made clear the differences in current opinion.⁴⁹ As she states, every county, every borough, and even the country as a whole had some sort of *communitas*, a word she uses to avoid the overtones of social unity inherent in the modern 'community'.⁵⁰ Since the county was the major administrative unit, and each member of the landholding classes could have some influence in that administration, to varying extents, then there must have been some common cause, if only occasionally. But it was, in essence, a society of individuals, with their own wishes, relationships and outside involvements, and a county was not necessarily a recognisable geographical entity. The trend in recent county studies to identify men as being members of the gentry of a specific shire is especially misleading here, since the person involved, though doubtless having a principal residence in a certain county, may well have felt equally at home in another. This would be particularly likely at the upper end of gentry society.⁵¹ Also, although by no means equally as strong in all areas of the country, the bonds of bastard feudalism rarely respected county boundaries. Except where administrative boundaries coincided with distinctive topographical ones,⁵² such borders would appear to have been far less important to the people concerned than the methodology of recent studies might imply.

Opinion is very much divided on this issue. Whereas Pollock and Maitland argued that the county was indeed a *communitas*,⁵³ recent studies have cast doubt on this idea, stressing particularly the 'vertical' influence of the magnate affinity above the 'horizontal' ties of the shire.⁵⁴ However, this may be simply replacing one questionable theory with another, ascribing to many members of the gentry a wider sphere of activity and consciousness than they perhaps possessed. Certainly for the majority of gentry

⁴⁹ Horrox, 'Local and National Politics', pp.391-403.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.395.

⁵¹ For example, the Markhams of Sedgebrook became established in Lincolnshire during the latter part of the fifteenth century, and were involved in Lincolnshire administration. However, since the main Markham line remained resident in Nottinghamshire, the Sedgebrook line was doubtless as much part of the Nottinghamshire elite it had sprung from as the Lincolnshire society it had entered. See also below, ch.2. For further details of the Markham family, see below, p.214, n.59; Payling, *Political Society*, pp.39-41.

⁵² Lincolnshire's geography means that it may well have been just such an exception. See below, ch.1.

⁵³ F. Pollock and F.W. Maitland, *The History of English Law before the time of Edward I*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1923), i, p.534.

⁵⁴ For example, Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.56-9.

landholders, their interests lay in only one or two shires, and their main political activity in one only. Therefore, it would seem logical that individual gentry families would be more interested in the activities of their neighbours, regardless of political affiliation, than those of distant retainers of the same lord. Nevertheless, these circles were far from closed, as shown by the relative ease with which some members of the gentry could find office in different counties where they may have had only a minor interest.⁵⁵ As Acheson notes, these arguments point to a dispute between two kinds of gentry; a gentry confined within the boundaries of a noble affinity; and a gentry as part of a local 'community', free to speak out and work for the interests of the shire elite.⁵⁶ Each shire, presumably, contained a proportion of both, although the majority of landholders probably fell into neither category. Whether a region possessed any kind of strong 'community', in whatever sense, would seem to depend on the relative strengths of these forces.

Nevertheless, while the idea of a 'gentry community', without geographical limitations and with the provisos outlined above, would seem a valid concept, the notion of a wider, 'county community' is a very different matter. Although the gentry may have been the workhorses of county administration, and in many areas the greatest lay landholders in the shire when viewed as a class, it must be remembered that they were by no means the only people with an interest in local affairs. As Horrox described it, any county *communitas* consisted of the 'people whose stake in the region gave them a right to a say in its governance'.⁵⁷ Obviously this was not just the gentry. The great cities and boroughs usually had an administration of their own, and their representatives certainly should not be ignored within wider, county government, even though very few achieved the high offices usually dominated by the great landholders. Many towns also sent representatives to Parliament where, although they were generally regarded as inferior to the shire knights, these burgesses and city members formed a large proportion of the Commons.⁵⁸ For instance, in March 1437, the county of Devon sent the usual two members to Parliament, but it also sent twelve urban representatives.⁵⁹ With so much of

⁵⁵ This will be highlighted by the number of Lincolnshire sheriffs whose principal interests lay elsewhere; see below, pp.85-6, 208-10. The same was true for MPs. For instance, Thomas FitzWilliam, a lawyer and younger son of a minor Lincolnshire landowner, sat in Parliament for Lincoln City, Plympton (Devon), London, and Lincolnshire between 1459 and 1490. *W.B.*, p.335.

⁵⁶ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, pp.78-9.

⁵⁷ Horrox, 'Local and National Politics', p.395.

⁵⁸ M. McKisack, *The Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs during the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1932; repr. 1962).

⁵⁹ However, Devon had an unusually large number of boroughs. McKisack, *English Boroughs*, Appendix II:3, pp.159-60. These members were not necessarily native burgesses, but could be local

any county's life centred around the large towns, particularly economic activity and gatherings such as the county court or the Sessions of the Peace, the urban situation cannot be ignored. The same is also true at the local level of the lesser nobility. While the great magnates generally relied on their position at the top of the bastard feudal hierarchy, the lesser nobility were often barely distinguishable from the wealthiest and best connected knight or esquire. Given the much more localised nature of their interests, they thus often took a more direct approach towards local affairs, and although such a nobleman's individual power was far less than that of one of the great magnates (of whom he might easily also be a retainer), the influence of that individual on the affairs of his immediate locality could often be far more real. It is clear that, while the term 'gentry community' can only have a certain, limited meaning, any 'county community' must involve far more than merely the gentry to have any relevance, even before the geographical issues are taken into account. With the focus of this study being very much on the gentry, it may be relevant to talk of a 'gentry community', while noting its very indistinct boundaries, but the idea of a 'county community' is perhaps something best left well alone.

landholders or lawyers, often with little connection with the town concerned. McKisack, *English Boroughs*, ch.6, esp. pp.113-18. See also the discussion of Grimsby, below, pp.163-4, 181.

Part 1

Lancastrian
Lincolnshire

Chapter 1

Lincolnshire in the Fifteenth Century

Lincolnshire is one of the counties of England which defies any easy definition. Not truly a part of northern, eastern or midland England but occupying a 'no-man's-land' between the three, its sheer size means that any generalisations are fraught with difficulty. The stereotypical image of Lincolnshire is that the county is flat, a wide open, agricultural, relatively treeless and singularly uninteresting landscape. Of course, this description could, possibly, be applied to certain areas of the county, but for others this could not be further from the truth, as anyone who has travelled across the Wolds or climbed the hill up to the castle and the cathedral in Lincoln would confirm. The stereotypically 'damp' image of the county prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature may have been successfully dismantled,¹ but the county as a whole still appears to suffer from something of an image problem, although, hopefully, few would now echo Henry VIII's famous description of the county, as 'one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm'.²

As expected of such a large county, the second largest of the ancient counties of England, Lincolnshire contains a wide range of topographical features, factors which have had significant effects on its medieval and modern history. The county has two major upland areas, which, though far from being the rugged landscape of northern England or Scotland, provide a distinct contrast to the lowland areas which they divide.³ To the east lie the Lincolnshire Wolds, part of a chain of chalk hills which stretch from the Yorkshire Wolds of the North and East Ridings, continue, broken by the Humber, the Wash and the rivers of the Fens, into Norfolk, and rise to around five hundred feet at their highest point in Lincolnshire. To the west lies the Lincoln Edge, the northerly extension of a limestone ridge which stretches north from the Cotswolds. Divided in two

¹ Typified by Dickens' choice of Lincolnshire as the setting for *Bleak House*. M.W. Barley, *Lincolnshire and the Fens* (London, 1952; 2nd edn., Wakefield, 1972), p.3.

² A description given at the height of the Lincolnshire revolt during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. G.A.J. Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1975), p.1; S.J. Gunn, 'Peers, Commons and Gentry in the Lincolnshire Revolt of 1536', *Past and Present*, cxxiii (1989), pp.52-79.

³ See Map 1.

by the River Witham at the Lincoln Gap, the larger, wider southern section, the Heath, is a much more fertile region than the narrower northern section, known as the Cliff.

Between and around these upland areas lie the four main, distinctive lowland regions of the county. To the west lies the valley of the River Trent, forming part of the county's western boundary. The Lincolnshire land immediately to the east of the river, fertile and well populated during the medieval period, was, until the modern era, in stark contrast to the only part of the county lying west of the Trent, the Isle of Axholme, an extremely inhospitable area before modern drainage, almost cut off from the neighbouring regions by the river and the large, deep marshes of the Trent valley. Two other lowland areas run roughly north-south through the county. The Vale of Lincoln lies between the ridge and the Wolds, while to the east of the Wolds, the Marsh forms a belt between five and ten miles wide, drained by the numerous small streams and rivers which flow down to the North Sea. The largest and most famous lowland area, however, lies to the south, the part of the county which straddles about a third of the large Fenland region around the Wash, and which does most to give the county its flat, agricultural image. This area, stretching southwards into Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, has attracted a mixed reception from visitors and commentators, ranging from William of Malmesbury's description of the area as 'Paradisi simulacrum, quod amenitate iam caelos ipsos imaginetur',⁴ to Daniel Defoe's accurate but decidedly unflattering statement, that the region was 'the sink of thirteen counties'.⁵ The Fens today still form a confusing maze of small streams and some of the largest rivers in England, yet it is this area where the face of the county has changed most over the centuries. The modern, agricultural landscape is largely unrecognisable from the dense and treacherous marshland, dotted with small islands and smaller settlements which provided havens for religious houses⁶ and bases for outlaws and fugitives from Hereward the Wake to Geoffrey de Mandeville, and the deep estuaries and quicksands which proved so disastrous to King John and his baggage train.⁷

⁴ 'A very paradise and a heaven for the beauty and delight thereof'; William's description of the site and surroundings of Thorney Abbey, Cambridgeshire. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, ed. N.E.S.A. Hamilton, Rolls Series, lii (1870), pp.326-7.

⁵ E. Storey, *Portrait of the Fen Country* (London, 1971; revised edn., 1978), p.54; W. Marsden, *Lincolnshire* (London, 1977), pp.174ff.

⁶ Croyland Abbey being the most famous Lincolnshire example, but also many others, such as Thorney Abbey, Ramsey Abbey and of course the cathedral of Ely, all in Cambridgeshire.

⁷ M.T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers, 1066-1272* (London, 1983; 2nd edn., Oxford, 1998), chs.2, 5 & 8; A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp.49ff; R.H.C. Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-1154* (London, 1967; 3rd edn., Harlow, 1990), pp.77-82; J.H. Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville* (London, 1892); *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis*, ed. W.D. Macray, Rolls Series, lxxxiii (1886), pp.332-4; W.L. Warren, *King John* (London, 1961), pp.253-4; *Chronica Rogeri de Wendover*,

Although some regions were drained during the medieval period, such activities were usually small-scale, piecemeal, and made only a limited impression on the general topography of the region, unlike the great drainage projects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, this reclamation was an important part of local life during the Middle Ages.⁸

Although seemingly possessing some of the longest land borders of any English county, Lincolnshire has always, to a large extent, been enclosed, cut off from the rest of the country by water. With the North Sea coast forming the eastern edge, the Humber estuary provides the northern boundary of the historic and, once again, the modern county. To the south, the much smaller but significant River Welland provides part of the division, while the Fenland, now seemingly arbitrarily divided between the counties which meet at Lincolnshire's south-eastern tip, once formed a natural barrier to most travel and communications.⁹ The history of this border with Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk is long and complicated, mainly due to the ever-changing geography of the region during the medieval period. A settlement of one of the most contentious disputes was reached during the Tudor period, and this border remained until the modern era.¹⁰ For much of the western edge, the frontiers are again

ed. H.G. Hewlett, 3 vols., Rolls Series, lxxxiv (1886-9), ii, pp.195-6. The stories of Hereward and King John's treasure have become significant elements of fenland folklore, although modern research has questioned much of their substance. P. Howat, *Ghosts and Legends of Lincolnshire and the Fen Country* (Newbury, 1992), esp. pp.10-13, pp.94-5; Williams, *Norman Conquest*, pp.49ff; J. Haywood, 'Hereward the Outlaw', *J.M.H.*, xiv (1988), pp.293-304; D. Roffe, 'Hereward "the Wake" and the barony of Bourne: a reassessment of a Fenland Legend', *L.H.&A.*, xxix (1994), pp.7-10; M. Swanton (tr.), *Three Lives of the Last Englishmen*, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, vol. 10, ser. B (New York and London, 1984), pp.43-88; R. Clark, *Cambridgeshire*, Pimlico County History Series (London, 1996), pp.12-27, pp.105-8; W. H. St J. Hope, 'The Loss of King John's Baggage in the Wellstream', *Archaeologia*, lx (1906), pp.93-110; A.V. Jenkinson, 'The Jewels lost in the Wash', *History*, new ser., viii (1923-4), pp.161-8.

⁸ D. Robinson, 'Drainage and Reclamation', in S. Bennett & N.H. Bennett, *An Historical Atlas of Lincolnshire* (Hull, 1993), p.72; H.C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (Cambridge, 1940); H.E. Hallam, *The New Lands of Elloe*, University College of Leicester Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, no. 6 (Leicester, 1954).

⁹ Lincolnshire's long-standing border with Northamptonshire has been removed by modern boundary changes which have transferred the area of the Soke of Peterborough from Northamptonshire to Cambridgeshire.

¹⁰ The history of this region and its border disputes is fascinating from both a historical and a geographical viewpoint. See A.E.B. Owen, 'A Fenland Frontier: The establishment of the boundary between Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire', *Landscape History*, iv (1982), pp.41-6; H.C. Darby, 'The Fenland Frontier in Anglo-Saxon England', *Antiquity*, viii (1934), pp.185-201; D. Hall, 'The changing landscape of the Cambridgeshire silt fens', *Landscape History*, iii (1981), pp.37-49. The Tudor settlement recognised the Lincolnshire men's claim over a small area known as 'Sutton St. Edmunds Common', a finger of land stretching southwards into Cambridgeshire. This region was incorporated into Cambridgeshire in 1934, and it and a small area just to the north appear to be the only parts of the medieval county not within the modern boundaries of Lincolnshire. Owen, 'Fenland Frontier', p.45.

relatively apparent, with the former marshes of the Isle of Axholme and the deep waters of the Trent forming most of the borders with Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Only in the south-west, where the limestone ridge broadens out into Rutland and Leicestershire, is, as Alan Rogers describes it, 'the county open to the rest of England.'¹¹

As well as external, county borders, Lincolnshire, like Yorkshire, also contains internal boundaries, being divided between the three ancient divisions of the Parts of Holland, Kesteven and Lindsey. Kesteven, its name describing accurately the more heavily wooded area it covered,¹² forms the south-western quarter, while Holland, originally only a small area around the mouth of the Witham but expanding as reclamation of the marshes and fens continued, formed the south-eastern corner.¹³ The rest of the county, almost all the land between the rivers Trent, Humber and Witham, along with Axholme, formed the Parts of Lindsey. Lindsey, possibly meaning 'the island of the Lindissi', or the people of Lincoln, appears rather apt, given its watery boundaries, but the exact origin of the name is less than clear.¹⁴ Lindsey itself was also divided into three parts, the North, South and West Ridings, another remnant of its Danish past,¹⁵ and the whole county was sub-divided into wapentakes,¹⁶ the Danelaw equivalent of the hundred, with eleven in Kesteven, eighteen in Lindsey, and three in Holland.¹⁷ Although Lindsey's boundaries are relatively obvious, following the courses of the three rivers for

¹¹ A. Rogers, *A History of Lincolnshire* (Chichester, 1985), p.11. Hence the importance of Stamford, not only on the Great North Road, but also at the gateway to Lincolnshire. W.F. Grimes, 'The Archaeology of the Stamford Region', in A. Rogers (ed.), *The Making of Stamford* (Leicester, 1965), pp.1-14, esp. pp.3-4; H.R. Loyn, 'Anglo Saxon Stamford', in Rogers (ed.), *Stamford*, pp.15-33; A. Rogers, 'Medieval Stamford', in Rogers (ed.), *Stamford*, pp.34-57.

¹² *Kest-* being a variation of the early British word *ceto*, which survives in modern Welsh as *-coed*, meaning 'woodland'. Cooper suggests that '-even' derives from *fyne*, meaning 'fen'; hence 'wood jutting into the fen', a reasonably accurate description. C.H. Cooper, *Historical Origins of Lincolnshire Villages and Lincoln Street Names* (Lincoln, 1994), p.54. However, Cameron suggests that this part derives from the Danish *stefna*, meaning 'meeting' or 'meeting place'. K. Cameron, *English Place Names* (London, 1996), p.60.

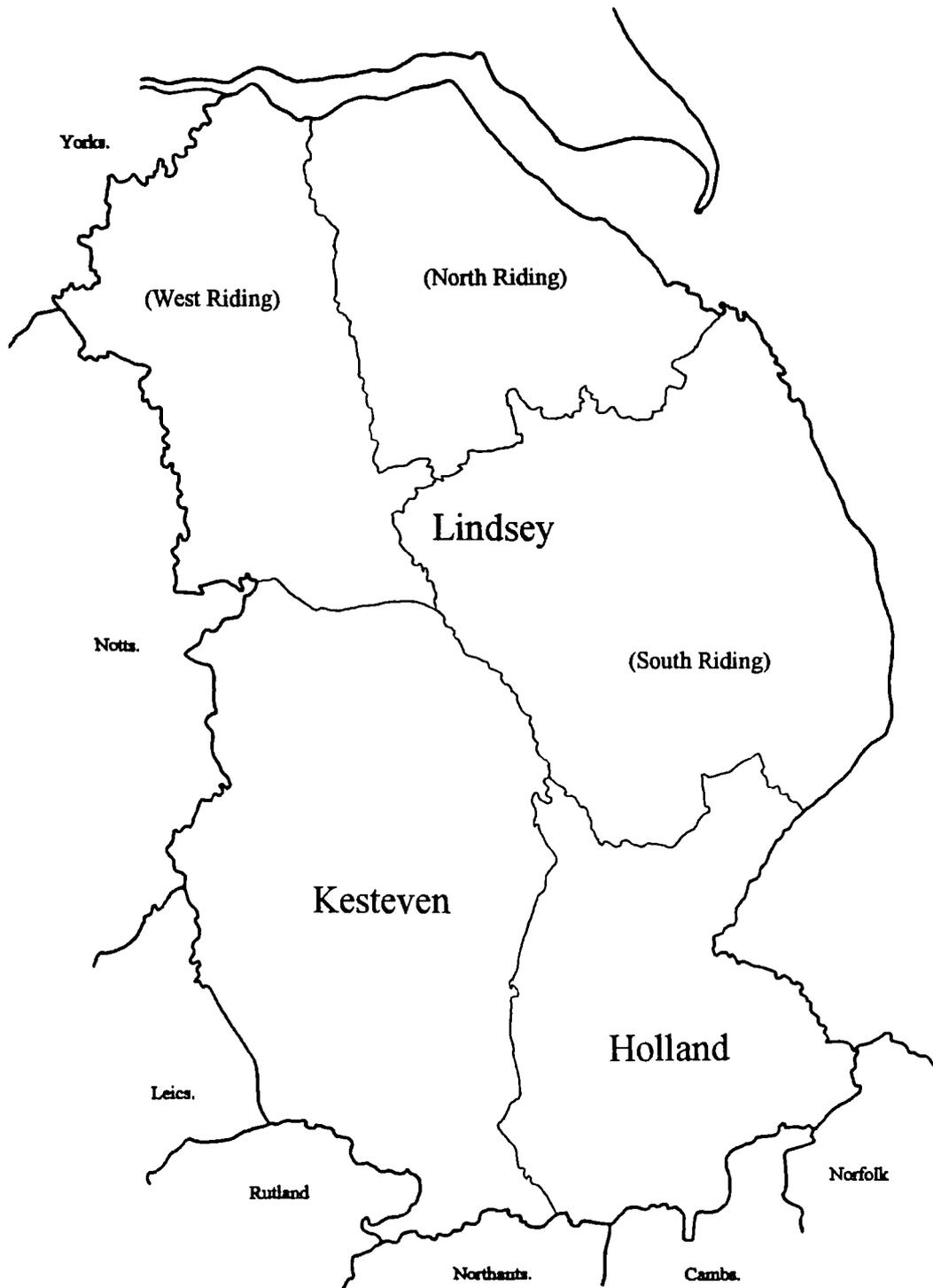
¹³ Cameron suggests an English origin for the name, meaning 'land by a (low) hill spur'. Cameron, *Place Names*, p.60. Alternatively, Cooper suggests the name simply means 'hollow land' (overlooked by higher land), similar to Halland in Sweden, but this appears less convincing. Cooper, *Historical Origins*, p.54.

¹⁴ The Old English *ēg*, which became the '-ey' of Lindsey, suggests a smaller island of some kind, rather than something the size of Lindsey. Nor does this seem consistent with the geographical site of Lincoln, though *Lindes*, primitive Welsh for 'people of the pool' (same stem as Lincoln itself), could correspond with Brayford Pool, on the Witham at the base of the hill. Cameron, *Place Names*, p.60; A. Mee, *The Kings England: Lincolnshire* (London, 1949: revised edn., 1970), p.2.

¹⁵ The word and the divisions being of Danish origin, a derivative of the Scandinavian word *þriðjungr*, or 'third part', which became *þriðing* in English, and hence 'riding'. Cameron, *Place Names*, p.60.

¹⁶ Again a word of Danish origin, the modern form of *wæpengetæc*, a version of the Scandinavian *vápnatak*. Cameron, *Place Names*, p.61.

¹⁷ See Maps 2 and 3.



Map 2. *Medieval Administrative Boundaries*



Map 3. Lincolnshire's Medieval Wapentakes

Arrows show detached portions. 'H' denotes the Liberty of Horncastle

most of their length, the boundary between Holland and Kesteven was far from clear, and, in the ever-shifting wilderness of the marshes, not always easy to define. Disputes arose at various times, one of the earliest recorded being in 1389, and the problem was not finally solved until 1817.¹⁸

Lincolnshire was not slow to witness the Roman invasion of A.D.43. The Ninth Legion soon penetrated northwards, through Cambridgeshire and then along the line of the ancient pathway along the limestone ridge, a route which soon formed the basis for Ermine Street, one of the major arteries of Roman Britain.¹⁹ While the Roman forces consolidated behind the Humber and Trent, Lincoln became a major legionary fortress, near the convergence of Ermine Street and the newly built Fosse Way. This ended after A.D.71, when further expansion meant the relocation of the army headquarters to York, and Lincoln, primarily a Roman foundation rather than a converted and expanded British capital, became one of the major regional centres of the new province. Other settlements were founded or expanded from native settlements, military posts or communication centres in the area: Caistor, Ancaster, Great Casterton and Horncastle all grew up, as did settlements along the main roads, Ermine Street and Fosse Way as well as King Street and the old Mareham Lane which ran southwards from Lincoln to Sleaford and beyond.²⁰

Little is known of the period between the Roman withdrawal in A.D.407 and the Saxon conquest, but the lack of evidence of destruction suggests a relatively peaceful transition. After the arrival of the Saxons, the region became divided, the southern section being part of a Middle Anglian kingdom later absorbed into Mercia, while Lindsey formed a small, independent kingdom, probably centred on Lincoln.²¹ Lindsey remained a semi-independent entity until around 800, despite becoming embroiled in the battles between the Mercians and the Northumbrians, but was under Mercian influence after the end of the seventh century, and had probably ceased to exist by the time of the Danish invasions. Under the Danes, the territory of Lincolnshire was part of the 'Five Boroughs' of Lincoln, Stamford, Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, set up after the

¹⁸ C.H. Vellacott, 'Political History', in *V.C.H.*, ii, pp.245-6. For an example of an early attempt to define the boundaries, see *CPR 1429-36*, p.605.

¹⁹ For the Ninth Legion, who had recently skirted the edge of the Fens, the Lincoln site provided an ideal position, controlling the river crossing and the route north, and giving access to the coast. F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1948; repr. 1965), p.2.

²⁰ G. Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1985), pp.3-4; B. Whitwell, 'Roman Lincolnshire', in Bennett & Bennett, *Atlas*, p.14; Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, pp.26-32; C. Brears, *A Short History of Lincolnshire* (London, 1927), pp.8-16.

²¹ Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, p.33. Lindsey also had its own bishop; see below, pp.39-40.

invasion of Mercia in 874. Saxon re-conquest followed after 917, but warfare continued as the English fought against the Norse Kings of York and then the Danish invaders. Lincolnshire played a key part in the events of the successful Danish invasions after 1013, a consequence of its position on the east coast and its Scandinavian past.²² At Gainsborough in 1014 the invading Danish forces chose Cnut to succeed his father Swein as King of Denmark and England,²³ and the people of Lindsey, who seem to have supported the Danish invaders, paid a high price when the area was ravaged by King Æthelred.²⁴

It is from this period, between the Danish conquests and the Norman invasion, that the recognisable administrative structures of Lincolnshire appear to date. The three parts of Holland, Kesteven and Lindsey certainly date from before the time of Domesday Book, though when they were formalised is less clear, as is exactly when and how the county itself was formed. Alan Rogers puts forward a possible explanation, based on the premise that Lincolnshire was actually an extension of the idea of a 'double' county.²⁵ He suggests that, when the counties of England were drawn up during the ninth and tenth centuries, there may have been two counties in the area, a northern one based around Lincoln, and a southern one around Stamford - in Rogers' words, a possible 'Stamfordshire'. Given that Stamford was the only one of the 'Five Boroughs' not to become a county capital, this would seem reasonable, as would the idea that its 'county' would correspond roughly with the eventual region of Kesteven. Rogers gives two possible reasons why this arrangement did not last. The establishment soon afterwards of the county of Rutland and the Soke of Peterborough, both artificial creations for political reasons, probably deprived Stamford of some of its territory, while practically cutting it off from its remaining hinterland. This left it isolated on a spur of the county just as it remains today, and without the necessary land to continue as a viable county capital. The

²² For details, see M.K. Lawson, *Cnut: The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), ch.1.

²³ According to both the Peterborough manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Lincolnshire-based twelfth-century poet Gaimar: Mee, *King's England: Lincolnshire*, p.138. However, Gaimar seems to have used a source similar to that used by the Peterborough scribe, or possibly the Peterborough manuscript itself. Both were written during the early twelfth century. Lawson, *Cnut*, p.77; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. & ed. M. Swanton, (London, 1996), pp.xxvi-xxvii, pp.143-5, esp. p.144 n.10; G. Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis*, ed. T.D. Hardy & C.T. Martin, Rolls Series, xci (1888-9), p.132; G. Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis*, ed. A. Bell (Oxford, 1960).

²⁴ According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Cnut sailed to Sandwich in the spring of 1014, leaving Lindsey to be attacked by Æthelred's English army. The Chronicler, extremely anti-Danish in tone, condemns Cnut for deserting his allies, rather than Æthelred for the attack. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. & ed. Swanton, p.145.

²⁵ Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, p.41.

other possibility is that, since Lincoln soon became the military centre for the English struggle against the Norse Kingdom of York, the city was given a 'double region' to support it, gaining lands both to the north and the south, and demoting Stamford to a secondary status. The first reference to a county of Lincolnshire dates from 1016, but probably refers solely to Lindsey, and possibly the hinterland of Lincoln to the south.²⁶ By the time of the Domesday survey, the three regions had become one county, suggesting that this was a creation of the last Danish or Saxon kings. Yet Platts suggests that there was little sense of county identity between the areas for many years, stating that only the growth of Lincoln as a major regional centre, and the growth of royal, county government, made such unity a possibility.²⁷ During the medieval period, and to an extent even today, local or regional loyalties generally remained much stronger than those of the county, and medieval Lincolnshire probably had little in the way of widespread 'county identity'.²⁸

Lincolnshire's history after the Norman Conquest is a story of relative peace and stability, with little further change to the county's administrative structure or borders, and only minor involvement in wider national affairs. Only sporadically did the county become the scene of trouble, usually due to the use of its marshland areas as places of refuge and bases for outlaws and fugitives.²⁹ In 1141, King Stephen was defeated and captured in battle at Lincoln by the supporters of Matilda,³⁰ and at the end of King John's reign in 1216, the city was captured by a French force under Prince Louis.³¹ In 1265, following their defeat at the Battle of Evesham, a number of the former supporters of Simon de Montfort found temporary refuge in the marshes of the Isle of Axholme.³² But such incidents were isolated and unusual, a result of a combination of factors, the two most important being the county's isolated geographical position, and the nature and

²⁶ Platts, *Land and People*, p.1. The text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 1016, which Platts quotes, suggests that this 'Lincolnshire' did not cover the same territory as the later medieval and modern county. 'He [Cnut] went ... along the fens to Stamford. Thence into Lincolnshire.' *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. J. Ingram (London, 1912), p.115; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tr. & ed. Swanton, pp.148-9.

²⁷ Platts, *Land and People*, p.3.

²⁸ For discussion of this idea with regard to the gentry, see below, chs.2, 3 & 6.

²⁹ See above, p.25, n.7.

³⁰ E. King (ed.), *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (Oxford, 1994), p.21; Davis, *Stephen*, pp.49-51; J. Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: the Civil War of 1139-53* (Stroud, 1996).

³¹ S. McGlynn, *The Invasion of England, 1216: Warfare in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Stroud, 1997).

³² Brears, *Short History*, p.99; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p.210; F.M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1947), ii, p.519, esp. n.2.

changing structure of lordship across the Middle Ages, changes which appear to have affected Lincolnshire in a distinctive way.

Lincolnshire and its population seem to have emerged from the Norman Conquest relatively lightly. William I immediately ordered the construction of a castle at Lincoln, but the county did not suffer the devastation meted out to other areas, particularly the North. However, the former landowners fared less well, with the native Saxon and Danelaw aristocracy, such as Morcar, Earl of Northumberland, and Merleswein, Harold II's sheriff of Lincolnshire, disappearing as local notables, to be replaced by William's Norman supporters.³³ This process was not immediate, but various revolts meant that few notable pre-Conquest landholders remained by the time of the Domesday Book. Platts' figures suggest that in 1086 70% of Lincolnshire's property revenue was controlled by secular lords, mostly new, Norman owners.³⁴ Yet although a third of all William's greater tenants in chief held land in Lincolnshire, few had their chief residences in the county.³⁵ The result was a large percentage of absentee landlords and relatively few locally-resident powerful men, and although the century after the Conquest saw more local lords in Lincolnshire than at any time thereafter, they appear to have done very little to strengthen their regional power. The Lindsey Survey of 1115-18 shows that little had changed in the structure of local landholding during the thirty years since Domesday, and local society appears to have been remarkably stable.³⁶ Yet, the Hundred Rolls of 1274-5 show that there were only 13 'baronies' in the county at the end of the thirteenth century, a significant reduction from 1086, and only a few of these were distinct, stable entities. This process continued as titles became extinct or amalgamated, until, by the fifteenth century, only four resident noble families remained.³⁷

As Barley has pointed out, the county was 'rather a stronghold of the free peasants, as wealthy as any in England, among whom feudalism could not find the same foothold . . .'.³⁸ Although over-simplified, this would appear sound. The peasant

³³ Platts, *Land and People*, p.13. Many men held lands in both Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. A.S. Ellis, 'Biographical Notes on the Yorkshire Tenants Named in Domesday Book', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, iv (1877), pp.114-57, 214-48.

³⁴ Platts, *Land and People*, p.13. Yet only 4% of the total was enjoyed by pre-Conquest secular lords, the remaining 66% being granted to newcomers. The only notable Saxon lords remaining were 'Colswein' and 'Ulf son of Tope'. Platts, *Land and People*, p.15.

³⁵ Platts, *Land and People*, pp.13-14; Rogers, *Lincolnshire* (1970), p.35.

³⁶ Platts, *Land and People*, pp.16-17.

³⁷ Beaumont, Cromwell, Willoughby and Welles, none of whom were among the original Norman lords. Of course, the notion of what constituted 'nobility' or a 'barony' changed considerably between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, but the comparisons are reasonably valid.

³⁸ Barley, *Lincolnshire*, p.68. For a discussion of economic factors, see below, pp.37-9.

population, generally wealthier and hence rather less subservient and more independently-minded than those of many other regions, provided a less than promising basis for great feudal lordships, while the county's marginal and isolated position gave control of the region little strategic or political importance. It was more rewarding to take the profits of prosperous Lincolnshire estates and invest them in power and influence elsewhere.³⁹ This is not to say the county contained no great families during the Middle Ages: dynasties such as the Gants and, to an extent, the Lacy Earls of Lincoln were key players on the national stage.⁴⁰ But such families were exceptional, and, throughout the medieval period, Lincolnshire produced few families, or even individuals, to compare with the great lords of, for instance, the North or the Welsh Marches.⁴¹

The lack of surviving fortifications in Lincolnshire is a reflection of this pattern of political society and landed structure, as well as signalling the strategic unimportance of the county.⁴² There were relatively few fortified sites in the county during the medieval period, but since castles were usually built with either a strategic or an administrative function in mind, such scarcity is hardly surprising.⁴³ William I built castles at Lincoln and Stamford, chiefly as administrative centres and symbols of his rule in the county's two key towns,⁴⁴ but most Lincolnshire castles were founded by the local landowners as honorial centres or defensive residences, mainly within a century of the Conquest. Most were small-scale, few retained their importance for long, and many such foundations, largely wooden-built motte and bailey constructions, were soon abandoned for more

³⁹ A practice also followed by the Dukes of Lancaster, particularly John of Gaunt. Although Bolingbroke provided substantial wealth, and the Lincolnshire gentry provided a large number of retainers, thus automatically making Gaunt a key figure in county affairs, the Honour played little part in his personal political ambitions or activities. Apart from the birth of Henry IV in 1367, and some building works in the 1370s, Bolingbroke Castle itself was practically abandoned as a residence. A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 1992), p.303 n.18, p.308. Also see below, pp.36-7, 75-7, 91-4.

⁴⁰ R.M. Sherman, 'The Continental Origins of the Gant Family of Lincolnshire', *Nott. Med. Stud.*, xxii (1978), pp.23-35; M.R. Abbott, 'The Gant Family in England', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1973); W.E Weightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy, 1066-1194* (Oxford, 1966).

⁴¹ A key factor in Lincolnshire's fifteenth-century politics. See below, esp. chs.2, 3, 6 & 7.

⁴² Of course, neglect and ruination also played a part in the disappearance of such structures as were built. The lack of building stone in some parts of the county meant that very few disused buildings were allowed to remain, even as ruins, but this should not be overplayed, since in some areas stone was far from rare. The famous quarries at Ancaster have provided stone not only for local medieval masons, but also for such buildings as Windsor Castle, York Railway Station and the current Houses of Parliament. Barley, *Lincolnshire*, p.52.

⁴³ The only castle sites of any significant strategic value were probably Lincoln itself, on the hill above the city, Stamford, on the main north road, and Gainsborough and Owston, both on the Trent. D. Roffe, 'Castles', in Bennett & Bennett, *Atlas*, p.40.

⁴⁴ Lincoln Castle's defensive position was also an added bonus, although the city probably owed its original existence to this feature. The Norman castle was built on part of the site of the former Roman fortress, which itself may have superseded an earlier defensive settlement. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p.3.

favourable sites, sometimes within but often outside the county.⁴⁵ A large number of unlicensed castles were founded during the civil war of Stephen's reign, and again under John, as royal control over the outlying regions of the kingdom weakened, but most were temporary, and were destroyed or abandoned soon afterwards.⁴⁶

However, few such sites were of great importance, and by the fifteenth century few castles remained in use. The royal castle at Lincoln, having passed to the Earls of Lincoln, the Dukes of Lancaster and back to the Crown, remained important, but mainly as an administrative centre, the headquarters of the sheriff and royal government. Bolingbroke, the centre of the Duchy of Lancaster interests, was rebuilt and expanded throughout the Middle Ages, but it too was primarily an administrative centre rather than a residence.⁴⁷ Folkingham, later home to the Beaumont family, and Tattershall, rebuilt by Lord Cromwell in the mid-fifteenth century, remained as centres and symbols of noble power, but few others did so. Somerton Castle, built by Anthony Bek, Bishop of Durham, and presented by him to Edward I, was in good enough repair to act as the prison of King John of France in 1359-60, but was otherwise of little importance.⁴⁸ The urban castles at Stamford, Sleaford⁴⁹ and Bourne all fell into decay well before the end of the medieval period, and the stones were gradually pillaged by local builders. Thus, not only did Lincolnshire see little of its greater medieval landholders, there were also few prominent symbols of lordship in the county, either royal or noble. A more accurate architectural symbol of Lincolnshire's medieval lordship is the famous manor house at Boothby Pagnell, Kesteven (built c.1200).⁵⁰ Barely fortified, and built by local landowners of middling rank, it was a far more common sight than the great castle on Lincolnshire's medieval skyline, and more accurately reflects not only the lesser rank of the majority of Lincolnshire's resident medieval lords, but also the relative peace, isolation and unimportance of the county. Lincolnshire's resident landholders may not have been of sufficient status to build great stone fortresses, but they had little reason either.

⁴⁵ For example, Kinnard's Castle at Owston, originally a Mowbray construction built to protect their Axholme estates. It was abandoned in favour of the Mowbray's new stronghold at Epworth. Barley, *Lincolnshire*, p.74.

⁴⁶ Roffe, 'Castles', p.40; C. Coulson, 'The Castles of the Anarchy', in E. King (ed.), *Anarchy*, pp.67-92, esp. pp.68-71.

⁴⁷ See also below, pp.36-7, and above, p.34, n.39.

⁴⁸ Barley, *Lincolnshire*, pp.75-6.

⁴⁹ Sleaford Castle was built by the manorial lords, the Bishops of Lincoln. Barley, *Lincolnshire*, p.68; D.M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), p.37.

⁵⁰ Platts, *Land and People*, p.48; Barley, *Lincolnshire*, pp.74-5.

One symbol of lordship which did stand out in Lincolnshire during the later medieval period, however, was the Duchy of Lancaster. This massive agglomeration of estates, lordships and honours, stretching across the whole of England, was a private fiefdom almost without parallel in late medieval England, and has been studied at length.⁵¹ The Duchy lands in Lincolnshire were mainly those formerly belonging to the earldom of Lincoln. Thomas of Lancaster had married the Lacy heiress, Alice, and inherited the Earldom on the death of her father, Henry de Lacy, in 1311.⁵² These estates were extensive and extremely wealthy, making the Duchy of Lancaster one of the largest (if not *the* largest) landed interests in the county during the later medieval period. Most of the Duchy lands comprised the honour of Bolingbroke,⁵³ a collection of estates centred on the eponymous castle, the birthplace of Henry IV, and lay chiefly in Holland and the North and South Ridings of Lindsey.⁵⁴ According to figures given by Helen Castor, the average annual receipts of the honour during the reign of Henry IV amounted to approximately £1138, a figure surpassed only by the receipts at Tutbury and Lancaster.⁵⁵ Under the Lancastrian kings, these lands had a chequered history. In 1411, lands worth £168 per annum were granted to the Prince of Wales (the future Henry V), while in 1415, the entire honour of Bolingbroke was enfeoffed by Henry V for the performance of his will.⁵⁶ Due to the problems of Henry VI's minority, various financial

⁵¹ For instance, R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster, I: 1265-1603* (London, 1953); J.R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-1322* (Oxford, 1973); S. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361-1399* (Oxford, 1990); H. Castor, 'The Duchy of Lancaster in the Lancastrian Polity, 1399-1461', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1993); Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, ch.14.

⁵² The Lacy inheritance consisted primarily of four honours; Bolingbroke, Clitheroe, Pontefract and Halton. Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.21-2.

⁵³ The Duchy manor of Long Bennington, in Kesteven, does not appear to have been included within this honour, and was administered and accounted separately. Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.574-5; DL28/29/2. It had formed part of the estate of Queen Katherine de Valois, returning to the Duchy on her death in 1437, and was the only Lincolnshire manor not assigned to the Duke of York in Edward IV's will of 1475. Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.208, 239. For the significance of the grant to Richard of York, see below, pp.230-1.

⁵⁴ Lists of the individual manors which formed the honour are found within the enfeoffment for the performance of Henry V's will in 1415, while a valor of the North Parts, taken in the early 1460s provides an almost identical list. *CPR 1413-16*, pp.356-7; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.339; DL28/29/2. The honour comprised, along with various other minor lands, the manors of Bolingbroke, Steeping, Ingoldmells, (North) Thoresby, 'Wathhall' (Waithe?), Brattleby, Waddington, Greetham, Long Sutton, Wrangle, 'Thorley', Saltfleetby, Wainfleet, Belchford and Donington. The lordships of the vill of Spalding and Pinchbeck were also claimed to have belonged to the Duchy, according to a group of residents appealing to Parliament in 1450, but they do not appear in either the valor or the grant to Henry V's feoffees. KB27/758, m. 76. See below, p.133 & n.69.

⁵⁵ Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster', p.60. The dominant nature of the Duchy as a landholder is evident from this figure. This single honour provided more revenue than the total assessed income of the richest local nobleman in 1436 (Ralph Cromwell, assessed at £1007). Gray, 'Incomes from Land', p.615.

⁵⁶ *CPR 1413-16*, pp.356-7; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.199.

difficulties which delayed the performance of the will, and the understandable reluctance of the surviving feoffees to relinquish the income of these valuable lands, the honour did not return to full Crown control until 1443. It does, however, seem to have escaped further enfeoffment in 1443 and 1445, when Henry VI used various other Duchy lands to endow his foundations at Eton and Cambridge.⁵⁷

The Duchy of Lancaster also formed a significant political presence in Lincolnshire, the greatest such presence during the later Middle Ages. Under the lordship of John of Gaunt and his son, the primary function of the Duchy estates as a whole was as a political entity, their income being used to pay annuities and pensions, funding the vast nationwide network of retainers upon which Lancastrian power and influence was based.⁵⁸ While large sums raised from Bolingbroke were undoubtedly used to fund interests elsewhere, a significant number of Lincolnshire men appear among John of Gaunt's retainers, especially from the prominent gentry families of the shire.⁵⁹ When Henry V reduced this spending, determined to use the Duchy to raise extra funds, expenditure on annuities did not fall as fast here as elsewhere,⁶⁰ but Lincolnshire was peripheral to national politics, and there is little to suggest this retinue was built up with any local dominance in mind, though of course this was an advantageous addition. The subsequent decline of the Duchy interests will be discussed later,⁶¹ but although Lincolnshire may have been only part of a much larger whole as far as the Duchy of Lancaster was concerned, it is clear that, in a county with few major figures and large estates, the Duchy played a significant role in political life in Lincolnshire during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

As noted earlier, one of the reasons why feudal society failed to gain as great a level of control in Lincolnshire as elsewhere may be the general wealth of the county and its inhabitants. In contrast to its relatively minor political importance, Lincolnshire was one of the most heavily populated and richest counties of England.⁶² The population expanded rapidly as new lands were brought under cultivation in the Wolds, the Trent

⁵⁷ Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.207-11, 219-22, 340; Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster', p.49. See also below, pp.76-7.

⁵⁸ Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, ch.2; Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster', pp.51ff; Somerville, *Duchy*, chs.9-11.

⁵⁹ Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, pp.262-84.

⁶⁰ Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster', pp.40-1.

⁶¹ See below ch.2.

⁶² The yield from Lincolnshire for the 1334 fifteenth and tenth was second only to the yield from Norfolk. *E.H.D.*, iv, no.556.

valley, and especially in the Marsh and the Fens, where reclamation was proceeding steadily throughout the medieval period.⁶³ Although the county produced a wide range of products, the most lucrative was its wool.⁶⁴ Lincolnshire wool was among the best in England,⁶⁵ and the towns of the county thrived on the trade of both wool and cloth to the European markets. Lincoln was one of the largest and richest cities in England for most of the medieval period, its river links making it the hub of the county's trading network. Other towns such as Stamford, Louth and Grantham also expanded rapidly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,⁶⁶ often as smaller staging posts in this network. However, the area of greatest population, the coastal regions of Holland, remained almost entirely rural, the large settlements being preserved as communities of agricultural labourers, rather than developing any urban identity.⁶⁷ Yet the greatest success story was undoubtedly Boston, thriving on the trade created by the agricultural prosperity of the surrounding countryside. Its advantageous east-coast position, the river links to Lincoln, and with the Fosse Dyke canal also giving access to the Trent after its re-opening in 1121, Boston flourished as a centre for trade, particularly to northern Europe, and although not even mentioned in Domesday, it grew rapidly to become the second greatest port in England after London, and by 1334 was the fifth richest town in England.⁶⁸ However, decline soon followed. Sporadic outbreaks of plague and years of famine had hit Lincoln especially hard, even before the Black Death took its toll. The

⁶³ See above, n.8.

⁶⁴ As well as other agricultural products, Lincolnshire was also a centre of salt making and fishing, as well as other smaller-scale activities such as iron-working, pottery and quarrying. Platts, *Land and People*, chs.4-5; E.M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeology*, vi-vii (1962-3), pp.182-201.

⁶⁵ In 1337, when setting up the wool scheme to help fund the war with France, Edward III's government valued Lincolnshire wool at 10 marks a sack; only that from Shropshire, at 10½ marks, was valued higher. *CCR 1337-9*, pp.148-50; W.M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England 1327-1377* (New Haven & London, 1990), p.184; G.L. Harriss, *King, Parliament and Public Finance in Medieval England to 1369* (Oxford, 1975), pp.235-9.

⁶⁶ For further details of the medieval history of Lincolnshire's towns, see Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*; Rogers, *Stamford*; E. Gillett, *A History of Grimsby* (Oxford, 1970); S.H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull, 1993); *The Royal Charters of Grantham, 1463-1688*, ed. G.H. Martin (Leicester, 1963).

⁶⁷ Platts, *Land and People*, p.196. See the relatively huge wealth of what were ostensibly fenland villages in the records of the 1334 lay subsidy. R.E. Glasscock, 'England circa 1334', in H.C. Darby (ed.), *A New Historical Geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973), pp.180-2.

⁶⁸ A. Markillie, 'The Economy and Society of Medieval Boston', in W.M. Ormrod (ed.), *The Guilds in Boston* (Boston, 1993), pp.15-18, p.15; Platts, *Lincolnshire*, pp.148-9; Carus-Wilson, 'Ports of the Wash', esp. pp.182-3; Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, p.51. For further details of Boston's medieval history, see P. Thompson, *The History and Antiquities of Boston* (Boston, 1856); P. Dover, *The Early Medieval History of Boston* (Boston, 1972); S.H. Rigby, 'Boston and Grimsby in the Middle Ages', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (London, 1983); S.H. Rigby, 'Sore Decay' and 'Fair Dwellings': Boston and Urban Decline in the Later Middle Ages', *Midland History*, x (1985), pp.47-61.

consequent dramatic reduction in the population after 1349 added to the troubles, the reduced volume of trade hastening Lincoln's demise as a commercial centre, and stifling prosperity across the county. The removal of the wool staple to Boston from Lincoln in 1369 was not just a sign of Boston's economic prosperity,⁶⁹ but a reflection of Lincoln's decline, a decline which soon spread to the rest of the county. Changing trading patterns, the re-location of foreign merchants to other ports and deteriorating political relations with the Hanseatic merchants, along with natural problems such as the silting up of the Witham at Boston, and blockages to the Fosse Dyke canal, brought a steady decline to a county whose prosperity was so dependent upon the wool trade. The economy which grew up around it was also hit, and Boston's attempts to diversify into other areas were thwarted by the decline of its major market, Lincoln.⁷⁰ Although Lincolnshire's agricultural wealth remained, the profits of its sale were diverted elsewhere. However, the medieval prosperity of the county, based on its wool trade, is still apparent today in the huge number of massive, ornate parish churches which still dominate the landscape, particularly in Holland and on the Wolds, quite disproportionate to the small villages many now serve.⁷¹

While the tangible symbols of secular lordship within Lincolnshire were few, these symbols of ecclesiastical power and influence were ever-present and numerous, even if many owed as much to economic prosperity, lay devotion and personal aggrandisement as they did to spiritual zeal. Yet it was not just in its building works that the Church played a large role in the life of the medieval county; as an institution it was a significant, if declining force in the temporal as well as the spiritual sense. At the time of Domesday, relatively little land in the county was in the hands of the Church, certainly compared to the secular lords.⁷² However, the bishopric of Lincoln was only then emerging from a long period of turbulence, and was soon to become a key power in the county. There had been a bishop of Lindsey in the seventh century, and possibly a bishop in Lincoln as early as the fourth century,⁷³ but the bishopric of Lindsey was destroyed by

⁶⁹ *Some Sessions of the Peace in Lincolnshire, 1381-1396*, ed. E.G. Kimball, 2 vols., i, L.R.S., xlix (1955), p.xvi.

⁷⁰ Platts, *Land and People*, pp.226-7.

⁷¹ Louth, Grantham and Boston being among the best known examples, along with the splendid churches of the numerous small towns and villages formerly along the edge of the Fens between the Witham and Nene estuaries. H. Thorold, *Lincolnshire Churches Revisited* (Salisbury, 1989), esp. pp.37-9, 78-80, 125-7.

⁷² Owen, *Church and Society*, p.47.

⁷³ Any Roman diocese disappeared during the Saxon invasions, but the memory undoubtedly lived on, with a visit by Paulinus in 627 and comment from Bede in 730. P. Kidson, 'Architectural History',

the Danes, and the bishop of Leicester, who had assumed responsibility for the region, later withdrew to Dorchester-on-Thames due to the Danish threat. After the Conquest, prompted by royal wishes to consolidate Norman rule in the region, Bishop Remigius moved the see back to the much more impressive site of Lincoln.⁷⁴ Despite continued protests from the Archbishop of York, who claimed Lindsey for the northern province, the new Norman cathedral was consecrated in 1092.⁷⁵ The bishopric of Lincoln rapidly became one of the most important in England, the huge diocese covering nine counties, a legacy of its troubled past, and one of the largest of Catholic Europe. The Bishop of Lincoln also gained a position as a temporal power in the county. Grants from William I to Remigius were supplemented by future acquisitions, grants and gifts, a castle was raised on the bishop's manor at Sleaford, and, by the thirteenth century, the bishops held control of the wapentake of Well,⁷⁶ which included the site of the episcopal palace at Stow. The actions of such prominent bishops as Alexander 'the Magnificent' (1123-48), Hugh of Avalon (1186-1200), and Robert Grosseteste (1235-53) made the bishop a key part of Lincolnshire society for much of the medieval period. Yet, despite retaining a great landed presence, by the fifteenth century the Bishops of Lincoln had become practically inactive in local political affairs, although many bishops probably saw very little of their diocese due to other commitments.⁷⁷

in D.M. Owen (ed.), *A History of Lincoln Minster* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.14-46, p.14. The Saxon bishopric of Lindsey, which probably existed from 678 to 1004, was not based on Lincoln. It supposedly had its seat at 'Sidnacester', but this location has not been identified. One traditional site, that of Stow, has been discounted by modern historians, while A.E.B. Owen has made a persuasive case for Louth. D.M. Owen, 'The English church in eastern England, 1066-1100', in Owen (ed.), *Lincoln Minster*, pp.1-13, pp.5-6; A.E.B. Owen, 'Herefrith of Louth', *L.H.&A.*, xv (1980), pp.15-20; Thorold, *Churches*, pp.118-22; Owen, *Church and Society*, p.37; D.M. Owen, 'The Norman Cathedral at Lincoln', in R. Allen Brown (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies VI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1983* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp.188-99.

⁷⁴ Owen, 'English church in eastern England', pp.8-9. The administration of such a large diocese from the insignificant town of Dorchester was clearly impossible, and Lincoln, a major city with good road and river communications, was the obvious choice. But see also below, n.75.

⁷⁵ The former bishopric of Lindsey was almost certainly part of the northern province, but the area was added to the southern diocese of Leicester/Dorchester after its destruction. This claim was not forgotten by successive Archbishops of York, and the move to Lincoln was certainly intended as a permanent solution to the issue, since establishing Lincoln as the seat of a strengthened southern diocese would make the area of the old Lindsey diocese inseparable from the rest, and unquestionably part of the southern province. As Dorothy Owen notes, the precise position of the cathedral, on the north bank of the Witham and thus within the area claimed by the Archbishop of York, would not have been lost on contemporaries, although it was also clearly the obvious site. Owen, 'English church in eastern England', p.9; Kidson, 'Architectural History', pp.14-16.

⁷⁶ Platts, *Land and People*, p.6.

⁷⁷ Owen, *Church and Society*, p.20; the fifteenth-century bishops are listed in Appendix 1.d. From 1432, the bishops were given an honorific position on almost all peace commissions. See below, p.101; Appendix 2. Some also held offices in the royal government; Henry Beaufort (1398-1404) was Chancellor of England, 1403-5, before going on to greater things; Thomas Rotherham (1472-80) was

There were an exceptional number of churches in Lincolnshire in the Middle Ages, the majority of which still survive.⁷⁸ This reflected the county's high population, while the lavish expenditure made possible by the prosperity of the wool trade turned some of these into the most spectacular parish churches in England. In 1086, there were around 255 churches in the county, second only in number to Suffolk, and medieval Lincoln contained over 40 alone.⁷⁹ By around 1320 there were around 700 parochial benefices,⁸⁰ but this number reduced quite drastically during the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as depopulation led to their abandonment and the decline in the county's economic prosperity meant that the local population could no longer afford the upkeep of so many large buildings. However, the hundreds that do survive demonstrate not only the comparative wealth of the population for most of the medieval period, but also the level of devotion which inspired such generosity.

Monasteries were another integral part of the religious life of Lincolnshire, as well as its landscape. Although most have now disappeared completely, there were more religious houses per square mile in Lincolnshire than in any other county except Yorkshire, well over a hundred in all.⁸¹ Almost all the major monastic orders were represented,⁸² and Lincolnshire was the home of the Gilbertines, the only English monastic order, founded in the twelfth century by St. Gilbert of Sempringham.⁸³

Keeper of the Privy Seal (1467-74) and Chancellor (1474-83) to Edward IV, and was succeeded in both offices, and his bishopric, by John Russell (1480-94). Others, such as Bishop Lumley, held government offices before their periods at Lincoln. A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1957-9), vol. iii, pp.1593-6, 1609-11; E.B. Fryde et al. (eds.), *Handbook of British Chronology*, 3rd edn. (London, 1986), pp.87-8, 95, 106; G.L. Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort: a Study of Lancastrian Ascendancy and Decline* (Oxford, 1992); G.L. Harriss, 'Marmaduke Lumley and the Exchequer Crisis of 1446-9', in J.G. Rowe (ed.), *Aspects of Late Medieval Government and Society* (Toronto, 1986), pp.143-78. The bishops also often acted as arbiters in local disputes, particularly those involving religious houses. See below, p.139.

⁷⁸ Of the ones which do not survive, some were lost when the villages they served were abandoned, particularly after the Black Death, while only 14 remained in Lincoln by the Reformation. Bennett notes the fate of St Peter's, Mablethorpe, which, as a result of coastal erosion, fell into the sea during the fifteenth century. N.H. Bennett, 'Parish Churches', in Bennett & Bennett, *Atlas*, p.46.

⁷⁹ Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, pp.57-8. Stamford contained roughly fifteen or sixteen churches, though the exact number is unknown, while Grantham, due to its manorial status, had only one. Rogers, 'Medieval Stamford', in Rogers (ed.), *Stamford*, p.52, esp. n.64; *Charters of Grantham*, ed. Martin, p.10.

⁸⁰ Bennett, 'Parish Churches', p.46.

⁸¹ Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.44-57, 146-53. There has been little modern excavation of Lincolnshire's monastic sites, certainly when compared to the work undertaken in Yorkshire. Barley, *Lincolnshire*, pp.59-60. Only where buildings were reused as parish churches, as at Crowland or Frieston, or incorporated into secular buildings as at Spalding, does masonry survive to any great extent. The majority, such as Bardney, Louth Park and Revesby, are now nothing more than grassy fields, though many were once every bit as impressive as Rievaulx or Fountains.

⁸² The Cluniacs being the only exception. Rogers, *Lincolnshire* (1972), pp.37-8.

⁸³ Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.48-52, 146-53; B. Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order, c.1130-c.1300* (Oxford, 1995); R. Graham, *St Gilbert of Sempringham and the*

Relatively few foundations pre-dated the Danish conquest, and all were destroyed during the Danish invasions. By 1066, only Croyland Abbey had been re-founded,⁸⁴ and of the others, only Bardney was ever rebuilt.⁸⁵ Most of Lincolnshire's medieval monasteries were founded during the century and a half after the Conquest, and although some houses were sponsored by the King or the great nobles, such as Gilbert de Gant's re-founding of Bardney, most were endowed by the lesser nobility, local landowners seeking to glorify themselves and their families, as well as providing salvation for their souls after death. The earliest foundations had been relatively small, all Benedictine, and often merely cells of other (usually Norman) houses,⁸⁶ but the later expansion, particularly during the reigns of Stephen and Henry II, brought far larger foundations, and many other orders. This corresponded with the situation across the country, while the establishment of the Gilbertines during the twelfth century also added to the proliferation within Lincolnshire. Many houses, especially those of the Cistercians, Gilbertines, and Premonstratensians, were founded in the more inhospitable areas, with many, particularly in the Fens and the Marsh, presumably on the implicit understanding that they would increase their estates through reclamation.⁸⁷

Lincolnshire's monasteries were very much a mixture, a reasonably large number of greater, relatively wealthy houses, such as Croyland, Kirkstead, Bardney and Thornton, and a vast number of smaller houses and cells. Although none was individually as rich or as politically influential as some of the great houses of medieval England such as St Albans or Bury St Edmunds, the sheer number of houses certainly gave them a significant role in the life of the medieval county. Although they did not always work together, and disputes were far from rare,⁸⁸ their estates were usually relatively compact

Gilbertines (London, 1901).

⁸⁴ However, see below, n.86.

⁸⁵ Rogers, *Lincolnshire*, p.37.

⁸⁶ For instance, Spalding Priory, supposedly founded by monks from Crowland in 1052, was re-founded in 1074 as a cell of St. Nicholas, Angers, after Ivo de Tailbois, Norman lord of Spalding, had terrorised the largely Saxon monks into returning to Crowland in 1071. It was later re-founded as an independent priory. R. Midmer, *English Medieval Monasteries, 1066-1540* (Athens, Georgia, 1979), pp.290-1; D. Knowles, *Religious Houses of Medieval England* (London, 1940), p.77; *Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1908), p.193. However, Owen disagrees, doubting the 1052 foundation date. Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.47, 152.

⁸⁷ Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.51, 57. Croyland Abbey and Spalding Priory were perhaps the best known monastic exponents of fen drainage, but others, such as the Gilbertine foundations at Haverholme and Alvingham, also undertook such work. Hallam, 'Elloe', *passim*; Golding, *Gilbertines*, pp.202-4.

⁸⁸ Owen, *Church and Society*, p.64. Since the Lincolnshire houses represented numerous different orders, this meant a large degree of rivalry, particularly when attempting to attract donations. Even houses from the same order were not necessarily friendly, as is evident from the numerous disputes between the monks of Croyland and their Benedictine neighbours at Spalding and Peterborough. Owen, *Church and Society*, p.69; Hallam, 'Elloe', p.31; Darby, *Medieval Fenland*, pp.86-92; *Ingulph*, pp.275,

and close to their house, making them important forces in specifically local administration and politics, and in the local economy,⁸⁹ while many houses played other key roles in local life, such as maintaining roads or bridges, or providing hospitals.⁹⁰ Such a large number of houses also had a great effect on the overall structure of landed power in the county, since large areas might thus experience little influence from secular lords, particularly the greater magnates. With the everlasting nature of ecclesiastical lordship, this situation could remain unchanged for many years, only ending with the Reformation.⁹¹ Economically, the monasteries also had a huge impact, often being at the centre of the economy of their immediate hinterlands and beyond. They were landlords, employers and producers, as well as one of the most significant markets for local produce. However, as with the great Yorkshire houses, and the rest of Lincolnshire's medieval economy, the key to monastic wealth was the wool trade. The great sheep-rearing areas of Lincolnshire, particularly the Wolds, the Marsh, the Kesteven hills, and the edges of the newly-drained Fens, were the regions where the concentration of monastic foundations was greatest. Most of the larger houses - Kirkstead, Revesby, Croyland, Louth Park, Vaudey, Sempringham - had huge flocks, selling their wool to both domestic and foreign markets,⁹² and the monastic shepherds even led the way in certain aspects of the industry.⁹³ As well as bringing great wealth to the monasteries, such activity also brought significant benefits to the wider local economy. For instance, the great wool fair held at Boston, undoubtedly boosted by sales from the large monastic flocks, was integral to the economy of both the town and the wider area.⁹⁴

As well as the monasteries, all the main orders of friars had houses in Lincolnshire. The Franciscans had become established in Stamford and Lincoln by 1230, followed closely by the Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians, and other houses were founded in Boston and Grimsby. There were also short-lived foundations by other

288ff, 320. Marsden, *Lincolnshire*, p.180. Yet co-operation still occurred: for instance, Croyland and Spalding joined together to repair local roads and bridges. F.M. Page, *The Estates of Crowland Abbey* (Cambridge, 1934), p.28.

⁸⁹ 92% of Spalding Priory's lands were in the Parts of Holland. Platts, *Lincolnshire*, p.38. Croyland Abbey was less typical, holding lands in at least five counties. Page, *Estates*, ch.2.

⁹⁰ Owen, *Church and Society*, p.51. For example, the Gilbertine priory at Holland Bridge was founded specifically to maintain the causeway between Holland and Kesteven, while Haverholme Priory was responsible for providing a ferry. Golding, *Gilbertines*, pp.243-4; see also above, n.88.

⁹¹ Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire*, esp. chs.2-4.

⁹² Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.66-8.

⁹³ Carus-Wilson notes the breeding programmes undertaken, particularly at the great Fenland houses. Carus-Wilson, 'Ports of the Wash', pp.185-6.

⁹⁴ Rigby, 'Sore Decay', pp.48-9; Platts, *Land and People*, pp.143-4.

orders, but these had all been abandoned by the early fourteenth century. These mendicant orders were not always popular, particularly the Stamford Dominicans,⁹⁵ but they played a vital role, adding a more colourful and personal touch to the religious life of the county. The Templars and the Hospitallers also had houses in Lincolnshire, the Templars having a number of sites, the most important being at Eagle and Temple Bruer, both in Kesteven.⁹⁶ On their suppression in the early fourteenth century, their property passed to the Hospitallers, who added these to their two original foundations at Skirbeck and Maltby.

Even from this brief survey of its medieval history, it is clear that Lincolnshire, during the closing decades of the Middle Ages, was a county of fascinating variations, a region of great contrasts whose geography, topography and history had combined to produce a diverse and possibly unique society within England. It undoubtedly contained a broad range of influences: the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes and the Normans all left their mark, physically, socially and linguistically. The isolation of the county, away from the centre of power but not too far away, with few large towns or cities and almost surrounded by water, had, certainly since the disappearance of the Danish threat, made Lincolnshire an easily forgettable region politically. Yet its wealth, derived primarily from the wool trade, gave it a degree of economic importance disproportionate to its inhabitants' limited political influence or involvement. While the wealth generated within the population as a whole helped to create a society largely incompatible with, and even resistant to, strong feudal or bastard feudal control by the great magnates, it also helped perpetuate the conditions which allowed this society to flourish. For ambitious noblemen looking to establish themselves as regional powers, the south and the Midlands, close to the centre of royal authority, or the border areas of the North or the Welsh marches provided far greater opportunities. With the possible exception of the Duchy of Lancaster, and royal taxation demands, it also meant that, by the later Middle Ages, a significant proportion of the wealth derived from the county's landed prosperity actually remained within the county itself, rather than being dispersed around the country funding noble retinues or military expeditions. Such conditions allowed various members of the local population to indulge in the lavish endowments of their local churches and religious

⁹⁵ Owen, *Church and Society*, p.91.

⁹⁶ N.H. Bennett, 'Religious Houses', in Bennett & Bennett, *Atlas*, p.48; D.R. Mills, *The Knights Templar in Kesteven*, North Kesteven District Council Pamphlet (n.p., n.d.).

houses which have had such a long-lasting effect on the county's skyline. However, the overriding question which remains to be addressed is that of the position of the county gentry within this society. Did this geographical isolation and comparative wealth have an effect on the composition and role of the Lincolnshire gentry? How did they exploit the opportunities such a state of affairs gave them, and what were their relations with their social superiors as a result? Or did they too suffer from the weaker hierarchical ties which seem to have existed? And most importantly, when the country exploded into warfare after 1455, how did the gentry of Lincolnshire respond?

Chapter 2

Structure and Composition

Before examining the effects of the Wars of the Roses upon gentry society in Lincolnshire, and the role these people played in the conflict, it is first essential to establish exactly who we are talking about. The aim of this chapter is to provide an insight into the structure and composition of Lincolnshire's landed classes during the decades immediately preceding the outbreak of the Wars. It does not attempt to create a portrait of that society at any particular time; any such attempt would doubtless leave so many obvious or potential gaps as to make the exercise relatively pointless, and might also detract from the very fluid and ever-changing nature of this society. Given the large size and population of Lincolnshire, as well as the problem of precisely defining the people concerned, such a picture would also be extremely unwieldy, and rather subjective.¹ It would therefore seem far more productive to adopt a more general, analytical approach towards the Lincolnshire gentry, building up an impression of the class as a whole from a broad range of angles. It will, by necessity, concentrate largely on the upper ranks of the gentry, the knights, greater esquires and more prominent gentlemen, the men who were the greatest landholders or most active in local affairs, and who consequently made the greatest mark on local society. However, it remains to be seen how representative they were of the county gentry as a whole.

The most important single record of the landholding elite of fifteenth-century Lincolnshire, as with a number of Midland counties, is undoubtedly the return for the graduated income tax of 1436.² Fortunately, unlike the equivalent documents for many

¹ Carpenter and Payling have both employed this method to varying extents, drawing a series of such pictures. Payling's concentration upon a small section of the Nottinghamshire gentry makes this method far more relevant, while Carpenter makes it clear that these are only part of a much larger whole. Both, however, make numerous qualifications to these analyses. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, ch.3 & Appendix; Payling, *Political Society*, ch.1.

² E179/136/198. An amended transcript appears below as Appendix 3:a. Further names are recorded on a supplementary roll, E179/240/269, including men such as Godfrey Hilton and Ralph Rochford. See below, pp.47-8 & n.9. However, most of these do not record the taxable incomes, and are only occasionally used in the following analysis. For a detailed study of this subsidy, its context and background, see Gray, 'Incomes from Land', pp.607-39.

other counties, where the information is generally more limited,³ the Lincolnshire return is extremely detailed and full, listing name, place of residence or social status,⁴ counties where other lands were held, the assessed taxable income, and the amount of subsidy payable. Unfortunately, as Carpenter has noted for the Warwickshire return, it seems that there was little interest in recording the ranks of anyone below that of esquire, nor should we place too much confidence in the ranks actually given.⁵ For instance, many men of knightly or esquire status were not accorded that title on the return, perhaps the most notable in Lincolnshire being Sir John Busshy of Hougham, who was given no title whatsoever. Nor can we assume that everyone on the return was necessarily a member of the true 'gentry'. Those people with no title on the return, apart from those esquires and knights missed by the commissioners, would be a mixture of gentlemen, yeomen, merchants and others of even lesser rank. The large number of people from Boston suggests that many of them were merchants or tradesmen, and would therefore not, on the whole, have been considered as equals by the rest of the gentry. However, their appearance on the return suggests that they did hold some land, and thus must be considered as members of landed society, if only at its lower limits.

Also, we must not see the return as a fully comprehensive list of the entire Lincolnshire gentry in this year; although relatively full, it is far from complete. Since many gentry landholders, particularly the greater ones, had estates in other counties, it is highly likely that some men who regarded themselves as members of Lincolnshire gentry society were actually assessed elsewhere. For instance, Sir Mancer Marmyon of Ripplingale was taxed in Leicestershire, where he held lands by right of his wife, Elizabeth Wolf,⁶ and since many Lindsey families had connections with Yorkshire,⁷ particularly the East Riding, other men might have been assessed there.⁸ Gray notes that Sir Godfrey Hilton and Sir Ralph Rochford were assessed individually before the Treasurer and Chancellor, the same method used for the nobility, rather than by the local commissioners.⁹ Rochford had been serving in France, as captain of Hammes castle,

³ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.38; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.50; Payling, *Political Society*, ch.1; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.3-4.

⁴ Only very rarely does it give both; presumably the compiler decided that the more prominent individuals needed no further details. A number of men with ecclesiastical titles were listed, as were lands held by feoffees or gilds.

⁵ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.51.

⁶ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.239. See also below, p.68.

⁷ See below, p.70.

⁸ Unfortunately, the Yorkshire return does not survive.

⁹ Gray, 'Incomes from land', p.613, n.1. These assessments appear on the supplementary roll,

while Hilton spent a lot of his time in Hampshire,¹⁰ and held a number of royal posts and military offices. Presumably, it was easier for them to be assessed in London rather than Lincolnshire, but they should still be considered as Lincolnshire men, as should Sir John Graa, the heir to the Multon estates, whose separate assessment probably stemmed from his financial difficulties following the death of his wife and his disputes with Lord Cromwell.¹¹ However, Ralph Babthorpe, the King's Sewer who was also listed as a Lincolnshire man on the supplementary roll, was actually a Yorkshireman assessed on a Lincolnshire income of £33, largely a product of his royal offices.¹²

The Lincolnshire return itself contains a total of 384 entries,¹³ with a further 26 on the supplementary roll. If we exclude obvious non-gentry entries such as ecclesiastics and gild trustees, this still leaves around 380 individuals.¹⁴ Obviously these do not represent 380 different families, nor were they necessarily all members of the established gentry. However, it is still a considerable body of people. According to Payling, Lincolnshire was the second wealthiest county in 1436 of those for which figures survive, with a total taxable wealth of £6226, second only to Essex.¹⁵ It also had the greatest number of individuals eligible for taxation, marginally ahead of Essex, and more than twice as many as counties such as Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire.¹⁶ However, this wealth was far more evenly spread throughout the population than occurred elsewhere. Payling's figures tell part of the story. Whereas, on average, over 30% of a county's assessed wealth was held by those with an annual income of greater than £100, in Lincolnshire this figure was less than 20%, with a much smaller percentage of the whole population falling into this category.¹⁷ This has also been picked up by Carpenter. However, she states that incomes in Lincolnshire were lower since it was a 'poor county'.¹⁸ As noted earlier, Lincolnshire was by no means a poor county.¹⁹ The large

E179/240/269.

¹⁰ He became embroiled in numerous disputes in Hampshire concerning his wife's dower estates. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.377-9; below, Appendix 6.

¹¹ For details of Graa's misfortunes, see S.J. Payling, 'A Disputed Mortgage: Ralph, Lord Cromwell, Sir John Graa and the Manor of Multon Hall', in R.E. Archer & S. Walker (eds.), *Rulers and Ruled in Later Medieval England* (London, 1995), pp.117-36; see also below, Appendix 6.

¹² *CPR 1436-41*, pp.63, 226; Gray, 'Incomes from land', p.613, n.1. The other Lincolnshire entries on the supplementary roll give no figures.

¹³ There are the equivalent of 384 separate entries. However, see also the notes to Appendix 3.

¹⁴ Abbots, priors and gild trustees are obvious, but given the inconsistent recording of rank, it is unlikely that the small number of men noted as chaplains or clerks represent the full picture.

¹⁵ Payling, *Political Society*, p.17. The figures refer only to the Lincolnshire return, not the supplementary.

¹⁶ Payling cites 370 entries, compared to Essex's 356. *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ M.C. Carpenter, 'Political Society in Warwickshire c.1401-72', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge,

number of gentry families, even when compared to its size, would tend to spread the land more widely and thinly, hence reducing the number of extremely wealthy families. However, as Eric Acheson has pointed out, the figures recorded on the return are not necessarily accurate, and since it was in the interests of the individuals to be assessed on as low an income as possible, they perhaps ought to be taken as minimum figures rather than the absolute truth.²⁰ Nevertheless, the same provisos would apply across the country, so comparisons remain valid.

Eleven Lincolnshire residents enjoyed an annual income of more than £100 in 1436.²¹ Of these, eight were knights or heads of potentially knightly families (Sir John Busshy, Sir Thomas Cumberworth, Sir Robert Roos, Walter Tailboys, Sir William Tirwhit, Sir John Willoughby, Sir Ralph Rochford and Sir Godfrey Hilton), while the other three, Hamo Sutton, Philip Tylney and John Haytfeld, were esquires. Two men, Hamo Sutton and Philip Tylney, were from merchant families; Sir Godfrey Hilton, Sir John Willoughby and possibly Sir Robert Roos were members of junior branches of noble families,²² and only one had an immediate family connection with the legal profession, William Tirwhit, son of Sir Robert Tirwhit, JKB.²³ Yet, interestingly, this figure not only represents an extremely small proportion of the local gentry population, but also the income figures are relatively small. The richest Lincolnshire resident by far was Sir Ralph Rochford, whose income of £394 dwarfed the next largest, Philip Tylney's £198.²⁴ Rochford's income was undoubtedly swollen by Crown annuities and grants, but even the Tylney family's entire assessment of £274 was still considerably less than that of

1976), p.32, n.4.

¹⁹ See above, pp.37-9.

²⁰ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.42.

²¹ Nine men on the main return, and Sir Godfrey Hilton (assessed at 200m) and Sir Ralph Rochford (£394) on the supplementary roll.

²² Hilton was a younger son of a junior branch of the Hiltons of Hilton in Holderness, while Roos was possibly a distant relative of the baronial Roos family. See Appendix 6. The identity of John Willoughby is uncertain. The fourth son of Robert, 4th Lord Willoughby, is most likely, although he may have been dead by 1436. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, pp.77-8. There were at least two other Johns alive at this time, the son and grandson of Sir Thomas Willoughby, the fourth lord's third son. However, the elder John had already succeeded to the barony of Latimer, and was taxed on an income of £175. Gray, 'Incomes from land', p.618; *C.P.*, vii, pp.477-8. The younger John was probably still a minor in 1436, and he is also unlikely to have held such large estates during his father's lifetime. Another branch of the family was resident at Rande and West Ashby, but was of far lesser status.

²³ Other families also had more distant associations, such as the Skipwiths. See also below, pp.64-5.

²⁴ However, Philip did not hold the entire family estate. Other lands were held by the feoffees of Grace, Philip's grandmother, and by two women called Margaret. See below, Appendix 3:a. One must have been Philip's mother, while the other was probably his great-aunt, the wife of Sir Frederick, elder brother of Philip's grandfather, Sir Philip. These estates were presumably a mixture of dowers and the personal inheritances of the women themselves.

Lord Welles, by far the poorest of the four resident noblemen. Also, the incomes are not especially high when compared with those of other counties. Only Rochford had an income of over £200, a figure equalled or exceeded by six Essex landowners, three Derbyshire residents, and one each from Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Warwickshire and Cambridgeshire, of the counties analysed by Gray.²⁵ Given the similarities of the wealth and population of Lincolnshire and Essex, this difference at the very top is perhaps surprising.

There were, however, far more Lincolnshire residents in the £40-£99 income range, 33 in total,²⁶ compared with only 22 in Essex, and even fewer elsewhere.²⁷ These included eight knights or potential knights,²⁸ fifteen esquires, five widows (four of whom were from knightly families)²⁹ and five others. Of those below esquire rank, only Richard Fryth might possibly appear out of place. John Hesyll was a servant of Lord Scrope of Masham,³⁰ Richard Benyngton may have been a merchant,³¹ John Langholme, almost certainly a lawyer, was a notable Duchy of Lancaster official with links with numerous noblemen,³² while Robert Deyncourt was probably a relative of the baronial Deincourt family.³³ The inclusion of such families as the Skipwiths and the Dymokes among this group was more accidental than representative of their true wealth. The Skipwith heir, William, was still a minor, the main line of the family being represented only by the dower lands of Alice, William's grandmother, while, the Dymoke lands were split between the current head of the family, Sir Philip, and his widowed mother, Elizabeth.

²⁵ Figures from Gray, 'Incomes from land', pp.631-9.

²⁶ 32 on the Lincolnshire return, and Sir John Graa on the supplementary roll.

²⁷ However, the proportion of the total taxable population remained relatively consistent. These 33 (discounting Hilton) held almost 25% of the total taxable wealth, whereas Payling's average from the extant returns was 24%. Payling, *Political Society*, p.17.

²⁸ Sir Nicholas Bowet, Sir Philip Dymoke, Sir Geoffrey Paynell, Sir John Pygot, Sir John Graa, John Copuldyke, Richard Hansard and Roger Pedwardine.

²⁹ Margaret, widow of Sir William Cromwell; Margaret, widow of Sir Frederick Tylney; Alice, widow of John Skipwith; Elizabeth, widow of Sir Thomas Dymoke; and Alice Gybthorpe, probably the mother of Simon Gybthorpe. Since Alice kept such a large proportion of the family estates, she may have been an heiress, or the lands may have been settled in jointure.

³⁰ Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.72.

³¹ There is little information about him beyond his considerable number of royal commissions, although he was only ever described as an esquire on the writ of *diem clausit extremum* issued after his death. *CFR 1461-71*, p.4. No title is recorded on the record of his admittance to the Gild of Corpus Christi, Boston, in 1425. British Library, MS Harley 4795, fols.34-5. For details of this Gild, see below, p.52 & n.40.

³² Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.76; *W.B.*, p.525; *CPR 1452-61*, pp.200, 341; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.576.

³³ The main Deincourt line died out in 1427. One of the co-heiresses married Lord Cromwell. *C.P.*, iv, pp.118-30.

Both families were of far greater importance locally than their recorded incomes would suggest.³⁴

Nevertheless, despite the apparent anomalies, this still leaves the vast majority of people assessed, 344 of the 388 individuals,³⁵ with annual incomes of less than £40, almost 90% of the total. Although undoubtedly incomplete, this picture is probably reasonably accurate, suggesting an extremely bottom-heavy structure to local landed society. It also had important considerations for the structure of local politics and landed influence, since there seems to have been few singularly important individuals or families, the very people who would usually emerge as the leaders of local affairs.³⁶ The income figures for the local magnates suggest that they were in a similar position, with only Lord Cromwell, largely absent at court and with only a partial interest in Lincolnshire, having a particularly significant landed income.³⁷ These initial figures would tend to suggest that while the Lincolnshire landholders as a whole were generally quite wealthy, this wealth was spread very thinly, creating a far more balanced landed society than may have been the case elsewhere.

In order to confirm these preliminary impressions, a wider analysis is necessary, and to maximise the available evidence, it may be more productive to talk of families rather than individuals. The heads of around thirty Lincolnshire families assumed knighthood at some point during the Lancastrian period, and over a hundred families were headed by men accorded the title of esquire.³⁸ Relatively few men were consistently described as gentlemen, mainly because of the novelty and imprecision of the term at this early stage. Of course, the dividing line between these groups in a wider context is also extremely blurred, and the sources do not record titles consistently or indeed regularly. For instance, the 1436 subsidy return does not use the title of 'gentleman' at all, yet it was widely used in the list of men required to swear the oath not to maintain

³⁴ See Appendix 6.

³⁵ The 384 on the Lincolnshire roll, plus Rochford, Hilton, Babthorpe and Graa, the only supplementary entries whose incomes are recorded.

³⁶ See also below, pp.104ff.

³⁷ See Appendix 3:b.

³⁸ As noted above, p.19, the upper levels of gentry society rarely felt constrained by county boundaries, but for the purposes of this analysis the 'Lincolnshire' gentry includes those families whose principal residence was in Lincolnshire. Even this requires a degree of subjectivity. For instance, it does not include Sir Hugh Midelton, who was almost certainly a Yorkshire native, and an East Riding JP. He never held any Lincolnshire offices, but he did take the oath against peacebreakers with the rest of the Lincolnshire gentry in 1434, and may have had a residence in Lincolnshire, possibly in or around Barton upon Humber. *CPR 1429-36*, p.382.

peacebreakers in 1434.³⁹ There was also often a difference between titles accorded on official royal commissions or grants, and those appearing in private deeds or documents, such as the register of the Gild of Corpus Christi in Boston,⁴⁰ which would record the title the individual chose to give, not necessarily the one by which he was generally known.⁴¹ Divisions of the gentry into different groups may be rather arbitrary and subjective, and will require qualification, but hopefully will help provide a worthwhile means of comparison.

At the upper end of Lincolnshire society, there appears to have been a general move away from knighthood during the Lancastrian period. Of the 31 knightly or potentially knightly families resident primarily in Lincolnshire,⁴² few could boast a continued tradition of knighthood throughout the entire century, and for many, for much of Henry VI's reign, the head of the family contented himself with the rank of esquire. For example, the Tailboys family, one of the most influential families in the county, was headed by esquires from the death of Sir Walter in 1417, until the time of Sir Robert (d.1498).⁴³ The reasons behind this decline are many, while the government's attempts to arrest this trend, particularly with distraints, had little success.⁴⁴ Despite the general wealth of the county, the Lincolnshire evidence suggests that reduced finances may have been a major factor. A number of the families whose leaders eschewed knighthood had incomes which were extremely low given their family's position. Gerard Sothill was assessed at only £20 in 1436;⁴⁵ John Hauley was assessed at only 40 marks, the family patrimony having been depleted by a profusion of younger sons; and although Sir Nicholas Bowet was assessed at exactly £40, the notional lower limit for knighthood, his family all but disappeared after his death.⁴⁶ Also, a number of the county's knightly

³⁹ *CPR 1429-36*, pp.381-2.

⁴⁰ British Library, MS Harley 4795. For a discussion of the Gild and its role, see Thompson, *Boston*, pp.115-34.

⁴¹ Membership was a significant status symbol within Holland society, and its members included not only local notables, but also monarchs, members of the royal family, the greater aristocracy and many foreign merchants.

⁴² These families are listed in Appendix 4, but should not necessarily be seen as any county 'elite'. There may also be a strong case for including the Tylneys of Boston in this group, but see below, p.53 & n.51.

⁴³ Sir Robert's father, William, was apparently knighted by Henry VI after the second Battle of St Albans in 1461, but he soon fled to Scotland. See also below, ch.4, and Appendix 6.

⁴⁴ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity* pp.39-41; Payling, *Political Society*, pp.74-7; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, pp.31-3; Powicke, *Military Obligation*, esp. pp.170ff; H. Leonard, 'Knights and Knighthood in Tudor England', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (London, 1970).

⁴⁵ His younger brother, John Sothill of West Rasen, was assessed at 40 marks, but most of this must have been from his wife's inheritance. See below, Appendix 6.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 6.

families died out or simply disappeared from the records during this period, while others, such as the Darbys, Swynfords and Armyns, almost vanish into obscurity.⁴⁷ Of these 31 knightly families, the assessed incomes of members of 25 are known,⁴⁸ and these provide an interesting analysis. Overall, they have an average income of almost £87. If we exclude the figures for the Spayn, Skipwith and Cromwell families, who were represented on the tax return by widows, the remaining 22 have an average income of £93.⁴⁹ This figure is perhaps misleading, boosted by large single entries such as those for the Roos, Tailboys and Rochford families, and only 9 of the 25 have incomes over this £93 average. Even so, it is still rather less than the same average for neighbouring Leicestershire, where the figure was roughly £100.⁵⁰

The esquire class provides a similar story, with a wide variation in incomes. With over a hundred distinct esquire families in Lincolnshire during the Lancastrian period, this title was clearly shared by men from very different economic leagues. Some esquires had incomes greater than many knights: the Littelbury, Meres, Haytfeld and Themylby families all had incomes which easily qualified them for knighthood, although there is no evidence that any of them ever assumed the title. The Tylney family of Boston was one of the richest in the county, but there is no direct evidence that any of their heads ever assumed knighthood in the fifteenth century, although they seem to have done so previously.⁵¹ Hamo Sutton, the prominent Lincoln merchant and Calais Stapler, was

⁴⁷ The Darby (or Derby) family's knightly status is extremely dubious, but they certainly survived. Their appearances in the Boston Corpus Christi register are mainly from the fourteenth century, except an entry for 'Thomas Derby of Benington, gent.', admitted in 1536. British Library, MS Harley 4795, fols.10, 14-16, 18, 64; Thompson, *Boston*, pp.544, 586; A.R. Maddison, 'Notes on Lincolnshire Families', *L.N.Q.*, ix (1906-7), pp.35-41; A.R. Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills, 1500-1600* (Lincoln, 1888), p.xxviii. The Swynfords were a prominent fourteenth-century family, but left little mark in the succeeding century. See Appendix 6. The Armyns of Osgodby also failed to provide any local officers during the whole Lancastrian period, and are almost totally absent from the records, despite retaining their knightly status for much of the period. Sir William Ardyn's election to the Parliament of October 1385 seems to have been the family's last major local office, although two younger sons did attest parliamentary elections in 1414 and 1432. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.44. However, the family did return to prominence during the sixteenth century. Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire*, pp.108, 181.

⁴⁸ All for 1436, mainly from the Lincolnshire return, but elsewhere for Rochford, Hilton, Graa (supplementary roll) and Marmyon (Leicestershire). None of the surviving inquisitions *post mortem* for the period are sufficiently detailed for use here.

⁴⁹ If we also discount the entry for the Darby family (see above, p.53, n.47), this figure rises to £97. Speculation about the overall wealth of those families represented by women is relatively pointless, since some received only the traditional widow's dower, while others held jointures, or were heiresses in their own right.

⁵⁰ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.40.

⁵¹ Sir Philip Tylney (d.1394) certainly was knighted, and Thompson's pedigree accords knighthood to all his successors; Thompson, *Boston*, pp.373-5. However, there is no clear evidence to back this assertion. The Boston Corpus Christi Register records numerous Tylneys, but none are styled as knights except Sir Philip (admitted in 1385) and a later Sir Philip (admitted in 1507). British Library, MS Harley 4795, fols.22, 55. A later member of the family, Agnes, became the second wife of Thomas

recognised as an esquire, and his income of £105 in 1436 more than justified this honour.⁵² At the other end of the scale, some men had very low incomes, and their qualification for inclusion among the true squirearchy is perhaps dubious.⁵³ 36 of the 78 families for which information is known had incomes below the £20 level widely regarded as the lower limit for an esquire; and seven had incomes of only 100s, the lowest income on which the tax was levied. Of course, there are many explanations for this apparent poverty. Some families were represented only by widows, and a number were junior branches of more illustrious families - two junior lines of the Hauley family and two Tailboys branches, among others, appear on the 1436 return. These families probably owed their titles more to their eminent origins than the standing of their own particular line.⁵⁴ We must also remember the potential inaccuracies of the information. Since the incomes here are relatively small, a difference of a few pounds might have a considerable effect on the way a particular family is viewed.

Taking the group as a whole, the average income for a Lincolnshire esquire was roughly £30, a figure in the middle of the £20-£40 income range associated with the esquire class. But again this is perhaps rather over-simplified. The huge range of incomes across the group makes such a figure almost meaningless, and although the greater number of individual families lessens the impact, the extremely high income of families such as the Tylneys must again distort the result. Balancing this against the fact that all these figures may only represent a minimum, it would seem that, for this group at least, no sweeping conclusions can be fully justified. Impressions from the third group of families, those described exclusively as 'gentlemen', bear this out. At least sixty families could possibly be said to have been headed by gentlemen during the Lancastrian period, but the novelty of the term, and its often transitory nature, makes its application to entire families difficult. Sons sometimes became esquires, or both titles were used in different contexts, while other descendants returned to having no specific title. The average for the 30 families whose incomes can be assessed from the 1436 return was around £13, but

Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and was the grandmother of Lord Howard of Effingham, admiral of the fleet which defeated the Spanish Armada. *C.P.*, ix, pp.612-15.

⁵² See also below, p.64.

⁵³ For example, Robert Wytham of Grantham, described as 'esquire' in most sources, is almost certainly the man described as a 'baker' in another. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.79. KB9/65A/15, KB9/65A/19. Many men otherwise styled 'gentleman' or 'husbandman' are also called 'esquire' in some contexts. The group of esquires here includes every man accorded the title unless there is solid evidence for doubting the source's validity.

⁵⁴ This situation could, of course, have the opposite result. Among the richest esquire families were junior branches of the Skipwiths and the Dymokes.

only 10 of these families had incomes above this, while seven families were taxed at the 100s threshold. Moreover, many of the men recorded as gentlemen in the 1431 subsidy on knight's fees did not appear on the 1436 tax record, and assuming that many of these must have fallen below the tax threshold, a £13 average for this group as a whole must be far too high.⁵⁵ Again there was a relatively wide range of incomes across the group, but the obscurity of many of these people, and the inconsistency of the title, gives detailed analysis limited relevance.

Perhaps the most obvious impression given by the analysis so far is that any link between income and status was extremely inconsistent, and the vagaries of each suggest that Lincolnshire gentry society was relatively fluid. The richest men were not necessarily the elite, and the social leaders were not necessarily the wealthiest, although, in general, the two correlated. The trappings of gentle society did not guarantee a position at the head of that society, and the available pool was extremely large.⁵⁶ Although, not surprisingly, Lincolnshire seems to have conformed to the general progression of wealth and status, there are many exceptions to this trend, and, particularly given the origins of families such as the Tylneys and Suttons, it would seem very much as though the strict hierarchical system identified by Payling in Nottinghamshire had considerably less relevance a few miles across the Trent.

As is clear from this analysis, while division of this large, amorphous body of people into categories is necessary for any statistical study, these divisions are far from clear-cut. The most obvious criterion for this division is that of title, but the financial evidence has shown that this is far from faultless. In a society where rank and title were extremely important, certainly more so than mere wealth,⁵⁷ this division would certainly mean more than most. But the huge variation across the titles, especially that of esquire, does tend to detract from the validity of the analysis. There are certainly arguments in favour of different divisions, yet this breakdown of the gentry population still appears to be the best available, as long as its limitations are acknowledged. Acheson has used a slightly different approach, dividing the Leicestershire gentry into four by splitting the ranks of the esquires into two separate groups.⁵⁸ In some ways this would seem sensible

⁵⁵ *F.A.*, iii, pp.340-66.

⁵⁶ This will become clearer in the context of local office holding. See below, ch.3.

⁵⁷ It is obvious that mere possession of wealth did not guarantee a position in local society. See above, pp.14-15.

