THE LIFE OF JOHN DE DROKENESFORD

Author: Gordon Hope

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CHAPTER 1

Who really was John de Drokenesford? This distant thirteenth century person who now lies in stately effigy in his Bishop's robes above his tomb in the cathedral at Wells but who is also still remembered with at least passing interest in the Meon valley village of Droxford in Hampshire. Where was he born?

Opinion in the past has seen him as a local boy who somehow came to the notice of the energetic King Edward I and who then rose by his own efforts to a high position as Keeper of the Wardrobe to that king and to another position later as Bishop of Bath and Wells in the reigns of that king's son and grandson, the kings Edward II and Edward III. For this opinion there are good grounds but it is suggested now that John's family (his wider family at least) had close links with the royal house, arising from a long and loyal tradition of service to various earlier English kings. In considering this suggestion an established fact will first be stated and then a backwards look will be taken to the Conquest of AD 1066 and to the following two centuries before John was born. A review will then be made of his early days and of his companions and activities in the Wardrobe service until the death of King Edward I in AD 1307. At a later date it is hoped to produce a second account, this dealing with his activities as Bishop until his own death at one of his palaces at Dogmersfield in Hampshire in AD 1329.

Firstly, then, there is among the charters and other documents in the Augustinian priory of St. Denys, near Southampton., one which has in its modern printed form this heading:-

"Copy…of a grant by John de Drokenesford, clerk, son of JOHN DE MOLENDINIS, to Robert, son of Adam le Hordir of Southampton, of 3 acres, in the field called Brychtwoldeslond to be held by the grantor for rents to the Prior and Convent of St. Denys of 42 pence sterling and to the grantor of half a pound of cumin yearly". This grant is dated to the early 1300's, chiefly because Adam le Hordir died around AD 1309, having been first a bailiff and then an alderman in Southampton between AD 1288 and AD 1304. His son Robert, the grantee above, was a bailiff there in AD 1303/1304. The field called Brychtwoldeslond seems from other evidence in the same St. Denys' records to have belonged before AD 1217 to John Brithwald' and to have lain to the north of the old walled town of Southampton, near to the main house of the lepers of St. Mary Magdalen's hospital, that is, in the general area of today's Southampton civic centre buildings (the grant being in fact listed under "Hamptone – Magdalen").

The prime interest of this record, however, is not in these 3 acres nor in Robert le Hordir but in the name of John de Drokenesford's father, John DE MOLENDINIS. This was an age when many men (and especially officials in the king's service) began to replace their old Norman family names (often Latin forms of place names in Normandy) with a "surname" taken from their English places of birth and to this custom John de Drokenesford was no exception, having been christened in the little parish church of Droxford (much smaller then than now, before the alterations which he himself made to it in his later, episcopal, days).

In that parish and manor (as shewn by the "Droxford" entry in a Pipe roll of AD 1289) John, son of John DE MOLENDINIS, paid: (a) 21 pence that year for some (unidentified) land, and (b) 5 shillings for one ferling (4 acres) of land with a house (note that house! It will reappear later), for 3 other acres of (unidentified) land and for some meadow land – all of this land surrendered by the previous tenant to the lord of the manor, the Bishop of Winchester.

These entries appear to relate to the young John de Drokenesford at about 21 years old and already an Usher of the Wardrobe since 20 November 1288, beginning to make his mark at home and surrounded in the same Pipe Roll entry by other references to the de Molendinis family – 3 pence each for annual recognisances from Galfrid' (Geoffrey) and Walter, 12 pence for woodland from Henry and payments for various pieces of land from John's own father, John de Molendinis. It can also be noted here that there were others of the same name within walking distance of Droxford in the first half of the thirteenth century and that all of these were mentioned either as grantors, as witnesses to documents or as tenants in connection with the area's three Augustinian priories – Roger de Molendinis and Elias his son (St. Denys priory, circa 1230); Nicholas (Southwick priory, circa 1220); John (Southwick, circa 1220); Philip (Selborne and Southwick, 1233 to 1250); Alard (Southwick, circa 1240) and James (Selborne, circa 1240).

What, then, was the source of this name "de Molendinis" and what does it signify in this account? Translated into English it means simply "of" or "from the mills" and in that form is unlikely to be translatable as "miller", the latin for which would probably be "molendinarius" or "molendinator". If, however, "de Molendinis" is translated back from Latin into French (to try and find a Normandy place name from which this family may have sprung) there is a small town near Lisieux, some 25 miles east of Caen, which meets the case and which has been identified as their likely place of origin. This small place is the village of Meulles, as an inhabitant of which one would be in French Jean de Meulles or in English John of the Mills or in Latin Johannes de Molendinis.

This identification with Meulles is important because it brings this account immediately to William the Conqueror, subsequently taking it through the years in the company of a family which seems to have had two unchanging qualities – firstly, a seemingly inexhaustible reserve of energy and, secondly, an unswerving loyalty to the Crown, however unpalatable that service on some occasions may have been.

CHAPTER 2

When William of Normandy fought the Saxons at Hastings in AD 1066 he had with him men upon whom he knew he could rely utterly and at least one of these shared with him a great-grandfather in the person of Duke Richard I of Normandy. William's distant cousin was BALDWIN, the son of Gilbert (the Count of Brionne in Normandy) and grandson of Godfrey (Count of Brionne and Eu), Godfrey having been an illegitimate son of Duke Richard I. Baldwin is variously named in the written records as Baldwin fitzGilbert or as Baldwin de Brionis or (more relevantly to this story) as Baldwin de MOL'IS (i.e. MOLENDINIS), the Seigneur de MEULES (his birthplace) and du Sap, both places in Normandy.

That William the Conqueror relied on Baldwin as one of his right-hand men is clear from his leaving him at Exeter in AD 1068 to stamp the royal authority on the shire of Devon after a rebellion there and to build a castle to hold the town for the king thereafter. At about the same time William also granted to Baldwin some 160 lordships in Devon (the chief of these being at Okehampton) and also other lordships at Hemington, Porlock and Apley (all in Somerset) and at Iwerne (in Dorset). He also made him Sheriff of Devon from AD 1080 to at least AD 1086 and probably until Baldwin's death in AD 1090. It further seems likely that Baldwin (known familiarly as "the Sheriff") was married twice, to Albreda and to Emma, one of whom at least was closely related to William. Finally, to complete the list of Baldwin's names, he was also known as Baldwin of Exeter and as the Lord of Okehampton.

From these two marriages Baldwin seems to have had three sons – Robert, William and Richard (all called fitzBaldwin) – and at least one daughter, Adeliza. Of the sons, Robert was Governor of Brionne in AD 1090, dying without issue in AD 1101; William became Lord of Okehampton and Sheriff of Devon on Baldwin's death in AD 1090, dying without issue in AD 1096; and Richard succeeded his brother William in these two offices in AD 1096, also dying without issue on 25 June 1137. Their sister Adeliza, then succeeded him as Sheriff of Devon and probably also as Lady of Okehampton. In addition to this (and much earlier in date) the Exeter Domesday survey shows Adeliza as the wife of William, the son of Wimund, this William then holding from Adeliza's father, Baldwin, the manor of Dueltona (i.e. Dolton) in the hundred of North Tawton, Devon. In another place reference is made to an unnamed daughter of Baldwin as being "of Dolton, Devon" and married to a William d'Avranches. It seems probable that this was Adeliza again, who outlived both William, son of Wimund, and also a second husband, Ranulf Avenel, before her own death on 28 April 1142. An indication of this is that her granddaughter, Maud d'Avranches (the daughter of Adeliza's son Robert d'Avranches) is recorded in AD 1172 as being the Dame du Sap and as holding (together with a certain Hugh Paynel) a moiety (half-share) of MEULES and of Sap.

It may well be asked – whatever is the point of this detailed foray into Anglo-Norman geneaology? It is this (to prolong the agony!) – Maud D'Avranches (who died in 1173) had a daughter, Hawise, and Hawise (who was called the Lady of Okehampton and who died on 31 July 1219) was married into the family of de Courtenay and had a son, Robert de Courtenay (who died in AD 1242) and a grandson, John de Courtenay (died AD 1274). Each of these inherited from her in their turn the great Honour of Okehampton which Baldwin ("the Sheriff") de MOL'IS had held and they then passed on that Honour to their Courtenay descendants each in their turn over the course of the next two hundred years, until the reign of King Edward IV. The significance of that (which should appear more clearly as this story unfolds) is that three of this John de Courtenay's grandchildren made marriages as follows and that the husbands of these marriages were all men with whom John de Drokenesford was in contact in one way or another during his life: (i) Hugh de Courtenay (AD 1276 to 1340), Earl of Devon and Baron of Okehampton, was married in AD 1292 to Agnes St. John (who also died in AD 1340), sister to John, Lord St. John of Basing in Hampshire, the St. John family being well known to John de Drokenesford through his contacts with them both in the king's service (see later) and also in their extensive land holdings in Hampshire; (ii) Isabel de Courtenay (Hugh's sister) was married to the above John, Lord St. John (who died in AD 1329), and (iii) Margaret de Courtenay (Hugh's other sister) was married at a date before AD 1313 to Nicholas de MOELS (cf. de MOL'IS), the second Lord MOELS and a direct descendant of an earlier Nicholas de Moels (of whom more later).

By the days of John de Drokenesford, therefore, there were strong ties between, on the one hand, the high-ranking de Courtenay and St. John families and, on the other, the family of de MOELS (or de MOLIS). Whilst it is therefore still possible that John's father, John de Molendinis, was no more than someone of some standing in his locality who perhaps had mills and millers among his forebears, the greater likelihood is now suggested that his young son received a head start in the king's service because he had relatives already in that service from a family which had proved itself to be loyal and reliable for at least two hundred years past and from which the king, following by now customary practice, was used to appoint some of his royal clerks.

What links can now be traced from Baldwin "the Sheriff" to John de Drokenesford to support this?

CHAPTER 3

No evidence has been found for this account of a direct descent from Baldwin "the Sheriff" to the Molendinis family in and around Droxford but what can be offered (especially at each of the ends of the chain) are some links which, although they can only be more probabilities than certainties, nevertheless appear to display again those elements of loyal and energetic service to the king which have been noted before.

Between the years AD 1086 and 1215 the information available on the de Mol(endin)is family is sparse but interesting, indicating as it appears to do links between them through a succession to various Devon manors:-

(i): In the Devon Domesday record there is a Roger de MOLIS (sometimes called merely "Roger") who held the following manors from Baldwin "the Sheriff" – Leuya (i.e. Lew Trenchard in the hundred of Lifton), Wadelscota (Waddlescot/Waddleston/Warstrong in Lew Trenchard), Teigna (George Teign in Ashton in the hundred of Exminster), Petecota (Pennycot in Shobrook in the hundred of West Budleigh), Cicecota (Chidacot/Chichacot in Okehampton in the hundred of Lifton), Etcheborna (Exbourne in the hundred of Blacktorington), Hantona/Hanitone (Highampton in the same hundred), Lachebroc (Lashbrook Mules in Bradford Dabernon in the same hundred), and Hesmalacoma (Smallicombe – an outlier of Offwell in Northleigh).

This Roger may have been another son of Baldwin or he may have been some other relation to him – nothing has been found to show which. He does seem to have lived, however, until at least AD 1131 for in the thirty-first year of the reign of the Conqueror's son, King Henry I, Roger de MOL' is shown in the Pipe Roll as having paid substantially both in chattels and in cash so that he, his brothers and his men might have peace concerning a man whom they had killed.

(ii): In AD 1166 (about thirty-five years later) a Joel de MOELS is shown in the Red Book of the Exchequer as then holding four "knight's fees" in Devon from Robert the king's son.

For four or five generations that is all that has been discovered but in considering the above list of manors it is of interest to note the following entry in the Devon section of the Book of Fees over 150 years later in AD 1242/1243:-

(iii): Two and a half "knight's fees" held by John de MOLIS in – Lechebrook (Lashbrook Mules above – 'Mules' being a corruption of 'MEULES'), Yekesburne (probably Exbourne above), and Hyauntone (probably Highampton above)

(iv): Two parts of a "knight's fee" held by William Trenchard from John de MOLIS in – Lywe (Lew Trenchard above), and Wadelestone (Waddlescot/Waddlestone/Warstrong above). These two manors John de MOLIS held himself from a John de Courtenay as part of the Honour of Okehampton and it is worth noting here that although the Okehampton lordship was now with the de Courtenay family the de Molis family were also still to be found holding property in this part of Devon.