⁵⁸ His Appendix I divides the members of the gentry into knights, distrainees, esquires and gentlemen

given the huge income chasm between the men at the two ends of the spectrum.⁵⁹ However, where should the line be drawn? Should economic factors be the only secondary consideration, or land holding, office holding, or something else? Such a division is merely a subjective one, which may well have more importance to the historian than it ever had to contemporaries. Acheson's split appears to be simply financial, but this is rather dangerous, particularly given the suspect nature of the evidence. For instance, a particular knightly family may well have a recorded income so low that they would not otherwise have qualified even as distrainees. Would a poor knight have had more influence and standing in the county than an extremely rich esquire? Probably, but how should we judge?

Acheson's structure also shows how the medieval gentry might, perhaps more appropriately, be divided by historians into two larger groups, with different geographical outlooks and aspirations; one whose interests were confined to a relatively small area, and another with more widespread activities, reflecting their generally more diverse estates and connections. Clearly this would demand a division of the esquire class, into those who saw themselves on a par with the knights, and those whose interests were more akin to their immediate inferiors. However, this again leaves a 'no-man's-land' between the two, of families whose position was greater than the mere local gentleman, but lower than those at the very top. Not all families, and certainly not all individuals, could necessarily be bracketed into one group or the other. For instance, while Hamo Sutton's wealth and career certainly put him on a par with his social superiors, his successors, despite presumably enjoying a similar income, limited their interests largely to Lincoln, putting the family more on a par with the greater city burgesses. It is clear that no arbitrary division of landed society can be totally satisfactory, since we are dealing with numerous, ever-changing parts of one large, interconnected whole, rather than a series of separate groups. All demand a degree of subjective decision-making by historians. Yet, simple division by status, despite the many problems, is perhaps the one which would have been most recognisable to contemporaries.

(as well as a separate category for the 'sub-gentry').

⁵⁹ For instance, the huge difference in 1436 between John Haytfield of Flixborough, assessed at £100, and Andrew Godehand of Walesby, assessed at 100s.

The emerging picture is therefore one of a society consisting of a mass of members of the local gentry, with relatively few of any great wealth, and where the trappings of rank could be enjoyed at a lower economic level than might be the case elsewhere. The 1436 return, along with other sources, also allows an insight into the very basis of the gentry's position in society, their lands themselves, both within Lincolnshire, and elsewhere. Maps 4 and 5 show clearly that, although some areas contained a higher concentration of gentry residences, the knightly and esquire families were spread relatively widely across the county, and there are few signs of any significant geographical groupings.⁶⁰ Other counties have seen a much more patchy distribution of gentry residences. For instance, Acheson has noted that the Leicestershire gentry tended to concentrate in particular areas, mainly river valleys and upland regions.⁶¹ The only relatively empty area of Lincolnshire was the southern part of the south Riding of Lindsey, presumably due to a mixture of topographical factors, the settlement pattern, and possibly also the region's extensive Duchy of Lancaster interests. Meanwhile, the greater families, particularly the knights, seem to have kept a respectable distance from their nearest neighbours, and only a small number lived in or near the same village.⁶²

The estates of the wealthier and more eminent members of the gentry would also be expected to be not only the largest, but also the most geographically diverse. Fortunately, many of the entries on the 1436 return note the existence and location of lands held in other counties by individual tax-payers, and the large number of such entries suggests a reasonably complete picture.⁶³ Not surprisingly, over 300 of the individual entries refer to lands exclusively in Lincolnshire, but 63 mention lands in one or more other counties.⁶⁴ However, 45 of these record lands in only one other county, primarily

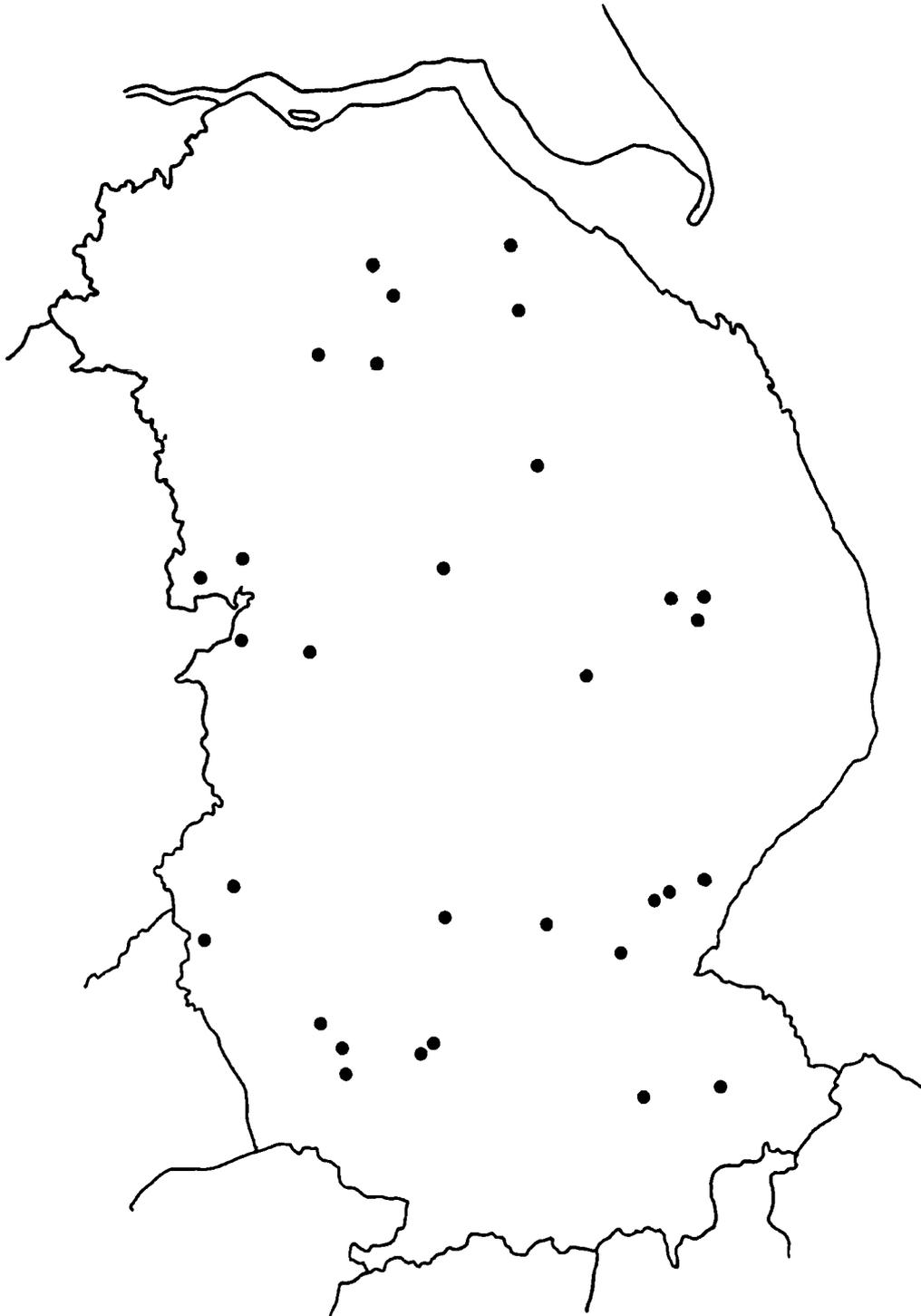
⁶⁰ The maps obviously refer only to each family's main residence.

⁶¹ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.45.

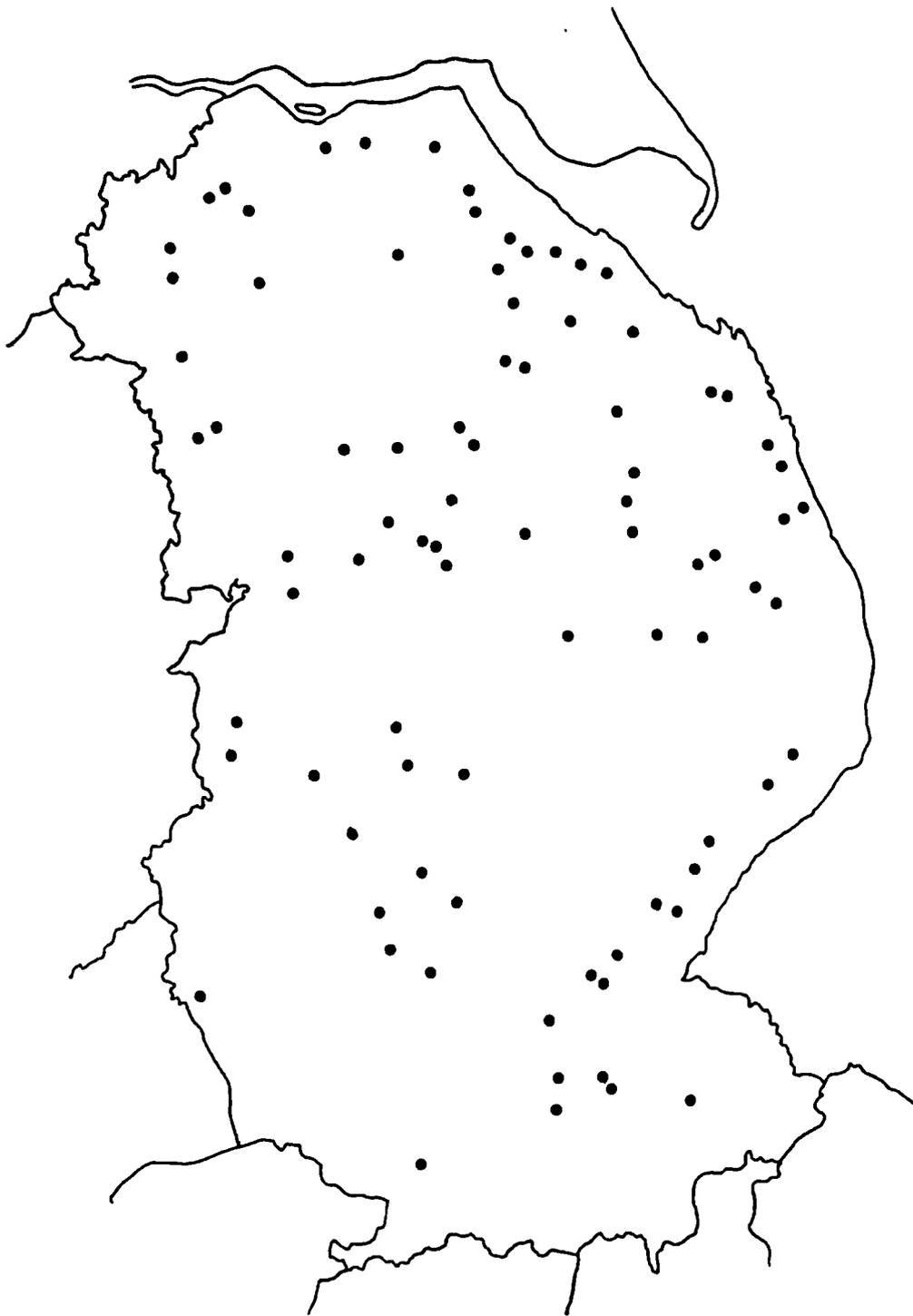
⁶² Most of these instances can be explained by familial relationships. However, changing settlement patterns, name changes and desertion can sometimes make exact identification difficult. For instance, the Aungevyn and Moigne families both claimed to reside at 'Theddlethorpe', but whether this refers to Theddlethorpe All Saints or Theddlethorpe St Helen, both in Calcewath wapentake, is unclear. One family may have lived in each village.

⁶³ Of course, information about distant estates may not have been totally accurate. The use of 'and elsewhere' on the return has been taken to include one other (unknown) county: this was doubtless not always the case, but must suffice for this analysis.

⁶⁴ These figures include the Abbots of Neubo and Thornton, but do not include Elizabeth Etton, whose entry referred to lands exclusively in Yorkshire, or those appearing on the supplementary roll, where these details are not recorded. Elizabeth Etton, specified on the return as the widow of Sir John Etton, cannot have been the wife of Sir John Pygot, as claimed by Rogers. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.43. Pygot had married Elizabeth, daughter and eventual heiress of Sir Thomas Belesby, by 1429 (when she was aged 18), while Sir John Etton, from Gilling, Yorkshire, did not die until 1433. *C.P.*, viii, p.290. Since Etton's wife was called 'Elizabeth Pygot' before their marriage in 1412, she was probably another relative of Sir John Pygot, who returned to Doddington after the end of her childless marriage to Etton.



Map 4. *Distribution of Knightly Families*
Points refer to the principal residences of identifiable knightly families active in Lincolnshire during the Lancastrian period.



Map 5. *Distribution of Esquire Families*

Points refer to the principal residences of identifiable esquire families active in Lincolnshire during the Lancastrian period.

neighbouring ones such as Yorkshire (17) and Nottinghamshire (12), although some certainly had interests further afield.⁶⁵ Many of these landholders also lived near Lincolnshire's boundary with the county concerned, possibly denoting small estates straddling that border (see Map 6).⁶⁶ That only 18 people held lands in two or more other counties is probably consistent with a county gentry of financially unimpressive individuals. Only one, Walter Tailboys, held lands in more than four other counties, seven in total excluding Lincolnshire itself, much of which descended to the family from the Umfravilles.⁶⁷ Nor were the lands of men with larger interests outside Lincolnshire necessarily any further afield. The relatively wealthy Sir John Busshy's lands, in three other counties, lay in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland, none of which was far from the family seat at Hougham, while the Paynell estates also lay in five neighbouring counties. The Devon lands of Tailboys and the Staffordshire estates of Sir Robert Roos were very much the exception.

Whatever their relative wealth and status in Lincolnshire itself, the people with the more wide-ranging interests were predominantly from the current or recently-lapsed knightly families. Presumably this was largely because their higher status had enabled them to secure marriage connections from further afield, connections which their social inferiors had only limited opportunity to achieve.⁶⁸ Also, families such as the Tirwhits, exploiting the wealth and connections of their legal offices, could only buy whatever lands were available, thus producing estates which were not necessarily close together. All five of the families with lands in four or more other counties, and five of the twelve with lands in two or three other counties, were from the group of 31 greater families (see Table 1).⁶⁹ Most esquires were limited to only one other county, while all the estates held by the three esquire families with lands in two other counties were probably in

Another Pygot family was resident at Clothierham, Yorkshire, but Elizabeth's appearance at Doddington suggests that she had Lincolnshire origins. *Test. Ebor.*, iii, pp.156-7. Whatever her relationship, her taxation return must refer to dower lands from the Ettons, and thus cannot be included among the Pygot estates.

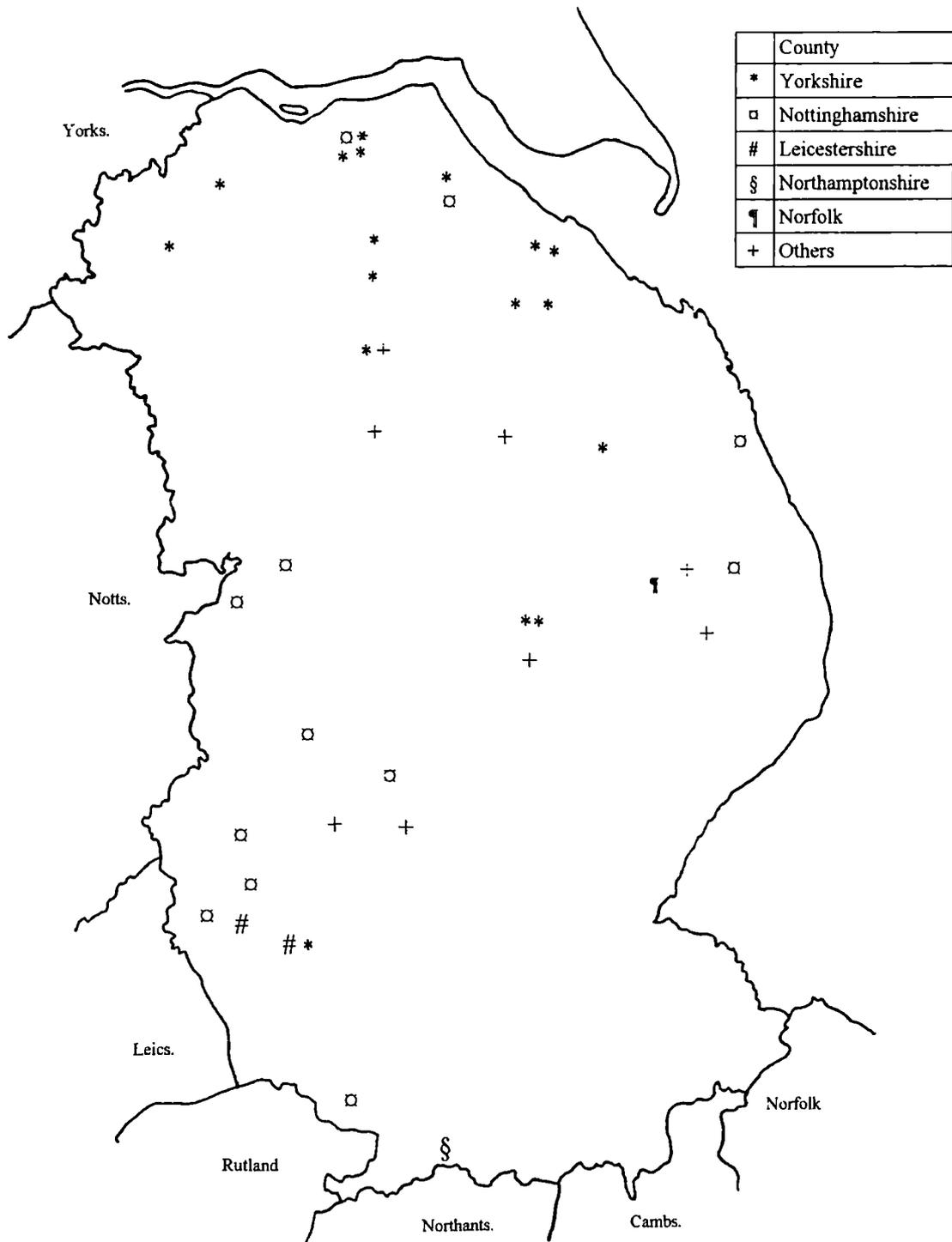
⁶⁵ Richard Fryth of Scremby was assessed on lands in Sussex, while others held lands in counties as widespread as Devon, Durham, Essex and Wiltshire. Presumably these were largely due to the vagaries of inheritance, rather than conscious efforts to secure lands in these regions.

⁶⁶ For example, many of the Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire landholders lived in Kesteven and the West Riding of Lindsey, such as Thomas Belwode of Belton and Nicholas Misterton of Witham on the Hill.

⁶⁷ For details, see Appendix 3:a & Appendix 6.

⁶⁸ The fourteenth-century marriage of Henry Tailboys to the eventual Umfraville heiress perhaps being the most notable example, but also a number of others. For a wider discussion of gentry marriage connections, see below, pp.65ff.

⁶⁹ However, the individuals were not necessarily knights at the time. Compare Table 1 with Appendix 3:a and Appendix 4.



Map 6. *Residences of Individuals Holding Lands in One Other County in 1436*

In cases where no residence is recorded on the return, points refer to the family's principal seat.

Table 1. *Land Distribution by Rank in 1436*

	Knights	Esquires	Gentlemen	Others ¹
<u><i>Lands in one other county</i></u>				
Number ²	4	16	2	18
% of total	10	40	5	45
Average Income (£)	78.3	30.1	30	11.2
<u><i>Lands in two other counties</i></u>				
Number	4 ³	3 ⁴	2	1 ⁵
% of total	40	30	20	10
Average Income (£)	67	68.7	11	20
<u><i>Lands in three other counties</i></u>				
Number	1	0	1	0
% of total	50	-	50	-
Average Income (£)	100	-	41	-
<u><i>Lands in four or more other counties</i></u>				
Number	4 ⁶	1 ⁷	0	0
% of total	80	20	-	-
Average Income (£)	132.4	274	-	-

¹ People with no known or apparent title. Ecclesiastics are not included.

² Figures include those people whose returns merely state 'Lincolnshire and elsewhere'. 'Elsewhere' has been taken throughout to include one extra county.

³ Figure includes a combined entry for Joanna and Richard Hansard.

⁴ Figure includes a combined entry for Isabella and William Themylyby, and Sheffield family.

⁵ Figure includes a combined entry for Joanna and Nicholas Misterton.

⁶ Figure includes a combined entry for Christina and Geoffrey Paynell.

⁷ The combined entry for the Tylney family.

neighbouring shires.⁷⁰ Although this situation is not unexpected, it does raise important questions. Although many of the knightly families raised at least part of their incomes from lands outside Lincolnshire, relatively few of the esquires did, and yet, in many cases, the economic difference between the two groups was not especially large. This suggests that, in Lincolnshire itself, the landed bases of the individual families were often very similar. In essence, the 'greater' county families may have been simply those Lincolnshire residents whose income and lands within the county were supplemented from holdings elsewhere. It also suggests that, in some cases, the knightly families, although possibly richer, may have held less land *actually in Lincolnshire* than their esquire neighbours. Of course, this made little financial difference to the individuals, but since it was the ownership of land rather than the income it generated which defined local influence and power, some of the wealthier members of the local elite may well have wielded little more political influence than their poorer neighbours. This might help explain why families such as the Tylneys, and someone as rich as Ralph Rochford, played little or no part in the local government of their home county.⁷¹ It would also have resulted in fewer opportunities for people to build large local followings - those who may have had the financial resources to do so may not have possessed the landed base within Lincolnshire which such activities would require. This in turn may have contributed to the power vacuum which appears to have existed in Lincolnshire during this period.⁷²

Although the Lincolnshire gentry obviously consisted of a huge body of people, it would seem that, at least at the upper levels,⁷³ there was also a degree of contraction over the first half of the fifteenth century. A number of families seemingly died out or disappeared during this period. The knightly families of Cromwell (1441), Hakebeche (1445), Roos (c.1441), Belesby (1429), Pygot (1451) and Cumberworth (1451) all died out in the male line, joining the large number of prominent fourteenth-century families

⁷⁰ The Themylbys (or Thimblebys) in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, and the Haytfelds in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. The Sheffelds held lands in Yorkshire 'and elsewhere', probably referring either to lands in Nottinghamshire, only a short distance from the Sheffelds' home at West Butterwick, or to minor estates in other counties.

⁷¹ Yet the £169 (of a total income of £274) which the Tylneys derived from Lincolnshire was still extremely significant. See the note to Appendix 3:a. The family's urban roots, and its relative decline, probably also played a part.

⁷² See below, pp.71-3, 75-9 & chs.6-7.

⁷³ It is probable that there was a similar change of personnel at the lower levels, but, with less solid information, such a theory is more difficult to substantiate.

which had done the same - Caythorpe, Lutterell, Toutheby and Auncell for instance,⁷⁴ as well as such great office-holding families as Bozoun and Pouger.⁷⁵ Many other families barely survived, and others were to die out (largely of natural causes rather than as a result of the Wars) during the second half of the century.⁷⁶ However, there was also a large degree of renewal of the elite, with other families taking the place of their predecessors, and most of these rising from the lower ranks.⁷⁷ Relatively few entered from outside the county, with most of those entering Lincolnshire through marriage rather than other means, such as Crown or noble preferment.⁷⁸ For instance, Thomas Blount, brother of Walter Blount, the future Lord Mountjoy, married Agnes, daughter and heir of John Hauley of Girsby,⁷⁹ while Sir John Graa was the son of Thomas Graa, a York merchant, and Maud, daughter and heiress of Sir John Multon of Frampton.⁸⁰ Others had a more traditional rise to the top, promotion through commerce being one such route. The Tylneys of Boston, one of the richest families in the county, had merchant origins, a link they had certainly not yet lost despite being reasonably well-established members of the county gentry. But perhaps the most spectacular example from this period was Hamo Sutton of Burton, near Lincoln. Accorded the title of esquire, Sutton was still very much an active merchant, and his wealth allowed him to expand his landed base. This gave him a place in Lincolnshire politics, a position further enhanced by his extremely prestigious marriage to Margaret Vavasour.⁸¹

Advancement through the law was another popular route to prominence, and two of the county's greatest families were certainly founded on the profits of legal office, the Skipwiths and the Tirwhits.⁸² Although there do not appear to have been any spectacular examples during the middle decades of the fifteenth century, with the possible exception

⁷⁴ The Toutheby name continued during the fifteenth century, but may have been due to a change of name after a descent through the female line. See the speculative article by A.R. Maddison, 'Toutheby *alias* Ryther', *L.N.Q.*, vi (1901), pp.188-91; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.48 (*sub* 'Ryther').

⁷⁵ J.S. Roskell, 'The Parliamentary Representation of Lincolnshire during the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V', *Nott. Med. Stud.*, iii (1959), pp.53-77, p.64. However, the heirs of these extinct families often retained their influence, such as the Sothills, heirs to the Pouger family. See Appendix 6.

⁷⁶ See below, pp.182-3.

⁷⁷ Immigration from other counties was more prevalent in the fourteenth century, when families such as the Skipwiths, Dymokes and Sothills all entered Lincolnshire society. Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, esp. pp.xvii-xlvi.

⁷⁸ Of course, some marriages may have been contracted with outside 'help', a method favoured by the Yorkists. See below, chs.6-7, esp. pp.169-71, 175.

⁷⁹ Blount later became a key member of Lincolnshire's Yorkist administration, although he entered county society well before 1461. See below, chs.6-7.

⁸⁰ Payling, 'Disputed Mortgage', esp. pp.118-20.

⁸¹ For further details, see Appendix 6.

⁸² See Appendix 6.

of the Ascoughs,⁸³ it is also quite probable that a number of the men styled as ‘gentleman’ in the records were actually lawyers. Younger sons of the greater families, and even heads of the lesser ones, appear to have been those most attracted by the legal profession, but identification is often difficult. A presumably typical picture of a gentleman-lawyer in the shires can be seen in the career of Richard Duffield of Barton upon Humber. He served as Clerk of the Peace for Lindsey for 38 years, and appeared regularly as a trustee, attorney or witness for numerous clients, ranging from families such as the Hansards and Skipwiths, to yeomen, merchants and craftsmen, and was employed by Walter Tailboys as his attorney during a dispute over his Umfraville inheritance in 1437.⁸⁴ He regularly attended Parliament, sitting for Grimsby on at least 12 occasions between 1413 and 1435, but almost nothing is known about his life beyond the records of his work, except his 1436 tax assessment of £10.⁸⁵ He was not the original founder of his family’s fortunes - his father was almost certainly William Duffield, four times mayor of Grimsby - but he may, like William Ascough and William Skipwith before him, have been the one to establish his family as a landed presence.⁸⁶ Duffield is just one example of the great number of men, working in the shires rather than the central courts, whose labours won their family a small foothold on the ladder of landed society, but little more. The lawyers and justices of the central law courts were the ones who had the greater opportunity to amass the wealth necessary to ensure a far more extensive legacy.⁸⁷

Regardless of the source of this wealth, it was still necessary to use it in the time-honoured process of consolidation and addition to the family estates, and for those without such profits, the most obvious method of achieving this was through marriage.

⁸³ The Ascoughs also benefited from advantageous marriages. See below, p.68. More prominent examples occur later in the century; e.g. FitzWilliam and Hussey. J.S. Roskell, *The Commons and their Speakers in English Parliaments, 1376-1523* (Manchester, 1965), pp.300-1; *W.B.*, pp.335, 489. The Husseys were later raised to the peerage. *C.P.*, vii, pp.15-18.

⁸⁴ For further details of Duffield’s career, see *H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.807-8; Rogers, ‘Electors’, iii, p.56.

⁸⁵ See below, Appendix 3:a.

⁸⁶ Richard was not necessarily the head of his family, but no other Duffield appears on the 1436 tax assessment. William Duffield, his fellow burgess in 1425, may have been either his father or, more probably, a brother of the same name. Rogers, ‘Electors’, iii, p.56.

⁸⁷ The profits of office were widely seen as a right, rather than a perk of the job. On his appointment as Justice of Common Pleas, Sir William Ascough even petitioned Henry VI for restitution of the serjeant’s earnings he would lose through his early promotion. Payling, *Political Society*, p.32; S. Lyons, ‘Copies of Three Remarkable Petitions to King Henry the Sixth’, *Archaeologia*, xvi (1812), pp.3-8, p.3.

Analysis of gentry marriages is often a thankless and unrewarding task, the identity of many brides being unknown, and the lack of imagination in female names often making exact identification difficult. However, a selective examination of certain families may prove fruitful. Also, since marriages involving heiresses would be the most important and influential, it is likely that the information in these cases would be fuller.⁸⁸

The marriage of its head or prospective heir was clearly of greatest importance to any gentry family, and a successful marriage, particularly to an heiress, could often be the key to a family's success. Since these matches brought the prospect of often significant increases to their estates, families often ventured well beyond their usual spheres of influence in their search, and even outside their own social bracket. The marriage ties of the heads of the greater Lincolnshire families give a very mixed picture. Of four heads of the strangely inactive Armyn family of Osgodby, three married daughters of knightly fathers, two being from outside Lincolnshire, while the fourth, to the daughter of a local esquire, occurred after the family apparently abandoned its knightly tradition.⁸⁹ Yet none were heiresses, a factor which can have done nothing to help end the Armyns' obscurity. The Dymokes of Scrivelsby, however, fared rather better. Sir Thomas (d.1422) married an heiress; his son, Sir Philip (d.1455), married a member of a powerful northern family, while his son, another Sir Thomas (ex.1470), married a daughter of Lord Welles. The first marriage of Sir Thomas' son, Sir Robert, to the daughter and heiress of a Londoner, presumably a merchant, may have had more to do with financial problems after his father's execution than any lowering of his own sights; however, control over his marriage may have been out of his immediate family's hands.⁹⁰ The Skipwith family also consistently attracted knightly brides, as well as the daughter of William, Lord Willoughby, although none of the fifteenth-century brides were heiresses.

The main lines of relatively few Lincolnshire knightly families clearly ended with heiresses during the later Lancastrian period. Probably the greatest Lincolnshire heiress was Elizabeth Belesby, eventual heiress of both the Belesby and Luttrell families.⁹¹

⁸⁸ For a fuller discussion of the ceremonial, personal and financial aspects of gentry marriages, see Acheson, *Gentry Community*, ch.6; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, ch.3.

⁸⁹ William Armyn (d.1488) does not appear to have become a knight, although his father certainly did.

⁹⁰ Sir Robert married Anne, daughter and heiress of John Sparrow of London. Aged 9 when his father was executed, his marriage was probably controlled by his step-father, Robert Ratcliffe. See also below, p.175. For such an eminent family to marry a merchant's daughter suggests that the Sparrow fortune was a significant prize.

⁹¹ The Luttrells were one of the greatest gentry families of fourteenth-century Lincolnshire, best remembered for the famous Luttrell Psalter, commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell during the early

Elizabeth married three times, her first marriage, to Sir John Pygot, probably predating her brother's death. Pygot was a Lincolnshire man, while Elizabeth's second husband, Sir William Vaux, was from Northamptonshire, a Lancastrian who probably died at the Battle of Northampton.⁹² However, Elizabeth had no children, and both inheritances eventually passed, presumably by different routes, to the Themylby family.⁹³ The Cumberworth heiress, Katherine, had married outside the county, into the Constables of Flamborough,⁹⁴ but she too was not an heiress at the time of her marriage; her first husband died in 1404, while her brother did not die until 1451. The descent of the Roos legacy is unclear,⁹⁵ while the Hauley heiress, Agnes, married men from two relatively new families; firstly Robert, the short-lived heir of Hamo Sutton, and secondly Thomas Blount.⁹⁶ If they had a choice, Lincolnshire families in general were probably eager to secure Lincolnshire matches for their heiresses, certainly as first husbands, but widows seem to have been less restrictive in contracting subsequent marriages.⁹⁷ However, since neither Agnes Hauley nor Elizabeth Belesby had any children with their first husbands, this might give the opposite impression, that Lincolnshire families were content to see their estates pass to owners from outside the county; this was probably not the case.

While marriage opportunities to prominent Lincolnshire heiresses were limited, prospects for securing marriages to heiresses from outside the county, and particularly from the lower ranks of the native gentry, were often a different matter. The accumulation of often far-flung estates through marriage has already been touched upon,⁹⁸ and Lincolnshire families had a degree of success. The marriage of Sir Thomas Dymoke (d.1422) to the daughter and heiress of Sir Nicholas Hebden is a good example, while the continual success of the Tylneys was almost without parallel. Three successive generations of Tylneys married heiresses, one from the immediate vicinity of the family's Holland estates, the others from Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, where the family already

fourteenth century. The family died out in the direct male line in 1419. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.377-9 (sub Hilton); J. Backhouse, *The Luttrell Psalter* (London, 1989); E.G. Millar, *The Luttrell Psalter* (London, 1932).

⁹² *W.B.*, p.904.

⁹³ The Luttrell lands presumably passed to the Hiltons, and thence to the Themylbys. For further details, see below, Appendix 5.

⁹⁴ The Constables did, however, have a long tradition of involvement in Lincolnshire affairs. See below, p.70. Katherine's second husband was Sir John Busshy of Hougham.

⁹⁵ See below, Appendix 6.

⁹⁶ See above, p.64.

⁹⁷ Obviously this was not always the case, Katherine Cumberworth being a clear exception. However, both her marriages occurred long before her brother's death.

⁹⁸ See above, pp.60-3.

had interests.⁹⁹ Marriages outside Lincolnshire also often occurred with families whose estates lay near outlying manors of the family concerned. Where brides were heiresses, or brought significant dowries, these could combine to form larger estates which in turn could form landed bases for future younger sons. Again, the Tylneys are a good example, with a number of younger cadet branches being provided for from outlying manors throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁰⁰ The marriage of the Toutheby heiress to Sir William Ryther may also have been part of an attempt to shore up the family's estates, but the details of this are obscure.¹⁰¹ However, not all marriages to heiresses were as beneficial, and the marriage of Sir John Graa to the eventual heiress of the Yorkshire family of Swillington caused terrible trouble for Graa when his wife died soon afterwards.¹⁰²

Mancer Marmyon's marriage to Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of John Wolf of Frolesworth, Leicestershire, provided a different type of opportunity. Marmyon was Elizabeth's second husband; thus her estates would (and did) pass to her son by her first marriage.¹⁰³ However, Marmyon was entitled to the revenue from those lands for the duration of their marriage, which lasted at least 14 years, and, as Acheson has pointed out, there was every opportunity of a more permanent tenure should his step-son have died young.¹⁰⁴ The marriage of John Tailboys, younger son of Sir Walter Tailboys (d.1417), to the heiress of a Nottinghamshire man, Sir Robert Cuckfield, helped establish John as an independent force in the region, and laid the foundation for John's successors in his estates, the Ascoughs.¹⁰⁵ The Ascoughs clearly show the benefits of marriages within the native gentry. Three of their four known marriages were to heiresses, two being to members of local families: Caythorpe of Caythorpe and Tailboys of Stallingborough. This relatively new family thus created a local landed base for itself, adding these more established estates to those accumulated by purchase by the family's founder, Sir William Ascough, JCP (d.1456). Similarly, the Themylbys' acquisition of the

⁹⁹ Philip (d.1453) married the co-heiress of Sir Edmund de Thorpe of Ashwell Thorpe, Norfolk. Philip's younger brother, William, held lands in North Creek, Norfolk, where their other brother, Richard, was the rector. Thompson, *Boston*, p.373. Philip's grandfather, Sir Philip (d.1394) held various commissions in Norfolk. For the disputed identity of the wife of Sir Philip Tylney see Appendix 6 (*sub* Roos).

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *Boston*, p.373.

¹⁰¹ See above, p.64, n.74.

¹⁰² See above, p.48 & n.11.

¹⁰³ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.239.

¹⁰⁴ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.166.

¹⁰⁵ Payling, *Political Society*, pp.140-1; Rogers, 'Electors', v, pp.54-5. However, John's Lincolnshire seat, Stallingborough, was a Tailboys manor.

Luttrell and Belesby lands vastly increased the estates of, in this case, an already long-established Lincolnshire family.¹⁰⁶

Details of marriages among the esquire families are far sketchier, but what is clear from the available information is that most heiresses involved in these marriages were from other, similar Lincolnshire families, presumably indicative of their less extensive social relationships. The passage of the Billyng and Atwell estates to the Yerburghs, or the Towers lands to the Fulnetbys, were commonplace events among the medieval landed classes, with one family's demise being another's gain.¹⁰⁷ However, the surviving information also suggests that there were numerous marriage connections between these families and the greater ones. This did not only occur when the lesser partner was an heiress; there was no concerted isolation of the greater families from the lesser ones. For instance, the Fulnetbys, a family of only limited importance in county society, could boast marriage links with the Skipwiths, Sothills and Dymokes in the space of four generations.¹⁰⁸ Many others had one or two links with their superiors, although such matches mainly involved daughters or younger sons of the more eminent family concerned. Of course, survival of evidence may overstate their importance, but these links are still significant, and, like the economic evidence, suggest a relatively integrated society rather than a rigidly stratified one.

The other major factor behind gentry marriages, and the one perhaps most relevant to the majority of families, was the forging of alliances and friendships with their contemporaries, be they friends, neighbours, distant relatives or local notables. Such marriages, again particularly involving daughters and younger sons, were usually contracted for the stability or protection they could provide, rather than any great financial or landed opportunities. Indeed, they could often be extremely expensive for the lesser partner, the cost being balanced against the possible benefits,¹⁰⁹ and a father seeking the protection of a powerful lord might pay well to secure such a marriage. The three examples of the heads of Lincolnshire families marrying noble brides were no doubt part of some attempt either to consolidate existing friendships (the Dymoke and Skipwith

¹⁰⁶ *C.P.*, viii, pp.289-90.

¹⁰⁷ E.M. Sympson, 'Yerburgh Family', *L.N.Q.*, xii, (1912-13), pp.174-82, pp.243-51; xiii (1914-15), pp.5-8; Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.62; vi, p.69.

¹⁰⁸ The Fulnabys probably had links with the Nevilles of Westmorland, and certainly with the borough of Grimsby. See below, pp.163-4.

¹⁰⁹ For instance, Sir John Copuldyke's will, drawn up in April 1408, included a bequest of over £300 as marriage portions for three of his daughters. *H.C.*, 1386-1421, ii, pp.649-51. No doubt there were many examples similar to that of the father of Joan Sheffield, wife of Sir Ralph Shirley, who was still paying his daughter's marriage portion when his son-in-law died. Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.164.

marriages to daughters of the local lords) or to gain a powerful ally among the nobility (probably the reason for the marriage of the Rochford heir to the daughter of Lord Scrope of Bolton). These prominent matches were the exception, however, and many, if not most gentry marriages seem to have been reflections of the political affiliations prevailing at the time.

Perhaps the most obvious example in Lincolnshire of a group of families linked by political and marital ties would seem to be the apparent existence of a group involving many of the greater families of Lindsey and the East Riding of Yorkshire.¹¹⁰ Prominent among the Yorkshire connection were the two Constable families, one from Flamborough, the other from Halsham. Both these families doubtless used their local connections to secure their numerous Lincolnshire offices.¹¹¹ Their marriage alliances linked them not only with the Cumberworths, but also the Copuldykes, Hauleys, Skipwiths, and Tirwhits, the heart of the greater gentry of Lindsey. Such links for families as eminent as the Constables are hardly surprising, but the range and number of their Lincolnshire connections is interesting. Other Yorkshire families had associations with the north Lindsey gentry; marriages were contracted with the Everinghams, Hildyards, FitzWilliams and others, as well as families integrating into Lincolnshire such as the Hiltons. But the Constables do appear in Lincolnshire with unusual regularity.¹¹² Contrastingly, there are few similar links with Lindsey's other neighbouring county, Nottinghamshire. Ties of kinship and friendship were rare, and very few men served in the local government of both shires.¹¹³ Such marriages as did exist were generally isolated incidents, with little obvious further connection between the families, and very few occurred after the 1420s.¹¹⁴ Set beside this lack of interaction across the Trent, the strength of the connections across the Humber are clearly highlighted.

¹¹⁰ Many of the Lincolnshire group also appear to have had connections with the Willoughbys. See below, pp.71-3.

¹¹¹ See below, Appendix 1. The Flamborough family also inherited the Cumberworth lands in 1451. See above, p.67; *W.B.*, pp.211-13.

¹¹² For a possible explanation, see below, p.76.

¹¹³ Only the relatively unpopular Lincolnshire shrievalty saw Nottinghamshire appointees: Sir Thomas Chaworth in 1408-9 and 1418-19, Thomas Darcy in 1433-4, and Sir Hugh Willoughby in 1438-9. See below, ch.3, esp. p.95. No Lincolnshire man held local office in Nottinghamshire during the Lancastrian period. Payling, *Political Society*, ch.5

¹¹⁴ The Nottinghamshire elite, extremely active in the pursuit of heiresses, tended to contract marriages with families of similar social status. Payling, *Political Society*, ch.3, esp. pp.79-81. The reduced circumstances of many Lincolnshire families may also have led Nottinghamshire men to look elsewhere.

Perhaps more importantly, this group can also be identified by the large number of marriage connections between the Lincolnshire families themselves. Although the greater families had quite wide marriage links, some appeared more regularly than others: Copuldykes with Hauleys, Hauleys with Skipwiths, Skipwiths with Tirwhits, and so on. It is most likely that many of these marriages were products of existing associations, since, in many cases, links can be seen between the two families long before the known or estimated date of any marriage. For instance, Sir Thomas Hauley was an associate of John Skipwith long before his daughter, Agnes, married Skipwith's younger son, Patrick.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Hauley's relationship with the head of the Copuldyke family, John, predated a similar arrangement between another of his daughters and Copuldyke's son; John Copuldyke himself also took a Hauley widow as his second wife.¹¹⁶ It would seem that the vast majority of these marriages, mainly involving younger children, widows and widowers, were formed with the intention of strengthening ties between these families, rather than any attempt to secure land or win new friends.

This Lindsey group was not the only one that can be identified in Lincolnshire. A similar situation can be seen in Holland, and although in this case links with neighbouring counties were rare, and the families concerned were generally less eminent, the sense of 'community' appears stronger. Within Holland, the Pynchebeks, Welbys, Leakes and others not only formed familial relationships, but also, to an extent, dominated the local administration.¹¹⁷ Kesteven may have contained something similar, but the picture is less clear, while in Lindsey, there may also have been another circle of inter-connected families, concentrated largely in the south and east.

It is the existence of this second group which begins to question this scenario of gentry groupings, since there may have been other forces at work. While it is tempting to see these relationships as signs of smaller gentry 'communities' within the wider county, and possibly reflecting Lincolnshire's internal divisions, it must be noted that the two Lindsey groupings also appear to correspond with the spheres of influence of the two local noblemen, Lord Welles and Lord Willoughby.¹¹⁸ It is unlikely to be purely geographical coincidence that the families who appear within these groups were also prominent among the associates of these particular nobles. Various Willoughby family

¹¹⁵ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.332-4; iv, p.390; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.52.

¹¹⁶ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, p.333; iv, p.389. The two men also served as shire knights together in 1406.

¹¹⁷ For further discussion, see below, p.102, & esp. ch.7.

¹¹⁸ The Holland grouping had no such noble presence, but details for these generally less eminent families are more limited.

documents refer to transactions involving members of this 'North Lindsey' grouping. For instance, documents concerning the marriage of Joan Willoughby to Richard Welles, dating from October 1435, list among the various feoffees, members of the Waterton, Langholme, Cumberworth, Tailboys and Yerburgh families, all members of this circle.¹¹⁹ Some men doubtless had military connections with Robert, 6th Lord Willoughby, a prominent commander during Henry V's French wars,¹²⁰ while the marriage connection between the Willoughbys and the Skipwiths only strengthened these links. Meanwhile, the Welles family seem to have had associations with a slightly different group, the most prominent family being the Dymokes, but the information is less clear.¹²¹ However, while the idea of a Welles-Dymoke axis balanced by one between the Willoughbys and the Skipwiths, and each side's various associates, is an attractive one, such links must not be overstated. Certainly, the groups contained a number of families with noble connections, particularly with the Willoughbys; however, this would be to over-simplify the situation. Willoughby and Welles were not Warwick or Buckingham, and even in their own heartland their influence over their gentry neighbours would have been limited. Also, the Welles and Willoughby families were good friends rather than great rivals,¹²² and many local men had connections with both families.¹²³ Nor did such service prevent connections with others. Richard Waterton of Corringham had close links with the Welles family, but also regularly acted as a feoffee for Cromwell during the 1450s, and assisted Lord Beaumont in 1453.¹²⁴ Certainly many local men had closer links to

¹¹⁹ LAO 2Anc 3/A/19; 2Anc 3/A/20. The documents appear to be Willoughby papers rather than Welles ones, but the feoffees may have been assigned by both parties.

¹²⁰ For example, Sir William Tirwhit, who fought under Willoughby in France from 1415 until c.1422. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.630-1.

¹²¹ Most information about the Welles affinity comes from the 1460s and the events surrounding the Rebellion, although some families, such as the Spensers and the Langholmes (see below, n.123), clearly had long-term connections. Few of the people associated with Richard Welles during the 1460s, after the union of the families, correspond with the close members of the former Willoughby affinity. This suggests that they represented either an earlier Welles affinity, or a new grouping of Richard's creation; the brevity of Richard's career makes the former most likely. *C.P.*, xii (ii), pp.663-6, esp. p.664; see also below, chs.5-6.

¹²² The union of the two houses was clearly anticipated after Joan Willoughby's marriage to Richard Welles, and would have reduced the chances of antagonism between the two families and their associates.

¹²³ For instance, the executors of John, 5th Lord Welles (d.1421) included John Langholme and Thomas Spenser, men with connections across the county. *CPR 1429-36*, p.97. Rogers notes that the Langholmes had links with the Skipwiths, Armyns and Stanlowes, as well as the Aungevyns (clients of the Welles family); Spenser may well have been a local lawyer; for details of his career, see Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.50.

¹²⁴ Leo Welles had married the daughter of Sir Robert Waterton of Methley, god-daughter and distant relative of Richard, head of the Lincolnshire branch. Waterton and Beaumont were granted the keeping of the alien priory of Newstead on Ancholme in 1453, along with Thomas Moigne, another man with Welles connections. *CPR 1452-61*, p.45; J.W. Walker, 'The Burghs of Cambridgeshire and Yorkshire

particular noble families, but on the whole, the picture appears to be one of a large, inter-connected group with varied and variable associations. The impression emerging is, in the case of Welles and Willoughby, more of a pair of noblemen who were 'first among equals' in their region, rather than powerful overlords. The existence of marriage connections with their gentry neighbours, rather than just with other peers, would seem to strengthen this scenario,¹²⁵ as would the lack of gentry support received by the Welles family in 1470.¹²⁶

Of course, relations between the various members of the gentry went much deeper than just marriage ties, which were often just formal recognitions of links that may have existed for years. Relationships could be forged in many different ways, one such method being through service together in the county administration. The great number of different men who filled local offices might possibly dilute the effects of this interaction somewhat, but the endless treadmill of duties provided ample opportunities for forging contacts across the county.¹²⁷ The county court may also have provided a forum for contact, but, if the lists of electors are a reliable guide, the greater men of the county were at best irregular attenders.¹²⁸ Perhaps the best evidence for inter-relationships between the members of the gentry exists in the form of appearances as feoffees, executors, and other legal duties. Such connections again appear to have been relatively diffused and widespread. Although there are numerous examples of people using their immediate neighbours as witnesses or feoffees, even lesser men looked further afield when necessary. Most deeds were relatively simple affairs, requiring little more than a few trustworthy neighbours. For instance a Skipwith deed of 27 April 1417 was witnessed by a relatively lowly group, consisting of John Cotes of Little Coates, Roger de Bernston of Great Coates, Lawrence Moigne of Theddlethorpe, John 'Hakthorne' of 'Waumesgare' and Thomas Enderby of Enderby,¹²⁹ this despite the fact that the recipients of the grant, of the advowsons of seven churches, included two members of the Willoughby family and the ever-present Willoughby servant Richard

and the Watertons of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, xxx (1930-1), pp.311-419; Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.73.

¹²⁵ Most Welles and Willoughby marriages were with other noble families, but a number were contracted with the gentry. See Appendix 5.

¹²⁶ See below, ch.5.

¹²⁷ See below, ch.3.

¹²⁸ A. Rogers, 'The Lincolnshire County Court in the Fifteenth Century', *L.H.&A.*, i (1966), pp.64-78.

¹²⁹ LAO MM 1/2/71.

Yerburgh,¹³⁰ What is clear is that Thomas Skipwith placed great faith in a small number of people, since Yerburgh, Cotes, Hakthorne, Enderby and the Willoughbys appear in a number of Skipwith documents from this period.¹³¹ These men also hailed from the same area of the county, the coastal strip of Lindsey east of the Wolds, and reasonably close to the Skipwith seat at South Ormsby. However, this closeness was not always desirable. The list of parties to a final concord of John and Joan Fulnetby, dating from 1429 and concerning various lands predominantly in the South Riding of Lindsey, began with a group of Holland esquires (Meres, Holand, Welby), but then included men such as John Tailboys, John Hauley and Gerard Sohill, a wide cross-section of the county gentry.¹³² Presumably the Fulnetbys thought it wise to secure their transaction by getting the widest possible acknowledgement. It was imperative, given the nature of enfeoffments to use, that feoffees were sought who were essentially trustworthy. Local lawyers, whose entire career depended upon their reputation, were an obvious and popular choice, but most landowners also used close friends, relatives or neighbours. Repeated appearance as a feoffee would doubtless indicate a close bond of trust between the individuals, given that land formed the very basis of a family's position in society.

The appointment of executors of a person's will, as well as the beneficiaries, was a much more individual affair, and can give a better insight into the friendships of the testator. Relatives and friends were most commonly mentioned. For instance, Sir John Copuldyke's will of 1408 named as his executors his wife, his eldest son, and his friend John Meres.¹³³ John Fulnetby's will of 1456 also appointed his wife as executor, and included bequests to William Willoughby and Henry Sohill.¹³⁴ Thomas Cumberworth, whose fascinating will dates from 1451,¹³⁵ appointed three comparatively unknown men as his executors,¹³⁶ but, along with many interesting instructions for his burial, also included bequests to his servants, various churches, his Constable relatives, and his friends John Tailboys, Robert Sheffeld, Leo and Richard Welles and their associate John

¹³⁰ Yerburgh, although of modest personal status, was probably a lawyer, and was a servant of both the Willoughbys and the Skipwiths. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.80; see also above, p.69, n.107.

¹³¹ LAO MM 1/2/72, 1/3/13, 1/3/17, 1/3/18, 1/3/22.

¹³² LAO FF/G21.

¹³³ Meres may have been a lawyer like his father, Sir Roger Meres, JCP, but this is unclear. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.722-3.

¹³⁴ *Early Lincoln Wills, 1280-1547*, ed. A. Gibbons (Lincoln, 1888), p.183.

¹³⁵ *Lincoln Diocese Documents, 1450-1544*, ed. A. Clark, *Early English Text Society*, o.s., cxlix (1914), pp.44-57.

¹³⁶ Robert Gyrdyk, John Bulman and John Broughton, who have proved untraceable. They may have been neighbours, trusted servants, or even local clerics.

Stayndrop, and even Ralph Cromwell. Some bequests could be merely sycophantic, but most were obviously genuine, given the context - the grantor clearly had very little to gain personally!¹³⁷

A final element which was often crucial in defining a particular person's social relationships was provided by his ties of lordship and clientage, loose associations as well as stronger, 'bastard feudal' relationships. In some cases, such ties could become the overriding influence upon social connections. In Carpenter's Warwickshire, ties of lordship, friendship and marriage were all regularly conducted within the framework of the noble affinity.¹³⁸ The lack of great magnate estates in Lincolnshire, and the relative weakness of the resident nobles, meant that, in this period, such ties were never as strong as those in many other areas. However, a number of Lincolnshire men did have connections with the nobility, and although these rarely affected life in the county to any great degree, or the day-to-day business of the person concerned, they were nonetheless very real.¹³⁹

The one person who appears to have had great potential power within Lincolnshire was the only one largely unwilling or unable to use it for much of the period: the King himself, particularly in his role as Duke of Lancaster.¹⁴⁰ The Honour of Bolingbroke was a large and wealthy part of the Duchy holdings, and while further study of the Duchy's role in fourteenth-century Lincolnshire is undoubtedly needed, it is clear that many of the major county families had links with the Duchy dating back to this time.¹⁴¹ Three members of the Skipwith family were among the supporters of the Appellants in the 1380s, while Sir William Skipwith was a member of Gaunt's council by at least 1373,¹⁴² the Hauleys had a tradition of service to the Duchy, with Sir William acting as Chief Steward of the North Parts in the mid-1380s, and Sir Thomas being

¹³⁷ Such gifts could be used to find favour on behalf of an heir, but Cumberworth, with no son to inherit, clearly did not have this in mind.

¹³⁸ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp.101-5, & esp. ch.9.

¹³⁹ These links, in a political and administrative context, will be discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁰ For a general discussion of the Duchy lands, see above, pp.36-7.

¹⁴¹ John of Gaunt's associates included, among others, various members of the Hauley, Lutterell, Dymoke, Busshy, Rochford, Roos, Swynford and Paynell families. Lincolnshire formed an extremely important part of Gaunt's powerbase. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, pp.31, 33, Appendix I; Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, esp. ch.14.

¹⁴² Somerville, *Duchy*, p.467; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.388-90. Sir William's loyalty to the Appellants saved him from impeachment at the Merciless Parliament of 1388.

confirmed as a king's knight by Henry V,¹⁴³ Robert Tirwhit, JKB, had been a councillor of the Duchy,¹⁴⁴ and even the hated Sir John Busshy had connections with Gaunt.¹⁴⁵

It is especially noteworthy that many of these families also seem to have been among those identified earlier as the North Lindsey grouping. This may not be purely coincidental. The decline in the strength of the Lancastrian affinity under Henry VI was very real across the country,¹⁴⁶ and the integrity of the Lincolnshire interests could not have been helped by the fact that most of the Duchy estates in Lincolnshire had been enfeoffed by Henry V, and were not returned to the King until 1443.¹⁴⁷ Even without a leader as such, the internal ties of the old affinity appear to have remained among the families it encompassed, albeit in a far looser form. The wider connections with the Willoughbys, prominent leaders in the French campaigns, could well have been part of this Lancastrian legacy, with the Willoughbys inheriting some sort of quasi-leadership in the absence of a strong ducal presence.¹⁴⁸ The involvement of some of the Yorkshire families, particularly the FitzWilliams and the Constables of Halsham, may also be explained by the Lancastrian connection, since both families had links with John of Gaunt, and may have forged closer relationships with their Lincolnshire neighbours through this common interest.¹⁴⁹

Of course, even without strong leadership, the Duchy also continued as an administrative entity. Local men were still to the fore, although this practice did decline slightly as Henry VI's reign progressed, with noblemen replacing locals as the titular holders of Duchy offices.¹⁵⁰ Stewards of Bolingbroke honour included John Kyme of Friskney and Sir Ralph Rochford, while John Langholme, John Ratheby and Thomas Moigne all held the post of feodary, an office held almost exclusively by locals

¹⁴³ Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, p.286; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.332-4.

¹⁴⁴ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.630-1.

¹⁴⁵ As Somerville states, this connection seems extremely anomalous, given Busshy's connections with Richard II. Somerville, *Duchy*, p.367. However, Walker notes that Busshy was a retainer of Gaunt before his more famous association with Richard. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, p.109.

¹⁴⁶ The disintegration of the Lancastrian affinity has recently been highlighted by Helen Castor. H. Castor, 'The Duchy of Lancaster and the Rule of East Anglia, 1399-1440: A Prologue to the Paston Letters', in R.E. Archer (ed.), *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud, 1995), pp.53-78.

¹⁴⁷ Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.199ff, p.339, n.2; see also above, p.36.

¹⁴⁸ It is probably safe to assume that the Willoughbys were virtually unchallenged as the leading noble family, at least in Lindsey and Holland, during the early part of the century. The Beaumonts' Lincolnshire interests lay predominantly in Kesteven, the Croniwells did not yet have any great influence, while the Welles family suffered a minority between 1421 and 1427.

¹⁴⁹ Gaunt's retinue for his 1359 campaign included men from the Constable and FitzWilliam families. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, p.31.

¹⁵⁰ Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster', pp.52-4; Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.575ff.

throughout the century.¹⁵¹ However, these were purely administrative posts, and were probably sought or avoided much like many other royal offices. The great Duchy affinity was largely a memory, preserved only by other means, yet the common bond it created still remained to an extent. Thus, by the outbreak of the Wars, the Duchy affinity had become more of a local entity, of connections between the county's families rather than a shared loyalty to the Dukes of Lancaster. Nevertheless, Edward IV's fears during the 1460s, of Lincolnshire as an area of potential Lancastrian sympathies, were entirely understandable.¹⁵²

Alongside the Duchy connection, the King could also theoretically call upon the services of his wider, specifically royal affinity.¹⁵³ Relatively few Lincolnshire men appear to have been retained by the Crown during the Lancastrian period, probably due to Lincolnshire's political insignificance and perhaps because, with the Duchy links, Lincolnshire's loyalty was simply taken for granted. However, the few men who were retained by the Crown during the later years of Henry VI's reign were very different people from their predecessors. Royal retainers under Henry IV and Henry V tended to be drawn from the same men who formed the Duchy affinity. That men such as Sir Thomas Hauley (d.1420) and Sir Thomas Cumberworth (d.1451) should have been king's knights is not surprising, and both kings were keen to preserve the personal link between the local elite and the Lancastrians, while also cementing the link between the monarchy and the Dukes of Lancaster. However, the royal retainers of Henry VI's majority rule, men such as the king's esquire Thomas FitzWilliam of Mablethorpe,¹⁵⁴ or the yeoman of the chamber and king's sergeant Hamo Sutton, were from families with no such exalted pedigree. William Grymesby, probably the most prominent household official from Lincolnshire, was successively a yeoman of the Crown and an Esquire of the Body, and, from 1456 until 1460, Treasurer of the Household, but he had little influence within Lincolnshire itself.¹⁵⁵ These were 'new' men, whose connections, and presumably their loyalty, lay predominantly with the Court rather than necessarily with the monarch himself. They were undoubtedly loyal servants, but they were not from the greater landed families, and the personal ties with the landed elite which had served Henry IV so well

¹⁵¹ Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.575ff, for officers of Bolingbroke honour.

¹⁵² See below, pp.199-200.

¹⁵³ For a discussion of Henry VI's household and retinue, see Griffiths, *Henry VI*, chs.13-14.

¹⁵⁴ The FitzWilliams became more prominent later in the century. *W.B.*, p.335; see below, pp.156, 194, 228-9; Appendix 6.

¹⁵⁵ For Grymesby's career, see *W.B.*, pp.400-1; below, pp.93, 96, 110, 165. The involvement of the royal retinue upon local administration will be discussed below, pp.91-4.

had all but disappeared by the 1450s. The lack of credible rivals in Lincolnshire doubtless prevented even greater damage to royal influence, but the Crown's links with the landed elite had practically disintegrated. It is also easy to see how, with the rise of these new men, faction could easily be transferred into the localities. While not necessarily alienating the traditional elite, it could certainly cause a degree of discomfort and possibly resentment. The same situation would nevertheless be repeated almost exactly by Edward IV in the 1460s, and, if only temporarily, with the same disastrous results.¹⁵⁶

Only a small number of Lincolnshire men possessed links with members of the greater aristocracy, and the nature of these ties is often difficult to assess. What is obvious is that no single nobleman possessed any great power in the county, or among any significant proportion of the gentry population. The lack of large noble estates in Lincolnshire was a major factor, but so too may have been the general structure of county society. Without any specific leaders as such, capable of holding any dominance over their contemporaries, local power was a very fragmented affair, while the sheer numbers involved would mean that any concerted effort to ensure dominance would be a difficult and costly process. Also, the landed base of the Duchy of Lancaster, although it may have become a sleeping giant, may have been a deterrent. However, individual ties were forged, and, while any attempt at regional hegemony was out of the question, a little local knowledge and assurance could still be valuable.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of the county gentry, such ties were not necessarily of any great importance, and certainly were not mutually exclusive. This was nothing new; the strong association of Sir John Busshy with the regime of Richard II did not prevent him taking an annuity from John of Gaunt, yet in turn this connection with Lancaster did not save Busshy from his fate in 1399. Though less extreme, there are other examples. Sir Richard Hansard (d.1428) had links with John Talbot (later Earl of Shrewsbury),¹⁵⁷ while his son had links of his own with Lord Roos and Lord Zouche, among others.¹⁵⁸ Sir William Skipwith, a servant of Richard, Duke of York, abandoned his lord during the early stages of the Wars of the Roses, refusing to desert the Lancastrian monarchy until its fall, but then rejoined the Yorkists and emerged from the Wars unscathed.¹⁵⁹ Sir Henry Retford, on the other hand, remained faithful to York and

¹⁵⁶ See below, ch.7.

¹⁵⁷ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.284-5.

¹⁵⁸ Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.69; see also below, p.168.

¹⁵⁹ See below, p.167.

died with him at Wakefield, a fate shared by Richard Hansard.¹⁶⁰ However, such close associations were unusual, and most were fleeting and often used for short-term gain. Thomas Meres had links with Lord Roos, Lord Cromwell and Lady Grey of Codnor, while his position as farmer of the royal manor of Burwell has been linked to a possible connection with the Duke of Bedford.¹⁶¹ Robert Roos may have used his connection with the Duke of Gloucester to secure appointments as sheriff,¹⁶² while other men probably exploited similar associations. But, in most cases, such links were relatively inconsequential, at least in terms of local politics, and must not be seen as more than they actually were. The only nobles with any great number of gentry associations, as would be expected, were the local men. The influence and connections of the Welles and Willoughby families in Lindsey have been noted above.¹⁶³ Lord Beaumont's Lincolnshire connections lay mainly in Kesteven, but Beaumont's major interests lay across the southern Midlands and at court, and his actual influence in Kesteven appears to have been limited, the lack of local rivals presumably helping his position more than his own initiative.¹⁶⁴ Ralph Cromwell's interests lay more generally across the northern Midlands, and this, along with the relative novelty of his family's local power and his preoccupation with national affairs, probably precluded the creation of the kind of purely local affinity built up by the Welles and Willoughby families, his nearest rivals in Lindsey. Cromwell may have attracted more influential supporters, but, like Beaumont, his Lincolnshire following was probably more akin to a larger version of the connections of the greater nobles, a collection of individual associations rather than a strong local presence in any specific area.¹⁶⁵ With the exception of the Welles and Willoughby circles, which (whatever their origins) do appear to have had some local relevance, concerted and active noble influence in late Lancastrian Lincolnshire, certainly when compared to the power enjoyed by noblemen in other areas, appears to have been practically non-existent.

In essence, the structure of Lincolnshire society during the late Lancastrian period was rather complicated. There was certainly no dynamic involvement or direction from the great men of the kingdom, but this does not appear to have resulted in the kind

¹⁶⁰ For further discussion of these cases, see below, ch.6.

¹⁶¹ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.36; *Early Lincoln Wills*, ed. Gibbons, p.168.

¹⁶² See below, p.94.

¹⁶³ See above, pp.71-3.

¹⁶⁴ His connections with William Tailboys were probably due to Tailboys' need for a powerful lord at court rather than any more local or long-term affiliation. See also below, ch.4.

¹⁶⁵ See also below, pp.94-5.

of independently minded society identified in neighbouring Nottinghamshire. Instead, the vast number of people involved, coupled with the relative lack of exceptional individuals, produced a society which was seemingly more homogeneous and far less socially divided, and one where influence, power and social status was almost taken for granted, something to be shared rather than jealously guarded. The legacy of the disintegration of the Duchy of Lancaster as a political force seems to have played a significant role in this. With so many of Lincolnshire's prominent families having ties with the Duchy, some sense of local affinity must have been produced, but the removal of this strong guiding force, particularly after 1422, created a vacuum which, by the middle of the century, had not yet been adequately filled. The formal Duchy affinity, and with it almost all royal influence, simply crumbled, and in its wake, Lincolnshire society lost much of its unity of purpose, its sense of common identity, and perhaps even its vitality, characteristics essential for both a strong 'community' of gentry and a strong magnate affinity. The figure of the Duke of Lancaster had been effectively removed from county life, yet no other lord, except perhaps the relatively unimportant Lord Willoughby, had been in any position to take his place. From its privileged position at the start of the century, at the centre of the new royal regime, Lincolnshire seems to have drifted, clinging to the memory of connections which no longer offered the rewards they once had, and whose legacy still dominated local life. Such isolation would eventually prove rather beneficial, providing a degree of immunity from the troubles of the Wars of the Roses,¹⁶⁶ however, at the end of the Lancastrian era, even with a new generation coming to the fore, the internal bonds of local gentry society were still reminiscent of an affinity which now had little relevance. In many ways, the Lincolnshire gentry community could almost be said to have become an affinity without a lord.

¹⁶⁶ See below, ch.6.

Chapter 3

Office Holding and Local Politics

Local government in fifteenth-century England was very much the preserve of the landed elites. In the absence of a professionally trained and paid bureaucracy, royal government in the shires was almost entirely dependent upon the co-operation and goodwill of the local landholders. It was they who performed the vast majority of the essential administrative and judicial duties, and it was they who effectively held the key to strong royal government in their particular region. Local administration was therefore also an area where the expectations and aspirations of the local notables could be expressed, even if the efficiency, and the integrity, of royal government often suffered as a result. This is not the place for a discussion of the merits and defects of English medieval local government. However, given that the holding of public office played such a large part in the lives of the medieval landed elite, particularly the upper echelons, and provided the most tangible manifestation of their regional power and status, the gentry and local government are two subjects which are inextricably linked.

The basic geographical unit of local government in later-medieval England was undoubtedly the shire, and it was within this framework that most of the local officers operated.¹ However, this was not the case for all officials, nor did the same system necessarily operate in all counties, and in many respects Lincolnshire was relatively unusual. Whereas most counties were single administrative units,² Lincolnshire, like Yorkshire, was sub-divided, with various officials working within differing boundaries. Moreover, Lincolnshire, although smaller than Yorkshire, had even more divisions.³ At the head of the Lincolnshire administration, as with most counties, was the sheriff, the premier officer of local government since before the Norman Conquest, and a man of considerable influence, both as an official and, usually, in his own right as a member of the local elite.⁴ However, by the fifteenth century, the sheriff had lost many of his duties,

¹ For a general overview of local government within a particular shire, see R.B. Pugh, 'The King's Government in the Middle Ages', in *V.C.H., Wilts.*, v (London, 1957), pp.1-43.

² Of course, many counties shared officials, particularly sheriffs and escheators; e.g. Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, or Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

³ See above, p.27 & Map 2.

⁴ W.A. Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff to 1300* (Manchester, 1927); W.A. Morris, 'The

and although he remained a key element in the effectiveness of local government within his region, in the administrative, judicial and military fields,⁵ the office was a shadow of its former self. This decline was partly due to statutory limitations, but also a result of the creation of further officials - the escheator,⁶ coroners⁷ and, most recently, the Justices of the Peace. However, many of these offices were also declining. Escheators and coroners, themselves also originally drawn from the knightly classes, were, by the fifteenth century, mainly appointed from the lesser gentry,⁸ and the duties were gradually being superseded.⁹ Although Lincolnshire had a single sheriff and escheator, who acted across the county, coroners worked slightly differently, reflecting Lincolnshire's internal divisions. Whereas most counties had four coroners or less, Lincolnshire had five,¹⁰ one each for Holland and Kesteven, and three for the much larger Parts of Lindsey, one each for its North, South and West Ridings.¹¹

Meanwhile, the antithesis of this administrative decline was undoubtedly the evolution of the Justices of the Peace. The rising stars of English local government, their

Sheriff', in W.A. Morris & J.R. Strayer (eds.), *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336*, II (Cambridge, Mass., 1947), pp.41-108; H.M. Cam, *The Hundred and the Hundred Rolls* (London, 1930; new edn., 1963); H.M. Jewell, *English Local Administration in the Middle Ages* (Newton Abbot, 1972), ch.7.

⁵ For a discussion of the sheriffs duties and his staff, see M.H. Mills, 'The Medieval Shire House', in J. Conway Davies (ed.), *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson* (London, 1957), pp.254-271; 'A Wiltshire Sheriff's Notebook, 1464-5', ed. M.M. Condon, in R.F. Hunnisett & J.B. Post (eds.) *Medieval Legal Records* (London, 1978), pp.410-28.

⁶ E.R. Stevenson, 'The Escheator', in Morris & Strayer (eds.), *English Government*, II, pp.109-67; B. Lyon, *A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England* (New York, 1960), pp.401-2, pp.521-2; J.M.W. Bean, *The Decline of English Feudalism, 1215-1540* (Manchester, 1968), pp.16-20, 181, 201-4.

⁷ R.F. Hunnisett, *The Medieval Coroner* (Cambridge, 1961), chs.2-5; H.M. Cam, 'Shire Officials: Coroners, Constables and Bailiffs', in J.F. Willard, W.A. Morris & W.H. Dunham (eds.) *The English Government at Work, 1327-1336*, III (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp.143-183.

⁸ It is perhaps no coincidence that this decline corresponded with attempts to reduce the amount of corruption, such as that made by Edward III's government in 1341. *The 1341 Royal Inquest in Lincolnshire*, ed. B.W. McLane, L.R.S., lxxviii (1988).

⁹ Henry VII's increased interest in his feudal revenues did not revive the office of escheator, the decline being so marked as to prompt one modern historian to note that the escheatorship was 'thoroughly ineffective by Tudor times'. P. Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford, 1979), p.407.

¹⁰ Yorkshire and Kent also had five coroners, while many counties had fewer than four. Hunnisett, *Medieval Coroner*, pp.134-7. Hunnisett implies that Lincolnshire had three coroners, one for each of the three Parts, but this was certainly not the case in the fifteenth century. Hunnisett, *Medieval Coroner*, p.135.

¹¹ The sheriff's return on the dorse of one of the few surviving writs for the election of Lincolnshire coroners specifies separate coroners for the three Parts, while two writs for the replacement of coroners enrolled on the Close Rolls also specify the West Riding of Lindsey. C242/12 m.13., the order for complete re-election of coroners by the Readeption government; *CCR 1422-9*, pp.309, 361. However, this was not always specified, since the order to replace Thomas Duffield in 1450 referred only to 'Lindsey', rather than a particular Riding, while many writs refer only to the county in general. *CCR 1447-54*, p.203; *CCR 1435-41*, pp.12, 212. Presumably the clerk expected the sheriff to know which part of the county was concerned.

duties were constantly expanded during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, usually at the expense of the older, established officials.¹² As in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire had more than one peace commission. Separate benches were appointed for each of the three Parts, and although they often shared members, they were totally independent, and regarded as separate bodies.¹³ This shift of responsibility continued under the Yorkists and Tudors, the duties of the JPs expanding even more.¹⁴ This was probably a reflection of a conscious royal policy, delegating authority in the localities to this collective body rather than concentrating power in the hands of single individuals. Such a situation might help lessen both the potential for corruption and, perhaps more importantly, the chances of successful outside manipulation by anyone other than the King.¹⁵

Various other local offices were open to members of the gentry. Probably the most prestigious was that of Knight of the Shire, the qualifications for which had been closely defined during the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.¹⁶ Although election to Parliament had little direct relevance at a local level, it can be seen as an important reflection of a person's standing among his neighbours.¹⁷ The gentry also provided the majority of the people appointed to the endless stream of other royal commissions. These commissions were issued at a variety of levels, but usually either to the whole of Lincolnshire or to the individual Parts. Commissions of array¹⁸ were usually,

¹² Of course, the people becoming JPs were usually the same people who would earlier have held the other offices. For details of the creation, evolution and duties of the JPs, see B.H. Putnam, 'Shire Officials: Keepers of the Peace and Justices of the Peace', in Willard, Morris & Dunham (eds.) *English Government*, III, pp.185-217; B.H. Putnam, 'The Transformation of the Keepers of the Peace into the Justices of the Peace, 1327-1380', *T.R.H.S.*, 4th ser., xii (1929), pp.19-48; A. Harding, 'The origins and early history of the keepers of the peace', *T.R.H.S.*, 5th ser., x, (1960), pp.85-109; B.H. Putnam (ed.), *Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, Edward III to Richard III* (London, 1938); J.R. Lander, *English Justices of the Peace, 1461-1509* (Gloucester, 1989). For an introduction to local justice before the advent of the JPs, see D. Crook, 'The Later Eyres', *E.H.R.*, xcvi (1982), pp.241-68; *The Eyre of Northamptonshire 3-4 Edward III, A.D. 1329-30*, ed. D.W. Sutherland, i, *Selden Society*, xcvi (1983).

¹³ All peace commissions issued for Lincolnshire between 1422 and 1485 are printed in tabular form in Appendix 2.

¹⁴ Lander, *English Justices*, pp.7-8. In 1461, indictments which had previously been sent to the sheriff's tourn were removed to the peace sessions, prompting Putnam's statement that this completed 'the downfall of the sheriff'. Putnam, *Proceedings*, p.lv.

¹⁵ See also below, pp.90ff.

¹⁶ *Statutes of the Realm*, i, p.394; ii, p.170, c.I. For discussion of their election, duties and history, see H.C., 1386-1421, i, pp.1-143; J.S. Roskell, *The Commons in the Parliament of 1422* (Manchester, 1954), esp. ch.1; J.G. Edwards, *The Commons in Medieval English Parliaments* (London, 1958); Lyon, *Constitutional and Legal History*, pp.598-600; Rogers, 'County Court', pp.64-78, esp. pp.64-8; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.111.

¹⁷ However, sitting MPs were often appointed to certain local commissions, particularly those dealing with taxation rebates, e.g. *CFR 1445-52*, pp.33 & 39, 123 & 128.

¹⁸ For details of these commissions, their use and basis, see Powicke, *Military Obligation*, esp. ch.11; H.J. Hewitt, *The Organization of War under Edward III, 1338-62* (Manchester, 1966), ch.2, esp.

though not always, issued separately to the three Parts,¹⁹ while commissions *de wallis et fossatis*²⁰ varied greatly in scope, some specifying small, precisely defined areas, others covering many counties.²¹ Direct taxes, the subsidies granted by Parliament,²² were collected by local commissioners, again usually appointed within the individual Parts,²³ while indirect taxes, the customs and subsidies on overseas trade, were collected at the ports by a series of specialist officials led by a Controller, again usually a local landholder.²⁴ Various judicial commissions, particularly those of *oyer et terminer*,²⁵ were also staffed by local landholders, along with the hundreds of other commissions sent into the shires, covering any and every aspect of medieval government.

However, it is not the offices themselves, or their particular duties, which are the significant factor in this study, but the people who filled them, and their positions in the wider community. Christine Carpenter has noted that analysis of the personnel of local government is important for many reasons,²⁶ and since the names of local officials are recorded in great numbers, such studies provide a wealth of possibilities. With local office being widely used to display and exercise both power and status, the study of these offices can provide a detailed picture of the lives, careers and expectations of the medieval landholding classes. As well as giving further insights into the individuals themselves, the following chapter will address a series of more specific issues; firstly the impact of Lincolnshire's threefold division upon the landed elite and the county offices; secondly the issue of bastard feudalism and outside influence over appointments; thirdly, changes in the titles and status of office holders; and finally the issue of administrative

pp.36-7.

¹⁹ For example, *CPR 1452-61*, pp.401-2, where commissions are issued for all three Parts. By contrast, in June 1454 a commission was issued for Lindsey alone: *CPR 1452-61*, p.170.

²⁰ For a detailed examination of the work of these officials, see *The Records of the Commissioners of Sewers in the Parts of Holland, 1547-1603*, 3 vols., i, ed. A.M. Kirkus, L.R.S., liv (1959), pp.vii-xxxvii. Commissioners who failed in their duties could also be prosecuted for their neglect, such as Sir John Colville suffered around 1440. KB27/718, m.134.

²¹ For example, *CPR 1429-36*, p.199; *CPR 1446-52*, p.534.

²² C. Johnson, 'The Collectors of Lay Taxes', in Morris & Strayer (eds.), *English Government*, II, pp.201-226. For a more general discussion of the basis of medieval taxation, see G.L. Harriss, *King, Parliament and Public Finance in England to 1369* (Oxford, 1975); J.F. Hadwin, 'The Medieval Lay Subsidies and Economic History', *Ec.H.R.*, 2nd ser., xxxvi (1983), pp.200-17; W.M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp.89-95; M. Jurkowski, C.L. Smith & D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales, 1188-1688*, PRO Handbook 31 (Kew, 1998).

²³ The return for the 1436 Lay Subsidy does not specify the three Parts, but since most entries for each Part appear together, it was probably compiled by transcribing three separate returns onto a single roll, before additions were made at the end. E179/136/198; see also Appendix 3:a.

²⁴ For further details, see M.H. Mills, 'The Collectors of Customs', in Morris & Strayer (eds.), *English Government*, pp.168-200.

²⁵ For further discussion of the use of *oyer et terminer* commissions, see ch.4.

²⁶ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.263 & Part II, *passim*.

experience, and the way in which individual careers differed across the Lancastrian period.

The existence of three administratively distinct regions within one county raises important questions concerning the pattern of county office holding, questions which may in turn have a wider significance regarding the social structures of the various parts of Lincolnshire, their inter-relationships and their own distinctiveness. Did the gentry from any one area dominate county administration to an unexpected degree? Was any particular group more successful at securing (or indeed avoiding) county offices? Also, did the need to find three separate bodies of people for certain duties have any effect upon the status of the people appointed, particularly with regard to the peace commissions?²⁷ An interesting parallel is with those pairs of counties which shared officials. For instance, only 29 of the 81 fifteenth-century appointments to the shrievalty of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire went to Derbyshire men,²⁸ while only sixteen of the sixty appointments to the escheatorship of Leicestershire and Warwickshire between 1423 and 1485 went to Leicestershire men.²⁹ Of course, there are often clear reasons behind these figures, such as one county having fewer possible candidates, or the dominance of regional magnates. But were there any such parallels among the gentry of the three Parts of Lincolnshire?³⁰

Before examining the resident office holders, attention should perhaps first be drawn to the number of non-resident men being appointed to Lincolnshire offices. During Henry VI's reign alone, nine shrieval terms, two parliamentary seats and two appointments to the escheatorship went to men whose main interests lay outside the county, all to different people. Although even more would later be appointed by the Yorkists,³¹ this was still a relatively large proportion, especially since very few Lincolnshire natives served in other counties.³² The only exceptions to this trend were the

²⁷ This subject will be addressed below, pp. 101ff.

²⁸ Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, p. 110.

²⁹ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p. 112.

³⁰ The process of assigning people to particular regions of the county may, however, be misleading. The Copuldyke family were resident in Lindsey, but were most active in Holland; the Retfords are assigned to Lindsey, but were almost equally as active in Kesteven; and the Rochfords, a Boston family, also had strong links with Kesteven. In this context, internal administrative boundaries, like some county boundaries, may begin to look increasingly artificial.

³¹ See below, ch. 7.

³² William Tirwhit, sheriff of Yorkshire in 1435-6, was resident in the East Riding at the time. No other Lincolnshire man is known to have acted as sheriff elsewhere. John Saynton, escheator of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire on three occasions, was a Lincoln man, and a few Lincolnshire men sat

peace commissions, where almost all gentry JPs were natives. This employment of outsiders was not new, since a number of sheriffs under Henry IV and Henry V were also from other counties. Some of the non-native appointments or elections can be ascribed to political influence,³³ but most were simply men from other parts of the country who also had minor interests in Lincolnshire, and who managed to secure appointment or election, possibly after failing in their respective home counties.³⁴ Nevertheless, it would seem strange for so many appointments to go to outsiders unless the native gentry were unwilling to take up the offices themselves, and would also suggest that, at least temporarily, the Lincolnshire gentry were unconcerned by this usurpation of their traditional privileges.

An analysis of the holders of three of the major county offices, those of sheriff, MP and escheator, for the Lancastrian period shows a marked dominance by Lindsey residents (see Table 2:a). Well over half the resident sheriffs and escheators were from Lindsey, and over two-thirds of the shire knights. These figures are not particularly surprising, given Lindsey's territorial superiority, seen clearly in Table 3. However, the Lincolnshire gentry were not necessarily spread entirely evenly across the county. Certain areas were undoubtedly more heavily populated than others, and while detailed figures are unavailable, a comparison between the three Parts is possible using data from the Poll Tax returns of 1377 and 1381 (see Table 4). These records, of little use as numerical measures of actual population, can be used to give an indication of the relative overall populations of the three Parts, assuming that the various anomalies are reasonably consistent across the county, and that there had been no great population shifts since 1381.³⁵ Although Lindsey still dominated, Holland was much more densely populated, with 22% of the county's total population compared to no more than 15% of the land area, and thus the 21% of officers from Holland is entirely justified.³⁶ Yet while Kesteven

in Parliament for other areas, mainly town or borough seats secured through political associations. For instance, John Gybthorpe sat for Taunton in 1449, a seat controlled by the Gybthorpe's former neighbour, the Lincolnshire-born Bishop of Winchester, William Waynefleete. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.65; *W.B.*, p.373. For Gybthorpe, see also below, p.93.

³³ Particularly Thomas Darcy and Sir John Byron.

³⁴ This may well explain the large number of men from Yorkshire, where the county's size ensured a larger pool of candidates for local office.

³⁵ These figures also assume that the gentry comprised a similar proportion of the population in any given area, a reasonable generalisation for these immediate purposes, but far from certain, as the following analysis of the 1436 lay subsidy data would suggest. See below, p.89. The gentry families were certainly not evenly spread by the late seventeenth century, when the desire for improved communications led them to cluster in Kesteven, close to the road to London, and around Lincoln. A. Weston, 'Lincolnshire Politics in the Reign of Queen Anne', *L.H.&A.*, v (1970), pp.59-75, p.62.

³⁶ See Table 4. For a detailed examination of population trends in the wapentake of Elloe, see H.E.

Table 2.a. *Regional Analysis of Appointments to Offices, 1399-1461.*

	Total no. of appointments or elections	Chief residence known	Non- Natives		Holland		Kesteven		Lindsey ¹	
			No.	% ²	No.	% ³	No.	% ³	No.	% ³
Sheriff	65	65	15	23.08	13	26	9	18	28	56
Escheator	60	59	2	3.39	10	17.54	13	22.81	34	59.65
Shire Knight	86	70	3	4.29	14	20.9	5	7.46	48	71.64
Totals	211	194	20	10.31	37	21.26	27	15.52	110	63.22

Table 2.b. *Regional Analysis of Office Holders, 1399-1461.*

	No. of Individual Office Holders ⁴	Holland		Kesteven		Lindsey ¹	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sheriff	35	7	20	6	17.14	22	62.86
Escheator	47	9	19.15	10	21.28	28	59.57
Shire Knight	37	9	24.32	5	13.51	23	62.16
Totals	119	25	21.01	21	17.65	73	61.34

¹ Includes residents of Lincoln.

² Percentage of total number of office holders from outside county.

³ Percentage of *native* appointments where residence known.

⁴ Number of different people to have held particular offices. Individuals with main residence outside county, and those whose identity or place of residence is unknown, are excluded.

Table 3. *Regional Comparison of Territory.*

	County	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey
Area (acres) ¹	1,705,293	263,120	469,377	972,796
% of County	-	15.43	27.52	57.05

¹ Figures taken from J. Bartholomew, *The Survey Gazetteer of the British Isles* (Edinburgh, n.d.), pp.346, 378, 424, based on the Census of 1951. Although the county's boundaries have changed very little since the fifteenth century (until the creation of Humberside in 1974), the Holland figure must be too large for the fifteenth century, given subsequent land reclamation.

Table 4. *Regional Comparison of Population.*

	County ¹	Holland	Kesteven	Lindsey
Lay Poll Tax Payers - 1377 ²	87,461	18,592	21,566	47,303
% of county total	-	21.26	24.66	54.08
Lay Poll Tax Payers - 1381	59,764	13,795	15,734	30,235
% of county total	-	23.08	26.33	50.59
Average	-	22.17	25.49	52.34

¹ This is the sum total for the three Parts. It does not include the separate figures for the City and Close of Lincoln, or the towns of Grimsby and Stamford (which are incomplete and relatively small).

² The figures are based on the Lay Poll Tax returns as printed in R.B. Dobson, *The Peasants Revolt of 1381* (Basingstoke, 1970; 2nd edn., 1983), pp.54-7.

possessed roughly a quarter of the population, a slightly smaller proportion than its size might merit, it provided a meagre 15.5% of county office holders. These figures suggest any combination of three possibilities: that, contrary to the above assumption, the gentry comprised a smaller proportion of the population in Kesteven than in Holland and Lindsey; that Kesteven residents were less eager to take jobs than their neighbours; or that a small number of extremely active people from Holland and Lindsey have distorted the figures.³⁷ The last of these possibilities can be quickly discounted. The similarity of the figures in Table 2:b, of the individual people holding office, suggests that re-appointment was relatively consistent across the county.³⁸

The evidence from the 1436 Lay Subsidy provides a further twist.³⁹ Interestingly, of the 410 separate entries on the two rolls,⁴⁰ 206 appear to be from Lindsey, 137 from Holland, and only 67 from Kesteven. Of course, many taxpayers would have held lands in more than one of the Parts, and the figure for Holland is perhaps misleadingly high, given the probable number of Boston merchants. Also, the relative wealth of Holland would almost certainly mean that a greater proportion of Holland residents possessed taxable incomes than in the other two Parts.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the figures do suggest that Kesteven possessed relatively few eligible landholders, despite it being the home of a number of the greater county families. Three of the twelve men with incomes of over £100 were Kesteven residents, as were 9 of the 31 'knightly families' noted earlier.⁴² However, many of these families were rather inactive in local government. The Paynells and Busshys served only sporadically, the Busshys perhaps still mindful of the fate of Richard II's favourite; the Belesby and Pygot families had merged; the Pedwardines were in terminal decline;⁴³ and Godfrey Hilton also had numerous duties elsewhere.⁴⁴ With these issues in mind, Kesteven's lack of major office holders is perhaps more easily

Hallam, 'Population Density in Medieval Fenland', *Ec.H.R.*, 2nd ser., x (1958), pp.71-81.

³⁷ This phenomenon has been highlighted by Roskell while describing the career of Sir John Busshy, who practically monopolised one of the county seats during Richard II's reign. Roskell, 'Parliamentary Representation of Lincolnshire', pp.53-77.

³⁸ Comparing the overall percentage totals in Table 2:b with those in Table 2:a.

³⁹ The majority of entries for each wapentake are listed together, although some entries appear out of position. Some were probably oversights added later, while other individuals may have been resident on outlying estates at the time of the assessment. Hence William Percy of Welton in Lindsey is listed under Kesteven, and Alexander Leeke of Leake in Holland appears with the Lindsey residents. For details, see Appendix 3:a.

⁴⁰ 384 on the Lincolnshire roll, 26 on the supplementary roll. See above, p.46, n.2.

⁴¹ R.E. Glasscock, 'England circa 1334', in H.C. Darby (ed.), *A New Historical Geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973), pp.136-85, esp. fig. 41, p.180; Table 4.2, p.181. See also above, p.47.

⁴² See above, p.52; below, Appendix 4.

⁴³ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.42; see also below, p.182; Appendix 6.

⁴⁴ For details, see Appendix 6.

explained, a mixture of scarcity, unwillingness and inability. Also, the fact that the old families were predominantly still present, simply inactive, may have prevented lesser families from emerging to take their place in the administration.⁴⁵ As the analysis of the peace commissions will show, Kesteven's landholders were actually rather more stable than their neighbours.⁴⁶

It is also worth noting the figures for the escheatorship, where Kesteven was far better represented. 13 of the 60 Lancastrian escheators were from Kesteven, the only case where Kesteven men outnumbered their Holland neighbours. This might suggest that, unlike their troubled social superiors, the lower ranks of the Kesteven gentry, from which the majority of escheators were drawn, were more eager, or more able, to assume county office, albeit at a lower level. This is also perhaps a little surprising given the lay subsidy evidence, which records far fewer taxpayers in Kesteven, and hence, presumably, a smaller pool of gentry families. However, it would appear that, overall, Lincolnshire's greater office holders were drawn reasonably proportionately from across the county, possibly making the internal divisions appear relatively unimportant in this context. The figures generally reflect the population and social composition of the three Parts, and if any other factors were affecting appointments to office, they were seemingly affecting the entire county relatively evenly.

The issue of outside interference in the appointment or election of local officers has proved a popular subject for historians, both at a local level and particularly when discussing elections to Parliament.⁴⁷ However, it is also one fraught with difficulty, often with little or no direct evidence to support even the most obvious of suppositions.⁴⁸ Appointments to the shrievalty, escheatorship or the peace commissions are even less clear, since any amount of background manoeuvring could occur before their appointments. Extreme care must be taken when attempting to detect outside influences,

⁴⁵ The opposite seems to have occurred in Holland. See below, p.102.

⁴⁶ See below, pp.102-4.

⁴⁷ Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, pp.93-4, pp.111-18; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, p.37; Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, ch.4; McFarlane, 'Parliament and "Bastard Feudalism"'; P. Jalland, 'The Influence of the Aristocracy on Shire Elections in the North of England', *Speculum*, xlvii, pp.483-507; Roskell, *Commons in 1422*, pp.24-7; H.G. Richardson, 'The Commons and Medieval Politics', *T.R.H.S.*, 4th ser., xxviii (1946), pp.21-45; A. Rogers, 'Parliamentary Elections in Grimsby in the Fifteenth Century', *B.I.H.R.*, xlii, (1969), pp.212-20.

⁴⁸ There are few records comparable to the note from Grimsby, recording that their burgesses to one Parliament were chosen directly by the Earl of Westmorland rather than the townspeople. See below, p.164 & n.20.

not only in tracing the existence of links between the gentry and their superiors, but to pinpoint a particular *reason* why that magnate would wish to have some influence over that office, in that particular place, and at that time. Few noblemen would waste their time and money securing offices for particular people without a specific reason, however obscure. There is also one further vital question to ask: would that individual have been elected or appointed anyway, regardless of his political affiliations? The existence of connections between a local officer and an influential nobleman or family does not necessarily mean that they were mobilised for the purposes of securing that appointment.