It is now that the story probably comes closer to the Droxford family and to John de Drokenesford as the lives are considered of Nicholas de MOLENDINIS and his son Roger (both also known variously as de Molis, de Molys, de Moels or de Molines) whose lives covered a combined period of some 100 years from about AD 1195 to 1295 and were full of interest as they were members of the households of Kings John, Henry III and Edward I, grandfather, father and son. It will be seen too that

Nicholas had not only a foot in Devon but also the other firmly in Hampshire and, further, that by his marriage about AD 1230 to Hawise de Botreaux (the younger daughter and co-heiress of James de Newmarch of Cadbury in Somerset and a still young widow after only twelve years of marriage to a John de Botreaux) he also acquired Cadbury and other manors in Somerset and neighbouring counties and so became one of the great landowners of that area. Their son, Roger de Molendinis, was born in AD 1232.

CHAPTER 4

The earliest traced reference to Nicholas de MOLIS is found in a letter addressed to him as 'Colin' and sent to him by King John in September 1215, three months after the king had signed Magna Carta and one month after the Pope had annulled it, thereby releasing the king from the oaths he had taken under it. The last known reference to Nicholas is in AD 1269 when he was appointed a Verderer of two Hampshire forests, Wulvemere and Alryesholt (now Woolmer and Alice Holt), both near Alton. It seems about right therefore to assume a date of birth for him as lying between AD 1195 and 1200, this making him about 15 to 20 years old when the king wrote to him in AD 1215. Evidently Nicholas too had a head start in the king's acquaintance and service from some quarter and from where else perhaps than that old-established family down in Devon (especially when it is remembered that it was from bases in this part of his divided kingdom that King John operated during his dispute with the barons).

Having through this dispute lost his crown, his treasure and his baggage-train in a crossing of the Wash, King John was stricken with dysentery and died at the Bishop of Lincoln's palace of Newark on the night of 18 October 1216, leaving his nine year old son and heir to the throne to the care of the 70-year old Earl of Pembroke, William Marshall, who was to act as Regent. Perhaps Nicholas de Molis was present when the boy-King Henry III and his party, being met on the road by the Marshall and his men near Malmesbury, asked God to give the Marshall power to protect him and heard the old soldier say to him in reply: "Upon my soul, my lord, there is nothing I will not do to serve you in good faith while I have the strength". Certainly Nicholas would have been engaged in the old marshall's successful efforts to expel from England the French invaders under Prince Louis (the son of King Philip), to whom the rebel barons had offered the Crown of England early in 1216, and to restore to his young ward and sovereign his rightful royal authority throughout the land. Perhaps it was as a reward for some service to the king at this time that Nicholas was granted in AD 1217 what seems to have been the first royal gift he received – the manor of Watlington in Oxfordshire.

Be that as it may, it is clear that from AD 1222 onwards Nicholas was a trusted servant of King Henry III and it will be simplest now to show just how trusted and active in the king's service he was by summarising in list form some of the duties which he undertook and the rewards which he received for them:-

1222 – He was granted the manor of Over Wallop in Hampshire.

1223 – He was sent to Poitou on an embassy from the king and also served in the king's expedition into Wales.

1224 – He was again sent to Poitou on an embassy; served at the siege of Bedford; and was one of the ambassadors sent to Cologne regarding a marriage between his King and a daughter of Leopold VI.

1226 – He was granted land at Little Berkhampstead in Hertfordshire.

1227 – He was on the king's service in Gascony and joint ambassador to the Count of Flanders.
1228 – He was charged with negotiations as to a possible truce with France; was appointed Sheriff of Hampshire and Keeper of Winchester Castle (an appointment in which he remained until AD 1231); and was granted the 'farm' of the town and hundred of Alton in Hampshire, holding this last grant jointly with Lawrence dee Heghes and Robert Wyard, both men whose families were connected with the Hampshire priories of Selborne and Southwick and both those families also providing Verderers of the forests of Alice Holt and Woolmer in the persons of Henry Wyard – at the same time as Nicholas was a Verderer in AD 1269 – and Peter de "Heeches" in AD 1300).
1229 – He was given plenipotentiary power to treat of peace with France and went again into Gascony on the king's service (who at this time described him as "miles noster familiaris" or "knight of our household").
1230 – He married Hawise de Botreaux and thereby became lord of her extensive lands in and around Somerset: he was also granted ten oak trees from the New Forest by the king for the support of his household.
1234 – He was appointed Sheriff of Devon (up to AD 1236) and was granted custody of the Channel Islands.
1236 – He and Richard Siward (described as "milites strenui" or "valiant knights") carried two royal sceptres at the coronation of King Henry III's Queen, Eleanor.
1237 – He was Keeper of the bishopric of Durham during a vacancy.
1239 – He was Sheriff of York (up to AD 1241).
1242 – He was ambassador to the King of France; the Book of Fees shows him holding a knight's fee in Chardford (Hampshire) from Robert de St. John (who was the tenant-in-chief), another knight's fee in Wallop (Hampshire) directly from the king and also two hides of land in the manor of Faccumbe (Hampshire) jointly with Robert and Reginald de Punchardon (another family holding land in Devon from Baldwin "the Sheriff" in AD 1086); the Book of Fees also shows Nicholas holding half a knight's fee directly from the king in Carswill (now Kerswell) and Depeford (?now Diptford), both places near Exeter in Devon.
1243 – He was left in Gascony as Seneschal by King Henry when the king returned to England and he remained for two years until June 1245, his service there being commended by the king; in the same year there is mention of James, the son of Nicholas de MOELS, who is to be educated with Prince Edward, the king's son (later King Edward I, whom John de Drokenesford was to serve) – this James seems to have been the first son of Nicholas and Hawise (possibly named after her father) but to have died young.
1244 – He inflicted a defeat on the King of Navarre, was at Bayonne in Gascony watching him and had had to borrow money as he tells his own king, who about this time describes him as "…militis strenuissimus ac fidelissimus…" – "…most valiant and faithful knight…".
1245 – After his return from Gascony he was appointed Keeper of the castles of Cardigan and Carmarthen and also Constable of Pembroke, Haverford, Kilgarran and Tenby – evidently trouble was brewing in southwest Wales and his experience was needed there; in this year also it is interesting – and it may be significant – to note that the Sheriff of Kent was ordered to pay for the passage of a John de MOLEND' (or MOLENDINIS), knight of the King of Navarre, and of his men, horses and harness and that the same John was given a safe-conduct by King Henry for four years from Michaelmas 1245 to "…go and return…" through Gascony as a "…knight of the king's kinsman…", the King of Navarre (a country lying to the south of Gascony). Could this have been John de Molendinis the father of John de Drokenesford and was he a near relation to Nicholas? Could he

have been appointed a knight of the King of Navarre to help to heal a breach and perhaps to keep an eye on his future actions? Possibly – at all events there was a similar safe-conduct for him and for his household again in August 1253.
1246 – He was Seneschal of Carmarthen and led troops in the King's war in Wales.
1248 – He directed the embarkation at Portsmouth in September of this year of knights and men and their horses and equipment for Simon de Montfort, who had been appointed King's Lieutenant in Gascony; in February 1248/49 he (Nicholas) was added to the Commissioners dealing with the King of Navarre.
1252 – In June this year Nicholas was sent into Gascony with Roscelin de Fos, Master of the Templars in England, to conserve a truce between Simon de Montford and Gaston de Bearn.
1257 to 1263 – He was at various times appointed Constable of Dover, Warden of the Cinque Ports, Sheriff of Kent and Constable of the castles of Rochester, Canterbury, Winchester, Sherborne and Corfe.
1264 – On 16 June, four weeks after the defeat of King Henry III and Prince Edward by Simon de Montfort at the battle of Lewes, Nicholas was summoned to come with all the munition of Windsor castle to the king in London with all speed, on pain of being counted a rebel if he did not: twelve days later, on 28 June, he was ordered to stay in Windsor castle and to permit none to enter: one week after that, on 4 July, he was ordered to cede the castle to John Fitzjohn, the custodian appointed by the barons: in the same year his son ROGER DE MOELS (now about 32 years old) began to come to the fore and was mentioned as an adherent of the king and the prince in the war with de Montfort and the barons.
1267 – Roger de Moels was appointed to be one of the Keepers of the Isle of Wight and, on 7 November this year, was told to restore the Island (with Carisbrooke castle) to Isabell, countess of Aumale: in this year too he was granted a weekly market and a yearly fair at his manor of Kings Carswell in Devon (held by his father Nicholas in 1242 – see above).
1269 – This year sees the last mention of NICHOLAS DE MOELS as he was appointed a Verderer of Alice Holt and Woolmer forests with Henry Wyard (see 1228 – Robert Wyard): his son, Roger de MOLYS, was described this year as being "… de comitatu Suthampt' …"or" … of the county of Southampton (or Hampshire)": Roger's own son, JOHN DE MOELS, was born in this year but this was too late for him to have been the father of John de Drokenesford (with the latter of whom in fact he more or less shared his age).

CHAPTER 5

At this point a pause for breath can be made, before galloping on again in this energetic company. From evidence which will shortly appear it seems likely that John de Drokenesford was born around AD 1268 to 1270 (but not earlier) and that he first took up duty as a clerk in the King's Wardrobe about the year AD 1285 at the age of 15 to 17 years old. He was therefore a very young man in the king's service and must have had a family or friendship connection there who was prepared to recommend him for a post. Was this the helping hand of ROGER DE MOELS or MOLIS, the son of Nicholas, both of whom by this time (if not before) had strong links with Hampshire? It is unlikely that this will ever be known for sure but it is possible to draw up a further summary of their lifetime to the end of the thirteenth century and then to stand back and see what inferences may reasonably be drawn from that:-

1276 – On 12 June this year a clerk to the new King Edward I, one Ralph de Drokenesford, was appointed Keeper and Bailiff throughout the realm of the new custom on wool and he too may have been some relation to the young John de Drokenesford and in a position to help him into the king's service: Ralph has otherwise only come to light at 21 April 1272, when he was paid 15s. 6d. as "Ralph de Drokesford" for his expenses in taking fish for the king (then still Henry III) from the 'stews' of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Easter: Ralph seems from these two glimpses of him to have been more of an administrator at Court than a military man such as Roger de Molis but clearly they would have known each other in the surroundings of the king's household, possibly they were related and possibly again they both helped to set the young John off on his long career.
1277 – Between this year and AD 1283 King Edward I was much engaged in dealing with risings by the Welsh under their leader Llewellyn and his brother David: on 1 July this year Sir Roger de Molis served against Llewellyn with one knight and was transferred to the command held by the king's brother, Edmund of Lancaster: Edmund and his men succeeded in subduing west Wales and, later in the year, Sir Roger was made one of the Barons of West Wales to guarantee the peace with Rhys ap Maredudd, lord of Dryslwyn, an erstwhile rebel who had submitted to Edmund's forces and whose homage the king had agreed to accept.
1278 – From March of this year until January 1280 Sir Roger de Molis was the Custos (or Keeper) of the castle and honour of Lampadavaur and all of the king's lands in Cardigan, receiving £80 per year and, in the first month of his appointment, a gift of five tuns of the king's wine.
1279 – On 27 July Sir Roger was appointed to hear complaints regarding an attack on Strata Florida abbey, the Cistercian house near Aberystwyth, and this – taken together with his earlier appointment to guarantee the peace in those parts and with other appointments later in his life (see below) – may indicate that he had not only had military training and experience but also some form of legal and administrative training in his younger days.
1281 – Having returned to the relative peace of the Hampshire countryside this by now eminent man fell foul of the law himself and was fined 400 'marks' (about £266 in the values of those days) for a forest trespass in that shire – but was later pardoned half of this on 7 November.
1282 – Back in Wales with the king to deal with another uprising, on 20 May Sir Roger's men brought a ship to him from Bridgewater in Somerset with corn and other victuals: three months later he was granted a gift of four oak trees from the Bishopric of Winchester and on 6 October 1283 was pardoned for not having made up the arrears of his account when he was a Bailiff in Wales.
1285 – In January he was given a 'protection' by the king to protect him whilst he was overseas from any legal actions in England, so long as he should be abroad on the king's service.
1285/86 – At this point comes an early trace of JOHN DE DROKENESFORD in the Wardrobe service – he was paid wages in Gascony as a clerk "… in the Wardrobe to help there …".
1287 – On 16 July Sir Roger de Molis received another 'protection' from the king, this time on going again into Wales for him.
1288 – On 20 November JOHN DE DROKENESFORD was appointed an Usher of the Wardrobe at a daily wage of four and a half pence plus three and a half 'marks' per year (£2:6s.:8d.) for his robes.
1289 – In October this year King Edward I returned to Westminster from three years away in Gascony: he found much discontent in the country over the lax and high-handed operations of many of his royal officers – chief justices, other judges, sheriffs, bailiffs and financiers among them – and he struck hard at them, no matter whether they were high or low: to do this he appointed as Auditors, to receive and determine complaints against them, those men whom he had tried and tested in Gascony over the last three years: they were –