Of course, the greatest influence at work in the shires was that of the King himself, through royal patronage, household connections, and the Duchy of Lancaster.⁴⁹ Robin Jeffs, in his study of the late medieval sheriff, has stated that, between 1437 and 1460, up to a fifth of all appointments to the shrievalty were of men connected to the royal household, and nine of the twenty-four sheriffs of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire in this period had Crown connections.⁵⁰ Theoretically, the monarch could appoint whomever he wished, but even he had to work within certain expectations, as well as the requirements for residence and income laid down by statute. The feeling that local officers should, when possible, be chosen from their own ranks was often strong among the county elite, and an unpopular sheriff or escheator would soon find it extremely difficult to do his job effectively, thus doing far more harm than good to the Crown's position within the shire. Similarly, a politically lightweight sheriff might find great difficulty commanding the respect of the county elite.⁵¹ It was entirely in the Crown's interests to appoint not just men it could trust, but also men with sufficient resources and respect to perform the task effectively.

As noted earlier, a number of Lincolnshire men had strong connections with John of Gaunt and Henry IV, and many of these held local offices during the early years of the

⁴⁹ C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the Kings Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England, 1360-1413* (London, 1986); Castor, 'Duchy of Lancaster'; D.A.L. Morgan, 'The House of Policy - the Political Role of the Late Plantagenet Household, 1422-85', in D. Starkey (ed.), *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), pp.25-70.

⁵⁰ R. Jeffs, 'The Later Medieval Sheriff and the Royal Household: a Study in Administrative Change and Political Control', unpubl. D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1960), p.166, n.1; discussed in Payling, *Political Society*, pp.150-1.

⁵¹ This was not always the case. Thomas Markenfield, sheriff of Yorkshire in 1484-5, was a political lightweight who owed his position entirely to Richard III's patronage. Richard's influence in the North prevented Markenfield from encountering any significant problems during his term, but he was otherwise so unimportant that Henry VII did not even dismiss him after his accession. C.E. Arnold, 'A Political Study of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1437-1509', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Manchester, 1984), Appendix 4, p.82.

century.⁵² The Rochford brothers, Sir John and Sir Ralph, were both firm Lancastrians, each serving two terms as sheriff, while John also sat in Henry's first Parliament in 1399.⁵³ Gerard Sothill, elected shire knight in 1402 and appointed sheriff soon afterwards,⁵⁴ was knighted by Henry, shortly before his coronation, while Gerard's son, Henry, became an Esquire of the Body.⁵⁵ Other local landholders, such as Sir Thomas Hauley and Sir Henry Retford,⁵⁶ were also Lancastrian followers. However, this situation was very much a case of the Lancastrians being associated with influential county followers, rather than a concerted effort to fill county offices with Lancastrian men. Loyalty was certainly crucial, but these were the men who would have expected to hold local office, regardless of their Lancastrian sympathies, and while the situation was clearly beneficial to Henry, there was no usurpation of local sensibilities.

Later in the century, despite the demise of the Lancastrian retinue,⁵⁷ the Crown still possessed a reasonably large basis of support, above and beyond the duty every Englishman owed to the King as monarch. A number of men were retained as king's knights or esquires, while others often held key positions as keepers of royal lands or within the household, particularly when the latter's power grew during the Suffolk and Somerset regimes.⁵⁸ It has been suggested that the 1440s saw a concerted effort by the Crown to place men with royal connections in the key offices of local government,⁵⁹ despite the number and influence of such men having decreased markedly with the decline of the Duchy affinity. Such a policy, perfectly possible and justifiable when many county landholders were members of the royal affinity, was far more likely to cause problems if it involved imposing unpopular or non-local officers on the community.

Royal retainers certainly continued to be used within the Lincolnshire administration during the reign of Henry VI, but these were relatively rare, and if any policy of control was attempted, it was inconsistent and extremely sporadic. Sir Thomas Cumberworth, a king's knight, was sheriff twice and sat in five Parliaments, two under Henry VI, but he was a remnant of the old affinity, a member of Henry V's generation rather than Henry VI's. Sir Brian Stapelton, a Yorkshireman with Lincolnshire interests,

⁵² See above, pp.75-7.

⁵³ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.219-21.

⁵⁴ His first appointment as sheriff was in November 1401, but this ended abruptly; presumably he either refused to act, or there was some error in the appointment.

⁵⁵ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.408-10.

⁵⁶ The elder Henry, rather than his Yorkist son.

⁵⁷ Payling, *Political Society*, pp.119-56; see also above, p.91, n.49.

⁵⁸ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, chs.7 & 12; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, chs.13-14.

⁵⁹ Ormrod, *Political Life*, pp.20-2.

was another king's knight, but he also had Yorkist sympathies and served his second shrieval term under Edward IV.⁶⁰ Hamo Sutton held numerous local offices, while Thomas FitzWilliam sat in Parliament in 1453-4,⁶¹ but most royal retainers were from the lower echelons of county society. William Grymesby, Treasurer of the Household, served as escheator and MP of Lincolnshire,⁶² but his local influence was limited. A number of other escheators had royal connections. Both Henry Morley⁶³ and William Stanlowe were royal servants,⁶⁴ while John Gybthorpe, Yeoman of the Crown by 1452, served Henry VI as custodian of Odiham Park in Hampshire.⁶⁵ John Penycok, another household man appointed as escheator, was one of the few obvious outsiders sent into Lincolnshire by the Crown.⁶⁶ Most of the Duchy of Lancaster officials appointed to county offices were eminently employable locals. Thomas Moigne (feodary of the Duchy, 1443-52)⁶⁷ was appointed sheriff by the Council in 1444 after problems finding a willing candidate,⁶⁸ while his immediate predecessor as feodary, John Langholme, was escheator in 1431-2 and 1436-7. Sir John Byron, MP in 1447, was a Duchy servant from Lancashire, sheriff of Lancashire (1437-49), and had only minor connections with Lincolnshire.⁶⁹ It should also be noted that Lincolnshire's Duchy estates lay predominantly in Holland and Lindsey, areas which provided slightly more office holders than Kesteven, where Lincolnshire's few Duchy of York lands lay.⁷⁰

Despite the numerous examples, it is difficult to see them as any specific attempt to control the offices of county government. There is little consistency, they are spread over a number of years, and to a large extent, as under Henry IV, their appointments

⁶⁰ *CPR 1441-6*, pp.169, 265; see also below, p.134, n.71; p.209 & n.33.

⁶¹ For further details, see Appendix 6.

⁶² See also above, pp.77, 165.

⁶³ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.39.

⁶⁴ B.P. Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne in English History* (London, 1971), p.278.

⁶⁵ See also above, p.85, n.32.

⁶⁶ Penycok was primarily a Surrey man, sheriff of Surrey and Sussex, 1449-50, MP for Surrey in 1449 and 1453-4, and sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire in 1448-9. He bought the manor of Over Burnham in 1446, hence qualifying as escheator of Lincolnshire, but lost all his lands after 1461. Jeffs, 'Medieval Sheriff', p.314; Wolffe, *Royal Demesne*, p.108. See also below, p.162.

⁶⁷ Somerville, *Duchy*, p.581; above, pp.76-7.

⁶⁸ Moigne was still a local man, although the native gentry could hardly complain after two candidates seemingly refused the position. See below, p.108, n.125.

⁶⁹ Byron held a number of small, scattered parcels of land in Lincolnshire, including a moiety of the manor of South Stoke, held of the Duchy of York. These were presumably enough to allow his election in 1447, but he had no other links with Lincolnshire. *CIPM*, xvii, no.994; *W.B.*, p.147; J.S. Roskell, *The Knights of the Shire for the County Palatine of Lancaster (1377-1460)*, Chetham Society, xcvi (1937), pp.152-5. See also below, p.96.

⁷⁰ However, there is no evidence of any great Kesteven 'revival' after 1461. See below, pp.212-13, 220-1.

were far from unexpected. Some, such as Grymesby or FitzWilliam, relatively die-hard partisans of Lancaster, may have benefited from their connections, but their appointments hardly constituted an outrageous break from the norm.

The influence exerted by individual magnates over local offices is a much harder phenomenon to pinpoint precisely. The potential of a particular nobleman to influence appointments depended just as much upon his standing with the government as with the members of the local gentry,⁷¹ but an active nobleman with influence inside the royal court could usually expect to get some reward for his efforts, especially during the majority rule of Henry VI. As noted earlier, relatively few Lincolnshire men had links with the great nobles,⁷² and thus few such men held local office. In the early years of Henry VI's reign, Sir Robert Roos of Gedney, thrice sheriff and a shire knight in 1422, had ties with the Duke of Gloucester, and fought in his retinue at Agincourt,⁷³ while Sir John Graa, Roos' colleague in 1422, may have been a follower of the Duke of Norfolk.⁷⁴ There is little direct evidence to suggest that either man owed his offices to these relationships, but Roos' shrievalties did occur during periods when Gloucester's influence was strong. Sir Henry Retford, sheriff in 1427 and 1454, was certainly a prominent follower of the Duke of York,⁷⁵ while William Percy, although resident at Welton, was probably a junior member of the great Northumberland family. Percy served as Constable of Lincoln and Bolingbroke Castles for many years, and was escheator in 1439-40.⁷⁶ However, such connections were few, and although a number of magnates held small areas of land in Lincolnshire, these connections seemingly did not merit any significant political investment.⁷⁷

Despite the greater number of connections between the gentry and the four resident noble families, few appointments to local office can be ascribed to their influence.⁷⁸ John Pygot, Patrick Skipwith, John Tailboys⁷⁹ and possibly John Sothill⁸⁰ all

⁷¹ Except, of course, in parliamentary elections.

⁷² See above, pp.78-9.

⁷³ Roskell, *Commons in 1422*, pp.213-4. See also below, Appendix 6.

⁷⁴ Roskell, *Commons in 1422*, p.81, n.1.

⁷⁵ Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47; see below, pp.167-8.

⁷⁶ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.42.

⁷⁷ The isolated nature of these estates is evident from the surviving records for the subsidies of 1428 and 1431. *F.A.*, iii, pp.254-366.

⁷⁸ See above, p.79.

⁷⁹ Payling names him as 'a leading member of Cromwells Lincolnshire affinity', and he married the heiress of John Cokfeld, a Nottinghamshire associate of Cromwell. Payling, *Political Society*, pp.140-1.

⁸⁰ Sothill may have been the man who supervised building works at Tattershall Castle, but Rogers states that this was a different man. Even so, it certainly suggests connections between Cromwell and the Sothills. *The Building Accounts of Tattershall Castle, 1434-72*, ed. W.D. Simpson, L.R.S., lv (1960),

had links with Lord Cromwell, but while Cromwell might have welcomed their appointments, all were eminent locals who merited their offices in their own right.⁸¹ The most obvious beneficiary of Cromwell's influence was not a local man, but Thomas Darcy, sheriff in 1433-4 and a Holland JP during the early 1440s. Darcy, a younger son of Philip, Lord Darcy, and already over 50 when he began his administrative career, spent most of his time in Yorkshire, and although he held lands in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, there is little to suggest that he would ever have sought appointments in these two counties without Cromwell's influence.⁸² The other local nobles, Welles and Willoughby, had connections with certain office holders, but it is unlikely that they had any great influence over appointments, and again the majority of these men more than merited their offices. Richard Waterton, sheriff in 1453-4 and 1457-8, was a distant relative and colleague of Leo Welles, while William Ryther, sheriff in 1430, was a feoffee of Robert, Lord Willoughby,⁸³ but both were perfectly capable of securing local office without noble assistance. However, perhaps the most infamous of gentry-noble connections was that between Lord Beaumont, probably the local nobleman with fewest Lincolnshire followers,⁸⁴ and William Tailboys. Given Tailboys' violent record, it was clearly only his relationship with Beaumont, and through Beaumont with Suffolk, which allowed him not only to escape punishment during the 1440s, but also to secure the local offices which his actions hardly suggested he deserved.⁸⁵

Although there seems to have been no attempt to dominate the Lincolnshire offices, some isolated appointments can certainly be traced to specific circumstances and events. Prolonged attempts to control local offices were likely to cause resentment, but individuals could exert influence over appointments to key offices at vital moments without causing too much trouble. Among the most obvious were the two sheriffs appointed during the periods of Yorkist control of Henry VI's government: Sir Henry Retford in 1454, during York's first Protectorate, and Thomas Burgh after the Yorkist victory at the Battle of Northampton. Retford was the head of an established and

p.xxvii, pp.34-7; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.49.

⁸¹ With the possible exception of Pygot, whose position was based on his wife's inheritance.

⁸² For a fuller summary of Darcy's career, which included a term as sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire (1435-6), see Payling, *Political Society*, p.141, n.128.

⁸³ Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.48.

⁸⁴ Beaumont's interests lay mainly in Kesteven and the neighbouring counties. *C.P.*, ii, pp.59-65; R.L. Storey, 'Lincolnshire and the Wars of the Roses,' *Nott. Med. Stud.* xiv (1970), pp.64-83, pp.68-9.

⁸⁵ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', pp.76-8; R. Virgoe, 'William Tailboys and Lord Cromwell: Crime and Politics in Lancastrian England,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, lv (1972-3), pp.459-82. Tailboys' 'career' will be discussed in Chapter 4.

well-connected local family; Burgh was a comparative newcomer, but his maternal lineage was distinguished,⁸⁶ and there was no attempt to remove him after the Yorkist defeat at Wakefield.⁸⁷ Similar examples exist among the shire knights, the election of the Treasurer of the Household, William Grymesby, to the 'Parliament of Devils' in 1459 being the most obvious. The sudden election, to a Parliament designed to destroy the Yorkist faction, of a committed Lancastrian of little local standing, would appear rather too convenient. Either pressure was applied from some quarter, or the electors were eager not to upset the victorious Lancastrians; however, Sir Robert Constable, almost certainly Grymesby's colleague, was no great Lancastrian adherent.⁸⁸ Similarly, in 1447, Sir John Byron was elected to the Parliament at Bury St Edmunds where the court faction intended to attack Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.⁸⁹ The election of Byron, an outsider, is perhaps the most blatant abuse of the system, but both show how outside influences could, when necessary, be brought to bear.

It has also been suggested that, in the years when Parliament was in session at Michaelmas, or had been recently dissolved, a high proportion of sheriffs were appointed from among the sitting MPs, reflecting successful attempts by individuals or their patrons to secure appointments. Payling quotes figures of between a quarter and a sixth of Lancastrian sheriffs nationwide being chosen from sitting MPs on these occasions,⁹⁰ but again this does not appear to have occurred in Lincolnshire. The nearest examples are probably John Pygot, appointed sheriff on 5 November 1432 after sitting in the Parliament dissolved on 17 July, and Thomas Meres, appointed on 6 November 1436, the day after a writ was dated electing him to the Parliament which met on 21 January 1437. This was Meres' third election to Parliament, and he had been a JP since February 1432, so although this was his first term as sheriff, neither office would have raised any suspicions; moreover, considering the usual delays, the two events must have been unconnected. Although such immediate preferment was possible, attendance at Parliament also provided opportunities for future advancement, and appointments such

⁸⁶ For a wider discussion of Burgh and his background, see below, ch.6, esp. pp.185-8; Appendix 6.

⁸⁷ There was little opportunity to remove him, there being only three months between the Battles of Wakefield and Towton. Burgh's later unpopularity in some circles did not become evident until after his rise to power under Edward IV. See below, ch.6.

⁸⁸ The men attesting this election were also generally of quite low status, and relatively few in number. Only one of the greater families was represented (unsurprisingly a Tailboys), and even then only by a junior member. The second MP was certainly a Constable, but the first name is missing from the return. C219/16/5; Rogers, 'County Court', p.75.

⁸⁹ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp.496-7. For Byron, see also above, p.93, n.69.

⁹⁰ Payling, *Political Society*, pp.114-15.

as Mancer Marmyon's as sheriff in 1448, only a year after he attended Parliament, may well have resulted from links forged at Westminster.

Outside influence over local offices in Lincolnshire in this period was thus an extremely inconsistent, spasmodic, and specific matter. There was no great effort to fill local government with known retainers, and the county appears largely to have been left to govern itself, presumably a reflection of its political insignificance. However, appointments could be influenced when desirable, but only on rare occasions were total outsiders championed. The few known connections between the gentry and noblemen were relatively weak, and to ascribe noble influence to an appointment on the strength of one appearance as a feoffee is to tread on very dangerous ground. Far more information is needed, about both parties, before such suppositions can be proven.

Local landholders clearly did not serve as administrators simply out of loyalty to the King, or because they had nothing else to do. Appointment to office certainly raised opportunities for personal aggrandisement, or the chance to forge wider political ties, but the most obvious attraction was the opportunity for individuals (or families) to display and cement their own position within their region. Office holding formed an integral part of gentry society, and involvement in local administration provided a framework within which the status of families and individuals could be reflected. This was made possible by the existence of a hierarchy of offices within the local administration, with men of different ranks tending to fill the different offices, a phenomenon described by numerous historians.⁹¹ However, this hierarchy was far from stable, partly due to the changing nature of the various offices (particularly the steady decline of the sheriff), and also the attitudes of the local population towards these duties. Moreover, since the importance of these offices to the landed elite had less to do with the nature of the job than with the expectations and reputation associated with it, other important issues are raised. Did the office convey status to the individual, or was it the reputation of its holders which gave status to the office? Were the careers of individuals during the later years of Lancastrian rule similar to those of their ancestors and predecessors fifty, or even thirty years earlier? Also, were the offices themselves attracting men of the same social rank throughout the period, or were changes occurring? Certainly the shrievalty had declined markedly, while

⁹¹ For example, Payling, *Political Society*, ch.5, pp.109ff, esp. p.114; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, ch.8, pp.263-77; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, ch.5, pp.107-34, esp. p.116.

the status of the JPs was rising, but was this process continuing within Lincolnshire, and is there any evidence of other changes?

The hierarchy of offices mentioned earlier was a national phenomenon, and Lincolnshire was no different, but Lincolnshire's own peculiarities, particularly its size, wealth and the threefold division, certainly had an effect on this picture. An analysis of the status of the major county office holders shows a pattern partly consistent with general expectations, but with a significant shift as the century progressed (see Table 5). The offices of sheriff and MP, as in other areas, still attracted the greater men of the county. Of the 65 Lancastrian appointments to the shrievalty, 34 were knights on appointment, with four others being knighted subsequently.⁹² However, only five esquires were appointed sheriff under Henry IV and Henry V, while between 1422 and 1440 there were thirteen esquires (three being knighted subsequently), and between 1441 and 1460 there were twelve esquires, only nine knights, and one gentleman. Clearly fewer and fewer Lincolnshire sheriffs were of knightly status on appointment.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the people becoming sheriff were any less eminent, merely that they held a lesser title, an important distinction given the national reduction in the number of knights. A more instructive analysis might be to look at the office in terms of the knightly families identified earlier.⁹³ Between 1399 and 1422, only three of the seventeen resident sheriffs did not come from one of these knightly families. Between 1422 and 1440 this number rose to six of the fourteen residents, while the last twenty years of Lancastrian rule saw only nine men from these families, three non-residents and ten others. Demographic changes obviously played a part, as some families rose and others declined or died out, and the nine 'new men' between 1440 and 1460 included Thomas Burgh, soon to become the most powerful individual in the county.⁹⁴ Yet these figures suggest less of an upheaval than those simply concerned with titles, although they still show a definite progression. Also, since the majority of non-resident sheriffs were knights (ten of the fifteen were knights on appointment, with John Constable being knighted later), the comparison becomes even more striking. However, this reduction in title was probably little more than cosmetic. Families whose heads avoided assuming knighthood probably did not suffer any great loss of local

⁹² Henry Retford (sheriff, 1427-8), knighted by 1431; John Pygot (sheriff, 1432-3), knighted by 1437; John Constable (sheriff, 1434-5), knighted by 1446; Thomas Burgh (sheriff, 1460-1), knighted by 1463.

⁹³ See above, p.52, & Appendix 4.

⁹⁴ This picture was not necessarily consistent across all parts of the county. See below, pp.102-4.

Table 5. *Lincolnshire Office Holders by Rank, 1399-1461*

	Knights	Esquires	Others ¹
<u>1399-1421</u>			
Sheriffs	18	5	0
Shire Knights	21	8	1
Escheators	2	8	11
<u>1422-1440</u>			
Sheriffs	7	13	0
Shire Knights	7	17	0
Escheators	0	17	2
<u>1441-1461</u>			
Sheriffs	9	12	1
Shire Knights	4	11	1
Escheators	0	17	3
<u>Total</u>			
Sheriffs	34	30	1
Shire Knights	32	36	2
Escheators	2	42	16

¹ Gentlemen, merchants and those whose rank is unclear or unknown.

influence, provided their landed base remained intact. The fact that more local officers were esquires, but not necessarily from 'new' families, appears to confirm this.

This shift in status was mirrored in the ranks of the county's MPs. During the Lancastrian period as a whole, 32 of the 70 seats for which evidence survives were taken by knights,⁹⁵ and a further four by men who were subsequently knighted.⁹⁶ The remaining Lincolnshire MPs were largely esquires, and only three (all knights) were non-residents. However, 27 of these 32 knightly MPs sat in the period before 1426, along with three of the four men knighted subsequently. For the sixteen parliaments between 1427 and 1460 for which names survive, only five MPs were knights at the time of election (two of whom - Byron and Constable - were outsiders) against 26 known esquires.⁹⁷ Indeed, for the nine parliaments between 1427-8 and 1442, only one knight was elected, Thomas Cumberworth in 1437. Although John Bell, a prominent Boston merchant and royal administrator, was elected in 1413, 1450 also saw the election of the first man styled as 'gentleman', Richard Welby.⁹⁸

Analysis of the backgrounds of the individuals elected again provides an important insight. Between 1399 and 1420, 22 of the 25 resident MPs were from the group of knightly families. Yet between 1421 and 1440, this figure had dropped to 14 of the 23, and only two such men were among the 14 known residents elected between 1441 and 1460: William Tailboys in 1445-6 and Mancer Marmyon in 1447. With the exception of John Byron and Robert Constable, both non-residents,⁹⁹ and Humphrey Bourchier, elected in 1460 prior to his elevation to the peerage, the rest were all from the middling ranks of the Lincolnshire gentry, a contrast to the shrievalty where the greater families, despite their reduction in title, were at least still well represented. Since election to Parliament was an office of great distinction, with a minimal workload and few costs, it seems strange that the office would be deserted by these families. Yet it is extremely unlikely that they were simply squeezed out by increased competition, and with little evidence of outside manipulation of the elections, they presumably deserted the office willingly. With no obvious reason for this dramatic change, one possible explanation

⁹⁵ For a full record of the known MPs, and details of the Parliaments for which information is missing, see Appendix 1:c.

⁹⁶ John Truthall may also have been knighted, but information is scarce. *W.B.*, p.872; C67/48, m.11.

⁹⁷ Including Pygot, later knighted. The remaining MP was Richard Welby (1450-1). See below, n.98.

⁹⁸ Although his father and his son were both styled 'esquire', there is no sign that Welby himself ever used the title. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, pp.74-5. For details of Bell, see *H.C.*, 1386-1421, ii, pp.176-9.

⁹⁹ Constable certainly had a residence in Lincolnshire (at Somerby, inherited from the Cumberworths), but he was primarily a Yorkshireman.

might be a general desire to remain clear of the ever-increasing turmoil at the centre of national political life, turmoil with which a seat in Parliament might have brought them into contact. Their social inferiors, with less to protect, more to gain and fewer potential enemies, may have been less concerned with the possible dangers.

If Lincolnshire's greater families were avoiding election to Parliament, they are likely to have sought alternative ways of expressing their power and status. Within Lincolnshire's curious administrative structure, the most readily available method of achieving this presumably lay in the peace commissions. Appointment to the bench may well have provided a relatively undemanding and locally influential method of securing the family's position within county society, while also providing safety in numbers as part of a larger whole.

The most striking development within the three Lincolnshire benches during this period was their huge increase in size. During the 1420s, the Holland bench contained only 11 or 12 members, comprising a pair of justices, a Duchy of Lancaster official, a small number of lesser magnates, and a few locals. However, by the 1440s and 1450s, this number had swollen to an average of between 16 and 18,¹⁰⁰ and the composition had altered radically. The Bishops of Lincoln were added to almost every Lincolnshire commission from 1432, while the local nobles were joined by an ever-changing number of greater magnates, such as the Earl of Suffolk, the Duke of York and the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. A similar situation occurred in both Lindsey and Kesteven, although here the increases were even more pronounced, with the number of commissioners in Kesteven rising from around 13 to between 20 and 25, and in Lindsey from around 15 in the 1430s to a high point of 27.¹⁰¹ However, the reasons for these increases were almost entirely political. The expansion during Henry VI's reign closely mirrored the increased political tension throughout the country as a whole, and became even more marked during the periods of political crisis.¹⁰² The government clearly wanted to ensure local control by appointing loyal supporters, while also rewarding its (mainly noble) followers with largely honorary seats on, for them, inconsequential benches.¹⁰³ This produced commissions in stark contrast to the smaller, more ordered

¹⁰⁰ With the notable exception of the commission of December, 1459, when only 12 men were appointed. *CPR 1452-61*, p.669.

¹⁰¹ For details, see Appendix 2.

¹⁰² This correlation can be seen clearly in Appendix 2:c.

¹⁰³ It is difficult to see any other reason for the appointment of such noblemen as the Earl of Warwick

benches appointed during the 1420s, and again during the early 1460s as Edward IV consolidated his rule.

Alongside this expansion of noble representation, the numbers of local men also rose steadily. In Holland, the five or six members of the 1420s rose to an average of eight or nine in the 1450s, with a high point of eleven in 1457. However, few of these were knights, who, by title, formed an ever smaller proportion of the local membership. In the 1420s and 1430s, around a third of Holland's gentry commissioners were knights, but no knights served between 1452 and 1454, and only Sir Thomas Holand, Sir John Tempest, a Yorkshireman, and Sir Thomas Neville, the younger brother of the Earl of Warwick, were appointed thereafter.¹⁰⁴ This would seem consistent with the general reduction in the number of men assuming knighthood, but, perhaps more importantly, of the seven knightly families identified as Holland residents, all but the Holands had either died out or disappeared by the end of the Lancastrian period, and even the Holands soon lost their knightly rank.¹⁰⁵ Early JPs such as Sir Robert Hakebeche, Sir Ralph Rochford and Sir Robert Roos had given way to lesser-ranked families, the Meres, Pynchebeks and Welbys. With the exception of Thomas Holand, who had himself only been knighted in the 1450s, the only knightly commissioners were native judges from elsewhere in Lincolnshire, such as William Ascough, and outsiders, such as Tempest and Neville. It would therefore appear that it was not just the officers of Holland which were reducing in status, but landed society as a whole, with the old knightly elite being replaced by new families, largely content to remain esquires or even gentlemen. However, little light is shed on the changes in the activities and intentions of the greater families, since much of the former Holland elite was no longer in a position to care.

More evidence is forthcoming from the Lindsey and Kesteven benches. Both saw increases in the number of great magnates, but this was almost balanced by the

or the Duke of Buckingham to commissions in Lincolnshire, a county where they had little or no personal interests.

¹⁰⁴ Tempest had Lincolnshire interests, and had served as sheriff in 1455-6. Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xli. Neville had married Maud, the widowed Lady Willoughby, and was killed at Wakefield in December 1460. Ross, *Edward IV*, pp.15, 30; *CPR 1452-61*, p.670.

¹⁰⁵ The Hakebeche and Roos families had died out, the Spayns and Darbys (whose knightly status is doubtful) had both disappeared into obscurity, the Rochfords were in severe decline, and the junior Willoughby line, formerly seated at Kirton, had succeeded to the barony of Latimer and virtually deserted Lincolnshire. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.264-5 (Hakebeche); Roskell, *Commons in 1422*, pp.213-4 (Roos); Thompson, *Boston*, p.232 (Spayn); above, p.53, n.47 (Darby); Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxxiii (Rochford); *C.P.*, vii, pp.475-9; xii (ii), pp.683ff (Willoughby); see also below, Appendix 6. For the Holand family, see Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.72; Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxi; below, p.210.

disappearance of some of the lesser noblemen, and the overall figure remained rather more stable. The greatest increase came in the ranks of the gentry, and again was ostensibly advantageous to the lower ranks. However, the fate of the knights was not entirely consistent. There were more knights on the Kesteven bench during the 1440s and 1450s than at any point since Henry VI's accession, and although the proportion of the total number was certainly far less,¹⁰⁶ the majority of such men were Kesteven residents.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the knightly contingent on the Lindsey bench declined, the four knights of 1424-30 only being equalled in the late 1440s,¹⁰⁸ and again this formed a far smaller proportion of the total gentry membership. We are thus left with the anomalous situation whereby Kesteven, which certainly produced fewer holders of the greater offices, was the only area where the number of knights on the peace commissions remained reasonably high and consistent.

Evidence for the greater families again adds a new dimension to this analysis. Of Kesteven's knightly families, only three failed to provide a single JP during the Lancastrian period,¹⁰⁹ while members of five others were regularly appointed to the bench,¹¹⁰ along with a small number of families, such as the Retfords and Tailboys, with interests in both Kesteven and Lindsey. However, of those appointed during the 1420s, only the Paynells ever provided further JPs, and then not until the 1470s. Nevertheless, there was more continuity than in Holland. Meanwhile, of the Lindsey families, only a small group were consistently appointed to the bench, while a number, including the Skipwiths and Retfords, only joined during the later years, mainly due to specific individual circumstances.¹¹¹ Other families continued to serve, but with reduced status, while a few died out. Successive heads of the Hansard family served as JPs, despite no longer being knights, a contrast to the Hauleys who were only represented by a younger

¹⁰⁶ Knights had held 3 of the 5 gentry seats in 1423, but 6 of 16 at the high-point of 1458. See Appendix 2.b.

¹⁰⁷ Only Sir Thomas Neville was a true outsider, although he too may have been resident at the time. John Markham and Godfrey Hilton were relative newcomers, but were undoubtedly local Kesteven men when appointed. For Markham, see below, p.214, n.59; for Hilton, see below, Appendix 6.

¹⁰⁸ This occurred when Sir William Ascough JCP joined, although he almost certainly owed his appointment to his judicial office rather than his family's local standing. Certainly only one other non-native judge was appointed at this time.

¹⁰⁹ The Armyns, who consistently avoided local offices; the Pedwardines, who were in decline and soon left the county; and the Pygots, although Sir John, held various other offices. See above, p.53, n.47, p.57, n.64, pp.63, 89; below, Appendix 6.

¹¹⁰ The only exception, Sir John Busshy, was a JP for only two years, 1437-9. See also below, Appendix 6.

¹¹¹ The Skipwiths were emerging from a long minority, while Henry Retford's Yorkist connections presumably reduced his opportunities while York was out of favour. See below, Appendix 6.

son. As expected from such a large area, the Lindsey picture is rather mixed, but would seem to fall somewhere between the consistency of Kesteven and the wholesale changes of Holland, with reduction of status possibly having the greatest effect.

A similar mixture appears among the ranks of the commissioners of array. As in many other counties, these relatively high-status officers tended to be the same men as the peace commissioners,¹¹² and thus the Lincolnshire arrays reflected the diversity of the three benches. For instance, the Holland commission of September 1458 comprised two local nobles, three men who had previously served as sheriff or shire knight, and three other men, all with no specific title, whose activities were restricted to the Holland bench, an extremely mixed group for such an important and highly responsible office. However, this similarity means that these commissions give few insights beyond those already evident from the three benches.

This analysis also raises a significant issue concerning the accepted idea of the rise to prominence of the JPs. Although their powers were undoubtedly growing during this period, it would appear that, certainly in Holland and Lindsey and to a degree in Kesteven, the personal status of the people *actually sitting* was in fact not rising but falling. It is debatable as to whether, at this time, it was the status of its members which gave the bench its prominence or vice-versa, but the presence of the greater knights could only have boosted the commission's standing. Since the gentry members did the bulk of the work at the peace sessions, by the end of the 1450s it is entirely conceivable that all the sitting JPs in Holland were of esquire rank or less, as were a majority of those sitting in Kesteven and Lindsey. The families concerned were not necessarily any less influential, but the esteem associated with knighthood may well have largely disappeared from the benches. Although it would be excessive to ascribe any increase in local crime to this reduction in status among the JPs, it is likely that a prominent knight or nobleman would have commanded greater respect from the general population than a mere esquire or gentleman, despite all theoretically having the same judicial powers, and it is doubtful whether a prominent local lawbreaker, such as William Tailboys, would have had much respect for a body staffed entirely by his social inferiors.

While these changes in the social background of Lincolnshire office holders undoubtedly had important consequences for the offices themselves, and possibly for

¹¹² Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, p.265.

royal government, they must also have affected the individual careers of the officials themselves. With fewer knights holding county office, and fewer men from the greater families, the *cursus honorum* of each individual landholder must also have been significantly different from that of his predecessors, and possibly from those of his neighbours and contemporaries in other counties. In Lancastrian Nottinghamshire, Simon Payling has identified a distinct group of families and individuals who, between them, dominated the administration of their county.¹¹³ These men held numerous offices, were regularly re-appointed, and their families had a proud tradition of service over many generations. To an extent, something similar existed in Lincolnshire during the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, while the Lancastrian connection held power, but even this was a recent creation, with many of these families themselves being newcomers to Lincolnshire.¹¹⁴ Following the gradual disintegration of this affinity, Lincolnshire produced few individuals, and even fewer families, who were especially active in local administration, and even these were not necessarily the wealthiest or the most influential,¹¹⁵ and nor did they dominate county life to any great degree. Some men, notably Thomas Cumberworth, Thomas Meres, Walter Tailboys and Nicholas Bowet, did hold a number of offices over a reasonably long period, but such individuals were rare, and, perhaps more importantly, few produced heirs who were equally as active.¹¹⁶ This in turn probably contributed to the ease with which the new Yorkist elite assumed power after 1461.¹¹⁷

The sheer number of different people holding county office, coupled with the lack of multiple re-appointments, gives an indication of the breadth of the office-holding class within Lincolnshire (see Table 6). 48 different people served as sheriff of Lincolnshire under the Lancastrians, and there were 50 different escheators; 30 and 38 men respectively served on only one occasion.¹¹⁸ Only the MPs showed a slightly different

¹¹³ Payling, *Political Society*, pp.111-19, pp.216-20, & esp. ch.2.

¹¹⁴ See above, p.64 & n.77.

¹¹⁵ Of the more active individuals, Thomas Meres (twice an escheator, five times an MP and twice sheriff between 1428 and 1447) was from a family with no knightly history, and Hamo Sutton (once escheator, once sheriff and three times an MP) was a Lincoln merchant.

¹¹⁶ Of the four mentioned above, only Thomas Meres left a son who was prominent in county affairs. Bowet's descendants are obscure, while Walter Tailboys' son, William, coupled only a limited administrative career with his more famous criminal activities. See below, ch.4. Cumberworth was childless, but his lands passed to Robert Constable, a future Lincolnshire sheriff and MP. For further biographical details, see Appendix 6.

¹¹⁷ See below, ch.7.

¹¹⁸ A small number also served other terms outside the Lancastrian period, such as William Bolle, who served three terms, totalling eight years, as escheator under Richard II, in 1388-90, 1392-4 and 1395-9. See Appendix 1 for further details.

Table 6. *The Spread of Responsibility, 1399-1461*

	Sheriff	Escheator	Shire Knight ¹
Total Appointments ²	65	59	70
Individual Appointees	48	50	40
Individuals serving 1 Term	30	38	24
Individuals serving 2 Terms ³	13	11	5
Individuals serving 3 Terms	4	0	5
Individuals serving 4 Terms or more	1	1	6

¹ Figures refer to county elections for Lincolnshire only.

² Total number of appointments made between 1399 and 1461 (deposition of Henry VI).

³ Figures include terms served before 1399 or after 1461.

ratio, with 40 people sharing the 70 county seats, and only 24 being elected only once.¹¹⁹ However, this was largely due to the repeated re-election of a small number of individuals, four of whom served in five Parliaments each. There was little such re-appointment among the sheriffs or escheators. Only Sir Henry Retford was sheriff on more than three occasions, and only four men served three terms;¹²⁰ only one man, William Bolle, held the escheatorship more than twice.¹²¹

These large numbers also affected the number of different offices any particular individual held. 30 of the 65 shrieval appointments went to men who also sat in Parliament for Lincolnshire, a total of 20 different individuals spread relatively evenly across the Lancastrian period. This was a reasonably high proportion of appointments, but the numbers involved hardly indicate a dominant elite. Less surprisingly, fewer men combined the escheatorship with either the shrievalty, a seat in Parliament, or both. Seven escheators also became sheriff at some point during their careers, five of whom were also elected to at least one Parliament for Lincolnshire.¹²² Two further escheators were also elected to Parliament. Importantly, the five men who held all three offices were all active during the earlier years of the Lancastrian period, their last office being Thomas Meres' final term as sheriff in 1446-7. Not only were their successors holding fewer offices, but they were also seemingly becoming more selective in their choices. Unsurprisingly, none of the Lincolnshire coroners whose names survive held any higher office,¹²³ although not all were of entirely lowly status.¹²⁴ However, given the often total lack of information, it is entirely possible that some of the more obscure JPs, or even escheators, could also have served as coroners. Nevertheless, the divisions of status between these lower offices and the rest seem to have been hardening, despite the lowly backgrounds of many later MPs and sheriffs.

¹¹⁹ Sir Richard Hansard, Sir Thomas Cumberworth, Walter Tailboys and Thomas Meres.

¹²⁰ Retford was sheriff on four occasions, although only one term, in 1406-7, occurred after 1399. Sir John Rochford, Sir Robert Roos, Sir Nicholas Bowet and Richard Waterton were all appointed three times, but Waterton's first appointment was cancelled and he probably did not act. *CFR 1437-45*, p.303; see below, p.108, n.125.

¹²¹ See above, n.118. His career was exceptional among the Lincolnshire escheators. It is interesting that many of the men serving multiple terms held some offices before 1399.

¹²² Sir John Copuldyke, Sir Richard Hansard, Hamo Sutton, John Tailboys and Thomas Meres. Given his family's prominence, Sir William Skipwith, escheator in 1449-50 and sheriff in 1458-9, may also have attended one of the Parliaments for which information does not survive, possibly under Edward IV.

¹²³ For details, see below, Appendix 1:d.

¹²⁴ Despite orders for his removal for 'insufficient qualification' in 1426, Gilbert Hansard, a Lindsey coroner, was almost certainly the younger son of Sir Richard Hansard. *CCR 1422-9*, p.236; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.284-5.

The possible reasons for the lack of re-appointments are many, but the most obvious problems were no greater in 1455 than they were in 1400. The escheatorship was certainly an unglamorous job, and the Lincolnshire shrievalty was a notoriously unpopular office.¹²⁵ A small minority clearly felt differently, either seeing potential for personal gain, or feeling that the difficulties were outweighed by the prestige of the office. Yet most members of the gentry, and certainly many of the families who would have been expected to have held office, appear to have either avoided it entirely, or, presumably grudgingly, accepted on one occasion in expectation of not being called upon again. Re-election to Parliament may have been more common, but mainly during the early part of the century, before the political troubles began. Whereas before 1440 only 12 of the 54 seats went to men who are known to have served a single term, the proportion rose to 12 out of 16 seats after 1440. Even allowing for the significant gaps in the extant information, this represents a significant change. The political difficulties appear the most likely reason here, and, certainly in the 1450s, may well have affected the other offices likewise.

These figures would also suggest that either previous experience and proven capability were not major concerns within the Lincolnshire administration, or widespread apathy or hostility to office-holding made this ideal impossible to achieve. In many counties, re-election of experienced MPs was a common phenomenon, and Acheson has noted that the Leicestershire electors preferred to send at least one experienced member to each Parliament.¹²⁶ Again, the Lincolnshire evidence suggests a definite shift in either attitudes or expediency. Before 1440, two novices were elected together on only four occasions, out of a total of 27 Parliaments; after 1440, this happened in five of the eight Parliaments.¹²⁷ Since people were simply not being re-elected, this situation was clearly

¹²⁵ The problems with the Lincolnshire shrievalty came to a head in 1444. The nominated sheriff, John Pygot, eventually had his appointment reversed, various other candidates refused, and in May 1444, the Council finally appointed Thomas Moigne, a relatively lowly esquire. In the following November, the appointment of Richard Waterton was again cancelled, and Moigne was probably left in office until John Newport's appointment the following April. Jeffs, 'Medieval Sheriff', pp.61-3; *CFR 1437-45*, p.303. One of the main problems was the difficulty in collecting the county fee farm, and Moigne was tempted with a promise that he could render his account on oath, rather than submitting to the traditional Exchequer audit. This removed the inevitable threat of legal action when the sheriff failed to collect all the expected revenue. This privilege was seemingly extended to all future Lancastrian and Yorkist appointments to Lincolnshire, the only county where this became a regular event. Jeffs, 'Medieval Sheriff', pp.62-5.

¹²⁶ Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.125.

¹²⁷ Robert Sheffield served a second term in 1445-6, Thomas Meres sat in the last of his five Parliaments in 1442, while William Grymesby, shire knight in 1459, had sat for Grimsby in 1449. Of course, the gaps in the information make all these figures provisional.

unavoidable. The figures are also in stark contrast to the pattern in Nottinghamshire, where the election of two Parliamentary novices became progressively less common.¹²⁸ As Payling notes, a large number of new men had entered the Nottinghamshire administration after 1399, certainly far more than did so in Lincolnshire.¹²⁹ Yet there was just as great a contrast between the two counties during the later decades of the Lancastrian period. This must have been at least partly because the Nottinghamshire offices remained the preserve of the old, established families, while the social background of Lincolnshire MPs was changing radically.

The possible drawbacks of having a large number of novice sheriffs are less clear, but, given the often-voiced desire that sheriffs be replaced regularly and have strictly limited terms, this probably caused little concern among contemporaries. Although the shrievalty was theoretically at the top of the hierarchy of local offices, individual sheriffs were not necessarily experienced local administrators, and indeed for some men this was their first office. Both Philip Tylney and Roger Pedwardine held no other major Lincolnshire office beyond their shrieval terms, while the only other office of John Newport, appointed sheriff in 1445,¹³⁰ was as shire knight in November 1450. The sheriff's staff presumably ensured that each appointee was closely assisted, while some sheriffs, having recognised since boyhood that they would eventually be expected to serve, would doubtless have accumulated some prior knowledge. The basic, monotonous administrative duties of the shrievalty (and likewise the escheatorship) would probably have been easier to learn before appointment than the more *ad hoc* political instinct necessary to succeed as an MP.

The differing attitudes towards administrative experience is evident from the lack of any specific order in which individuals progressed through the ranks of local office. The *cursus honorum* of medieval local government had little concept of starting at the bottom and working to the top, and family reputation, influence and power meant far more than ability or experience - the 'hierarchy' noted earlier was one of status, not competence. Although some offices did tend to attract the less experienced administrators, these were not necessarily the lesser ones. Nevertheless, few greater officers ever performed the lesser duties. Indeed, no Lincolnshire coroner is known to

¹²⁸ Payling, *Political Society*, Table 5.1, p.118. However, only a slightly smaller proportion of different individuals were elected. 38 men shared 78 Nottinghamshire seats, an average of slightly more than 2 each, whereas Lincolnshire saw an average of 1.75 per person (40 men and 70 seats).

¹²⁹ Payling, *Political Society*, pp.118-19.

¹³⁰ Appointed, but did not act. See above, p.108, n.125.

have held any of the greater offices, and only a small number of escheators. Nine escheators also served as sheriff, MP or both, most being active during the early decades of the century.¹³¹ Six of these held the escheatorship first, as did the majority of the 12 escheators of Henry VI who became JPs. The latter figure may seem reasonably large, but was undoubtedly a reflection of the large number of men needed to staff three benches, and consequently their varied social ranks.

A seat in Parliament was regarded in some counties as an introduction to local administration, despite most counties being careful not to elect two such novices together. However, this was not always the case; Nottinghamshire men often began their careers in Parliament, but few Leicestershire men did so.¹³² In Lincolnshire, most early Lancastrian MPs had at least some previous administrative experience, and although this experience generally lessened as the century progressed, the trend seems to have continued. Only eight MPs held no other Lincolnshire offices before their election,¹³³ and only 8 of the 20 men who served terms both as sheriff and MP attended Parliament *before* becoming sheriff. 11 of the 26 different men returned to Henry VI's Parliaments were current or past JPs, and only seven never joined any of the peace commissions; however, five of these were elected after 1447, despite the increase in the number of gentry JPs. Of the men elected to the six Parliaments between 1447 and 1461, only one was elected more than once, yet four were former or current JPs,¹³⁴ two were former sheriffs, and one was a former escheator.¹³⁵ Although none could be described as a particularly experienced administrator, only a minority had never held any Lincolnshire office before. Service as an MP may have been reasonably undemanding, but, particularly during the later years of Lancastrian rule, election was regarded neither as an introduction to county office, nor as the preserve of the local workhorses.

With its three benches, perhaps the most obvious route into Lincolnshire office holding was through the peace commissions. This seems to have been true to a degree. In addition to the 19 MPs who also sat as peace commissioners, 25 of the 41 sheriffs appointed during Henry VI's reign were also JPs during their careers, of whom 16 joined

¹³¹ The only exceptions were Sir William Skipwith and William Grymesby.

¹³² Payling, *Political Society*, p.114; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.124.

¹³³ These included the non-residents John Byron and Robert Constable, John Graa, a relative newcomer from Yorkshire, and William Tirwhit, who, despite holding other offices, did not join the Lindsey bench until 1432, after his father's death. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.630-1; below, Appendix 6.

¹³⁴ In addition, Sir Robert Constable was a JP in the East Riding of Yorkshire. *W.B.*, p.213.

¹³⁵ William Grymesby, shire knight in 1459, had sat as a Grimsby burgess in 1449. *W.B.*, pp.400-1. However, this period did immediately follow the end of the long careers of men such as Hamo Sutton, Thomas Meres and Sir Thomas Cumberworth.

the bench before becoming sheriff. 16 from 41 appointments may not seem a particularly high proportion. However, of the sheriffs who were never Lincolnshire JPs, seven were non-residents, and four served in the years 1441-4, shortly before the office's unpopularity reached its climax, and also a period when the Crown may have been influencing the appointments.¹³⁶ Also, of those only subsequently appointed to the bench, Thomas Darcy and Thomas Burgh were politically-motivated appointees, and Thomas Moigne's was a last resort.¹³⁷ Again, there are no clear trends, but it does seem that a large proportion of resident sheriffs had already acted as JPs before their shrieval appointments. Although the evidence is extremely mixed, the average sheriff seems to have been slightly more experienced than the average MP, while a seat on one of the benches generally occurred relatively early in a career; but these are extremely tentative generalisations, and many careers were totally different. There was no well-trodden route through the local administration, and individual careers progressed at differing rates, entirely dependent upon the aims and ambitions of the person concerned.

Alongside the reluctance of individuals to secure re-appointment (or even a first appointment) to local office, there were also few families which consistently and regularly provided Lincolnshire officials. Representatives from 40 different families served as sheriff between 1399 and 1461, an extremely large group indicative of the few people serving more than one term.¹³⁸ Certainly some families did provide more officials than others, but these were the exception. Brothers John and Ralph Rochford both acted as sheriff under Henry IV, as did Walter and John Tailboys under Henry VI, but such examples were rare. More surprisingly there were few instances of fathers and sons both serving during this period, only five in all: the two Henry Retfords, John and Richard Waterton, Mancer and John Marmyon, John and William Copuldyke and Gerard and John Sothill. Even then, William Copuldyke and John Sothill were both younger sons.¹³⁹

The same pattern is found among the shire knights. Brothers Robert and Godfrey Hilton, Richard Welby and his son Richard, two members each of the Meres and Skipwith families, and three from the Tailboys family, are the only examples, and most of

¹³⁶ See above, pp.91-3 & n.59; p.108, n.125.

¹³⁷ See above, pp.95-6; p.108, n.125.

¹³⁸ Of course, some of these families were related by marriage or distant kinship, but only direct descendants and siblings are regarded here as being of the same family. Hence John and Richard Waterton of Great Corringham are regarded as being from the same family, while their distant relative Robert Waterton of Methley, Yorkshire, is not. For further details, see below, Appendix 6.

¹³⁹ John Sothill was Sir Gerard's second son, and inherited the Pouger estates at West Rasen. William Copuldyke succeeded to the family estates after the childless death of his elder brother, John. See Appendix 6.

these were elected only once.¹⁴⁰ The peace commissions also saw little family continuity. In Holland during Henry VI's reign, two members of the prolific Pynchebek family were appointed,¹⁴¹ as were the elder and younger Richard Welby, but no other individuals from the same family. Kesteven saw two members of the Walcote family, a single commission for the younger Thomas Meres, replacing his extremely active father, and both William and Walter Tailboys, although the latter only served for six months in 1439. Lindsey, despite having far more commissioners, saw only one gentry family with more than one representative, with John, Walter and William Tailboys all serving at various times.¹⁴² Again, as with the other county offices, this was an extremely widespread diffusion of responsibility.

Of course, the sixty years of the Lancastrian period is perhaps a rather short period of time for such an analysis, given the numerous possible problems faced by gentry families. For instance, the career of Sir William Skipwith's father, Thomas, ended prematurely with his early death in 1417, and William's long minority left the family politically inactive. Nevertheless, many of these families were large, and the lack of officers from junior branches, particularly if the main line was incapable of acting, is perhaps surprising. William Skipwith's uncle, Patrick, did sit in two Parliaments, but held no other offices: hardly the career expected from someone who was effectively head of his family during his nephew's minority. Yet, as noted earlier, even those without such obvious problems were often inactive.¹⁴³ Although the wealth of the main line was reduced by provisions for younger sons, the Sothills provided just one MP during the whole period, Sir Gerard in 1402, and two sheriffs, Sir Gerard in 1401¹⁴⁴ and 1402 and John in 1442. No Sothill sat on any of the three peace commissions, while the career of Sir Gerard's eldest son, also Gerard, consisted only of two terms as escheator. Such a chequered administrative history was far from unusual for the families of Lancastrian Lincolnshire.

The overall picture of Lincolnshire office-holders under the Lancastrian kings would therefore appear to be one of declining status, evasion and fragmentation, with

¹⁴⁰ Walter Tailboys and Thomas Meres being the notable exceptions, with five elections each.

¹⁴¹ However, their exact identities and relationship are far from clear. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.44.

¹⁴² Two members of the Waterton family also appear on the Lindsey commission, but this may have been an error. See the notes to Appendix 2. William Cromwell also served alongside his noble nephew, Ralph, Lord Cromwell, as did Leo Welles and his son Richard.

¹⁴³ See above, p.53 & n.47.

¹⁴⁴ He did not account, and presumably refused the office.

relatively little stability or continuity. The county's internal divisions had only a limited effect. The Holland gentry, although often from newly-prominent families, continued to secure a reasonable proportion of county offices; yet the Kesteven gentry, generally more stable, did not. Lindsey retained its numerical superiority, while throughout the county no particular families dominated, whether by choice or accident. Lincolnshire only partly corresponded to the usual division of offices between the various ranks. The greater families generally held only the greater offices, but such divisions of labour were by no means clear-cut, particularly during the early decades. Meanwhile, the profiles of the peace commissions suggest a diverse administrative elite, with the various ranks joining to work together, at least within these bodies. This picture of the county's office holders, as an inclusive and wide-ranging group of individuals encompassing a large number of people from many families and backgrounds, appears consistent with the general style of society depicted earlier.¹⁴⁵ The rather rigid structure identified for counties such as Nottinghamshire had no parallel in Lincolnshire, and local office was open to a wide range of people, not just a small clique of the wealthy and powerful. The ability of a family such as the Suttons, to rise rapidly from merchant roots to become a major force in local administration, testifies to Lincolnshire society's open nature.¹⁴⁶ Lincolnshire's broad-based social structure, a product of its size and wealth and perhaps best reflected in the peace commissions, may well have helped to foster a greater degree of gentry interaction than was possible in other, more rigidly hierarchical counties. Whether this greater interaction also produced a more peaceful society remains to be seen.

¹⁴⁵ See above, ch.2.

¹⁴⁶ See above, p.64; below, Appendix 6.

Chapter 4

Lawlessness and Local Violence

The reputation of the fifteenth century as a period of widespread violence and criminal activity has undergone something of a rehabilitation during recent years. The traditional, Shakespearean view of the century, as a time of endemic and ever-increasing lawlessness, has been very much put into context by modern writers, just as the blood-soaked image of the Wars of the Roses has been revised.¹ No longer is the fifteenth century seen merely as a violent interlude between the more peaceful and prosperous high middle ages and the sixteenth century of the Tudors; rather, it is now regarded as a period where crime in general was probably no more common than it had been in the immediate past, or would be in the immediate future. However, have historians possibly gone too far in their attempts to rehabilitate the fifteenth-century gentry and nobility? In the process of absolving the period of its unwarranted, Tudor-inspired reputation, have modern studies possibly reduced the apparent importance of lawlessness and disorder to a period in which such issues were still very much a part of everyday life? We must not lose sight of the simple fact that, although society as a whole may not have been any more or less violent, the country was, albeit for a variety of reasons, plagued by civil warfare, however limited and sporadic, for over thirty years. The continuator of the Croyland Chronicle, describing the early years of the Wars, wrote that:

‘in the words of the Gospel, ‘Brother was divided against brother and father against father;’ . . . And not only among princes and people had such a spirit of contention arisen, but even in every society, whether chapter, college, or convent, had this unhappy plague of division effected an entrance; . . . The

¹ For the dismantling of the traditional picture of late-medieval violence, see P.C. Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia, 1422-1442* (Oxford, 1992), esp. ch.1; C.L. Kingsford, *Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England* (London, 1925); J.G. Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1973); E. Powell, *Kingship, Law and Society: Criminal Justice in the Reign of Henry V* (Oxford, 1989). For current perspectives on the levels of violence and bloodshed during the Wars, see J. Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1981), ch.1; J.R. Lander, *The Wars of the Roses* (Gloucester, 1990), pp.3-21; C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses* (Cambridge, 1997), ch.1; Goodman, *Wars*.

consequence was, that, . . . the combatants . . . attacked each other whenever they happened to meet . . .'²

Such a situation is unlikely to have been a result of the early years of the Wars themselves - the very nature of the Wars, and their relatively limited scale, would tend to preclude this. Thus, such divisions are more likely to have been a product and a feature of the preceding period, of tensions and difficulties existing before the outbreak of war in 1455. The Chronicler's words may have been exaggerated, going on to suggest carnage far worse than that which actually occurred,³ but they must have reflected his own fears and understanding, and probably those of at least a proportion of the population. This impression, important in itself if widely held, must have had at least some basis.

Professor R.L. Storey, in *The End of the House of Lancaster*, put forward a proposition for the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses which has become one of the most famous, and most contentious, of all such theories. His premise, that the outbreak of the Wars could, at least in part, be described as 'the outcome of an escalation of private feuds', has attracted much debate and criticism since its publication.⁴ Storey's argument does, however, need a little clarification with regard to local violence. He was not suggesting that the Wars were the product of a situation where a number of private disputes in the localities, involving a bellicose and restless landed class, became extremely violent and merged to produce one large conflict, with the English throne as its eventual prize. Rather, as he describes, it was the failure of Henry VI's faction-ridden governmental and judicial bodies to resolve satisfactorily the large number of local disputes which had always been part of life in the English shires, be they simple disagreements over land or other, graver matters, which caused the problem. In this situation, the disaffected parties looked to their own devices for restitution, and to their social superiors for assistance, rather than trusting the King's justice. This often took the form of arbitration, an integral and positive aspect of bastard feudal relationships;⁵ but it also often involved the use of force, especially among the landed elite, the people in a position to exploit such behaviour but also the very group who were expected to maintain the King's peace. Thus, rather than solving the dispute, the original problems

² *Ingulph*, p.419.

³ For further examples, see below, pp.145-6.

⁴ Storey, *Lancaster*, p.27; see also above, p.11.

⁵ For a discussion of this, see below, pp.138-40.

were too often perpetuated and indeed exacerbated, and a situation was created which would eventually polarise into two, albeit loosely aligned, opposing camps. Rather than the violence itself as such, it was the quarrel between those flourishing under this system and those who suffered which provided the basis for warfare.

Storey illustrated his point with discussions of two of the most high-profile disputes of Henry VI's reign, those between the Nevilles and the Percies in the North, and between the Earl of Devon and Lord Bonville in the South-West.⁶ However, the validity of Storey's argument rests on two important elements, neither of which is especially well illustrated by these examples: firstly, that disputes involving average members of the county gentry became embroiled in the wider arguments; and secondly, that such disputes became increasingly numerous and violent, thus drawing in large numbers of people, and creating an extremely volatile situation. Only if these two points can be proved can Storey's thesis really be seen as valid.

As a contrast to Storey, the traditional picture of the century has been even further eroded, particularly in recent years, by the proliferation of local studies and a tendency to highlight long-term trends rather than more immediate concerns. Philippa Maddern, in her study of local violence in East Anglia during the first decades of Henry VI's reign, has suggested quite forcefully and persuasively that violence, at least among the gentry, was actually rather rare, and that any confrontations which did occur were committed within strict social guidelines and limitations.⁷ As she states, limited acts of violence were seen as justifiable, provided they accorded with the perceived 'natural order'.⁸ It was only when these limits were breached, and the actions of a tiny minority threatened to undermine the social norms of gentry life, that violence became a problem. Maddern has suggested that violence actually played an almost negligible part in the majority of gentry disputes, and that when it did, it was so unusual and unacceptable as to provoke often strong reactions.⁹ This idea actually fits in rather well with at least part of Storey's argument. The abuses of the legal system, through the influence of magnates, officials and others, played a large part in undermining the normal workings of the courts, and since litigation played such a significant role in the ordering of gentry life and the solution of gentry disputes, this was certain to have repercussions. If the usual

⁶ Storey, *Lancaster*, esp. chs.10 & 13.

⁷ Maddern, *Violence*, esp. ch.7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.231-2.

⁹ Maddern highlights the strong local reaction to the criminal career of John Belsham. *Ibid.*, pp.154-66.

methods of social regulation failed to act in the expected way, would opponents not be forced to use other, perhaps less peaceful, means? Maddern implies that this was unnecessary during the period of her study (c.1422-c.1442), since such occasions did not generally arise, but this was largely before the troubles of Henry VI's majority rule really began to have an effect. Whether Maddern's ideas can be seen to hold true during the later years of the reign, and particularly during the descent into warfare during the 1450s, remains to be seen, but the two pictures, of Maddern and Storey, are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The central problem in assessing the overall level of violence within any section of the medieval community is the source material; it is very difficult to discover anything more than general impressions.¹⁰ The major sources for any such study must be the records of the royal courts, since few records survive in any great number from the lesser, more local jurisdictions, such as the peace commissions, sheriffs' tourns or franchisal courts. But the central court plea rolls cannot be treated as anything approaching a comprehensive survey; that was not their purpose. They obviously only record cases conducted in the relevant court (King's Bench or Common Pleas), and generally give only one side of the story, that of the plaintiff. Also, cases which did appear probably had little in common apart from the fact that someone involved wanted the case to reach King's Bench; otherwise, it would probably have been resolved more locally, or by arbitration.

Maddern has also noted that ideas of what constituted a 'crime' have changed, often considerably, over the centuries, as have the methods of describing them.¹¹ Many incidents of possible gentry violence may not have left any record of their existence simply because society at the time did not recognise these incidents as crimes, and just because there is no evidence of criminal activity does not mean that such things did not happen - it is extremely dangerous to argue conclusively from silence.¹² Also, while

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the problems of using legal records, see Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, Appendix 4, pp.705-9; Maddern, *Violence*, ch.2; also, for a brief historiography of the problem, see Powell, *Kingship*, Introduction, esp. pp.1-9.

¹¹ Maddern, *Violence*, ch.1.

¹² The problems with this can be illustrated by an example from Maddern, who argued that there was no evidence of violence or trespass allegations in the dispute in Suffolk between William Clopton and the Lincolnshire esquire Robert Eland, and thus it was simply a 'gentlemanly dispute' over a vague, long-forgotten land claim. Maddern, *Violence*, pp.166ff. However, on the King's Bench plea roll for Michaelmas term, 1430, there is a case brought, in Lincolnshire, by Robert Eland and his wife against Clopton and some of his associates, alleging trespass and other offences. The charges are hardly

occasions when prosecutions were blocked by the actions of a powerful lord have become notorious,¹³ how many cases failed for the very same reason before ever reaching the stage where they would be recorded? How many victims or witnesses were too frightened to come forward, fearful of retaliation from their tormentor during the long legal process or after the often inevitable acquittal or pardon? Also, how many disputes, even after they became violent, were solved by extra-judicial methods, thus by-passing the legal records altogether? The disappearance of cases from the plea rolls without judgement or other conclusion usually meant that the dispute had been solved by other means, often by arbitration,¹⁴ but undoubtedly many went straight to this stage. Thus the plea rolls can be assumed to contain records of perhaps only a fraction of the incidents of local crime and violence, and any impressions gained from them must remain only impressions.

The best overview of lawlessness in a particular region would doubtless have come from the peace rolls, but few survive, and none for Lancastrian Lincolnshire.¹⁵ The only remaining records of their business are for cases transferred to King's Bench and therefore entered on the plea rolls, a reasonably frequent occurrence but by no means regular.¹⁶ Again, only the most important cases were summoned to Westminster - 'important' because of royal interest or the wishes of the litigants, not the crime alleged - and thus cases involving the nobility and gentry were more likely to be transferred. This could, however, lead to a misinterpretation of the levels of gentry violence. Members of the gentry may appear over-represented in what is by far the fullest record, not necessarily because they were an especially lawless group but because the plea rolls do not give a full account of the activities of the lower classes, whose justice would be swifter, more local, and often more summary.¹⁷ The gentry may have been especially litigious, but they were also better able to meet the costs involved, and were often particularly eager, especially in the case of land disputes, to have the case decided by the highest court possible in order to prevent future counter-claims. Those with prominent

gentlemanly in tone, although the language is relatively standard, and Maddern's general theories about the case probably hold. KB27/678, m.92.

¹³ Especially Suffolk's support of Tailboys, described below, pp.119-24.

¹⁴ A point noted by Powell, and contrary to the views of Bellamy, who stated that many cases ended because the two parties were either 'bored, exhausted or dead'. Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law', p.51; Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order*, pp.117-18.

¹⁵ *Proceedings before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. B.H. Putnam (London, 1938), pp.34-7; *Records of some Sessions*, ed. Kimball, i, pp.ix-lxvi.

¹⁶ For example, see below, pp.121-2, for the indictments against William Tailboys in 1448.

¹⁷ Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order*, esp. chs.2 & 6.

patrons at court could also expect a more favourable hearing. Moreover, there was always the possibility that the very threat of appearance before the central courts would persuade an opponent to settle, doubtless to the plaintiff's advantage.

Despite these reservations, the central courts, particularly King's Bench, were a popular arena for gentry disputes, and the plea rolls provide the best hope of judging the levels of local violence, even if this picture is only a comparative one. However, would any increase in activity in the records necessarily reflect an increase in actual crime, or even an increase in the number of people using the court due to the failure of extra-judicial measures? Could it not also simply reflect more efficient practice, an effort by the government to crack down on crime, or better record keeping? In the absence of judgments in the vast majority of cases, we often do not even know whether the pleas were genuine, exaggerated or just plain fraudulent. Also, an increase in local violence would not necessarily be reflected by an increase in the business of the courts. If people were using violent means to settle their disputes, it is likely that fewer cases would come to court, particularly if there was general mistrust of the impartiality of the system. In the absence of reliable figures or clear explanations, a qualitative approach, rather than a purely quantitative one, may prove just as valuable. What sort of crimes were being committed, who was committing them, and were the perpetrators punished or did they walk free? Analysis of the plea rolls will hopefully give some general impressions, but rather, as Powell and Maddern have both suggested, the most sensible method is perhaps simply to show by example what sort of things were happening, and what the results may have been.¹⁸

Following this idea, before attempting to establish any discernible trends in the levels of crime and violence among the fifteenth century Lincolnshire gentry, it may be worthwhile examining the 'career' of probably the most notorious Lincolnshire example of what has become known as the 'criminal gentry' - William Tailboys of South Kyme.¹⁹ The violent feud which simmered between Tailboys and his enemies, particularly John Dymoke and Lord Cromwell, throughout the 1440s and early 1450s has been described

¹⁸ E. Powell, 'Social Research and the Use of Medieval Criminal Records', *Michigan Law Review*, lxxix (1981), pp.967-78; Powell, *Kingship*, pp.1-9; Maddern, *Violence*, p.21.

¹⁹ For further examples and discussion, see B.A. Hanawalt, 'Fur-Collar Crime: the Pattern of Crime among the Fourteenth-Century English Nobility', *Journal of Social History*, viii (1975), pp.1-17; E.L.G. Stones, 'The Folvilles of Ashby-Folville, Leicestershire, and their Associates in Crime, 1326-1347', *T.R.H.S.*, 5th ser., vii (1957), pp.117-36; J.G. Bellamy, 'The Coterel Gang: an Anatomy of a Band of Fourteenth-Century Criminals', *E.H.R.*, lxxix (1964), pp.698-717.

in detail by Roger Virgoe,²⁰ and has also been used by Storey himself to illustrate the way local affairs and central politics could interact.²¹ Indeed, Storey even noted that there may be a case to argue that Tailboys' life of crime had a direct influence on the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses.²² The Tailboys case does, however, show clearly the basis for part of Storey's argument, illustrating how local disputes could become enmeshed in national politics, to the detriment of both justice and good government. While showing the direct consequences of such violence upon public order in the localities, it also gives an insight into the political tensions within the county during Henry VI's reign, and the way the law could be manipulated by those at the centre of power.

William Tailboys was not simply an upstart gentleman who rose to prominence, caused a great deal of trouble, and disappeared again. The Tailboys family was one of the wealthiest and most powerful in Lincolnshire during the later Middle Ages.²³ William himself served as shire knight in 1445, and as a JP - in Lindsey and Kesteven during the 1440s, and also in Northumberland. His offices, his election to Parliament, and his marriage to the daughter of a court favourite,²⁴ give an indication of the influence and esteem of both William and his family. By the mid-1440s he had also forged relationships with two of the most influential members of the Lancastrian regime; John, 1st Viscount Beaumont, the most prominent nobleman in Kesteven, and, through Beaumont, the King's chief minister, William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk. Violence by such a prominent local notable would no doubt have caused much concern for many involved, while also highlighting the shortcomings of the system. The parallels between this case and that of John Belsham, described by Maddern, are striking.²⁵ Both involved a large section of the local elite uniting to act against a man who, by his actions, had placed himself outside the normal bounds of gentle society, and who, in the minds of his enemies, needed to be brought to heel.

²⁰ R. Virgoe, 'William Tailboys and Lord Cromwell: Crime and Politics in Lancastrian England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, lv (1972-3), pp.459-82. Much of the detail of the following section is based upon this article.

²¹ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', pp.64-83.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.81-2.

²³ For further details, see Appendix 6.

²⁴ By November 1446 he had married Elizabeth, daughter of William Bonville, another supporter of Suffolk and the Earl of Devon's great rival in the South-West. Virgoe, 'Tailboys', p.462; Storey, *Lancaster*, ch.5. Bonville, by his marriage to the widow of Robert Harrington, had become the lord of the nearby village of Moulton. *Ingulph*, p.395.

²⁵ Maddern, *Violence*, pp.154-66.

By 1449, Tailboys and his associates faced numerous charges of murder, assault, robbery and other crimes. Of course, the veracity of each individual accusation cannot be taken for granted, but the sheer number of them is certainly significant. The first evidence of trouble comes in the form of two special commissions of *oyer et terminer*, issued on 5 May and 14 July 1448, both ordering investigations into the actions of Tailboys and his colleagues.²⁶ The first does not specify who initiated the procedure, but the second was the result of a complaint by a fellow Lincolnshire esquire, John Dymoke, a servant of Robert, Lord Willoughby d'Eresby. Virgoe has argued that the composition of these commissions, and their remit, shows that direct outside influence was already at work.²⁷ The first commission was directed to a large and extremely eminent group, including the Earl of Salisbury, Lord Cromwell, and the prominent local knight Sir Thomas Cumberworth, and was given powers to look into a long list of different crimes. The second, superseding the first, was issued to just four central court justices (three of whom, including Sir John Fortescue, had been on the first commission), and its remit was far narrower. Certainly the removal of Cromwell could only help Tailboys, yet the second commission was hardly toothless, given the personnel, and should have been far more impartial, had it ever met: there is no evidence that it ever did. While a commission composed of Tailboys' enemies would have been extremely unsympathetic, the second commission contained people with no personal interest in the prosecution, and although still dangerous, would probably have proved more open to manipulation. This is what appears to have happened.

It would seem that Tailboys, by his actions, had alienated a wide section of the county elite, and, with the exception of Beaumont, he found practically the full weight of the shire against him. Presumably realising that the *oyer et terminer* commissions would prove fruitless, his enemies tried another route. Later in 1448, the Justices of the Peace in both Lindsey and Holland made a series of presentments against Tailboys and a large number of his supporters.²⁸ At Horncastle on 9 August, Tailboys and his followers were accused of the murder of John Storroure and an assault on John Dymoke. This assault, the most serious of the crimes listed (socially, if not criminally), apparently took place on 14 March 1448, was doubtless the reason for Dymoke's earlier *oyer et terminer*

²⁶ *CPR 1446-52*, pp.187, 189.

²⁷ Virgoe, 'Tailboys', p.463.

²⁸ KB9/260/95-96. Records of these indictments also appear at various stages among the plea rolls of King's Bench. e.g. KB27/770, mm.148, 170.

commission, and formed the catalyst for the action at local level. Then, at Boston on 2 October, they were also accused of the murders of three further men, and an assault upon a certain John Kede of Spalding. The Holland peace session was led by Richard Benington, a mainstay of the local administration but of no great personal standing, while the Lindsey session was led by Lord Welles himself.²⁹ Since the victims of these crimes were all relatively unimportant, these particular incidents were presumably included to strengthen the weight of evidence against Tailboys, in the interests of Dymoke and his backers; the difference in the penalties for assault and murder would also not have gone unnoticed. Indeed, the murder of Thomas Lodde at Brothertoft, near Boston, dated back to 1442.³⁰ Tailboys' servants were also pursued through the courts. For instance, an action was brought in King's Bench against Thomas Codder *alias* Mawes of Legsby, specified as a servant of Tailboys, along with a number of associates, for the murder of John Storrour, one of three men whom Tailboys had already been accused of murdering. A number of actions of trespass and riot were also brought against William Davell of South Kyme, another Tailboys servant, and against John Tailboys, William's younger brother.³¹

The indictments against Tailboys were soon taken out of local hands, and thus away from Tailboys' enemies, and summoned to King's Bench. Here, Tailboys' connections with Beaumont and Suffolk could be used to ensure that the cases against him would fail.³² Writs of exigend were not executed by the Lincolnshire sheriff, Sir Mancer Marmyon, supposedly at Suffolk's behest, an action for which Marmyon would later face punishment.³³ The judicial procedures had been removed from the hands of Tailboys' direct enemies by the end of 1448, yet he still had three of the four local nobles ranged against him, and apparently took drastic action. Accounts of the incident outside

²⁹ Welles' personal appearance suggests a vested interest in the business of the day. The hostility of the benches is not surprising, since the Holland commission included Welles, Cromwell and Willoughby, while the Lindsey justices also included Cromwell, Welles, and other supporters such as Sir Thomas Cumberworth, a member of the first *oyer et terminer* commission. *CPR 1446-52*, p.591. However, Lord Beaumont was also a member of both commissions, as was Tailboys himself! Presumably Tailboys was unable to prevent them, or knew they would fail. The Kesteven bench was of little use to Tailboys' enemies, since it was dominated by Beaumont and his followers, despite Welles, Willoughby and Cromwell all being members.

³⁰ Since Tailboys had been granted a general pardon in November 1446, this case must have been directed predominantly at Tailboys' accomplices.

³¹ These cases appear on the plea roll for 1450, but obviously first entered King's Bench some time earlier. KB27/758, mm.91, 109, 114.

³² The cases were removed to King's Bench on 16 October 1448. KB9/260/92, 95; Virgoe, 'Tailboys', p.464.

³³ Suffolk's promised pardon saved Marmyon from serious harm. Virgoe, 'Tailboys', pp.465-6, p.466 n.6; *R.P.*, iii, p.181; E28/78/103.

the Star Chamber at Westminster on 28 November 1449, where Tailboys supposedly attempted to murder Lord Cromwell, are doubtless exaggerated, but some sort of violent incident certainly occurred.³⁴ With Suffolk blocking the obvious means of redress, and with Suffolk and Cromwell being far from friends, it is extremely likely that Cromwell encouraged, if not actively helped the Commons with their impeachment of Suffolk which followed soon afterwards.³⁵ Only the removal of Suffolk, who had many other enemies besides Cromwell, could allow process against Tailboys to continue unhindered. Suffolk's fall did indeed leave Tailboys unprotected. Even before Suffolk's impeachment, Cromwell had persuaded the Commons to present a bill accusing Tailboys of attempted murder and demanding that he be sent to the Tower. The King agreed, and while the process against Suffolk continued, Cromwell, Willoughby and Dymoke all brought their own actions against Tailboys. All succeeded, and by the following Easter, Tailboys owed £3500 in fines to the three men.³⁶

Tailboys remained in various forms of custody, unable to pay the huge fines, while various cases against him and his followers proceeded through King's Bench, and Virgoe has detailed the accounts of his actions over the next few years, a series of abortive, failed and increasingly desperate attempts at retribution.³⁷ Yet, with the death of Willoughby in 1452, and as Cromwell's influence waned during the mid-1450s, Tailboys' fortunes revived, and his rehabilitation began in earnest. He regained his seat on the Kesteven bench in 1455, and pardons were granted to him and his associates.³⁸ The deaths of both Cromwell and Willoughby removed the momentum of his enemies,

³⁴ Virgoe, 'Tailboys', pp.466-7; *R.P.*, v., pp.200-1; KB27/755, m.21d.

³⁵ 'Wilhelmi Wyrcester Annales' in *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the Reign of Henry VI*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols., Rolls Series, xxii (1861-4), ii (2), p.766. For fuller details of Cromwell's character and career, see R.L. Friedrichs, 'Ralph, Lord Cromwell and the Politics of Fifteenth Century England', *Nott. Med. Stud.*, xxxiii (1988), pp.207-27; R.L. Friedrichs, 'The Career and Influence of Ralph, Lord Cromwell, 1393-1456', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Columbia, 1974). This use of procedural and judicial tactics was almost certainly masterminded by Cromwell. He was an expert in the business of government and administration, having served as treasurer for ten years, and, as can be seen from his disputes with Sir John Graa and others, an expert in legal procedure and trickery. Payling, 'Disputed Mortgage', esp. pp.121ff. His noble colleagues, Welles and Willoughby, were probably less adept; Willoughby was a soldier, while Welles was not averse to using violence himself: see below, pp.133-5.

³⁶ Virgoe, 'Tailboys', pp.467-8. KB27/755, mm.21d, 26, 30.

³⁷ Virgoe, 'Tailboys', pp.468-71.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.472. The pardon was probably granted while Henry was temporarily back in nominal control of the government; however, the re-appointment to the Kesteven bench occurred about two weeks after York resumed the Protectorate, in November, 1455. He did not regain his places on the Lindsey and Holland benches. Although there is no evidence of any animosity between Tailboys and any members of the nascent Yorkist party, it would appear strange that Tailboys' revival should begin during the period when the government was under the control of his future enemies.

and the two noblemen's executors reached agreements with Tailboys over the remaining unpaid fines. Thus, although Cromwell at least managed effectively to rid himself of this troublesome neighbour for the rest of his own life, and Willoughby and possibly Dymoke received some recompense for Tailboys' crimes, relatively little was achieved beyond Tailboys' temporary discomfiture - an all too typical outcome of a medieval legal battle. Although there is no indication of any new offences appearing on the plea rolls during the final years of the decade, actions were still continuing in King's Bench at least until 1459 against a number of Tailboys' servants.³⁹ At the Coventry Parliament of 1459, the Commons again presented a petition complaining of the actions of certain robbers and criminals, including a 'William Tailboys of Enfield, Middlesex'.⁴⁰ However, nothing appears to have been done. The tottering Lancastrian regime proved extremely unwilling to alienate a man whose family was still a major force within Lincolnshire, and who was a loyal supporter during the political turmoil which was becoming more and more apparent.⁴¹

The Tailboys case has become something of a *cause célèbre* of the period, a notable example of local violence and judicial corruption at its extreme, and of the way local disputes and national tensions could become inextricably intertwined. However, the question is not about how important this well-discussed case was in the national picture, but rather whether this example is merely the tip of a very large and unexplored iceberg, or whether it has become noteworthy simply because it was out of the ordinary, not just due to the eminence of its protagonists, but also because of the crimes alleged to have been involved. Were these incidents really more violent, more prolonged or more wide-ranging than the average dispute? Was it usual for members of the gentry to resort to violence of this kind, or was it just the fact that it had far-reaching consequences which has brought an otherwise unimportant and unremarkable series of actions to our attention? It is highly likely that many of Tailboys' crimes, particularly the alleged murder of Thomas Lodde, would never have come to light had not Tailboys made himself

³⁹ The cases of the two widows, who had also pursued suits against Tailboys for the murder of their husbands, were left to languish in the plea rolls, of no more use to Cromwell, Welles and Willoughby. Both cases ended during the 1450s, after the widows failed to appear at the return day and were defaulted; Virgoe suggests that they had probably died. Virgoe, 'Tailboys', p.472.

⁴⁰ This is almost certainly the same man, although there is no indication that the family owned any land in the county. Walter Tailboys' subsidy return of 1436 does however include lands in nearby Hertfordshire. See Appendix 3:a.

⁴¹ A wise move, given Tailboys' future loyalty to the Lancastrians in his later years. See below, ch.6.

powerful enemies by his subsequent assault on John Dymoke. Assuming not every gentry criminal's list of victims included a prominent local esquire, how many men's lives of crime might have gone unrecorded simply because the victims were of insufficient status to make a serious fuss?

If Storey's theory is to hold up, the general impression of Henry VI's reign must be one of an increase in gentry violence in the shires, certainly towards the end of the reign, and, perhaps more importantly, an increase in the seriousness of the crimes committed. A summary examination of the King's Bench plea rolls across the first thirty years or so of Henry VI's reign does not appear to suggest any great rise in the total amount of criminal activity, at least not in any way which affected the business of that court. Analysis of the Michaelmas term rolls of 1430, 1440 and 1450 shows a relatively stable number of individual cases, with a slight reduction in business as the period progressed (see Table 7). Yet by 1460 the total number of Lincolnshire cases had risen again, and interestingly the numbers of these cases which involved the gentry also changed. The proportion of cases involving gentry plaintiffs ranged from only 14% (5 out of a total number of 35 cases) in 1450, to almost 28% (13 out of 47) in 1460. However, the numbers of gentry defendants also rose, although the numbers were still small. Only one of the 40 cases on the roll for Michaelmas 1440 involved a member of the gentry as a defendant,⁴² increasing to three of the 35 cases in 1450, and five of the 47 cases in 1460, a definite increase but hardly spectacular. Of course, such small numbers could easily be unduly influenced, and two of the cases in both 1450 and 1460 were part of the process against Tailboys, but the trend does nevertheless conform to the basis of Storey's premise.

The evidence from King's Bench across the last decade of Henry VI's reign also seems to match this trend. Perhaps the most striking observation, however, is the fluctuation in the total amount of business being conducted by the court. With the exception of Michaelmas 1460, when the roll contains more individual Lincolnshire cases than any other, the number of cases was generally quite low. Whereas 42 cases were recorded in 1430, 40 in 1440 and 35 in 1450, the 1450s generally saw far fewer - only

⁴² KB27/718, mm.54, 71. The defendant seems to have been the same Robert Eland involved in the dispute with William Clopton, and the incident, though not naming Clopton, may possibly have been connected. See above, p.117, n.12.

Table 7. *Gentry Involvement in Suits in Plea Side of King's Bench*

Term	Total no. of Lincolnshire cases ¹	Cases with Gentry or Magnate as Plaintiff	Cases with Gentry or Magnate as Defendant
Michaelmas 1430	42	8	2
Michaelmas 1440	40	11	1
Michaelmas 1450	35	6	3
Michaelmas 1451	19	6	0
Michaelmas 1452	21	8	6
Michaelmas 1453	32	10	3
Michaelmas 1454	29	8	2
Michaelmas 1455	16	5	1
Michaelmas 1456	20	4	3
Michaelmas 1457	20	9	4
Michaelmas 1458	28	9	7
Michaelmas 1459	14	4	6
Michaelmas 1460	47	13	5

¹ Cases which appeared at more than one return day in the term have only been counted once. Numbers do not include cases specified as being from the City of Lincoln.

199 cases between 1451 and 1459, an average of only 22 per term.⁴³ Of course, each individual case did not necessarily appear on every plea roll for the duration of the action - it could be postponed to a future date, or, if there were no significant details to record other than the defendant's non-appearance, this was often added to the entry on a previous roll.⁴⁴ However, since it is extremely unlikely that litigants had taken a sudden dislike to conducting their actions during the Michaelmas term, it is probably safe to assume a general reduction in the amount of Lincolnshire business being conducted by the court. However, it is unlikely that this reflected a reduction in actual crime. Instead, it may well be a result of the unsettled conditions in the country in general; of people being unwilling to travel, of greater mistrust of the legal system, or possibly a sign that individuals were employing more direct means to settle their disputes, whether arbitration or violence. Certainly the two terms with the least number of Lincolnshire cases coincide with the periods of greatest turmoil - 1455 and 1459 - while the great rush of business in Michaelmas term 1460, with 47 cases, coincided with the reasonably stable, if tense period of Yorkist control between the battles of Northampton and Wakefield. Also, many of the cases must have entered the court during the earlier terms of 1460, possibly brought by Lancastrian supporters following the apparent destruction of the Yorkist cause at Ludford and the events of the Coventry Parliament. The increase in business may be a reflection of an albeit false sense of stability during the early months of 1460, a general attempt across the country to settle old differences, whether through litigation or violence, and possibly also a backlog which, in the temporarily calmer atmosphere, could now be cleared.

Although comparatively less business appears to have been conducted in King's Bench during the 1450s, the *proportion* of cases involving the gentry, both as plaintiffs and defendants, increased quite markedly across the decade as a whole, as the numbers of cases involving the gentry remained reasonably stable and those from the lower classes fell. With the exception of 1460, only in 1453 did the number of gentry suits reach double figures, but there were never less than four cases in any single term.⁴⁵ For

⁴³ Also, many of these cases appeared during more than one term, making the total number of individual suits even less.

⁴⁴ For example, the case between the Abbot of Croyland and John Wytham was recorded on the roll for Michaelmas 1452, but notes of Wytham's continued non-appearance were added to the entry during the next three terms, with the final entry being for the resumption of proceedings during the Michaelmas term of the following year. KB27/766, m.20; for the case against Wytham, see below, p.140.

⁴⁵ The exact identity of the plaintiff is often unclear. Men of knightly or esquire rank were usually accorded the title on the plea roll, although this is far from consistent, and, unlike the defendant, the status of non-gentle plaintiffs is recorded only rarely. Identification of the defendant was made

instance, in Michaelmas Term 1457, almost half of the cases were brought by members of the gentry,⁴⁶ while only in 1456 did gentry cases form less than a quarter of the total number. Given that the defendants in most of these cases were seemingly unimportant locals, the cases themselves may have little relevance to gentry violence, but the numbers are interesting.⁴⁷ Although overall use of the court had declined, for whatever reason, this decline seems to have been among the lower classes, rather than the landed elite. While the gentry appear to have used King's Bench in the same numbers as before, their social inferiors either found alternatives, or simply did not bother with litigation during this troubled period. But this stability in the number of gentry suits does not necessarily say much about the level of crime. If more crime was being committed, it is quite possible that simple retaliation would be employed just as readily, and thus the original dispute would not be recorded. Also, if life in general was becoming more disturbed, thus producing the decline in the use of the court by the lower classes, this may have been followed by the gentry, and these numbers may themselves only represent a smaller proportion of crime in the county at the time. Certainly, a landowner whose patron was in a position of power, either in the immediate vicinity or at court, may well have concluded that summary violence was the best way of achieving a beneficial outcome, while his rivals may have had little option other than an often vain hope for some degree of impartiality within the legal system. Conversely, the gentry, given their greater power and influence, may have retained a degree of faith in the system for longer than their lesser neighbours. It is impossible to tell from the records. The only other explanation, that the lower classes suddenly became far more law-abiding towards each other, is difficult to imagine!

Among cases featuring members of the gentry as defendants, the actual numbers themselves point towards an increase in gentry crime, though hardly on a great scale. In 1430, only two members of the gentry are recorded as being indicted in Lincolnshire cases.⁴⁸ One was the ongoing Clopton-Eland dispute,⁴⁹ while the other case, against Sir Mancer Marmyon, appears to have been a plea of false accusation in a previous suit,

compulsory by the Statute of Additions of 1413, and seems to have been observed reasonably consistently. Maddern, *Violence*, pp.38-9 & n.25.

⁴⁶ KB27/786. Also, one case was brought by the Abbot of Croyland, John Lytlyngton, and the name of one plaintiff is unrecorded.

⁴⁷ However, this did not necessarily mean that members of the gentry were not involved. See below, pp.137, 141-2.

⁴⁸ KB27/678, mm.52, 92d.

⁴⁹ See above, p.117, n.12, and Maddern, *Violence*, pp.166ff. KB27/758, mm.1, 60.

rather than any violent incident.⁵⁰ Only one case was enrolled in 1440,⁵¹ while in 1450, three cases were recorded, two being the on-going murder cases against William Tailboys, the other being a trespass suit by Sir Godfrey Hilton against Thomas Meres, almost certainly a simple property dispute masquerading as something more serious.⁵² Across the three terms, a total of only six cases against members of the gentry, out of a total of 117 from Lincolnshire, hardly seems to suggest a catalogue of gentry violence. However, seemingly in accordance with Storey's theory, the numbers themselves do increase during the 1450s, although by no means consistently. With the exception of 1452, when the numbers are inflated by cases against Tailboys, there was a steady increase in cases brought against members of the gentry, and although there was a total of only 32 gentry defendants recorded between 1451 and 1459, the proportions are interesting. The seven cases of 1458 may, in real terms, not have been significantly worse than the two cases of 1430, but those seven cases represented a quarter of all the cases in King's Bench that term, a five-fold increase on the equivalent term in 1430. The six cases of 1459 also represented over 40% of the total. Taking these figures in conjunction with the scenario outlined above, it may be that there was a rise in the overall level of gentry crime, although quite how much is impossible to judge. It would be dangerous to assume that any decline in the overall use of King's Bench was consistent across the social spectrum, and while its use by the lower classes may have declined, that of the gentry may have remained the same. In the more disturbed atmosphere of the 1450s, the gentry, with their greater power and influence, may have had less need and inclination to use the court, but they are also the group who stood the best chance of achieving their aims through using it. For the humble yeoman, without a powerful lord or numerous retainers and tenants to help him pursue any violent action, the royal courts would almost always have been the only possible option. That the endemic corruption of the 1450s should lead to a lack of trust from this group is, nevertheless, hardly surprising, and the figures could be seen to bear this out. But for the gentry the picture is far more complicated. Certainly a far greater proportion of business in King's Bench involved members of the gentry during the 1450s, but since the numbers involved are still relatively small, whether this reflected a real increase in gentry crime, or simply the lack of cases in general, or even a mixture of the two, is difficult to determine.

⁵⁰ KB27/758, m.52.

⁵¹ See below, p.130 & n.55.

⁵² KB27/758, m.1.

As well as the issue of whether there was any increase in the prevalence of criminal activity by and against members of the gentry, the nature of these offences is also important. Not only does Storey's argument rest on the premise of an increase in crime, but also that this crime was becoming increasingly violent, as men resolved their disputes by force rather than the law. The nature of the offences in the majority of cases is not recorded on each individual roll; if the entry only records the non-appearance of the defendant, the clerk rarely went to the trouble of recording anything other than the bare essentials of the case, and the case would have to be pursued back to its origin to discover the original entry, a long and often difficult procedure. Yet the details that are known, in cases on both the plea and rex sides of King's Bench, would seem to back up the general theory behind Storey's ideas.

Only three cases against members of the Lincolnshire gentry were recorded in the plea side of King's Bench during the Michaelmas terms of 1430 and 1440. One was part of the ongoing Clopton-Eland action, and is likely to have been a legal fiction employed as part of a non-violent property dispute.⁵³ Another, a complaint by Richard Casterton that he had been falsely accused of a breach of the peace by Sir Mancer Marmyon, may (assuming Casterton was actually innocent) be more indicative of the way the law could be used as a tool by the gentry than any sign of increased gentry violence.⁵⁴ The only case from 1440, between a certain William Goodhall and the same Robert Eland and two associates, gives no indication of the crime other than the usual trespass statement, and may even have been connected with the previous dispute with Clopton.⁵⁵ The rex section, where more serious crimes would be expected to have been recorded, tells a similar story. In the four Lincolnshire cases on the roll for Michaelmas 1430, the only gentry defendant appears to have been Sir John Kyghley, appearing with a number of others to defend errors in a previous plea of novel disseisin against numerous notables including Lord Roos of Hamelake, John Fulnetby and various members of the Tailboys family.⁵⁶ The 1440 roll contained two cases. One was the prosecution of Sir John Colvyle of Newton, Cambridgeshire, for failing in his duty, as a commissioner *de wallis et fossatis*,

⁵³ See above, p.117 & n.12.

⁵⁴ KB27/678, m.52.

⁵⁵ There is no sign of any Goodhall family in Lincolnshire at this time. It is probable that he was either of lowly status, or an outsider and thus possibly an associate of Clopton from Suffolk. However, Maddern makes no mention of a man of that name in her study of the case. Maddern, *Violence*, pp.166ff.