John de Pontissara (Pontoise), the Bishop of Winchester and a civil lawyer, well known to John de Drokenesford.
Robert Burnell, the king's Chancellor, also versed in the law.
Henry de Lacy, the earl of Lincoln, a layman and member of the king's household.
John de St. John, the great Hampshire tenant in chief of the king, another layman and member of the royal household (" … staying continually … " with the king), whose family had been loyal Crown servants since AD 1066 and who was also well-known by John de Drokenesford.
William Lattimer, a further layman and a household knight since Edward's early days and also a fellow-Crusader with him.
William de Luda (of Louth), Keeper of the Wardrobe at that time and the king's chief financial expert during his stay in Gascony – also, of course, John de Drokenesford's superior in the Wardrobe.
William Marsh, Controller of the Wardrobe (next below the Keeper), soon to be Treasurer of the Exchequer.

CHAPTER 6

Now that the entrance of John de Drokenesford upon his long Wardrobe service has been noted it will be convenient to record separately the remaining days of Sir Roger de Molis before describing the younger man's own very active life:-
1289 – On 2 October Sir Roger was made a Commissioner to deal with trespasses in the forests of Braden and Chute and in other forests in other counties: having been convicted of a forest trespass himself (see AD 1281 above), was this setting a thief to catch a thief or did Sir Roger, as suggested earlier, add to his soldierly activities some legal training and expertise?
1290 – On 1 March he was made a Justice for forest trespasses, together with a Richard de Bosco: on 16 July the king granted him free warren at his (Sir Roger's) manors of Little Berkhampsted (Herts.), North Stoke (Oxon.), Abbotts Kerswell, Diptford and Langford (all Devon).
1292 – Sir Roger held four knight's fees at Yekesbourn (Devon), " … late of Hugh de Curtenay … " (which Hugh in fact would eventually be father-in-law of Sir Roger's grandson, Nicholas de Moels, only 2 or 3 years old in AD 1292 – see here chapter 2 above at (iii): from this year also, for three years until 1294, Sir Roger served variously as a Commissioner to deal with the killing of the Forester of Bradene forest, as the Keeper of that forest, as a Commissioner to deal with trespasses in forests, chases and parks in several counties and as a Justice to deal with forest please and with vagabonds: he also served with Adam Gurdon – another poacher turned gamekeeper by the king – and with others as a Justice of 'oyer et terminer' to deal with prisoners held in Windsor castle for forest trespasses.
1294 – In November the king called him back to Wales as a marshal of the army to deal with further rebellions there.
1295 – At the beginning of this year, in January and February, Sir Roger, as marshal of the southern forces, found himself isolated in Llanbadarn (Aberystwyth) and the Constable of Bristol was ordered there by the king to relieve and to resupply him by sea: his besiegers were an army of native Welsh levies whom the king had armed to serve him in an expedition to Gascony but who had failed to appear at a muster at Shrewsbury, preferring instead to attack that same king's newly-built castles, designed to subordinate them: the king himself joined the fray from Conway but lost his baggage-train in a well-laid ambush among the hills and was forced to retreat behind Conway castle's walls; once there, he insisted on sharing the meagre rations available equally with his men, saying that "…

in time of need all things must be in common …" and that " … he who has caused the hardship should not fare better than others " : this Welsh uprising lasted until the end of this year but by 25 June Sir Roger was dead, possibly because of the hardship of the siege he had endured or possibly killed or mortally wounded in the fighting: his heir was JOHN DE MOELS (later created the first Lord Moels) and this John took over his late father's lands on 6 August 1295 at about 26 years of age, no doubt taking upon him the responsibility of caring for his widowed mother, Alice, the daughter and heiress of William de Preux, lord of Orton in Oxfordshire: Lord John de Moels will be met again later in the army of King Edward I's Scottish wars.

When he died, Sir Roger de Moels was only about 63 years old, some 10 to 15 years younger than his father had been at his death in or soon after AD 1269. Following usual legal procedure the king now ordered the making of 'Inquisitions post mortem' in various shires to establish what lands Sir Roger was holding at his death and who was his rightful heir. These inquisitions resulted in the following information being given by the jurors sworn in each locality, the late Sir Roger's name being variously spelled as " de Moeles, de Molis, de Moelys, de Meoles, de Muelis " and " de Meles ":

¬ At Wallop in Hampshire he held a house (etc.) and more than 200 acres of land, the rents from the tenants there, the customary works due from them and the please from the manor court there.

¬ At Elingeham in Hampshire he held a house (etc.), 55 acres of land, a water-mill and the tenants' rents, works and pleas.

¬ At Rockford in Hampshire he held 40 acres of land.

¬ At Upton (or Opton) near Didcot in Berkshire he held the manor directly from the king.

¬ At Maperton in Somerset he held the manor.

¬ At Cadbury in Somerset he held the manor.