⁵⁶ KB27/678, m.149. Kyghley was not a Lincolnshire resident, and his main interests were probably in Yorkshire. *W.B.*, p.515.

to maintain the flood defences on the River Nene around Wisbech, on the Cambridgeshire-Lincolnshire border. The second, ordering the arrest of Oliver Atherton of Kirton in Holland, gentleman, in connection with the death of Christopher Frythbank, esquire, might seem more indicative of gentry violence. However, Atherton and Frythbank are otherwise totally obscure, and one of Atherton's co-defendants was Thomas Frythbank, the dead man's brother, possibly indicating a family feud or local dispute. This evidence would tend to support Maddern's general view of gentry litigation.⁵⁷ Cases in the rex section would mainly be concerned with felony offences, and crimes which the Crown saw as sufficiently important to demand its involvement, something which would not be needed, or especially welcome, in the average gentry dispute. Nigel Saul remarked that, in the fourteenth century, few members of the gentry were indicted for murder, or indeed any felony, with most gentry cases involving various forms of trespass.⁵⁸ The Lincolnshire evidence suggests that this was still generally the case in the fifteenth century.

The nature of the crimes committed during the 1450s, however, is more mixed, and although there is evidence of violence, it is difficult from the records to assess how widespread such actions were, or just how violent. The majority of cases, especially on the plea side, give little indication of the alleged crime, and those which are known were not necessarily especially serious. For instance, a case in 1454 between Leo Welles and Richard Braytoft of Braytoft, gentleman, one of the few to give details, concerned nothing more serious than a breach of Welles' free warren and the alleged theft of a number of hares, rabbits and game birds.⁵⁹ This was probably part of an attempt by Welles to obtain legal recognition of his rights over the area concerned, and the incident itself may never have actually occurred at all; even if it did, it was hardly a serious misdemeanour. Towards the end of the decade, however, the crimes in general do tend to become more serious, although gentry involvement is sporadic. In 1456, Thomas Neville of Walesby, gentleman, was accused by Alice Wardale of being an accessory to the murder of her husband John.⁶⁰ Also in 1456, Richard Stalverley began a long-running action against a number of men, headed by John Huddleston, a Lincoln merchant, and his

⁵⁷ Maddern, *Violence*, ch.7.

⁵⁸ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, p.173.

⁵⁹ KB27/774, m.11d.

⁶⁰ KB27/782, m.1.

brother Nicholas, accusing them of assault.⁶¹ But these are isolated examples on the plea rolls, the majority giving no indication of the crime.

The rex side of King's Bench also gives a similar impression. In general, violent incidents involving members of the gentry are still rather rare - although there were a number of Lincolnshire cases recorded on the rex side, few involved known members of the landed classes. Indeed, if the cases involving Tailboys and his servants are excluded, gentry cases are extremely rare. The incidents which do appear are varied. The 1452 roll recounts a process before the Justices of the Peace, sitting at Louth on 20 August 1451, against a Robert Wytham, who, having gathered a band of unknown colleagues, had killed one man and attacked another in Louth a month earlier.⁶² Wytham is described as a yeoman, but he may well be the same Robert Wytham, from Grantham, who appeared in the same year, accused of supporting the Duke of York.⁶³ In 1455, the only defendant given a title was a certain John Fordham, gentleman, who was accused of involvement in an attack upon the servants of Lord Beaumont in Boston.⁶⁴ In 1458, Thomas Retford of Ashby by Partenay, esquire, and his wife Matilda, were both accused of robbery, the victim being Maria Themylby, presumably a member of the prominent gentry family of that name.⁶⁵ But these are only a small proportion of the increasing number of cases dealt with on the rex side. The largest total number of rex side cases in a single term occurred in 1459, contrasting sharply both with the small number on the plea side, and the scarcity of rex side cases earlier in the reign - 17 in 1459 compared with only 4 in 1430 and 3 in 1450.⁶⁶ This increase may possibly reflect a more general increase in crime (though seemingly not necessarily among the gentry), but it may also suggest an increase in violence. A reduction in plea side cases may reflect men using violence rather than the law to achieve their original aims, while increased rex side cases might suggest that their victims were seeking retribution. The reduction in cases brought by the lower classes,

⁶¹ KB27/782, m.38; KB27/786, m.90; KB27/790, m.51d; KB27/798, m.68d.

⁶² KB27/766, m.119.

⁶³ Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.79; see below, ch.6.

⁶⁴ For further details of this episode, see below, p.138. Fordham is otherwise unknown, and was probably a wealthy citizen of Boston rather than a member of the landed gentry.

⁶⁵ The case appears to have stemmed from an original case brought by Maria herself, and presumably transferred due to the non-appearance of the Retfords. KB27/790, m.151.

⁶⁶ Although there are 17 entries on the 1459 plea roll, some entries recorded multiple accusations against individual defendants or groups of defendants. For example, there are four cases against Richard Asheburner, not surprisingly another resident of the Tailboys manor of South Kyme. Added to two cases against William Lewyn, one against William Dalyson, and two more against men connected with the murder of John Sanderson, it is clear that the Tailboys gang was still dominating the criminal activity of the county. KB27/794, mm.95, 98d, 101d, 102.

and the rise of rex side prosecutions, again principally among the lower ranks, would seem to correlate, but the figures are far from conclusive. Nevertheless, the small number of cases involved hardly give the impression of a particularly lawless society.

Although the evidence gained from a study of the plea rolls would tend to give a complex and in some ways contradictory picture of crime and violence in Lincolnshire during this period, the small numbers involved, particularly involving the landed classes, would suggest that, although there was an increase, it was a small increase from a reasonably low starting point. However, there are notable examples which show that violence was still a key element in local society at this time. The Tailboys case is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon, and the sheer number of incidents involved makes it totally exceptional, as well as distorting any statistical analysis. But another example also illustrates how the greater men could act with complete disregard for the very law which, at least in theory, they were supposed to be upholding.

An entry on the plea roll for Michaelmas term 1450 recounts a dispute between Leo, Lord Welles, and a group of people from Spalding and Pinchbeck, in Holland.⁶⁷ It recalls a petition sent to Parliament by four inhabitants of Spalding and Pinchbeck, complaining of an attack by a group of men from Welles' lordships of Deeping in Lincolnshire, and Maxey in Northamptonshire.⁶⁸ According to the petition, copied in full on the plea roll, the dispute began on 12 August 1449, when a group of men from Deeping and Maxey attacked the two villages, stealing the goods of the inhabitants. Then, on 22 November, they attacked again, this time stealing and destroying the villagers fuel stores. The inhabitants of the villages, which, according to the preamble of the petition were part of the Duchy of Lancaster,⁶⁹ sued out a writ against their attackers, and the bailiff duly attached the accused men. Whether Welles was responsible for the

⁶⁷ KB27/758, m.76ff.

⁶⁸ The lordships were controlled by Welles, but were actually the property of his wife, Margaret, Duchess of Somerset. These were held either in her own right, or in dower from her marriage to John, Duke of Somerset, and they do not appear in any of the grants which followed the attainder of Richard Welles in 1474. Presumably the manors were retained by Margaret until her death, and then either defaulted to the Crown, or passed to Margaret and John's daughter, Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond.

⁶⁹ This assertion appears to be backed up by a reference in the Croyland Chronicle, referring to the council of the Duchy in connection with a dispute between the abbey and the townspeople of Spalding, but there is no sign of them in the valor from the 1460s, or in the Honour of Bolingbroke estates included in the enfeoffment for the performance of Henry V's will. *Ingulph*, p.396; DL28/29/2; CPR 1413-16, pp.356-7. See also above, p.36 & n.54. However, the important manor of Long Sutton lay nearby.

original attack is unclear, but from here his involvement is evident. Welles, as lord of Deeping and Maxey, countered with a writ of replevin, sent to the coroners of Lincolnshire, and a further writ of counter-dstraint, by which the villagers lost another £20 worth of cloth to Welles' keeping. Taking advice from the council of the Duchy, the villagers then sued out a writ of supersedeas from the chancery, ordering Welles to return the goods taken from them, and appear before the justices of Common Pleas at the following quindene of Easter. Welles simply ignored this writ entirely, failed to attend, kept the goods, and continued to send out his men into the fens, so much so that the tenants claimed to have been unable to farm their land. Then, again, on 1 April 1450, Welles sent out another force, according to the plaintiffs, of '100 men . . . arrayed in manner and form of war . . . from the castle of Maxey the which he keepeth in manner of garrison' this time attacking the villagers, beating many, seriously injuring two and killing a certain John Ankes, whose widow was among the petitioners.⁷⁰ They stole another 100 marks worth of goods, and returned to Maxey, from where they continued to terrorise the countryside. Welles was summoned to Parliament at Leicester on 20 April 1450 to explain the situation, but failed to appear. The tenants, thus claiming to have no further legal options, petitioned the King to use the authority of Parliament to get Welles and his men to appear or else stand convicted. This appeared to have met with some success, since on 7 June 1450, at the same Leicester Parliament, the sheriff of Lincolnshire was ordered to make a proclamation in Deeping ordering the accused men to appear in King's Bench during the following Michaelmas term, or stand in default of the authority of Parliament and be automatically convicted of the charges. The sheriff replied that he received the order at Lincoln at 3:00pm on Wednesday 17 June,⁷¹ and that Simon

⁷⁰ The people attacked probably held some position of leadership among the villagers. Among the injured in 1450 was a child, named as 'young Robert Horner'. In 1433, 'John Hanks' and 'Robert Horner' were arrested and committed to the Fleet prison until the people of Spalding paid £100 to the Abbot of Croyland, as damages and expenses in a court case against them. *Ingulph*, pp.397-8. Ankes may have been the same man, Horner probably a son or grandson, since a Thomas Horner was also among the injured in 1450. That both families should appear on both occasions might suggest a family history of leadership. Leo Welles also brought an action of trespass against various residents of Spalding and the nearby village of Cowbit in 1458, one of whom was Thomas Sparowe, another of the men associated with the 1450 petition. KB27/790, mm.51, 51d, 82.

⁷¹ The sheriff was Sir Brian Stapelton, primarily from Carlton in Yorkshire but, during his shrievalty, presumably resident at his Lincolnshire manors of Conisholme and Cockerington, villages in Lindsey and at the other end of the county from Deeping. The precision of the times and dates is interesting. Stapelton may have been worried that the almost inevitable failure of the accused to appear might be blamed on him and his officers, and was eager to assure the court that he had followed the proper procedures as closely and swiftly as possible. Given that both the petition and the royal writ called for the order to be with the sheriff by 14 June, and seems to have arrived three days late, Stapelton's attention to detail may have been a wise precaution. For his Lincolnshire career, see above, pp.92-3 & n.60; below, p.209 & n.33.

Johnson of Great Hale, presumably one of his officials, made the proclamation in Deeping on 24 June.⁷² The accused men duly failed to appear.⁷³

There is no further indication of the outcome of this case, but presumably Welles ensured that his tenants escaped punishment. Also, the petition naturally only gives one version of the story, that of the people of Spalding and Pinchbeck, and the attack on their villages could well have been provoked by an earlier attack by them on the people of Deeping and Maxey, an incident which obviously would not be mentioned in the villagers' petition. It is difficult to see any reason why Welles would have orchestrated the attack, given that the Lincolnshire villages were supposedly part of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Welles' relations with the King were good. It would seem probable that the attacks stemmed from relations between the villagers rather than their noble lords, but who exactly began the violence is unknown. Nevertheless, the case clearly highlights the ways in which the upper classes could act with almost total disregard for the law, and escape any punishment. Welles not only manipulated the legal procedures to his advantage but also appears to have flouted the authority of Parliament with total impunity. Presumably he was safe in the knowledge that he could easily secure a pardon for all these breaches of royal and parliamentary authority, and was determined to protect his tenants in their dispute and also thus enhance his prestige and power in a region where his influence was weak.⁷⁴ The inability of the villagers to receive any form of justice, blocked at every turn by a powerful lord, demonstrates the problems encountered by people outside the ruling elite. The fact that the villagers' lord was the King himself perhaps should have been to their advantage, but presumably Henry VI, hardly the best person to act as a defender of his tenants, was either unwilling to enter a conflict with one of his own supporters, or he and his advisors (of which Welles was one) were simply uninterested in the villagers' plight. Not only does the case highlight the abuse of the legal system which was taking place, it also shows the vast differences between weak and strong lordship, and the fact that good lordship was not necessarily fair, and often of dubious legality.

⁷² The roll gives the date of the proclamation as 'the feast of St Bartholomew the abbot'. Given the lack of other plausible candidates, this presumably must refer to the rather obscure monk and hermit St Bartholomew of Farne (d.1193), whose feast day was 24 June. D. Farmer (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1992), pp.39-40.

⁷³ The order to appear before King's Bench, and the subsequent non-appearance, explains why the details of the case are all transcribed on the plea roll.

⁷⁴ Welles' power in southern Lincolnshire was far weaker than in Lindsey, and based almost entirely on his seat on the Holland and Kesteven benches. The Welles family's only other interests in the south of the county were in and around Boston. See also above, p.133, n.68.

The abuse of the legal system by individuals, often with the support of the central administration, is perhaps seen at its best (or worst) in the often dreaded special commissions of *oyer et terminer*. These commissions were a product of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and allowed individuals to petition the King for special judicial bodies to investigate specific offences, usually granted on payment of a small charge. They were usually staffed entirely by supporters of the plaintiff, hence the unpopularity of the commissions, particularly among those without influence with the government.⁷⁵ Given their obvious partiality, they were hardly a reputable part of the King's justice, but were used relatively widely, usually as a method of either destroying opponents or forcing them into a settlement. As with many parts of the medieval legal system as it applied to the gentry and the nobility, the actual process of the body itself was usually secondary to the background manoeuvring.

The most notable Lincolnshire examples of these commissions are undoubtedly those used against William Tailboys, but these were far from isolated cases.⁷⁶ The Tailboys examples show, in the first commission, the system at its most partisan and factional, in the second example at its most ineffective. Yet this was not always the case, and they could work effectively, although usually heavily in favour of one side. The patent rolls yield another six commissions for the years between 1430 and 1450 (excluding replacement commissions against Tailboys), and evidence of others doubtless lie among the plea rolls of King's Bench, to which cases were often returned.⁷⁷ The crimes for which the commissions were issued were not necessarily particularly serious. A commission of 1432, issued after a complaint by Sir Godfrey Hilton that Sir Thomas Cumberworth and others had attacked his manor of Swine, Yorkshire, is relatively typical,⁷⁸ and quite possibly formed part of some wider, non-violent dispute, probably over land, rather than any unprovoked attack, especially given the previously cordial

⁷⁵ For further details, see R.W. Kaeuper, 'Law and Order in Fourteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Special Commissions of Oyer and Terminer', *Speculum*, liv (1979), pp.734-84; Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order*; J.B. Avrutick, 'Commissions of Oyer and Terminer in Fifteenth Century England', unpubl. M.Phil. thesis (University of London, 1967).

⁷⁶ See above, p.121.

⁷⁷ For example, the commission of 1449 granted to Lord Beaumont; below, pp.137-8. There is no sign of any special commissions in Lincolnshire during the 1450s, just a small number of general commissions: e.g. *CPR 1452-61*, pp.54, 652-3.

⁷⁸ *CPR 1429-36*, p.275. The dispute involved two Lincolnshire men, but the commission was issued for Yorkshire, the scene of the offence.

relations of the two families.⁷⁹ Other actions were even more trivial. Also in 1432, the Abbot of Croyland secured a commission against around 300 local men, alleging trespass on marshland belonging to the abbey.⁸⁰ The record claims that the trespassers also assaulted some of the monks, but this was probably just a stylistic exaggeration used to secure the grant. Again, this may well have been part of an attempt to establish the abbey's ownership of a piece of land, rather than to punish trespassers, and certainly gives the impression of heavy-handedness if the trespass was the only concern. If the real aim of the commission was to clarify ownership of the marshland, the trespass may well have never actually taken place at all, and the huge amount of names included to give the abbey's claim even greater solidity.

Use of these commissions has traditionally been seen as restricted to the upper classes, a tool of faction in the hands of the powerful. Certainly most were, but a commission of February 1430 was apparently granted on a complaint by two villagers of Kirton in Lindsey that they were assaulted by a group of men led by a yeoman, John Pynder of Redbourne. Not only is this unusual, but the commission's members also included some very eminent individuals.⁸¹ This would suggest that the case involved more than just an assault by a group of locals with a grudge. Presumably it formed part of a wider issue, possibly between the noble or gentry lords of the men involved.⁸² Not only would this sort of dispute not usually even reach King's Bench, let alone deserve a special commission of *oyer et terminer*, a lord's patronage would also explain how such men could afford the half a mark which the commission cost to purchase.

Few special commissions can be taken at face value. Even those against Tailboys, very much concerned with real offences such as the assault on Dymoke, were part of a much bigger picture. In 1439, a commission was issued to Lord Beaumont, who claimed that Walter Tailboys⁸³ had blocked a ditch which resulted in the flooding of some of his

⁷⁹ Hilton's brother, Sir Robert, had acted as feoffee for Cumberworth in 1410, along with Lord Willoughby, and although relations may have deteriorated after Sir Robert's death in 1431, it is difficult to imagine such a swift and sudden change as to result in a serious attack only a year later. However, the attack could have been related to Cumberworth's recent inheritance of the Yorkshire estates of his maternal grandfather, Sir William Ergum. *H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.713-15; iii, pp.377-81; below, Appendix 6.

⁸⁰ *CPR 1429-36*, p.219.

⁸¹ They included Lord Cromwell, Sir Ralph Rochford, Walter Tailboys, and a number of central court justices and other knights. *CPR 1429-36*, p.82.

⁸² Members of the upper classes were certainly not averse to using their own and other men's servants as pawns in their disputes: e.g. Maddern, *Violence*, p.32.

⁸³ Father of William, Beaumont's future friend and colleague.

land.⁸⁴ Mention of theft and threats of assault are added almost as an afterthought. Blocked ditches hardly merited a special commission, important though drainage was in this area,⁸⁵ so presumably Beaumont had some ulterior motive, probably involving the ownership of the land or the watercourse involved, or possibly even a grudge against Tailboys. However, some undoubtedly were genuine. Storey recalls another commission granted to Viscount Beaumont on 1 September 1449.⁸⁶ This followed a disturbance in Boston in which some of Beaumont's men were attacked. On this occasion, Beaumont doubtless decided that, since the Holland bench was decidedly unsympathetic towards him, his best course of action was to deal with the matter himself.⁸⁷ The indictments were presented on 25 September 1449, before the commissioners sitting at Lincoln Castle.⁸⁸ Undoubtedly violence did occur in this case, but it is probably safe to assume that only a small proportion of these commissions can be regarded as indicative of actual violence, or at least violence which was seen as worthy of punishment. Rather they formed just another weapon in the seemingly never-ending stream of litigation which characterised landed society.

Of course, very few disputes were settled through the legal process. Payling has noted the paucity of cases which actually reached a verdict in the royal courts,⁸⁹ and although social inferiors could be overawed, threatened or otherwise dealt with by even less lawful means, disputes with fellow landholders usually required arbitration to reach any sort of satisfactory conclusion. However, evidence of such cases is even less easy to discover, since few written records survive, and although disappearance from the plea rolls may well mean a successful arbitration, further details are usually rare. Arbitration has played a large part in the discussion of local violence in many recent county studies,⁹⁰

⁸⁴ An exceptionally and unfeasibly large area of land if the wording of the commission is to be believed! *CPR 1436-41*, p.271.

⁸⁵ See above, pp.130-1, for the prosecution of Sir John Colville for failing to maintain flood defences. KB27/718, m.134.

⁸⁶ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', pp.75-6. There is no evidence of this commission in the patent rolls, only in the King's Bench records. KB9/265; KB27/778 m.118d.

⁸⁷ The entire incident was probably connected with the Tailboys episode, and the attack on Beaumont's steward may have been supported by Welles, Willoughby and others. Alternatively, it may have been an example of the Boston people taking advantage of a tense situation to exact retribution on an unpopular official.

⁸⁸ The process against the attackers was still continuing as late as 1455. KB27/778 m.118d.

⁸⁹ Between 1399 and 1461, only 5 of the 387 Nottinghamshire cases on the plea side of King's Bench involving the gentry or local magnates actually reached a verdict. Payling, *Political Society*, p.186, n.3. Evidence for Lincolnshire would tend to agree with this extremely low rate.

⁹⁰ Payling, *Political Society*, ch.7; Wright, *Derbyshire Gentry*, ch.9; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity, passim*; S.J. Payling, 'Law and Arbitration in Nottinghamshire, 1399-1461', in Rosenthal & Richmond

and it is quite likely that many of the cases discussed in this chapter were thus resolved, but few details have survived. However, most cases probably followed a similar pattern to the numerous cases described by the Croyland Chronicler. The abbey of Croyland regularly entered into litigation, mainly to protect its rights against encroachment by its ecclesiastical, gentry and noble neighbours in the fenlands of Holland. Around 1448, the abbots of Croyland and Peterborough called in a group of local lawyers to arbitrate in their dispute over the exact line of the boundary between the lands of the two houses.⁹¹ This involved a series of meetings of a group of arbiters, mainly in the church at Deeping, which, in this case, failed to produce any sort of decision, despite large expense.⁹² Of course, a dispute between two religious houses was not especially likely to lead to excessive organised violence, except perhaps skirmishes between their various tenants, however much was at stake. There is no mention of violence in this instance, but the abbey and its monks were not safe from the violent intentions of less peaceable neighbours. The chronicler recounts how, in 1429, a monk of the abbey was assaulted by a priest from the nearby village of Moulton.⁹³ Presumably since both parties in this crime were churchmen, the Bishop of Lincoln was called to arbitrate, which he did successfully, the priest being forced to make public penance. The Bishop was also called to arbitrate in a long-running dispute between the abbey and another neighbour, Thomas, Lord Dacre, the lord of Holbeach.⁹⁴ Both sides claimed certain rights in the vill of Whaplode, where both held lands, the abbey holding the 'principal demesne rights'.⁹⁵ Dacre had apparently begun to exercise these rights himself, a slight to the abbey's lordship, and the abbot was forced to act. After process at Westminster, the abbot managed to have the case transferred to the Lincoln assizes, apparently a well-attended gathering.⁹⁶ Dacre had by now recognised that his case was weak, and called upon the

(eds.), *People, Politics and Community*, pp.140-60; E. Powell, 'Arbitration and the Law in England in the Late Middle Ages', *T.R.H.S.*, xxxiii (1983), pp.49-67; E. Powell, 'Settlement of Disputes by Arbitration in Fifteenth Century England', *Law and History Review*, ii (1984), pp.21-43.

⁹¹ *Ingulph*, pp.412-13. The line of the boundary, which seems to have also been the county boundary between Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire, had become confused in the harsh and often featureless marshlands. See also the controversy over the borders between Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, and between Holland and Kesteven, above, pp.26-30.

⁹² The four arbiters included some of the best known county lawyers, no doubt contributing to the expense of the action: Henry Grene, Richard Benyngton, Robert Sheffield and Richard Welby.

⁹³ *Ingulph*, p.394.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.404ff.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.404.

⁹⁶ The chronicler goes on to state that, during the course of this action, 'there was also present at this august assembly William Tailbois, Esquire, who had come thither to conduct the cause of the church of Croyland, and proved himself a most faithful supporter of it to the very utmost of his abilities'. Although this must have been the same man, such a description hardly fits in with the known details of the rest of

Bishop of Lincoln, William Alnwick, to arbitrate. Rather than submit to the clear-cut verdict of the court, Dacre presumably hoped to gain some concessions from the abbot during the negotiations which he would not otherwise get through the common law. The bishop's eventual decision was a compromise, accepting the abbey's rights but making certain grants to Dacre with regard to his own tenants.⁹⁷ Such a compromise would have been impossible to reach in the law courts, where a case had, on the whole, to be decided in favour of one party or the other, often producing a very unsatisfactory and potentially volatile situation.

The chronicle also notes an example of legal action having the desired effect, if perhaps by unusual means. Around 1450, a local esquire, John Wytham, attempted to assert his own lordship over the village of Baston.⁹⁸ Wytham held only a part of a knight's fee in the village, while the abbey held the principal manor. Wytham carried out the usual actions of someone claiming lordship, cutting trees and impounding cattle, and also alienated many locals by desecrating a chapel, converting it into a stable. The abbot pursued him through the courts, to such an extent that Wytham was reduced to poverty and forced into a settlement.⁹⁹ The Chronicler's description implies that, again, the result was decided out of court by the protagonists, rather than by the court itself. It would seem that none of these cases actually proceeded to judgement, a fair reflection of the evidence from the plea rolls. The abbey of Croyland may have been in a different position from the average temporal landholder, but it was forced to use the royal courts in the same way as any other, and its experiences were no doubt shared by many. Its religious status may have saved it from the worst excesses of gentry society, but it was far from immune.

Tailboys' career! No further description of the extent of Tailboys' abilities' in this dispute are given, and it must be wondered whether Tailboys presence was not for some other, less worthy reason.

⁹⁷ *Ingulph*, pp.406-10.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.414-15; *CPR 1452-61*, p.268. Baston lies roughly three miles north-west of Deeping. The Wytham pedigree is unclear. A John Wytham was an elector in 1432 and 1453, described as 'of Grantham'. He may well have been the same man accused of helping the Duke of York in 1452. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.79; KB9/65A/19. A Robert Wytham, also described variously as 'of Grantham' and 'of Baston' was also accused of helping York. The two men were quite probably related, their known careers suggesting that John may have been Robert's son.

⁹⁹ For an example of the legal action brought by the abbot, see KB27/766, m.20 (Michaelmas Term, 1452). The abbot accused Wytham of various 'enormities', principally the theft of some of the abbey's sheep, worth 40s. The case was continually delayed due to Wytham's non-appearance, but does not appear the following year, presumably because Wytham came to terms.

While it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from the surviving evidence which would demonstrate a definite increase in local violence, that which does exist would seem to point in this direction. Lack of evidence to implicate the gentry in general, however, is not necessarily surprising. Most incidents of gentry violence within the localities are unlikely to have been conducted in person by the individual concerned; a band of tenants or, better still, hired thugs was far more preferable. A case noted by Bohna from the 1460s, where a Lincolnshire esquire personally led an assault upon his enemy, was the exception rather than the norm.¹⁰⁰ In most of these cases, often with no clear evidence to implicate the instigator, the servants would be the only ones to face indictment. The case described above between the villagers of Deeping and Maxey and of Spalding and Pinchbeck, is a good example. It is clear that the victims realised that Lord Welles was involved, if not necessarily from the beginning, and continually mentioned his name on their petition; yet his name did not appear among the list of men accused of carrying out the attack. The victims of gentry crime must invariably have realised that they had no chance of achieving any sort of conviction against their eminent rivals, and concluded that their only means of redress was against servants and tenants, rather than the lord himself. With this in mind, it is likely that further King's Bench cases, with no apparent sign of gentry involvement, might well be of a similar nature.

However, it would also be unfair to suggest that the whole gentry class were resorting to violence, or at least no more than usual. As Maddern has noted, many members of the gentry were in no position to use violence, either having little support from tenants or no powerful lord to protect them, or, as in the case between Eland and Clopton, the enemy concerned lived far away, in a region where his rival had no power or influence.¹⁰¹ The relatively isolated nature of Lincolnshire society might also have worked in the interests of preventing local violence. The low levels of outside interference in the county during the Lancastrian period, the modest economic and social status of its inhabitants, and the paucity of men with close links with the greater nobility might all have helped to lessen the pressures upon the inhabitants. Lincolnshire was certainly no haven of peace; the careers of William Tailboys and his associates show that violence was never far away. But the reaction against Tailboys, and the way he appears

¹⁰⁰ Brian Talbot, a member of the new Yorkist elite in Lincolnshire, led a violent assault upon his fellow Holland JP, John Pynchebek. However, there may have been wider influences involved in this case. M.L. Bohna, 'Royal Lordship and Regional Power: The King's Affinity and Informal Government, 1460-1485', unpubl. Ph.D. thesis (Rochester, NY, 1995), pp.100-6; see also below, pp.189, 212.

¹⁰¹ Maddern, *Violence*, p.170.

to have aroused a significant proportion of the county against him, might indicate that his crimes, far from being the norm, were seen as exceptional and unacceptable. Certainly political affiliations played a large part in this episode, but the victims of the crimes were almost certainly Tailboys' personal enemies, and the politics stemmed largely from the crimes, rather than vice-versa. Nevertheless, although it would seem that there may well have been an increase in criminal activity among the Lincolnshire gentry during the final years of Lancastrian rule, with the exception of Tailboys it would appear to have been at a reasonably low and, in medieval terms, generally acceptable level.

Part 2

Yorkist
Lincolnshire

Chapter 5

Lincolnshire and the Wars of the Roses

Having examined the landed society which existed in Lincolnshire immediately preceding the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses, attention can now be turned to the issues of the Wars themselves. The sporadic periods of conflict which have become known as the Wars of the Roses are undoubtedly the dominant feature of the second half of the fifteenth century, but while modern interpretations have played down the military importance of the Wars in terms of casualties and destruction, the associated political and social consequences were far more pervasive, and certainly more relevant to life in the localities.¹ The intention of the following chapters is to examine the interplay of gentry society and the Wars from both sides of the relationship, discussing both the role of Lincolnshire's inhabitants in the course of the conflict, and, more importantly, the role played by the Wars in shaping the nature of Lincolnshire's landed society between the collapse of Lancastrian rule and the demise of the Yorkists.

As noted earlier, the issues of local society and the Wars of the Roses are two areas which have rarely been examined in conjunction.² Despite the emphasis placed upon the study of events and activities in the localities by McFarlane and his successors,³ the direct consequences of the Wars themselves upon the lives and careers of the members of the county elites have not so far been examined in detail, with the majority of county studies tending to lessen the perceived importance of such national events by concentrating upon the wider, long-term picture. Events in the regions of England were of vital importance to the conduct and course of the Wars, an issue highlighted recently

¹ For a general discussion of the events and personalities of the Wars, see Gillingham, *Wars*; Lander, *Wars*; Carpenter, *Wars*; Storey, *Lancaster*; Pollard (ed.), *Wars*; C.D. Ross, *The Wars of the Roses* (London, 1976); McFarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses'; M.K. Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', *E.H.R.*, civ (1989), pp.285-367; C. Richmond, 'The Nobility and the Wars of the Roses, 1459-61', *Nott. Med. Stud.*, xxi (1977), pp.71-86. For greater discussion of the military aspects, see Goodman, *Wars*; A.W. Boardman, *The Medieval Soldier in the Wars of the Roses* (Stroud, 1998); P.A. Haigh, *The Battle of Wakefield* (Stroud, 1992); A.W. Boardman, *The Battle of Towton* (Stroud, 1994); P.W. Hammond, *The Battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury* (Stroud, 1990); M. Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester, 1987); P.A. Haigh, *The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses* (Stroud, 1995).

² See above, pp.10-12.

³ See above, pp.9-10.

by Ralph Griffiths.⁴ However, this was very much a reciprocal relationship; the localities certainly shaped the Wars, but, probably to an even greater degree, the Wars, and the political, military and administrative consequences of them, had a profound effect upon life in the English shires. As will hopefully become clear, the relatively limited involvement of Lincolnshire's population in the military activity of the Wars, with one notable exception, will mean that, in this county, the second part of this inter-relationship will receive most attention, but it should always be remembered that this was a two-way association. Since fifteenth-century England was a relatively integrated entity, no region could remain entirely untouched or untroubled, and although only briefly the centre of attention during the Wars themselves, Lincolnshire was nevertheless profoundly affected by their consequences.

As with many, if not most, of the English shires, Lincolnshire's experience of the military conflicts of the Wars of the Roses was limited and sporadic. With no large magnate estates or major fortresses, few urban centres and largely isolated from the main communication routes, Lincolnshire was of little interest to either of the contending parties. Of course, a number of county landowners took part in the Wars, for various reasons, and their experiences and fortunes will be discussed below.⁵ But the fighting itself largely passed the county by, and on only two occasions did contending armies cross the county's borders. The first of these incidents occurred in the winter of 1461, when the Lancastrian army of Queen Margaret of Anjou, fresh from its defeat of Richard of York at Wakefield, passed through Lincolnshire on its way to further victory at the second Battle of St Albans. As it moved south, this large, predominantly northern army pillaged the countryside, and the Lincolnshire towns of Stamford and Grantham, both with strong Yorkist connections, were easy prey, and both suffered for their loyalty to their former lord. The Benedictine monk writing the *Continuation of the Croyland Chronicle*, a writer renowned for his graphic, almost apocalyptic descriptions of the Wars,⁶ was certainly worried by their arrival;

⁴ Griffiths, 'Provinces and Dominions', esp. pp.2-4. However, Griffith's article is more concerned with the parts of the realm outside England (Wales, Ireland, the Channel Islands, etc.) than with the English regions. See also above, pp.11-12 & n.9.

⁵ See below, ch.6.

⁶ See above, pp.114-15.

‘the northmen, . . . again swept onwards like a whirlwind from the north, and in the impulse of their fury attempted to overrun the whole of England. . . . Thus did they proceed with impunity, spreading in vast multitudes over a space of thirty miles in breadth’⁷

The Continuator’s fears were matched by his relief when Croyland Abbey escaped the fate of Stamford and Grantham;

‘For really we were in straits, when word came to us that this army, so execrable and so abominable, had approached to within six miles of our boundaries. But, blessed be God, . . . our Croyland became as though another little Zoar, in which we might be saved; and, by the Divine grace and clemency, it was preserved.’⁸

The Continuator’s words were probably coloured by a deep and commonly held fear of the men of the north, but the passage of Queen Margaret’s army was certainly an unwelcome event, even in a county with predominantly Lancastrian sympathies. Although only a brief contact with the reality of the conflict, it doubtless helped persuade many residents that Lincolnshire’s isolation was a blessing.

Queen Margaret’s passage through Lincolnshire may have been frightening, particularly to the people of Kesteven, but the army quickly moved on to St Albans, before heading back north to eventual defeat at Towton. Lincolnshire saw no further sign of the first stage of the conflict, but, as will be seen later, the county, and particularly its landed and political elite, was profoundly affected by the consequences of the Yorkist victory.⁹ It would be another ten years before the realities of the Wars returned to Lincolnshire; however, this second incident was far more significant, both for Lincolnshire and for the course of the Wars. The Lincolnshire Rebellion, culminating in the Battle of Lose-Cote Field on 12 March 1470, was the county’s greatest and last experience of the fighting of the Wars of the Roses, and indeed Lincolnshire would produce no significant trouble to any monarch of any dynasty until the outbreak of the

⁷ *Ingulph*, pp.421-2.

⁸ *Ingulph*, p.423.

⁹ See below, chs.6-7.

Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII in 1536.¹⁰ As will hopefully become clear over the following chapters, the Rebellion was very much a product of the political situation created in Lincolnshire by the Wars, and by the new Yorkist masters, and its consequences were felt not just in Lincolnshire but, at least temporarily, throughout the country as a whole. However, it remains one of the most curious incidents of the Wars, since not only are its origins somewhat obscure, but the intentions and motivations of a number of its protagonists are very much open to interpretation. Some historians have seen the Rebellion as an episode almost entirely engineered by Edward IV's enemies, part of a wider scheme to overthrow the King;¹¹ others have seen it as a largely local event which rapidly became submerged into the national conflict.¹² The underlying motivation for the Rebellion at the local level will be discussed more fully in the next two chapters, but an understanding of the episode itself requires a detailed description of the actual events of the winter of 1469-70, the activities of the leading characters, and the Rebellion's place in the wider context of the Wars. Although most of the chronology of the Rebellion is known, some parts remain open to conjecture, and much of the detail is based upon chronicle sources produced as unashamed pieces of propaganda by Edward's administration, both immediately following the event, and after his restoration in 1471.¹³ The validity and accuracy of these sources have been discussed at length by various commentators,¹⁴ and although many details can be verified against other official documents, the information must be treated with a degree of suspicion. But since alternative sources are limited, these documents cannot be ignored. As Holland has said about the main source, the *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire*, 'to reject it wherever it stands unsupported . . . would be to lose much valuable information'.¹⁵

¹⁰ For further details and bibliography, see A. Ward, *The Lincolnshire Rising, 1536* (Nottingham, 1986); Gunn, 'Peers, Commons and Gentry'.

¹¹ For instance, M.A. Hicks, *False, Fleeting, Perjur'd Clarence* (Gloucester, 1980), ch.2.

¹² For example, P. Holland, 'The Lincolnshire Rebellion of March 1470', *E.H.R.*, ciii (1988), pp.849-69; Ross, *Edward IV*, Appendix 5, pp.441-2. Oman even went so far as to suggest that it was a purely local event used fraudulently by Edward as a pretext for attacking his rivals. C.W.C. Oman, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (London, 1891), esp. pp.195-8.

¹³ 'Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire, 1470', ed. J.G. Nichols, in *Three Chronicles of the Reign of Edward IV*, ed. K. Dockray (Gloucester, 1988), pp.103-30 (hereafter *Chronicle*); 'The Confession of Sir Robert Welles', in S. Bentley (ed.), *Excerpta Historica* (London, 1831), pp.282-4, reprinted (as a supplementary note to the *Chronicle*) in *Three Chronicles*, ed. Dockray, pp.123-5, and in *E.H.D.*, iv, pp.302-3. (Subsequent references are given for the 1988 Dockray edition for both sources.)

¹⁴ For instance, A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, II, c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), pp.261ff; C.L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (New York, 1913), pp.173-4.

¹⁵ Holland, 'Rebellion', p.850.

The outbreak of the Lincolnshire Rebellion itself occurred on 4 March 1470, when Sir Robert Welles, only son and heir of Richard, Lord Welles and Willoughby, had proclamations made in the county's churches, 'in the kinges name, the duc, erle, and his owne name', calling upon the people of the shire to gather on 6 March at Ranby Hawe, about fifteen miles east of Alford, in order to resist the King.¹⁶ However, the chain of events had actually begun some time earlier, with an attack upon the house of Sir Thomas Burgh, Edward's most trusted confidante in Lincolnshire, by an armed gang, apparently consisting of Lord Welles' servants and retainers.¹⁷ At first glance, such an incident can have been nothing too extraordinary, since attacks on rivals' houses and other property were, if not common, then certainly not unheard of in Lincolnshire during this period.¹⁸ However, the attack was against Burgh, a trusted courtier, Master of the Horse to Edward IV, and very much the leader of the Yorkist administration in the county. Thus, especially given the tensions in Lincolnshire at the time, the incident was always likely to be seen as much as an attack on Yorkist rule as upon Burgh himself.¹⁹

Richard Welles and his brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Dymoke, who was also implicated in the raid, were summoned to London to explain their actions. When they finally appeared at the beginning of March, they managed to satisfy Edward of their loyalty, and both were pardoned.²⁰ However, by the time these pardons were issued, the

¹⁶ *Chronicle*, p.108. Exactly which king is referred to here is debatable. It would seem anomalous for a rebel to call out a host in the name of the very king he was defying, but he may have used Edward's name to give his gathering a certain amount of legitimacy. The author of the *Chronicle* probably assumed he meant Edward, and made no further comment. It is generally believed that Welles already knew of a plan to make Clarence king, but Clarence, 'the duc', is already mentioned. The 'king' could conceivably refer to Henry VI, either out of genuine loyalty or to gain support from former Lancastrian partisans, and such an interpretation may help to explain earlier historians' willingness to regard this rising as Lancastrian in character; e.g. Oman, *Warwick*, pp.195-8. The exact identity of 'the king' may have been left deliberately vague by Sir Robert, in order to attract maximum support.

¹⁷ The date of the attack is unclear, but is critical to the interpretation of the events. Details of the identities of the attackers are equally sketchy, but they were almost certainly all Welles servants; see below, pp.153ff, & ch.6. For further details of the life and career of Sir Thomas Burgh, see below, chs.6-7, & Appendix 6; S.J. Gunn, 'The Rise of the Burgh Family, c.1431-1550', in P. Lindley (ed.), *Gainsborough Old Hall*, Occasional Papers in Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 8 (Lincoln, 1991), pp.8-12.

¹⁸ For instance, the attack by Sir Thomas Cumberworth and others upon the Hilton manor of Swine, Yorkshire, in 1432; see above, p.136.

¹⁹ For further details of Burgh's position in local government, local tension and the basis for the dispute with Welles, see chs.6-7.

²⁰ C67/47, m.8. Welles was pardoned on 3 March, Dymoke on 6 March; see also below, pp.155-6. The names of some members of the raiding party are given in Warkworth's chronicle; J. Warkworth, 'A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth', ed. J.O. Halliwell, in *Three Chronicles*, ed. Dockray, pp.1-101, p.30. However, since his account is confused, and details are mixed with events from the Rebellion itself, it cannot be automatically assumed that Dymoke was involved. However, the fact that he was subsequently pardoned, and the other two men named, Sir Robert Welles and Sir Thomas de la Launde, were not, would suggest that Dymoke at least was

incident had grown out of all proportion. According to the confession given by Sir Robert Welles before his execution, '[a]boute Candelmasse last' (2 February) he and his father had been approached by servants of the Duke of Clarence, promising to help them in return for their support in the nascent schemes of the Duke and Warwick against Edward.²¹ The two noblemen probably used a similar tactic to that which would later be used by Robert Welles to call out the shire, promising support to men already fearing for their safety because of other misdeeds. According to Sir Robert, Clarence asked them to be ready to raise a force when the Duke was prepared, but not to do anything until they received instructions. Unfortunately for the rebels, the insurrection erupted prematurely.²²

On Sunday 4 March, Sir Robert launched the Rebellion, calling upon the people of the county to gather, in order to resist the King, who, Welles claimed, was coming to the county to 'destroie the comons of the same shire'.²³ Quite why Robert launched the Rebellion at this precise time is not clear, especially since the only person who appears to have been adequately prepared was Edward himself. Edward had been gathering a force with which to visit Lincolnshire, presumably urged along by the displaced Burgh,²⁴ and after delaying at Westminster, where he met with Clarence, he left for Waltham Abbey on 6 March, the day the rebels mustered at Ranby. On the next day, he received first news of the rebel gathering, and further commissions of array were drawn up, directed to Clarence and Warwick, for the counties of Warwickshire and Worcestershire.²⁵ Edward then continued his journey northwards, albeit at a somewhat leisurely pace.²⁶ After spending Tuesday and Wednesday nights at Waltham Abbey, he reached Royston on

embroiled.

²¹ 'Confession', p.123.

²² Most of the details of the chronology of the Rebellion are from the *Chronicle*. Certain parts of this are open to further interpretation, but this version is the most probable. For further details, see Holland, 'Rebellion', pp.854ff.

²³ *Chronicle*, p.108.

²⁴ Holland states that this was the reason for the issue of commissions of array to much of southern and eastern England from 8 February. This is almost certainly correct, although it does not appear to have been specified on the commissions themselves. Holland, 'Rebellion', p.853; *CPR 1467-77*, pp.199-200.

²⁵ *CPR 1467-77*, p.218; *Foedera, Conventiones, Literae . . .*, ed. T. Rymer, 20 vols. (1704-35), xi, pp.652-3. These commissions have been seen as evidence that Edward was indeed unaware of the two noblemen's involvement in the Rebellion: Hicks, *Clarence*, p.69; Holland, 'Rebellion', p.855. The precise timing of Edward's dealings with Clarence at this stage are not entirely clear.

²⁶ Presumably he was amassing his army *en route*. It is difficult to conceive that he had originally intended to visit the county with a particularly large force before hearing of the Rebellion, since the main instigators of the trouble had already been pardoned, and a heavy-handed show of royal authority would probably have proved counter-productive. A map detailing Edward's progress, and that of the rebels, appears in Gillingham, *Wars*, p.168.

Thursday, and Huntingdon by Friday. During the journey on Thursday 8 March, between Buntingford and Royston, he received a letter from Lord Cromwell's steward at Tattershall,²⁷ informing him of the situation in Lincolnshire, and describing the muster at Ranby and the rebels' initial movements. On Sunday 11 March, the royal party arrived at the Yorkist stronghold of Fotheringhay in Northamptonshire.

Meanwhile, the rebel host had moved across the county. From the muster at Ranby, they moved immediately to Lincoln, where they seem to have stayed for at least a day. By Sunday 11 March they had reached Grantham, having supposedly received letters from Clarence and Warwick as they travelled. However, events then forced a change of plan. After Edward had heard of the rebel gathering, he had ordered that Richard Welles and Thomas Dymoke, who were still in London, be brought to him on his journey. They duly joined Edward at Huntingdon, where they supposedly confessed to their knowledge of Sir Robert's plans, though apparently not the involvement of Clarence and Warwick. Edward then ordered Welles to write to his son, stating that, unless the rebels surrender to the King, he and Dymoke would be executed. Sir Robert received the message after he had left Grantham, ostensibly heading towards a rendezvous with Clarence and Warwick at Leicester. Having been told by his father before he left for London that he should come to his aid should he need it, he turned his force towards Stamford, the next town on Edward's route, intending to attack the royal army as it rested on Monday night, and thus rescue his father.

Edward left Fotheringhay early on Monday 12 March, and headed to Stamford, intent upon facing the rebels, and aware of their change of direction. At Stamford, he received letters from Clarence and Warwick, saying that they were still at Coventry gathering their contingents, and would be at Leicester the next day. Edward decided not to wait. He ordered the immediate execution of Welles and Dymoke, then moved against the rebels, meeting them in a field outside the village of Empingham in Rutland, just to the west of Stamford. The rebels, facing a far superior force, in weapons and technology though maybe not numbers,²⁸ fled almost immediately. In their haste to escape, they supposedly discarded their heavy clothing and any incriminating livery, and thus the incident became known as 'The Battle of Lose-Cote Field'.

²⁷ John Morling, steward of Humphrey Bourchier. *Chronicle*, pp.108, 122-3 & n.7. For details of Bourchier, see below, pp.161-2.

²⁸ The rebel host, according to the *Chronicle*, numbered more than 30,000 men, but this is almost certainly an exaggeration. However, since it is unlikely that Edward was expecting a battle when he left London, the royal army was probably not especially large either.

The rout at Empingham effectively brought the Lincolnshire Rebellion to a rather ignominious and rapid end. However, Edward's campaign continued. During the battle, and especially after interrogating the leaders, Edward accumulated evidence implicating Clarence and Warwick in the events, and pursued them, first northwards, then back to the south coast, from where they escaped to France.²⁹ But the Lincolnshire events were over. During the days immediately after the battle, before his pursuit of Clarence and Warwick, Edward dealt with the defeated rebels. As was his usual custom, he allowed most of the lesser men to escape unhindered, but showed ruthless vindictiveness towards their leaders. All were captured relatively quickly, and, after confessing their crimes, were executed. Sir Thomas de la Launde, another brother-in-law of Richard Welles, had been captured immediately after the battle, and he and another leader, John Neille of Lincoln, were executed at Grantham on 15 March. Robert Welles himself was executed at Doncaster on 19 March, along with 'anothre greate capteyne', probably Richard Wareyn, whom Ross describes as the commander of the rebel foot-soldiers.³⁰ No record survives of any other executions, suggesting that the vast majority of the insurgents were of lowly status, and *Edward made no concerted attempt to punish other offenders; he had far more important matters to deal with.* A commission of *oyer et terminer* was later issued to the 'county and city of Lincoln' on 11 July 1470, under such eminent men as the Duke of Gloucester, Marquis Montagu, and the Earls of Northumberland, Worcester and Essex.³¹ Since no members of the local gentry appear on the commission, with the exception of Sir Thomas Burgh, it was presumably issued with the intention of restoring order and examining the loyalty of the local landowners. However, it is unlikely that it achieved much. Warwick and Clarence returned from exile in September, and Edward was forced to flee to Burgundy. The victory at Empingham may have appeared decisive, but within a few weeks it was to prove irrelevant.

The existence and relative reliability of the *Chronicle* means that most of the main events of the Rebellion are reasonably well known. However, many of the issues outside the scope of the *Chronicle* are less clear. The general background to the episode

²⁹ For a discussion of the roles of Warwick and Clarence in the wider event, and the implications, see Holland, 'Rebellion', pp.858ff; Hicks, *Clarence*, ch.II:2. However, Hicks' chronology of the early events is almost certainly in error. See below, pp.153-7.

³⁰ Ross, *Edward IV*, p.144. The details of the executions come from a letter to John Paston dated 27 March, probably sent by a member of the royal party then staying at York. *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Davis, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971-6), ii, pp.432-3.

³¹ *CPR 1467-77*, p.221. The majority of the non-noble commissioners were royal justices.

within the county, and its aftermath, will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, but closer attention must be drawn to the details of the specifically local event which prompted the Rebellion, the raid on Thomas Burgh's house at Gainsborough. That this incident occurred is not in doubt; however, the date of the attack, crucial to a fuller understanding of the episode, is far from clear. Warkworth's Chronicle states that the attack occurred in March, during the course of the Rebellion itself.³² However, this is clearly incorrect, since it was this incident which prompted Edward's decision to visit the county in the first place, the threat of which was in turn used by Robert Welles to spur the county into rebellion. Warkworth's chronology is undoubtedly confused, but how much earlier the incident occurred is crucial, not least because it may prove the difference between the incident being a specifically local dispute which only subsequently became embroiled in wider matters, or its being part of the wider conspiracy against Edward by the Duke of Clarence and the Earl of Warwick. An early date would suggest the former, while a later date would significantly increase the possibility that the two magnates were involved from the beginning.

The root of the trouble lay in the turmoil of 1469.³³ After the numerous minor rebellions, the defeat of his supporters at Edgecote and his surrender, Edward had been a virtual prisoner of Warwick for over a month, but the gradual collapse of Warwick's position forced him to free Edward some time in September 1469. Although he was effectively back in control, the situation was still tense, especially since Warwick and Edward made no show of reconciliation until December. The troubles of this period were exacerbated by numerous incidents of local violence, as certain individuals took advantage of the breakdown of order to pursue their personal battles with their neighbours. In a period reminiscent of the disorder which accompanied the collapse of the Lancastrian regime ten years earlier, the Duke of Norfolk took the opportunity to launch a full-scale assault upon Caister Castle, forcing John Paston to surrender.³⁴ Meanwhile, on 20 March 1470, the forces of the Countess of Shrewsbury and the Berkeleys met in the so-called 'Battle of Nibley Green'.³⁵ It was in this prevailing atmosphere that the Gainsborough raid took place.

³² Warkworth, p.30.

³³ For further details and discussion of the events of the later 1460s, see Ross, *Edward IV*, ch.7; Gillingham, *Wars*, ch.10; Carpenter, *Wars*, ch.8; Goodman, *Wars*, ch.4; K. Dockray, 'The Yorkshire Rebellions of 1469', *The Ricardian*, 6:83 (1983), pp.246-57.

³⁴ Richmond, *Fastolf's Will*, pp.197ff.

³⁵ Gillingham, *Wars*, p.167; Ross, *Edward IV*, p.138.

Although the majority of the rebellions of 1469 had broken out in Yorkshire, some of them under Neville guidance, the movements may have attracted wider support.³⁶ According to Ross, Lincolnshire sent a number of men to join Robin of Redesdale's rebellion in June and July 1469, the revolt with which Warwick appears to have had the most definite links.³⁷ In January 1470, the outgoing Lincolnshire sheriff, Sir Richard FitzWilliam of Aldwerk, Yorkshire,³⁸ was pardoned all offences and debts incurred during his tenure due to the 'insurrections of the people in the shire'.³⁹ Quite what these were is not specified, but if these links with the Yorkshire rebellions, and possibly the Gainsborough raid, all occurred during the final weeks of FitzWilliam's term, his inability to complete his tasks is understandable.⁴⁰ Robert Welles, in his later confession, said that the Rebellion was due to fears that the King was coming to Lincolnshire 'with grete power, . . . where the kinges jugges shulde sitte, and hang and draw grete noumbre of the comons'.⁴¹ Almost certainly this was a reaction to more than just the Gainsborough incident. The raiding party is unlikely to have been especially large, and it is quite probable that Welles played on the fears of men already worried about facing punishment for their involvement in previous disorder.⁴²

Some commentators have opted for a later date for the raid on Gainsborough, placing the attack in January or even, in the case of Michael Hicks, in February.⁴³ However, it is more likely that it occurred rather earlier, perhaps even as early as August or September 1469, while Edward was still a prisoner. Holland has used evidence from

³⁶ For an analysis of the nature of these rebellions, see Dockray, 'Yorkshire Rebellions', pp.246-57.

³⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, pp.139-40. He gives no source for this assertion, and I can find no evidence to confirm it, but, given the numerous and strong links between Lincolnshire and various parts of Yorkshire, it is highly likely that the rebel Yorkshire gentry called for support from south of the Humber. The Lincolnshire men may well have sent their own supporters or tenants to join the rebels, or possibly joined in person.

³⁸ For further details, see below, p.209 & n.36.

³⁹ *CPR 1467-77*, p.185.

⁴⁰ FitzWilliam was succeeded by Sir Richard Tempest on 5 November 1469. If the Gainsborough raid, or other incidents, had badly affected relations between the county and the royal administration, this may have prevented FitzWilliam, who was not a Lincolnshire resident, from completing his duties satisfactorily. Tempest, his successor, was also from Yorkshire, from Bracewell in the West Riding. Although non-native sheriffs were not uncommon, the troubled state of Lincolnshire, and doubts about the loyalty of the Neville faction, may well have prompted the appointment of Tempest, not only an outsider but also a Percy annuitant, thus presumably no great supporter of the Nevilles. For details of Tempest, see Arnold, 'West Riding', Appendix 2. For further discussion of Lincolnshire appointments, see below, ch.7.

⁴¹ 'Confession', p.124.

⁴² Carpenter notes that rumours, possibly started deliberately, were spreading, suggesting that Edward intended to punish the rebels of 1469, despite having already issued a general pardon. Carpenter, *Wars*, p.176.

⁴³ Ross, *Edward IV*, p.38; Hicks, *Clarence*, p.67.

the numerous commissions of array issued during this period to suggest a date at some point between November 1469 and February 1470, but is no more specific.⁴⁴ A series of commissions were issued from 8 February onwards, for numerous eastern counties.⁴⁵ However, while it is likely that these were intended to provide Edward with a force with which to visit Lincolnshire, there is no indication that they must have been issued immediately after the raid; it was almost certainly Edward's decision to act that determined the timing of the commissions, rather than the attack itself. Holland also cites commissions issued for the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and the new Earl Rivers in November 1469, for the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, which he states may have been issued as a direct response to the attack.⁴⁶ However, the wording which Holland highlights, that the commissions were issued 'pro suppeditatione Rebellionum & Inimicorum nostrum', was relatively standard, and was almost the same as would be used in the commissions directed to Warwick and Clarence the following March.⁴⁷ Moreover, given the troubled situation in East Anglia itself, where the problems were ostensibly more serious than those in Lincolnshire at this point, it is perhaps just as probable that these commissions were intended for issues more local to that area.⁴⁸ In terms of the date, it would also seem rather premature for commissions of array to be issued, thus creating even more groups of armed men, unless Edward was certain of the necessity and was ready to act. The situation was not one for rash decisions, and surely the most obvious first move would have been to investigate the incident, possibly through Sir Thomas Burgh himself, or by summoning the ringleaders to London, rather than immediately issuing commissions of array. The November commissions, had they been issued in response to the trouble in Lincolnshire, would certainly suggest an earlier date for the raid, but it is most likely that they were unconnected.

Another series of commissions of array, not discussed by Holland, had also been issued on 29 October 1469, and are perhaps more interesting. There is no obvious indication of why these commissions were issued, and, given the wide geographical spread and the length of time before Edward finally took action, were again probably themselves nothing to do with the Lincolnshire situation. However, while commissions

⁴⁴ Holland, 'Rebellion', p.853.

⁴⁵ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.199-200.

⁴⁶ Holland, 'Rebellion', p.853; *CPR 1467-77*, p.197; *Foedera*, xi, pp.649-53.

⁴⁷ *Foedera*, xi, pp.652-3; *CPR 1467-77*, p.218.

⁴⁸ See above, p.152 & n.34. Unfortunately for Paston and his followers, the fact that the Duke of Norfolk was one of the chief protagonists would not have precluded his involvement on the commission!

were issued to almost all the English counties, the most notable omissions from the list were the three Parts of Lincolnshire.⁴⁹ While it is dangerous to argue from silence, this could well be a sign that trouble had already erupted in the county. Why else would Edward, raising soldiers for his own use, have ignored such a large and populous county, with no strong connections with Warwick, the chief instigator of the troubles of 1469?⁵⁰ With Thomas Burgh in his predominant position in the county, surely Edward would have looked to his trusted servant to help him.⁵¹ However, if Burgh had already been driven out, and Welles was implicated in the disorder, Edward may well have decided that the safest course of action was to refrain from issuing commissions to Lincolnshire at all.

This is far from the only evidence suggesting an earlier date. After the February council meeting at Westminster which preceded his departure for Lincolnshire in March, Edward issued a general pardon, for all offences committed *before Christmas*, to anyone who appeared at the Chancery willing to purchase such a pardon.⁵² Michael Hicks has stated that Welles did not leave for London until after 22 February,⁵³ which was also the same day that the general pardon was proclaimed. Welles had almost certainly been summoned to London well before that date; summoning the chief protagonist would surely have been the first option the King pursued, and according to Polydore Vergil, Welles had been making numerous excuses and delaying his appearance.⁵⁴ It is not

⁴⁹ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.195-6. Most of the other omissions can be more easily explained; the palatinates of Durham, Cheshire and Lancashire were obviously not included, while Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland and Yorkshire were probably omitted due to their geographical position, and the troubled state of the North during 1469. There is no sign of a commission for Herefordshire, but there are two commissions for neighbouring Worcestershire, listed consecutively in the list in *CPR 1467-77* - one of these may be an error for Herefordshire. This leaves only Middlesex, which was often treated differently due to its proximity to London and Westminster, and the three Parts of Lincolnshire. Their commissions could, possibly, have been lost, but for all three to disappear would seem strange.

⁵⁰ Warwick was also not included in any of the commissions, even that for Warwickshire itself, which was headed by Lord Hastings. *CPR 1467-77*, p.196.

⁵¹ Burgh's name does appear on the equivalent commission for Nottinghamshire. *CPR 1467-77*, p.195.

⁵² C81/830/3025; C81/1501/27. C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (London, 1923), pp.510-11. The pardon is also mentioned in P.J.C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge, 1993), p.131, and Hicks, *Clarence*, p.68 n.46. Presumably this was intended mainly as an act of reconciliation with the various rebels of 1469. Holland notes the names of other Lincolnshire men pardoned at this time with Welles and Dymoke. Holland, 'Rebellion', p.850. However, since a general pardon had been proclaimed, it would be unwise to simply assume that these men were necessarily involved in the raid or the Rebellion.

⁵³ Hicks, *Clarence*, p.66. However, Hicks gives no reference for this assertion.

⁵⁴ *Three Books of Polydore Vergil's English History*, ed. Sir Henry Ellis, Camden Society, xxix (1844), p.127. However, much of the rest of Vergil's account is muddled, and was written long after the events they describe. Such a delay in attending a summons from Edward is quite possible, even if the attack had actually occurred as early as the previous August. Edward was in no position to enforce his orders until at least the end of September, and given the unruly situation in the country as a whole, and

inconceivable that it was this promise of a pardon which encouraged Welles to stop prevaricating and actually appear at Westminster; a pardon was duly enrolled on 3 March.⁵⁵ Although this evidence may be only circumstantial, it would certainly support a date before Christmas for the initial attack on Gainsborough.

Michael Hicks has argued that the attack occurred some time shortly after Candlemas (2 February), the date given in Robert Welles subsequent confession for the beginning of the alliance between the Welles family and Clarence.⁵⁶ However, Hicks is inclined to give Warwick and Clarence a larger role in the origins of the Rebellion than they appear to deserve. The main basis of his argument is the inclusion among those pardoned at roughly the same time as Welles and Dymoke of three men with associations with Clarence: Thomas FitzWilliam of Mablethorpe (one of Clarence's Lincolnshire manors); FitzWilliam's son and namesake; and William Yerburgh, the reeve of Clarence's manor of Gayton. However, the argument is tenuous. Even if we accept that they were pardoned for the same reason as Welles and Dymoke (probable, but not certain),⁵⁷ their connections with the Welles and Willoughby families were much stronger and older than those with Clarence. Clarence's Lincolnshire estates were recent acquisitions, consisting mainly of lands from the honour of Richmond and the estates of attainted Lancastrians, and were extremely minor compared to his estates elsewhere in England.⁵⁸ Obviously they had all been granted to him since Edward IV's accession, and there is no evidence of any attempt by Clarence to build up a loyal following within Lincolnshire during the 1460s. Meanwhile, the Yerburghs and FitzWilliams had numerous connections with the Welles family, both the general connections expected between neighbours in gentry society, and others suggesting a closer association.⁵⁹ Moreover, they were all relatively minor figures in county life, certainly in comparison to Richard Welles and Thomas Dymoke, one the (albeit recently restored) heir to two local baronies and potentially the natural leader of county landed society, the other being the

little indication of further trouble in Lincolnshire, the punishment of Welles would probably not have been an immediate concern. Furthermore, the fact that it was winter could partly excuse both Welles' delays, and Edward's inactivity. Welles also had a precedent for his stance, since his father apparently ignored with impunity a summons to appear before Parliament during the equally troubled atmosphere of 1450. See above, p.134.

⁵⁵ C67/47, m.8.

⁵⁶ Hicks, *Clarence*, p.67.

⁵⁷ See above, p.155, n.52.

⁵⁸ For details of Clarence's Lincolnshire estates, see Hicks, *Clarence*, Appendix 2, p.209.

⁵⁹ For example, LAO 2Anc 3/A/23, where both Yerburgh and the elder FitzWilliam were described as feoffees of Richard Welles. See also above, pp.72-4; below, ch.7.

hereditary King's Champion. It is difficult to see how such minor figures could have been especially instrumental in persuading Welles, Dymoke and others into helping Clarence, although one or more of them could, conceivably, have used their connections to forge links between Clarence and their embattled friends at a later date. Hicks' scenario tends to reduce the importance of local considerations and connections in favour of wider, national ones, a dangerous approach in a county with a political structure such as Lincolnshire's, where links with the greater magnates were limited at best. Although this consideration does not in itself discount a date after 2 February for the raid on Gainsborough, it does cast serious doubt upon the only real basis for such an assertion.

Sir Robert Welles' confession also suggests an earlier date for the raid. Given the nature of the document, the veracity of this confession must be regarded with suspicion, despite the claims that all the confessions provided after the Rebellion had been given 'of there free willes un compelled, not for fere of dethe ne otherwyse stirred . . .'.⁶⁰ However, there is no great reason for doubting its truthfulness.⁶¹ Welles does not actually mention the attack on Gainsborough at all, beginning his account with the initial agreement with Clarence early in February, but Welles probably realised that, by this time, Edward was looking for evidence against Clarence and Warwick, rather than details of the failed Rebellion. Yet it would be strange for him not to implicate the noblemen in this incident, the very event which began the Rebellion, if they had been involved. The omission of the attack from the account would suggest that Sir Robert (or indeed Edward) did not regard it as an important part of the incident in hand. Whether this was just because the noblemen were not involved, or because it happened considerably earlier, is not clear, but the most likely situation is that Warwick and Clarence were not party to the attack, and that Edward had nothing further to gain by even attempting to implicate them.

The evidence as set out above would therefore seem to suggest this course of events leading up to the outbreak of the Rebellion. The troubled state of the country in the summer of 1469 was exacerbated in Lincolnshire by limited local involvement in the Yorkshire rebellions, a situation serious enough to prevent the sheriff from executing his duties. Lord Welles, with a grudge against Sir Thomas Burgh, saw an opportunity to score a victory and, following the example set by many others throughout the Wars, launched an attack upon Burgh's house in Gainsborough, probably during the period of

⁶⁰ *Chronicle*, p.113.

⁶¹ There is nothing in the Confession which is obviously untrue. For a discussion, see Holland, 'Rebellion', pp.857-8; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp.261-2; Ross, *Edward IV*, Appendix 5, pp.441-2.

Edward's imprisonment by Warwick in late-August or early-September, or at least soon afterwards. Burgh, the King's trusted friend and key supporter in Lincolnshire, persuaded Edward that he should act to restore him to power, and Burgh's assailants were summoned to London some time after Edward regained control. Welles and Dymoke, fearful for their safety, delayed. In the meantime, in the absence of Edward's main agent in the county, Lincolnshire was ignored by royal commissions of array, while Welles, still fearing retribution, was approached with offers of support by agents of Edward's enemies, Clarence and Warwick, possibly brought about through the magnates' connections with other Lincolnshire associates of Welles. In February, Edward made an offer of a general pardon, and Welles, despite already being involved with Clarence and Warwick, seized the opportunity, appearing at Westminster in time for his pardon on 3 March. In his absence, however, his son continued with the plan as discussed with Clarence and Warwick, and launched the Rebellion. This scenario is, of course, only one interpretation, but would seem to fit the available evidence.

Thus, the Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1470, the only occasion when the county and its inhabitants became directly and seriously embroiled in the actual events of the Wars of the Roses, remains a curious incident. It would appear to have been a classic example of the simplified version of Storey's theory of the Wars as the 'escalation of private feuds', whereby a grudge held by a member of, in this case, the minor nobility erupted into local violence, and was then engulfed by outside events, as others attempted to use the situation to further their own ends. If, as seems most likely, the raid on Gainsborough was a specifically local episode, it is unlikely that Richard Welles or his supporters had any idea, or wish, that it would eventually escalate into a full-scale, if rather shambolic rebellion. The blame for this probably falls upon some of the more headstrong protagonists; Robert Welles was relatively young and inexperienced,⁶² and Clarence's volatile and impetuous character has been discussed at length elsewhere.⁶³ But for such an episode to be associated with Warwick would seem unusual, since despite his abysmal record as a field commander,⁶⁴ he was far more adept at the kind of covert political manoeuvring which seems to have characterised the early stages of the Rebellion.

⁶² Since his father was only about 40 years old at this time (he was born c.1428-30), it is unlikely that Robert was much older than 20. Richard had married Joan, daughter and heir of Robert, Lord Willoughby, on 26 September 1435, when Richard, and presumably Joan, was still a child. Joan died shortly before 13 February 1462. *C.P.*, xii (ii), p.446; LAO 2Anc 3/A/19.

⁶³ Hicks, *Clarence, passim*.

⁶⁴ Warwick lost every battle in which he served as a principal commander. The only occasion when he fought on the winning side was at St Albans in 1455.

Richard Welles himself, as will be described below,⁶⁵ had managed successfully to rebuild his position during the 1460s, and despite the tension between him and Burgh, it is far from clear exactly what he had to gain by actually rebelling. The seemingly uncoordinated situation at the start of the Rebellion, with the shire being called out before the noblemen had even left London for the safety of the Midlands, and the fact that Warwick and Clarence were unable to get their forces together in time to defeat Edward, certainly suggests opportunism rather than a well-planned episode. This would seem to agree with the evidence far better than the alternative arguments. Therefore, it is within the shire itself where the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the Rebellion lie, in the situation which had emerged in the aftermath of the early Wars and the advent of the Yorkist monarchy.

⁶⁵ See below, pp. 189ff.

Chapter 6

War and Landed Society, 1461-85

Lincolnshire's experience of the actual events of the Wars of the Roses was clearly limited, with just the brief incident of 1469-70 when the county had any real effect on the national scene. However, the links between the county, its people, and the consequences of the Wars went much further, and the ties of bastard feudalism, family loyalty and service meant that a number of members of the landed classes were drawn into the conflict in various ways. Lincolnshire as an area may have been peripheral to the actual fighting, but relationships with other notables, and with the Crown, meant that its residents had a greater involvement than may be expected given the county's geographical isolation. However, the influence of Lincolnshire and its residents upon the Wars was in many ways less important in this context than the influence of the Wars upon the county, its inhabitants and its governance. Changes at the centre of English government had far-reaching effects upon the localities, both as a direct result of the fighting, and because of the change of dynasty. These changes undoubtedly had a major impact upon the government of the shires, but, perhaps of more importance to the local inhabitants, there were also a number of changes in the fundamental structure and composition of landed society in the English regions, changes necessary for the Yorkist regime to achieve its aims, but not necessarily popular with the people most affected - the county landholders. In many ways, Lincolnshire provides a good example of the ways in which both the nature of medieval warfare and royal intervention could have a profound effect on the affairs of the landed classes, even while appearing to be of only peripheral concern to the people involved. It also shows how royal and magnate influence, or interference, could on the one hand be useful to the Crown, but could also prove extremely dangerous to all concerned.

The fighting of the Wars may have by-passed Lincolnshire during their early stages (Queen Margaret's unwelcome visit to Stamford and Grantham excepted), but of course that did not mean that the county gentry were personally uninvolved. Various

factors, from bastard feudal ties to personal choice and ambition, meant that a number of Lincolnshire men fought, and in some cases died, in the various battles which marked both the end of Lancastrian rule and also the Yorkist crisis of 1469-71.¹ Lincolnshire certainly had a legacy of Lancastrian service, particularly among the greater families, but the steadfast loyalty of earlier years had clearly dissipated by the 1450s.² Lincolnshire was no longer a heartland of Lancastrian strength, and both sides drew some support from the county. However, it is impossible to know how many men were actual combatants. Unless they were recorded as being present at the various battles, or were killed or captured, their movements generally remain a mystery, and there is little evidence of the wider conflict provoking local clashes between the followers of the disputants. The presence of a man's lord in a battle may suggest that that particular man may also have been present, but this cannot be taken for granted.³ Many doubtless decided to remain at home, but there were some who were less reticent.

Not only were the former Duchy links likely to have created a degree of Lancastrian support within Lincolnshire, but the Lancastrian sympathies of most of the resident nobles would probably have had a similar effect. John, Viscount Beaumont, Leo, Lord Welles, and Welles' son, Richard, Lord Willoughby, all fought for Lancaster. Beaumont was killed at Northampton, while his son, William, followed Queen Margaret into exile, returning only briefly during the Readeption.⁴ Leo Welles, another committed supporter of the Lancastrian regime, almost certainly fought at most of the early battles, and was killed at Towton,⁵ while Richard Welles was a member of Queen Margaret's pillaging army in 1460, fought at the Second Battle of St Albans, and was captured fighting alongside his father at Towton.⁶ The only other member of the Lincolnshire nobility, the new Lord Cromwell, Humphrey Bourchier, was from a reasonably pro-Yorkist family, the third son of York's brother-in-law, Henry, Viscount Bourchier (later Earl of Essex).⁷ However, Humphrey himself remained aloof from the early stages

¹ Although the events surrounding the Battles of Bosworth and Stoke are beyond the scope of this study, there is also little evidence of involvement by many, if any, Lincolnshire men.

² For a discussion of the Lancastrian affinity in Lincolnshire, and its apparent dissolution during the fifteenth century, see above, pp.75ff.

³ For instance, Sir William Skipwith blatantly disobeyed the Duke of York's summonses in 1459. Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47; *CPR 1452-61*, p.552; see above, p.78; below, p.167.

⁴ *C.P.*, ii, pp.62-4.

⁵ *C.P.*, xii (ii), pp.443-4.

⁶ *C.P.*, xii (ii), pp.445-6.

⁷ Humphrey Bourchier had married Joan Stanhope, niece and co-heiress of Ralph Cromwell. *C.P.*, iii, p.554.

of the Wars, only embracing the Yorkist cause shortly before Edward IV's final victory. He did, however, support Edward during the crisis of 1469-71, and died fighting for Edward's cause at Barnet.

In the prevailing circumstances, it would not be surprising to find a similarly pro-Lancastrian attitude among the gentry. However, surviving records are scarce, few combatants are known, and with ties of affinity often being less than clear, those people whose connections are known, such as Thomas Dymoke, knighted after the Battle of Northampton,⁸ are relatively rare. After the successful capture of the throne by Edward IV, while those who fought for York were honoured with offices or lands, those who had fought for Lancaster usually laid low, and the deaths of those who fell supporting Henry VI were quietly forgotten by their families in the hope of avoiding punishment or retribution. The lists of those attainted for their presence at Wakefield and Towton contain the names of very few Lincolnshire men, despite the relative proximity of the two battles, and the strong links between the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire gentry. Only two Lincolnshire residents appear in the list of those involved at Wakefield: William Grymesby, the former Treasurer of Henry VI's household, and 'Philip Lowes of Thouresby'. In addition to Leo Welles and the ubiquitous Grymesby, among those attainted after Towton were William Tailboys, John Maydenwell of Kirton in Lindsey, Thomas Claymond of Great Hale and Richard Fulnaby of Fulnetby, as well as others with more minor Lincolnshire connections such as William Vaux and John Penycok.⁹ A later act stated that a 'John Ratford of Lincolnshire, gentleman' was also attainted for his adherence to the Lancastrian cause in Northumberland during the risings of 1464.¹⁰ While these numbers may seem small, the lists as a whole are short, presumably a reflection of the Yorkists' limited need for revenge, their sketchy knowledge of who was present at these battles, or their assessment of which people were worth taking action against. Similarly, after the Yorkist restoration in 1471, action against the rebels of 1470 was extremely limited. Alongside the Welles family, only one man, Sir Thomas de la

⁸ W.C. Metcalfe, *A Book of Knights* (London, 1885), p.2.

⁹ *R.P.*, v, pp.476-7. Of course it is quite likely that many of the men present at Towton might also have previously fought at Wakefield. Sir William Vaux and his son, also William, were from Harrowden, Northamptonshire, but had Lincolnshire connections after the elder William married Elizabeth Belesby, some time after 1451. *W.B.*, p.904; see also below, Appendix 6. For Penycok, see above, p.93 & n.66.

¹⁰ *R.P.*, v, p.511. It is conceivable that 'Ratford' was a relative of the Yorkist Sir Henry Retford. There were other Retford or Ratford families in the county at this time, but details are sketchy, and the main Retford line died out with Sir Henry. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.47 (*sub.* 'Thomas Retford'); below, Appendix 6.

Launde, suffered attainder, and even that did not occur until 1474.¹¹ The intervening Readeption may have allowed the involvement of others to be disguised or forgotten, while others may have died, but the lack of victims shows a consistency in Edward's treatment of his enemies, attacking and destroying the ringleaders while showing leniency towards their lesser followers.

With the exception of William Tailboys, the men attainted all appear to have been drawn from the middle and lower ranks of the gentry, men who, while certainly members of the landed classes, were by no means members of the county elite.¹² This would seem to suggest that while loyalty to the Lancastrians may have waned among the great families of the county, at least to such an extent that they were unwilling actually to fight for them, loyalty among at least some of the lesser families, either to Henry VI himself or to his noble supporters, was still evident. Conversely, it could be the case that, with three pro-Lancastrian noblemen having interests in the county, only the greater gentry were able to resist such pressure as there was from above to join in the fighting. However, the relative scarcity of links between these noblemen and those attainted casts doubt upon this theory.¹³

Of the men with Lincolnshire connections who were attainted, John Penycok and William Grymesby¹⁴ were prominent royal servants, and Philip Lowes of Thoresby has proved untraceable.¹⁵ Thomas Claymond of Great Hale had served as escheator in 1456-7, and was the royal alnager in Lincolnshire in 1453. His ancestors had been far more prominent, his grandfather serving as sheriff in 1385, and his father as a Kesteven JP, but Thomas himself was rather more obscure.¹⁶ Richard Fulnaby, presumably a member of the esquire family of Fulnetby, is considerably more interesting. Again, his precise identity and pedigree are unclear,¹⁷ but Richard had strong links with the borough

¹¹ The delayed attainder was a purely political act, used to manipulate the inheritance of the Welles estates after the childless death of the Welles heiress. See below, pp.171-2, 230-1.

¹² Tailboys' career has been discussed at length, above, ch.4. Despite the knighthood of Sir Thomas, the de la Laundes were recent additions to the local elite, although the family had a long pedigree within Lincolnshire. The connections with the Welles family probably accounted for their higher profile during the later 1460s. See below, Appendix 6.

¹³ For details of the Lincolnshire followings of the local nobles, see above, pp.79, 94ff.

¹⁴ For Penycok, see above, p.93 & n.66; for Grymesby, see below, p.165.

¹⁵ A Richard Lawe of Grantham was an elector in 1432, but appears to have died childless. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.77. John Lowys (or Lawes), a Boston merchant, died in 1445, but again there are no signs of any sons; his loans to the Crown in 1436, and his duties supplying building materials for Cromwell at Tattershall Castle might suggest possible Lancastrian sympathies, but there is no sign of any Thoresby connection. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.77; *Tattershall*, ed. Simpson, pp.64-5.

¹⁶ Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.51.

¹⁷ His dates suggest he may have been the son or brother of John Fulnaby (or Fulnetby), assessed on the respectable income of £60 in 1436. See Appendix 3:a. There is no mention of Richard in John

of Grimsby,¹⁸ serving as mayor in 1439 and as Parliamentary burgess in 1427 and 1442. Fulnaby's loyalties are clear from his grant, in 1460, of the office of bailiff of the Soke of Caistor, forfeited by Richard, Earl of Salisbury, a grant which might help explain why Fulnaby later suffered attainder, a rare and dubious honour for a man of his lowly standing.¹⁹ However, the grant may also indicate his involvement with the Neville Earls of Westmorland, the lords of the borough of Grimsby. Fulnaby's elections to Parliament may well have been orchestrated by Westmorland, or at least conducted with his tacit approval,²⁰ and Fulnaby was known as an ardent, and often violent supporter of Sir John Neville, the brother of Ralph, 2nd Earl of Westmorland and an influential, if often unwelcome figure in the affairs of Grimsby.²¹ The significance of granting an office formerly held by one magnate to a known supporter of one of his greatest rivals would not have been lost on contemporaries. Fulnaby also had other links, with Ralph Cromwell, Lord Roos and the Tailboys family, and was also a king's sergeant,²² but his main connections were with the Westmorland Nevilles. However, since his Neville lords played little part in the Wars, Fulnaby's presence at Towton was probably due to other interests, perhaps his royal sergeantry or his other Lincolnshire links.²³

Fulnaby's will of 1456, but eldest sons often received no mention. Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills*, p.183. Wedgwood notes that references to a Richard Fulnaby stretch back to the late 1420s; thus the Grimsby burgess of 1427 may have been too old to have been fighting for Lancaster at Towton. *W.B.*, p.360. While the attainder refers to Richard Fulnaby of Fulnetby, a man of that name lived at Grainthorpe in 1443 and 1446. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.62; *CPR 1445-52*, p.39. However all references may still be to the same man, and will be treated as such in the text.

¹⁸ The manor of Fulnetby belonged to the Nevilles of Middleham, part of their inheritance from Ralph, 1st Earl of Westmorland, and formerly part of the dower of Ralph's widow, Joan, Countess of Kent. *CPR 1437-45*, p.267; *F.A.*, iii, p.343. The Fulnabys' connections with Grimsby, a borough whose fee farm belonged to the Nevilles of Westmorland, may thus have dated from a period when Fulnetby and Grimsby shared a common lord. E. Gillett, *A History of Grimsby* (Oxford, 1970), pp.52-4; S.H. Rigby, *Medieval Grimsby: Growth and Decline* (Hull, 1993), pp.115-19.

¹⁹ Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.62; *CPR 1452-61*, p.576.

²⁰ The Nevilles often used their influence in Grimsby to intervene in borough elections. On one occasion, Westmorland simply told the mayor to send him the writs so that he could nominate two of his own men and save the cash-strapped borough the cost of the men's wages! Rigby, *Grimsby*, pp.101-2. The Grimsby residents continually complained that the borough's fee farm, payable to the Earl, was too high, and although the burgesses succeeded in getting a reduction, this was dependent upon the good will of the Earl, a hold over the town which the Nevilles continually used to their advantage. Gillett, *Grimsby*, ch.4.

²¹ Gillett, *Grimsby*, pp.60-1.

²² Assuming this is all one man. *CPR 1452-61*, p.576; *1441-7*, p.245; *1435-41*, p.159; *1429-35*, pp.110, 115; *W.B.*, p.360. John Fulnaby also had links with Ralph, Lord Cromwell, particularly concerning the building works at Tattershall. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.62; Simpson, *Tattershall*, pp.44, 51. This forms an impressive list of connections for a member of a relatively minor gentry family.

²³ Possibly William Tailboys, or perhaps Leo Welles, whose estates lay in the same region as Fulnetby, Grainthorpe and Grimsby.

John Maydenwell of Kirton in Lindsey was another relatively minor figure. Since Kirton was a royal manor, part of the Duchy of Cornwall,²⁴ Maydenwell was probably a reasonably trustworthy royal tenant or servant. However, little of his career is known, suggesting it was relatively undistinguished,²⁵ and unless he was directly called upon by the Crown as a Duchy of Cornwall tenant, his reasons for being at Towton are equally unclear. Given his unimportance locally, his attainder may have been due to his tenancy of royal lands, or some other unknown reason, but he was almost certainly unlucky to have suffered when many others of his rank must have escaped.

The careers of two more famous Lancastrian supporters are better known. William Tailboys of South Kyme probably fought for Henry VI at most of the early battles, was attainted by Edward IV, and was eventually captured and executed in 1464, after the battles of Hedgeley Moor and Hexham.²⁶ Another Lancastrian official, William Grymesby, had somewhat better, if remarkable, fortunes.²⁷ Grymesby was undoubtedly a Grimsby native, although his pedigree is unclear. He served Henry VI in various household offices, and was present at the Coventry 'Parliament of Devils' in 1459, probably as one of Lincolnshire's shire knights, or possibly as a Grimsby burgess. The recipient of various lands forfeited by Yorkists in 1460,²⁸ he certainly fought at Wakefield and Towton, and perhaps the earlier battles, before apparently going into exile with Queen Margaret. Grymesby's attainder was probably sought to recover the forfeited Yorkist lands rather than to punish Grymesby himself, and he was eventually pardoned by Edward IV in December 1471, returning to county politics soon afterwards and serving as Grimsby burgess yet again in 1472.²⁹ His survival and eventual reconciliation with the Yorkists shows clearly how members of the gentry were able to adapt when faced with an apparent *fait accompli*.

²⁴ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.35.

²⁵ He never held local office, and attended the parliamentary elections only once, in 1449. Rogers suggests that he may have been a collector of rents for Lord Cromwell in the 1430s. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.35. No writ of *diem clausit extremum* was issued for Maydenwell after Edward's accession; therefore either he was not a tenant in chief of the Crown, or he was still alive. His lands were later granted to John Burgh. *CPR 1461-7*, p.75.

²⁶ For further details of his life, see above, ch.4.

²⁷ *W.B.*, pp.400-1. However, this biography does contain inaccuracies. For further details of his career, see above, p.77 & n.155.

²⁸ Given Grymesby's long career in Lancastrian service, it is unlikely that it was this grant alone which provoked his attainder.

²⁹ *W.B.*, pp.400-1. Wedgwood notes that his death was wrongly recorded twice, once as a supposed prisoner in the Marshalsea, and secondly after Tewkesbury.

However, it is difficult to draw too many conclusions from the known Lancastrian supporters, and there is no way of knowing whether these were typical, or how many colleagues they had.³⁰ The only common feature appears to be that, with the exception of Tailboys, all of the men attainted were royal office holders of some kind. It is probably reasonable to assume that they were attainted not simply because they were Lancastrian supporters, but because they also possessed offices and grants which the new Yorkist government wanted to recover - without these, at least some of them might have been spared more readily. However, the absence from this group of members of the greater families is perhaps most interesting. If the heads of any of the major county families had actively supported Lancaster, Edward might have allowed them to return home unpunished, but it would be strange for their involvement to have attracted no comment whatsoever. Even so, while the precarious Yorkist regime may have been keen not to cause unnecessary resentment in the localities, Edward's subsequent actions would suggest that, in these first few months, the niceties of local politics were not necessarily uppermost in his mind.

Lancastrian supporters among the Lincolnshire gentry may be difficult to identify, but it is still likely, given the political geography, that they were more numerous than their Yorkist counterparts. Yet interestingly, the known Yorkist partisans seem to have been men of a consistently higher rank and importance in local affairs. With no tradition comparable to the Duchy of Lancaster to draw in any widespread established loyalty, the limited number of Yorkist supporters would presumably have been recruited more directly, hence favouring the wealthier, more active families. Some Yorkist links can be seen with a number of the great Lincolnshire families, yet it would still be wrong to suggest that there was any strong or widespread Yorkist feeling among even this section of the county gentry. Most known Yorkist supporters from Lincolnshire appear to have had connections with their lords' estates; thus, with few Yorkist lords holding any great lands in Lincolnshire, Yorkist support would by default be greatest among those families who also had links and interests in other areas.³¹ Of course, it is for these men that the

³⁰ The pardon roll for the first year of Edward's reign contains the names of dozens of Lincolnshire men, but this does not necessarily mean they had done anything which merited a pardon. C67/45. Most would simply have sought one as an insurance against any future accusations. For the use of pardons, see N.D. Hurnard, *The King's Pardon for Homicide before A.D.1307* (Oxford, 1969); Storey, *Lancaster*, Appendix 2.

³¹ Yorkist interests within Lincolnshire appear to have been largely restricted to the towns of Grantham and Stamford. However, key Yorkist estates in Yorkshire lay close to Lincolnshire's north-west border, and the Yorkist stronghold of Fotheringhay in Northamptonshire (where numerous members of the family were buried, including, eventually, Duke Richard himself) lay less than ten miles

most information is available, but even here Yorkist sympathies initially appear far more transitory and shallow. Also, with few of the tenurial or bastard feudal ties which might over-ride the natural reluctance to take up arms against an anointed monarch, it is difficult to imagine any kind of wider loyalty to the Yorkist cause.

Perhaps the most prominent Lincolnshire man with Yorkist connections was Sir William Skipwith of South Ormsby.³² Skipwith was the steward of York's important Yorkshire lordships of Hatfield and Conisbrough, but his connections with the Duke went much further than simple estate management. In 1452, he was one of the large number of people accused of helping in York's abortive coup at Dartford,³³ yet he still retained his role at the centre of Lincolnshire's local government.³⁴ Nevertheless, he refused York's summons to join him in arms in 1459, and was summarily dismissed from his offices. He was reinstated in December 1459 by the Lancastrians after the seizure of the Duchy of York estates, but there is no evidence to suggest that he fought in any of the battles of this period, for either side. He retained his offices after the Yorkist victory, and was granted numerous others - presumably Edward deemed Skipwith far too important a person to offend by indulging in any heavy-handed punishment for previous disloyalty. Thus, although Skipwith was undoubtedly York's man during the 1450s, it is clear that, in a county with very little Yorkist tradition, pragmatism was the over-riding factor, and Skipwith, presumably like most of his colleagues, was keen to avoid any potentially dangerous situations.

Another less fortunate Yorkist official was Sir Henry Retford. The son of another Sir Henry, a former supporter of Richard II and Speaker of the Commons,³⁵ Retford had held numerous local offices, and had sat on both the Kesteven and Lindsey benches. He also served as mayor of Bordeaux, possibly through York's patronage during his period as a commander in France, and was certainly a follower of York for many years.³⁶ During

south of Stamford.

³² He had been nominally head of his family for his entire life, since his father, Sir Thomas, had died in 1417, before William's birth in 1418. Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47; W.O. Massingberd, *A History of the Parish of Ormsby-cum-Ketsby* (Lincoln, 1892); *CIPM*, xx, 698-9; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.388-90 (sub 'John Skipwith', grandfather of Sir William). Wedgwood's biography refers to another William, a member of a junior branch. *W.B.*, p.773; see also above, p.78; below, Appendix 6.

³³ KB9/65A/20.

³⁴ Skipwith served as a Lindsey JP, as escheator in 1449, and as sheriff in 1458 and 1463, as well as on countless other local commissions. Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47; below, Appendix 1.

³⁵ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.201-3; Roskell, *Commons and their Speakers*, pp.141-2; J.S. Roskell, 'Two Medieval Lincolnshire Speakers: 2. Sir Henry Retford', *Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society, Reports and Papers*, vii, part 2 (1957-8), pp.117-25.

³⁶ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, p.203.

York's first Protectorate in 1455, Retford was appointed sheriff of Lincolnshire, and was present at the rout at Ludford. He surrendered and was attainted, but was spared his life, but was killed fighting alongside York at Wakefield.³⁷

The other prominent Yorkist supporter among the Lincolnshire gentry was Richard Hansard of South Kelsey. Hansard was also killed at Wakefield, but he does not appear to have been attainted, and the reason for his presence at the battle is not clear, although he certainly fought on the Yorkist side. He had no obvious link with York himself, but he did act as mainpernor for Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury in 1454.³⁸ The Hansards and the Nevilles reputedly shared a common ancestry, both being descended from the FitzMaldred Lords of Raby, and there may have been closer ties between the two families, either in Lincolnshire, or in the Hansards' original home county of Durham, where they also held lands.³⁹ Earlier links with the Talbots might also suggest involvement in the French wars, and thus a link with York, one of Shrewsbury's colleagues in France.

These men - Retford, Hansard and Skipwith - may have been three of the most prominent men in Lincolnshire, but they were also the only significant supporters of the Yorkist cause in the early stages of the Wars. Unlike Lancastrian supporters, seemingly drawn primarily from the middle ranks of the gentry, there was no wide-ranging support for the Yorkists. Apart from these three, the only other known supporters were from York's own towns of Stamford and Grantham, a number of whose residents were accused, along with Skipwith, of supporting York's abortive rising at Dartford in 1452. Yet, despite numerous indictments before various local and national judicial bodies, it seems that little was actually achieved against them.⁴⁰

This is undoubtedly not a complete picture, and it is quite possible that many more Lincolnshire men, chiefly from the lower ranks of the gentry or below, may have been involved in the fighting, men whose actions have gone unrecorded. Storey has noted the unusually large number of Lincolnshire people for whom writs of *diem clausit extremum* were issued at the beginning of Edward IV's reign.⁴¹ However, it is impossible to say how many of these were victims of the battles. The troubles of the previous few months would almost certainly have created something of a backlog in the machinery of

³⁷ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', p.79, n.55; *CPR 1452-61*, pp.551, 587.

³⁸ *CPR 1452-61*, p.98.

³⁹ Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxix; *C.P.*, ix, pp.494-6. For further details, see Appendix 6.

⁴⁰ P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford, 1988), chs.4-5; KB9/65A.

⁴¹ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', p.79; *CFR 1461-71*, pp.1-4.

government, which could now be cleared, and which might account for some of the number. Writs were issued for some of the victims who were attainted, such as Leo Welles and Sir William Vaux, yet others such as Ellen Retford and Joan, Lady Willoughby, were clearly not war victims, and it is equally unlikely that Hamo Sutton, who was nearly seventy years old, was killed in battle! But it is quite probable that other deaths were a result of the Wars. Members of the Copuldyke, Marmyon, Dysney, and Waterton families all appear, as well as lesser families such as Langdale, Hardbene and Kyddall. For so many members of the local gentry to die in one year of entirely natural causes is perfectly possible,⁴² but probably unlikely, especially given the wider circumstances.

It thus appears that while a number of Lincolnshire men may have been involved in the fighting of the Wars of the Roses, few were from the upper ranks, few can be identified, and there was certainly no concerted military or political action within the Lincolnshire gentry as a whole. However, the Wars, and the consequent changes at the heart of English government, could hardly pass by unnoticed or without reaction, especially when this resulted in changes within the shires themselves. Potentially the most disruptive effect of these deaths and attainders on the community of the shire was the dislocation associated with the redistribution of the forfeited estates. The initial severity of such changes was probably limited in Lincolnshire, since few men suffered such a fate, and even fewer were landholders of any great standing. However, in a county where relatively little land was in the hands of magnates, whose forfeited estates often changed hands *en bloc*, the local effects of more minor alterations could have been much more significant, and perhaps the cause of greater resentment towards a royal authority seen to be interfering in the natural order. Although in many ways the day-to-day life of these estates would continue as before, simply with a new and often absentee lord, the redistribution of lands within a county could, and did, have major considerations for the balance of power.

The structure of landholding in Lincolnshire described in Chapter 2 was undoubtedly one of relative independence, of a county whose isolation and political unimportance led to a general disregard from both the royal administration and the greater nobles. The Lancastrian monarchy could, to an extent, take a degree of loyalty

⁴² For instance, an isolated outbreak of plague or other such disease. None of the surviving inquisitions *post mortem* stemming from these writs give any indication of the cause of death.

for granted, while the presence of the Duchy lands and the fragmented nature of local estates meant that most noblemen simply ignored the county as a potential source of power or influence. However, for the new Yorkist regime to achieve its desired aims of stability and strong local government, it first had to create a situation among the landed classes beneficial to its wishes, a task which involved the creation of a new Yorkist order within the county. Lincolnshire underwent something of a revolution in its overall relationship with the Crown under the Yorkists. After 1461, and even more so immediately after 1471, royal intervention in the internal politics of Lincolnshire increased dramatically, and rather than leaving the inhabitants of the county to their own devices, as occurred during most of Henry VI's reign, the new Yorkist government took a very pro-active role in ordering county affairs. While this was undoubtedly primarily due to administrative concerns - some of which the Rebellion proved were well-founded - this new relationship had a significant effect upon not only the structure of the landed elite, but also upon its composition. In many ways, the elite of the Yorkist period was very similar to that of the Lancastrian era, but there were real differences, and the individuals and families forming the apex of county society in the 1440s and 1450s were not necessarily the same ones who held that position during the 1460s. Interestingly, the same can also be said about the 1460s compared with the 1470s and early 1480s. Obviously, these changes occurred for a number of reasons, but the greatest influence upon Lincolnshire's landed elite was not simple demographics, or the conflict itself, but rather the political upheavals which accompanied and followed the Wars.

The estates of the local Lancastrian noblemen formed the largest blocks of confiscated territory, particularly those of Welles and Beaumont.⁴³ The majority of the Beaumont lands, predominantly situated in Kesteven, were granted to Lord Hastings as part of Edward's strategy of building Hastings into a strong, loyal power across the Midland region. A few manors were retained by John Beaumont's widow in dower, while others were granted elsewhere,⁴⁴ but to a large extent, the political landscape of this part of the county changed little, since the Beaumonts, a family whose Lincolnshire interests were usually secondary to those in neighbouring counties, were simply replaced by another nobleman in a similar position. Hastings' duties at court meant that Kesteven

⁴³ The Cromwell title and lands had already passed to the Yorkist Humphrey Bouchier along the normal lines of succession, and were thus unaffected. The Willoughby lands remained nominally in the hands of their lord, Richard Welles, despite his virtual imprisonment at court.

⁴⁴ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.30, 103, 113, 179, 195, 345, 361, etc..

was once more left without a truly dominant and active local figure, doubtless to the relief of the local gentry.

The Welles estates, however, were not only more compact and potentially more influential in local matters, but, since the natural heir was still alive and, at least officially, at liberty, were to prove far more politically important. They formed a distinct block of territory in the north-east of the county, in the north and south ridings of Lindsey, and were forfeited after the attainder of Leo Welles. However, they do not appear to have been granted away in the same manner as the Beaumont lands. The outlying parts of the Welles estate, a lordship in Northumberland and the reversions of manors in Essex, were granted to Yorkist supporters, but the majority remained in the hands of Leo Welles' widow, Margaret, dowager Duchess of Somerset.⁴⁵ These grants were modified, and various reversions and remainders were granted, but Margaret's longevity kept the estates relatively united, thus allowing for Richard Welles' smooth restoration in 1465 - perhaps Edward's intention from the outset.⁴⁶

The Rebellion of 1470 and the executions of both Richard and Robert Welles created a rather larger power vacuum in the north of Lincolnshire than that of 1461, with the forfeiture of both the Welles and Willoughby lands. This time, Edward handled the situation with rather more political skill, although his methods were perhaps of dubious legality. The Welles and Willoughby lands themselves were initially allowed to follow the natural order of succession. Since Sir Robert had no children, the estate passed to his sister, Joan. Soon after the execution of her father, and doubtless under royal pressure, she married Richard Hastings, the younger brother of Lord Hastings. Thus another estate passed to the Hastings family, this time in the north-east of Lincolnshire to match Lord Hastings' interests in Kesteven, and presumably intended to provide more stability in the county. After Joan's death in 1474, an act of attainder was finally passed against her father and brother, thus allowing the estates to be re-granted for life to Richard Hastings. Meanwhile the reversion of these lands, along with those of the dowager Lady Willoughby⁴⁷ and Richard Welles' widow, Marjory Strangways, was granted to

⁴⁵ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.113, 116, 184, 427. By no means all of the Welles family's Lincolnshire lands were recorded as being granted to Margaret. The remainder were almost certainly still in the hands of Leo's feoffees. For instance, see *CPR 1461-7*, p.468.

⁴⁶ But this would seem contradictory to Edward's chosen policy of elevating Burgh to his position of dominance. See below, pp.185ff and ch.7.

⁴⁷ Matilda, wife of Robert, Lord Willoughby (d.1452). Her second husband was Sir Thomas Neville (k.1460), younger brother of Richard, Earl of Warwick.

Edward's younger son, Richard, Duke of York.⁴⁸ This was no display of royal power against former rebels, but a rather arbitrary act simply intended to protect the new order. Without it, the Welles and Willoughby inheritances would have been dispersed elsewhere. The Willoughby heir was Sir Christopher Willoughby, Joan Welles' maternal second cousin, while the Welles heir was John Welles, the son of Leo Welles and Margaret, Duchess of Somerset. Neither appears to have been particularly disaffected with the Yorkist regime at this point, but both were minor figures. Edward wanted to protect the new, reasonably stable situation, and could use the misdeeds of Richard and Robert Welles to preserve a beneficial position.⁴⁹ It actually made things even more favourable for Edward. Not only was the greatest landholder in this area a man whose loyalty was beyond doubt, it was also a creation which, in the short term at least, was based entirely upon royal favour rather than inheritance. It also began to lay the foundations of a potentially important landed estate for the young Duke of York, who received the reversion not only of Hastings' lands, but also the dower estates of both the Duchess of Somerset and Matilda, Lady Willoughby, lands which even Richard Welles did not enjoy. Added to the extensive Duchy of Lancaster estates in the area, the potential existed for absolute Crown domination for the foreseeable future.⁵⁰

The overall picture of noble estates under the Yorkists would thus seem to be rather different in complexion from that under the Lancastrians, but not in structure. Lord Beaumont had been replaced by Lord Hastings, Welles and Willoughby by another Hastings, and Cromwell by Bourchier, but with the exception of the Cromwell estates, which had already been split,⁵¹ and the proliferation of widows, the structure was very similar, with the bulk of the lands within the county remaining as distinct units. Lincolnshire's political geography, with very few large estates and a vast number of gentry landholders, meant that, if royal authority was to be exercised effectively through these channels, the few significant landed estates in the county had to be both preserved intact and held by loyal supporters of the regime. The restoration of Richard Welles in 1465 may ultimately have been proven to be a mistake,⁵² but the mistake was in the

⁴⁸ *CPR 1467-77*, p.508.

⁴⁹ John Welles was later involved in Buckingham's Rebellion against Richard III, and was attainted. He joined Henry of Richmond in exile, and was restored to the family title and lands in 1485. *C.P.*, xii (ii), pp.448-50.

⁵⁰ This extremely important issue will be fully discussed below, pp.230-1.

⁵¹ The Cromwell estates were initially retained by Ralph Cromwell's feoffees, before parts were sold, and the rest were divided between Cromwell's nieces, Maud and Joan Stanhope, and their numerous husbands. Payling, *Political Society*, p.10; see also below, Appendix 5.

⁵² See below, pp.189ff.

person, not the theory. As will be seen below, with all the established seats of landed authority in the hands of loyal and largely absentee lords after 1471, the Yorkist administrative regime, based around Sir Thomas Burgh and his colleagues, could finally govern the county unchallenged.⁵³

It was in the forfeited lands of the gentry that the Yorkist regime had most potential for rewarding loyal followers, and for manipulating the county's gentry hierarchy to its advantage. Although the number of families suffering attainder during the Wars was relatively small, and many were reversed reasonably quickly, it did allow a degree of orchestration and alteration to occur. Probably the wealthiest and most important gentry family to suffer attainder was the Tailboys family, whose lands, assessed at £159 in 1436, had been considerably augmented after 1437 by their inheritance of the Umfraville estates.⁵⁴ William Tailboys was attainted in November 1461,⁵⁵ and his estates thus formed a valuable asset for the new regime, not just in Lincolnshire, but also elsewhere, particularly Northumberland. The outlying manors and lands were granted to a number of Yorkist supporters and regional notables,⁵⁶ while the family's Lincolnshire seat at South Kyme, the lordship at the centre of the Umfraville inheritance, was granted to the Duke of Clarence.⁵⁷ However, the remainder of the Lincolnshire estates remained relatively intact, being granted to Sir Thomas Burgh.⁵⁸ He was not the only recipient, with lands in Lincolnshire also being granted to John Fogge, John Burgh and Sir Thomas Dymoke, among others, and restitution was made to the citizens of Lincoln of lands seized by William Tailboys during his lawless career during the 1450s.⁵⁹ However, most of these grants were small, of only isolated manors or small parcels of land. The parallels with the treatment of forfeited noble estates are strong. The Yorkist regime did not try to break up this estate in order to reduce the local interests and hence the local influence and power of its holder. Rather, as with the noble estates, it was used to endow a loyal Yorkist follower and thus to create another strong, distinctly royal presence in the county. It was certainly not Burgh's personal wealth that Edward

⁵³ For discussion of the wider administrative changes under the Yorkists, see below, ch.7.

⁵⁴ See below, Appendix 6.

⁵⁵ *D.N.B.*, xix, p.341; *R.P.*, v. p.477.

⁵⁶ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.113, 149, 210, 367, 466, 486.

⁵⁷ *CPR 1461-7*, p.199; Hicks, *Clarence*, p.173 n.3, p.209.

⁵⁸ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.112, 371.

⁵⁹ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.89, 115, 144, 224, 270, etc.. John Burgh, the recipient of the Tailboys lands in Holland, may have been a relative, possibly a brother, of Sir Thomas, but this is far from certain. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.49; *W.B.*, p.134; *CCR 1454-61*, p.51; see also below, Appendix 6.

was concerned with when making these grants.⁶⁰ By effectively making Burgh the successor to the Tailboys family within Lincolnshire, Edward was not only endowing his new local dignitary with a degree of wealth and land to back up his position, but also trying to harness some of the local power of this major lordship, or at least prevent it from being used against the interests of the Crown.

Unfortunately for Burgh, if not necessarily Edward, the fact that the Tailboys family was far from extinct meant that this particular example was only partially successful. Robert Tailboys, William's son, was barely of age at the time of his father's attainder,⁶¹ remained practically unknown during the 1460s, but may have joined Edward's cause during the crisis of 1470-1. He was restored soon after Edward's return to power, and the attainder was reversed in 1472, thus depriving Burgh of a large part of his landed income.⁶² However, it also set up another potential rival to the established Yorkist elite, since Tailboys immediately regained a position in county society of comparable importance to that held by his immediate ancestors.⁶³

There were no other significant forfeitures during the initial stages of the Wars. None of the other men attainted were of the same wealth or standing as Tailboys, and thus had little to be seized. Sir Henry Retford, the only other member of the county elite to suffer attainder, was attainted by the Lancastrians after Wakefield, and this was probably reversed.⁶⁴ Presumably the lands of other victims of the Wars passed to their natural heirs. The only other significant estates to suffer forfeiture were those of another of the rebels of 1470, Thomas de la Launde. The majority of his lands were immediately granted to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, despite the fact that Thomas himself, like the Welles family, was not formally attainted until 1475, while various grants were also awarded jointly to a group headed by Queen Elizabeth.⁶⁵ Thomas' widow, Katherine, eventually managed to recover her jointure,⁶⁶ but his son, another Thomas, had to

⁶⁰ Burgh did not receive any of the Tailboys lands in other counties, thus suggesting that it was the concentration of power, rather than a reward for a loyal follower, which was Edward's main concern.

⁶¹ The sources are contradictory. Wedgwood states that Sir Robert was born in 1440. *W.B.*, pp.834-5. However, he was also said to have been aged 40 at the time of his mother's death in 1491. *C.P.*, vii, p.361. The latter date is probably most likely.

⁶² Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.178; *W.B.*, pp.834-5.

⁶³ For further details of Robert Tailboys' career, see pp.226, 229; *W.B.*, pp.834-5.

⁶⁴ There is no sign of any official reversal, but presumably the Lancastrian attainder was ignored. Sir Henry had no children, his lands passing to the descendants of his sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, Sir Maurice Briyn. See below, Appendix 6.

⁶⁵ *R.P.*, vi, p.144; *CPR 1467-77*, pp.297, 508, 543, 560, 567.

⁶⁶ M.A. Hicks, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester: A Study in Character*, Borthwick Paper 70 (York, 1986), p.18.

petition Henry VII for the reversal of his father's attainder, claiming that his father had been a 'true servant' of Henry VI.⁶⁷

The lands of the other major rebel of 1470, Sir Thomas Dymoke, were treated far less harshly, the result of a combination of royal strategy, some favourable family circumstances, and probably a degree of noble manipulation. The fact that the Dymokes were also hereditary King's Champions may also have helped, since the family was certainly one of the most eminent in Lincolnshire, if not necessarily one of the wealthiest.⁶⁸ Following the execution of Sir Thomas, custody of the family's lands was initially granted to Richard of Gloucester.⁶⁹ However, Sir Thomas' widow, Margaret (sister of Richard Welles), almost immediately married Robert Ratcliffe, a Yorkshire esquire and loyal Yorkist.⁷⁰ This marriage, like that of Joan Welles, almost certainly owed as much to outside manipulation as it did to Ratcliffe's opportunism. Margaret and her new husband were duly granted custody of Margaret's son, Robert, and his estates during his minority, and the Dymokes were spared the attainders suffered by Sir Thomas' colleagues from 1470.⁷¹ This situation also deprived Gloucester of the Dymoke lands, and thus it is highly unlikely that the deal was done without his involvement and consent. Michael Hicks has suggested that this was part of a general break-up of a potentially large and powerful Lincolnshire estate which Gloucester had built up immediately after his brother's restoration.⁷² Almost certainly some sort of deal was done between Gloucester, Ratcliffe, the Dymokes and Edward which not only allowed the Dymokes to survive, thus preventing the possibility of future disaffection by the dispossessed son, but also ensuring (through Ratcliffe) a loyal presence in charge of one of the larger gentry estates in the county for the immediate future.

⁶⁷ *CFR 1485-1509*, p.626; *CPR 1494-1509*, p.648; *CPR 1485-94*, p.425; *R.P.*, vi, p.308. The De la Launde pedigree is extremely confused. The younger Thomas appears to have been knighted in 1501, and may have been the father of another Thomas. *CPR 1494-1509*, pp.67, 359, 648.

⁶⁸ The 1436 subsidy assessment amounted to £100, but the family wealth was continually depleted by long-lived dowagers and endowments for younger sons. For more details, see Appendix 6.

⁶⁹ *CPR 1467-77*, p.297.

⁷⁰ Horrox names him as the son of Sir Thomas Ratcliffe of Attleborough, stressing the distinction between him and Sir Robert Ratcliffe of Hunstanton, Norfolk, who married the widow of Humphrey Bourchier. Horrox, *Richard III*, p.84 n.210. However, she also mistakenly refers to Sir Thomas Dymoke as 'lord Dymmoke'.

⁷¹ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.336-7.

⁷² Hicks, *Richard III as Duke of Gloucester*, p.18. It is tempting to see this dissolution of Gloucester's power as part of Edward's plan to build an estate for his younger son. See below, pp.230-1. However, the restoration of the Dymokes occurred two years before the death of Joan Welles, which in turn allowed Edward's scheme to be set in motion. It is more likely to have been part of a general restructuring of Gloucester's power, based as it was in the North, not Lincolnshire.

The evidence thus suggests that the pattern of landholding in Lincolnshire during the Yorkist period was, unlike the almost benevolent neglect of the Lancastrians, a carefully crafted and organised phenomenon, one which was not left to the vagaries of inheritance, but which was guided by royal intervention. In this, the Yorkist government used the forfeited gentry estates in practically the same way as it used those seized from the nobility. Rather than wholesale seizures, followed by lavish distribution to loyal supporters, the picture was far more conservative. Forfeitures were few, and the estates were kept virtually intact, at least with regard to the lands actually in Lincolnshire itself. Rather than dividing them into small parcels, and hence further fragmenting local authority, they were used to endow a new generation of local lords, building up new or existing members of the gentry and nobility into potentially dominant, and above all loyal forces in Lincolnshire's local politics. Instead of creating an unwelcome power vacuum, even more bereft of leadership than under the Lancastrians, the Yorkist government attempted to create a dominance over local landed society using the existing land-holding structures. It thus created a new order compliant with, and loyal to, royal wishes, and one which could bring order to a potentially, and in 1470 actively, disruptive county. The first attempt at this was not entirely successful, leaving certain elements in place which would eventually prove disruptive, but the second attempt, forged in the wake of the events of 1469-71, proved much more flexible, and more stable.

While the structural basis of landed wealth within Lincolnshire appears to have undergone few truly significant changes as a result of the Wars, the composition of the local landed elite, the families and individuals who were the leaders of county society, seems to have undergone a similar alteration, though not necessarily for the same reasons. Of course, over a particular period, some changes in this pattern would be expected, the result of inheritance, family extinction, economic troubles, and so on. Yet the Wars of the Roses long ago lost their reputation as a time of carnage among the upper classes of England, and the paucity of known participants would suggest that Lincolnshire was far from being littered with the bodies of its gentlemen. Of course families continually died out naturally, and others took their place, but Yorkist Lincolnshire appears to have undergone a different kind of change, one where those families who had been at the head of local affairs for decades were no longer sure of their place within it, and where new men were coming to the fore extremely readily. Certainly

this was by no means total, or new - some of the ancient families kept their exalted positions in county affairs, and, as has been shown, Lincolnshire society was far from rigidly stratified before the Wars.⁷³ Nor does this appear to have been permanent, and many of the old families began to reassert themselves again towards the end of the Yorkist period. It would seem fair to suggest that much of the explanation behind this lies in the attitudes of the Yorkist county administration, and the intervention alluded to above, and which will be detailed later. But such a situation is nevertheless curious from the viewpoint of local county society.

Detailed analysis of the composition of the Lincolnshire gentry during the Yorkist period is hampered by the lack of any document comparable to the 1436 subsidy assessment. Any broad picture of the landed classes must be pieced together, and any statistical analysis similar to that attempted in Chapter 2 is impossible. However, a number of less detailed sources are available. An indication of the changes to the overall composition of the gentry can be gained by comparing the identities, status and family relationships of the men attending the county court for the election of the shire knights. Records for these sessions, one of the most important gatherings of the county's social calendar and the composition of which should have been at least reasonably free from concerted political manipulation,⁷⁴ survive for three Yorkist Parliaments; 1467, 1472 and 1478. This compares unfavourably with the 18 surviving returns for Henry VI's reign, even given the significantly shorter period,⁷⁵ but the composition of these bodies provides a number of interesting comparisons.

Perhaps the most immediately striking observation is that very few of these electors were knights. However this was nothing new; even during the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V, when the men elected were almost invariably knights and many more of the heads of the greater families assumed the title, very few such men attested the election. Given the declining number of men assuming knighthood during the fifteenth century, it is no surprise that this tradition continued. For the three Parliaments after 1460 for which returns survive, the only knight appearing as an elector was Sir William

⁷³ See above, ch.2.

⁷⁴ Of course, the results of the election may well not be free from such intervention, but, since the entire landed community was eligible to attend (though by no means everyone did), the composition might be more representative than, for example, the personnel of the county benches. The composition of the electorate may well have been influenced by other concerns from time to time, but the disinterest usually shown towards Lincolnshire affairs by the powerful magnates makes this less likely than may have occurred in other counties. See below, pp.181-2, for possible influences within the electors of 1472 and 1478.

⁷⁵ These returns are printed in Rogers, 'County Court', p.76.

Skipwith, who headed the return in 1478.⁷⁶ However, this return dates from the latter part of the Yorkist period, when knighthood was again becoming more common. For instance, in 1478, Sir Robert Tailboys restored a family tradition which had lapsed since the death of Sir Walter in 1417,⁷⁷ and over the next few decades, members of many families, including the Ascoughs, Tirwhits, Busshys and Hansards, would resume the knightly status which their ancestors had shunned for varying lengths of time.⁷⁸

However, by analysing the actual identities of the electors, it is clear that the composition of this group had altered quite significantly. During Henry VI's reign, the men themselves may not have held titles significantly different from those of their successors, but, in general, they were often members, if not the heads, of the greater county families. For instance, the election of 29 June 1433 may have been attested by only two knights,⁷⁹ but representatives of many of the important families were involved: John Tailboys, Gerard and John Sothill, William and Henry Hauley, Richard, Robert and William Hansard. There were also many men from the next rank of families, not as rich or important as those mentioned above, but still holding a respected position in county society: Philip and John Meres, Laurence Moigne, Simon Gybthorpe, Thomas FitzWilliam, John SeyntPaull, and many more. Nor was the election of 1433 particularly unusual. The lists of electors are reasonably consistent throughout the 1430s, 1440s and 1450s, with many men appearing at numerous elections. The Lancastrian picture was very much one of consistency and continuity, where the great families played a significant role, and could cement their positions at the head of county society.

The surviving writs from the Yorkist period, however, show a marked difference, particularly the two from the 1470s. Too few writs survive to allow any detailed examination of consistency of attendance, but while some of the great families were represented, and a number of the same lesser ones, the lists contain a large proportion of men from families with no history of involvement in county politics before the Yorkist period. This is not to suggest that the electorate was packed with outsiders or new

⁷⁶ There are a number of illegible entries on the 1478 return, but since the names are in strict order of status, it would appear that these men were of the rank of gentlemen or below. Rogers, 'County Court', p.76; C219/17/3. Sir Thomas Burgh and Sir Robert Constable also appear, as shire knight and sheriff respectively.

⁷⁷ Unless we count the knighthood conferred upon Robert's father, William, by Margaret of Anjou during the battles of 1460-1.

⁷⁸ This process continued well into the Tudor period. For example, the percentage of knights among the early sixteenth-century sheriffs was far higher than at any point since the early fifteenth century.

⁷⁹ Namely Sir John Willoughby and Sir Philip Dymoke. C219/14/4; Rogers, 'County Court', p.73. For Willoughby's identity, see above, p.49 & n.22.

arrivals, although such men did attend. Instead, it was much more of a mixture - of old and new, of those families with a long tradition of involvement in county affairs, and those with little or none. Table 8 shows quite clearly the changing nature of the composition of the county court. The number of electors who were members of established native families remained relatively consistent throughout the century. Assuming that the population was susceptible to the usual demographic changes, a certain amount of decline after 1460 would be expected, and thus these figures may actually be surprisingly consistent. However, the number of men from families with a tradition of involvement in the electoral process declined quite markedly during the Yorkist period, and by 1477 only half of the attestors were from families whose members had attended before 1460. Simple demographics, although obviously a factor, is unlikely to have changed the composition of half the county's recorded electorate in the space of a generation. There is also a marked difference in the figures relating to office holders. The percentage of electors from families which had provided Lancastrian sheriffs, escheators and MPs declined significantly after 1460. However, when Yorkist officials are included, this percentage increases rather more than might be expected. For instance, in 1472 only eight electors were from families who had provided officials during the 60 years of Lancastrian rule, while 12 further electors were from families who provided these officials only during the 24 years of Yorkist rule.⁸⁰ The attendance of Yorkist officials and their families at the county court is not surprising, but these families appear to have formed a group distinct from their predecessors. This in turn may well be indicative of deeper divisions within the county elite.

Analysis of the electoral returns suggests that three things may have been occurring. Firstly, that the composition of the shire elite as a whole was not changing unduly - that there was no massive influx of new men into the county at this level; secondly, that a different group of men were playing a greater part in local affairs than had been the case earlier; and thirdly, that the involvement, and hence the local prestige and influence, of the traditionally greater families may have been declining, or that these families were choosing to absent themselves from such matters. The second of these premises will be considered more fully in Chapter 7, but the other two are most interesting in the context of this discussion. While the changes in the composition of the county court might suggest a degree of political dislocation, the fact that the majority of

⁸⁰ Of course, during the brief Yorkist period, the elector and the office holder were often the same man.

Table 8. *Analysis of Electors in the County Court, 1449-77*

Year	Total no. of Electors	Men from families who also provided electors in period 1407-60	Known members of established county families ¹	Men from families which provided a Lincs. sheriff, escheator or shire knight in period 1400-60	Men from families which provided a Lincs. sheriff, escheator or shire knight in period 1400-85
1449	24	-	22 (92%)	5 (21%)	6 (25%)
1450	53	-	50 (94%)	18 (34%)	20 (38%)
1453	27 (+1) ²	-	22 (81%)	13 ³ (48%)	15 (56%)
1467	48	35 (72%)	39 (81%)	16 (33%)	23 (48%)
1472	47	25 (53%)	41 (87%)	8 (17%)	20 (43%)
1478	42 ⁴	22 (52%)	31 (74%)	10 (24%)	19 (45%)

¹ Families assessed in Lincolnshire in 1436, or otherwise known to have been resident in the county from that time or earlier. Includes residents of Lincoln, Grimsby, etc.

² One name is illegible.

³ In addition, Sir William Vaux held numerous such offices in his native Northamptonshire.

⁴ There are roughly 52 names on the return, but only 42 are complete and legible.

electors were still members of the established gentry community suggests again that, on the whole, the Wars had relatively little effect upon the general composition of the county elite at a local level. Many of the men attending the county court may not have been from the same families attending in previous years, but they were still Lincolnshire men.

Analysis of the election returns also throws up some surprising information. Unusually, the 1472 return contains the names of a number of men from the municipal administrations, men such as Robert Fox, a former sheriff of Lincoln, John Saynton, another Lincoln native, and Hugh Balfroint and Thomas Pormard, prominent men in the borough administration of Grimsby. While it was quite common for members of the gentry to make their presence felt in the towns, particularly in attempting to secure seats in Parliament,⁸¹ these men were different. They were not members of the gentry, but true townsmen, members of the urban rather than the landed elite. Saynton, a lawyer, was Clerk of the Statute Merchant at Lincoln, and attended Parliament on at least three occasions, twice for Lincoln (one of which was this very 1472 Parliament) and once for Grimsby.⁸² Balfroint and Pormard also sat for Grimsby, and were both members of families with long-standing links with the borough.⁸³ The career of the Lincoln merchant Hamo Sutton during the Lancastrian period demonstrates the increasingly blurred distinctions between the landed and urban elites, but these men were not in the same league financially or socially as the Suttons. For so many urban residents suddenly to appear at this particular election suggests a degree of outside interference, but, if so, by whom is unknown.⁸⁴

The 1478 return also contains anomalies. Although the record is incomplete, it again includes a large number of newcomers. This may have been the result of influence from the sheriff, William Brown, a merchant whose connections belonged mainly to

⁸¹ Grimsby provides a good example of gentry and noble interference in urban affairs. Gillett, *Grimsby*, ch.4; Rigby, *Grimsby*, ch.4.

⁸² *W.B.*, pp.748-9; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.49.

⁸³ The Grimsby burgesses in 1472 were Hugh Edon and the newly rehabilitated William Grymesby. Pormard's election occurred in 1485, but there is confusion over whether he actually sat. *W.B.*, pp.37, 693; Gillett, *Grimsby*, ch.4 & Appendix 1.

⁸⁴ The sheriff in 1472 was Leonard Thornburgh, a member of the new Yorkist administration: see below, p.184. He may have had connections with these men, and urged them to attend the court, but what these may have been is unknown. The members elected, Robert Tailboys and Richard Welby, were in no way unusual, although this was Tailboys' first election since his restoration. This would argue against the idea of outside interference in the election, unless such actions were attempted unsuccessfully.

Stamford and the surrounding regions of Kesteven and Rutland.⁸⁵ Although a firm family link cannot be proven, it can surely be no coincidence that the return contains the names of two other Browns, Richard and Robert, men who are otherwise completely unknown, and there may well have been other friends and colleagues among the other obscure electors. It seems highly likely that William Brown brought his friends and family to the court for the occasion, presumably one of the highlights of his relatively humble administrative career.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that there was a degree of fluidity within the county elite during this period, possibly more so than the composition of the county court may suggest. It is impossible to give precise figures as to the number of 'new' men entering county society, since the sources do not allow such precision, nor was the landed elite so stratified as to categorise people quite so easily. But new families did appear on the Lincolnshire county scene during the late Lancastrian and Yorkist periods, just as some old families disappeared. Often it is impossible to attribute a direct cause to a family's demise, but there is little to suggest that the Crowland Chronicler's vision of mass destruction was any more relevant to his native gentry than to the greater nobility.⁸⁶ Some families certainly did disappear during the Yorkist period, just as others had previously done so under the Lancastrians.⁸⁷ The Pedwardines of Burton Pedwardine, rather than becoming extinct, simply left the county, having sold their Lincolnshire lands and moved to Shropshire by the 1480s,⁸⁸ while the recently-established Tailboys family of Stallingborough were one of the few which actually died out during the period, ending with the death of John Tailboys in 1467.⁸⁹

However, although the Stallingborough branch was far less involved in the turmoil of the period than their more illustrious namesakes, the main branch of the Tailboys family was probably more usual, in that it managed to survive the Wars. Very few of Lincolnshire's great families appear to have succumbed during the period of the Wars, either to extinction, or to the pitfalls of the battles, forfeitures and executions. Most families, though not necessarily remaining unscathed or with all their power and influence intact, seem to have survived in one way or another. Of the knightly and

⁸⁵ *W.B.*, p.119; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.49; R.C.H.M., *The Town of Stamford* (London, 1977), p.37.

⁸⁶ See above, pp.114-15.

⁸⁷ See above, p.63-4.

⁸⁸ Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.42; see also below, Appendix 6.

⁸⁹ For details, see Appendix 6.

greater esquire families resident in the county at the start of the Wars, most were still present by the end. Of the 30 Lincolnshire knightly families identified in Chapter 2, of course not all survived the Wars, but most did, in one way or another. Many of these had already disappeared before the Wars even began, families such as Cumberworth, Pygot, and Roos, but relatively few others died out during the succeeding three decades. The Retford family died with Sir Henry on the field of Wakefield, his estates passing to his sister and her Bruyn and Tyrell descendants,⁹⁰ but the Retfords were an exception. Some families disappear from sight, but this does not necessarily mean they had become extinct. The Marmyons of Rippingale vanish after the careers of Mancer and John, but the family certainly did not die out.⁹¹ The Swynfords of Kettlethorpe and the Armyns of Osgodby, whose inactivity has been mentioned earlier, continued to remain in the background.⁹² However, by contrast, the Busshys of Hougham, largely inactive for much of the Lancastrian period, completed a return to prominence.⁹³ After a successful damage limitation exercise under the Lancastrians, members of the family served sporadically as JPs in Kesteven in the 1430s and 1450s, then almost continuously after 1468,⁹⁴ and they eventually returned to the shrievalty in 1479.

Although the vast majority of the men attesting the county elections were members of long-standing Lincolnshire families, there were a number of newcomers, men who had entered county society and politics under the Yorkists, and from other parts of the country. Some of these men could be seen as royal agents, men 'planted' by the Crown in order to ensure the smooth running and loyalty of the county. However, this was by no means always the case, and the majority of such movements in and out of the county were the result of family circumstances, of inheritance and marriages. Only a small number of 'new' men appear on the electoral returns; however, as with the earlier gatherings, which often did not include the greater men of the county, these were not necessarily the most representative of groups - the county court electors were most likely to represent the politically active elite and their followers, not necessarily landed society

⁹⁰ See above, p.174 & n.64; below, p.224; Appendix 6.

⁹¹ John Marmyon, son of Sir Mancer and sheriff in 1459-60, was still alive in 1489. *W.B.*, p.575.

⁹² Thomas Swynford did attend the county court in 1478. Rogers, 'Electors', v, pp.53-4; see above, p.53 & n.47; below, Appendix 6.

⁹³ See above, pp.76, 103; below, Appendix 6.

⁹⁴ Exactly which man served at which time is unclear, since the family was continuously headed by various 'Johns' until the succession of Miles Busshy on the death of his grandfather in 1498. For details, see Appendix 2.

as a whole. Nevertheless, despite the obvious dominance of the 'old' families at the elections, it is clear that new men were entering this community.

As noted earlier, one example of this phenomenon was Robert Ratcliffe, a Yorkshire esquire who entered Lincolnshire after marrying the widow of Sir Thomas Dymoke. Although unclear, his movement was probably the result of magnate influence, possibly from Richard of Gloucester, but although in a position of power during his ward's minority, he played little part in county affairs. Perhaps a better example was Leonard Thornburgh, who attested the elections of 1467 and 1477. A member of a Westmorland family, he again entered Lincolnshire following his marriage, gaining interests in Boston and the surrounding area,⁹⁵ and with his Lincolnshire connections appearing to date from after 1460, a connection with the House of York, or one of their supporters, is likely. His numerous local offices clearly gained him a strong position among the county gentry, especially in Boston where he was a member and eventually alderman of the prestigious Corpus Christi gild.⁹⁶ He was certainly a key part of the new Yorkist administration, but he was clearly also well integrated into the wider local community. The same was true of John Wythecotes, an elector in 1472. Originally a Shropshire merchant, Wythecotes had connections with both the Duke of York and Sir Thomas Burgh,⁹⁷ and married Elizabeth, the daughter and co-heir of John Tirwhit of Harpswell, thus inheriting a strong position among the local elite. His children also made high-profile marriages, with his son and daughter both marrying into the Busshy family.⁹⁸ This strong double-marriage link was no doubt designed to strengthen his position within the county, and may also have helped with the rejuvenation of the Busshys.

Many of the other possible newcomers are less easy to trace. Richard Spert, an elector in 1472 and 1478, may have been a Sussex native, and may have entered Lincolnshire through his appointment as steward of the lands of Tattershall College in 1460.⁹⁹ However, with Spert as with many others, that they were recent arrivals is far from certain. Men such as Roger Langcastre and Richard Catlyn, whose names are previously unheard of in Lincolnshire sources, may have been newcomers, but could also have been men whose families had risen from extremely lowly beginnings.

⁹⁵ Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.67.

⁹⁶ He served as JP in Holland and Kesteven, and was appointed sheriff in 1471. He joined the Corpus Christi Gild in 1462, and was Alderman in 1473. British Library, MS Harley 4795, fols.44, 46.

⁹⁷ Also known as Whichecotes and various other variations. Rogers states that it is not clear whether this elector is the first John (d.1476/8), or his son. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, pp.79-80.

⁹⁸ Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.80.

⁹⁹ Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.51; *W.B.*, pp.787-8.

One man who entered Lincolnshire society from far from lowly beginnings was Thomas Blount, one of the most influential men in Lincolnshire during the early days of Yorkist rule. Blount was the younger son of Sir Thomas Blount of Barton Blount, Derbyshire, and was the brother of Walter, Lord Mountjoy.¹⁰⁰ Blount himself entered Lincolnshire society by the trusted method of marriage, to Agnes, daughter and heir of John Hauley of Girsby,¹⁰¹ the head of what had been one of Lincolnshire's premier families.¹⁰² Blount's marriage certainly pre-dated his rise to prominence under the Yorkists. He was a JP in Lindsey from 1456, but he profited greatly from his family's Yorkist links, receiving numerous offices in his new home region after 1460. From then until his death in 1467 he formed, with Thomas Burgh, the backbone of the new Yorkist regime in Lincolnshire, succeeding Burgh as sheriff in 1461, and serving with him as shire knight in 1467.¹⁰³ In many ways Blount was certainly a newcomer, but unlike Thornburgh, and even Burgh himself, Blount entered the county with substantial backing behind him, his wife's Hauley heritage. Blount was in no way a usurping outsider, but the legitimate heir to a prestigious place among the county elite, and his rather exalted position (elected as shire knight less than a decade after his entry into local politics) should be no great surprise.

However, the greatest newcomer to county society, and the only man who seems to have aroused any great resentment, was Sir Thomas Burgh of Gainsborough. The 'parvenu' description levelled at Burgh by contemporaries and commentators alike is reasonably justified, but must be qualified. Certainly his local power was new, but in a period when the 'lesser' men were coming to the fore, and in a county where such events were not uncommon, this was unusual only in its scale, not its existence. However, Burgh's lineage suggests that he was not just a local squire made good. Burgh's father, also Thomas, was a rather obscure figure and apparently a soldier,¹⁰⁴ but his grandfather,

¹⁰⁰ *W.B.*, p.85.

¹⁰¹ Agnes was also the widow of Robert Sutton, eldest son of Hamo Sutton, but her marriage had been childless, and the Hauley estates thus passed to Blount.

¹⁰² John Hauley held lands worth 40m in 1436. See Appendix 3:a. His father, Sir Thomas Hauley (d.1419/20), had been one of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the county elite during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. His desire to provide for all of his large family seriously depleted the main family estate, and hence reduced the influence of the main line after his death. However, Sir Thomas' largesse did allow the family heritage to continue after the failure of the direct male line. *H.C.*, 1386-1421, iii, pp.332-4.

¹⁰³ Blount was also elected, with Humphrey Bourchier, in 1460, and quite probably served with Burgh in the 1461 and 1463 Parliaments, for which no returns survive. *W.B.*, p.85. For greater discussion of the Burgh-Blount partnership, see below, ch.7.

¹⁰⁴ For Burgh's pedigree, see Appendix 5.

Richard, was a follower of the Earl Marshal, and had enough influence to secure the elder Thomas' marriage to Elizabeth Percy, the heiress of both a junior branch of the Earls of Northumberland, and of David, Lord Strathbogie and Earl of Atholl.¹⁰⁵ From this marriage, the Burghs gained a great deal of prestige, and some lands, including the manor of Gainsborough which soon became the centre of Sir Thomas' power.¹⁰⁶

Burgh's rise to prominence, both locally and nationally, was undoubtedly the product of not only royal patronage, but a conscious royal policy of direct government in the localities. His accumulation of local offices, and his involvement in practically every detail of county administration, gave Burgh a unique, virtually unprecedented place in county society.¹⁰⁷ He became, in many ways, the direct representative of central government in Lincolnshire, a situation which was both new and, in some quarters, resented.¹⁰⁸ But the stability of his position could not be based solely upon royal favour and administrative appointments. He needed at least a degree of acceptance from the local elite, and this required some sort of landed base. His mother's Percy inheritance provided a starting point, but even in a county where the landed wealth was relatively dispersed, and where even the greatest families were not especially rich, Burgh's own estates would not have been enough to sustain his new-found position at the top of the local elite. From the outset, Burgh, with Edward's help, started to remedy this situation. From one angle, this personal aggrandisement might appear to be simple greed, the exploitation of position and an abuse of patronage akin to the worst excesses of Henry VI's reign. In many ways it was, though contemporaries would have expected nothing less. But it was also a shrewd piece of politics from the Yorkist administration, constructing a local notable in their own mould, someone who could, and would, do their bidding, but attempting to use the existing system rather than imposing one from outside.

Burgh's elevation began in the immediate aftermath of the first stages of the Wars. However, this was not based on grants of land in the same way as was used to build up the influence of men such as Lord Hastings and his brother. The lack of

¹⁰⁵ *C.P.*, ii, p.422; Gunn, 'Burgh Family', pp.8-9.

¹⁰⁶ Sir Thomas was deprived of the Burgh estates by his uncle's plans, and thus was left to concentrate upon his maternal inheritance; hence his arrival in Lincolnshire. For details, see Appendix 6.

¹⁰⁷ For further discussion of Burgh's offices, see below, pp.204ff. There are similarities between his position and that of Sir John Busshy under Richard II, although Busshy was by no means an outsider. *H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.449-54; Roskell, 'Parliamentary Representation of Lincolnshire', esp. p.62, n.14.

¹⁰⁸ This policy, and Burgh's position within it, will be addressed more fully in ch.7.

Lincolnshire men suffering forfeiture at this point meant that patronage was limited, although Burgh was granted the largest available group of estates, those of the Tailboys family. The largest grant occurred in 1464, following the capture and execution of William Tailboys, and consisted of six Lincolnshire manors and a number of other lands.¹⁰⁹ He was also the co-recipient of a grant of two manors in Lincolnshire and one in County Durham, which he received for the life of, and for the use of, William Tailboys' widow, Elizabeth.¹¹⁰ However, despite this, there was no possibility of him simply assuming the Tailboys family's position in Lincolnshire society. Perhaps most importantly, the Tailboys heir was alive and well, and even in the early 1460s, Robert Tailboys could have been reasonably hopeful of the eventual return of his patrimony. Also, Burgh did not receive the entire inheritance, since the family seat at South Kyme was granted to the Duke of Clarence,¹¹¹ and a sizeable proportion was also held by William's widow. Thus, without the entire inheritance, and certainly without the caput of the honour, the Tailboys lands could prove no more than a useful addition to his own estates, rather than providing anything more significant locally.

The Tailboys lands were not the only grants made to Burgh at this time, but were the only worthwhile Lincolnshire estates granted to him personally during the 1460s. He was granted lands in Middlesex forfeited by William Waynesford, a servant of Margaret of Anjou, but these were relatively insignificant.¹¹² Yet there is little doubt that his royal connections were also used to good effect in securing a lucrative marriage. By 1464, Burgh had married Margaret, the widowed Lady Botreaux, who brought him a significant income from her dower estates in Wiltshire, Somerset and Devon. The marriage was almost certainly the product of a mixture of royal pressure and the attractions of Burgh's royal connections to a widowed noblewoman, and although Margaret's lands were of little use in enhancing Burgh's power in Lincolnshire, they did provide him with much needed income, presumably also reducing the need for further royal grants and lessening the pressure on the royal purse. But it was through grants of royal offices and stewardships, rather than land, that Edward managed to build the local power of his favourite. The Tailboys lands may have been a personal grant to Burgh, probably a just reward for his past service to Edward, but it is likely that both Burgh and

¹⁰⁹ *CPR 1461-7*, pp.112, 144, 151, 371.

¹¹⁰ *CPR 1461-7*, p.144.

¹¹¹ See above, p.173 & n.57.

¹¹² *CPR 1461-7*, pp.197, 371.

Edward knew that the grant would only be temporary, and would be reversed when the Tailboys heir could be safely restored. As D.A.L. Morgan has noted, relatively meagre grants of lands to trusted servants being accompanied by lavish grants of stewardships and offices were not uncommon.¹¹³ However, such actions, building up a man through royal service and favour, would always run the risk of causing alienation and resentment among men who may see the newcomer as usurping power from the natural leaders of local society. While Lincolnshire was relatively stable and peaceful during the early 1460s, this problem did not arise, but these tensions did occur in the second half of the decade, and had serious consequences, both for Burgh and for Edward.

Despite his impressive lineage and royal connections, Burgh was nevertheless still a newcomer to county society. Gainsborough had had no great resident lord whose position the Burghs could inherit in the same way Blount did as the heir to the Hauleys at Girsby. The influence in Lincolnshire of Burgh's distant kinsmen, the Percies, was weak,¹¹⁴ and Burgh had no power base of his own to utilise. Thus, to gain a foothold in local affairs distinct from his official royal role, Burgh had to carve out a niche of his own. His position as one of Edward IV's most trusted friends and advisors may have made this easier in some respects, but it also ran the risk of upsetting both the sensibilities of the local gentry population, wary of outside attacks upon their privileges, and the balance of power in the county. Burgh's power was not only new, it was alien. Royal interference, which Burgh's elevation clearly was, was a relatively unknown phenomenon, and something to be wary of. But, just as importantly, the local gentry were used to dealing with a distinct group of people. The sympathies of the local population naturally lay with the heads of the traditional lordships, the lords of Belleau, Kyme, Scrivelsby, even Tattershall; the lords of Gainsborough had no place in this pattern.

It is perhaps this more than anything which explains the problems encountered by Burgh during the late 1460s. There is no indication that any of the other newcomers were resented by the members of the established gentry, or were treated as anything less than colleagues, neighbours, and even friends - Thornburgh's election as alderman of the

¹¹³ Morgan, 'King's Affinity', p.20.

¹¹⁴ Despite the family relationship, there is no evidence to suggest any close ties between Burgh and the main Percy family. Burgh's personal associations lay elsewhere - Hastings, the Staffords, and even the Woodvilles. The Percies were influential in the East Riding of Yorkshire (whose inhabitants had numerous connections with Lincolnshire), but had few Lincolnshire interests. See above, p.70, p.94 & n.76.

Corpus Christi gild at Boston testifies to his successful integration. Some of these newcomers were also heavily involved in county administration, as were many of the men from newly prominent native families, but faced very little adverse reaction. Indeed, there is evidence of exactly the opposite, of antagonism, even violent confrontation, by the newcomers towards members of the established families. For instance, Brian Talbot, a newcomer to the administrative elite in Holland, launched a violent attack upon John Pynchebek, a member of one of the most prominent 'old' families of Holland. Pynchebek, a Holland JP, was attacked by Talbot and his henchmen while travelling to the peace sessions.¹¹⁵ But Burgh was different. None of these other men had been so deliberately built up within Lincolnshire as Burgh had, and none of these men had created such a change within the structure of local society and lordship, not just local administration. Although obviously the new men found individual enemies as well as friends, Burgh's increased standing and power meant that, at the height of his powers in the late 1460s, he found the biggest enemy of all, in Richard, Lord Welles.

The fact that Burgh's rise went unchallenged for the first half of the decade was partly due to the power of the new Yorkist monarchy, but mainly to the situation in the county at this point. With the death of Ralph Cromwell, the attainders of Beaumont and Leo Welles, and the quasi-captivity of Richard Welles, and with few significantly wealthy and powerful gentry families within Lincolnshire, there was simply no opposition to Burgh's growing influence. Whether anyone would have dared to challenge him at this time, backed as he was by the full weight of royal favour, is debatable, but without a figurehead to rally any kind of local political opposition, Burgh and his associates - Blount, Thornburgh, Richard Welby and others¹¹⁶ - were supreme. It was only with the return to county affairs of Richard Welles in the middle years of the decade that any challenge to Burgh's supremacy arose. The depth of any opposition to Burgh is difficult to assess. It is likely that a large number of the greater gentry in the county resented

¹¹⁵ Storey, 'Lincolnshire', p.80; Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.100-6. Talbot had entered Lincolnshire following his marriage (c.1460-2) to Katherine, widow of John Haryngton of Fleet. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.68. His origins are more obscure, but he was presumably a younger son, and the name suggests a possible link with the Earls of Shrewsbury, or with the Yorkshire family from Bashall. However, there is no sign of any Brian in the visitation pedigrees of the Bashall family. W. Dugdale, *The Visitation of the County of Yorke*, Surtees Society, xxxvi (1859), pp.238-9. He was also possibly the man who served as Constable of Clitheroe for the Duchy of Lancaster, 1479-85. Somerville, *Duchy*, p.499. However, the attack was probably more than just a personal dispute between Talbot and Pynchebek. See below, p.212.

¹¹⁶ The existence of this 'new' Yorkist administrative elite will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Burgh's dominance, but few were prepared to voice their concerns. Welles' opposition to Burgh, the basis to the events which led to the Rebellion of 1470, has been seen as the manifestation of deep-seated and widely held feelings of discontent among the native gentry population.¹¹⁷ But the lack of widespread gentry support for the Rebellion might suggest otherwise. It must be remembered that many members of the county gentry, particularly the lower ranks, were becoming more involved with the new system which Burgh represented, while the greater families, the ones who appeared to be becoming marginalised, still had far too much to lose to risk all on any violent protest, even if they privately agreed with its local aims.

The roots of the Rebellion of 1470 lay not in relations between Burgh and the wider gentry, but with Richard Welles himself. Edward's decision to restore Welles to his father's lands in 1465, thus allowing the long-expected unification of the Welles and Willoughby estates and allowing Welles to return to his native county, was to prove crucial. Montgomery Bohna, in his study of Yorkist government in Lincolnshire, stated that 'the King's pardon of Richard Welles seriously undermined royal policy and the Yorkist regime in Lincolnshire', and the administrative and political aspects of this decision will be examined in Chapter 7.¹¹⁸ Yet it is highly unlikely that Edward had any idea at the time just how crucial Welles' continued absence was to the balance of landed power in Lincolnshire, and hence to royal authority, and although Welles' restoration was consistent with Edward's lenient treatment of many former opponents, it proved to be a grave miscalculation. Doubtless Edward hoped that Welles, having proved his loyalty during his participation in the northern campaign against the Lancastrians, would prove to be an able and above all loyal servant, and there is little to suggest that, ordinarily, this would not have been the case. But he almost certainly overlooked the potential clash of personalities and influence within a situation which he himself had created. On his return, Welles was faced not only with an estate in almost total ruin, but also a county in which his own position, which should have been supreme, had been totally usurped by a royal interloper, an outsider with no traditional claim to local ascendancy, and who had used the four years of Welles' enforced absence to construct a strong and stable base within the county. Welles subsequent actions to try to remedy this situation, his violent attack on Burgh's house and his embroilment in the schemes of Warwick and Clarence, may be difficult to understand in terms of what he expected to

¹¹⁷ Holland, 'Lincolnshire Rebellion', pp.849-54; Storey, 'Lincolnshire', pp.71-3.

¹¹⁸ Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.117.

achieve, but his reasons for feeling resentment and dissatisfaction towards Burgh and the regime which created him, at his expense, are obvious.

The threat posed by Burgh to Welles and his position in Lincolnshire affairs was serious for both men. The basis of the problem lay primarily in the geography.¹¹⁹ The traditional region of Welles power was the north-east of the county, the north and south ridings of Lindsey. Had this still been the case on Welles' return, the problems may not have been as acute, and Welles and Burgh could well have worked together, creating a regime not dissimilar to that which eventually emerged a decade later. However, this region was also one where a great deal of Burgh's power was concentrated. Although his residence was at Gainsborough, on the western edge of the county and some distance from the Welles heartland around Louth, Burgh had numerous lands and offices in this area. Many of the Tailboys lands were here, as were many Earldom of Richmond lands, of which he was steward; administratively, he was undoubtedly the dominant force within the Lindsey bench; and, perhaps most importantly, he was steward of the honour of Bolingbroke, an office which was not only one of the most prestigious and influential within the county, but one which brought control of the region's other major estate.¹²⁰ To see this intruder in such positions of power in the heart of what should have been Welles territory must have been difficult for Welles to accept. Not only was he usurping offices which Welles could justifiably have felt should have been his, but outside the administrative sphere, his dominance also threatened the client base upon which noble power rested. With Welles relatively weak, and Burgh in the ascendancy, Lincolnshire men looking for lordship would naturally choose the man with most influence. Thus Burgh's impact in the region would grow even more, despite Burgh's personal landed base being much smaller than that of Welles, while the Welles-Willoughby affinity would doubtless continue its stagnation and decline. This was a situation which Welles himself simply could not allow to continue. Not only did he have to restore the family fortunes financially, a task he addressed with varied results,¹²¹ but he also faced the problem of restoring his affinity in the face of a rival whose power was unchallenged, and, in Welles' mind, created at his expense. This inevitably meant a clash with Burgh.

¹¹⁹ A problem noted by Bohna. Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.119.

¹²⁰ For further discussion of the impact of royal offices on local politics, see below, pp.207ff.

¹²¹ For further details about the financial problems of Richard Welles, see Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.114-17.

The personal nature of the Welles-Burgh struggle is evident from the events surrounding the Gainsborough raid and the Rebellion which followed. While it is tempting to describe the situation in Lincolnshire in the late 1460s as one of two factions, with Burgh and his newcomers on one side and Welles, leading the 'native' families in a defence of local privileges, on the other, this would be extremely misleading. Although Welles most certainly did have a number of supporters, those whose identities are known do not appear to go beyond the ranks of the very affinity Welles was trying to defend. Burgh on the other hand, had no such affinity as yet. Despite Burgh's attempts at integration, the two men represented two very different forms of power; Burgh, the new, royal authority directly delegated in personal form into the county; Welles the traditional, landed forms of noble authority, based on kinship and affinity. When the rivalry became violent, Burgh had little choice but to turn to his master, the King, for assistance. But while Welles appears to have had the backing of his affinity, or at least a part of it, there is nothing to suggest that he enjoyed any wider support for his opportunistic raid on Burgh's house, a traditional form of assault if one of only limited usefulness. He was defending his own position, not necessarily that of the local community as a whole, and although many others may possibly have agreed with his reasons, and resented Burgh's influence, they do not appear to have given him any significant assistance.

The main leaders of the actual Rebellion were not just retainers of Welles, but members of his family; Thomas Dymoke and Thomas de la Launde, both of whom may also have been involved in the Gainsborough raid,¹²² were married to Welles' sisters. Richard Wareyn, the only other named leader, is unfortunately unknown.¹²³ As stated earlier,¹²⁴ the composition of the raiding party which attacked Gainsborough can only be partially surmised from the people seeking pardons at the same time as Welles and Dymoke. Although their pardons cannot be taken to mean that they were definitely involved, it suggests that they were at least frightened of being accused by association. Nevertheless, the key issue here is that almost all of those pardoned are known to have had close personal links with Welles and his affinity. Apart from Richard and Robert Welles and Thomas Dymoke, ten Lincolnshire men received pardons during the first

¹²² Dymoke certainly was, appearing with Welles before Edward, and being pardoned on 6 March. De la Launde may well have been involved, but he was not among those pardoned. C67/47, m.8. Although Warkworth places him at the scene, his account of this episode is extremely confused. *Warkworth*, p.30.

¹²³ Hicks claims that Wareyn, alias 'Ratcliffe,' was a native of Boston. Hicks, *Clarence*, p.66. If this is correct, this may link him specifically with Clarence, who was lord of the town, or Welles, who also had interests there.

¹²⁴ Above, p.156.

week of March 1470,¹²⁵ and another seven men later in the year.¹²⁶ Almost all of these appear to have had some link with the Welles affinity, or were from the area where Welles' power was strongest. Many are otherwise totally unknown, but clearly men such as Roger Smyth, whose pardon gives two addresses for him, Belleau in Lincolnshire¹²⁷ and Bywell in Northumberland, both of which were Welles manors, must have been a servant of the Welles family. Three of the men pardoned, the elder FitzWilliam, William Yerburch and John Stayndrop, all appeared among a group of men, specified as the feoffees of Richard Welles, who, on 20 January 1474, re-granted the manors of Willoughby (Lincs.) and Edgefield (Norf.) to Richard Hastings, on behalf of themselves and others, including Thomas Dymoke, who had already died.¹²⁸

It would seem therefore that there were two groups of people involved here; men such as Smyth (and probably Stayndrop, given that he too was pardoned as a resident of Belleau)¹²⁹ who were household servants of the Welles family, and other, more prominent men, such as Dymoke and Yerburch, who were friends and clients. The documentary evidence suggests that these men formed an extremely coherent group, and numerous examples exist of members of this group acting together as feoffees or witnesses, or in other respects. An agreement between Welles and his step-mother Margaret in 1468 also included Dymoke, both FitzWilliams, Gryffyth, Stayndrop and Yerburch, among others.¹³⁰ In a fine of 1477, Stayndrop and his wife Agnes were joined by the younger FitzWilliam, John Walton (who also appeared on the 1468 Welles document), and William Walton, presumably a relation.¹³¹ However, these close connections provide a

¹²⁵ C67/47, m.8 (Richard and Robert Welles of Belleau, John Byllyngay of Langton, William Yerburch of Yarborough, John Stayndrop of Halton and Belleau, Thomas FitzWilliam jnr. of Mablethorpe, 'Cokynnton' and London, Thomas FitzWilliam snr. of Mablethorpe and Burwell, Charles Aungevyn of Ashby near Horncastle, Richard Gryffyth of Stickford, Thomas Dymoke of Scrivelsby, Roger Smyth of Belleau and Bywell, Northumberland); m.7 (Thomas Spenser of Spalding and Grimsby); m.5 (Robert Sheffield of West Butterwick, South Cave, Yorks., and London).

¹²⁶ C67/47, m.6 (Thomas Holand of Swineshead (28 May)); m.5 (Thomas Leche (or Moyses) of Holton near Spilsby and Thomas Gybson (or Scrop) of Great Steeping (16 March), Simon Godeknappe of Saltflethaven (14 May)); m.4 (Robert Tetforth of Louth (6 June), Stephen Wynthorpe of Saltflethaven (3 July), John Wythecotes of Harpswell (16 July)).

¹²⁷ Belleau, the modern name of the Welles family seat, is used here throughout. Obviously the village appears in its medieval form, 'Hellowe', in all the documentary sources.

¹²⁸ LAO 2Anc 3/A/23.

¹²⁹ Stayndrop was almost certainly a member of the Welles household, but his appearance as a feoffee suggests that he possessed some personal standing, and was styled 'esquire' in 1477. *CPR 1476-85*, p.15. The family appears to have been a long-standing member of the Welles-Willoughby circle. In 1439, a John Stayndrop (probably the father of the later John) acted as feoffee for Robert, Lord Willoughby, and Stayndrop himself was to be arrested along with Joan and Robert Welles in 1461. *CPR 1436-41*, p.358; *CPR 1461-7*, p.34.

¹³⁰ *CCR 1461-8*, p.464.

¹³¹ LAO FF/H21.

new problem. Given that the pardons of 1470 give no reason for their issue, it is just as likely that some of these men may not have been involved in the raid at all, but, seeing their master in trouble, decided to sue out pardons in order to prevent any future trouble for themselves. Therefore, rather than the names on the pardon rolls giving the identity of the Gainsborough insurgents, it could simply be a list of frightened Welles associates.

There is no evidence to suggest that there was any wider participation from the gentry in either the raid or the Rebellion. Holland, agreeing with Storey, has argued that the pardon given to Robert Sheffield, a lawyer from West Butterwick, is indicative of a wider sympathy for Welles' cause among his neighbours.¹³² However, Sheffield's legal expertise meant that he had connections with a great number of people, of whom Welles was just one. In his case, it is perhaps even more likely that his pardon was an attempt to disassociate himself from Welles' actions. Also, Sheffield, a lawyer from the western edge of the county, was hardly representative of the wider gentry classes. Indeed, given his career, and the proximity of his residence to Gainsborough, he may well have had far more in common with Burgh than with Welles. Although it is far more likely that the FitzWilliams were involved, especially the elder Thomas, they also appear to have been far from exclusive partisans of Welles. For instance, the younger Thomas acted with Burgh as a feoffee in North Ingleby in November 1464,¹³³ and both father and son were involved with Burgh as feoffees in the Swynford manor of Kettlethorpe in November 1468, only a year before the raid.¹³⁴ Such divided loyalties mean that the FitzWilliams, presumably keen to maintain their extensive and widespread involvement in gentry affairs, make unlikely insurgents against a situation which appears to have been to their benefit. The Lancastrian sympathies of the father confuse the issue, and subsequent arrest warrants show that the Yorkist regime certainly had its suspicions, but neither father nor son suffered significantly for whatever actions they had taken.¹³⁵

The evidence from the Pardon Rolls is backed up by writs issued in 1470 and 1471, ordering the arrest of various people.¹³⁶ Many of the men pardoned in 1470 again

¹³² Holland, 'Lincolnshire Rebellion', p.854, n.2; Storey, 'Lincolnshire', p.72. Sheffield, like Burgh, was a councillor to Anne, Duchess of Buckingham, and would later act for Burgh and Clarence during the 1470s. C. Rawcliffe, *The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham, 1394-1521* (Cambridge, 1978), pp.225-6; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.51.

¹³³ LAO FF/H4.

¹³⁴ LAO FF/H11.

¹³⁵ *W.B.*, pp.335-7; Roskell, *Commons and their Speakers*, pp.300-2.

¹³⁶ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.218, 286.

found themselves in trouble. The 1470 list, ordering the seizure of the goods of various rebels, included the known leaders of the Rebellion, as well as Yerburgh, suggesting that he too was involved in the rising. The rest of the names appear to be mainly associates of Clarence and Warwick, with no direct connection with Lincolnshire. The later commission, dated 26 May 1471, was specifically for Lincolnshire, and included the names of Yerburgh, Gryffyth, FitzWilliam, Gybthorpe,¹³⁷ Aungevyn and Godeknappe, all of whom had earlier been pardoned, as well as others such as Margaret Dymoke, her son Robert, John Saynton of Lincoln and the Abbot of Kirkstead. No reason for their arrest is given on the commission, and it would be wrong to assume that they were all necessarily involved in either the raid or the Rebellion - Margaret Dymoke is hardly likely to have participated personally! It is likely that many, if not most, were to be arrested for their actions during the Readeption. However, the correlation of names between this commission and the pardons of 1470 suggests that some quite probably took part in the raid, were pardoned, and then subsequently became involved either in the Rebellion or with the Readeption regime.¹³⁸

But what is strikingly clear throughout the episode is the lack of notable supporters from outside the Welles-Willoughby circle. There is nothing to suggest that any members of the greater families of the county such as the Armyns, Suttons, Tirwhits or Busshys joined the raid or the Rebellion, and nor did families such as the Pynchebeks who had every reason for disliking Burgh and his colleagues. Robert Tailboys, dispossessed in favour of Burgh in 1461 and not yet restored, did not take this opportunity to exact revenge, may indeed have actually helped Edward, and regained his lands as a result of his loyalty. There is no sign of involvement by anyone from the Fulnabys, Maydenwells or the other families which suffered after 1461.¹³⁹ Nor is there evidence that anyone from outside the immediate area of Welles influence participated, with the exception of De la Launde. From the available evidence, it would appear that the Rebellion, just like the raid on Gainsborough before it, was conducted not by the Lincolnshire gentry in general, but by the Welles affinity, along with however many peasants could be recruited. Of course this does not mean that everyone except Welles was perfectly happy with Burgh, but in a county with little history of protest or political

¹³⁷ Simon Gybthorpe, esq., of Thorpe by Wainfleet, was the brother of John Gybthorpe, yeoman of the chamber to Henry VI and escheator of Lincolnshire, 1457-8. Simon was pardoned, as executor of John's will, on 12 February 1462. C67/45, m.39.

¹³⁸ Some, such as the elder FitzWilliam, certainly supported the Readeption. See below, ch.7.

¹³⁹ Of course, some of these lesser families may have died out unrecorded.

disturbance, the gentry in general were completely unprepared to risk their own position to help Welles in what was, originally, a private battle for his own future.

Edward IV's recovery of the throne in 1471 marked a watershed in Burgh's career and his position, although not an altogether profitable one. Although he had witnessed the comprehensive destruction of the Welles-Willoughby affinity and the granting of that family's lands to another largely absentee lord (and the brother of one of his best friends), Burgh's position within the county elite came under increasing threat from elsewhere, as Edward, though far from abandoning his friend and ally, changed the nature of his dealings with the county, particularly in the administrative sphere. These changes, one of which was the reintegration of some members of the traditional elite, will be discussed later. But for Burgh, this policy proved expensive. The restoration of Robert Tailboys in 1472 meant that Burgh lost the Tailboys estates which he had held for the previous decade. These lands were not only lucrative, they were some of the few estates which Burgh held personally, separate from his administrative duties. Although he was granted the reversion of the lands of the Beaumont widows, this was hardly compensation.¹⁴⁰ The rather unseemly scramble for the estates of the elderly Duchess of Norfolk which occurred during the 1470s, and in which Burgh was very much involved, should be seen in this context. Bohna has seen Burgh's close association with the Duchess during this period as an almost cynical attempt to win over her favour, in the hope of securing at least a portion of this wealthy woman's lands.¹⁴¹ Of course this was nothing especially new, but it must be seen in context. Although Burgh wielded great influence through his position at court and his local offices, his landed base in Lincolnshire was still small. With the loss of the Tailboys lands, this was reduced to only his own meagre inheritance, and such lands as he had managed to purchase,¹⁴² thus making his position even more vulnerable in the event of the removal of royal support or challenges from within the local elite. The pursuit of the Norfolk lands was not just pure greed, but was doubtless linked to a realisation by Burgh of the need to bolster his family's landed position to supplement the very real, but transitory power he held by

¹⁴⁰ *CPR 1467-77*, p.310. The grant was also at the expense of Lord Hastings, Burgh's close friend, who, as the main recipient of the Beaumont estates, would have expected to acquire these lands as well.

¹⁴¹ Burgh had already been granted the reversion of six Lincolnshire manors in 1475, and subsequently secured a number of offices from the Duchess. Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.184; *CPR 1476-85*, pp.74, 208.

¹⁴² For instance the Pygot manor of Doddington, bought from the widowed Elizabeth Pygot. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.43; see below, Appendix 6.

virtue of his royal service. Burgh's successful attempts to secure the renewal of his Lincolnshire offices jointly to himself and his son show clearly how much importance Burgh placed upon these as the source of his power, but perhaps equally it betrays feelings of insecurity in the family's position if such grants were to go elsewhere.¹⁴³

That Burgh's priorities changed is clear from his actions over the marriages of his children and grandchildren. Although Burgh spent his life at court, and was a nobleman in all but name (until his eventual elevation to the peerage in 1487), his actions in later life suggest a realisation that the long-term interests of his family lay in Lincolnshire itself, rather than at court. Burgh may have secured a notable bride for his son and heir,¹⁴⁴ but the marriages of his other children were mostly closer to home. His daughter Elizabeth did at first marry into the nobility, marrying Richard, Lord FitzHugh, but after his death in 1487, she joined the Nottinghamshire gentry, marrying Sir Henry Willoughby of Wollaton. Meanwhile, Burgh's other daughter, Margaret, married the son of one of her father's great local rivals during the later part of his life, George, son of Sir Robert Tailboys. But the changed priorities are shown clearest in the marriage of Edward's son, another Thomas, to Agnes, daughter of Sir William Tirwhit. Whereas at least three generations of Burghs had married noble brides, this marriage, arranged by Sir Thomas himself shortly before his death in 1496, was to the daughter of a man who was in a totally different bracket. Although the Tirwhits were a prominent and influential family within Lincolnshire, and were to rise further under the Tudors, they were very much members of the local gentry, not the courtly gentry and nobility among whom Burgh had spent much of his own life. By a combination of these marriages, Burgh probably achieved as much as he could have hoped, forging ties both with noble families and the gentry of his home and neighbouring counties. By these associations with the Tailboys and Tirwhits, he had linked the Burghs with two of the most respected families in Lincolnshire. However, it is ironic that, particularly in the case of the Tailboys marriage, the very families whom Burgh now sought to link his family's future security with were those very families whose revival during the last quarter of the century had been one of the key factors behind the waning of Burgh influence from the heady days of the 1460s.

¹⁴³ Gunn, 'Burgh Family', p.9. However, the plan failed with the collapse of the Yorkist monarchy, since Henry VII granted many of Burgh's offices elsewhere, pacifying Burgh with a peerage.

¹⁴⁴ Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Cobham of Sterborough and a granddaughter of Humphrey, 1st Duke of Buckingham.

The structure of local landed society in Yorkist Lincolnshire was thus a curious mixture. There was relatively little change in the pattern of landholding, and only a limited redistribution of the gentry estates, but those that did undergo changes were generally of rather great significance. The noble estates certainly did pass to very different people, but were transferred as blocks of territory, to largely absentee courtiers with relatively little interest in Lincolnshire affairs, and thus their effects upon local issues were limited. While the Hastings family, certainly after 1471, possessed great potential landed influence in Lincolnshire, it was not used to any great degree. However, the fact that these estates were not split up, but remained in existence, gave the Yorkist monarchy a much-needed degree of stability in a potentially difficult region. Meanwhile, gentry estates underwent rather less manipulation, partly because there were few estates available, partly because there were few large enough to be worth worrying about. Such manipulation as did occur also tended to be temporary, with Edward's tendency to forgive old enemies resulting in the restoration of the majority of forfeited lands to the sons or successors of their former lords. Lincolnshire's gentry families themselves seem to have emerged relatively lightly from the events of the Wars, with few families dying out, and even fewer being permanently destroyed by adherence to the wrong side. The basic composition of the Lincolnshire gentry under the Yorkists does not appear to have been especially different from that existing under the Lancastrian monarchs, the main difference being in the degree of activity shown by the various families and their members. Not surprisingly given their long Lancastrian heritage, a degree of caution appears to have been prevalent. Many families, particularly the greater ones, appear to have pursued a 'wait-and-see' policy, assessing the situation without displaying any opposition, but also not showing any great support for their new Yorkist masters, at least not until the prospects of the Yorkists being overthrown again had all but disappeared. However, in the absence of the traditional elite, a new group emerged, based not just upon landed wealth but upon service and office holding, and built up around Burgh, Edward's key man in Lincolnshire. It is to these office holders, the differences between them and their Lancastrian predecessors, and the specific difficulties surrounding their existence, to which attention must now be turned.

Chapter 7

Administration, Politics and Local Authority

The beginning of Yorkist rule in 1461 brought about a distinct change in the attitude of central government towards Lincolnshire's administration, and created a very different style of relationship between the Crown and the local population. As described in Chapter 3, Lancastrian governmental practice had kept royal interference in the shires to a minimum, with action only being taken in exceptional circumstances and with the people of the shires, and the greater magnates, being left to administer their regions themselves. Far from being a dereliction of duty, such an approach was generally exactly what the local notables, both noble and gentry, were eager to see. It was not necessarily detrimental to royal authority or good governance, but was dependent upon the way the situation was exploited locally. As a result, local affairs had been conducted with few major problems throughout the later years of Lancastrian rule, and in a reasonably stable and peaceful atmosphere.

The advent of the Yorkists, however, brought about a much more pro-active style of royal governance, one which reflected the changed relationship between Lincolnshire and a new regime with which it had few direct connections. Mindful of the numerous links between Lincolnshire and his Lancastrian predecessors,¹ it is obvious that Edward IV initially saw Lincolnshire as a potential source of difficulty, possibly fearing some sort of 'Lancastrian' resistance, or at least a degree of resentment towards his rule. Instead of following Lancastrian methods and leaving Lincolnshire to administer itself, Edward decided that stricter control was essential in ensuring the maintenance of good order. In 1461, these fears were almost certainly unfounded: Lincolnshire's participation in the Wars thus far had been minimal; the Lancastrian affinity, at its height under Henry IV, had ceased to exist as a serious political force; and the local nobles, the only real place where discontent might focus, were either Yorkist supporters, in exile, dead or under arrest.² However, with his hold on power still somewhat precarious, Edward was unwilling to take any undue risks.

¹ For details of these connections, see above, pp.161-6.

² For the details of the county's involvement in the actual conflict, see above, chs.5-6.

Whether Edward did not trust the people of Lincolnshire to stay loyal, failed to understand the local situation, or simply wished to impose a new style of government, Lincolnshire's local administration underwent a fundamental change. Rather than allowing the county to meander along as it had before, Edward actively sought to ensure that the shire was being run by people of known loyalty to himself, rather than necessarily by the people who would have expected at least to have been asked to fulfil the tasks. This is not to say that Edward by-passed local people, and local sensibilities, by employing large numbers of outsiders, the controversial policy later associated with Richard III.³ Certainly some outsiders were used, but by no means exclusively, nor would this necessarily have been anything new had it been the case, given the identity of many Lancastrian office-holders.⁴ However, it would seem that the Yorkist regime, certainly during the 1460s, attempted to create a new ruling elite largely from within the county, employing many men from families with little tradition of county governance. As a result, a number of the established gentry families were effectively left to smoulder on the sidelines, undoubtedly a consequence of Yorkist concerns over the loyalty of many of the greater families. Bohna has noted that, for the new Yorkist monarchy, Lincolnshire was 'far too dangerous to ignore'.⁵ However, was it perhaps far more dangerous to interfere? As the Rebellion would later demonstrate, attempting to impose new power structures, and especially ignoring existing ones, could, and did, create the very situation the new system was designed to prevent. In this case, the resistance was limited, but the fact that even this episode came close to costing Edward his throne clearly indicates the dangers involved. In the second part of his reign, with his throne secure and having learned an important lesson, Edward could relax his control, and the consequent reversion to something more like Lancastrian methods finally allowed Lincolnshire to return to its more normal, calm condition.

The Creation of an Elite, 1461-9

The immediate impact of the Yorkist victories of 1461 upon the personnel of Lincolnshire's administration was perhaps surprisingly slight. The previous round of

³ For example, Horrox, *Richard III*, ch.4. However, there is little indication that even Richard used outsiders in Lincolnshire.

⁴ See above, ch.3, esp. pp.85-6. One exception to this would appear to be the succession of non-resident sheriffs appointed during the later 1460s. See below, pp.208-9.

⁵ Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.32.

appointments to the main local offices, in November 1460, had occurred during a period when the government was dominated by the Yorkists, between the battles of Northampton and Wakefield. Thus the incumbent officers were effectively Yorkist appointments, and most were acceptable to the new regime. The sheriff was Thomas Burgh himself, while Simon Hareby, a Kesteven esquire, served as escheator.⁶ Similarly, the three peace commissions already included many men trusted by the Yorkists well before their final victory. The Lindsey commission, revised on 16 May 1461, had last been changed on 22 November 1458, an occasion when it had been reduced in number by almost half, and, although still containing staunch Lancastrians such as Leo Welles and Viscount Beaumont, also contained the Duke of York and the Earl of Salisbury, and an exceptionally small number of local gentry.⁷ During the May revision, the exiled Beaumont and the captive Richard Welles were both removed, as were Salisbury, York and Leo Welles, all now dead. Three of the six locals on the bench were also removed; John Langholme and Thomas Moigne both had Duchy of Lancaster connections, while Robert Sheffield's removal may have been due to old age.⁸ New Yorkist men, however, were rather scarce, not surprising given the initial lack of Yorkist support in the county, and particularly in Lindsey.⁹ Burgh was appointed to the bench, despite being the serving sheriff, as was his colleague at the head of the new elite, Thomas Blount.¹⁰ The non-resident Yorkist Sir Robert Constable was also included, but the Constables were regular participants in Lincolnshire affairs.¹¹ John Tailboys managed to secure his re-appointment after a three year break, while the only other new members were the ubiquitous Earl of Warwick, and William Newecom, a local esquire from Saltfleetby.¹²

⁶ Hareby (*alias* Hardby or Harisby) stood as surety for Humphrey Bourchier in 1460, but does not appear to have had any other direct involvement with the Yorkist leaders. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.67; *CFR 1452-61*, p.294; *1461-71*, p.26; Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.76. He had served as escheator in 1450-1, and terms on the benches of Kesteven, Lindsey and Norfolk, and was clearly a man of some local standing. A 'John Hardeby' of Evedon, near Sleaford, possibly Simon's father, was assessed on an income of 100s in 1436. See below, Appendix 3:a. The connection with Bourchier may explain his acceptability to the new regime.

⁷ Only six, the most prominent being Sir William Skipwith. The revision occurred during a period of temporary reconciliation between the Lancastrian government and the Yorkist followers.

⁸ Wedgwood suggests that Moigne died in 1461. Either Moigne himself, or a son also called Thomas, returned to local politics in 1463. *W.B.*, pp.598-9; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.39. Sheffield was certainly over 50 years old, probably older, and had been a JP for over 30 years. However, the Sheffield family were closely connected with the Moignes, and, coupled with his wide legal connections, the Yorkists may not have entirely trusted him. His son, however, regained his father's position in 1463. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.51.

⁹ See above, pp.166-9.

¹⁰ For discussion of the Burgh-Blount partnership, see below, pp.206-8.

¹¹ For Constable's Lincolnshire connections, see above, p.70.

¹² See below p.208 & n.28.

Overall, apart from the removal of all the noblemen except Warwick and Humphrey Bourchier, the net effect of these changes was relatively small, at least compared to the last 'Lancastrian' commission.¹³ However, a commission of only twelve men compared to those of the 1450s, which reached as many as 27 in 1456-7, was significant. It was no coincidence that the largest commissions coincided with the periods of greatest turmoil,¹⁴ as the monarch tried to please as many people as possible by 'rewarding' them with the 'honour' of a place on the bench. It was clear that Edward was determined to give at least the appearance of strong, united local government, even in a region where he needed to win as many friends as possible.

The Kesteven and Holland benches had both been revised in November 1460, again under Yorkist guidance, and show a similar pattern. In Holland, the 1460 commission had been unusually large, and was cut by a third on 7 June 1461. As in Lindsey, the majority of changes were caused by death, particularly among the nobles. Richard Benyngton may also have died,¹⁵ and Thomas Meres' removal was again probably due to his age.¹⁶ In Kesteven, the commission was not revised until 20 September, by which time the Yorkist regime was more settled, and numbers were again cut, this time by almost half. Four fewer noblemen were appointed, but there were also five fewer local men, leaving only six. Thomas Meres again suffered, as did the Lancastrian William Stanlowe, John Marmyon (a former sheriff), William Coote and the late Sir Henry Retford. Only one, presumably trusted local was added; Nicholas Misterton of Witham on the Hill.¹⁷

This lack of wholesale immediate changes to local officials was very much due to the Yorkist influence upon previous, nominally Lancastrian, appointments, rather than

¹³ Dated 22 November 1458, when the bench had been reduced from 27 members to only 16. See also above, pp.101-3.

¹⁴ For a graphic representation of this correlation, see Appendix 2:c.

¹⁵ The writ of *diem clausit extremum* was not enrolled until 13 February 1462, but Benyngton, a prominent member of the Holland administration, disappeared abruptly from the records after 1459. He presumably either died during the period of turmoil and the delay was administrative, or 'retired', possibly through ill health, and died later. There is nothing to suggest that he was removed for political reasons, and he was probably too old to have been killed in battle. See also above, p.50 & n.31.

¹⁶ Yet he had been appointed to a commission of array a month earlier. Meres died at some point after 1467, while his son, also Thomas, was appointed to the bench in 1466. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, pp.36-7; *W.B.*, p.585; see also below, pp.208, 211.

¹⁷ Very little is known of Nicholas' life or career, and he held no other local office. In 1436, he was assessed on an income of £10 in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, while a Joanna Misterton, also of Witham on the Hill (presumably his widowed mother) was assessed on an income of £10 in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. See Appendix 3:a.

any lack of interest after 1461. However, the composition of the new administration certainly shows the beginning of a fresh approach. Analysis of the personnel of local government over the rest of the decade produces an impression very similar to that given by the composition of the county court earlier, of an administration, as well as an elite, whose membership was in a state of flux.¹⁸ As noted earlier, the people attending the county court were not necessarily representative of the landed gentry as a whole, since many of the greater men did not attend. A similar caveat must be attached to the lists of local officers, but the composition of this group almost certainly goes some way to explaining part of the reason for the absenteeism at the shire court.

It is clear that the new Yorkist masters were attempting to create a new ruling group within Lincolnshire, of men willing to help in the establishment of the new dynasty's position in the region. However, the composition, and hence the political affiliations of the local gentry could not be manipulated by the monarch in the same way as, to an extent, the nobility could be. Widespread forfeitures, even if desirable, practical, or socially or legally acceptable, could not be conducted merely on vague suspicions, and the inactivity of the local gentry during the early stages of the Wars gave Edward little justification for vindictiveness. Thus, rather than drawing upon the great men of the county's landed families to fill the posts of local government, the process appears to have almost been turned upside-down. By employing different, often far lowlier men, the Yorkists began to create a new administrative elite, based not upon landed wealth (although some did indeed possess or subsequently gain this) but on service and loyalty to the Crown. As will be discussed later, this situation lasted only for a decade or so, but during this time, it is possible to see the existence of two groups within Lincolnshire society, one of which was based upon traditional landed wealth and pedigree and had remained relatively unchanged structurally for decades, the other upon royal patronage and service. In the past, the people who comprised the former had automatically gained the rewards inherent in the latter, but for at least a decade, in Lincolnshire this was no longer the case.

However, this new administrative elite was also an extremely fragile phenomenon. One of the explanations for the county's inactivity during the early years of the Wars was that, for various reasons, the local landholders were largely isolated from the national political scene, and had little to gain by supporting either side. By remaining

¹⁸ See above, ch.6, esp. pp.178-82.

aloof, most of them emerged with their land and wealth relatively unscathed. This situation, while to the benefit of the individuals, did nothing to help preserve Lancastrian rule - they may not have helped the Yorkists, but they did not help the Lancastrians either. The Yorkists were now creating a different elite, one whose power and position was almost inextricably linked with the continuing rule of the House of York. Such a situation would create a whole group of men who would not only take over the running of the shire from an elite of suspect loyalties, but whose power would also make them in many ways the leaders of that society, replacing and reducing the influence of the less trustworthy families, regardless of their continuing landed wealth. The creation of this local service aristocracy would both address the short term administrative concerns, and establish a local power structure entirely in the royal interest, yet without the security of a personal landed and territorial base which had proved so costly to the Lancastrians. The only concern would be in the possible response of those who suffered as a result, but, at least in the early days of Yorkist rule, such problems were secondary.

In Lincolnshire at least, this period of highly directed and focused manipulation of the personnel and institutions of local government formed the height of what has been described as the 'personal monarchy' of Edward IV, the government of the regions by men with close links with the Crown and the royal household. Numerous commentators have remarked upon the way Edward used his personal entourage as a political force, building his trusted followers into men of great local power, who could ensure his wishes were carried out in their areas.¹⁹ In Lincolnshire, the key man was undoubtedly Sir Thomas Burgh. As an Esquire and later Knight of the Body, and Edward's Master of the Horse, Burgh formed a link, effectively the only link, between Lincolnshire and the very centre of royal government. However, to see Burgh in the same light as men such as Hastings or Pembroke would be wrong, since Burgh's authority was based rather on royal grace, and the lack of alternative challenges to his influence, rather than the personal landed power with which Hastings and others were entrusted. As noted earlier, Burgh received very few grants of land, and most of those he did receive, mainly the Tailboys lands, were far from secure.²⁰ Burgh seems to have been treated as more of an official than a local notable by Edward, a man to do his bidding and preserve royal rather

¹⁹ The most obvious being Warwick, Hastings, Pembroke and Gloucester. Ross, *Edward IV*, chs.4 & 8, esp. pp.73-9; Morgan, 'King's Affinity', esp. pp.18-20; Horrox, *Richard III*, ch.1. See also below, pp.230-1.

²⁰ See above, pp.173-4, 186-7, 196.

than personal interests. To his neighbours he was a conduit, perhaps their only route to the King. His influence could thus not be taken for granted; at this stage, he was far from being the regional 'magnate' he has sometimes been described as.²¹ He was simply the guiding force during the early days of Yorkist rule, albeit a very influential and important one at the time, but this also meant that he was not indispensable, as the waning of his influence during the 1470s and 1480s was to show.

In some ways, Burgh's role can almost be seen as that of a figurehead, a symbol of Yorkist authority in a potentially recalcitrant county, around which effective local government could be formed. However, Burgh's power was not entirely detached from traditional landed authority, since although he had only modest personal estates, and few land grants, his royal offices were incredibly important territorially. On Edward's accession, he was immediately appointed Steward of Bolingbroke, the main Duchy of Lancaster office in the county, and at the same time was also made Constable of Lincoln Castle, steward of the Lincolnshire estates of the Earldom of Richmond, and steward of the important royal manor of Kirton-in-Lindsey.²² Burgh thus received all the important royal offices in the county, bringing authority over large areas of land and with widespread influence. At a stroke, he became not only the head of the royal interests in Lincolnshire, but also a major landed force, albeit in the King's name. By virtue of these offices, Burgh gained an almost vice-regal authority, separate from both the landed hierarchy and the institutions of local government. However, Burgh was by no means a lone figure, and around him were a number of men who formed the core of this new elite, and who filled many of the key local offices. Yet unlike the situation surrounding his noble counterparts elsewhere, these were not men who owed their allegiance to Burgh personally. Men such as Thomas Blount, Sir William Skipwith, Leonard Thornburgh and Richard Welby were very much part of this group, and Burgh was clearly regarded as their 'leader', but this was certainly not any form of Burgh 'affinity'.

²¹ For example, Storey, 'Lincolnshire', p.73. Storey's argument that Burgh had effectively replaced Cromwell as the third member of the Lincolnshire noble 'triumvirate' is only partially correct, and Burgh was far from a straight replacement for Cromwell. The Cromwell title did not disappear until 1471, while Burgh's power was at its height during the 1460s. Only under Henry VII, after the restoration of Welles and Beaumont, was the 'triumvirate' actually restored, but by then Burgh's power had waned. Also, Burgh's landed powerbase, such as it was, was far smaller than Cromwell's had been, and in a different part of the county.

²² *CPR 1461-7*, pp.130, 208; Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.576, 583. The Earldom of Richmond, theoretically the property of Henry Tudor, was seized in 1461. His lands were granted to Gloucester and Clarence, were later seized by Richard III, and were re-united with the Crown on Henry's accession in 1485. *C.P.*, x, pp.827-9.

Indeed, despite his support for Burgh, a man like Sir William Skipwith, the head of one of the great Lincolnshire families, probably still saw Burgh as something of an interloper, a 'new man' whose presence he tolerated as an unavoidable necessity rather than especially welcomed.

Skipwith's involvement also demonstrates that, although the majority of people forming this group around Burgh were 'new' men, this was not always the case, and the composition of Lincolnshire's administrative elite under Edward IV was no more clear-cut than it had been under Henry VI. Although relatively few men from the traditional great families of Lincolnshire appear to have been involved, some certainly were, as were similar men from other counties. However, the majority of people undertaking the various administrative duties tended to be similar to those appearing in the records of the county court (particularly that of 1467), men drawn predominantly from the lower ranks of the land-holding classes. Also, this group was very much an amalgam, a mixture of the more important men, who held a number of offices, and others who held only the minor offices, and often served only once. Although the lack of enthusiasm for frequent re-appointment to the main offices which characterised the Lancastrian period appears to have continued, it is nevertheless possible to discern an elite at the centre of local affairs, something largely lacking during the previous decades. However, just as Burgh's personal powerbase was largely divorced from the institutions of local government, the same is also true to an extent of many of his closest colleagues. It is clear that the correlation between landed authority and local political power was being eroded by a regime desperate to ensure control.

The early 1460s was undoubtedly the time when the new regime needed its most trusted servants at the head of local affairs. Following Burgh's period as sheriff, the office was granted in November 1461 to Thomas Blount, who, until his death in 1467, effectively became Burgh's partner in local government. Blount, a relative newcomer himself, was eager to become established in county affairs, and was undoubtedly helped by his position as heir to the Hauley family.²³ He was also the only man in the whole Lancastrian and Yorkist period to serve two complete successive terms as sheriff, a sure sign of his importance within the new administration at this time.²⁴ However, this

²³ For more details, see above, pp.184-5.

²⁴ This double-term appointment from 1461 was not peculiar to Lincolnshire. Sir Robert Constable served a similar period in Yorkshire, and the same seems to have occurred in most counties where the

Burgh-Blount partnership, and the power they wielded, had its real basis away from local government office as such. For instance, the two men also appear to have acted together at parliamentary elections, practically controlling the shire's representation during the 1460s. They attended Parliament together in 1467, and although this was probably the only time they did so, their parliamentary careers were closely connected.²⁵ Also, while Burgh was Chief Steward of Bolingbroke, Blount acted as receiver, effectively the second most important Duchy officer, from 1461 until his death, when Burgh assumed the title himself. Blount also acted alongside Burgh as receiver in Lincolnshire of both the royal lands and the honour of Richmond.²⁶

Thus, in almost all the important royal offices in Lincolnshire, Burgh and Blount acted in partnership. Although Burgh was undoubtedly the senior partner, receiving the greater offices and the most recognition, it is in this partnership that the real strength lay. Blount was no stooge; as the brother of a peer and heir to one of the greatest families of Lancastrian Lincolnshire, he was effectively Burgh's social superior, although, unlike Burgh, he was never knighted. He was no retainer of Burgh, merely a friend and colleague. While Burgh's loyalties lay almost entirely in his relationship with the King, and the royal household of which he was a part, the same is only partly true of Blount. He too was a member of the household,²⁷ although by no means on a par with Burgh, and the idea of government via the household link should be seen in terms of both men, not just Burgh. Yet, while Burgh may have had the power of strong royal backing, Blount also had the advantage of the landed wealth and tradition of his ancestors, both Blounts and Hauleys. Also, while Burgh was often absent performing his household and other duties, Blount would have spent much more time in Lincolnshire, to the benefit of himself and the new regime. It is perhaps not entirely a coincidence that the death of Blount, leaving a thirteen-year-old heir, coincided with the beginnings of the resurgence

King controlled the appointment.