¬ At Halton in Somerset he held two parts of the manor. (Note: These Somerset manors were held directly from the king " … with other manors in divers counties … " as Sir Roger's half-share of the barony of Neufmarche, Novomercato or Newmarket - see end of Chapter 3 above).

¬ At Kynghiskarswelle in Devon (Kingkerswell, near Torquay) he held the manor directly from the king.

¬ At Duppeford in Devon (Diptford, near Totnes) he held the manor directly from the king.

¬ At Langeford in Devon (near Cullompton) he held the manor from Sir John de Mohun.

¬ At Little Berchamstude in Hertfordshire (Little Berkhampstead) he held the manor and the rents from the free tenants directly from the king.

¬ At Herdewyk in Buckinghamshire (Hardwick, near Aylesbury) he held a house and close and more than 220 acres of land plus the tenants' rents, works and pleas and half the profits of a mill, all directly from the king.

¬ At We(e)don in Buckinghamshire (near Aylesbury) he held 53 acres of land.

¬ At Over Orton in Oxfordshire he held the manor directly from the king.

¬ At Stoke Bassat in Oxfordshire he held the manor directly from John de Riveres.

In connection with this long list, taken from the printed Calendars of Inquisitions, it is interesting to note:

(a): that full 'extents' (descriptions) of several of these manors still exist to give details of them and of the tenants on them;

(b): that several of these manors acquired the place-name suffix 'Meoles' , 'Moeles' or 'Mules' within the next half-century; and

(c): that almost all of these manors eventually passed – by the death of his father William, the first Lord Botreaux, in AD 1391 – to William, the second Lord Botreaux, who was married to Elizabeth de St. Lo (of Newton St. Loe, west of Bath in Somerset), she having been interestingly enough a great-granddaughter of MARY DE DROKENESFORD (see below), who was wife to Sir John de Clevedon (of Aller in Somerset), who himself was Seneschal in AD 1315 to none other than Bishop JOHN DE DROKENESFORD of Bath and Wells, the subject of this story.

To follow this up (and so conclude this chapter) the son of the above William and Elizabeth, another William and the third Lord Botreaux, died in AD 1462 and is buried in the church of North Cadbury in Somerset, his own 'Inquisition post mortem' showing his HAMPSHIRE manors as not only Rokeford Moyles 'alias' Elingham and Little Burgate (from his late father's 'de Moels' inheritance) but also (from his mother Elizabeth's 'de Drockenesford' inheritance) Flexland manor and Soberton hamlet (both near Droxford), Bensted manor (near Alton), Fryth manor and Wyke manor (both also near Alton), Penyton manor (Penton Mewsey, near Andover) and Bodenham manor and hamlet (Bedenham, a mile or so north of Gosport, on the west side of Portsmouth Harbour).

Of these various holdings Flexland, Bensted (where there is still a very old house called 'Roxfords'), Penton Mewsey and Bedenham at least were all at one time held by John de Drockenesford and were passed by him to his brother and heir, PHILIP DE DROCKENESFORD. Exactly what happened next is not known for sure but these holdings were passed on into the hands of the Mary de Drockenesford mentioned above and from her to her son, another Sir John de Clevedon, and so to his daughter, Margaret de Clevedon (wife of Sir John de St. Lo) and from her to her daughter Elizabeth, Lady Botreaux.

What precise relationship Mary de Drockenesford was to John de Drockenesford and to his brother, Philip, is not clear but it seems probable that she was either their sister or, perhaps more likely, Philip's daughter and therefore John's niece. The important point to note is that some lands once held by Sir Roger de Mol'is (? Molendinis) and some lands once held by John de Drockenesford, the son of a John de Molendinis, are eventually found being held together in the hands of William, third Lord Botreaux, on his father's death in AD 1395, this apparently reinforcing a connection between the localised de Mol(endin)is family at Droxford and the loyal and active de Mol(endin)is servants of the two kings, Henry III and Edward I.

CHAPTER 7

What summary of evidence is there then – either direct or circumstantial – to link John de Drokenesford probably with the de Molis family rather than to see him as just a local gentleman's son who made a good career for himself in life? The following, perhaps:-
(1): The name of his father – John de Molendinis.
(2): The properties and offices held in Hampshire by Sir Nicholas and his son Sir Roger de Molis and also their activities there – showing that they both knew that shire well and were themselves well-known there just when John de Drockenesford was becoming a young man. (As an instance of this, one of the properties they held and lived at was a house at Elingham, some one and a half miles north of Ringwood in Hampshire, which they held together with 55 acres of land and a water-mill there and another 40 acres of land at near-by Rockford – a place known later on as 'Rokeford Moyles alias

Elingham' and, later still, as 'Moyles Court'. Now it may be significant here that by AD 1309 John de Drockenesford had acquired the 'wardship' of a private house only seven or eight miles away at Rockbourne, just north-west of Fordingbridge, and that he seems after that to have stayed there on a regular basis, especially on his later journeys as bishop back from his diocese at Wells to his family home at Droxford and on his other journeys into Hampshire or elsewhere in the south-east. It may also be significant that Sir Nicholas de Molis had responsibilities in Alton and in the neighbouring Hampshire forests of Alice Holt and Woolmer whilst John de Drockenesford later on acquired the house already mentioned (called 'Roxfords') in Binsted, near Alton, and also had an interest in some land in those two forests).
(3): The reference in AD 1245 to John de Molendinis as a knight, albeit a knight of the king of Navarre, shortly after the defeat of that king by Nicholas de Molis.
(4): The references in the Droxford pipe roll entries of AD 1289 to other 'de Molendinis' family members in that manor.
(5): The constant military and administrative activity in the king's service of Sir Nicholas and Sir Roger de Molis in Gascony and Wales and the fact that the young John de Drockenesford is found in service with the king's Wardrobe in Gascony in AD 1285/86 at not more than 18 years old and that he is also found in Wales with the king a few years later, during the last years of Sir Roger's life.
(6): The known facts that John de Drockenesford had a brother named ROGER and a "kinsman" (probably a nephew) named NICHOLAS.
(7): Above all, the strong tradition of energetic and loyal service to the king which is seen in Sir Nicholas and Sir Roger and which will be met again in moving on from all these complicated genealogical details to the more interesting personal life and experience of John de Drockenesford himself, firstly set in his native village of Droxford and then in the surroundings of the king's household as he rose to the Keepership of the King's Wardrobe and carried there the very heavy administrative and financial burdens of that responsible office. In so moving on, there will be renewed meetings with some of the people already mentioned and it will be seen how closely interwoven was the tapestry of society in his late thirteenth and early fourteenth century days.