²⁵ Returns for Lincolnshire for the Parliaments of 1461 and 1463 do not survive, although Wedgwood has suggested that Blount attended in 1461. He also suggests that one of the men elected in 1463 was Richard Waterton, but his biography fails to distinguish between the father (MP in 1449), who was dead by 1461, probably killed at Wakefield, and the son, who presumably could have been the MP. Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.96; *W.B.*, pp. 924-5. It is therefore possible that Burgh and Blount could have both served together at either or both Parliaments, but unlikely. Burgh was sheriff during the 1461 election, while Blount performed the same task in 1463, and no fifteenth-century Lincolnshire sheriff is known to have returned himself to Parliament. However, it is highly probable that the two men returned each other on these occasions.

²⁶ Somerville, *Duchy*, p.579; *CPR 1461-7*, pp.26, 111.

²⁷ He was noted as such on his appointment as successor to his brother, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, as Treasurer of Calais in 1464. *CPR 1461-7*, p.356.

of Richard Welles, the embodiment of the county's traditional landed classes, and the deterioration of the position of both Burgh and his new elite.

Burgh and Blount were not the only men whose careers encompassed Duchy of Lancaster, royal and county office. William Newecom, one of the few additions to the local peace commissions at the start of the reign, also served as feodary of the Duchy, replacing William Foljambe in 1459 and being confirmed in office in July 1461.²⁸ He also served on other local commissions, both before and after the change of dynasty.²⁹ This story was presumably repeated across the spectrum of lower offices. Thus an understanding was built up between a consolidated group of people, holding local and royal office, which transcended the ever-changing personnel of local government, with its relatively short terms and frequent replacements. Thus, even when the major county offices were granted to others, it is clear that real power in the county lay not necessarily with the man holding the office, but with this group, whose influence stretched across so many aspects of county life.

The dominance of the Burgh-Blount clique over county life during most of the decade may also help explain the strange trend in the appointments to the shrievalty during the latter half of the decade. Of the seven men who served as sheriff after Burgh and Blount, only two, Sir William Skipwith (1463-4) and Thomas Meres (1467-8),³⁰ were truly members of the native gentry. Skipwith's appointment would have been no surprise, since he was one of the few men who was both the head of a great family and a committed and trusted Yorkist. Meres, on the other hand, had no obvious political affiliations, but was one of the few prominent Holland men at this time, and presumably sought the job to further his career. John Wythecotes, appointed sheriff in 1465, probably did much the same.³¹ Originally an outsider, he was, like Meres, beginning to establish himself on the county scene, although Wythecotes probably already had links with the Yorkist leadership.³² However, the other four sheriffs were all from Yorkshire.

²⁸ Somerville, *Duchy*, p.581. Bohna states that Newecom was a Yorkist, but little is known of his career beyond his terms as JP in Lindsey (1455-8, 1461-7) and his appointment as feodary of the Duchy (1459-66). Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.69; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.39. His appearance on a Yorkist commission of November 1461 may suggest he was a supporter of the new regime. *CPR 1461-7*, p.101. However, his appointment as feodary was made under Lancastrian rule in February 1459, and he had been a Lancastrian JP; he may simply have been seen as a safe pair of hands.

²⁹ For example, *CPR 1452-61*, pp.300, 409; *CPR 1461-7*, p.205.

³⁰ Son of the dismissed JP. See above, p.202 & n.16.

³¹ For Wythecotes' origins, see above, p.184.

³² Wythecotes was among the men enfeoffed in Lincolnshire by Sir Henry Retford during the 1450s, a list which included the Earl of Warwick, the Duke of York, and Edward himself as Earl of March. *CPR 1461-7*, p.112. Since Retford was a close associate and retainer of York, it is likely that Wythecotes was

Sir Brian Stapelton, appointed in 1464, had held the office before, in 1450.³³ Although a Yorkshire resident, he had considerable Lincolnshire interests, as well as Yorkist sympathies, as did Sir Robert Constable, sheriff in 1466.³⁴ Sir Richard Tempest of Bracewell, who served during the turmoil of 1469-70, was the son of Sir John Tempest, sheriff in 1455-6.³⁵ Sir Richard FitzWilliam, appointed in 1468, was the only Yorkshire man with no clear family interest in Lincolnshire politics.³⁶

The appointment of so many Yorkshire men in such a short space of time is interesting. Edward may simply have been eager to ensure loyal Yorkists held the post, especially at the end of the decade when the tension between the new elite and the resurgent Welles affinity was beginning to show.³⁷ Alternatively, there could have been a shortage of candidates, with the bulk of the native gentry still unwilling to become involved with a regime which remained relatively exclusive and suspicious. Of course, such appointments from outside Lincolnshire were not new, although outsiders had never been appointed quite so regularly before. While the need for loyalty was probably the main concern, it is also probable that these men were appointed at least partly because they were not locals, and thus would not be a threat to the power of the Burgh-Blount faction. Whoever was chosen as sheriff, real influence had to remain with Burgh and his associates; therefore, the appointment of men with little personal interest in local politics would remove the possibility of this group's enemies gaining any foothold through the exercise of this office. Almost certainly the new elite had too few committed members of sufficient standing and social status to be able to totally monopolise the office effectively, and since the Lincolnshire shrievalty had lost none of the problems which had made it

also a member of this circle. This man was also almost certainly the MP for Bletchingly, Surrey, in 1460, a seat controlled by the Staffords; this may link him with Burgh, another Stafford associate. *W.B.*, p.940; Rogers, 'Electors', vi, pp.79-80. For Burgh's Stafford connections, see Rawcliffe, *Staffords*, pp.55-6, 200, 225.

³³ Although serving as Lincolnshire sheriff twice, Stapelton was never sheriff of Yorkshire, but did sit for Yorkshire in three Lancastrian Parliaments. He held numerous offices in both counties, but was never appointed to the bench of either. According to Arnold, he was also a king's knight under Henry VI, probably the result of being the ward of John, Duke of Bedford. Arnold, 'West Riding', p.116. The family also had connections with the Nevilles. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.459-61; above, pp.92-3 & n.60, p.134, n.71.

³⁴ See above, p.70, p.201 & n.11.

³⁵ For details of the Tempest family, see Arnold, 'West Riding', pp.127-30, 149, 167, 211, & Appendix, pp.66-7; T.D. Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (ed. A.W. Morant) (Leeds, 1878), pp.96ff.

³⁶ The Yorkshire FitzWilliams may, possibly, have been distantly related to their namesakes from Mablethorpe, key participants in the events of 1469-70. For details of the Yorkshire FitzWilliams, see Arnold, 'West Riding', esp. pp.66-7, 127-30 & Appendix 1. For Richard FitzWilliam's time as sheriff, see above, p.153 & n.40. For the Mablethorpe family, see below, pp.228-9, Appendix 6.

³⁷ See below, pp.215ff.

such an unwelcome burden in 1444,³⁸ it would have been unrealistic for men such as Burgh or Skipwith to take on the task continually. Although Burgh's associates held the reins of power, the realities of the job meant that the holder had to be a man of sufficient standing to enforce his will; beyond Burgh, Blount and Skipwith, there appear to have been few such candidates among the ruling elite.

Among the other offices of local government, there does not appear to have been the same problem, suggesting that the reasons for using outsiders were specific to the shrievalty. Of the eight escheators who succeeded Simon Hareby, it is almost certain that all were current Lincolnshire residents,³⁹ and although few were from the greater families, all but one were from families long established in the county. Only Richard Hansard in 1465,⁴⁰ and Thomas Holand in 1466,⁴¹ were from the traditional elite, and while Richard Wyneslowe had served an earlier term as escheator (1453-4), the rest were all newcomers to the office. William Foljambe, escheator in 1467-8, was almost certainly the same man replaced as feodary of the Duchy of Lancaster by William Newecom in 1459, but he had never held county office before.⁴² As with the shrievalty, the man appointed in 1461, Richard Spert, served two terms, again presumably to provide stability; he was also the only known newcomer to the county to serve as escheator during this decade.⁴³ Only four escheators are known to have had links with the new Yorkist elite, and only these four - Hareby, Burgh, Spert and Hansard - were regarded as worthy of a place on the county's peace commissions. However, as under the Lancastrians, the employment of such lesser landholders is as much a reflection of the diminishing importance of the escheatorship as of the lack of prominent supporters of the new order.

The peace commissions also give a mixed impression, and all had peculiarities of their own. However, the composition of each of the benches give a good indication of

³⁸ The replacement of the traditional Exchequer audit by the declared account obviously did nothing to ease many of the job's other difficulties, particularly the county's large size. For details, see above, p.108 & n.125.

³⁹ The only doubt being over the identity of John Burgh, escheator in 1463, who may have been the brother of Sir Thomas. See Appendix 6.

⁴⁰ Son, or possibly grandson, of the Yorkist killed at Wakefield. See Appendix 5.

⁴¹ The escheator was the son of Sir Thomas Holand of Swineshead. However, despite the knighthood, the family was not especially active in county affairs. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.72; above, p.102.

⁴² Foljambe (or 'Folgeham') may have owed his earlier positions to the influence of Ralph Cromwell, whose feoffees he served as attorney in 1441. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.60. Since he lost his offices during the later 1450s, it is possible that he fell foul of the Lancastrian government after Cromwell's death, subsequently reappearing under the Yorkists. Alternatively, there may have been two separate men.

⁴³ See above, p.184 & n.99.

the differing attitudes and approaches taken by the Yorkists towards the governance of three areas which, politically at least, were very different. The Holland bench was by far the most stable of the three, with its members generally serving for many years. After the drastic cut in its personnel in 1461, it soon returned to its former strength, comprising between sixteen and nineteen members for the rest of the decade, and almost all alterations were due to either death or outside events. The Duke of Clarence (1466) and Marquis Montagu (1468) were added, primarily for political reasons,⁴⁴ while in 1466 Richard Welles regained the position once held by his father, despite having few Holland connections. However, continuity was the key. Of the six local men appointed in 1461,⁴⁵ only John Pynchebek failed to serve for the whole decade, and he presumably died in office.⁴⁶ With the exception of Brian Talbot, a Yorkist raised by the ruling group, subsequent additions also seem to have been both long-term appointments and members of families traditionally influential within Holland.⁴⁷ Robert Dokkyng of Whaplode, appointed in 1466, was removed after the Readeption, but served again between 1474 and 1477.⁴⁸ Thomas Meres also returned to the Holland bench in 1467, the year he became sheriff, but was removed after the Rebellion, not used by the Readeption government, and only returned to favour in 1480. Meanwhile, William Pagnell of Boston, appointed in 1466, served throughout the rest of the Yorkist period, including the Readeption.⁴⁹

This stability within the Holland bench is not entirely surprising; even during the troubles of the 1450s, the gentry membership of the Holland bench had remained reasonably stable, despite the changes in the composition of the wider elite.⁵⁰ Undoubtedly this was partly due to the region's isolation and political unimportance. The

⁴⁴ Clarence did have land in the region, notably part of the lordship of Boston, and had gained further interests during the redistribution of the Tailboys lands. See above, p.173 & n.57; Hicks, *Clarence*, p.209.

⁴⁵ These included Sir Thomas Burgh. Although Burgh had few personal interests in Holland, the Duchy of Lancaster did have some estates there. *CPR 1413-16*, p.387; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.577; DL28/29/2. See also above, p.36 & n.54.

⁴⁶ Details of Pynchebek's life and career are scarce, but a man (or men) of that name served on the bench continuously from 1452 to 1468. It was this man who was attacked by the Yorkist Brian Talbot on his way to the Peace Sessions in 1463. Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.100-6. See also below, p.212, n.52.

⁴⁷ Even Talbot was not a complete outsider, since he was a successor of the Haryngtons of Fleet: see above, p.189 & n.115. Talbot was not appointed to the bench until May 1470, presumably a panic measure after the Rebellion, and was re-appointed after the Readeption, remaining until 1475.

⁴⁸ Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.55.

⁴⁹ This was a different family from the Paynells of Boothby Pagnell, or possibly a distant junior branch. William himself was a close associate of Burgh. Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.41.

⁵⁰ See above, p.102.

only significant landholder in the area, with the exception of the Church, was the Duchy of Lancaster, and the local gentry were generally of middling wealth and influence, forming a rather insular and close-knit group. Also, the influence of men with Boston connections, such as Richard Benyngton, Leonard Thornburgh, Thomas Totoft, the Tylneys and others should not be underestimated - Boston's influence over Holland was far greater than Stamford's over Kesteven, or Lincoln's or Grimsby's over Lindsey. Also, since the main powerbase of the new regime was in the northern half of the county, with Burgh at Gainsborough and Blount at Girsby near Louth, there was only limited contact between the county's leaders and the Holland elite - even the Duchy estates were not really enough to give Burgh, their steward, any significant foothold. Thus, in Holland, the Yorkists effectively continued the Lancastrian policy of allowing the locals to rule themselves as they wished during the 1460s, even though it is evident that they were still not widely trusted. The attack on John Pynchebek by a known Yorkist supporter was unlikely to have been mere coincidence or personal hatred.⁵¹ The Pynchebeks were one of the most influential Holland families, and at the time, one of their relatives, the fugitive William Tailboys, was with the Lancastrian forces causing trouble in Northumberland.⁵² The attack on John Pynchebek may have been at least partly orchestrated as a show of strength by the Yorkists, designed to keep the Pynchebeks, and hence the rest of the Holland gentry, quiet during this turbulent period. However, these men had to be used in the government of Holland, simply because, in the absence of any local figures on a par with Burgh or Blount, any administration which simply ignored these locally powerful families and used insignificant men would have lacked any credibility. The general attitude of the Yorkists towards Holland was seemingly to leave well alone and only intervene if absolutely necessary, a policy made possible by Holland's political irrelevance.

In Kesteven, the prevailing atmosphere was somewhat different, since, unlike in Holland, noble influence was still present, at least nominally, in the form of Lord Hastings. The number of Kesteven JPs also rose sharply throughout the decade, both among the noble and gentry members, but continuity was again evident. Of the five

⁵¹ See above, p.189.

⁵² Tailboys' sister was the wife of Richard Pynchebek, another prominent Holland JP. Bohna suggests that John and Richard Pynchebek were brothers, but although this may well be correct, only Richard appears in the pedigrees. However, these are extremely confused, and Rogers notes that the Pynchebek family had produced a number of junior branches. Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.100-6; A.R. Madison (ed.), *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, 4 vols., Harleian Society, 1-liv, lv (1902-6), iii, p.783; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.44. For an attempt at part of the Pynchebek pedigree, see below, Appendix 5.

gentry members of the 1461 commission, only Nicholas Misterton and Richard Walcote left before the Readeption, both probably dying in office,⁵³ and most of those added subsequently, like their Holland counterparts, served for many years. Thomas Burgh, John Busshy and Thomas Wymbyssh all served, with a few gaps, until 1485, as did William Hussey, the future Chief Justice of King's Bench. Again, few Kesteven men seem to have had strong links with the new Yorkist leadership, even though the only significant Yorkist lands in Lincolnshire were in this region, and only Hareby and Hussey had clear connections with Burgh. Burgh's own influence was again far weaker than in Lindsey,⁵⁴ while although a notable local landholder, Hastings' continual absence prevented any significant input from him. Nevertheless, the Kesteven gentry, who traditionally looked rather more towards the Midlands than northwards or eastwards, had few discernible links with known Lancastrian partisans either, were noticeably less insular than their Holland neighbours, socially as well as geographically, and thus had little basis for united action. Hence they seem to have been viewed with less suspicion than their neighbours, but again were left to run things pretty much as they pleased. Edward could presumably rely on the Hastings connection to keep watch for any potential trouble.

It was therefore in Lindsey where the most significant political activity took place. Lindsey undoubtedly still played the dominant role in Lincolnshire politics, and it was there that the major players had their bases. Burgh and Blount both lived in Lindsey, the main royal interests (particularly Bolingbroke) were there, and so were the estates and connections of the man who would become the main focus of opposition, Richard Welles. The Lindsey bench had, throughout the 1450s, been far more susceptible to political faction and manipulation than Kesteven or Holland, a product of the Lindsey elite's greater size and fluidity, and this trend continued during the 1460s. As with the other parts, the membership of the bench expanded after 1461. By 1467, it had grown from 12 members to 25, and remained high until the Readeption.⁵⁵ Some additions were noblemen but the majority were gentry appointments. Of course, some men again served

⁵³ Misterton had almost certainly died by the time of his removal in 1468. Rogers suggests that the Richard Walcote removed in May 1470 was the same man who served a single term in 1483, but the 1483 appointment may be an error for John Walcote, who had served on the previous commission. See Appendix 2. A Richard Walcote certainly was alive in 1474, but it is unclear whether this was a son, other relative, or possibly the original JP, removed for unknown reasons and not re-appointed. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.72.

⁵⁴ For Hareby see Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.67; for Hussey, see *W.B.*, p.489.

⁵⁵ See Appendix 2.

for long periods; ignoring the Readeption troubles, Thomas Burgh, William Skipwith, Thomas Knyght, Robert Sheffield and, after his initial omission, Thomas Moigne all served for almost the entire Yorkist period. But, beyond these, many others served much shorter periods, maybe not surprising given the larger number of potential candidates available, but perhaps more than would be expected in a region otherwise dominated by the Burgh-Blount faction. John Ascough appeared in 1468, soon after inheriting Stallingborough, Thomas Dymoke and the younger Thomas FitzWilliam in 1463, and John Topclyff in 1467.⁵⁶ Also, numerous others served for shorter periods. John Burgh appeared on two commissions, both in 1470;⁵⁷ Gervase Clifton, John Villers, John Hatcliffe, as well as Hastings and his brother Richard all appeared at this time - an obvious sign of the turmoil within the county administration.⁵⁸ Welles also appeared and disappeared, while John Markham CJKB⁵⁹ and Arthur Ormesby also served brief terms.⁶⁰ Despite this, the skeleton of the new regime is clearly evident; Burgh, Blount, Skipwith and the two Richard Hansards all served, as did other supporters such as Robert Constable, Humphrey Bouchier and the Yorkist Richard, Lord Dacre. It was among the

⁵⁶ According to *CPR*, John and Thomas Topclyff served alternate terms on the bench until November 1470! Since there is no other sign of a Thomas Topclyff, this must be an error for John, who thus served continuously from 1467 until 1470, when he was removed by the Lancastrians. He was not re-appointed until 1478, despite his links with Burgh, for whom he acted as feoffee in 1475. *CPR 1467-77*, p.523; Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.69.

⁵⁷ Given the need for trusted servants at this time, this could further strengthen the case for John being Sir Thomas' brother. See above, p.210, n.39; below, Appendix 6.

⁵⁸ Villers, the sheriff in 1473, was a resident of Fulnetby, but was probably a member of the family from Brooksby, Leicestershire. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.72; Acheson, *Gentry Community*, p.255. Clifton's appointment is surprising, since this must surely be the illegitimate son of Sir Gervase Clifton of Clifton, Notts. (d.1453). Clifton was the third husband of Maud Stanhope, one of the Cromwell co-heirs and widow of both Robert, 6th Lord Willoughby and Sir Thomas Neville, and was styled as 'of Eresby', the Willoughbys' ancestral seat, in 1465. *W.B.*, pp.194-5; Payling, *Political Society*, p.10. However, he was a staunch Lancastrian, and was executed after his capture at Tewkesbury in 1471, making his appointment to a Yorkist commission at this critical time rather strange. Wedgwood suggests that he may have left for France in 1470, which might mean that the JP was a different man, but there are no other plausible candidates. Sir Gervase's nephew and namesake, steward of Tickhill from 1461, was still an esquire in 1470. Somerville, *Duchy*, p.528.

⁵⁹ Since two other judges, John Nedeham and Robert Danby, also served at this time, Markham was probably appointed as a local landholder, not in his judicial capacity. Markham was the founder of a junior branch of the Markhams of East Markham, Nottinghamshire, resident at Sedgebrook in Kesteven. Payling, *Political Society*, pp.40-1.

⁶⁰ Ormesby was a lawyer, originally from North Ormsby, Lindsey. He rose to prominence rapidly in 1466-7, when, according to Wedgwood, he was already over 70 years old. *W.B.*, pp.650-1. He was appointed to the Surrey bench in 1466 (styled as 'of Southwark', presumably his professional, London address), the Lindsey bench in 1467, and sat in the 1467 Parliament for Ludgershall, a Wiltshire borough controlled by Clarence. His Lindsey appointment must have been part of an attempt by Clarence to bolster the influence of a trusted man, but probably had little relevance to Lincolnshire beyond the fact that it was Ormesby's home county. M.A. Hicks, 'George, Duke of Clarence as 'Good Lord'', in Hicks, *Richard III and his Rivals* (London, 1991), pp.133-48, p.137, n.11. Unless they were for short-term reasons, Clarence's efforts were wasted, since Ormesby died in 1468.

peripheral members where the turnover was greatest, perhaps a reflection of the shallow base of support for the Yorkist administration. Yet, significantly, the great families seem to have been split between those who took places on the bench, and those who remained absent. The Dymokes,⁶¹ the Hansards, and the Tailboys and Ascoughs of Stallingborough all provided members, but along with understandable omissions such as the Kyme branch of the Tailboys family (also absent from the Kesteven bench), and others which had become extinct, notable absentees included the Tirwhits, Copuldykes, Suttons and Sothills.⁶² This suggests that the inclusion of men such as Dymoke, presumably regarded with too much suspicion to be entrusted with offices like the shrievalty, was nevertheless seen as essential for the peace commissions to work effectively.⁶³ Such limited inclusions suggest that the greater families were not deliberately avoiding office, or being collectively uncooperative, while, from the royal viewpoint, the dominance of the Burgh-Blount faction over the peace sessions, and their wider influence, would make the inclusion of these other men an acceptable and limited risk, however much their loyalty may have been in doubt. It also points towards the gradual re-integration of some of the families mistrusted since 1461, a process which continued to greater effect in the 1470s.

Reaction and Resistance, 1467-71

The Yorkist system of governance during the early 1460s was thus based upon the effective separation of political and landed power, and the creation of a separate body of local officials whose power was almost entirely a royal creation and who were thus dependent upon continuing royal favour. These men could then run the county according to Edward's needs, without worrying unduly about the wishes of the local landed elite. Meanwhile, the manipulation of forfeited lands, ensuring that the greater landed estates were in the hands of Edward's supporters, reduced the chances of conflict between royal and noble power. Unfortunately for Edward, although this system had proved reasonably successful, it was a situation which was simply incompatible with his next important action on the Lincolnshire stage; the restoration of Richard Welles. The power of the

⁶¹ Despite whatever suspicions the Yorkists may have had, Dymoke still fulfilled his family's traditional role as King's Champion at Edward IV's coronation in 1461.

⁶² The Copuldykes' absence was not new, since no member of the family had served as JP under Henry VI. The Suttons lost much of their prominence after the death of Hamo Sutton in 1462. See below, Appendix 6.

⁶³ See also below, p.219.

Burgh-Blount faction was dependent upon the lack of credible opposition from the traditional elite, and the fact that there was no single person or family within Lincolnshire able to challenge the new order. The restoration of Richard Welles immediately changed that. Not only was Welles determined to restore his personal fortunes and influence, he also needed to re-establish the traditional patterns of lordship and governance within Lincolnshire, especially Lindsey, upon which his family's position and power had been based. Edward doubtless hoped that Welles and Burgh would be able to work together in local government, uniting both old and new elites to a greater extent than Burgh and Blount had managed, yet still under strict Yorkist control. However, this was to prove impossible. Whatever the personal relationship between Burgh and Welles (of which we know little but which was probably less than cordial given the circumstances), the power and influence of the two men were based on systems which were totally incompatible, and as became increasingly obvious towards the end of the decade, the two forms of authority simply could not exist side-by-side.

The main problem was the way that the new royal system functioned by exploiting the collapse of the old order, using a new elite of local royal administrators and effectively by-passing the traditional structures of landed influence. This situation had to be maintained, since the new regime did not have the solid landed and social base to retain control over strong local affinities working in opposition. Conversely, if Welles was to regain the position to which he felt entitled, he had to re-establish that old order, and place himself at the top of a social hierarchy whose focus had been diverted during his absence. Part of this re-establishment was the issue of territoriality described earlier - renewing the dominance of Welles as the only resident great lord in his sphere of influence, the North and South Ridings of Lindsey.⁶⁴ But along with this, he had to demonstrate his recovery by regaining his position at or near the head of county politics, and by securing places for himself and his supporters in the local administration, the very heart of the power of the new order. Welles must have resented the accumulation by Burgh of such offices as Steward of Bolingbroke, which, in other circumstances, Welles could reasonably have expected to secure for himself or his followers.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Welles must have realised that his chances of usurping him in this sphere, at least in the

⁶⁴ See above, pp.171, 191-2.

⁶⁵ His father had also failed to secure this prestigious stewardship, losing out to Viscount Beaumont. With Beaumont's exile, and the lack of other noble candidates, Welles would have had cause to resent his exclusion from this office.

short term, were remote, and therefore the only avenue for advancement was in the realm of local government.

However, the mixture of continued mistrust and the need for the new regime to preserve its position, meant that this route back was also effectively blocked, a situation which must have caused considerable resentment. None of the men holding the offices of sheriff or escheator towards the end of the decade had any known connections with Welles or his affinity, and to see outsiders serving as sheriff while his followers were ignored must have been especially irksome. Similarly on the Lindsey bench, where Welles would have expected to wield some influence, advancement was denied. Despite five renewals between Welles' restoration and the Rebellion, the only men appointed with any Welles connections (apart from Welles himself and his son, Robert) were the younger Thomas FitzWilliam, whose links are less than clear, and Thomas Dymoke, whose initial appointment pre-dated Welles' restoration. Yet both men were of sufficient personal standing to have secured appointment on their own merit, regardless of Welles' influence.

This situation shows precisely the dilemma created by Edward's clemency towards Welles, and his lack of appreciation of its effects. The rule of the new elite may not have been particularly popular, especially in Lindsey, but it was successful and effective, and Welles' restoration put this under threat, introducing rivalry into a potentially volatile situation. Welles was desperate to resurrect his regional political power, while the new elite had to preserve the new *status quo* to survive. With Burgh and his colleagues in charge, they could effectively control appointments, and the years between Welles' restoration and the Rebellion saw increasing tension between these two groups. Yet Burgh's position had been significantly weakened; the death of Blount in 1467 not only removed Burgh's most eminent colleague, but it also removed one of the few links between the apex of the new elite and the traditional land-holding classes. The wider use of outsiders in office was probably indicative of the growing isolation of Burgh's faction from the rest of the county elite. Meanwhile, Burgh himself was increasingly absent at court,⁶⁶ thus leaving his ruling elite even more isolated, from the centre as well as their neighbours. Rather than allowing greater integration between old and new, Welles' restoration resurrected a traditional affinity which, although relatively small, had far deeper local loyalties than anything the new order had achieved since 1461,

⁶⁶ Bohna has noted that Burgh was almost certainly absent for most of the 18 months prior to the raid on Gainsborough. Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.121.

and which effectively set itself up in opposition. The return of some of the old families through the peace commissions, particularly Welles himself and Sir Thomas Dymoke, may well signify an attempt to defuse a potentially volatile situation by effectively 'bribing' some of the key players, desperate measures not unlike those attempted more widely by the Lancastrians during the 1450s.

In these circumstances, the attack on Gainsborough and the subsequent Rebellion perhaps begin to make more sense. The notion that it was a purely personal thing between Burgh and Welles, described as a 'private feud' by Ross and a 'quarrel' by Gillingham,⁶⁷ fails to highlight the complexity of the situation, since although it was certainly a Welles family issue on one side, it was not just Burgh but the system he represented that Welles was attacking. The Gainsborough raid appears to have been entirely the work of the Welles affinity, and despite the complications of Warwick and Clarence, the Rebellion was much the same. That few others joined the enterprise is hardly surprising - the initial attack was conducted for the benefit of the Welles affinity, not necessarily the wider political community. The rest of the local elite, families with no close links with Welles such as the Tirwhits, Sothills or Busshys, had little incentive for joining in. Should Welles succeed, as members of the traditional elite mistrusted under Burgh they surely would not suffer, and should he fail, their position would be no worse. However, by joining, success would bring few further rewards, while failure would have led to disaster and the headsman's block.

The attack on Gainsborough itself was almost certainly pure opportunism, taking advantage of the political turmoil, although its purpose is debatable. It is unlikely that Welles had any intention of actually killing Burgh and thus removing him permanently, even though Warwick had done exactly that in his 'executions' of Rivers and Pembroke a few months earlier.⁶⁸ Apart from Warkworth's confused account, there is no indication of whether Burgh was present at the time, but the demands of his various offices and duties would make his absence likely.⁶⁹ Since personal revenge was not really the major concern here, it is unlikely that Welles would have risked the greater wrath of the King by murdering one of his closest friends and allies. The raid was almost certainly intended

⁶⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, p.138; Gillingham, *Wars*, p.166.

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *Wars*, p.175; Ross, *Edward IV*, pp.131-2; Gillingham, *Wars*, pp.163-4.

⁶⁹ See above, pp.152-3. Warkworth's description that the attackers 'droff oute of Lyncolneschyre Sere Thomas à Burghe' might imply that he was present, but Warkworth's description is extremely unreliable, and may be merely figurative. *Warkworth*, p.30. See also above, pp.153ff, for a discussion of the date and circumstances of the attack on Burgh's house.

as a show of strength by Welles (probably not dissimilar to Talbot's attack on John Pynchebek in 1463), designed to make Burgh and, more importantly, Edward take notice of his growing strength. Burgh's death might have removed one of the main obstacles for Welles, but would gain him little sympathy with Edward. By demonstrating his ability to make things difficult, Welles probably hoped to force Edward into a compromise, and to prevent trouble by allowing Welles the freedom to exercise his power, and reducing the over-riding presence of Burgh and his colleagues. However, Edward's loyalty to Burgh, his success in regaining control after the troubles of 1469, and the way the entire episode became embroiled in the rebellious schemes of Warwick and Clarence, prevented this from occurring.

Compared to the turmoil which preceded it, the Readeption passed in relative peace. There is no sign of any retribution towards the dispossessed Yorkist supporters, and Burgh, stripped of his power, did not follow his master into exile, presumably spending the winter planning the reconstruction of his Gainsborough manor house. The return of Henry VI coincided with the annual round of local appointments, and although not noticeably 'Lancastrian', they certainly favoured people who had been in the wilderness during the previous decade. John Ascough, only recently appointed to the Lindsey bench by the Yorkists, became sheriff, while Henry Foterby served as escheator. His replacement in February 1471 by Brian Sandeford⁷⁰ occurred well before the return of the Yorkists, suggesting that Foterby died in office.⁷¹ Unfortunately the returns for the Readeption Parliament, which might give a better indication of the political complexion of the shire, do not survive. Wedgwood's suggestion that one of the shire knights may have been William Grymesby is certainly plausible, and although entirely a politically-influenced event, his election would certainly reflect a change in the attitude and possibly the composition of the electorate.⁷² Interestingly, Ascough, Foterby,

⁷⁰ Sandeford was described as from Maltby le Marsh in 1472 and 1473, and was probably a member of the Yorkshire family from Thorpe Salvin in the West Riding. He later served as sheriff of Lincolnshire, 1486-7. C67/48, m.7; CPR 1467-77, p.412; CFR 1485-1509, p.89; J. Hunter, *South Yorkshire: The History and Topography of the Deanery of Doncaster*, 2 vols. (London, 1828-31), i, pp.309-11. The Sandefords also had interests in Westmorland, suggesting that Brian may have entered Lincolnshire through connections with his Westmorland neighbour, Leonard Thornburgh.

⁷¹ Alternatively, he may have refused the office. Nothing is known about Foterby beyond his appointment, but he was probably the son of John Foterby of Normanby, assessed on an income of 40m in 1436. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.61.

⁷² For Grymesby, see above, p.165.

Sandeford and Grymesby were all connected with Lindsey, not the seemingly more Lancastrian Holland.

However, it is again the peace commissions which are most enlightening. On the Holland bench there were again few changes. The obvious Yorkists - Burgh, Bouchier, Talbot, Welby and Thornburgh - were naturally removed, as were a few others,⁷³ while the only newcomers were the restored Warwick and Clarence, Thomas Totoft of Boston⁷⁴ and the Prior of Spalding. In Kesteven, Burgh, Hareby and the exiled Hastings were all removed,⁷⁵ while the only new additions were again Warwick and Clarence.⁷⁶ In both regions, the core of the commission remained, reflecting both the limited scope of the Readeption government to make wholesale changes, and the relative neutrality of the Holland and Kesteven benches throughout the 1460s. The Readeption regime probably believed that if they removed the Yorkist leadership, there would be little resistance from the rest. However, in Lindsey, the situation changed rather more markedly, reflecting the temporary demise of the Burgh-Blount faction and the final fling of the Welles affinity. As in Kesteven, this was the third renewal of the year, but was far more drastic. Of the twenty men appointed by Edward in September, only six were still on the bench after the November renewal - Bishop Chedworth of Lincoln, the judges Danby and Nedeham, and three locals; Thomas Knyght, John Wythecotes and Robert Sheffield, who were presumably regarded as reasonably impartial workhorses of the local administration, essential for the bench to function effectively.⁷⁷ Of the other seven men appointed, three were nobles, while the rest were men of the Welles affinity; Charles Aungevyn, the two FitzWilliams of Mablethorpe, and Richard Gryffyth.⁷⁸ A second Readeption commission

⁷³ Marquis Montagu, John Markham and Hugh Tylney.

⁷⁴ Rogers states that Totoft was probably the younger son of another Thomas. However, his associations were all with prominent Yorkists, and there is no indication why he should have begun his career under the Readeption government. His arrest was ordered on Edward's return, but he was back in favour by 1472. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, pp.69-70; *CPR 1467-77*, p.354. He was a fixture on the commission until 1493, when he was removed in the wake of his dismissal for incompetence from the post of feodary of the Duchy. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.70; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.581.

⁷⁵ Also removed were Sir John Busshy, William Dysney and Lord Grey of Codnor. Surprisingly, Humphrey Bouchier remained on the Kesteven bench, despite being removed from Lindsey and Holland.

⁷⁶ However, this was the third renewal of the Kesteven commission in 1470. The composition of the bench had changed from the one which started the year, although mainly among the honorific and minor appointees. For details, see Appendix 2.

⁷⁷ For Knyght, see Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.74; *W.B.*, pp.518-9; for Wythecotes, see above, pp.208-9 & n.32; for Sheffield, see Appendix 6.

⁷⁸ All four men were among those receiving pardons in 1470. C67/47; see also above, p.192 & n.125.

issued to Lindsey in January 1471, was practically identical, the only change being the addition of the Abbot of Kirkstead.⁷⁹

The different approaches taken in the three parts of Lincolnshire in 1470-1 is not especially surprising, given the recent events. Kesteven and especially Holland had been peripheral to the wider political tensions within the county, while Lindsey had been the scene of almost all the problems of recent years, and the region with the greatest political divisions. Thus there were fewer men regarded as neutral, and more wholesale changes were necessary. The use of the Welles affinity is interesting. Presumably Warwick and his colleagues assumed that supporters of a former ally would now remain loyal to them, despite their master's death. Although now leaderless, the affinity would still have been in existence, in much the same way that the Duchy of Lancaster affinity long outlasted the active involvement of its Duke, and the appointment of four of their number to the bench was probably a stop-gap measure, possibly a 'reward' for their past service. The FitzWilliams may have merited a place on the bench in their own right, but Gryffyth and Aungevyn almost certainly did not. However, for a new regime unsure of its position, they were presumably the safest options.

The relative neutrality of the Readeption officials, and the differences between Lindsey and the rest of Lincolnshire, are equally evident in the changes made by the returning Yorkists in 1471. Although John Ascough was immediately replaced as sheriff by the reliable Yorkist Richard Welby,⁸⁰ and never regained his seat on the Lindsey bench, he secured a pardon later that year, and even became a commissioner of array in March 1472.⁸¹ Brian Sandeford, the escheator, was not even replaced, serving out the remainder of his term. The three peace commissions were not renewed until August, when they were effectively returned to their earlier, Yorkist composition, with numerous other additions. Strangely, all three increased in number, despite the greater strength of Yorkist rule.⁸² However, the only local man (apart from the Prior of Spalding) to be

⁷⁹ The reason for the inclusion of the Abbot of Kirkstead in Lindsey and the Prior of Spalding in Holland is unknown. Possibly the new government thought that their appointment might bring some stability to the bench, or perhaps it was a thinly-veiled bribe to two important and influential local churchmen.

⁸⁰ The appointment is dated 4 April, ten days before the Battle of Barnet and a month before Edward's final victory at Tewkesbury.

⁸¹ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.258, 352. Rogers suggests that he may not have taken up his position as sheriff in 1470. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.43.

⁸² In Holland, the numbers rose from 13 to 22, five more than on the equivalent Lindsey bench, and more than any Lancastrian commission for Holland. This was contrary to the tendency throughout the century of strong government bringing smaller numbers of commissioners. See above, pp.101-2.

removed from the Holland bench was Robert Dokkyng, and even he returned in 1474. In Kesteven, John Stanlowe suffered similarly, returning in 1473, but again most changes occurred in Lindsey. The Welles connection were dismissed *en masse*, and only the younger FitzWilliam ever returned.⁸³ Knyght and Wythecotes both suffered for their Readeption service, leaving Sheffield as the only Lindsey man to remain throughout the entire period. The brevity and confused nature of the Readeption period certainly prevented any concerted effort to influence local government, and in Lincolnshire the only man who might have done that for the returning Lancastrians, Richard Welles, obviously did not live to take his chance. Therefore the Lancastrians and Nevilles had to rely on what they found: hence their use of hitherto Yorkist men such as Wythecotes and Knyght to work alongside men such as Richard Pynchebek, Nicholas Bowet and Robert Sheffield, who successfully negotiated the entire period without incident. More than anything else, the survival of these men and others, particularly in Kesteven and Holland, as well as the continued absence of other families, suggests that few members of the wider Lincolnshire elite were solid partisans of any of the factions, preferring instead to remain aloof from the political troubles of the period. Such attitudes may have caused suspicion as to their intentions, but was ultimately the safest and most successful course of action.

The Restoration of Peace, 1471-85

Edward IV's defeat of the Readeption government in 1471 ushered in perhaps the most stable period of royal rule since the death of Henry V in 1422. However, in Lincolnshire at least, Edward had learnt significantly from the mistakes of the past. Although his dominance might have allowed him to rule as arbitrarily as he wished, this was not the approach he chose. Rather than imposing an even stricter and harsher regime on a county whose actions had contributed significantly to his downfall in 1470, Edward embarked on a system of reconciliation, attempting to remove the divisions of the past and create a much more integrated political society, one which included the traditional elite rather than ostracised them. In doing so, he began to create an active elite with a far wider base than was evident earlier in his reign, thus helping to remove some of the

⁸³ FitzWilliam returned in 1475, and his career flourished thereafter. See below, pp.228-9; Appendix 6.

tensions which had developed during the 1460s. In many ways, the *rapprochement* between former enemies, which, certainly at the upper levels, has been credited to the strong governance of Henry VII, appears to have begun, as with many of Henry's successes, under Edward IV. It is also clear that the reign of Richard III did nothing to disrupt this progress. However, these changes should not be over-emphasised: the main basis of Yorkist rule survived, at least until the death of Edward IV in 1483, and although the overarching power of Burgh's narrow clique was significantly reduced, Burgh and his supporters remained the guiding force in county politics at least until 1485.

The restoration of the Yorkists initially meant a return to the style of government which had proved successful, if divisive, before the Rebellion, as Edward purposefully re-established his rule. The commissions issued soon after his return, ordering the arrest of numerous local people, show Edward's determination.⁸⁴ These commissions were packed with former Yorkist officials, and while those to be arrested included many members of the Welles circle, the reasons for their arrest are not specified. The arrests themselves seem to have achieved little, since many of the people involved successfully sued out pardons during the succeeding months.⁸⁵ Yet the scene was set for the next few years. On his return, Edward had initially acted far more ruthlessly towards his bitterest enemies, but now his position of strength allowed him to be more generous to his lesser opponents. For instance, there is no indication that the 1470 commission of *oyer et terminer*, issued in response to the Rebellion, was ever implemented.⁸⁶

The territorial restoration of traditional families such as the Dymokes and Tailboys was a significant part of these changes,⁸⁷ and was itself mirrored in a return to local politics of both these men, and others who, although not necessarily deprived of their lands, had formerly found themselves excluded. Yet this new approach took a while to show through. The first sheriff to be appointed from the upper ranks of the traditional elite was Sir John Busshy in 1479, significantly the first resident knight (excluding the Yorkists Burgh and Skipwith) to be appointed since Sir Henry Retford in 1454.⁸⁸ Yet

⁸⁴ *CPR 1467-77*, pp.285-6; see also above, pp.194-5.

⁸⁵ C67/48. Pardons granted to many other Lincolnshire men are also recorded here, such as Brian Sandeford, Thomas Meres and Robert Sheffield.

⁸⁶ For the context of the commission, see above, p.151 & n.31.

⁸⁷ See above, pp.175, 196.

⁸⁸ Even Retford's appointment owed much to his Yorkist associations: see above, pp.167-8. The previous knightly sheriff had been Sir Nicholas Bowet in 1451.

apart from Thomas Knyght in 1482-3, all the remaining Yorkist sheriffs were from this group. Previously, the 1470s themselves had seen a similar progression to that of the 1460s, with a few prominent Yorkists initially, followed by insignificant locals and outsiders. This time, rather than being the result of an internal power struggle as such, this progression seems to reflect the reduction in the dominance of the new elite, as older landed families began to reassert their influence over a new elite who were no longer receiving the undivided attention of the King.

The increasingly insignificant post of escheator was again held by a succession of men of limited importance. Henry Hansard, a younger son of Sir Richard Hansard, was a lone exception, while Stephen Shotton, who, according to the lists, held the office for five years, is otherwise totally unknown. The appointment in 1484 of Andrew Leeke, a member of an ancient Holland family, may be significant, but again, the unattractiveness of the office makes the escheatorship a poor example. However, one appointment is quite interesting: Thomas Tyrell, appointed in 1471, was the husband of Elizabeth Bruyn, younger daughter and co-heir of Sir Henry Bruyn, himself the son of one of the co-heirs to the Retford estates, and Thomas and Elizabeth were both pardoned, as 'of Beckenham, Kent', on 16 February 1472.⁸⁹ Tyrell was a member of a prolific Essex family, many of whom had strong Yorkist connections. Another Thomas Tyrell was an Esquire of the Body (1478-85), and Richard III's Master of the Horse, and Sir James Tyrell was later supposedly implicated in the murder of Edward V.⁹⁰ Thomas had previously played no role in Lincolnshire politics, despite his wife's father having died in 1461, nor did his interests extend beyond his period as escheator. His family's connections with the Yorkists suggest that Tyrell's appointment was a blatant piece of political manipulation, either by Edward, or possibly by Richard of Gloucester, who was

⁸⁹ C67/48, m.4. Tyrell was a younger son of Sir Thomas Tyrell, eldest son of Sir John Tyrell of Heron in East Thorndon, Essex, Chief Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster and JP in Holland in the 1420s. *H.C.*, 1386-1421, iv, pp.683-6; *The Visitations of Essex*, ed. W.C. Metcalfe, 2 vols., Harleian Society, xiii-xiv (London, 1878-9), i, pp.300-1. He founded a junior branch of the Tyrell family, resident at South Ockenden, Essex. Wedgwood's biography, which states that the husband of Elizabeth Bruyn was also a Yorkist household man, Essex MP in 1478 and 1495, and Richard III's Master of the Horse, is clearly confused, since Elizabeth's husband must have been dead by 1485, when her second husband, Sir William Brandon, was killed at Bosworth. *W.B.*, pp.892-3; *C.P.*, ii, pp.357-8.

⁹⁰ The Essex MP and the Yorkist household official were not necessarily the same person, and Wedgwood gives two possible candidates. Sir James Tyrell was the eldest son of Sir William Tyrell of Gipping, a cousin of the Lincolnshire escheator. W.E. Hampton, 'Sir John Tyrell; with some notes on the Austin Friars London and those buried there', in J. Petre (ed.), *Richard III: Crown and People* (Gloucester, 1985), pp.203-17; W.R.D. Robinson, 'A Letter from Sir Richard Croft to Sir Gilbert Talbot in 1486 concerning Sir James Tyrell's Offices in Wales', *Historical Research*, lxvii (1994), pp.178-89. For biographies of a number of members of the family, of varying accuracy, see *W.B.*, pp.889-93.

later closely associated with the Tyrells, and had just received interests in the Dymoke and De la Launde lands. Whoever was responsible, after the troubles of 1470, offending local sensibilities in Lincolnshire by appointing outsiders would not have been a great concern!

As usual, it was mainly in the peace commissions that the balance of power in local politics emerged.⁹¹ While the first peace commissions issued after Edward's return effectively restored those locals deposed in 1470, all three benches initially saw an increase in numbers, particularly among the noble membership. Although the new elite of the 1460s regained their positions, as the years passed their dominance was gradually eroded, as replacements tended to come from within the traditional, greater families, rather than those lesser families which had hitherto been to the fore under the Yorkists. In Holland, this was less pronounced, particularly since very few sitting members appear to have died. The Yorkists Brian Talbot and Robert Ratcliffe both left the bench in 1475, while others such as John Tamworth and Robert Dokkyng also disappear. However, these loyal Yorkists were not replaced. Apart from Thomas Meres, restored in 1480, Reginald Gayton, commissioned for the first time in 1471,⁹² and Thomas Welby, added in 1477,⁹³ the only other major local addition was an obvious replacement, Thomas Pynchebek replacing Richard Pynchebek in 1482.⁹⁴ Yet in Kesteven, rather than just the removal of new men, some of the old families, long absent, were beginning to make a comeback. Mancer Marmyon, son of the 1459 sheriff, returned in 1479, as did John Busshy in 1473 after only sporadic involvement over the past fifteen years, and also John Paynell in 1472. Although largely absent, the Busshys and Marmyons were two of Kesteven's most eminent families, while Paynell must have been a member, probably the head, of the ancient family from Osgodby and Boothby Pagnell, in relative obscurity since the death of Sir Geoffrey in 1437.⁹⁵ Certainly compared to Holland, the Kesteven bench changed quite considerably, though this appears to have been due to deaths rather than politics. Nicholas Bowet, Simon Hareby and William Coote all disappear in 1473,

⁹¹ For the growing importance of the peace commissions, see above, pp.82-3 & n.12.

⁹² Gayton was probably a lawyer, and apart from being a supervisor of the will of the Yorkist Richard Spert (albeit in 1499), had no known links with the Yorkists as such. He remained a JP continuously until 1503. Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.62.

⁹³ The Holland JP, sheriff of Lincolnshire (1491-2) and deputy steward of Bolingbroke (1496) are probably all the same man, but this is not certain. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.75; Somerville, *Duchy*, p.577.

⁹⁴ For the problems of the Pynchebek pedigree, see above, p.212, n.52. According to Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.44, Thomas was the younger son of a Richard Pynchebek, who died in the 1490s. Another Richard, presumably Thomas' elder brother, predeceased his father in 1482.

⁹⁵ *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.30-1.

and William Dysney in 1475, while men such as Thomas Boys and Leonard Thornburgh served for terms of varying length.⁹⁶ However, by the end of the Yorkist period, the Kesteven commission, unlike that of Holland, bore little resemblance to that appointed in 1471. Only six of the 18 men appointed in December 1483 had remained from 1471, three of these being noblemen.⁹⁷

The Lindsey bench, meanwhile, remained an extremely politically sensitive body, and although the Yorkist clique was joined by members of the resurrected traditional elite, to an extent effective power continued to remain with the same group of people, at least until 1483 and probably even 1485. The restored Yorkist administration of 1471 was again joined by various noblemen and others, reflecting the territorial alterations after the Rebellion.⁹⁸ As in Holland, a small group of men remained throughout the rest of the period, but in Lindsey these were mainly Yorkists; Thomas Burgh, Thomas Kyme, Thomas Moigne all survived, as did Sheffield, Spert and, with a few gaps, Thomas Knyght.⁹⁹ All were, by this time, Yorkist loyalists,¹⁰⁰ although only Burgh and Spert were 'newcomers' to Lincolnshire.¹⁰¹ Most new additions were men of longer local pedigree, though not necessarily from the greatest families. Robert Tailboys' rehabilitation was helped by a seat in Lindsey between 1471 and 1475, when he was transferred to Kesteven following his restoration. The younger FitzWilliam returned in 1475, William Tirwhit for a term in 1483,¹⁰² Wythecotes for most of the 1470s, and Topclyff during the 1480s.¹⁰³ Yet the return of the old elite was gradual. There were still no Copuldykes or Sothills,¹⁰⁴ the Tirwhits had just the one term, and Sir Robert Dymoke was also

⁹⁶ Thornburgh only served for two years in Kesteven (1473-5), but since he served until 1485 in Holland, he clearly had not died. Presumably his was a temporary appointment made to strengthen the bench. Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.67.

⁹⁷ Northumberland, Dacre and Richard Hastings. The other three were Burgh, Hussey and Thomas Wymbyssh of Nocton.

⁹⁸ For example, Robert Ratcliffe, the new husband of Margaret Dymoke, served from 1471 until 1483.

⁹⁹ Knyght was omitted in August 1471, restored in December, and again omitted between 1475 and 1477. He was sheriff at the time of the commission of May 1483 (nominally appointed by Edward V's government), but was restored in June, well before the end of his term. See also above, p.220, n.77.

¹⁰⁰ Only Sheffield's associations are slightly unclear, but he had almost certainly recognised the *fait accompli* of 1471. See above, p.194 & n.132. For Moigne, see Rogers, 'Electors', iv, pp.38-9; above, p.93, p.108 & n.125.

¹⁰¹ The only other possible outsider appointed, excluding nobles and justices, was John Villers, the sheriff of 1473. See above, p.214 & n.58.

¹⁰² Why Tirwhit received only one term (Edward V's one commission) is unclear, especially since he was at the start of a highly successful career, and did not die until 1522. Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire*, esp. ch.7.

¹⁰³ Wythecotes' precise allegiances are uncertain. See above, p.208.

¹⁰⁴ The Lincolnshire family are regularly confused with their namesakes and relatives from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. Henry Sothill, apprentice-at-law within the Duchy of Lancaster and deputy Chief Steward of the North Parts between 1459 and 1476, was probably from the Dewsbury branch, contrary to

overlooked, although John Dymoke, a distant relative, was appointed in 1483.¹⁰⁵ Quite why is unclear, but it may partly be that the judicial functions of the bench were gradually becoming more important than its political significance. Along with the central court justices, FitzWilliam, Knyght, Sheffeld, and probably others, all had legal backgrounds. Yet, while the return of some of the former absentees is significant, it would seem that Burgh and his colleagues still maintained a measure of control.

The impression gained from the identities of the county's shire knights would appear to be somewhat similar.¹⁰⁶ The numerous appearances of Burgh suggest his continued influence, and probably also a large degree of royal pressure, designed to secure the election of a trusted supporter.¹⁰⁷ Richard Welby, another Yorkist, was also elected, seemingly filling the space left by the death of Blount and also giving Burgh a welcome link with Holland. However, the only other man known to have been elected under the Yorkists was Robert Tailboys, firstly in 1472 and, according to Wedgwood, on at least two further occasions.¹⁰⁸ This is unlikely to have been the result of any resurgence by the ancient landed class; he would not have been elected against the wishes of the Yorkist regime, and the surviving returns recording the composition of the county court in 1472 and 1478 suggest they were far from anti-Yorkist.¹⁰⁹ However, being the son of an unrepentant Lancastrian, his continual election would have been extremely significant to local society as a whole, marking not just his re-emergence but also that of the wider group of which his family had been a part. Election to Parliament may have carried little local authority, but it had great symbolic importance, extremely useful when added to his family's landed wealth and traditional position in local society.

The reintegration of the families tainted by their opposition to the Yorkists was still only piecemeal, and rather slow, but it was happening. However, their return to county office was only gradual, and although their influence in Kesteven and Holland remained greater, their power in Lindsey, the heart of the Yorkist regime, took longer to recover. There is no indication of any changes among the other royal posts, the main

Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.425-6; Arnold, 'West Riding', p.85. See also below, Appendix 6.

¹⁰⁵ John Dymoke must have been trusted by Burgh long before 1483, since he acted as Burgh's deputy as receiver of Bolingbroke honour from 1468 until 1485. Somerville, *Duchy*, p.579.

¹⁰⁶ Returns survive only for the 1472 and 1478 Parliaments, although Wedgwood has pieced together records for a number of others. J.C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Register of the Ministers and of the Members of Both Houses, 1439-1509* (London, 1936), pp.654-7; below, Appendix 1:c.

¹⁰⁷ Wedgwood's reconstruction suggests that Burgh was also elected to at least one of Richard III's two Parliaments, despite Burgh's relationship with Richard being far weaker. *W.B.*, p.136.

¹⁰⁸ *W.B.*, pp.834-5.

¹⁰⁹ See above, pp.177ff.

basis of the power of Burgh and his supporters, and Burgh retained his important offices, including the stewardship and receivership of Bolingbroke, until replaced by Henry VII.¹¹⁰ However, the territorial restoration of men such as Robert Tailboys and Robert Dymoke, coupled with at least royal acquiescence, allowed them to rebuild their local influence based on their landed estates. Thus the ancient ties of kinship and affinity, by-passed during the 1460s, were allowed to become active once again. None of these men was individually as powerful as Richard Welles, and the clash of the late 1460s was not repeated, but Burgh's position as the unofficial head of county landed society was nevertheless gradually eroded. Even though it took a while for their resurgent local influence to be recognised in terms of administrative office, it became increasingly clear that the focus of power was shifting. When the direct link between Burgh and the centre was severed with the death of Edward IV in 1483, to be replaced by cooler relations with Richard III and ultimately the 'pensioning off' of Burgh by Henry VII, this process quickened, evident in the appointment of members of the old elite, Robert Dymoke and Thomas Meres, and then Thomas Pynchebek, to the shrievalty by Richard and Henry respectively.

However, while traditional landed power was the key for men such as Tailboys, Dymoke and many others, this was not the only route. The FitzWilliams had been tainted by their associations with the Readeption administration, and although the family's participation in the Rebellion is unclear, they certainly had connections with the Duke of Clarence.¹¹¹ They returned to local affairs around 1475, before the elder Thomas' death in 1479, but it was Thomas' younger son, the younger Thomas, who took the family to new heights. Having been re-appointed to the Lindsey bench in 1475, he rose to become Recorder of London in 1483, and Speaker of the Commons in 1489.¹¹² However, as a younger son, he would have inherited little landed base,¹¹³ thus suggesting that his career in local politics was founded largely on his legal expertise and Yorkist favour, a situation which sits rather uneasily with his uncertain past conduct. Yet he was just the sort of

¹¹⁰ Succeeded by John, Viscount Welles and Thomas Pynchebek respectively. Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.577, 579.

¹¹¹ This link may have ended soon after the Rebellion. There is no indication of any problems for the FitzWilliams at the time of Clarence's execution in 1478.

¹¹² See below, Appendix 6.

¹¹³ According to Wedgwood, he married Margaret, daughter of Sir James Harrington. *W.B.*, p.335. Since this was presumably the Yorkist tainted in 1485, it is unlikely that she brought FitzWilliam any lands. *W.B.*, pp.423-4. For further details of his life and family, see Appendix 6.

prominent man needed to help broaden the range of the local administrative elite, as well as to provide some knowledge and experience to local government.¹¹⁴

These changes in the balance of power were not occurring in isolation, and much of this alteration in county politics, particularly in Lindsey, must be seen in conjunction with the territorial changes which occurred in the aftermath of the Rebellion. Future events would mean that many of these involvements were temporary, but they certainly did have an influence on Lincolnshire politics in the short term. Clearly the direct, restricted and unashamedly royalist rule of the 1460s had produced a reaction, but one which was basically only from one man, and from an affinity which had now been effectively broken as a political force. The lack of any equivalent figure to Richard Welles could have encouraged Edward simply to revert back to his pre-1470 methods, something the 1471 commissions suggest might have begun. That he did not suggests two things: firstly, a greater sensitivity towards local society in Lincolnshire, something which, had it been employed in the 1460s might have been extremely helpful but by 1471 might seem a little late; and secondly, a wider agenda. Although Edward clearly recognised the mistakes of the past, he must have also have recognised the consequences of what he was doing to Lincolnshire society in general, and particularly for the viability of continued rule by Burgh and his faction. Although it would take time, Edward's actions were undermining the basis of Burgh's position, and effectively marked the beginning of the end for this system of government. However, Edward's wider actions suggest he may have had other plans, in which Burgh, whose career would anyway be drawing to a close by the time such plans came to fruition, played little part. One factor behind this new approach must be the new generation. Robert Tailboys' age, and his father's survival until 1464, had made him largely irrelevant during the 1460s, but he and his contemporaries now had to be taken into consideration. Had Edward continued to ignore the claims of Tailboys and others, he ran the risk of creating a disaffected element within local society far deeper and far more extensive than the Welles affinity had been. By gradually restoring them to their traditional positions, the threat of disruption or possible opposition was largely removed.

¹¹⁴ His legal expertise was in great demand among his friends and neighbours. For instance, FitzWilliam acted with Burgh for the Swynfords in Kettlethorpe in 1468, with William Hussey in Sleaford in 1473, and for the former Welles man John Stayndrop in Little Steeping and Halton in 1477. LAO, FF H11, H14, H21.

However, as D.A.L. Morgan has noted, 'the politics of the 1470s were the politics of land',¹¹⁵ and it would appear that this was especially true of Lincolnshire. Morgan's discussion, looking at the issue from a central perspective, touched upon an attempt by Edward IV to create a landed estate in eastern England for his younger son, Richard of York.¹¹⁶ It is clear that Lincolnshire was an integral part of this plan, and many of Edward's actions are more easily understood when seen in this context. A significant amount of Yorkist policy within Lincolnshire can be connected with this aim during the 1470s, replacing the more immediate need for peace and security which had dominated affairs earlier in the reign. Edward had already built up other relatives and supporters into regional magnates, particularly Richard of Gloucester in the North, and these plans created the possibility of a comparable situation in the East under his younger son. This would provide a controlling influence both during the latter part of his own reign and, more importantly, that of the future Edward V.¹¹⁷ The plan appears to have been put into effect in 1475, shortly after the death of Joan Welles provided Edward with an opportunity to manipulate the situation. As noted earlier, after their belated forfeiture, the reversions of the Welles and Willoughby estates were granted to the young Richard.¹¹⁸ Also in 1475, Edward IV's will authorised the granting to Richard, on his sixteenth birthday in 1489, of most of the Duchy of Lancaster estates in Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Rutland (the honours of Bolingbroke and Higham Ferrers), and of the Duchy of York lands in the same counties.¹¹⁹ When added to Edward's attempts to secure the Mowbray property for his son,¹²⁰ the potential existed for the creation of a massive agglomeration of estates, stretching from the Humber, through Lincolnshire, Rutland and Northamptonshire, and into the Mowbray heartlands in East Anglia. Thus, with Gloucester's rule dominant in the North, the Woodvilles in Wales and the West,

¹¹⁵ Morgan, 'King's Affinity', p. 18, discussing the issue in the wider perspective of the 1470s.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19. The scheme is also mentioned in Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 335-6.

¹¹⁷ The creation of landed estates for younger sons was as much a concern of monarchs as it was of the gentry: see above, pp. 67-8. Edward III had similar concerns in the fourteenth century. W.M. Ormrod, 'Edward III and his Family', *Journal of British Studies*, xxvi (1987), pp. 398-422. With Henry IV's sons being largely occupied with the French wars and, subsequently, the minority administration of Henry VI, Edward IV was the first monarch since Edward III to have a younger son to provide for.

¹¹⁸ Above, pp. 171-2.

¹¹⁹ Somerville, *Duchy*, p. 239; Bentley (ed.), *Excerpta Historica*, pp. 366-79.

¹²⁰ Richard had married the heiress of John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, who died in 1476, but on her early death, Edward effectively disinherited the legal heirs and Richard retained the estates until the restoration of John Howard, one of the dispossessed heirs. Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 335-6; *C.P.*, ix, pp. 608-12.

Hastings in the Midlands, and Richard being established in the East, the future of the Yorkist throne would seem secure for years to come.

However, to achieve this, Edward had to create not just a landed estate, but also a strong and united base of support within the local landed elite. Lincolnshire's inclusion in this would be essential, but the continuation of the divided society essential for Burgh's dominance during the 1460s would have made such a task practically impossible. The creation of any regional power based on a landed affinity would need the active participation of the greater gentry, the very families who had once formed the heart of the Duchy of Lancaster affinity, but also the very people currently alienated from the Burgh regime. However, the short-term stability of the county also demanded sensitive treatment of the new administrative elite created earlier in the reign, the loyal Yorkist followers who had supported Burgh and who now had a position within local society. Thus the reintegration had to be gradual, bringing back the old families while taking care not to alienate the new. A political balancing act was required, but given the relatively co-operative nature of the individuals involved - Robert Tailboys appears to have been a far different man from his father - such a progression was seemingly well under way by the time Edward's death, Gloucester's usurpation and Richard of York's 'disappearance' all brought the scheme to an untimely end.

The natural corollary to this change in circumstances was the gradual decline in the personal power of Burgh. Burgh's influence steadily waned during the 1470s and 1480s, no doubt as the reality of his position became evident, but he had not wasted his period at the top. He had managed to establish himself to such an extent that he was no longer a royal interloper, but an integral part of local political society, and his position was confirmed towards the end of his career, as he moved from royal official to local magnate. Although he never enjoyed the same relationship with Richard III as he had with Edward IV, he was not removed from office, and indeed was made a Knight of the Garter. However, he must have had little admiration for Richard, the man who deposed his former master's son, and destroyed Burgh's friends and colleagues, Hastings and the Woodvilles. Burgh did nothing to help Richard in 1485, and, along with many of Edward's former supporters, appears to have willingly accepted the victory of Henry VII.¹²¹

¹²¹ *C.P.*, ii, p.422; Gunn, 'Burgh Family', p.9; *W.B.*, p.136.

Although he lost almost all his major county offices to Henry's supporters after 1485, Burgh's elevation to the peerage as Lord Burgh of Gainsborough in 1487 made the transformation complete. From being the agent of royal power, Burgh had now become a nobleman himself, ironic given that his success had been based so firmly on the exploitation of a lack of regional noble power. However, it is interesting that Burgh's personal promotion, the Garter and his peerage, both came at the end of his career, when his usefulness to the Crown as a local force within Lincolnshire was waning under Richard III, and effectively over under Henry VII.¹²² In many ways, these were little more than marks of recognition for a long career in royal service which was now past, no longer required by monarchs with a different agenda and other people to please. Burgh's position in Lincolnshire had been usurped from below, admittedly by those families who had themselves been usurped previously, and Burgh himself, and the system he represented, had become largely irrelevant. In his 'promotion', Burgh may have been pushed up the social scale, but in terms of power politics, he had been pushed out, removed from the system which created him, but largely without the personal authority or the landed base to make a serious mark on his own. By raising him to the peerage, Henry VII effectively removed him from a position which no longer needed to be filled.

Lincolnshire had thus come full-circle. With the reduction in tension during the 1470s, the restoration of the traditional elite and the lessening of central control, Lincolnshire politics were gradually returning to the situation of the Lancastrian period, a situation which, in its own way, had served to protect the majority of its residents from the troubles afflicting the country as a whole. The county's isolation had preserved it and its landed classes from the problems of the first stage of the Wars of the Roses, but when the rise of Burgh and his Yorkist elite forced Lincolnshire more fully into the wider political scene, the consequences were more profound. The peace of the 1470s, the removal of the greatest disaffected elements, and a more sensitive approach from the Crown, allowed the county to slip contentedly back to its pre-1461 inactivity. Lincolnshire was not a region used to dealing with powerful external political forces. As the architect of change, Edward IV must have seen their lack of enthusiasm as potential opposition, and set up an administration to ensure that none arose. However, the over-riding impression from Lincolnshire society is of a lack of interest in wider affairs,

¹²² Burgh's career itself was not entirely over, since he undertook diplomatic missions for Richard III and remained a royal councillor to Henry VII. Gunn, 'Burgh Family', p.9.

something Edward failed to understand until after 1471. Few locals served in other counties, few men fought in the Wars, and few men had ties of affinity beyond their immediate neighbourhood. This seems to have been coupled with a prevailing wish to be left alone in their own region. The Lincolnshire gentry were clearly not complete isolationists; there is no evidence of strong county unity to create such a feeling, links with some other regions remained strong, especially with Yorkshire, and outsiders were generally accepted as local officials. But interference in the local balance of power was unwelcome, and Edward appears to have miscalculated, especially in the way he created two rival power bases in the county during the later 1460s. But Edward seems to have misinterpreted insularity and inactivity as opposition and discontent. There is very little to suggest that there might have been any Lancastrian backlash in the county after 1461, despite Edward's fears, but there certainly was an (albeit limited) anti-Yorkist backlash in 1470: the two were no more linked than the Neville and Lancastrian causes were before Edgecote and Lose-Cote Field. If Edward had simply allowed Lincolnshire to continue to administer itself as it had under the Lancastrians, not only is it unlikely that the feared Lancastrian sympathies would have even arisen, let alone caused any problems, but it is also extremely likely that the Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1470, and the chain of events which came close to costing Edward IV his throne, might never have occurred.

Conclusion

Through examination of the people and society of the county of Lincolnshire, this study has demonstrated that the effects of the Wars of the Roses were by no means confined to those regions where the military activity actually took place, or to areas whose inhabitants played a significant role in the conflict. The issues surrounding the Wars had an impact across the whole of England, far removed from the actual theatres of war themselves, and indeed, it has become increasingly clear that it was not the military aspects of the Wars but the political upheavals accompanying them which had by far the greatest effect upon life in this particular English shire, and probably many others. The Wars themselves may not have been the blood-soaked conflict of legend, and did not come close to destroying the English landed classes; but nor were they just a minor dispute between noblemen with little relevance to the majority of the population. If their effects in a county with relatively little interest were so great, the Wars clearly had profound and far-reaching consequences across the whole of landed society, and beyond.

The study of Lincolnshire's gentry society on the eve of the outbreak of the Wars has highlighted the factors which proved crucial in allowing the county's landed elite to escape relatively lightly from the dangers of the conflict. The political isolation of the region was probably the most critical. With few strong connections with the greater nobles, even fewer with the Yorkist faction, and with the once mighty Duchy of Lancaster influence having all but disappeared, Lincolnshire was never likely to be a successful recruiting ground for the opposing factions. The collective wealth of the landed classes had allowed them a degree of independence, and while the lack of exceptionally wealthy individual families may have prevented the formation of a strong county identity at the uppermost levels, the wide and fragmented landed base prevented the greater nobility from gaining a foothold. Hence, when these lords went to war, it was not the men of Lincolnshire who were dragged into the conflict with them. Lincolnshire itself also seems to have been a relatively peaceful area, and although the incidents of local violence which did occur were no different to those which plagued many other regions, and were indicative of the same problems of faction and abuse of power, such

activities and their consequences probably had less of an effect than they did in other, more troubled regions - even if the individual incidents might have seemed more shocking for their rarity.

However, it is evident that the Wars shaped gentry society on a number of levels, not just the personal fortunes of individual families, and some aspects of local life were affected to a far greater extent than others. Although the Wars once had the reputation of an extremely violent and disastrous conflict, their effect upon the actual composition of gentry society in Lincolnshire was perhaps surprisingly minimal, even for a county which provided relatively few participants. Very few families disappeared from county life due to circumstances directly relating to the Wars, and even a family such as the Retfords, which did come to an end on the battlefield, became extinct through lack of male heirs, not the mass destruction of the line. Meanwhile, most of those who suffered forfeiture were eventually restored, even if some had longer to wait than others. To a large extent, the families which formed the landed elite of the Lancastrian period were still there under the Yorkists, and most with their estates firmly intact. It was clearly their limited participation which allowed this, and while few were in a position to reap the rewards of being on the winning side, at least most avoided the disasters of supporting the losers. Given the fluctuating nature of the conflict, especially in the particularly active periods of 1459-61 and 1469-71, isolation was undoubtedly a blessing.

Yet, however immune to such immediate events the Lincolnshire gentry may have been, they could not escape the consequences of the changes of government which the Wars brought about, and it was in this respect that the Wars had their greatest effect upon the county. The decision of the new Yorkist regime to impose an entirely new method of governance upon Lincolnshire resulted in huge changes in the personnel of the local administration, which in turn radically altered the political influence, outlook and careers of the local landed elite, and substantially shifted the balance of power within the county. Most of the greater families may have emerged from the Wars with their landed estates intact, but they now found that the political influence which that landed base had always brought, and which formed such an important aspect of gentry life, was no longer open to them. While many individuals and families may not necessarily have taken full advantage of these opportunities under the Lancastrians, at least they were available, and to have them removed was a significant attack upon the whole basis of their position in society. In some ways, they may well have felt that, despite not being involved, they had

actually lost the war, and it is probably not surprising that those who found themselves suffering the most from this situation, in this case the Welles family, reacted forcefully against this interference. After managing to survive what proved to be the initial stages of the Wars, to lose out to a group consisting largely of men who were either newcomers to the county, or their social inferiors, or both, was particularly galling. This dislocation of local power was probably the most significant result of the Wars within Lincolnshire; however, rather than a direct consequence of the conflict, this situation was largely of the Yorkist government's own making.

In the abstract to his thesis, Montgomery Bohna has stated that Lincolnshire provides a good example of the failure of Lancastrian kingship. Certainly, such episodes as the almost government-sanctioned lawlessness of William Tailboys and the shrieval fiasco of 1444 show clearly the deficiencies of various aspects of Lancastrian governmental practice, the problems associated with the growth of faction within the landed classes, and the way that such issues could be transferred between the shires and the centre, and vice-versa. However Lincolnshire also shows many of the good points of Lancastrian government, at least as far as Lincolnshire's inhabitants themselves were concerned. Lincolnshire's benign isolation and relative peacefulness were only possible through the Lancastrian practice of allowing the county's landed elite to administer their own region without excessive interference from the Crown, or from the greater magnates and their affinities. Certainly Lincolnshire's long-standing Lancastrian connections and loyalties played a part in giving the government the confidence to allow this, a luxury the arriving Yorkists did not possess; but it also required a sensitive approach from the centre to allow this situation to continue. That it did continue throughout the 1450s (despite the turmoil elsewhere and the occasional problem within Lincolnshire itself) is perhaps a sign that Lancastrian government in Lincolnshire was far from a total failure. Allowing the local population to govern their shire without heavy-handed outside interference may not have persuaded the people of Lincolnshire to fight for their Lancastrian lords, but few fought against them, and most appear to have decided that this was either not their quarrel, or was not worth the trouble of becoming involved. The Yorkists, however, appear to have taken the view that anyone who did not support them was a potential enemy, and throughout the 1460s treated the county with suspicion, marginalising the traditional elite and imposing a governmental structure alien to Lincolnshire society. The Rebellion of 1470, in many ways a reaction to the new Yorkist

style of government, clearly demonstrated the dangers of unwelcome interference from the centre in local affairs, and proved to be a salutary lesson for Edward IV's regime. The gradual move away from this active intervention during the 1470s suggests that Edward may finally have realised the dangers of the dislocation he had caused within Lincolnshire society, and that he was better off working with the local elite, rather than simply ignoring them.

Appendices

Appendix 1:a

Sheriffs of Lincolnshire, 1399-1485

The following list is based upon that printed in *A List of Sheriffs for England and Wales*, ed. A. Hughes, PRO Lists and Indexes, main series, ix (London, 1898; repr., 1963), p.79, with corrections and additional information added from various sources.

Personal names are standardised. Places of residence are given by their modern names and spellings. Italics denote second or subsequent appointments.

Ranks are given as at time of appointment; subsequent knighthoods are indicated in brackets.

K - Knight; E - Esquire; G - Gentleman; M - Merchant.

* - Previous appointment(s) before 1399. ¶ - Subsequent appointment(s) after 1485.

Area refers to the location of the individual's principal residence, if within Lincolnshire.

H - Holland; K - Kesteven; L - Lindsey; * - Lincoln.

? - Information uncertain, but probably correct.

Gaps denote information unknown or too uncertain to make estimation worthwhile.

Sheriffs in brackets { } seemingly did not take up the appointment.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
22/08/1399	<i>John Copuldyke*</i>	K	Harrington	L
24/11/1400	<i>John Rochford*</i>	K	Fenn in Boston	H
{08/11/1401	Gerard Sothill	K	Redbourne	L}
Mich 1401	Thomas Swynford	K	Kettlethorpe	L
29/11/1402	<i>Gerard Sothill</i>	K	Redbourne	L
05/11/1403	Thomas Willoughby	K	Boston	H
22/10/1404	Ralph Rochford	K	Fenn in Boston	H
22/11/1405	Thomas Hauley	K	Girsby	L
05/11/1406	<i>Henry Retford*</i>	K	Castlethorpe	L
23/11/1407	<i>Ralph Rochford</i>	K	Fenn in Boston	H
15/11/1408	Thomas Chaworth	K	Wiverton, Notts.	-
04/11/1409	<i>John Rochford</i>	K	Fenn in Boston	H
29/11/1410	John Waterton	E	Great Corringham	L
10/12/1411	Robert Waterton	E	Methley, Yorks.	-
03/11/1412	Nicholas Alderwiche	E	?Washingborough	?K
06/11/1413	Thomas Clarell	E	Aldwark, Yorks.	-
10/11/1414	Robert Hilton	K	Swine, Yorks.	-
01/12/1415	Thomas Cumberworth	K	Somerby	L

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
30/11/1416	Nicholas Tournay	E	Caenby	L
10/11/1417	John Normanville	K	Kilnwick, Yorks.	-
04/11/1418	<i>Thomas Chaworth</i>	K	Wiverton, Notts.	-
23/11/1419	Richard Hansard	K	South Kelsey	L
16/11/1420	Robert Roos	K	Gedney	H
01/05/1422	<i>Thomas Clarell</i>	E	Aldwark, Yorks.	-
14/02/1423	Walter Tailboys	E	Goltho	L
13/11/1423	John Haytfeld	E	Flixborough	L
06/11/1424	Robert Hildyard	K	Winestead, Yorks.	-
15/01/1426	John Tailboys	E	Stallingborough	L
12/12/1426	William Copuldyke	E	Harrington	L
07/11/1427	Henry Retford	E(K)	Castlethorpe	L
04/11/1428	Hamo Sutton	E	Burton-by-Lincoln	L
10/02/1430	William Ryther	K	Ryther, Yorks	-
05/11/1430	<i>Thomas Cumberworth</i>	K	Somerby	L
26/11/1431	<i>Robert Roos</i>	K	Gedney	H
05/11/1432	John Pygot	E(K)	Doddington	K
05/11/1433	Thomas Darcy	E	Newstead, Notts.	-
03/11/1434	John Constable	E(K)	Halsham, Yorks.	-
07/11/1435	<i>Robert Roos</i>	K	Gedney	H
06/11/1436	Thomas Meres	E	Kirton	H
07/11/1437	Philip Tylney	E	Boston	H
03/11/1438	Hugh Willoughby	K	Wollaton, Notts.	-
05/11/1439	John Neville	E	Althorp	L
04/11/1440	Nicholas Bowet	K	Rippingale	K
04/11/1441	Roger Pedwardine	E	Burton Pedwardine	K
06/11/1442	John Sothill	E	West Rasen	L
{04/11/1443	<i>John Pygot</i>	K	Doddington	K}
09/05/1444	Thomas Moigne	G	Old Clee	L
{06/11/1444	Richard Waterton	E	Great Corringham	L}
03/04/1445	John Neuport	E	Riby	L
04/11/1445	John Haryngton	E	Fleet	H
04/11/1446	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
09/11/1447	<i>Nicholas Bowet</i>	K	Rippingale	K
09/11/1448	Mancer Marmyon	K	Rippingale	K
26/02/1450	Brian Stapelton	K	Carlton, Yorks.	-

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
03/12/1450	William Ryther	K	Harewood, Yorks	-
08/11/1451	<i>Nicholas Bowet</i>	K	Rippingale	K
08/11/1452	<i>John Neville</i>	E	Althorp	L
05/11/1453	<i>Richard Waterton</i>	E	Great Corringham	L
04/11/1454	<i>Henry Retford</i>	K	Castlethorpe	L
04/11/1455	John Tempest	K	Bracewell, Yorks.	-
17/11/1456	<i>John Haryngton</i>	E	Fleet	H
07/11/1457	<i>Richard Waterton</i>	E	Great Corringham	L
07/11/1458	William Skipwith	K	South Ormsby	L
07/11/1459	John Marmyon	E	Rippingale	K
07/11/1460	Thomas Burgh	E(K)	Gainsborough	L
07/11/1461	Thomas Blount	E	Girsby	L
05/11/1463	<i>William Skipwith</i>	K	South Ormsby	L
05/11/1464	<i>Brian Stapelton</i>	K	Carlton, Yorks.	-
05/11/1465	John Wythecotes	E	Harpwell	L
05/11/1466	Robert Constable	K	Flamborough, Yorks.	-
05/11/1467	Thomas Meres	E	Kirton	H
05/11/1468	Richard FitzWilliam	K	Aldwark, Yorks.	-
05/11/1469	Richard Tempest	K	Bracewell, Yorks.	-
06/11/1470	John Ascough	E	Stallingborough	L
11/04/1471	Richard Welby¶	E	Moulton	H
09/11/1471	Leonard Thornburgh	E	Boston	H
09/11/1472	Thomas Kyme	E	Friskney	L
05/11/1473	John Villers	E	Fulnetby	L
07/11/1474	Thomas Wymbyssh	E	Nocton	K
05/11/1475	Robert Markham	K	East Markham, Notts.	-
05/11/1476	John Bolles	E	Gosberton	H
05/11/1477	William Browne	?G	Stamford	K
05/11/1478	Thomas Tempest¶	E	Bracewell, Yorks.	-
05/11/1479	John Busshy	K	Hougham	K
05/11/1480	Robert Tailboys	K	Kyme	K
05/11/1481	William Tirwhit¶	E	Ketilby	L
05/11/1482	Thomas Knyght	E(K)	Lincoln	*
06/11/1483	Robert Dymoke¶	K	Scrivelsby	L
05/11/1484	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
05/11/1485	Thomas Pynchebek	E	Pinchbeck	H

Appendix 1:b

Escheators of Lincolnshire, 1399-1485

The following list is based upon that printed in *A List of Escheators for England and Wales*, ed. A.C. Wood, PRO List & Index Society, lxxii (1971), pp.79-81, with additions and correction from various sources.

Notes and legend as for Appendix 1:a.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
26-11-1399	John Toup	?E	Algakirk	H
24-11-1400	<i>John Meres*</i>	?E	Kirton	H
08-11-1401	John de la Launde		Pinchbeck	H
29-11-1402	<i>William Bolle*</i>	?E	Wellingore	K
12-11-1403	John Slory		Sleaford	K
10-11-1404	John Bell		Boston	H
15-01-1406	William Gybthorpe	E	Thorpe by Wainfleet	L
09-11-1406	John Copuldyke	K	Harrington	L
30-11-1407	Henry Morley	E	Holme	L
09-12-1408	John Henege	G	Hainton	L
07-11-1409	William Dryby			
29-11-1410	John Thorley		Barton	L
10-12-1411	Henry Westiby		?Skegness	?L
03-11-1412	John Fulnaby	E	Fulnetby	L
10-11-1413	Nicholas Tournay	E	Caenby	L
14-12-1415	Richard Hansard	K	South Kelsey	L
08-12-1416	Richard Denton		Denton	K
30-12-1417	Richard Hagh	E	Hough on the Hill	K
04-12-1418	<i>John Henege</i>	G	Hainton	L
23-12-1419	Thomas Belwood		Belton	L
16/7-12-1420	Robert Ferriby	G	Frodingham	L
20-05-1422	<i>Richard Denton</i>	E	Denton	K
13-11-1423	Hamo Sutton	E	Burton-by-Lincoln	L
06-11-1424	John Tailboys	E	Stallingborough	L
24-01-1426	John Topclyff	E	Somerby	L
17-12-1426	<i>Henry Morley</i>	E	Holme	L
18-11-1427	Thomas Haltoft	E	Moulton	H

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
04-11-1428	Thomas Meres	E	Kirton	H
12-02-1430	Gerard Sothill	E	Redbourne	L
05-11-1430	John Tamworth	?E	Old Leake	H
26-11-1431	John Langholme	G	Conisholme	L
05-11-1432	Gilbert Haltoft	?E	Moulton	H
05-11-1433	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
03-11-1434	John Seyntpaul	E	Snarford	L
07-11-1435	<i>Gerard Sothill</i>	E	Redbourne	L
23-11-1436	<i>John Langholme</i>	G	Conisholme	L
23-11-1437	William Stanlowe	E	Silk Willoughby	K
06-11-1438	William Hauley	E	Langton	L
05-11-1439	William Percy	E	Welton by Lincoln	L
04-11-1440	Robert Wasselyn	E	Grimsby	L
04-11-1441	Patrick Langdale	E	Waltham	L
06-11-1442	<i>William Stanlowe</i>	E	Silk Willoughby	K
04-11-1443	<i>William Hauley</i>	E	Girsby	L
06-11-1444	Henry Hauley	G	Girsby	L
04-11-1445	<i>John Seyntpaul</i>	E	Snarford	L
04-11-1446	William Malet		Normanton, Yorks.	-
04-11-1447	John Pencyok	E	Oatlands, Surrey	-
06-11-1448	John Sutton	E	Lincoln	*
11-12-1449	William Skipwith	E (K)	South Ormsby	L
07-12-1450	Simon Hareby	E	Thurlby	K
29-11-1451	John Denton	E	Osbournby	K
13-11-1452	Richard Denton	E	Denton	K
03-12-1453	Richard Wyneslowe	E	Metheringham	K
06-11-1454	Richard Hansard	E	South Kelsey	L
04-11-1455	William Grymesby	E	Grimsby	L
04-11-1456	Thomas Claymond	E	Great Hale	K
07-11-1457	John Gybthorpe	?G	Thorpe-by-Wainfleet	L
07-11-1458	Hugh Tylney	E	Boston	H
07-11-1459	Richard Fysshburn	E	Tealby	L
07-11-1460	<i>Simon Hareby</i>	E	Thurlby	K
08-11-1461	Richard Spert	E	Stainsby	L
04-11-1463	John Burgh	E		
05-11-1464	<i>Richard Wyneslowe</i>	E	Metheringham	K

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
05-11-1465	Richard Hansard	E	South Kelsey	L
05-11-1466	Thomas Holand	E	Swineshead	H
05-11-1467	William Foljambe	G	Hemswell	L
05-11-1468	Richard Halmer	E	Weston	H
05-11-1469	Thomas Bank	E	Quadring	H
05-11-1470	Henry Foterby	E	Normanby	L
19-02-1471	Brian Sandeford	E	Maltby le Marsh	L
07-11-1471	Thomas Tyrell	E	South Ockenden, Essex	-
05-11-1472	Henry Hansard	E	South Kelsey	L
05-11-1473	John Haryngton		?Grantham	?K
07-11-1474	John Saynton	G	Lincoln	*
05-11-1475	Robert Haryngton	E	?Grantham	?K
05-11-1477	Stephen Shotton	G		
05-11-1482	John Pygge	?G	Boston	H
06-11-1483	Robert Kele		Grainthorpe	L
10-12-1484	Andrew Leeke		Leke	H
05-11-1485	Thomas FitzWilliam	E	Mablethorpe	L

Appendix 1:c

Lincolnshire Knights of the Shire, 1399-1485

The following list is based upon information printed in *Return of the Name of Every Member of the Lower House of Parliament . . . , 1213-1874*, 2 vols. (Parliamentary Papers, 1878), i, with a number of additions and corrections from various sources, particularly the additions made in J.C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Register of the Ministers and of the Members of Both Houses, 1439-1509* (London, 1938).

Notes and legend as for Appendix 1:a.

<u>Parliament</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
1399	<i>Sir John Rochford*</i>	K ¹	Fenn in Boston	H
"	Sir Thomas Hauley	K	Girsby	L
1401	Sir Henry Retford	K	Castlethorpe	L
"	<i>Sir John Copuldyke*</i>	K	Harrington	L
1402	<i>Sir Henry Retford</i>	K	Castlethorpe	L
"	<i>Sir Gerard Sothill*</i>	K	Redbourne	L
Jan. 1404	Sir Richard Hansard	K	South Kelsey	L
"	<i>Sir John Copuldyke</i>	K	Harrington	L
Oct. 1404	<i>Sir Henry Retford</i>	K	Castlethorpe	L
"	<i>Sir Thomas Hawley</i>	K	Girsby	L
1406	<i>Sir John Copuldyke</i>	K	Harrington	L
"	John Skipwith	E	South Ormsby	L
1407	<i>John Skipwith</i>	E	South Ormsby	L
"	John Meres	?E	Kirton	H
1410				
Oct. 1411	Sir Thomas Willoughby	K	Boston	H
"	John Pouger	E(K)	West Rasen	L
Feb. 1413				
May. 1413	<i>Sir Richard Hansard</i>	K	South Kelsey	L
"	John Bell	M	Boston	H
Apr. 1414	<i>John Skipwith</i>	E	South Ormsby	L
"	Thomas Cumberworth	E(K)	Somerby	L
Nov. 1414	<i>Sir Richard Hansard</i>	K	South Kelsey	L
"	<i>Sir Thomas Willoughby</i>	K	Boston	H
1415				

<u>Parliament</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
Mar. 1416	Sir Robert Hilton	K	Swine, Yorks.	-
"	William Tirwhit	E(K)	Wrawby	L
Oct. 1416				
1417				
1419				
1420	Sir Robert Hakebeche	K	Whaplode	H
"	<i>Sir Thomas Cumberworth</i>	K	Somerby	L
May. 1421	<i>Sir Richard Hansard</i>	K	South Kelsey	L
"	Sir Godfrey Hilton	K	Irnham	K
Dec. 1421	<i>Sir Thomas Cumberworth</i>	K	Somerby	L
"	Richard Welby	E	Moulton	H
1422	Sir Robert Roos	K	Gedney	H
"	Sir John Graa	K	Ingleby	L
1423-4	<i>Sir Richard Hansard</i>	K	South Kelsey	L
"	<i>Sir William Tirwhit</i>	K	Wrawby	L
1425	<i>Sir Thomas Cumberworth</i>	K	Somerby	L
"	Walter Tailboys	E	Goltho	L
1426	<i>Sir William Tirwhit</i>	K	Wrawby	L
"	<i>Walter Tailboys</i>	E	Goltho	L
1427-8	<i>Walter Tailboys</i>	E	Goltho	L
"	Patrick Skipwith	E	Utterby	L
1429-30	<i>Walter Tailboys</i>	E	Goltho	L
"	Thomas Meres	E	Kirton	H
1431	<i>Walter Tailboys</i>	E	Goltho	L
"	Hamo Sutton	E	Burton by Lincoln	L
1432	John Pygot	E(K)	Doddington	K
"	Geoffrey Paynell	E	Boothby Pagnell	K
1433	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
"	<i>Patrick Skipwith</i>	E	Utterby	L
1435	<i>Hamo Sutton</i>	E	Burton by Lincoln	L
"	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
1437	<i>Sir Thomas Cumberworth</i>	K	Somerby	L
"	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H
1439-40	John Tailboys	E	Stallingborough	L
"	<i>Hamo Sutton</i>	E	Burton by Lincoln	L
1442	<i>Thomas Meres</i>	E	Kirton	H

<u>Parliament</u>	<u>MP</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>
"	Robert Sheffield	E	West Butterwick	L
1445-6	William Tailboys	E	South Kyme	K
"	<i>Robert Sheffield</i>	E	West Butterwick	L
1447	Sir John Byron	K	Clayton, Lancashire	-
"	Sir Mancer Marmyon	K	Rippingale	K
1449	John Neville	E	Althorp	L
"	Richard Waterton	E	Great Corringham	L
1449-50				
1450-1	John Neuport	E	Riby	L
"	Richard Welby	G	Moulton	H
1453-4	Thomas FitzWilliam	E	Mablethorpe	L
"	John Truthall	E	Laughton	L
1455-6				
1459	Sir Robert Constable	K	Flamborough, Yorks.	-
"	William Grymesby	E	Grimsby	L
1460-1	Sir Humphrey Bourchier	K	Tattershall	L
"	Thomas Blount	E	Girsby	L
1461-2	?Thomas Blount	E	Girsby	L
"				
1463-5	?Richard Waterton ²	E	Great Corringham	L
"				
1467-8	Sir Thomas Burgh	K	Gainsborough	L
"	<i>Thomas Blount</i>	E	Girsby	L
1469	³			
1470-1	? <i>William Grymesby</i> ⁴	E	Grimsby	L
"				
1472-5	Robert Tailboys	E(K)	Kyme	K
"	Richard Welby¶	E	Moulton	H
1478	<i>Sir Thomas Burgh</i> ¶ ⁵	K	Gainsborough	L
"	<i>Robert Tailboys</i>	E(K)	South Kyme	K
Jan. 1483	⁶			
June 1483				
Nov. 1483	⁷			
1484				

- ¹ Rochford was almost certainly knighted during this Parliament. *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.219-21.
- ² *W.B.*, pp.924-5. However, this cannot have been the MP from 1449, but was probably his son. See Appendix 6.
- ³ This Parliament was prorogued, and never actually met.
- ⁴ He certainly sat in this Parliament, either for Lincolnshire or for Grimsby.
- ⁵ He was also summoned to Parliament as Lord Burgh from 1487. See also below, n.6.
- ⁶ Wedgwood suggests that Burgh and Welby sat in January 1483 and 1484, and Burgh and Tailboys in June 1483. Although Burgh may well have been elected to many of these later Parliaments, no compelling evidence survives, and his known absence in 1472-5 also shows that he did not monopolise the seat.
- ⁷ This Parliament was cancelled due to Buckingham's Rebellion, and never met. Elections were held, but no details survive.

Appendix 1:d

Lincolnshire Coroners, 1422-85

The following list contains all people known to have acted as coroner within Lincolnshire between 1422 and 1485. It is by no means a complete record.

Places of residence have been included where specified in the source, or added if known from other elsewhere. 'Area' refers to the Part or Riding of which the individual was coroner, and is only included where specified in the extant source(s). Residence and area generally correlate, but cannot be assumed to have done so in every case.

References are given to the known sources, most being the writs noting each coroner's death, or other reasons for his dismissal, and ordering the election of a successor.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Gilbert Hansard	Walesby	Lindsey	Insufficiently qualified, 20-2-1426. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.236.
John Usflete	Halton	Lindsey, West Riding	Lived in 'uttermost parts of county', unable to exercise office, 12-7-1427. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.309.
Thomas Bernarde	Stretwell		Insufficiently qualified, 29-9-1427. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.346.
John Bayly	Quadring	Holland	Insufficiently qualified, 8-2-1428. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.361; too sick and aged, 16-6-1428. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.371.
Robert Crulle	Winterton	Lindsey, West Riding	Insufficiently qualified, 8-2-1428. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.361.
Thomas Harleston	Barrowby		Insufficiently qualified, 24-4-1429. <i>CCR 1422-9</i> , p.435.
Thomas Fereby	Burton Stather		'Unfit person', 1-7-1432, 8-5-1439. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.154; <i>CCR 1435-41</i> , p.212.
William Hawardby		City of Lincoln	Sick and aged, 5-7-1432. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.154.
Richard Percy	Fosdyke	Holland	Dead, 20-10-1432. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.195; C242/10, m.16.
John Aleyn	Kirton	Holland	Elected, 27-10-1432. C242/10, m.16. Insufficiently qualified, 12-2-1434. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.271.
William Bleseby	Bleasby	Lindsey	Sick and aged, 24-7-1433. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.214.
Thomas Harryson	Tydd St Mary	Holland	Insufficiently qualified, 6-6-1435. <i>CCR 1429-35</i> , p.332. Lived on 'uttermost border' and too busy on 'King's business', 24-11-1440. <i>CCR 1435-41</i> , p.400. Coroner of Holland, 1441. <i>CPR 1436-41</i> , p.489, p.513.
Robert Skaifman	Stallingborough		Sick, 9-5-1436. <i>CCR 1435-41</i> , p.12.
John Sothyby	Croxby	Lindsey	Dead, 14-11-1445. <i>CCR 1441-7</i> , p.326.
William Quyxley	Gainsborough		Sick and aged, 8-8-1450. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , p.146.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Roger Bay	Helpringham	Kesteven	Sick and aged, 8-8-1450, 1-3-1451. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , pp.146, 204.
John Bleseby	Bleasby		Insufficiently qualified, 8-8-1450. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , p.146.
Thomas Duffeld	Barton	Lindsey	Sick, 12-11-1450. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , p.203.
John Jolyffe			Too busy, 25-10-1452. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , p.382.
Thomas Hayson			Sick and aged, 14-2-1454. <i>CCR 1447-54</i> , p.457.
Thomas Spenser	Spalding	Holland	Specified as coroner when receiving pardon, 1-3-1470. <i>C67/47</i> , m.7.
George Wemwall		Holland	Elected, 3-12-1470. <i>C242/12</i> , m.13.
Robert Fox	Ropsley	Kesteven	Elected, 3-12-1470. <i>C242/12</i> , m.13.
James Saltby?		Lindsey	Elected, 3-12-1470. <i>C242/12</i> , m.13.
Robert Hansard		Lindsey	Elected, 3-12-1470. <i>C242/12</i> , m.13.
Thomas Towers		Lindsey	Elected, 3-12-1470. <i>C242/12</i> , m.13.
Robert de la Launde		City of Lincoln	In office, 17-2-1479. <i>CPR 1476-85</i> , p.142.
John Saynton		City of Lincoln	In office, 17-2-1479. <i>CPR 1476-85</i> , p.142.

Appendix 1:e

Bishops of Lincoln, 1398-1494

The following list provides details of the Bishops of Lincoln during the Lancastrian and Yorkist periods, and is based upon information taken from J. Le Neve, *Fasti Anglicanae, 1300-1541*, vol.I, Lincoln Diocese, comp. H.P.F. King (London, 1962), pp.2-3, and from D.M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1971), Appendix 4.

It provides information concerning the dates and details of each bishop's appointment to Lincoln, and the dates and circumstances of the end of their episcopacy.

prov. - date of provision to Lincoln; cons. - consecrated; el. - elected;
temps. - secured temporalities of Lincoln; enthr. - enthroned; res. - resigned;
d. - died; trs. - translated from/to another bishopric/archbishopric.

Henry Beaufort	prov. 27 Feb., cons. 14 July, temps. 19 July 1398	trs. Winchester, 19 Nov. 1404
Philip Repington	prov. 19 Nov. 1404, temps. 28 Mar., cons. 29 Mar., enthr. 9 Apr. 1405	res. by proxy 1 Oct. 1419
Richard Fleming	prov. 20 Nov. 1419, cons. 28 Apr., temps. 23 May 1420	d. 25 Jan. 1431 ¹
William Gray	trs. London, prov. 30 Apr., temps. 4 Aug. 1431	d. Feb. 1436
William Alnwick	trs. Norwich, prov. 19 Sept. 1436, temps. 16 Feb., enthr. 28 Mar. 1437	d. 5 Dec. 1449
Marmaduke Lumley	trs. Carlisle, prov. 28 Jan., el. 21 Feb., temps. 14 Mar. 1450	d. bef. 5 Dec. 1450
John Chedworth	el. bef. 11 Feb. 1451, prov. 5 May, temps. 2 June, cons. 18 June, enthr. 23 Sept. 1452	d. 23 Nov. 1471
Thomas Rotherham	trs Rochester, prov. 8 Jan., temps. 10 Mar., enthr. 7 July 1472	trs. York, 7 July 1480
John Russell	trs. Rochester, prov. 7 July, temps. 9 Sept 1480	d. 30 Dec. 1494.

¹ Fleming was translated to York on 14 February 1424, but after objections from Henry VI's minority council, he was returned to Lincoln on 23 July 1425. Following his death, John Mackworth was seemingly elected, but never took up the post.

Appendix 2

Justices of the Peace, 1423-85

Appendix 2:a Justices of the Peace, 1423-85

Commissioners are given in alphabetical order. Noblemen are listed according to their titles, with the exception of barons whose family name differed from their title, in which case they appear according to their family name. Hence Ralph, Lord Cromwell, appears under 'Cromwell', but his successor, Humphrey Bourchier, appears under 'Bourchier'. Prelates are listed according to their ecclesiastical title.

The status column indicates each individual's categorisation in Appendix 2:b. The categories refer to either the person's social status, in the case of members of the nobility or gentry, or their professional position (judges, prelates, etc.) where applicable. Royal judges are regarded as professional government administrators unless they were Lincolnshire natives (e.g. Sir William Ascough), in which case they are included among the local gentry members.

The abbreviations used are:-

P/J - Professional - Non-native Justice	K - Knight
P/D - Professional - Duchy of Lancaster Official	E - Esquire (later knighthoods in brackets)
N - Nobleman	G - Gentleman
Pr - Prelate	? - Gentry member of unknown or unclear rank
K(J) - Native Royal Justice	

Appendix 2:b Compositional Analysis of the Lincolnshire Peace Commissions

These tables provide an analysis of the numbers of professional, noble, ecclesiastical and gentry members of the three Lincolnshire peace commissions, and also a further analysis of the different ranks of the gentry JPs.

'Others' includes those gentry members claiming the title of gentleman, those with no title and those whose titles are unknown.

Appendix 2:c Graphs

These four graphs trace the fluctuations in the size and composition of Lincolnshire's three peace commissions. The first three show the relationship between the total number of JPs and the numbers of gentry and noble members in each of the three Parts. The final graph compares the fluctuations in the size of the three commissions between 1423 and 1485.

The figures denote the number of commissioners sitting on the bench during that particular year. JPs who died in office are deemed to have remained on the bench until officially removed. For years when two or more commissions were issued, an average has been estimated, taking into account the sizes of the bodies and the months each was in existence.

Appendix 2:a:i - Holland Justices of the Peace, 1423-85

	Status	7/71 1423	20/71 1424	14/21 1430	22/11 1431	11/81 1432	17/81 1432	12/71 1440	28/81 1440	20/111 1441	4/21 1444	20/31 1444	28/21 1448	12/71 1452	8/21 1454	20/51 1458	3/11 1457	25/31 1457	4/121 1458	28/111 1480	7/81 1481	4/21 1486	8/21 1487	18/71 1488	3/51 1470	26/111 1470	21/81 1471	20/111 1472	81 1474						
Ardern, Peter, JCP	P/J															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X												
Ascough, William, JCP	K(J)								X	X	X	X	X																						
Beaumont, John, Viscount	N					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																
Benyngton, Richard	G	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X															
Bolles, John	E																								X	X	X	X	X						
Bourchier, Humphrey, Lord Cromwell	N															X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Brown, John	?																																		
Buckingham, Henry, Duke of	N																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Burgh, Thomas	K																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Clarence, George, Duke of	N																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Cockayne, John, JKB	P/J	X	X																																
Cromwell, Ralph, Lord	N		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Danby, Robert, JCP	P/J													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Darcy, Thomas	E							X	X	X																									
Dokkyng, Robert	G													X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Ellerker, John, JKB	P/J			X	X	X	X																												
Fairfax, Guy, JKB	P/J																																		
Fendyke, Richard	?																				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Fiennes, Richard, Lord Dacre	N																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Flore, Roger	P/D	X	X																																
Gayton, Reginald	?																												X	X					
Gloucester, Richard, Duke of	N																												X	X					
Grey, Henry, Lord of Codnor	N				X	X	X																												
Grey, John, Lord of Codnor	N	X	X	X																															
Hakebeche, Robert	K	X																																	
Haitoft, Gilbert	E						X																												
Haryngton, John	E							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																	
Hastings, Richard, Lord Welles	N																												X	X					
Hastings, William, Lord	N																												X	X					
Henege, John	G	X	X	X	X	X	X																												
Holand, Thomas	K														X	X	X	X	X																
Hussey, William, JKB	K(J)																																		
Lincoln, William Alnwick, Bishop of	Pr							X	X	X	X	X	X																						
Lincoln, John Chedworth, Bishop of	Pr													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Lincoln, William Gray, Bishop of	Pr				X	X																													
Lincoln, Thomas Rotherham, Bishop of	Pr																													X	X				
Lincoln, John Russell, Bishop of	Pr																																		
Littleton, Thomas, JCP	P/J																												X	X					
March, Edward, Earl of	N																					X													
Markham, John, JKB	K(J)																									X	X								
Markham, Robert	K																													X	X				
Meres, Thomas (I)	E									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X														
Meres, Thomas (II)	E																								X	X									
Montagu, John, Marquis	N																								X	X									
Nedeham, John, JCP	P/J																						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Neville, Thomas	K															X	X	X	X		X														
Norfolk, John, Duke of	N																																		
Northumberland, Henry, Earl of	N																													X	X				
Paynell, William	E																						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Portyngton, John, JCP	P/J							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Pynchebek, John	E													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Pynchebek, Richard	E	X			X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Pynchebek, Thomas	E																																		
Ratcliffe, Robert	E																													X	X				
Rochford, Ralph	K		X	X	X	X	X	X																											
Roos, Robert	K	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																										
Salisbury, Richard, Earl of	N									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X														
Scrope, John, Lord of Masham	N		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																						
Spalding, Thomas, Prior of	Pr																											X							
Strangways, James, JCP	P/J	X	X	X	X	X	X																												
Suffolk, William, Earl of	N							X	X	X	X	X	X																						
Tailboys, William	E									X	X	X	X																						
Talbot, Brian	E																													X	X	X			
Tarnworth, John	E																					X								X	X				
Tempest, John	K																X	X																	
Tempest, Thomas	K																																		
Thornburgh, Leonard	E																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Totoft, Thomas	E																											X	X	X					
Tyney, Hugh	E																																		
Tyney, Robert	E																		X																
Tyrell, John	P/D					X	X																												
Vavasour, John, JKB	P/J																																		
Warwick, Richard, Earl of	N																					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Welby, Richard (I)	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Welby, Richard (II)	E												X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Welby, Richard (III)	E																																		
Welby, Thomas	E																																		
Welles, Leo, Lord	N							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Welles and Willoughby, Richard																																			

Appendix 2:b.i

Compositional Analysis of the Holland Peace Commission, 1423-85

Date of Commission	Total N° of Commissioners	Professionals	Noblemen	Prelates	Gentry	Knights	Esquires	Others
07/07/1423	11	3	2	0	6	2	2	2
20/07/1424	12	3	4	0	5	2	1	2
14/02/1430	11	2	4	0	5	2	1	2
22/01/1431	11	2	3	0	6	2	2	2
11/06/1432	14	3	4	1	6	2	2	2
17/09/1432	16	3	5	1	7	2	3	2
12/07/1440	15	1	7	1	6	2	3	1
29/08/1440	15	1	6	1	7	2	4	1
20/11/1441	15	1	6	1	7	1	5	1
04/02/1444	17	1	7	1	8	1	6	1
20/03/1444	17	1	7	1	8	1	5	2
28/02/1448	17	1	7	1	8	1	5	2
12/07/1452	16	2	5	1	8	0	5	3
06/02/1454	15	2	4	1	8	1	4	3
20/05/1456	16	2	4	1	9	2	4	3
03/01/1457	17	2	4	1	10	3	4	3
25/03/1457	18	2	4	1	11	3	5	3
04/12/1459	12	2	3	1	6	1	3	2
28/11/1460	18	2	6	1	9	1	5	3
07/06/1461	12	2	3	1	6	1	3	2
04/02/1466	16	3	4	1	8	1	5	2
09/02/1467	18	3	5	1	9	1	6	2
18/07/1468	19	2	6	1	10	2	6	2
03/05/1470	17	2	3	1	11	2	7	2
26/11/1470	13	2	4	2	5	0	4	1
21/08/1471	22	2	6	1	13	2	9	2
20/11/1472	22	2	6	1	13	2	9	2
08/11/1474	22	2	6	1	13	2	8	3
10/11/1475	18	2	6	1	9	1	6	2
21/05/1477	18	2	6	1	9	1	7	1
22/12/1477	18	2	5	1	10	2	7	1
27/11/1480	19	2	5	1	11	2	8	1
27/02/1482	20	2	5	1	12	2	8	2
14/05/1483	19	2	6	1	10	2	7	1
26/05/1483	19	2	5	1	11	2	8	1
05/12/1483	19	2	4	1	12	3	7	2

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Compositional Analysis of the Kesteven Peace Commission, 1423-85

Date of Commission	Total N° of Commissioners	Professionals	Noblemen	Prelates	Gentry	Knights	Esquires	Others
07/07/1423	13	3	5	0	5	3	2	0
20/07/1424	13	3	6	0	4	2	2	0
16/02/1428	11	2	6	0	3	1	2	0
16/02/1430	13	2	7	0	4	2	2	0
11/06/1432	14	2	6	1	5	2	2	1
18/02/1434	16	2	7	1	6	3	2	1
06/11/1435	16	2	7	1	6	3	1	2
25/03/1437	18	2	7	1	8	3	1	4
12/01/1439	17	2	6	1	8	3	2	3
20/03/1439	19	2	8	1	8	3	2	3
14/05/1439	21	2	8	1	10	3	4	3
28/11/1439	19	1	9	1	8	3	2	3
06/07/1440	18	1	8	1	8	3	2	3
08/08/1440	16	1	7	1	7	2	2	3
27/01/1441	16	1	7	1	7	2	2	3
22/03/1442	19	1	9	1	8	3	2	3
03/04/1446	19	1	8	1	9	4	4	1
14/04/1446	20	1	8	1	10	4	4	2
14/03/1448	22	1	8	1	12	4	5	3
26/11/1455	20	2	6	1	11	4	4	3
26/02/1456	21	2	5	1	13	4	5	4
18/06/1456	23	2	6	1	14	5	5	4
01/09/1456	24	2	6	1	15	5	5	5
03/02/1458	25	2	6	1	16	6	5	5
23/11/1458	15	2	5	1	7	2	5	1
28/08/1460	19	2	6	1	10	5	5	0
28/11/1460	20	2	6	1	11	5	5	1
20/09/1461	11	2	2	1	6	3	2	1
20/11/1463	14	2	3	1	8	4	3	1
12/08/1464	16	2	3	1	10	5	3	2
14/02/1465	17	2	3	1	11	5	3	3
19/02/1468	17	2	4	1	10	6	3	1
18/07/1468	18	2	5	1	10	6	3	1
03/05/1470	14	2	3	1	6	6	2	0
07/09/1470	15	2	3	0	10	5	3	2
28/11/1470	12	2	3	1	6	3	2	1
21/08/1471	19	2	6	1	10	4	4	2
18/02/1472	20	2	6	0	12	4	6	2

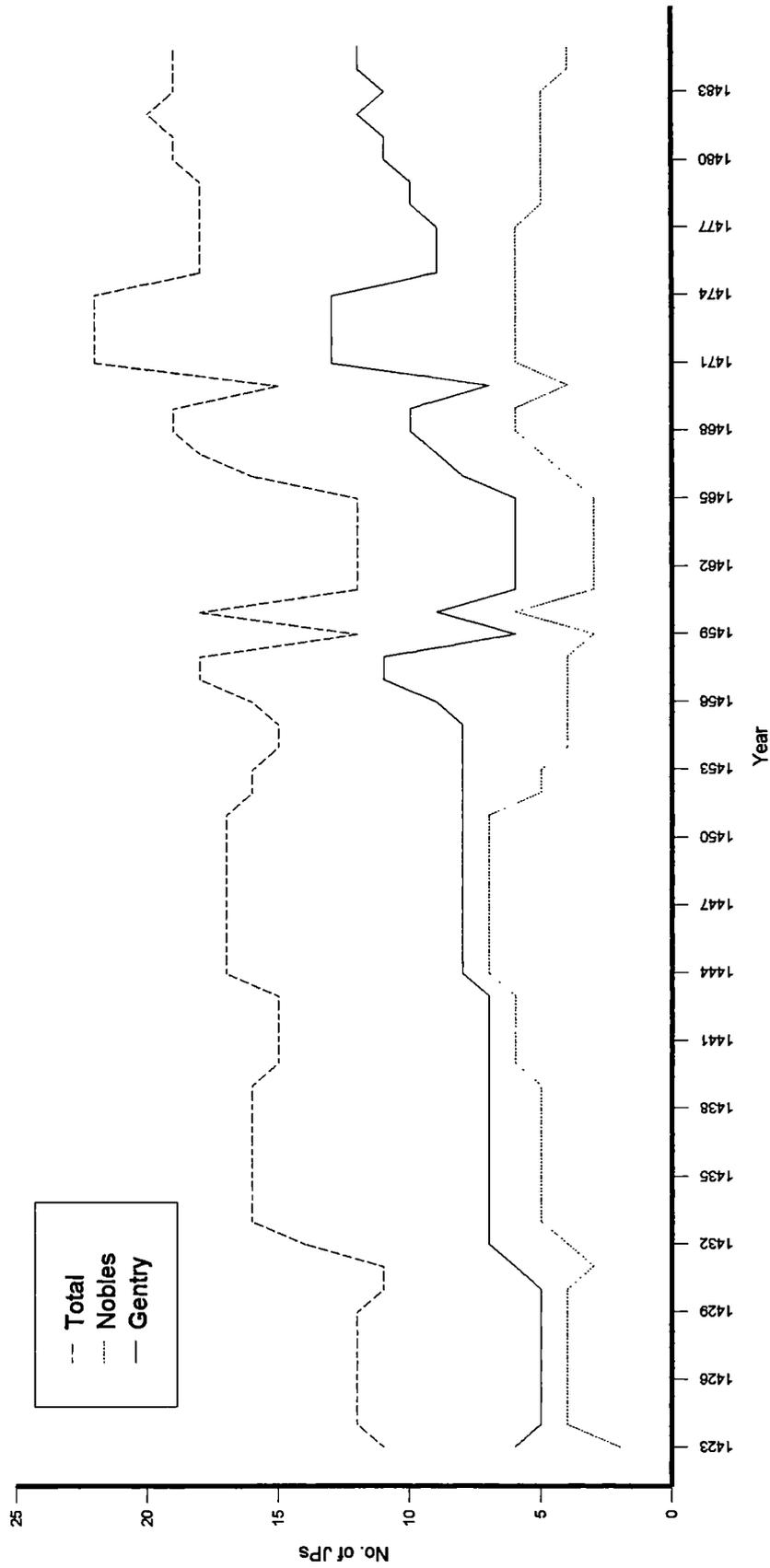
Date of Commission	Total N° of Commissioners	Professionals	Noblemen	Prelates	Gentry	Knights	Esquires	Others
20/11/1472	21	2	6	1	12	4	6	2
28/05/1473	23	2	6	1	14	5	7	2
10/12/1473	21	2	6	1	12	4	7	1
18/05/1474	22	2	6	1	13	4	8	1
10/11/1475	17	2	6	1	8	4	4	0
12/04/1479	17	2	5	1	9	4	5	0
13/11/1479	18	2	5	1	10	5	5	0
14/05/1483	19	2	7	1	9	5	4	0
26/06/1483	19	2	6	1	10	5	5	0
05/12/1483	18	2	5	1	10	5	5	0

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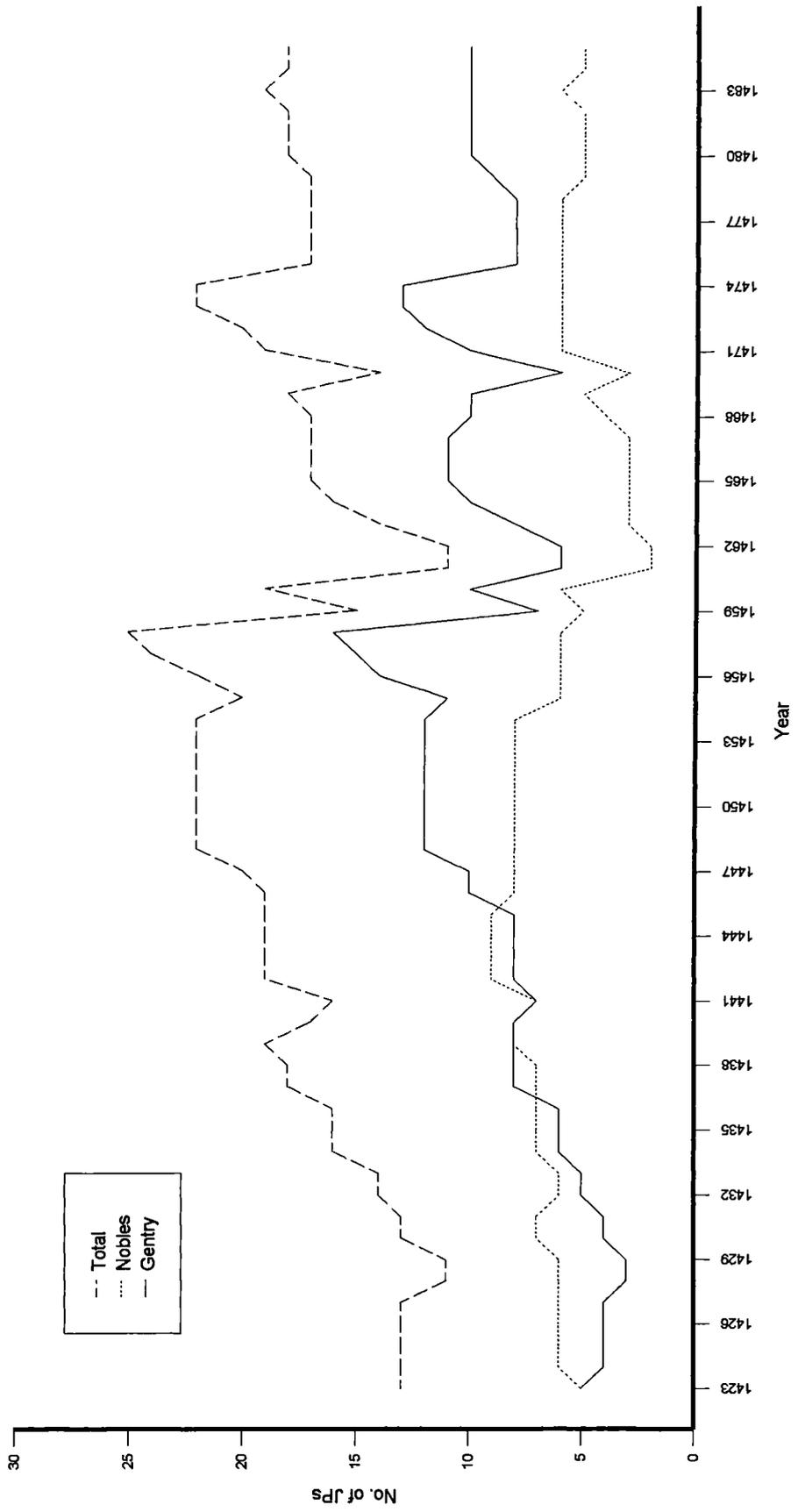
Compositional Analysis of the Lindsey Peace Commission, 1423-85

Date of Commission	Total N° of Commissioners	Professionals	Noblemen	Prelates	Gentry	Knights	Esquires	Others
07/07/1423	13	3	4	0	6	3	1	2
20/07/1424	17	3	6	0	8	4	3	1
14/03/1425	18	3	6	0	9	4	3	2
14/02/1430	16	2	6	0	8	3	3	2
30/11/1430	15	2	6	0	7	2	4	1
02/06/1432	15	2	5	1	7	1	4	2
12/07/1432	15	2	6	1	6	2	3	1
08/08/1433	16	2	6	1	7	2	5	0
05/12/1434	16	2	7	1	6	2	4	0
20/07/1435	15	2	6	1	6	2	3	1
22/10/1436	16	2	7	0	7	2	4	1
17/02/1437	17	2	7	0	8	2	4	2
24/03/1437	20	2	7	1	10	2	6	2
03/04/1438	21	2	7	1	11	2	6	3
18/05/1442	18	1	7	1	9	3	4	2
06/12/1443	19	1	7	1	10	3	4	3
04/06/1444	20	1	7	1	11	3	5	3
02/03/1447	20	1	7	1	11	3	6	2
20/06/1447	22	1	8	1	12	4	6	2
14/03/1448	23	1	8	1	13	4	7	2
12/11/1448	24	1	8	1	14	4	7	3
13/12/1453	21	2	8	1	10	1	6	3
24/02/1455	23	2	8	1	12	1	8	3
07/07/1455	23	2	8	1	12	1	8	3
24/11/1455	25	2	8	1	14	2	9	3
04/02/1455	24	2	6	1	15	2	10	3
20/05/1456	20	2	7	1	10	3	2	5
20/05/1456	26	2	7	1	16	3	10	3
08/07/1456	27	2	7	1	17	3	11	3
01/02/1458	27	2	7	1	17	3	12	2
22/11/1458	16	2	7	1	6	1	3	2
16/05/1461	12	2	2	1	7	3	4	0
03/07/1461	15	2	3	1	9	3	6	0
20/02/1463	21	3	3	1	14	5	8	1
04/02/1467	25	3	4	1	17	6	10	1
04/07/1467	23	2	5	1	15	6	8	1
14/02/1468	23	2	5	1	15	6	8	1
18/07/1468	25	2	6	1	16	7	8	1

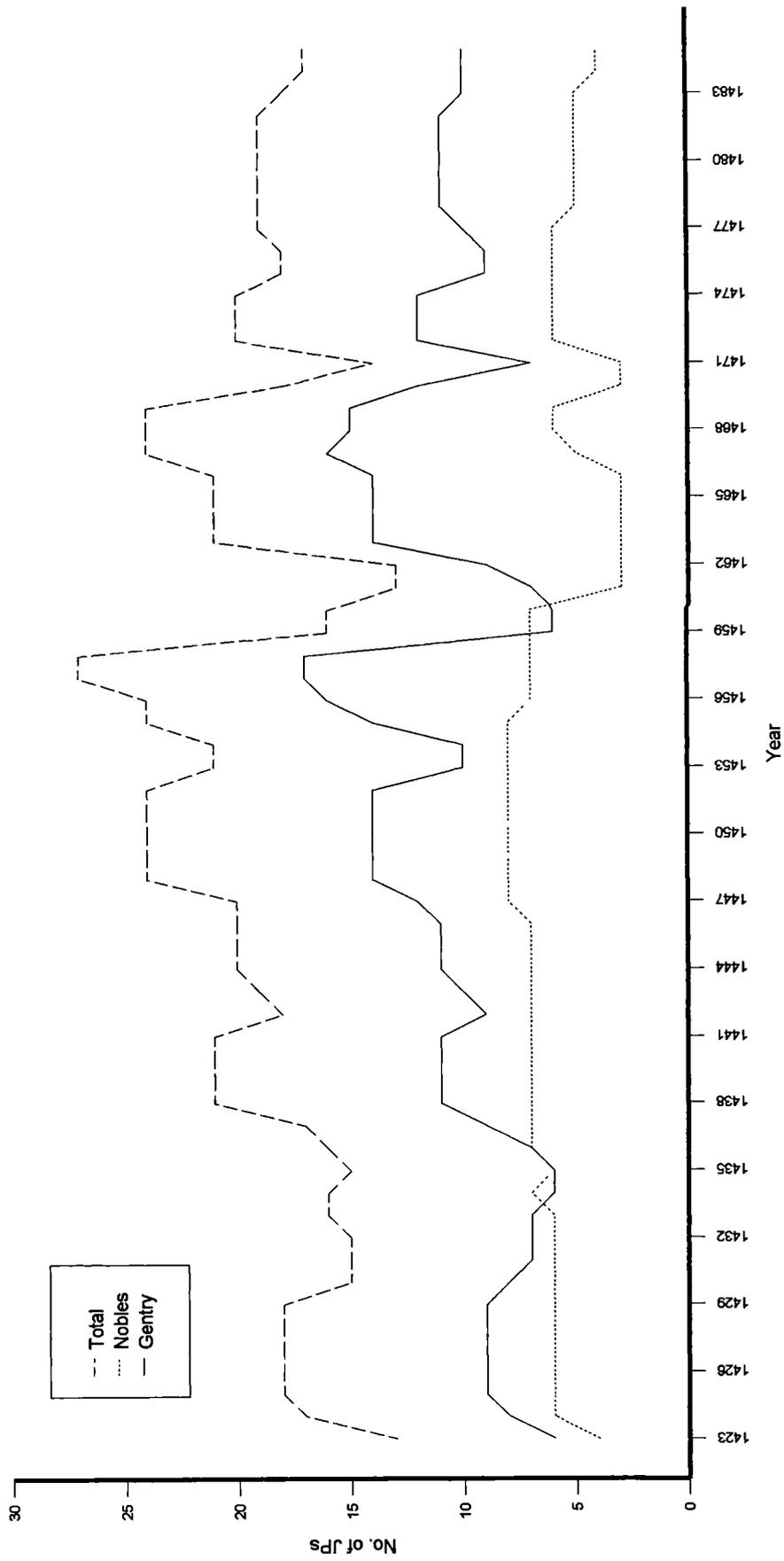
Date of Commission	Total N° of Commissioners	Professionals	Noblemen	Prelates	Gentry	Knights	Esquires	Others
07/09/1468	24	2	6	1	15	7	7	1
03/05/1470	22	2	3	1	16	6	8	2
07/09/1470	20	2	4	1	13	4	8	1
23/11/1470	13	2	3	1	7	1	6	0
23/01/1471	14	2	3	2	7	1	6	0
21/08/1471	17	2	6	1	8	3	4	1
08/12/1471	19	2	6	1	10	3	6	1
27/02/1472	20	2	6	0	12	4	7	1
20/11/1472	21	2	6	1	12	4	7	1
08/11/1475	18	2	6	1	9	3	5	1
11/03/1477	19	2	6	1	10	3	6	1
23/11/1478	19	2	5	1	11	3	6	2
14/05/1483	19	2	6	1	10	3	6	1
26/06/1483	19	2	5	1	11	2	8	1
05/12/1483	16	2	4	1	9	2	6	1
07/07/1484	17	2	4	1	10	2	7	1



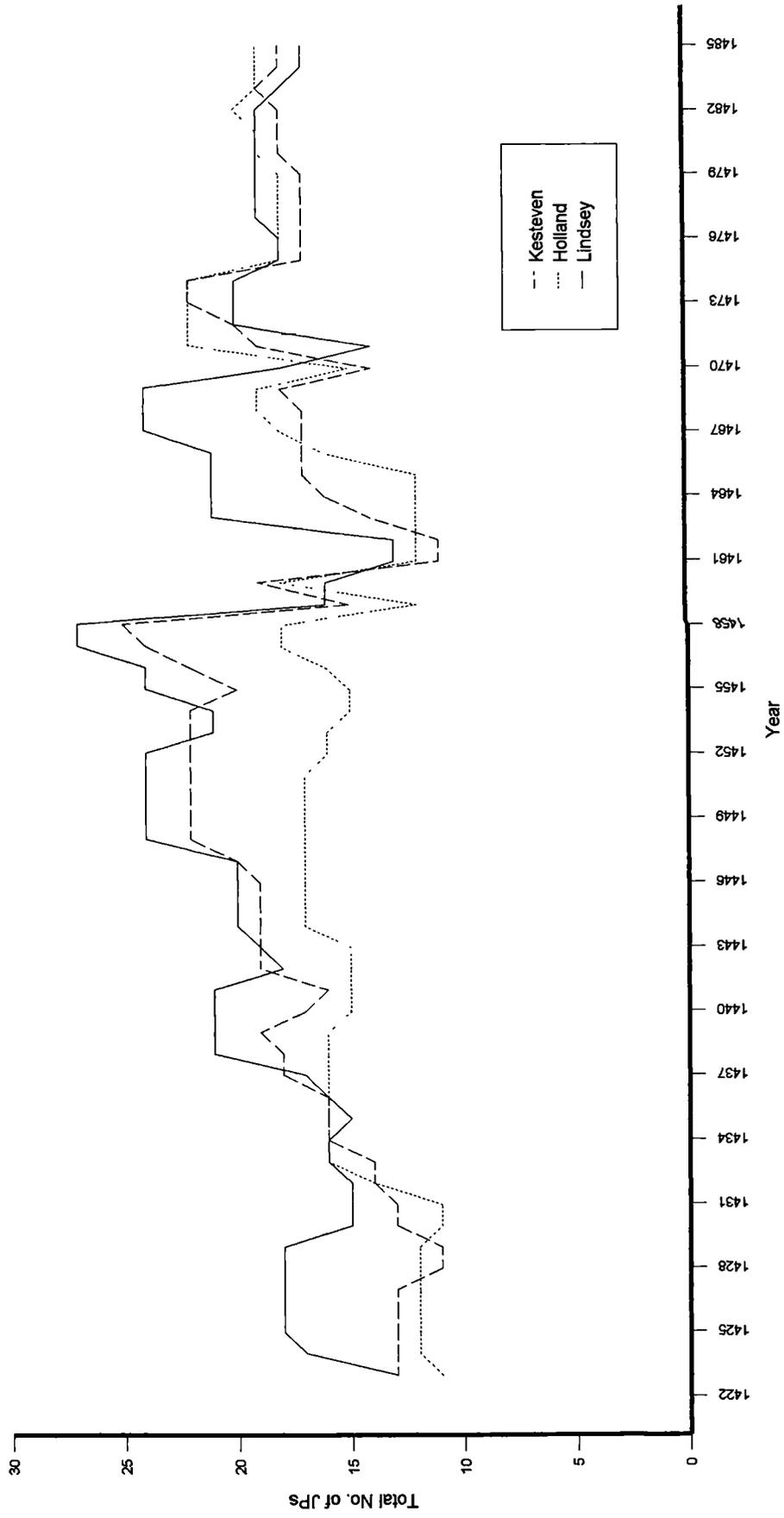
Appendix 2:c:i - Size and Composition of the Holland Peace Commission, 1423-85



Appendix 2:c:ii - Size and Composition of the Kesteven Peace Commission, 1423-85



Appendix 2:c:iii - Size and Composition of the Lindsey Peace Commission, 1423-85



Appendix 2:c:iv - Overall Sizes of the Three Lincolnshire Peace Commissions, 1423-85

Notes

Roger Flore, in all three parts, and John Tyrell, in Holland, were appointed solely due to their positions as successive Chief Stewards of the Duchy of Lancaster. Tyrell's successor, however, the Earl of Suffolk, has been included among his fellow noblemen.

It is almost beyond doubt that 'John Lescrop, knight', JP in all three Parts, refers to John, Lord Scrope of Masham. However Scrope died in 1455, when he was removed from the commissions of Lindsey and Holland, but the name still appeared on the two Kesteven commissions of 1458. It also appeared on a Kesteven Commission of Array for 5 September 1458. *The Complete Peerage* only refers to his position on the Lindsey and Holland benches, but, since the name appears on all three commissions for the first time on the same day, 20 July 1424, it seems inconceivable that this is not the same person. Also, there is no sign of any plausible alternatives of the same name. He has been included among the nobles for the whole period, even after his death, but this may not be correct.

A 'Richard Willoughby' appears on the Kesteven commission of 14 April 1446. However, this must have been an error for Robert, Lord Willoughby.

The William Waterton named on the Lindsey commission of 1444 may also be an error for the long-serving Richard Waterton, who was omitted from this commission. William Waterton has proved untraceable, but it is not clear that this is a mistake, and his name has been retained.

Richard Hastings appears twice on the Holland Commission of 1472, once simply as 'Richard Hastings', secondly as 'Richard Hastings of Welles'. This is clearly a clerical error, and the extra name has been excluded from the analysis.

Robert Tailboys' appointments to the Lindsey bench all occurred before he was knighted in 1478. However, only his first appointment to the Kesteven bench occurred before this date. The change in his status has been recognised in the analysis tables.

The Kesteven commissions of the 1470s contain men variously described as 'Thomas Roys', 'Thomas Boys' and 'Thomas Edyes'. These names never appear on the same commission, and the dates, and the lack of other plausible candidates, suggest that they refer to a single individual, Thomas Boys of Sleaford. They have been treated as such in the analysis.

Appendix 3:a

Lincolnshire Lay Subsidy Return - 1436

The following table is based upon the Lincolnshire return for the 1436 Lay Subsidy, PRO E179/136/198. Entries are given in alphabetical order for ease of reference, the entry's number representing its original position on the return. Titles, residences and/or other counties where individuals held land are only given where specified on the return.

Personal names have been standardised and place names have been modernised where exact identification is possible.

Entries referring to enfeoffed lands are listed in the name of the original holder. Abbots and Priors are alphabetised under the name of their house.

Taxation entries in two parts reflect the graduation of the tax, with the first 100l taxed at 6s/l, the remainder at 8s/l (except * below).

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
195	Alege, Richard	Wigtoft		8m	2s 6d
211	Aleynson Tomson, John	Kirton		100s	2s 6d
201	Algakyrk, Robert	Swineshead		100s	2s 6d
133	Allotson, Thomas	Wainfleet		100s	2s 6d
101	Angevyn, John	Theddlethorpe		20l	10s
212	Arcle, Alan	Kirton		100s	2s 6d
38	Auncell, Robert	Grimsby		6l	3s
160	Baghill, John	Lusby		100s	2s 6d
377	Baker, John	Deeping	Northants.	30l	15s
378	Baker, John, as alderman of the Gild of BVM, Baston [<i>sic.</i>]			100s	2s 6d
60	Barde, John	North Kelsey		9l	4s 6d
181	Barlings, Abbot of			30l	15s
42	Barneby, John	Barton	Yorks.	40m	13s
337	Barneby, Richard	Gonerby		10m	3s
44	Barneby, Robert*	Barton	Lincs. + Notts.	13m+100s	4s+2s 6d
357	Barnet, Thomas; John Chevercourt & other co-feoffees			10l	5s
215	Bate, Humphrey	Frampton		6l	3s
226	Bate, John	Algakirk		10m	3s
216	Bate, Roger	Frampton		6l	3s
253	Baxster, John	Boston		10l	5s
254	Baxster, Richard	Boston		100s	2s 6d
256	Baylly, Richard	Boston		10m	3s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
323	Baylly, Richard; as alderman of the Gild of BVM			100s	2s 6d
36	Beel, Henry	Waltham	Yorks.	8m	2s 6d
18	Bekyngham, John	Manby		100s	2s 6d
262	Belle, Margaret	Boston		100s	2s 6d
268	Belle, Richard	Benington		10l	5s
9	Beltoft, Richard	Belton		100s	2s 6d
5	Belwode, Thomas	Belton	Notts.	40m	13s
306	Benet, Walter	Pinchbeck		10m	3s
279	Benne, John	Wrangle		10m	3s
239	Benyngton, Richard	Boston		40l	20s
28	Bernston, Thomas	Great Coates		20l	10s
115	Billesby, Tohmas	Bilsby	Notts.	13l	6s 6d
24	Bleseby, William	Bleasby		100s	2s 6d
380	Bluet, Joanna, once wife of John Bluet	Somerby	Leics.	7l	3s 6d
172	Bocher, John	Toynton		10m	3s
158	Boleyn, William	Stickford		10l	5s
200	Bolle, John	Swineshead		8m	2s 6d
227	Bolle, William	Algakirk		10m	3s
364	Bowet, Nicholas, knt		London + Northumberland	40l	20s
332	Boys, Athelard	Bourne		20m	6s 6d
372	Boys, John, esq.	Wellingore	Notts.	40l	20s
266	Brasse, Thomas	Butterwick		100s	2s 6d
328	Brone, John	Belvoir	+ elsewhere	100s	2s 6d
47	Bryan, John, jun.	Barton		100s	2s 6d
45	Bryan, John, sen.	Barton		100s	2s 6d
320	Bryson, Simon, chaplain	Old Leake		100s	2s 6d
99	Bukton, Thomas, esq.	Louth	Yorks	40l	20s
367	Busshy, John	Hougham	Leics. + Notts. + Rutland	100l	50s
283	Bylflow, John	Boston		100s	2s 6d
316	Calowe, William	Holbeach		12m	4s
35	Candlesby, William	Waltham		6l	3s
6	Castleford, William	Belton	Yorks.	10l	5s
82	Cawode, John	Oxcombe		100s	2s 6d
326	Chamberlayn, Robert	Wickenby	+ elsewhere	10l	5s
258	Chesell, Thomas	Boston		10m	3s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
373	Chevercourt, John, brother of Gild of Corpus Christi			100s	2s 6d
347	Claymore, Richard	Helpringham		100s	2s 6d
275	Clement, John; Edward Robertson & co-feoffees			20m	6s 6d
76	Clerk, Isabella	Wragholm		100s	2s 6d
291	Clerk, William	Holbeach		100s	2s 6d
371	Cokkyng, John	Kyme		10m	3s
330	Colston, Thomas	Corby		100s	2s 6d
77	Copuldyke, John		Norfolk	100m	33s
324	Copuldyke, Ralph	Boston		91 6s 8d	4s 6d
214	Copuldyke, Roger	Frampton		10l	5s
186	Cote, Henry	Coningsby		100s	2s 6d
139	Cowton, Robert	Burgh		24l	12s
230	Crabden, Thomas	Algakirk		100s	2s 6d
110	Cracraft, William	Hogsthorpe		100s	2s 6d
343	Cranwell, William	Cranwell		40l	20s
143	Croft, William	Burgh le Marsh		6l	3s
287	Cromwell, Margaret, once wife of William Cromwell, knt			43l	21s 6d
314	Crowland, Abbot of			15l	7s 6d
117	Cumberworth, Thomas	Strubby		100s	2s 6d
192	Cumberworth, Thomas, knt		Yorks.	160l	50s + 40s
21	Dalyson, Richard	Laughton		20l	10s
311	Danby, Thomas	Holbeach		100s	2s 6d
278	Dandyson, Hugh	Wrangle		16l	8s
277	Dandyson, Simon	Old Leake		10m	3s
267	Darby, William, knt	Benington		20l	10s
319	Dayncourt, Robert	Kirton		44l	22s
358	De la Launde, Simon	Ashby de la Launde		100s	2s 6d
27	Del See, Brian	Little Coates	Yorks.	18l	9s
31	Del See, John	Little Coates		100s	2s 6d
334	Denton, Agnes, once wife of Richard Denton	Denton		8l	4s
331	Denton, John	Osournby		10m	3s
7	Dodythorp, Ralph	Belton		100s	2s 6d
355	Dokke, Richard	Stamford		10m	3s
294	Dokkyng, John	Whaplode		10m	3s
51	Drayton, Peter	Barton		100s	2s 6d

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
46	Duffield, Richard	Barton		10l	5s
119	Dughty, William	Withern		10l	5s
163	Dymoke, Elizabeth	Stickford	Oxon. + London	60l	30s
126	Dymoke, John	Friskney		53l 2s 8d	26s 6d
183	Dymoke, Philip, knt			40l	20s
112	Dymoke, Thomas	Hogsthorpe		100s	2s 6d
66	Dysney, John	Kingerby		16m	5s
89	Edlyngton, William, esq	Castle Carlton		40m	13s
84	Eland, Robert	Raithby		80l	40s
40	Elkington, Simon	Grimsby		100s	2s 6d
124	Emerton, Henry	Farlesthorne		10l	6s
352	Etton, Elizabeth, once wife of John Etton, knt	Doddington by Eyde	Yorks.	28l	14s
231	Everard, William	Sutterton		24l	12s
232	Feld, Athelard	Sutterton		10l	5s
271	Fendyke, John	Leverton		10m	3s
16	Fereby, Robert	Frodingham		20l	10s
103	FitzWilliam, Thomas, esq.			10l	5s
149	Flayne, Simon	Wainfleet		100s	2s 6d
213	Flete, John, feoffees of	Frampton		40m	13s
288	Flete, Richard	Holbeach		20l	10s
240	Flete, Thomas	Boston		20l	10s
30	Flynton, Walter	Laceby		12l	6s
14	Foderby, John	Normanby	Yorks.	40m	13s
74	Forman, Robert	Utterby		10l 6s 8d	5s
58	Forman, William	Keelby		10l	5s
134	Forthyngton, John	Wainfleet		100s	2s 6d
157	Foulstowe, Richard	Toynton		9l	4s 6d
297	Fryday, John	Moulton		100s	2s 6d
327	Fryskney, Hugh	Kyme	+ elsewhere	8m	2s 6d
175	Fryth, Richard	Scremby	Sussex	50l	25s
174	Fulnaby, John	Fulnetby		60l	30s
8	Garner, Richard	Belton		100s	2s 6d
39	Garrowe, William	Grimsby		100s	2s 6d
54	Gaskryk, Edmund	Killingholme	Yorks.	20l	10s
81	Gedney, Robert	Bag Enderby		10l	5s
255	Glaston, William	Boston		10l	5s
69	Godehand, Andrew	Walesby		13l	6s 6d
245	Godyng, William	Boston		10l	5s
170	Goldeburgh, Thomas	Haltham	Middlesex	10m	3s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
370	Goldsmyth, Elizabeth, once wife of John Goldsmyth	Grantham	Leics.	100s	2s 6d
4	Grayve, Thomas	Messingham		110s	2s 6d
282	Grovale, John	Boston		100s	2s 6d
161	Gryme, John	East Kirkby		10m	3s
37	Grymesby, John	Grimsby		100s	2s 6d
144	Gunby, John	Gunby		10l	5s
233	Gybon, Thomas	Sutterton		10l	5s
151	Gybthorpe, Alice	Thorpe		40l	20s
152	Gybthorpe, Simon	Thorpe		19l	9s 6d
310	Gylberd, Robert, chaplain	Tydd St Mary		100s	2s 6d
41	Hagh, John	Grimsby		100s	2s 6d
116	Hagh, Richard	Haugh	Essex	50l	25s
106	Hagnaby, Abbot of			10l	5s
90	Hakthorp, Thomas	'Hakthorp'		100s	2s 6d
132	Hall, Agnes, atte	Wainfleet		100s	2s 6d
301	Halmer, Richard	Weston		100s	2s 6d
296	Haltoft, Thomas	Moulton		20l	10s
292	Haltoft, William	Whaplode		20l	10s
162	Halywell, Thomas	Spilsby		6l	3s
113	Hanby, William	Belleau		22l	11s
147	Hanon, Thomas	Partenay		100s	2s 6d
61	Hansard, Joanna, once wife of Richard Hansard		Durham	32l	16s
67	Hansard, Richard	South Kelsey	Yorks.	40l	20s
300	Harberd, John	Weston		10m	3s
23	Hardbene, John	Bishop Norton		10l	5s
351	Hardeby, John	Evedon		100s	2s 6d
359	Harleston, William	Barrowby		100s	2s 6d
315	Harold, Alice	Old Leake		100s	2s 6d
252	Harte, John	Boston		8l	4s
342	Haryngton, John	Grantham		100s	2s 6d
188	Haryngton, John, esq.			15l	7s 6d
257	Hastings, Joanne	Boston		10m	3s
171	Hauley, Henry			100s	2s 6d
72	Hauley, John, esq.		Durham	40m	13s
83	Hauley, William, esq.			100s	2s 6d
71	Haunserd, Gilbert	Tealby		100s	2s 6d
13	Haytfeld, John	Flixborough	Yorks. + Notts.	100l	50s
49	Hende, Walter	Barton	Yorks.	8m	2s 6d

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
179	Henege, Joanna	Hainton		10l	5s
178	Henege, John	Hainton		10l	5s
251	Hennyng, Thomas	Boston		20m	6s 6d
379	Hesyll, John	Carlton Scrope	Yorks. + Notts. + London	41l	20s 6d
218	Hoberd, William	Donington		10m	3s
333	Hode, John	Bourne		100s	2s 6d
196	Holand, Anna	Swineshead		20l	10s
197	Holand, Thomas	Swineshead		24m	8s
381	Hough, Henry	Hough on the Hill	Notts.	20m	6s 6d
276	Hungate, John	Old Leake		10m	3s
229	Hunnyng, Lambertus	Algakirk		8m	2s 6d
224	Hunnyng, Thomas	Algakirk		8m	2s 6d
260	Huson, Robert	Boston		10m	3s
244	Hyllyngton, William	Boston		20m	6s 6d
336	Ive, Simon	Grantham		10l	5s
209	Iveson, John	Kirton		10m	3s
322	Iwarby, Robert, clerk, as alderman of Gild of Corpus Christi, Boston			10l	5s
70	Johnson, Richard	Thorganby		100s	2s 6d
92	Kele, Thomas	Grainthorpe		40m	13s
321	Keleby, Thomas, clerk	Old Leake		100s	2s 6d
63	Kelke, Roger	Barnetby le Wold	Yorks.	20l	10s
50	Kelke, William	Barton	Yorks.	100s	2s 6d
33	Kirk, William	Barnoldby le Beck	Yorks.	10l	5s
155	Knaresborough, Gilbert	Halton		20m	6s 6d
153	Knaresborough, John	Belleau		12m	4s
127	Kyme, Margaret	Friskney		26l	13s
128	Kyme, Thomas	Friskney		36l	18s
80	Kyme, William	Langton		100s	2s 6d
79	Kyshley, John	Salmanby		20l	10s
105	Lake, John, chaplain	Trusthorpe		100s	2s 6d
64	Lamme, John	Thornton Abbey	Yorks.	12m	4s
32	Langdale, Patrick	Waltham		20l	10s
87	Langholme, John	Conisholme		40l	20s
88	Langholme, Katherine			10l	5s
122	Langholme, Thomas	Croxby		10m	3s
78	Langton, John	Langton		33l 6s 8d	16s 6d
305	Launde, Beatrice, once wife of John Launde	Pinchbeck		15l	7s 6d

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
243	Lawes, John	Boston		20l	10s
312	Lecham, Thomas, chaplain of chantry of BVM	Kirton		100s	2s 6d
348	Ledbeter, William	Sleaford		100s	2s 6d
167	Leeke, Alexander			20m	6s 6d
274	Leke, Andrew	Old Leake		10m	3s
384	Leke, John	Grantham		10l	5s
265	Leke, John; Richard Benyngton & other co-feoffees			20l	10s
225	Leke, Richard	Algakirk		20l	10s
207	Longland, Thomas	Kirton		10l	5s
48	Lorymer, William	Barton		100s	2s 6d
123	Lyndesey, John, esq.	Swaby		6l	3s
204	Lyttelbury, Humphrey	Kirton		100m	33s
308	Lyttelbury, John	Holbeach		100s	2s 6d
193	Magelyn, John	Wigtoft		20m	6s 6d
194	Magelyn, William	Wigtoft		100s	2s 6d
25	Malet, William	Irby upon Humber		20m	6s 6d
121	Manby, John	Legbourne		24m	8s
286	Manne, Nicholas	Tydd St Mary		100s	2s 6d
107	Markby, Prior of			6l 3s 9d	3s
270	Marten, Gilbert	Benington		100s	2s 6d
141	Massingberd, Robert	Burgh le Marsh		6l	3s
140	May, Simon	Burgh le Marsh		10l	5s
345	Medburn, John	Grantham		10l	5s
206	Meres, Philip	Kirton		10l	5s
205	Meres, Thomas	Kirton		100m	33s
29	Messenden, Thomas	Healing		40l	20s
376	Misterton, Joanna	Witham on the Hill	Leics. + Notts.	10l	5s
375	Misterton, Nicholas	Witham on the Hill	Notts.	10l	5s
15	Mitford, Thomas	Luddington	Yorks. + Newcastle	25m	8s
100	Moigne, Laurence	Theddlethorpe	Notts.	51m	17s
95	Monters, Katherine	Saltfleethaven		10m	3s
289	Morys, John	Holbeach		10l	5s
383	Neubo, Abbot of		Notts.	12l	6s
96	Neucom, William	Saltfleetby		10m	3s
26	Neuland, John	Humberston		100s	2s 6d
56	Newhouse, Abbot of			16l	8s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
335	Nicoll, Richard	Grantham		100s	2s 6d
11	Nobell, John	Althorpe	Yorks.	20l	10s
2	Noreys, John	Gainsborough		6l 13s 4d	3s
361	Oudeby, Ralph	Hacconby		25m	8s
199	Overton, Thomas	Swineshead		10m	3s
247	Palmer, Margaret	Boston		20m	6s 6d
93	Parkehous, Stephen	Grainthorpe		100s	2s 6d
269	Parsonson, John	Benington		10m	3s
382	Paynell, Christina, once wife of John Paynell, knt		Yorks. + Hunts.	30l	15s
369	Paynell, Galfridus, esq.	Osgodby	Leics. + Notts. + Rutland + Yorks.	45l	22s 6d
125	Pedwardine, Roger	Friskney	Lancs. + Suffolk	56l	28s
210	Peles, John	Kirton		100s	2s 6d
340	Percy, William	Welton by Lincoln	+ elsewhere	20l	10s
98	Pormard, John	Saltfleetby		100s	2s 6d
293	Porter, John	Whaplode		8l	4s
118	Poterell, Walter	Markby		8m	2s 6d
168	Prester, Roger	Horncastle		100s	2s 6d
290	Pulvertoft, Robert	Holbeach		10m	5s
368	Pygot, John, esq.	Doddington	Notts.	60l	30s
146	Pylet, Thomas	Welton		100s	2s 6d
309	Pynchebek, Radulphus	Weston		10m	2s 6d
304	Pynchebek, Richard	Pinchbeck		100s	2s 6d
284	Pynchebek, William	Butterwick		100s	2s 6d
242	Quykerell, John	Boston		22m	6s 6d
1	Qwyxley, William	Gainsborough	Yorks. + elsewhere	106s 8d	2s 6d
135	Randson, William	Wainfleet		100s	2s 6d
137	Ranen, William	Winthorpe		100s	2s 6d
217	Ransom, William	Bicker		100s	2s 6d
102	Rasyn, John; Walter Tailboys & co-feoffees	Theddlethorpe		20l	10s
75	Ratheby, John	Covenham		20l 13s 4d	10s
169	Ratheby, Thomas	Raithby		8l	4s
280	Rede, William, son of Richard Rede	Wrangle		100s	2s 6d
52	Redenese, Agnes	Barrow upon Humber		10l	5s
272	Robertson, Edward	Leverton		10l	5s
202	Robertson, John	Swineshead		10m	3s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
182	Roos, Robert, knt		Yorks. + Staffs. + Norf. + Suff.	165l 6s 8d	50s + 43s 4d
259	Rose, William	Boston		100s	2s 6d
362	Rothewell, William	Hacconby		25m	8s
150	Ruston, Simon	Steeping		100s	2s 6d
145	Rygge, Tohmas	Welton		10l	5s
363	Rypynghale, Thomas	Rippingale		10m	3s
338	Saltby, John	Gonerby		10l	5s
341	Saltby, Richard	Gonerby		100s	2s 6d
19	Santon, Robert	Santon		100s	2s 6d
339	Sapcote, John	Grantham		10l	5s
62	Scriban, William	Caistor		100s	2s 6d
299	Serjeantson, Thomas	Moulton		100s	2s 6d
180	Seyntpaul, John, esq.	Snarford		10l	5s
353	Seyvyll, Thomas	Sempringham		100s	2s 6d
3	Sheffield, Robert	West Butterwick	Yorks. + York + elsewhere	40l	20s
59	Skipwith, Alice, once wife of John Skipwith			80m	26s 6d
73	Skipwith, Patrick	Utterby		40l	20s
55	Skipwith, William	Habrough	Notts.	40m	13s
94	Skupholme, Eudo	Somercotes		8l	4s
298	Skyrbeck, Thomas	Moulton		100s	2s 6d
350	Sleford, Margaret, once wife of Thomas Sleford	Kirkby La Thorpe		100s	2s 6d
365	Slory, Thomas	Dorrington	Notts.	10l	5s
366	Slory, William	Rauceby	London	100s	2s 6d
228	Slye, John	Fosdyke		100s	2s 6d
241	Smyr, Alice	Boston		100s	2s 6d
190	Somercotes, Joanna	Willingham		100s	2s 6d
184	Sothill, Gerard	Redbourne		20l	10s
65	Sothill, John	West Rasen	Wilts.	40m	12s 6d
313	Spalding, Prior of			20m	6s 6d
302	Spaldyng, John	Spalding		40m	13s
374	Spanby, John	Spanby	Oxon.	20l	10s
303	Spar, Thomas	Spalding		100s	2s 6d
273	Spayn, Katherine, once wife of William, knt			40m	13s
263	Stephenson, Richard; John Edlyngton, clerk, & other co-feoffees			20l	10s
221	Stiberd, William	Gosberton		10m	3s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
166	Stirton, John	Sturton		100s	2s 6d
246	Stoyle, John	Boston		100s	2s 6d
129	Strange, John	Friskney		6l	3s
12	Strangway, Thomas	Epworth		10l	5s
356	Styrteswold, Robert	Stamford		10m	3s
235	Sutton, Alexandra, once wife of John Sutton	Surfleet		100s	2s 6d
173	Sutton, Hamo	Burton by Lincoln	Notts.	105l	50s + 3s 4d
219	Sutton, Thomas	Donington		100s	2s 6d
109	Swaby, Margaret, Lady of			20l	10s
138	Tailboys, Henry	Irby in the Marsh		14l	7s
57	Tailboys, John	Stallingborough		40m	13s
176	Tailboys, Walter, esq.		Cambs. + Yorks. + Devon + Durham + Wilts. + Warks. + Herts.	159l 8s	50s + 39s
85	Tathewell, Ralph	Tathewell		6l	3s
156	Tetford, William	East Keal		10m	3s
165	Themylyby, Isabella	Thimbleby	Cambs. + Norfolk	26l	13s
164	Themylyby, William	Thimbleby		40l	20s
68	Thoresby, John	Croxby		100s	2s 6d
34	Thoresby, Margaret, once wife of Nicholas Thoresby	Fulstow Marsh		14m	4s 6d
329	Thorness, Richard	Carleby		12m	4s
53	Thornton, Abbot of		Yorks.	20m 10s	6s 6d
154	Thorp, William	Thorpe		10l	5s
248	Thurland, William	Boston		100s	2s 6d
250	Thymolby, John	Boston		24l	12s
43	Tirwhit, William, knt		Yorks. + Northants. + Essex + Herts.	195m	70s
264	Toft, Robert	Toft		10m	3s
281	Tope, John	Boston		100s	2s 6d
22	Tournay, Elizabeth, once wife of John Tournay			20m	6s 6d
114	Toutheby, John, esq.			10m	3s
222	Trumpot, John	Algakirk		100s	2s 6d
307	Tylney, Grace; Richard Roos, knt, & Roger Holland, feoffees			100s	2s 6d
238	Tylney, Margaret	Boston		20l	10s
318	Tylney, Margaret	Boston	Staffs. + Cambs.	51l	25s 6d

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
317	Tylney, Philip¶	Boston	Norf. + Suff. + Yorks.	198l	50s + 65s 4d
20	Ufflete, John	Halton		100s	2s 6d
191	Ver, William	Stallingborough		100s	2s 6d
131	Wace, John	Wainfleet		10l	5s
130	Wace, Matilda	Wainfleet		20m	6s 6d
234	Wace, Thomas	Sutterton		100s	2s 6d
104	Wade, William	Trusthorpe		10m	3s
349	Walcote, John	Walcote		20l	10s
354	Walcote, William	Walcote		100s	2s 6d
108	Walton, Thomas, esq.			20m	6s 6d
346	Warde, Elias	Grantham		7l	3s6d
208	Warner, John	Kirton		10l	5s
261	Warrewyk, Andrew	Boston		100s	2s 6d
17	Wasselyn, Robert	Grimsby	Yorks.	10l	5s
177	Waterton, Richard	Great Corringham		40m	13s
10	Wateryng, Robert	Belton		100s	2s 6d
223	Welby, Richard	Algakirk		8m	2s 6d
295	Welby, Richard	Moulton		100m	33s
111	Well, Robert atte	Hogsthorpe		100s	2s 6d
148	West, William	Partenay		100s	2s 6d
136	Westiby, John	Skegness		100s	2s 6d
86	Westmels, Ralph	Louth		20l	10s
142	Whaytcroft, Thomas	Burgh le Marsh		6l	3s
159	White, Alice	Bolingbroke		100s	2s 6d
220	Whytebred, Richard	Gosberton		10m	3s
203	Willoughby, John, knt	Kirton		100l	50s
189	Willoughby, Nicholas	Rande		20m	6s 6d
97	Wodeburne, John	Louth Park		10m	3s
325	Wodethorp, John	Boston		10m	3s
198	Wolmer, John	Swineshead		25m	8s
249	Wrangle, Marjery	Boston		100s	2s 6d
120	Wrangle, Richard, chaplain	Legbourne		100s	2s 6d
360	Wykes, John	Horbling		40l	20s
285	Wyllyngham, Robert	Boston		6l	3s
187	Wynde, John	Willerby		100s	2s 6d
185	Wynter, Robert	Coningsby		100s	2s 6d
237	Wythom, John	Boston		40m	13s
236	Wythom, Margaret, once wife of Hugh Wythom	Algakirk		20l	10s

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Other Counties</u>	<u>Assessed Wealth</u>	<u>Taxation</u>
344	Wythom, Robert	Grantham		10m	3s
91	Yerburgh, Richard	Yarborough		20l	10s

* - There are two consecutive entries for Robert Barneby on the return, for Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire respectively.

¶ - The returns for Margaret and Philip Tylney both specify the individual amounts for each county. Margaret:- 20l in Lincs., 17l in Staffs., 14l in Cambs.; Philip:- 124l in Lincs., 50l in Norfolk, 8l in Suffolk, 16l in Yorks.

Appendix 3:b

Income of Noblemen Resident in Lincolnshire

The following table is based on information from H.L. Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436', *E.H.R.*, xlix (1934), pp.607-39, pp.615-18.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Total Income</u>
Ralph, 3 rd Lord Cromwell, of Tattershall	£1007 ¹
John, 6 th Lord Beaumont, of Folkingham	£733
Robert, 6 th Lord Willoughby d'Eresby	£679 ²
Leo, 6 th Lord Welles, of Belleau	£321

¹ Including an annuity of £133, payable at the Exchequer.

² Including an annuity of £100, charged on the customs.

Appendix 4

Lincolnshire Knightly Families

The following table provides a summary of the knightly families resident in Lincolnshire during the fifteenth century. For further details, see below, pp.52ff. 6

Unless otherwise noted, incomes given are the relevant entries from the Lincolnshire return for the 1436 lay subsidy, printed in Appendix 3:a. Two figures are given when two members of the main line of the family appear on the 1436 return, one usually being a dowager.

<u>Family</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Income</u>
Armyn	Osgodby	K	-
Ascough	Stallingborough	L	-
Bowet	Rippingale	K	40l
Burgh	Gainsborough	L	-
Busshy	Hougham	K	100l
Copuldyke	Harrington	L	100m
Cromwell	Driby	L	43l
Cumberworth	Somerby	L	160l
Darby	Benington	H	20l
Dymoke	Scrivelsby	L	60l + 40l ¹
Graa	North Ingleby	L	87l ²
Hakebeche	Whaplode	H	10l ³
Hansard	South Kelsey	L	40l + 32l ⁴
Hauley	Girsby	L	40m
Hilton	Irnham	K	133l
Holand	Swineshead	H	24m+20l ⁵
Markham	Sedgebrook	K	-
Marmyon	Rippingale	K	40l ⁶
Paynell	Boothby Pagnell	K	45l + 30l ⁷
Pedwardine	Burton Pedwardine	K	56l
Pygot	Doddington	K	60l
Retford	Castlethorpe	L	-
Rochford	Fenn in Boston ⁸	H	394l
Roos	Gedney	H	165l 6s 8d
Skipwith	South Ormsby	L	80m
Sothill	Redbourne	L	20l

<u>Family</u>	<u>Residence</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Income</u>
Spayn	Boston	H	40m
Swynford	Kettlethorpe	L	-
Tailboys	Goltho ⁹	L	159l 8s
Tirwhit	Kettleby	L	130l
Willoughby	Kirton	H	100l

¹ Philip Dymoke of Scrivelsby, assessed at 40l in Lincs; his mother, Elizabeth Dymoke of Stixwould, assessed at 60l in Lincs., Oxon., and London.

² £87 in 1436, after the loss of his wife's inheritance. His income had been £186, in 6 counties. Roskell, *Commons in 1422*, p.81.

³ Taxed in Cambridgeshire in 1436. Undoubtedly only part of total income.

⁴ Richard Hansard of South Kelsey, assessed at 40l in Lincs. and Yorks.; his mother, Joanna Hansard, assessed at 32l in Lincs. and Durham.

⁵ Thomas Holand assessed at 24m; Anna Holand, probably his mother, assessed at 20l.

⁶ Taxed in Leicestershire in 1436.

⁷ Geoffrey Paynell, assessed at 45l in Lincs., Leics., Notts., Yorks. and Rutland; Christina Paynell, wife of John Paynell, assessed at 30l in Lincs., Yorks. and Hunts..

⁸ Also resident at Stoke Rochford, Kesteven, but mainly active in Holland.

⁹ Later moved to South Kyme, in Kesteven

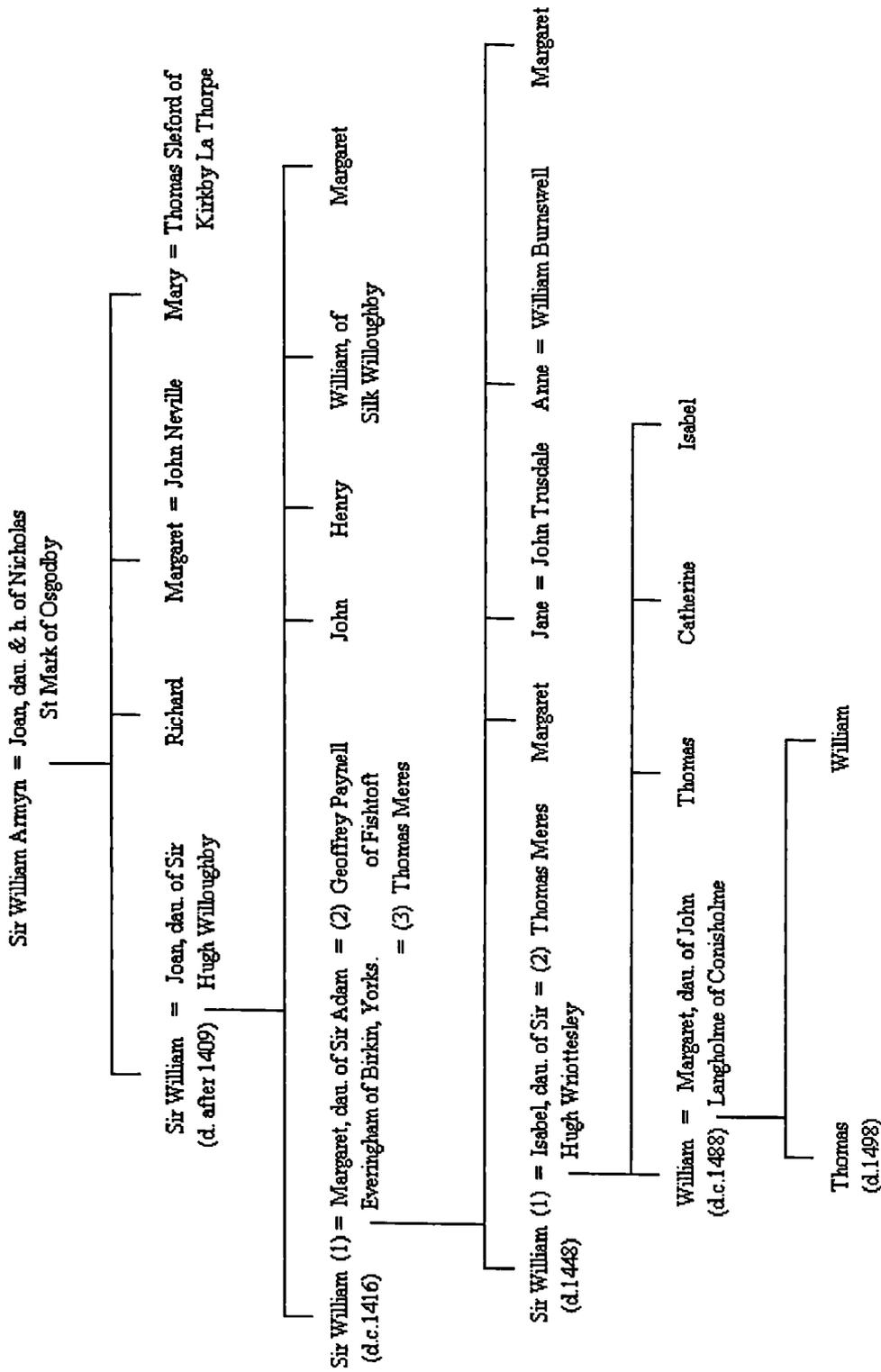
Appendix 5

Genealogical Tables

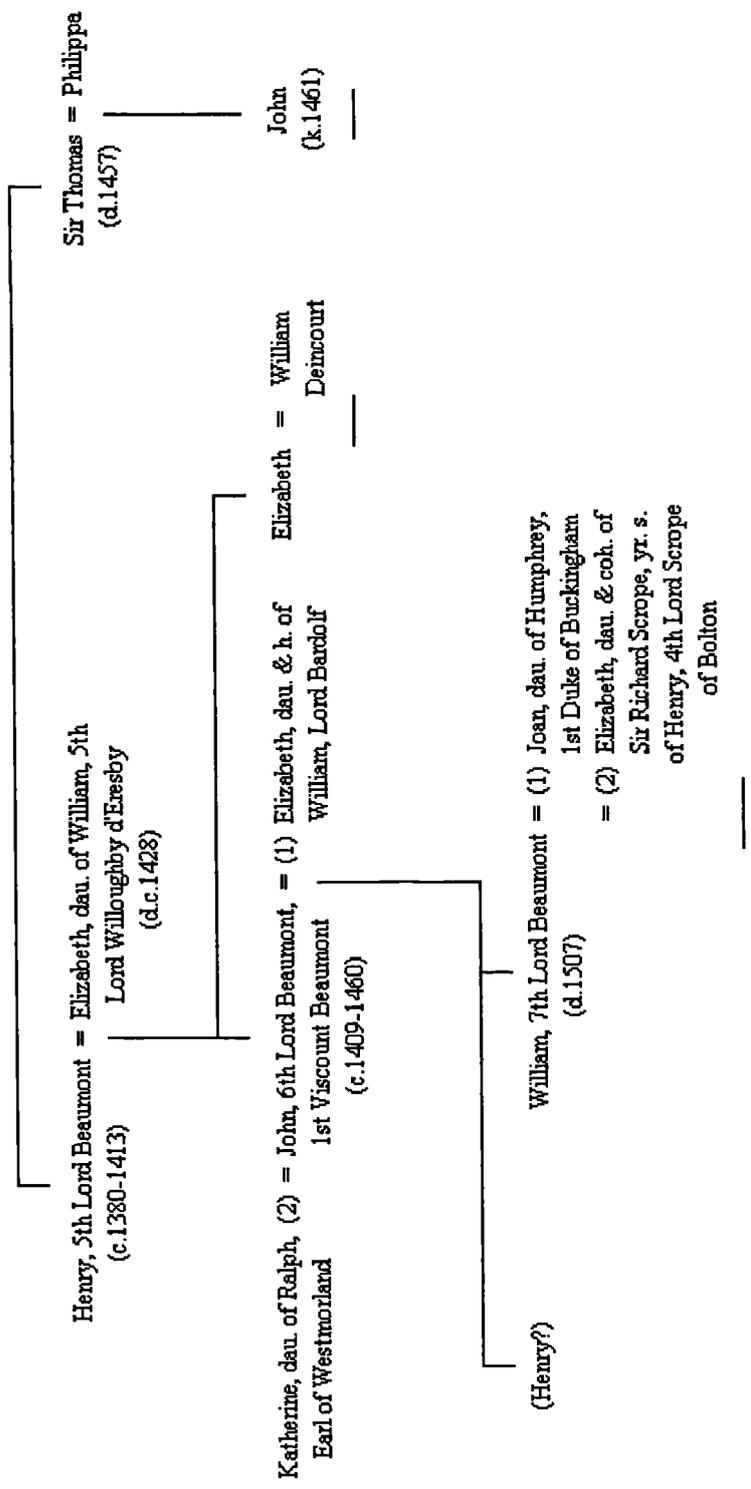
The following pages contain the pedigrees of a selected number of the more prominent noble and gentry families mentioned during the course of this thesis.

Only families for which sufficient information survives have been included. Many pedigrees are based upon those printed in A.R. Maddison (ed.), *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, 4 vols., Harleian Society, 1-1ii, 1v (1902-6). However, many of these contain inaccuracies, and corrections, based on a variety of sources, have been made where possible.

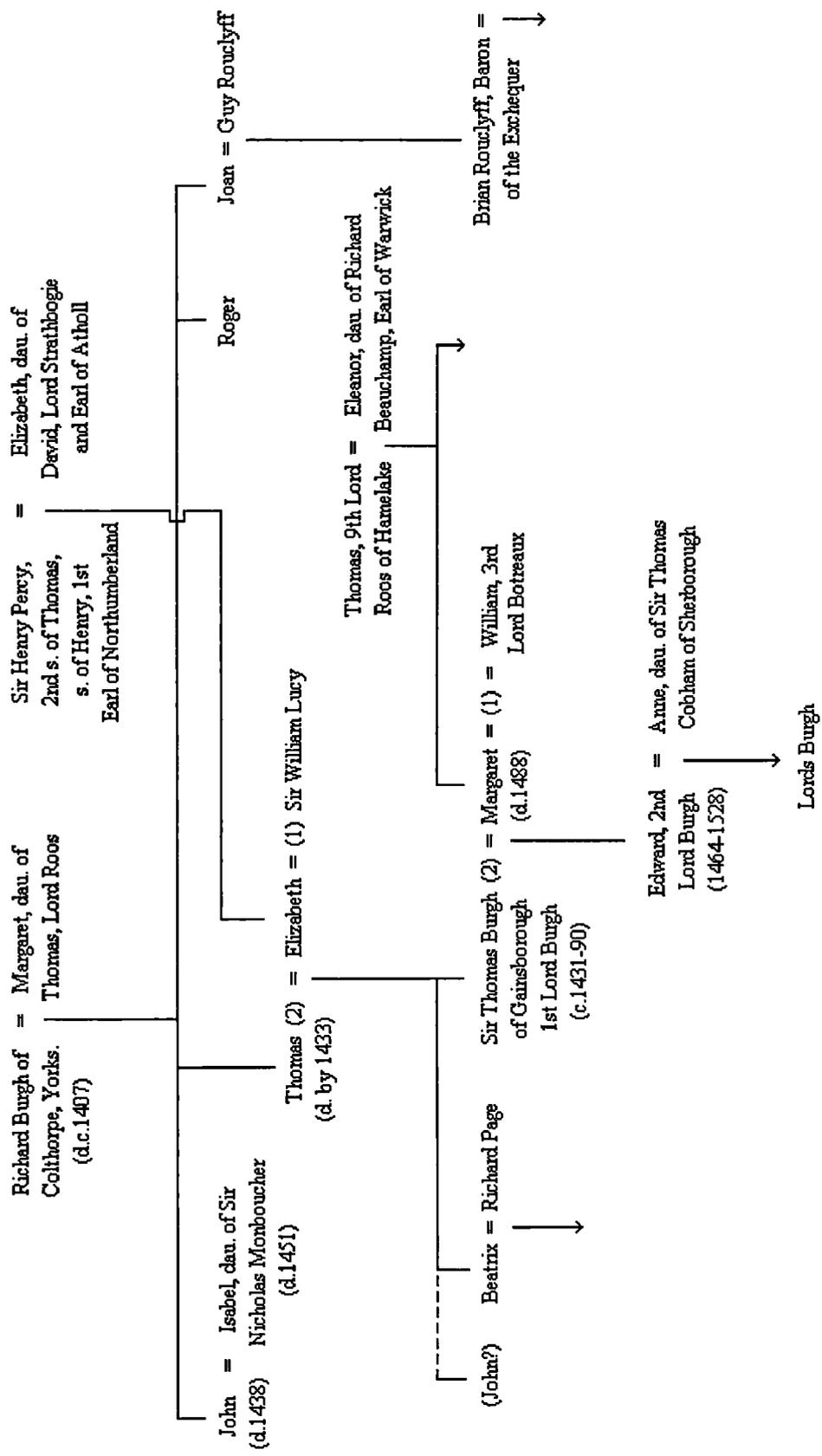
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Armyn of Osgodby



Beaumont



Burgh of Gainsborough

Sir William Bussy of = Isabel, dau. of Sir John
 Hougham, Lincs., & Paynell of Boothby
 Thistleton, Rutland
 (d.1380)

Sir Ralph Daubeney of (2) = Mary (2) = (3) Sir John (3) = (1) Maud, dau. & h. of Sir Philip Neville = (1) Sir William Cantelupe
 South Ingoldsby of Grimssthorpe & Scotton of Greaves, Notts.
 Sir John Multon of (1) = = (2) Sir Thomas Kydale
 Frampton of South Fernby

Sir John = Katherine, dau. of
 Robert Cumberworth

Sir John = Agnes, dau. of
 Hamo Sutton

Thomas Graa = Maud

John Wyrhecotes = Elizabeth, dau. & coh. of
 of Harpswell John Tirwhit of Harpswell

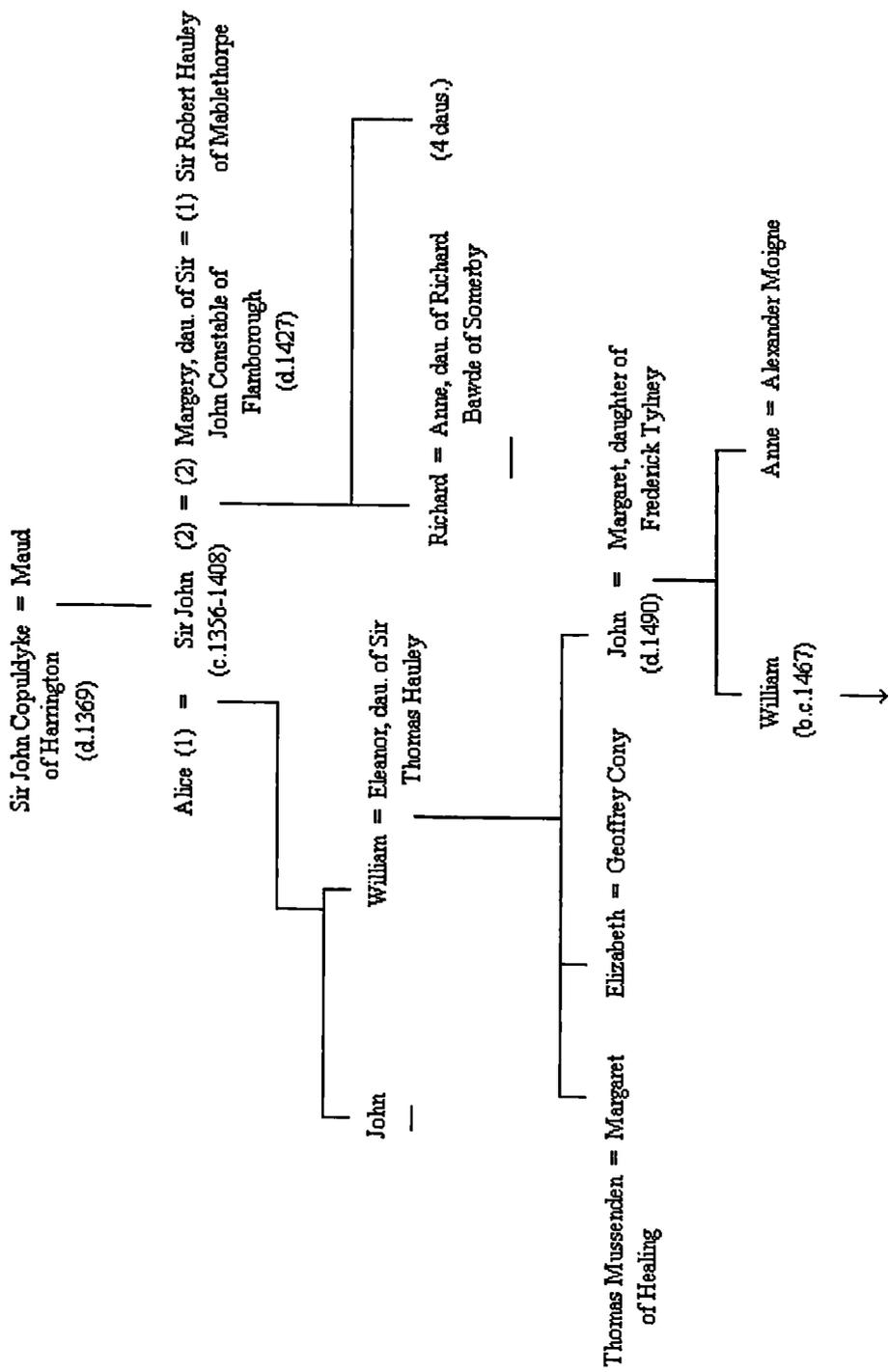
(3 daus.) Elizabeth, dau. of Sir = Sir John
 Laurence Berkeley of (d.1498)
 Wymondham, Leics.

Margaret, dau. (1) = Sir John Graa = (2) Thomasina, dau. of
 & h. of Sir Roger _____ Thomas Fauconer
 Swillington of _____ of London
 Swillington

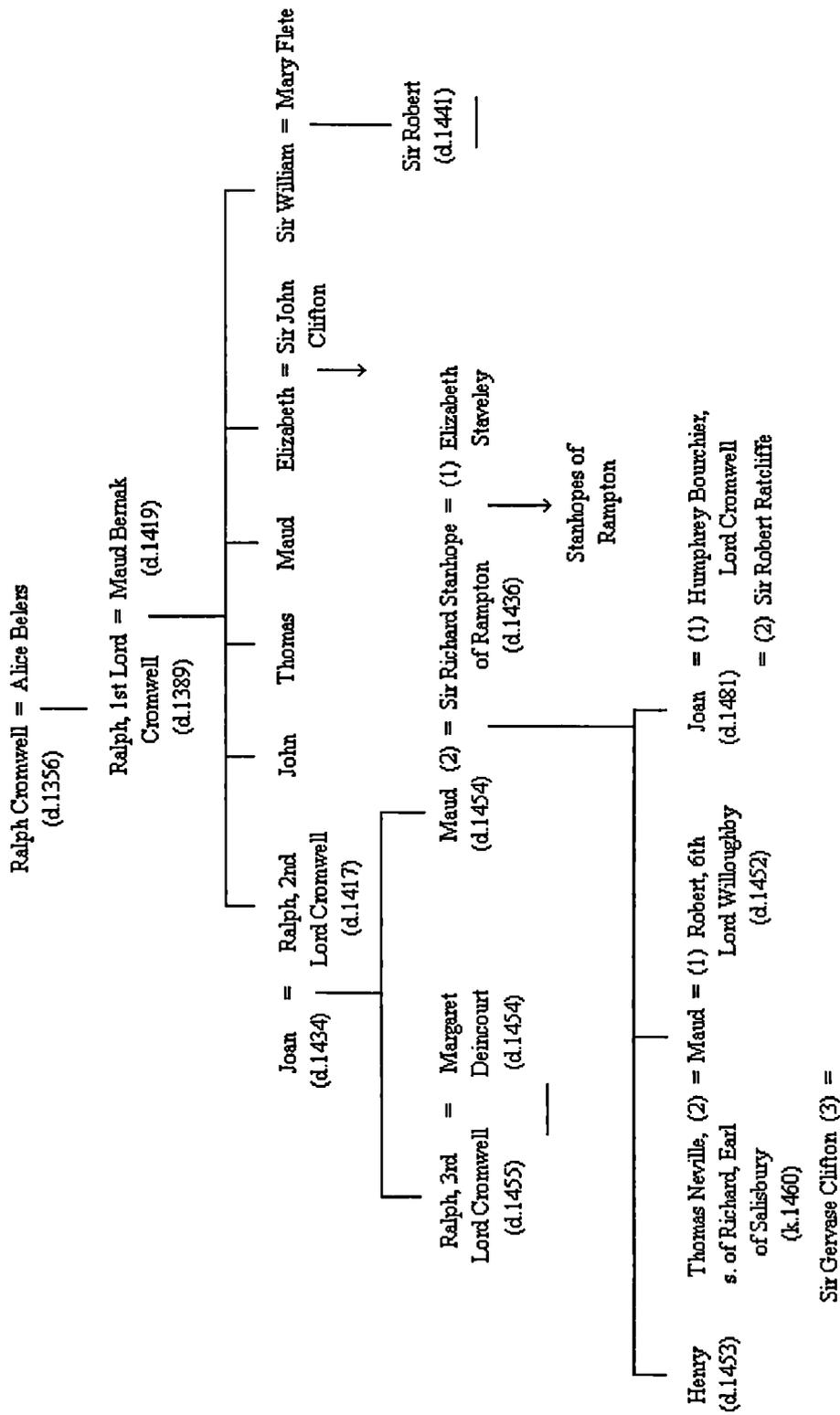
Hugh = Jane
 (d. by 1498)

Sir Miles = Margaret, dau. of
 (b.c.1477) Henry Foljambe of
 Walton, Derbys.