CHAPTER 8

The time has now come to look more closely at the family circle from which John de Drokenesford came. His father's name has already been given but his mother's name is not known (although some think that the effigy of a lady in the south aisle of Droxford church is of her – it certainly seems to belong to the right period in time and is said to have been found in the early 1800's by workmen filling in an old moat in Palace Meadow, a riverside field just to the south of the church – there is more about this in Chapter 9 below). John de Drokenesford himself seems to have been born about AD 1270, this estimate coming from an entry in the Calendar of Papal Registers which records a dispensation given to him in AD 1298 for his having incorrectly obtained the benefice of Childewell (Childwall in Lancashire) in March 1293 whilst he was still 'under age', the age limit in question being presumably around 21 years. Later references establish that he was baptised in Droxford church and it is therefore likely that he was born in the village there.

Of any sisters for him, nothing certain is known but various documents give the names of at least four brothers and tell something of their lives. They were:-

(1): ROGER DE DROKENESFORD: Mentioned in a papal letter to John de Drokenesford in AD 1299. Roger was then over 18 but under 25 and so was born between AD 1274 and 1281. Another source shows that he too, although not a priest at the time, was presented to the benefice of Childwall (in July 1299); that he was rector of Shalfleet and of Freshwater (both on the Isle of Wight) in AD 1302 and 1303; that he went subsequently to study at an English university in AD 1303; that he was lent forty shillings by Merton College in Oxford in AD 1305 (by which year he was a 'magister' or 'master' there); that he was a canon of York and a prebendary of Wilton in AD 1307 and that he was also a King's clerk by the same year. He may have died by April 1310, for on that day John de Drokenesford and a Master Roger de Candevere (Candover in Hampshire) were executors of the will of a @Master Roger de Drokenesford'.
(2): PHILIP DE DROKENESFORD: When Bishop John de Drokenesford eventually died in May 1329 his heir was his brother Philip, then aged " 40 or more ". Philip was therefore born either in AD 1289 or, more probably, a few years before that. It was also probably he who, in AD 1310, was mandated by the bishop of Winchester to be rector of Droxford and to whom that bishop also gave licence at the same time to study for seven years. He lived until at least 1337 but was dead by January 1349. He had two known sons – another PHILIP, who was his heir (who died in AD 1355/56 and whose own heir was another JOHN) and ANDREW (another university student and holder of ecclesiastical benefices), both of them ordained by their uncle Bishop John in April 1317.
(3): MICHAEL DE DROKENESFORD: Michael (and his horse) served under his older brother, John, in King Edward I's army in Scotland in AD 1298 (more about this later) and he was therefore born not later than, say, AD 1283. Michael had at least two sons: one another MICHAEL (who was made rector of Droxford by Bishop Woodlock of Winchester in December 1315 and who later received ecclesiastical benefits around Wells from his uncle there, Bishop John); and the other RICHARD (ordained, together with his cousins Philip and Andrew above by his uncle Bishop John in April 1317 and also later in receipt of ecclesiastical benefits around Wells from that uncle).
(4): RICHARD DE DROKENESFORD: Richard was another beneficiary in January 1310 of his older brother John's move to the bishopric of Wells in AD 1309 but he had only a few years to enjoy it for he had apparently died by September 1316.

This then was a sizeable family and one of some consequence in Droxford – father, mother, at least five intellectually capable sons who survived to adulthood and no doubt some daughters, one of whom may have been the MARY DE DROKENESFORD mentioned above at the end of Chapter 6, married by AD 1319 to Bishop John's seneschal, Sir John de Clevedon. Such a large family group must have lived in a substantial house and this is thought to have been in Droxford village, the bishop of Winchester having issued a licence to Bishop John in February 1316 for him to consecrate newly-restored altars in Droxford church, the church in which Bishop John had been baptised as a child.

Where might this family home have stood? Without direct archaeological or documentary evidence (which may yet come to light) it is impossible to be certain but it is open to surmise that it was not the then manor-house and that it did not stand in the centre of Droxford village, that manor and its manor-house having been since Saxon times in the hands firstly of the monks of St. Swithun at Winchester and after that in those of the bishop of Winchester. It is more likely to have stood somewhere on the outskirts of the village, outside the demesne lands and either north or south of it in an area which seems to have become known a century of later by the name of Droxford Philippi (and which has its own series of account rolls).

Since there were in AD 1256 a William and Sarah de Moleyns (compare 'Molendinis') who held in Corhampton, north of Droxford, a messuage, lands, rents and a mill; and since John de Drokenesford himself acquired property in Meonstoke, also north of Droxford, soon after AD 1300; and since his brother and heir Philip was charged the fairly large tax bill of five shillings in the national Lay Subsidy of AD 1327 under the heading of Corhampton village in the hundred of Meonstoke: it could well be that this family home lay somewhere near the Droxford boundary with Corhampton and Meonstoke and that, although parochially 'de Drokenesford', they had as it were a foot in each parish. All that is known for sure of John de Molend(inis) (the father) is that he attended the manor court of the bishop of Winchester when it was held in Droxford in at least the years AD 1286, 1289 and 1291 and there paid assorted sums in 'fines' for various pieces of land or as other innocent dues. There is no indication in the entries for these specimen years that he paid anything in respect of a house but he did hold at least half a virgate of land in Droxford manor.