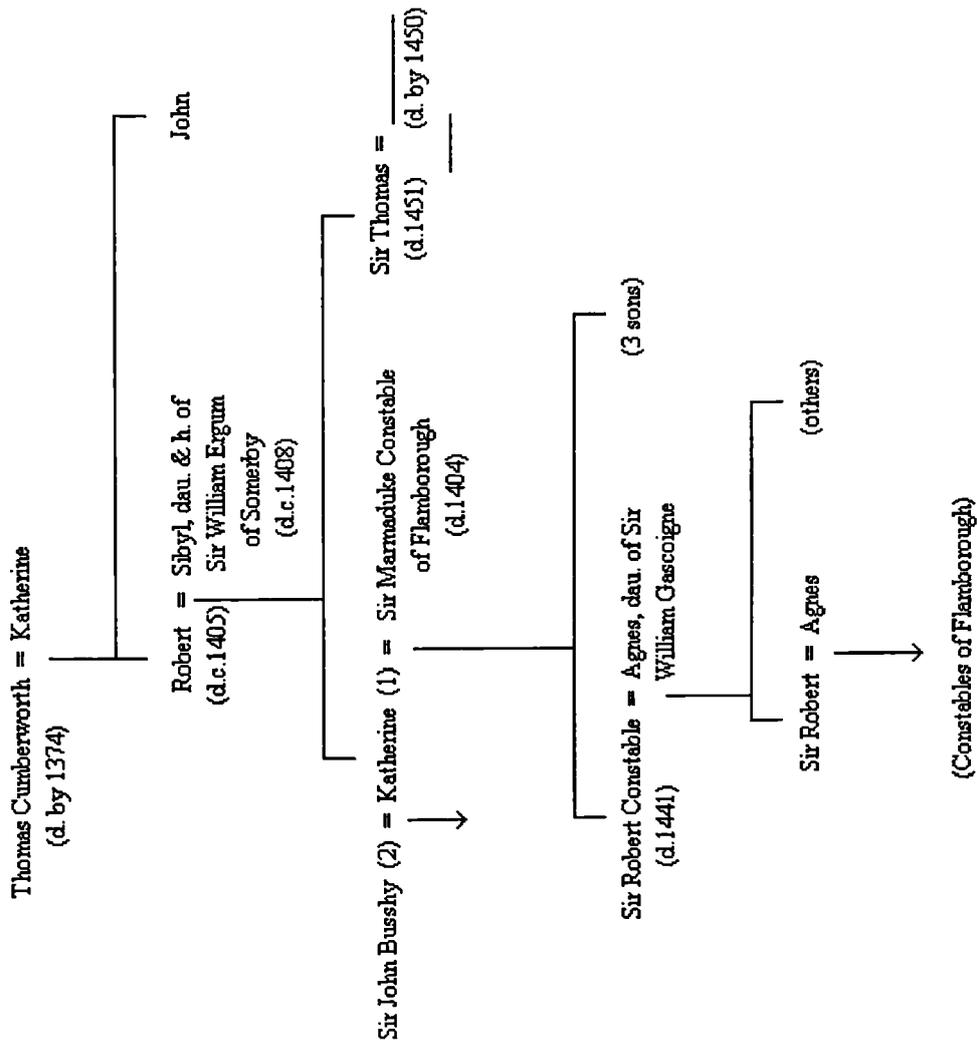
Bussy of Hougham



Copuldyke of Harrington



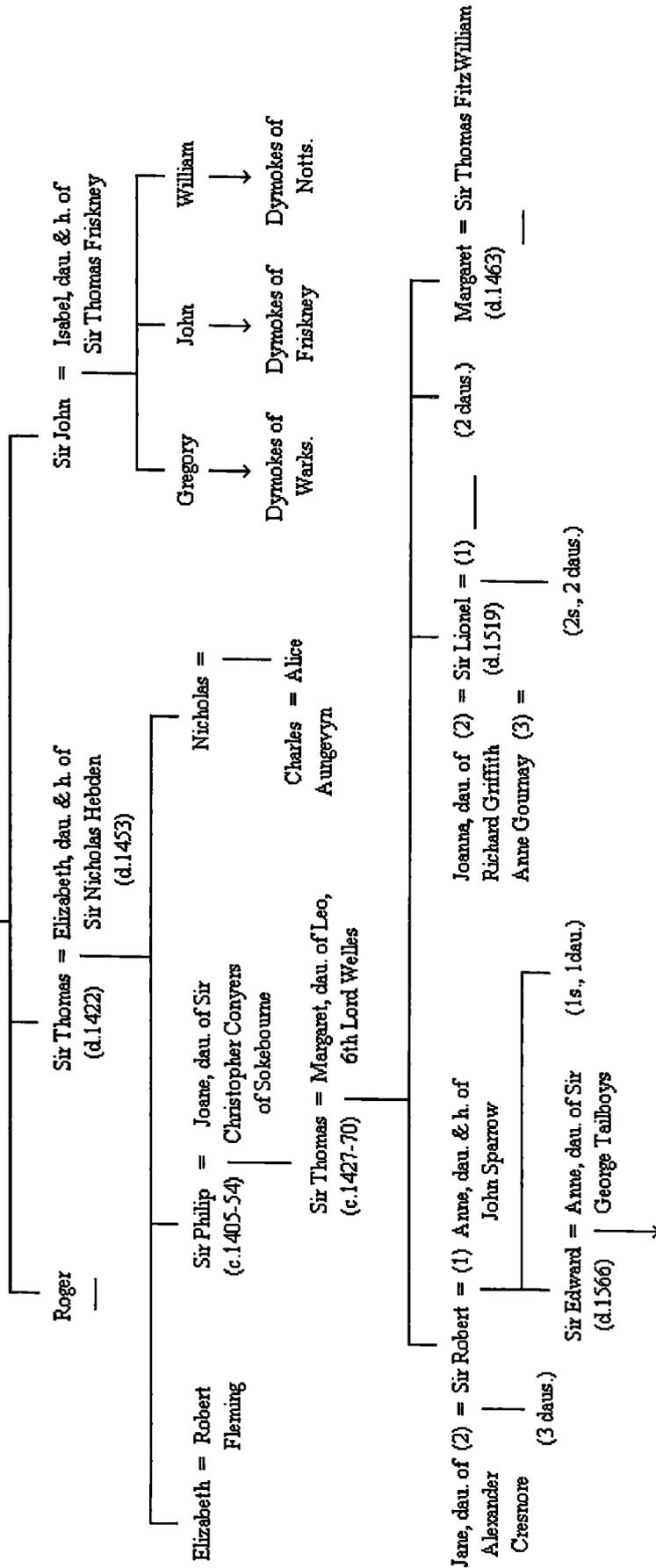
Cromwell



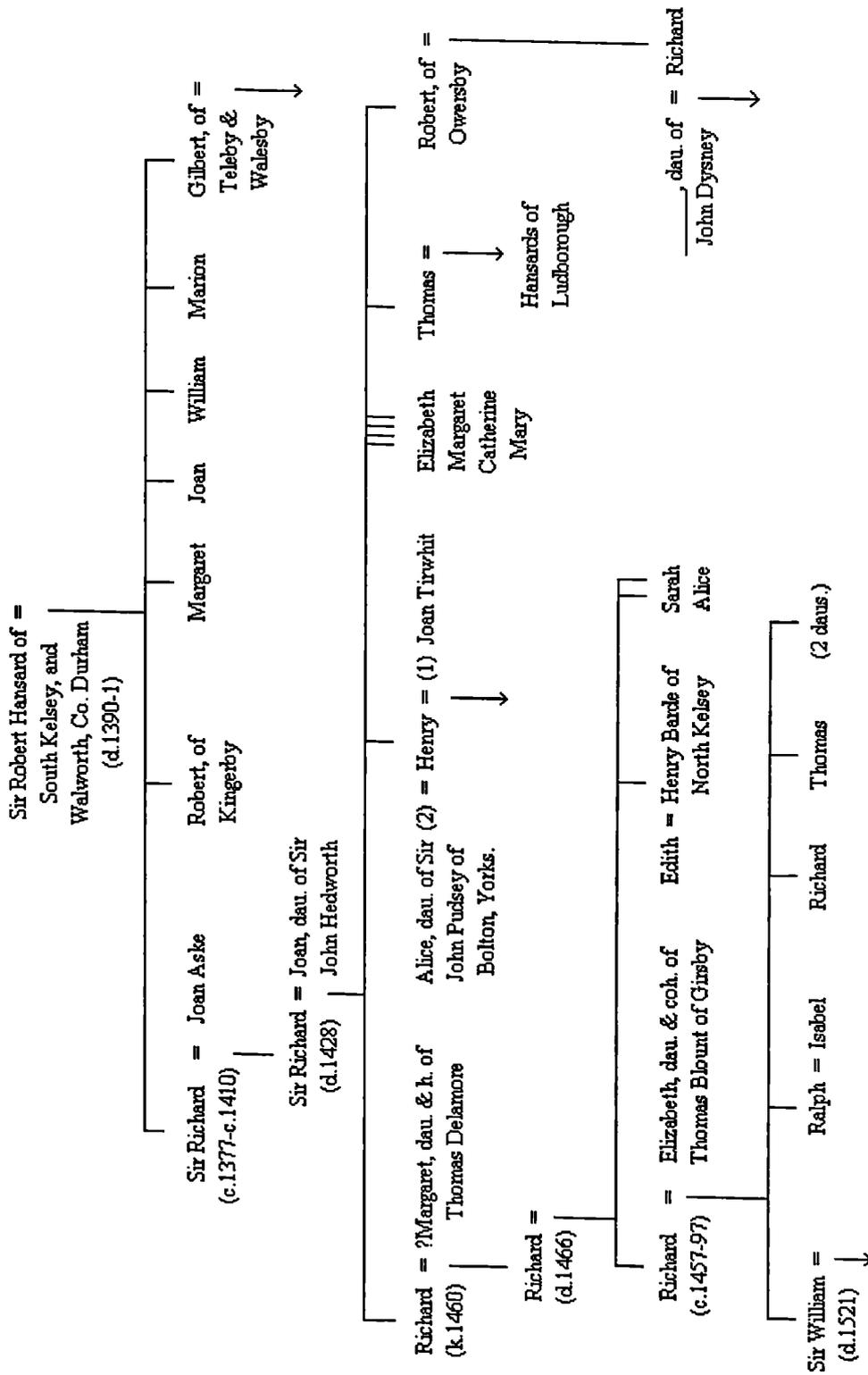
Cumberworth of Somerby

Sir Thomas Ludlow (2) = Joana, dau. & h. of Philip = (1) Sir Henry Hillary
 Marmion, Lord of Scrivelsby

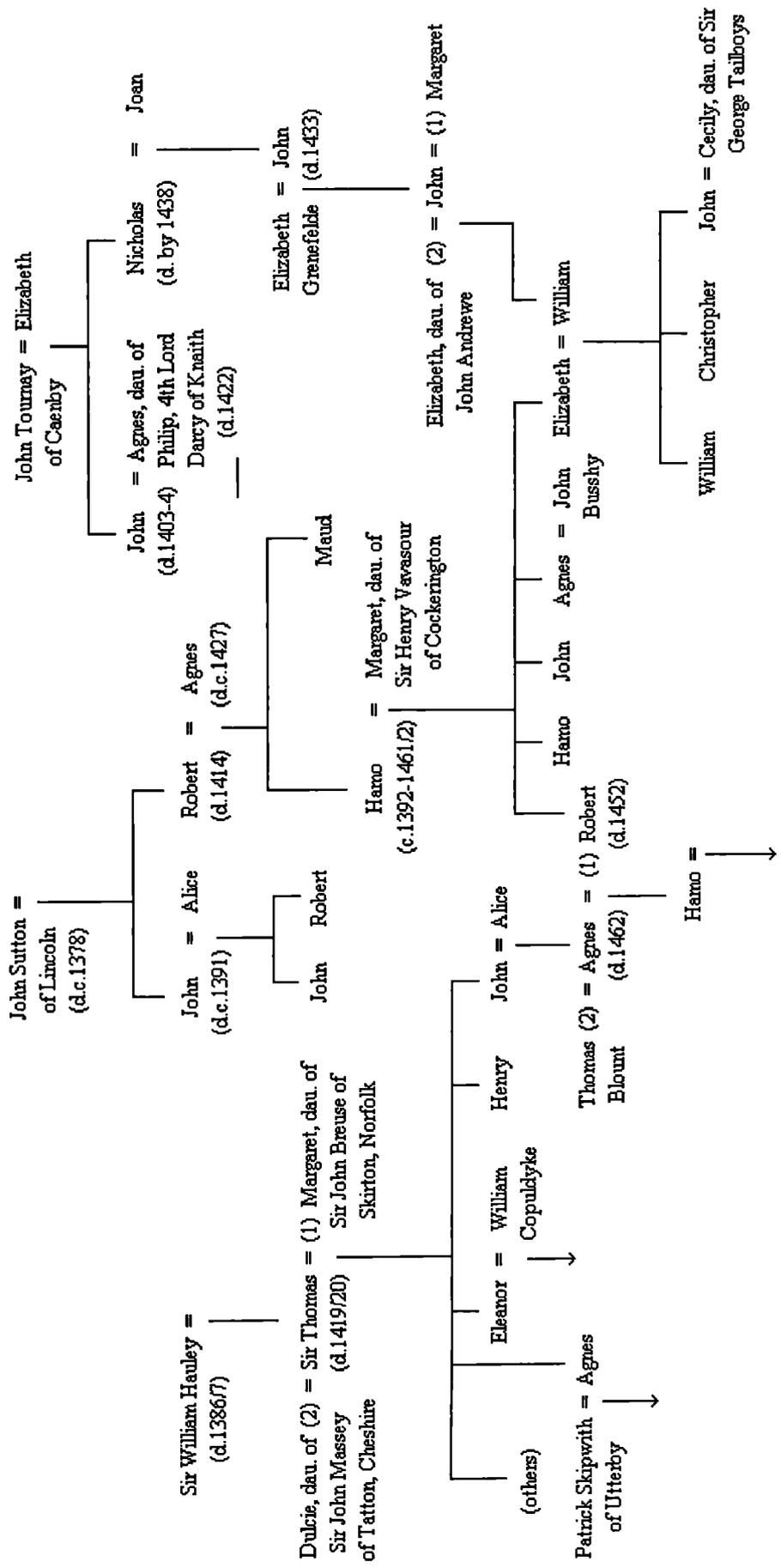
Sir John Dymoke of = Margaret
 Dymock, Glos. (d.1414)



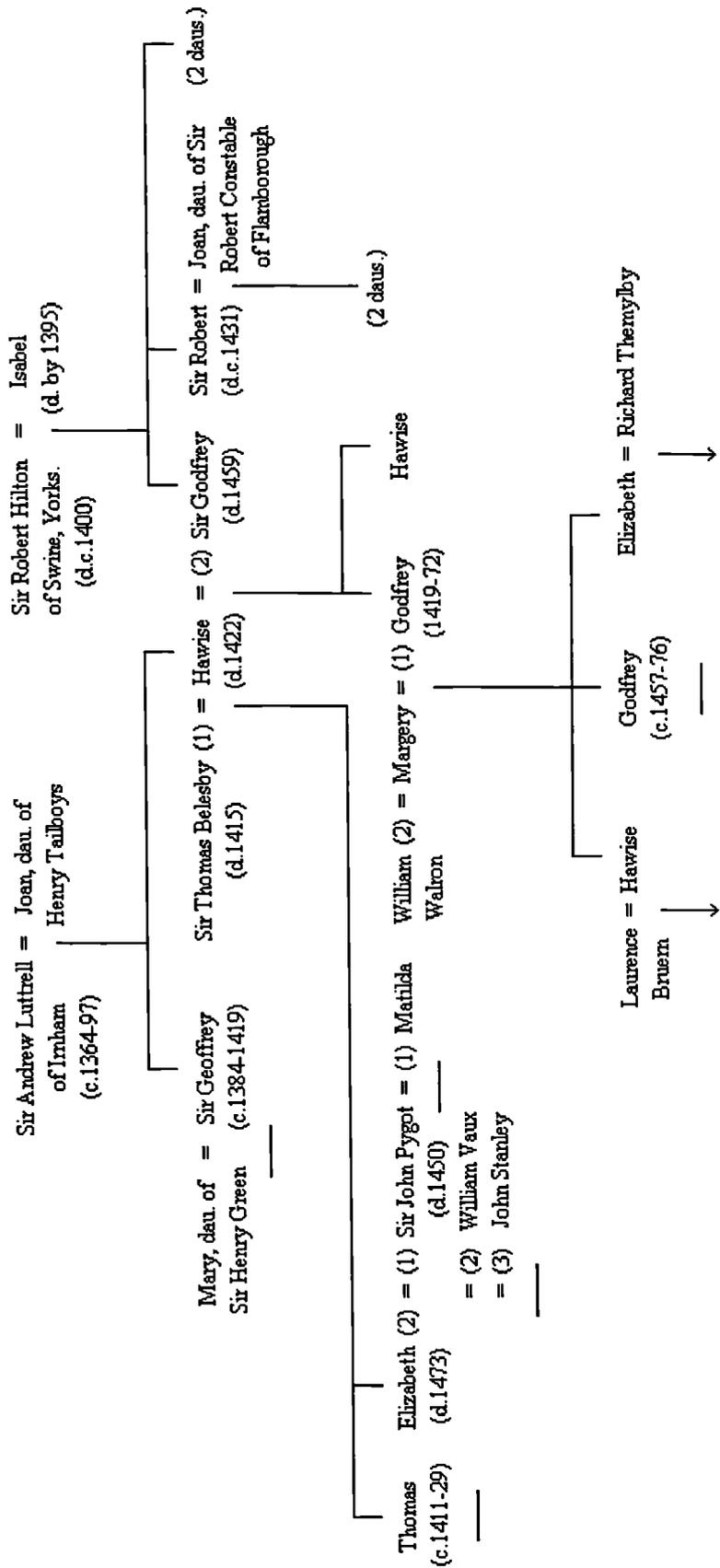
Dymoke of Scrivelsby



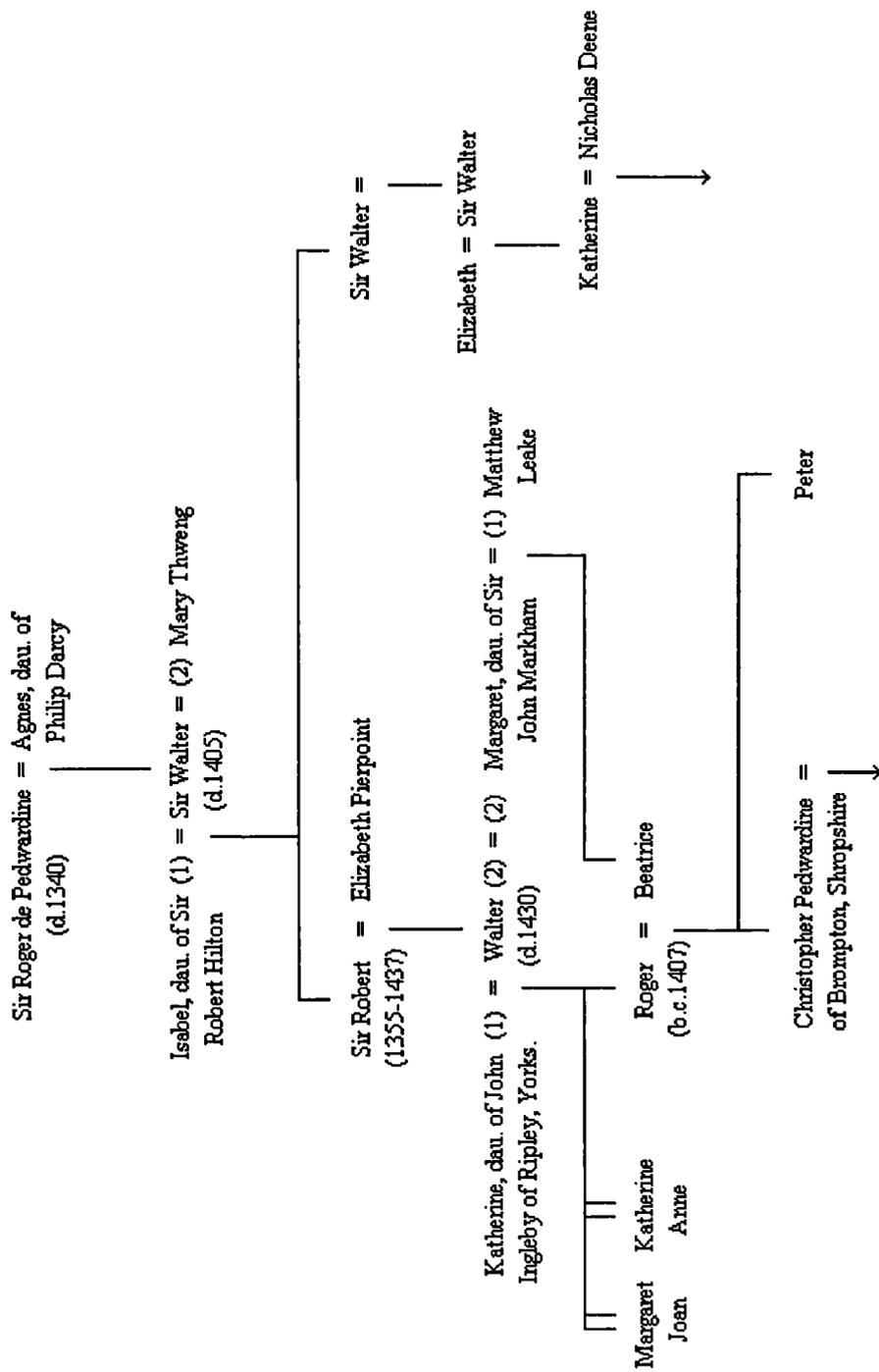
Hansard of South Kelsey



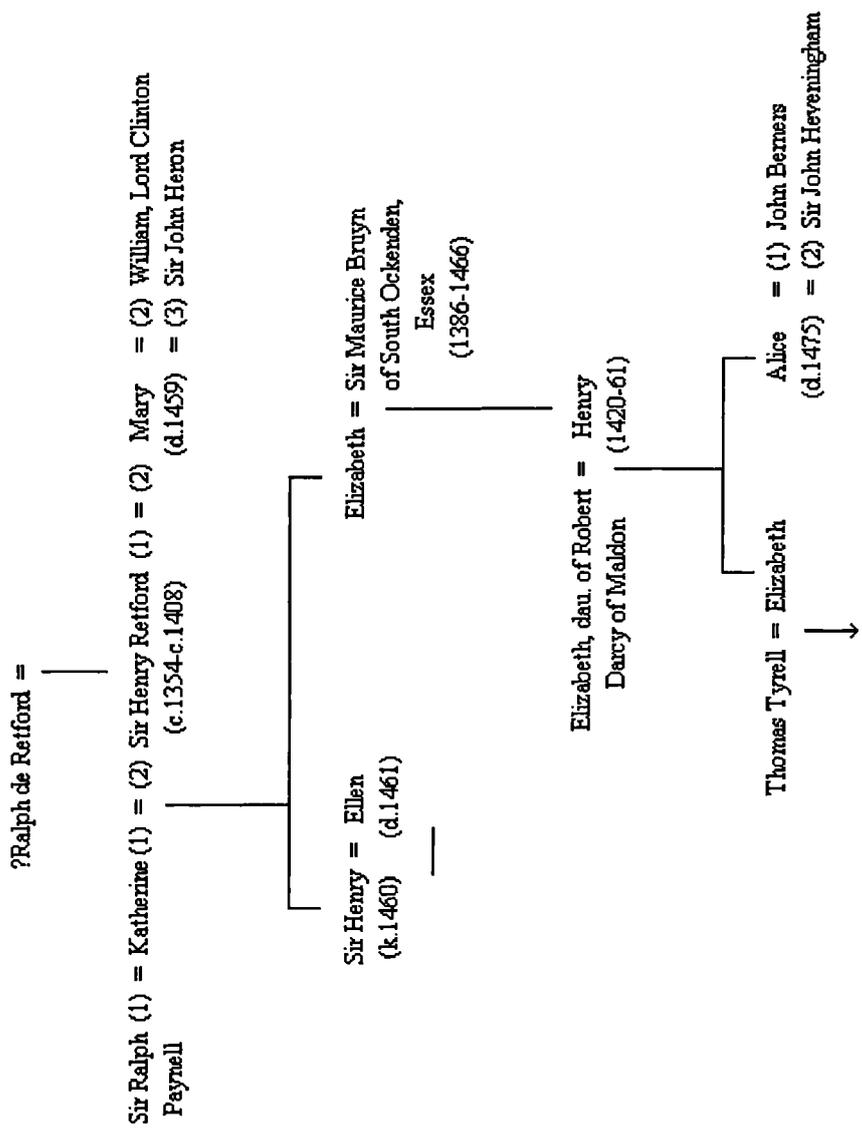
Hauley of Girsby & Sutton of Burton



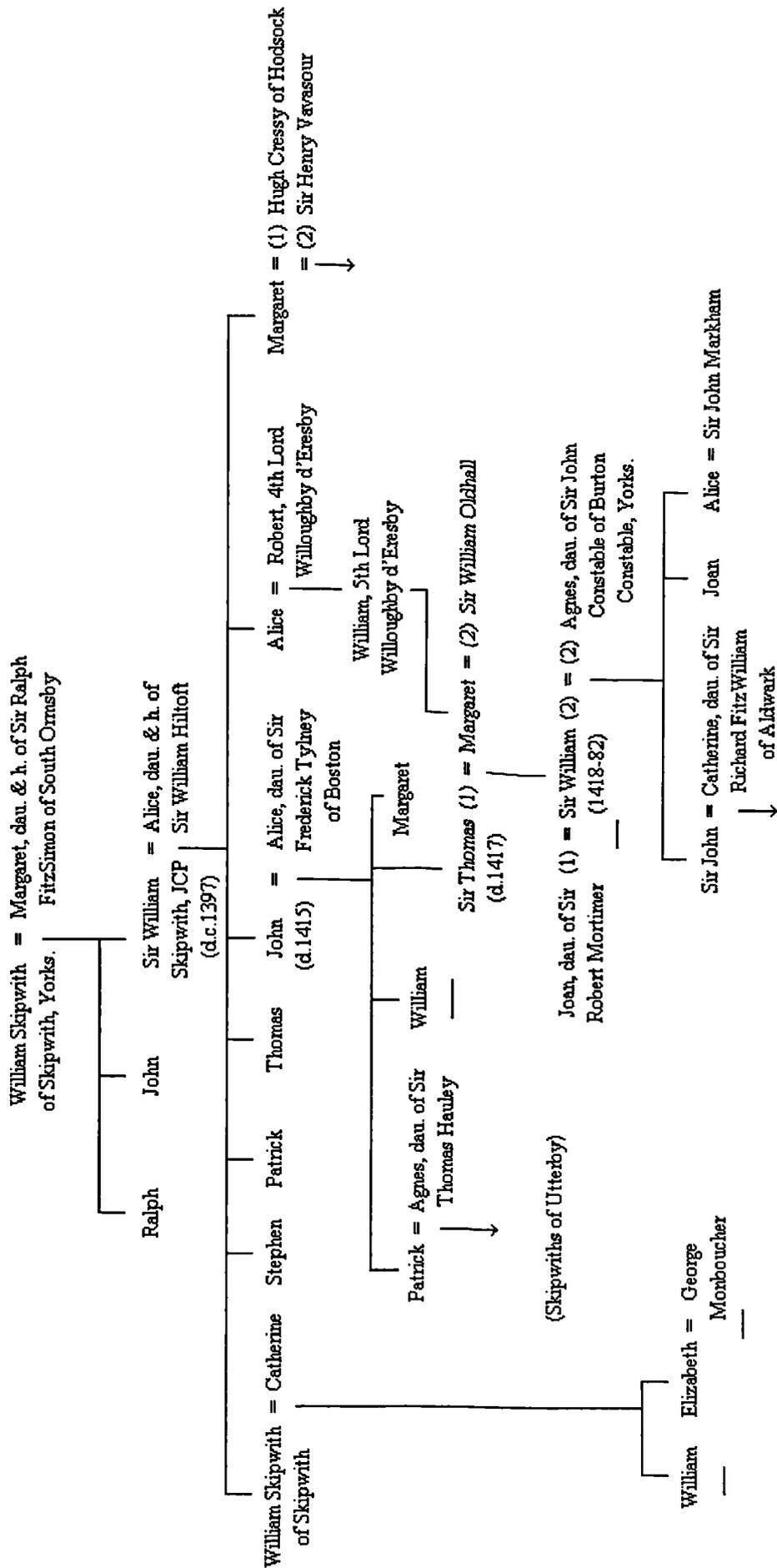
Hilton of Irnham



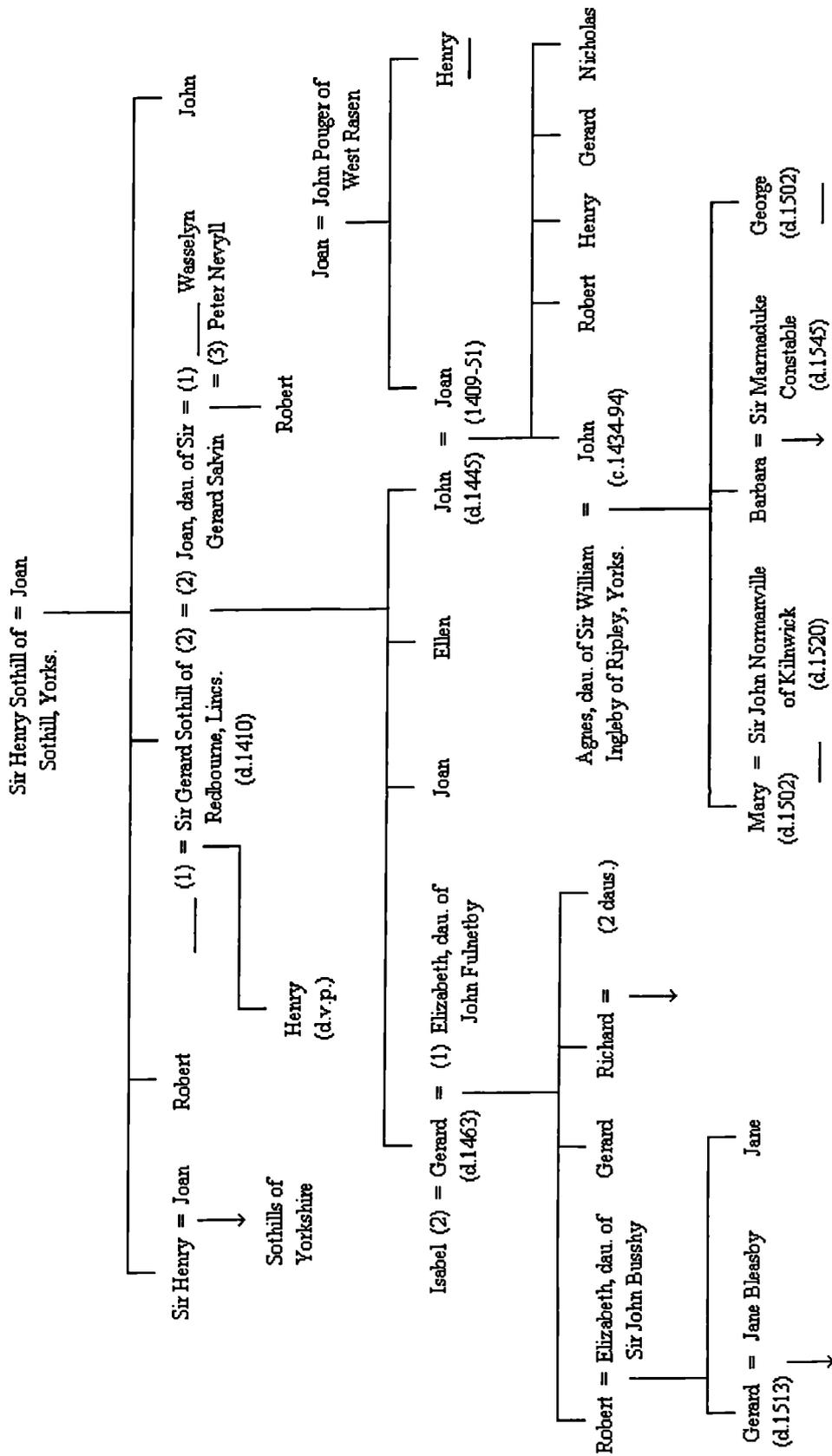
Pedwardine of Burton Pedwardine



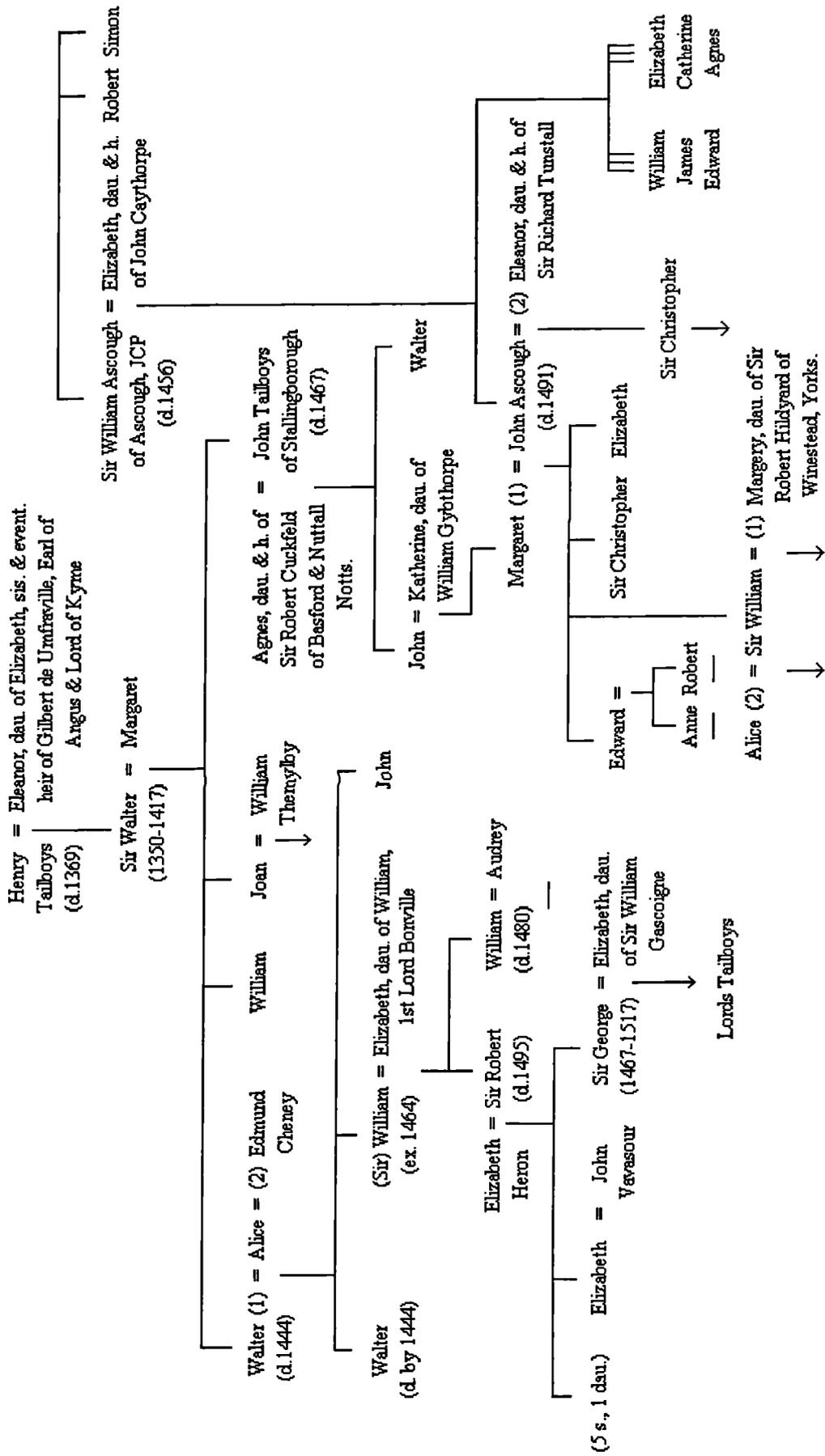
Retford of Castlethorpe



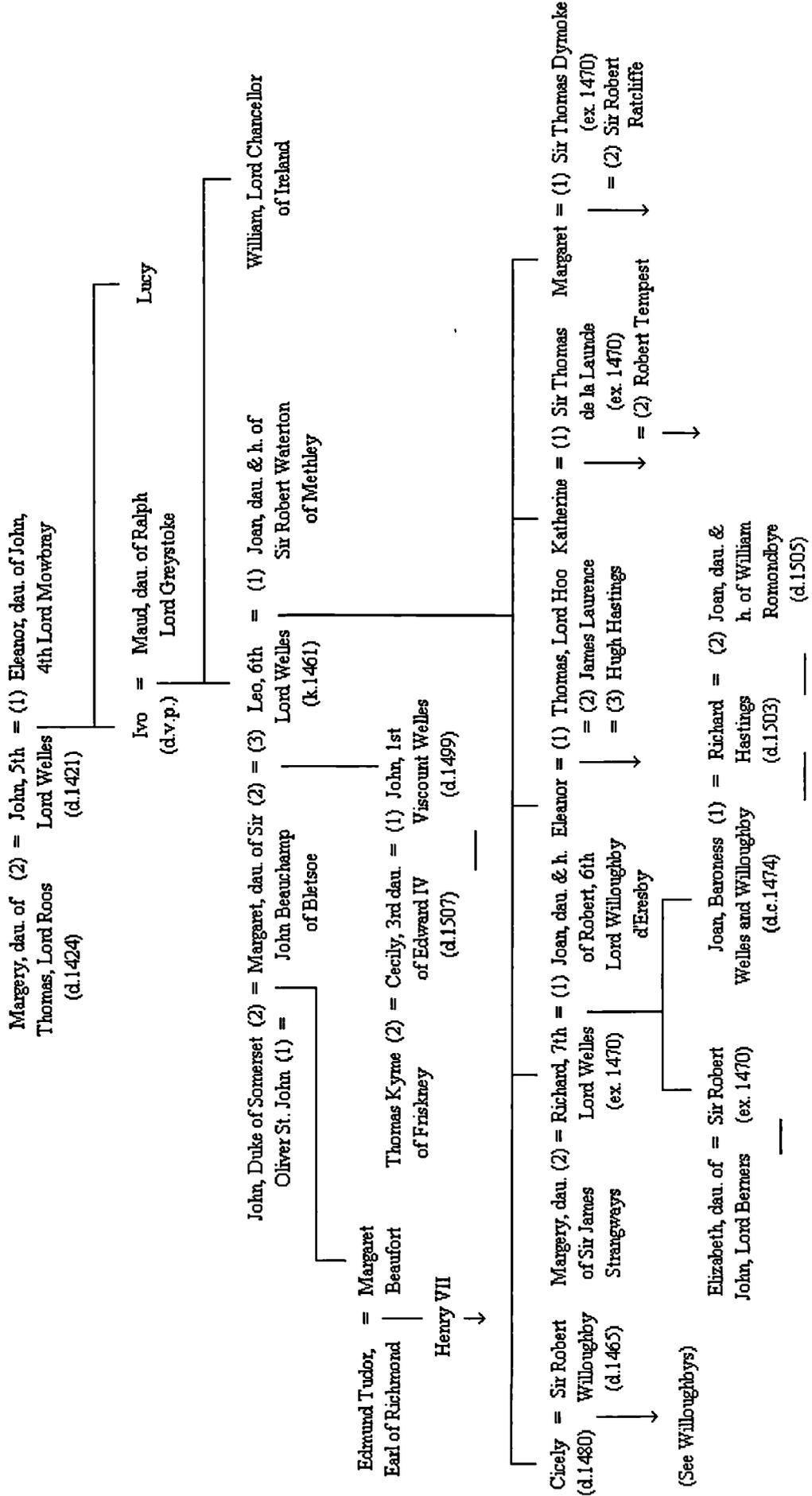
Skipwith of South Ormsby



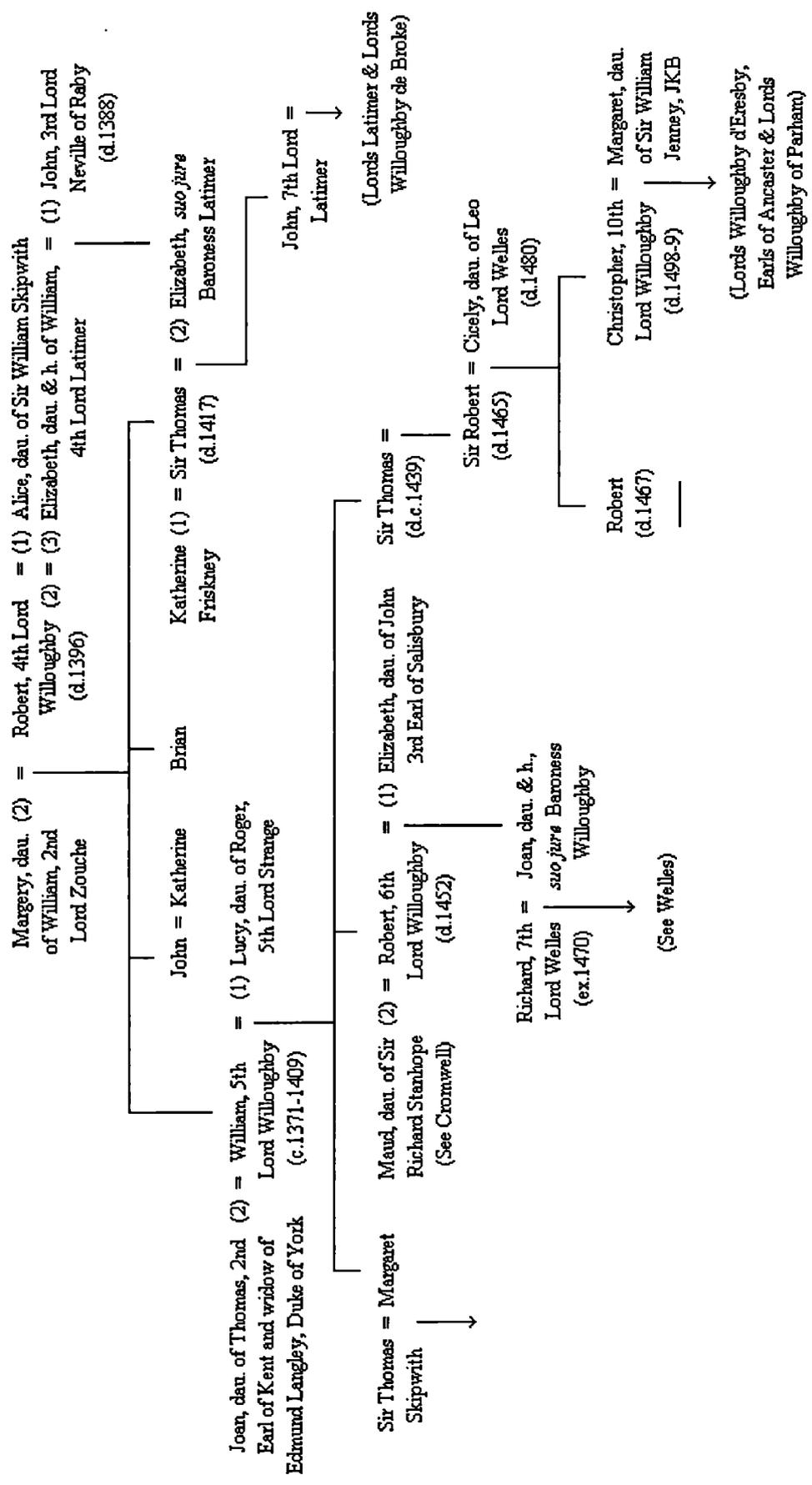
Sothill of Redbourne



Tailboys of South Kyme



Welles



Willoughby

Appendix 6

Biographical Details of Selected Lincolnshire Families

Ascough

Originally from Bedale, Yorkshire, the Lincolnshire Ascoughs (or Ayscoughs) were a branch of the same family as William Ascough, the Bishop of Salisbury murdered during the political turmoil of 1450, and their Lincolnshire interests were founded by Sir William Ascough, JCP (d.1456), who married the heiress of the Caythorpe family. (Jacob, *Fifteenth Century*, pp.495-6; Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xliii.) William's son, John, significantly increased the family estates through his marriage to the heiress of the junior Tailboys line, gaining their family seat at Stallingborough, and held various local offices. He was appointed sheriff in 1470, during the Readeption of Henry VI, but was dismissed by the returning Yorkists, and remained largely inactive thereafter. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.43.) In the sixteenth century, the family achieved much greater prominence. They added to their lands through marriage to the heiress of the Hansards of South Kelsey, while another Sir William Ascough became one of the leaders of the Lincolnshire Rising of 1536. (Hodgett, *Tudor Lincolnshire*, pp.30-3, 64, etc..)

Bowet

Sir Nicholas Bowet of Rippingale was one of the most prominent office holders in Lincolnshire, and especially Kesteven, during Henry VI's reign. However, little is known about his family or his origins, although he may possibly have been a relative of Henry Bowet, Archbishop of York (1407-23). He married Elizabeth, only daughter and heiress of Sir John de la Zouche and his wife Margaret, daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Burgh of Kirklington, Nottinghamshire, and from his commissions he probably died around 1473. Putnam states that he left a son, William, but he is also said to have left two daughters and co-heiresses: Elizabeth, who married Sir William Chaworth and then John Dunham; and Margaret, who married John Chaworth. (Putnam, *Proceedings*, p.21; *Test. Ebor.*, ii, pp.153, 222; Payling, *Political Society*, p.243.) Both may be true, and William may have died young and childless.

Burgh

The Burghs had been settled at Cowthorpe in the North Riding of Yorkshire from at least the thirteenth century, and only gained Lincolnshire interests in the fifteenth century. Richard Burgh, a retainer of Thomas Mowbray, Earl Marshal, Earl of Nottingham and later Duke of Norfolk, left two sons, the eldest

of whom, John, may have been the John Burgh who attested the Lincolnshire election of 1436. (*C.P.*, ix, pp.601-4; Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.41ff; *Test. Ebor.*, i, pp.347-8.) He died childless in 1438, and after the death of his wife, Isabel, in 1451, his lands passed to the Rouclyff family, the children of his sister, Joan. (C219/15/1; C139/144/35; *CCR 1454-61*, p.51) This effectively disinherited the children of his younger brother, Thomas, who had married Elizabeth, widow of Sir William Lucy and the heiress of a junior branch of the Percy Earls of Northumberland. Their son, Sir Thomas, inherited only modest estates. He gained the manor of Couseby from his father, while his mother's lands consisted of the Northumberland barony of Mitford and the Lincolnshire manor of Gainsborough, which became his home. (Gunn, 'Burgh Family', pp.8-9; *C.P.*, ii, p.422; Bohna, 'Informal Government', pp.55-6.) Sir Thomas joined the Yorkists from an early stage, possibly through his Stafford connections, becoming a friend and supporter of Edward IV, and the chief royal agent in Lincolnshire throughout Yorkist period. (See above, Chapters 6 & 7; *W.B.*, p.136; Rawcliffe, *Staffords*, pp.55-6, 200, 225.) He was a prominent royal household officer, a Knight of the Body and Master of the Horse to Edward IV, was created a Knight of the Garter by Richard III, and was elevated to the peerage as Lord Burgh of Gainsborough by Henry VII in 1487. Sir Thomas died on 18 March 1496, and was buried at Gainsborough, where he built the famous Old Hall, probably as a replacement for the house destroyed prior to the 1470 Rebellion. He was succeeded by his son, Edward, but Thomas' successors failed to build upon his successful career, and the family died out during the sixteenth century. John Burgh, escheator of Lincolnshire in 1463 and a Lindsey JP in 1470, may have been a brother of Sir Thomas, but there is no firm evidence. (Bohna, 'Informal Government', p.80.) Wedgwood states that this is the same man as the Lancastrian Yeoman of the Crown and MP for Wallingford in 1453, but the dates make this impossible. (*W.B.*, p.134.) Wedgwood's other assertion, that this man was from a cadet branch of the Burghs of Gainsborough, is only possible if he was Sir Thomas' brother. He may have been from another cadet branch of the Yorkshire Burghs, but there may also have been at least one other Burgh family in Lincolnshire during the fifteenth century.

Busshy

One of Lincolnshire's great knightly families, the Busshys (or Bussys) were seated at Hougham, Kesteven, from at least the thirteenth century. (Roskell, *Commons and their Speakers*, pp.350-1.) The family had provided Lincolnshire officials from at least the early fourteenth century, with Sir Hugh Busshy serving as sheriff in 1300-02, and had grown in local importance throughout the century. The most famous member of the family was undoubtedly Sir John Busshy, whose career in local and national politics, including three terms as Speaker of the Commons, has been well-documented. He was one of the most detested of Richard II's closest associates, and it was no surprise when he was targeted by the victorious Lancastrians, arrested at Bristol, and executed on 29 July 1399. (Roskell, 'Parliamentary Representation of Lincolnshire', p.62; *H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.449-54; Roskell, 'Bussy'.) His lands were originally forfeited by his attainder, but at least a significant proportion, including Hougham, was restored to his son in 1408-9. In 1382 Sir John had married the notorious Maud Neville, the

twice-widowed daughter and heiress of Sir Philip Neville of Scotton. She was almost certainly responsible for the murder of her first husband, Sir William Cantilupe, but escaped punishment through the influence the incumbent sheriff, Sir Thomas Kydale, who shortly afterwards became her short-lived second husband! She brought Sir John the significant estates of her father, including the manor of Scotton, and also large dower estates from the Cantilupes. By the time of his execution, Sir John had accumulated a massive estate: the Kesteven manors of Hougham, Manton, Willoughby, Great Hale, Haceby, Ingoldsby, Silkeby and Dembleby; the manor of Dowdike and lands in the townships of Spalding, Surfleet, Pinchbeck, Gosberton and Quadring, all in Holland and all purchased in 1398-9; the manor of Cottesmore and lands in Thistleton in Rutland; and the manors of Wigsley, Spalford, Balderton, Farndon, Syerston and Elston in eastern Nottinghamshire. (Roskell, 'Bussy', p.30.) With the exception of the Holland lands, all these formed a relatively compact and wealthy estate, and while it is unclear how much his son, Sir John, actually managed to recover, he still held lands in Lincolnshire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire worth £100 in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.4d.) This Sir John was probably also the Kesteven JP of the 1430s, while the John who sat for a few months in 1458 was probably his grandson (d.1498) rather than his son (d.1459). However, the family remained comparatively inactive for many years following the events of 1399, and it is often difficult to distinguish between the long line of Johns who headed the family until 1498. The Busshys finally began to re-emerge as a political force under the Yorkists, when the latter Sir John regained his seat on the Kesteven bench and, in 1479, became the first Busshy to become sheriff of Lincolnshire since 1391.

Copuldyke

The Copuldykes acquired their seat at Harrington, in the South Riding of Lindsey, in the fourteenth century, before which they had been resident at 'Copuldyke's manor' in Freiston, held of the Lords Roos. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxvii; Thompson, *Boston*, pp.502-3.) They also held the manors of Aswardby, Fordington, Friskney, Tytton and Frampton, and other lands in Lincolnshire, Norfolk & Suffolk. (*CIPM*, xiii, no.21; 2nd ser., i, no.1041; *H.C.*, 1386-1421, ii, pp.649-51.) Sir John Copuldyke (d.1408), a ward of Sir William Hauley after his father's death, was twice sheriff of Lincolnshire, held many other local offices, and also fought in Henry IV's Welsh campaigns. Following his death, he was initially succeeded by his eldest son, John, a clergyman, and then by his second son, William. William was far less prominent in local affairs than his father, and held few local offices beyond his single term as sheriff in 1426-7. His son, John, was to be arrested after the Readeption, but he recovered to serve as sheriff in 1488, and died in 1490, when he was succeeded by his son, another William. A junior branch of the Copuldyke family was also involved in local affairs in the fifteenth century, being seated at Frampton.

Cromwell

The younger son of Ralph, 1st Lord Cromwell, Sir William Cromwell held lands in Driby, Winthorpe, Fleet, Tydd St Mary, Sutton and Boston. He served as a JP in Holland and Lindsey, and had also fought in France for Henry V, probably alongside his friend, Lord Willoughby. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.53.) He died in 1428, while in 1436 his widow, Margaret, was taxed on an income of £43 in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Berkshire. (E179/136/198, m.4.) He was initially succeeded by his only son, Sir Robert, a minor in the wardship of Ralph, 3rd Lord Cromwell, but Robert died childless in 1441, and his lands passed back to the main line of the family.

Cumberworth

The Cumberworths were briefly one of most prominent families in Lincolnshire, following the marriage of Robert Cumberworth (d.1405) to Sibyl, daughter and co-heiress of Sir William Ergum of Argam, Yorkshire. Robert's father, Thomas, had a prosperous if uneventful career, but Sibyl brought Robert her father's Lincolnshire estates, including the manor of Somerby, and Robert rose in county society, sitting as MP for Lincolnshire in 1393 and 1395. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.711-13.) He was succeeded by his son, Sir Thomas, who rapidly became a mainstay of the Lincolnshire administration, serving for over 40 years in various offices. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, ii, pp.713-5; Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.53.) In 1432, Thomas gained the rest of the Ergum inheritance, including Argam, on the death of his aunt, Gilian Aske, and added these to his existing Lincolnshire estates. These included lands in Somerby, Stain, Searby, Theddlethorpe and Bondby, and Thomas enjoyed an assessed income of £160 in 1436. (*F.A.*, iii, pp.257, 271, 284, etc.; E179/136/198, m.3.) He was a prominent royal servant, and entrusted with the task of guarding the captive Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon during the 1420s and 1430s. He died in 1451, leaving a famous will containing lavish bequests to his friends and family, but which also showed his contempt for elaborate funerals. (Clark, *Lincoln Diocese Documents*, pp.44-57; Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills*, pp.45-57; C139/143/29.) He died childless, and his lands passed to the Constables of Flamborough, the family into which his sister, Katherine, had married.

De La Launde

The De la Laundes may possibly have originated from Launde in Leicestershire, but gained estates in Holland and Kesteven, and had settled at Ashby during the thirteenth century, the village thus taking the name Ashby de la Launde. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxviii.) At least two branches were active by the fifteenth century, but the relationship between them is unclear and the pedigrees are extremely confused. (Maddison, *Pedigrees*, i, p.293; iv, pp.1192-4.) A John de la Launde of Pinchbeck was escheator of Lincolnshire, 1401-2, while another line became seated at Horbling and Gosberton. The family rose to prominence in the mid-fifteenth century, when Sir Thomas de la Launde married

Margaret, daughter and presumably heiress of Nicholas Tye of North Witham, and left a son Richard (d.1444), who was in turn succeeded by his son, Thomas. (C139/116/40; Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.77.) Thomas married Katherine, daughter of Leo, Lord Welles, ties which led him to follow his nephew, Sir Robert Welles, in the Rebellion of 1470. Captured after the Battle of Lose-Cote Field, he was brought to Edward IV at Grantham and executed on 15 March 1470. (*Chronicle*, p.112; *Paston Letters*, ed. Davis, ii, pp.432-3.) Although he was not formally attainted until 1475, his lands were forfeited; this was a substantial estate, including the manors of Sutton, Tydd St Mary, Gosberton, Morton, Surfleet, Witham on the Hill, North Witham, Horbling, Helpringham, Austhorpe, Newton and Walcote, along with Upton (Nottinghamshire), Tydd St Giles (Cambridgeshire), and other lands in Lincolnshire and elsewhere. (C145/327/46; *CPR 1467-77*, pp.297, 543, 560; *R.P.*, vi, p.144.) He supposedly left a son, Thomas (who died childless), and two daughters: Jane, who married Thomas Denton of Denton; and Margaret, who married Thomas Berkley. He may possibly have also left another son, Richard. (Maddison, *Pedigrees*, iv, pp.1192-4; Baker-Cresswell & Craster, 'Ellington', pp.11-12.) The younger Thomas was probably the man knighted by Henry VII at Blackheath on 17 June 1497, and who served as sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1498. (Metcalf, *Book of Knights*, p.30; Foster, 'Templum', p.133.)

Dymoke

Originally from Dymock, Gloucestershire, the Dymokes moved to Lincolnshire during the fourteenth century following the marriage of Sir John Dymoke to the heiress of Ludlow family. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, pp.xxxvii-xxxviii.) The Ludlows themselves were the heirs of the Marmion family, from whom the Dymokes inherited the office of hereditary King's Champion, a duty performed by the Dymokes at all fifteenth-century coronations. The family seat at Scrivelsby, the manor associated with the office of Champion, was supposedly held by barony by the Marmions, but the Dymokes held it by grand serjeanty. (C139/158/30; Massingberd, 'Scrivelsby'.) The Dymokes remained relatively prominent in Lincolnshire throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and were one of the few families who consistently retained their knightly status. The lands of Sir Philip (d.1454) and his mother Elizabeth were assessed at a total of £100 in 1436 (E179/136/198, m.3), and included the Lincolnshire manors of Howell, Claypole, Great Gonerby and Ewerby Thorpe, and the manors of Lee and Hognorton, Oxfordshire, and Norton and Eske, Yorkshire. (C139/150/30; C139/158/30; *F.A.*, iii, pp.331, 342; Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.56.) Sir Philip's son, Sir Thomas, had married the sister of Richard, Lord Welles, and was knighted after the Battle of Northampton in 1460. These connections with Welles led to his implication in the Rebellion of 1470, and he was executed at Stamford on 12 March. (Metcalf, *Book of Knights*, p.2; *Chronicle*, p.112; C140/34/50; C140/41/29.) Sir Thomas' son, Sir Robert, was a minor on his father's death, but eventually restored the family's position, serving both Richard III and Henry VII. There were also a number of cadet branches in Lincolnshire in this period, including one established at Friskney, assessed at £53 2s 6d in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.3.) John Dymoke, the man involved in the process against William Tailboys in the late-1440s, was from the Friskney branch.

FitzWilliam

The FitzWilliams were resident Mablethorpe, and while they may have been connected with the more famous Yorkshire FitzWilliam families, any connections are unclear. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xlv.) Thomas FitzWilliam was assessed on an income of £10 in 1436, but it was not until the 1450s that the family achieved greater prominence. (E179/136/198, m.3.) Thomas' son, another Thomas, was a King's Esquire by 1443, and sat in Parliament in 1453. He was a loyal Lancastrian supporter, and was also reeve of Burwell for Lord Cromwell. He and his younger son, also Thomas, were possibly involved in the events of the Rebellion of 1470, and both were later associated with the Readeption regime. The elder Thomas died in 1479, being succeeded by his eldest son, John, but John was almost entirely overshadowed by the activities of his younger brother, Thomas (1427-97). Thomas, a lawyer, was active in local affairs as early as 1458, survived his associations with the Rebellion and the Readeption, and sat in Parliament on many occasions. (*W.B.*, p.335.) He remained on the Lindsey bench for most of the Yorkist period, and in 1483 he was elected as Recorder of London. As Recorder, he played a key role in the events of 1483, when the Duke of Buckingham urged Richard of Gloucester to become King, but he also welcomed Henry VII into London at Shoreditch in 1485, was knighted by Henry in 1486, and was elected Speaker in the Parliament of 1489. (Roskell, *Commons and their Speakers*, pp.300-1.) He married Margaret, a daughter of Sir James Harrington, but died childless in 1497, and his lands passed back to the main line of the family, to his nephew Thomas, the son of his elder brother.

Graa

The Graas were a York merchant family with a brief but influential interest in Lincolnshire. The York MP Thomas Graa (d.1405) married Maud, daughter and heiress of Sir John Multon of Frampton, a marriage which brought Thomas a number of lands in Lincolnshire, including the manors of Multon Hall in Frampton and North Ingleby. (*F.A.*, vi, pp.481, 550, 612; *H.C.*, 1386-1421, iii, pp.218-20.) By 1411, their son, Sir John, had married Margaret, daughter of Sir Roger Swillington of Swillington, Yorkshire, but the couple had become estranged by 1423, soon after she inherited the Swillington estates. John's total annual income in the 1420s was over £320, but Margaret died childless in 1429. (Payling, 'Disputed Mortgage', pp.118-19.) She left John a life interest in certain manors in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, worth around £120 a year, but various other grants were challenged by Ralph, Lord Cromwell, one of the common law heirs. Cromwell manipulated the inquest juries and seized the majority of the estate, including John's life interest, and leaving him with only a rent of 40 marks. Graa had been active in the French wars, participating in the Agincourt campaign, and found himself heavily in debt. Many of his lands were mortgaged, and his annual income had fallen to only £87 by 1436. (E179/240/269.) His second marriage, to Thomasia, daughter of Thomas Fauconer, a London mercer (and widow of a brother of Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester), helped his finances temporarily, but Cromwell continued his legal actions, determined to add the Graa estates to own. John lost control of many of his lands, including Multon Hall, and only regained them after Cromwell's death

in 1456. Sir John died childless, and after Thomasia's death in 1475, his estates passed to Magdalen College, a foundation of William Wayneflete, Bishop of Winchester and one of Lord Cromwell's executors.

Hakebeche

Although his origins are obscure, Sir Robert Hakebeche was a prominent Holland office holder during the early fifteenth century. Seated at Whaplode, he held extensive estates, including lands at Hackbeach in Emneth, Walpole and Walton in Norfolk, Litlington in Cambridgeshire, and Washingley in Huntingdonshire. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.264-5.) He served as a Holland JP, was on many royal commissions in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, and was appointed sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in 1413. He was also active in Norfolk society, but probably retired soon after sitting as MP for Lincolnshire in 1420, and died childless in 1445.

Hansard

The Hansards were originally from Walworth Co. Durham, and shared the same FitzMaldred roots as the Neville Earls of Westmorland and Salisbury. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxix.) By the fifteenth century their interests were concentrated in Lincolnshire, largely through the career of Sir Richard Hansard (c.1377-c.1410), and were based at South Kelsey, a Duchy of Lancaster manor, from the thirteenth century. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, pp.69-70; *F.A.* iii, p.269; vi, p.613.) The family also held lands in Yorkshire, including the manors of Thornton and Blacktoft. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.70.) Sir Richard's son, another Sir Richard (d.1428), was MP for Lincolnshire on five occasions between 1404 and 1423, although he was temporarily out of favour after being involved in an attack by Sir Robert Tirwhit upon William, Lord Roos, in 1411. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.284-5.) He too left a son named Richard, but the proliferation of successive heads of the family named Richard makes the Hansard pedigree rather unclear. However, contrary to Roskell, there is no clear evidence to suggest that any Richard died in 1457, so it is probable that the Richard killed at Wakefield fighting for the Yorkists was the son of Sir Richard (d.1428). He was succeeded by another Richard, who held a number of local offices during the early 1460s, but he seems to have died in 1466. His son, yet another Richard, had, by 1483, been appointed royal steward of Odiham Castle, Hampshire, where he spent much of his career. (*CPR 1476-85*, pp.412, 442.) His son and heir, William, returned to Lincolnshire, serving as sheriff in 1516-17, but the main line soon died out, their lands passing to the Ascoughs. The family in general was extremely prolific during the fifteenth century, with a large number of cadet branches established at Walesby, Kingerby, Owersby and elsewhere.

Hauley

The Hauleys were retainers of John of Gaunt during the late fourteenth century, with Sir William Hauley (d.1386/7) acting as Chief Steward of the North Parts. His son, Sir Thomas, inherited the family seats at Girsby and Utterby, along with lands in Burgh on Bain, South Willingham, Hainton, Fotherby, Covenham and Calthorpe, and had also acquired Withern, Stainton, Biscathorpe and Tetney by the time of his death around 1419. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.352-4.) Thomas' Lancastrian connections gave him useful contacts after Henry IV's accession, and he sat in Henry's first Parliament in 1399, and may also have fought for Henry at the Battle of Shrewsbury. By useful marriage connections Thomas and his father had built the Hauleys into one of the greatest families in Lincolnshire, but Thomas made generous provisions for his numerous younger sons, and thus depleted the lands of the main line to such an extent that his eldest son, John, had an assessed income of only 40 marks in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.2.) John must have died soon after this, leaving a young daughter and heiress, Agnes, and the family estates eventually passed to her second husband, Thomas Blount. However, the proliferation of younger sons allowed the establishment of a number of cadet branches, particularly at Langton and Tetney. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, pp.68-9.)

Hilton

The Hiltons entered Lincolnshire society during the fifteenth century, inheriting lands from the Luttrells of Irnham. Hawise, daughter of Sir Andrew Luttrell and heiress of her brother, Geoffrey, married, as her second husband, Sir Godfrey Hilton, younger son of Sir Robert Hilton of Swine and Winestead, Yorkshire, a junior branch of the noble Hilton family. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iii, pp.377-81.) Although most of the Luttrell lands presumably passed to Hawise's children by her first husband, Sir Thomas Belesby, she brought Hilton the manors of Irnham and Corby in Lincolnshire, Gamston and Bridgford, Nottinghamshire, and Hooton Pagnell, Yorkshire, worth over £50 a year. Also, on the death of his elder brother, Robert, in 1431, Sir Godfrey gained a life interest at Swine, a Yorkshire manor attacked in 1432 by a band led by the Constables, Thomas Cumberworth and others, and he was assessed on an income of 200 marks in 1436. (*CPR 1429-36*, p.275; *CCR 1422-9*, p.8; E179/240/269.) Sir Godfrey himself was a military man, fighting at Agincourt in 1415, and had only a limited career in Lincolnshire. He forged many links within Lincolnshire, but after his second marriage, to the widow of Sir Hugh Poyning of Chawton, he spent much of his later life in Hampshire fighting disputes over her dower lands. Sir Godfrey died in 1459, but his son and grandson had far less prominent careers, and on the childless death of Sir Godfrey's grandson, another Godfrey, in 1476, the Hilton estates were divided between the younger Godfrey's two sisters, with the Lincolnshire lands passing to the Themylby family. (C139/176/33; C140/41/30; Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.72)

Meres

Originally named 'atte Meres', meaning 'at the mere', the Meres family were one of the leading families of Holland throughout the fifteenth century. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, pp.xxxi-xxxii.) Roger Meres, JCP (d.1388) established the family's fortunes through his service in the judiciary and in the retinue of John of Gaunt, and left lands to his son, John, in Coningsby, Algakirk, Gosberton and Holbeach in Lincolnshire, Aubourn in Yorkshire and Bottesford in Nottinghamshire, as well as the family seat at Kirton (Holland). John probably followed his father into the legal profession, sat in Parliament in 1407, and died around 1410. His son, also John, was far less prominent, and the ensuing pedigree is extremely confused. A Philip Meres of Kirton held lands worth £10 in 1436, but his connection with the rest of the family is unclear, and he does not appear in the pedigrees. (Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.36; E179/136/198, m.3; Maddison, *Pedigrees*, ii, p.663.) He may have been a brother or uncle of by far the most prominent member of the family, Thomas Meres. He was probably the son of Nicholas Meres, the grandson of the MP of 1407, but the descent is unclear, and Nicholas is otherwise obscure. Thomas must have been the head of the family, since he held both Kirton and Aubourn, and was assessed on an income of 100 marks in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.3.) An extremely active local officer, he sat in Parliament on at least five occasions, and was a JP in both Holland and Kesteven. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir Adam Everingham of Birkin, Yorkshire, and widow of both Sir William Armyn and Geoffrey Paynell, but he was certainly dead by 1470, and possibly by 1467, when his son, also Thomas, was appointed sheriff. (*W.B.*, p.585; *CFR 1461-71*, p.260.) The younger Thomas was to be arrested by the returning Yorkists in 1471, and remained relatively obscure until 1480, when he was re-appointed to the Holland bench, and was sheriff again in 1484. He died in 1495, leaving at least five sons, including his heir, Sir John (d.1535/6). (Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.37.)

Pedwardine

Originally from Shropshire, where they were tenants of the Earls of March, the Pedwardines were seated at Burton Pedwardine from the early fourteenth century. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxxiii.) They also held the manors of Nocton (Lincolnshire), Clipston (Nottinghamshire), South Warnborough (Hampshire), and other lands in Lincolnshire, Lancashire and Westmorland. (Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.42; C139/47/7.) The family was relatively active during the later fourteenth century, but thereafter lost much of its influence in Lincolnshire. Roger Pedwardine held a number of offices during the 1430s and 1440s, but failed to halt the family's decline, and during Edward IV's reign, Roger's son, Christopher, sold Burton Pedwardine, leased his other lands, and moved the family interests back to Shropshire. (Maddison, *Pedigrees*, iii, pp.764-5; iv, pp.1295-6.)

Pygot

In the fourteenth century, Sir John Pygot (d.1361) held the manors of Doddington and Thorpe on the Hill, Lincolnshire, and Cardington, Bedfordshire. Doddington and Thorpe passed to Sir John's eldest son, another Sir John, while Cardington passed successively to the younger John's half-brothers, John and Baldwin. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.82-4.) Another Sir John (probably the grandson of first Sir John) held Doddington and Thorpe, along with Hareby, Nottinghamshire, these lands being worth £60 a year in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.4d.) His marriage to a rich heiress, Elizabeth, sister of Thomas Belesby, gave Sir John a much-increased position in local society, and he held numerous county offices, including two terms as sheriff and a seat in Parliament in 1432. Sir John died childless in 1451, leaving as his heir John Bendyssh of Hadley, Suffolk, but his widow, Elizabeth, sold Doddington to Sir Thomas Burgh. (Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.43; C139/146/17; C140/47/62.)

Retford

The Retfords were prominent landholders in northern Lincolnshire by the middle of the fourteenth century, being seated at Castlethorpe in *Irby and Broughton*. *Ralph's son, Sir Henry*, was an extremely violent and troublesome man, but an active local office holder. A favourite of Richard II, he survived Richard's deposition in 1399, switching his loyalty to Henry IV, and sat in Parliament three times between 1401 and 1404. (Roskell, 'Retford'; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.201-3.) His son, also Sir Henry, succeeded him in 1409, and was himself prominent in local society, holding most local offices and sitting as a JP in Kesteven and Lindsey. He served the Crown as Steward of Kirton in Lindsey, but his major connections were with Richard of York, and he was killed alongside York at Wakefield in 1460. (Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47.) Sir Henry had also earlier been attainted by the Lancastrians after supporting York at Ludford, and his forfeited lands included the manors of Broughton, Castlethorpe in Irby, Worlaby by Saxby, Carlton Kyme, Killingholme, Caythorpe, Carlton Paynell, Burton and Rothwell. (*CPR 1452-61*, p.551; *F.A.*, iii, pp.255, 261, 264, 296.) This attainder was probably reversed, but since Henry had no children, his lands passed to his sister Elizabeth, wife of Sir Maurice Bruyn of South Ockenden, Essex. Her son, Henry, who predeceased his parents, had no male heirs, and the Retford lands appear to have passed to Elizabeth, one of his two daughters, and her husband, Thomas Tyrell. (*W.B.*, p.127; *CPR 1447-54*, pp.349, 502.)

Rochford

Originally a Boston merchant family, the Rochfords had become significant county landholders by the fourteenth century, being seated at the manors of Fenn in Boston and Stoke Rochford. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxxiii.) The family reached its greatest prominence early in the fifteenth century, when it was probably the most influential family in Holland, and they and the Tylneys practically

controlled the prestigious Boston Gild of Corpus Christi. Sir Saier de Rochford and his brother, John, were both supporters of John of Gaunt, while Sir Saier's son, Sir John, was a retainer of Henry IV, served as Henry's Steward of Bolingbroke (1399-1407), and also as Constable of the Bishop of Ely's castle at Wisbech from 1401 until his death in 1410. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.219-21.) He sat in Parliament on at least four occasions, and on his death he left the manors of Fenn, Stoke Rochford, and 'Skreyng', along with Arley in Warwickshire, to his successor, Sir Ralph. Sir Ralph was supposedly John's younger brother, but the pedigrees are extremely confused, and Sir John also appears to have had a number of children. (Maddison, *Pedigrees*, iii, p.829; below, *sub. Roos*.) Ralph was a military man, spending many years in France, for which he received various rewards, such as the farms of the manors of Somerton (Lincolnshire) and Newton Longueville (Buckinghamshire), and the custody of a number of religious houses. (*CPR 1413-16*, pp.155, 327; *1416-22*, p.259; *1422-9*, p.113; *1436-41*, pp.359-60.) His assessed income in 1436 of £394 was one of the largest in Lincolnshire, but was undoubtedly inflated considerably by these grants and farms. (Gray, 'Incomes from Land', p.613.) Ralph left a long and detailed will, dated 26 March 1439, in which he made various lavish bequests to religious houses, servants and friends such as Lord Cromwell and the Bishop of Lincoln, and also made extremely specific provisions for his children which included the lands inherited from Sir John, and others in Obthorpe, Thurlby and Dembleby. (Furnivall, *Fifty Earliest English Wills*, pp.120-1.) Little is known of Ralph's son, Henry, despite his father having secured a prestigious marriage to a daughter of Lord Scrope, but he had no sons and on his death in 1470, his lands passed to Henry Stanhope, the husband of his daughter and heiress, Joan.

Roos

The Roos family of Gedney was probably a distant junior branch of the noble family settled at nearby Belvoir in Leicestershire, but no clear connection is evident. Sir James Roos was involved in a dispute with Sir Henry Retford in the late fourteenth century, but little is known of his life or career. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, p.201; JUST 1/1488, rot.4.) However, James' son, Sir Robert, was far more prominent. An active local office holder, Sir Robert served as a Holland JP for many years, and represented Lincolnshire in the Parliament of 1422. He clearly inherited extensive lands, including Gedney in Lincolnshire and the manor of Hunmanby in Yorkshire, and with an income of £165 was one of the richest men in Lincolnshire according to the 1436 tax assessment. (E179/136/198, m.3.) He was a follower of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, with whom he served in France, but also had other connections with men such as the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Willoughby. He had no sons, and the fate of his daughters, and thus of the Roos estates, is unclear. The custody and marriage of one of his daughters, Eleanor, was granted to John Tailboys, while another, Margaret, married a Northamptonshire man, John Littlebury. (*CPR 1441-6*, pp.2, 51; Foster, 'Lord Boston's Muniments', p.24.) Thompson states that Grace, the wife of Sir Philip Tylney, was also a daughter of Sir Robert Roos, but this is almost certainly a mistake. (Thompson, *Boston*, pp.373-5.) Frederick Tylney, the son of Philip and Grace, married Margaret, a daughter of Sir John Rochford, and sister of Roos' wife, Joan, and although the pedigrees

are far from clear, if Philip Tylney's wife was a daughter of Robert Roos, Frederick Tylney would have married his own great-aunt: possible, but highly unlikely! Since Sir Philip died in 1394, and Sir Robert Roos, his supposed father-in-law, did not die until 1441, the timescale would also suggest that Thompson is mistaken.

Sheffield

The Sheffieldds were seated at West Butterwick on the Isle of Axholme from the thirteenth century, but only achieved the status of a county family two centuries later. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv.) Robert Sheffield of West Butterwick and Owston (d.1420) inherited lands in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire through his marriage to Katherine, daughter and heiress of Thomas Beltoft, while in 1436, his son, also Robert (1405-1467), held lands in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, the City of York and elsewhere worth £40 a year. (Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.51; E179/136/198, m.2.) This Robert's own marriage, to Jane, daughter and co-heiress of Alexander Lounde, brought the family further lands in North and South Cave, Yorkshire. He was a noted local lawyer, held numerous administrative offices in Lincolnshire, particularly in Lindsey, and also used the profits of his offices to increase the family estates. (*CCR 1441-7*, pp.305, 351; *1447-54*, pp.164, 274, 279, etc..) His son, another Robert, followed his father into a legal career, and was retained by the Duchy of Lancaster throughout much of the Yorkist period. He was also a prominent Yorkist supporter and local office holder, and sat in Parliament for the Stafford borough of Bedwin, Wiltshire, in 1467 and for Ludgershall in 1472. (Somerville, *Duchy*, p.454; *W.B.*, p.760.) This Robert died in 1502, when his inquisition *post mortem* noted that he held large estates across northern Lincolnshire, including the manors of West Butterwick, Beltoft, Belton, North and South Coningsby, Crosby, Gunnas, Messingham, Haxey, Flixborough and a number of other estates. (*CIPM*, 2nd ser., ii, pp.357-9.) By then, his son, another Robert and yet another lawyer, was already carving out an influential career of his own. He succeeded Sir Thomas FitzWilliam as Recorder of London in 1495, serving until 1508, sat in Parliament on a number of occasions, and was elected Speaker for the Parliament of 1512-14. (Roskell, *Commons and their Speakers*, pp.301, 312-14; *H.C.*, 1509-58, iii, pp.304-5.)

Skipwith

Originally from Skipwith, Yorkshire, the Skipwith family acquired Lincolnshire interests in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries through a series of marriages, and a branch was established at South Ormsby in the later fourteenth century by John Skipwith (d.1415). (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, pp.xl.) The family also held the Lincolnshire manors of Laceby, Bigby and Thorpe, but the family fortunes were hugely increased by Sir William Skipwith, JCP (d.c.1397). (*D.N.B.*, xviii, pp.356-7.) His marriage to the heiress of the Hiltoft family brought him, among other lands, the manors of North and South Hiltoft and Ingoldmells, and he made various purchases so that, by the 1440s, the family estates also included the Yorkshire manor of Menthorpe, the Lincolnshire manors of Kettlesby, 'Waumesgare',

Calthorpe, Covenham, Grainthorpe, Wragholm, Ingoldmells, Uphall and Little Carlton, and various other lands. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.388-90; *CCR 1435-41*, p.476; LAO MM 1/3/17; Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.52; v, pp.47-8; *CIPM*, xx, nos.698-9.) The Lincolnshire estates all passed to John, Sir William's second son, while Skipwith and the Yorkshire lands passed to his eldest son, William. William's line was short-lived, the Lincolnshire family adding the Yorkshire lands to their estates around 1409, while John's eldest son, Thomas, enhanced the family's local status by his marriage to a daughter of William, 5th Lord Willoughby. Thomas' early death in 1417, leaving a posthumous son, Sir William, led to a long minority, but William soon became one of the most prominent figures in late Lancastrian and Yorkist Lincolnshire, holding numerous local offices, and had strong connections with Richard, Duke of York. (Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.47.) Despite deserting York in 1459, he was restored to favour under Edward IV, and survived the rest of the Wars of the Roses unscathed, dying in 1482. (C141/1/3.) The family had many links with the greater Lincolnshire families, and also with the Yorkshire gentry, particularly the Constables, Vavasours and FitzWilliams, and remained at the head of local society well into the sixteenth century. There were also numerous cadet branches during the fifteenth century, including one resident at Habrough, and another, founded by Thomas' brother, Patrick, at Utterby. (Rogers, 'Electors', iv, p.52; v, p.48.)

Sothill

Another family with Yorkshire origins, the Sothills became established in Lincolnshire in the later fourteenth century through the career of Sir Gerard Sothill (d.1410), a younger son of Sir Henry Sothill of Sothill, Yorkshire. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xl; *H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.408-10.) From 1371 he gradually acquired half of the manor of Redbourne, as well as buying other lands in Messingham, Corringham and Harpswell, and in Knottingley, Yorkshire. Meanwhile, through his second marriage, he inherited the other half of the manor of Redbourne, as well as lands in Bigby, Hackthorn and Flixborough. (*F.A.*, iii, pp.248, 267, 363; *CIPM*, xix, nos.760-1.) Sir Gerard twice sat in Parliament for Lincolnshire, held numerous other local offices, and probably also had a legal training. He was succeeded by his young second son, also Gerard, who spent sixteen years as a ward of his mother. Her death in 1442 brought Gerard more lands in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire to add to his own estates, which were worth only £20 in 1436. By then, his brother, John had also become an extensive landholder in his own right, his marriage to the sister and heiress of Henry Pouger of West Rasen bringing him lands in Lincolnshire and Durham worth 40 marks. (E179/136/198, mm.2-3.) These included the manors of West Rasen, Middle Rasen and Scalby, and the Yorkshire manor of Drax, while the lands in Wiltshire which he held on his death in 1445 may have been those held by his mother in 1436. Both brothers played an active role in local affairs, but their descendants were far less prominent, and the pedigrees are not entirely clear. On his death in 1463, Gerard was succeeded by his son, Robert, and the family remained active in Lincolnshire into the sixteenth century. Meanwhile, John had been succeeded by his son, another John. (Maddison, *Pedigrees*, iii, pp.914-16; C140/9/18; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.49.) This John (d.1494) left an idiot son, George, and on George's childless death in 1502 the family's lands,

which by now included the manor of Everingham (inherited in 1464 following the death of Joan Pouger's maternal uncle, Robert Elys), were divided between George's two sisters, Mary and Barbara. Mary also died childless, and the entire estate passed to Barbara and her husband, Sir Marmaduke Constable. (*C.P.*, v, p.193.) The Sothills of Dewsbury, Yorkshire, who included John Sothill, presumably escheator of Yorkshire in 1446, and Henry Sothill, attorney general to the Earl of Warwick and a prominent Duchy of Lancaster servant under the Yorkists, are often confused with the Lincolnshire families, but were almost certainly a separate branch. (Arnold, 'West Riding', p.85; Somerville, *Duchy*, pp.425-6; *Test. Ebor.*, iv, p.168.)

Sutton

The Suttons were one of the richest and most influential families of Lincoln's mercantile elite. John Sutton (d.c.1378) was a highly successful wool merchant, and was mayor of Lincoln in 1368. He left two sons, John and Robert, who both forged lucrative careers of their own. The eldest, John, was Mayor of Lincoln in 1386-7, served as Mayor of the Boston Staple in 1375-6 and 1384-5, and also sat in Parliament for Lincoln on five occasions between 1369 and 1388. (*H.C.*, 1386-1421, iv, pp.536-7.) From 1378, as well as his property in Lincoln, he held the manors of Owmbly, Cold Hanworth and Willingham, and also other lands in Maidenwell and Langworth. On his death (c.1391), he left two underage sons, and a struggle ensued over the family property between the two boys and their uncle, Robert. Robert's career had eclipsed his older brother's, even during the latter's lifetime, and despite losing the dispute with his nephews, it was Robert's line which remained prominent, while little is known of John's sons. Robert had also served as Mayor of Lincoln (1379-80) and as Mayor of the Boston Staple (1379-80), and attended eleven Parliaments between 1381 and 1399, sitting alongside his brother in the Merciless Parliament of 1388. (*H.C.*, 1386-1421, iv, pp.538-41.) Robert already had a share in his brother's lands, but he also purchased substantial estates in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, including his country residence at Burton, and by 1412 he owned lands and property worth at least £57 a year. His lavish will of 1413, which demonstrated his great wealth, provided for bequests worth well over £2300, and he was succeeded in 1414 by the most prominent member of the family, his only son Hamo. (C138/6/3; *CIPM*, xx, nos.141-2; *Register of Bishop Repeyngdon*, ed. M. Archer, iii, pp.27-32.) One of the city's richest men, Hamo sat in Parliament for Lincoln on seven occasions between 1416 and 1426, but preferred to use his growing landed wealth to pursue a career in county rather than city politics. (*H.C.*, 1386-1421, iv, pp.533-5; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.53.) In this aim he was helped considerably by his influential marriage (to Margaret, daughter of Sir Henry Vavasour of Cockerington, Yorkshire, and a granddaughter of Sir William Skipwith, JCP), and by his great wealth, conservatively assessed at £105 in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.3.) He was an ever-present feature in the county administration, sitting in Parliament on three occasions, but also held many mercantile offices, was Mayor of the Calais Staple between 1433 and 1453, and was even sent on embassies to Burgundy in 1435 and 1446. He also made large loans to the Lancastrian government, and acted as a King's sergeant from around 1447. However, his family life appears to have been less successful. He was involved in

lengthy litigation with the Busshy family over the jointure involved in the short-lived marriage of Busshy's son and heir to Hamo's daughter, Agnes, while in 1452, Hamo's eldest son, Robert, died. (*Lincoln Diocesan Documents*, ed. Clark, pp.57-9; Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.53.) Hamo himself died around 1461, his heir being his grandson, another Hamo; however, the pedigree from this point is far from clear. (*CFR 1461-71*, p.4.) The Hamo Sutton who sat as MP for Lincoln in 1453-4 (and presumably also in 1459 and 1460-1) was probably the elder Hamo's younger son. (*W.B.*, p.824.) Meanwhile, the Hamo who was fined in 1465 for not taking up knighthood was probably the same man who died on 22 April 1467. (E370/2/22, m.2; *CPR 1461-7*, p.500; *CFR 1461-71*, p.195; C140/25/30.) However, since this man's lands included the manor of Burton, he must have been the heir to the family estates, suggesting that either this Hamo was the son of Robert, and that Wedgwood's biography combines the lives and careers of both men, or that Robert's son died young, and childless, between 1461 and 1467, with Robert's brother inheriting their father's estates. The former appears most likely. Whichever was the case, the family's influence certainly declined rapidly after 1461, and they once again returned largely to urban rather than county affairs.

Swynford

The Swynfords appear to have originated from Huntingdonshire, the county for which a Sir John Swynford sat in Parliament under Edward I. A branch had become established in Lincolnshire by the early fourteenth century, and had settled at Kettlethorpe by the time of the death of Sir Thomas in 1361. (Bentley, *Excerpta Historica*, pp.152-9.) His son, Sir Hugh, was a retainer of John of Gaunt, and was in Gaunt's service when he died on the continent in 1372. Hugh's widow Katherine, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Payne Roelt, a Hainault knight, subsequently became Gaunt's wife, and the mother of the Beaufort family. Hugh and Katherine's son, Sir Thomas, was a child on his father's death, but later continued his family's service to Gaunt, and also served as an ambassador to France and as sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1401-2. He died in 1432, leaving lands in Laughton, Fenton, Newton, Colby and Barton upon Humber, among others, and although he and his sons, Thomas and William, retained connections with their eminent relatives, Cardinal Beaufort and the Duke of Exeter, the family played little role in county politics during the rest of the century. (Rogers, 'Electors', iii, p.54.) The younger Thomas, who attested the Lincolnshire election of 1423, had died by 1440, leaving a young son, also Thomas, and the estates seem to have been entrusted to servants of Lord Cromwell. (C219/13/2.) The latter Thomas was probably the man who attested the election of 1478, but little more is evident. (C219/17/3.)

Tailboys

The Tailboys family were descended from Ivo Tailbois, a follower of William I and sheriff of Lincolnshire, but were seated at Hepple, Northumberland, until the fourteenth century, when their interests shifted to Lincolnshire. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxxv.) They also gained large estates through the marriage of Henry Tailboys (d.1369) to Eleanor, niece and eventual heiress of Gilbert de

Umfraville, Earl of Angus and Lord of Kyme. (*H.C.*, 1386-1421, iv, pp.558-6, 686-8; *C.P.*, vii, pp.352ff, *sub* Kyme; Virgoe, 'Tailboys', esp. pp.459-62.) Some lands passed to Henry's son, Walter, immediately after Umfraville's death in 1381, including Sotby and Skellingthorpe, and in 1436 the income of Walter Tailboys, son of the earlier Walter, was assessed at £159 a year from eight counties. (E179/136/198, m.3; *F.A.*, iii, pp.270, 273, 278, 297, etc.) The rest of the Umfraville inheritance passed to the Tailboys in 1437 following the deaths of the heirs of Gilbert's half-brother, Thomas; this included Harbottle Castle, Northumberland, and the lordship of South Kyme, which soon became the family seat. The inquisitions *post mortem* of William Tailboys (ex.1464) show that he had also held the manors of Hessele, Paddockthorpe and Newton Kyme in Yorkshire, Otterburn in Northumberland, and the Lincolnshire manors of Croft, Sotby, Faldingworth, Goltho, Skellingthorpe, Bullington and Stallingborough. (C139/115/30; C140/15/49) One of the most prominent families of fifteenth-century Lincolnshire, they provided numerous local office holders, in both Lincolnshire and Northumberland, especially the extremely active Walter Tailboys (d.1444). (Rogers, 'Electors', v, p.55.) Walter was the father of William Tailboys, the notorious criminal and trouble-maker connected with Lord Beaumont and the Duke of Suffolk during the 1440s and 1450s. (Virgoe, 'Tailboys', esp. pp.462-4; above, ch.4.) A Lancastrian, he was supposedly knighted by Henry VI in 1461, after the Second Battle of St Albans, and often styled himself Lord, and even 'Earl', of Kyme. (*D.N.B.*, xix, pp.341-2.) He joined Margaret of Anjou in exile in Scotland after 1461, and suffered attainder on 4 November 1461. He conducted military campaigns for the Lancastrians in Northumberland during the early 1460s, seizing Alnwick Castle in 1462, and fought at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham. He was captured after Hexham, supposedly hiding in a coal mine and carrying much of the Lancastrian treasury, and was immediately executed, his head being displayed on the gates of York. William's son, Robert, managed to restore the family fortunes by joining with the victorious Yorkists, securing the reversal of the attainder in 1472, and held numerous local offices, including sitting in Parliament in 1472-5 and 1478. The family's recovery continued thereafter, until Robert's grandson, Gilbert, Lord Tailboys (d.1530), finally received the peerage Sir William had claimed many years earlier. Another Tailboys family, a cadet branch of the main line, was also briefly prominent during the fifteenth century. John Tailboys, a younger son of Sir Walter (d.1417), had married the heiress of Sir Robert Cuckfield of Basford, Nottinghamshire, and became seated at Stallingborough, near Grimsby. John held many local offices, and had an income of 40 marks in 1436. (E179/136/198, m.2.) However, the early death of John's eldest son, leaving only a daughter, Margaret, brought the line to an end, and the family estates, including the seat at Stallingborough, passed to Margaret and her husband, John Ascough.

Tirwhit

Originally from Northumberland, the Tirwhits moved to Lincolnshire in the fourteenth century, settling at Kettleby. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xlii.) The family owed its position to the career of Robert Tirwhit, JKB (d.1427), a prominent lawyer and royal judge who invested much of the income from his career in building a large landed estate. (*D.N.B.*, xix, p.1372.) On his death, his son, William, inherited

14 Lincolnshire manors (Kettleby, Wrawby, Buslingthorpe, Thorpe, Stallingborough, Fillingham, Elsham, Hibaldstow, Healing, Firsby, Scawby, Howsham, Bigby and 'Twigmore'), along with other lands in Yorkshire, Essex and Northamptonshire, and his assessed annual income in 1436 of £130 was almost certainly underestimated. (C139/168/27; C139/144/44; E179/136/198, m.2; *F.A.*, iii, pp.344, 355, 358, etc..) After spending his early life in Yorkshire, William emerged as a prominent and influential member of Lincolnshire society, a regular office holder and three times MP for the county. (*H.C., 1386-1421*, iv, pp.630-1.) However, the family's influence declined somewhat after William's death in 1450. His son, Adam, died within a year of his father, leaving the family estates to his own son, Robert. Robert also died young in 1458, leaving a baby son, and a long minority ensued. John Tirwhit, a younger son of Robert Tirwhit, JKB, was also extremely active during the early Lancastrian period, founding a junior branch resident at Harpswell, but this was short-lived. John was dead by 1431, his lands being divided between his three daughters, and Harpswell itself passed to John Wythecotes, a Shropshire merchant, Yorkist supporter and the husband of John's daughter, Margaret. (*CFR 1430-7*, p.3; Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.68.)

Waterton

The Watertons took their name from the village of Waterton, on the Isle of Axholme, from where the more famous main line moved to Methley, Yorkshire, where the tomb still stands of the family's most famous member, Robert Waterton, a prominent supporter of Henry IV. (Maddison, *Lincolnshire Wills*, p.xxv.) The Lincolnshire branch, descended from a younger son of the main line, and was founded towards the end of the thirteenth century, becoming established at Corringham, in the West Riding of Lindsey. (Walker, 'Burghs and Watertons', esp. pp.390-6.) John Waterton served as Lincolnshire sheriff in 1401 and 1404, was the royal Constable of Kirton in Lindsey, and may have been the John Waterton who acted as Henry V's Master of the Horse at Agincourt. He died around 1417, and was succeeded by his son, Richard. A minor on his father's death, Richard vastly increased the family estates by his marriage in 1435 to Constance, daughter and heiress of Sir William Assenhull. This marriage brought the Watertons large estates in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including the Yorkshire manors of Walton, Cawthorne and Manston, and while Richard's subsidy assessment in 1436 was only 40 marks, this was solely from lands in Lincolnshire, and clearly was only part of his total income. (E179/136/198, m.3.) A Lindsey JP for many years, he also served two terms as sheriff, despite refusing an earlier appointment in 1444, and sat in Parliament in 1449. The Waterton line hereafter is slightly unclear, but it appears that Richard died in 1461, possibly falling at Towton, and left a son, Richard, who is often confused with his father in the pedigrees. (Rogers, 'Electors', vi, p.73; *W.B.*, pp.924-5.) It was probably this Richard who sat as MP in 1463, not his father as asserted by Wedgwood. This Richard died early in 1480, being succeeded by his son, Robert, who was knighted by Richard of Gloucester in 1482, but died in the same year. However, the family continued its rapid rise within Lincolnshire and Yorkshire society, and soon moved to Walton in Yorkshire, where they remained until Walton was sold in 1876. (Walker, 'Burghs and Watertons'.)

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