There may also be one or two other clues to improve this picture. Firstly, in that same Lay Subsidy of AD 1327 Bishop John's brother and heir Philip was also taxed three shillings under the heading of the village of Droxford. As Bishop John at that time had still two years to live this may not have related to property held by him but it may have related to the de Molendinis alias the de Drokenesford family home: alternatively, it may have related to property once held by him but transferred by him before he died to Philip by a documentary record not yet discovered. Secondly, it is possible to gain some idea of the size and construction of the dwellings on which Philip's tax charges were assessed by comparing them with two other nearby dwellings which are still identifiable and in use – they are: the still substantial St. Clairs Farm at the small crossroads two miles due south of Droxford village (on which John de Seintcler was assessed eight shillings); and the ancient Midlington Farm at the crossroads one mile south of Droxford (on which Richard de Midlington was assessed five shillings).

CHAPTER 9

We return now to the reference in Chapter 1 above to a fine of 5 shillings paid at the Droxford manor court in AD 1289 by " John, son of John de Molend' " for one ferling (or four acres) of land with one house, three acres of land and one piece of meadow, " …surrendered by John, the son of Peter ?Cl'ia … ". Apart from the acreage of the land mentioned – about 8 acres in all – there is no indication where it lay but it may be that there are clues to its location from other sources:-

(1): In the muniments of Winchester College there is a document (number 13242A) which is dated probably between AD 1290 and 1300 by which Richard de Midlington grants John de Drokenesford " … two acres in the field of Midlington in Brodforlange (Broad Furlong), between land of John le Cartere and meadow of Alice de Wallop on the East side and next to the Church path from Midlington to Droxford on the West side … ". Now, these two acres can be identified very positively (see the attached sketch map, based on the tithe map of AD 1841 for Droxford) as being part of 'PALACE MEADOW', a field just south of the buildings of the village and located between 'Wallop's Close' on the East side (see the Soberton tithe map) and, on the West side, the foot-path which still runs from south to north from a point about 100 yards east of the present Midlington crossroads on the A.32 road straight across the meadows to the south doorway of Droxford church. Alice de Wallop's husband (presumably deceased by the date of this grant) had been Richard de Wallop, the son of John and Amabilla (Mabel) de Wallop, who in AD 1242 was holding land in Soberton which is today represented by Wallopswood Farm in the eastern part of that parish.

(2): In the Hampshire county record office at Winchester there is a document (number 11M59 / 158819 / 8) of which a part is a rental of Droxford and Midlington of about the year AD 1551 and which, although damaged by time, contains the following entry under the heading of " Droxford Philippi " (that part of Droxford village lying outside the demesne lands):-
" Philip Wastell holds one parcel of enclosed land called PALYCE containing … " (the acreage in question is indecipherable) " … lying on the south side of ?Clate Mede between the river bank on the East and land of John Tanner on the West; also, one enclosed parcel of meadow, containing 1 acre, called PALLYCE MEDE, lying on the south boundary of Le ?Cort Mede between the fields of Soberton on the East and the river bank on the West … ".
(3): In AD 1552 John Tanner was a churchwarden of Droxford and the above rental states of him in another place that he held:-
" One close, with meadow adjoining, containing 4 acres together, and lying on the south part of a lane there " (i.e. at Droxford Philippi) " between LE PALYCE on the East and the field of Midlington on the West." The Droxford tithe map shows this field of Tanner's as " Church Field " and as being then separated (AD 1841) from PALACE MEADOW on the East and from Midlington land on the West by a line of trees running from north to south on either side of it. (The remains of those on the east of " Church Field " can still be traced now (1996) – very substantial trees. The lane mentioned above is also still there, running eastwards and downhill as a grass track from the junction of the A.32 and the Swanmore roads to the above-mentioned footpath from Midlington to Droxford church).
(4): Accounts of Droxford's history and of the church there, written in the 19th and the early 20th centuries, mention that the effigy of the lady now lying in the south chapel of Droxford church was found in a moat in PALACE MEADOW in AD 1820 by workmen who were filling it in. In Prior and Gardners' " Medieval Figure Sculpture in England " this lady is mentioned (with other sculptures of a like style) under the heading " The fourth style of Purbeck effigy 1270 – 1305 " and there may be in this some support for the strong local tradition that this figure came from the tomb of John de Drokenesford's mother. Of any moat in PALACE MEADOW there is now no obvious trace on the ground but on the AD 1870 edition of the Ordnance Survey 25-inch map there are certain lines running west into that meadow from the river Meon which may be evidence for its partial survival at that date. Moats around private houses were common in the 13th / 14th centuries but more often as a symbol of status than as a means of defence.
(5): Bishop John de Drokenesford's Register shows that after his consecration as Bishop of Bath and Wells in November 1309 he stayed several times at Droxford, for instance in May 1310 for at least eight days. He must therefore have had somewhere of reasonable accommodation size for himself and his retinue to stay in.
(6): As already noted, John's brother, Philip, was taxed at 3 shillings in the Lay Subsidy of AD 1327 on a property at Droxford.
(7): On 29 January 1348 either this Philip or his son and heir Philip was granted a licence by Bishop Edinton of Winchester to have oratories (or private chapels) for his houses at Bedenham (north of Gosport) and at Droxford (this was not a privilege granted to everyone).
(8): One dictionary definition of the word 'PALACE' reads " … the official residence of an archbishop or bishop within his cathedral city (but also) extended to ANY episcopal residence ". Another is " … an enclosed place … ". William Tyndale in AD 1526 spelled the word " Pallys ", not so very different from the " Pallyce " of the above circa AD 1551 rental.
(9): An exploration on foot of the southwest corner of PALACE MEADOW in the early 1980's, at a time when the meadow was very wet, discovered a solid wooden beam about 15 feet long, 9 inches wide and 6 inches thick, containing hand-made nails and probable carpenter's mortice holes. A prodding of

the nearby area with a stick suggested possible solid structures a foot or so beneath the surface.

With all these pointers in mind, and it is only excavation which will supply evidence, it is suggested here that the house and 4 acres plus 3 more acres held by " John, son of John de Molend' " in AD 1289 is the same as the large field called PALACE MEADOW on the AD 1841 tithe map, the additional 2 acres acquired by John (now " de Drokenesford ") from Richard de Midlington later on (see (1) above) being that further strip of PALACE MEADOW (of about 2 acres area) which lies on the tithe map between Church Field (and its footpath) on the West and the indented meadow of Soberton parish's 'Wallops Close' on the East. In between these two dates there is Philip Wastell's " … enclosed land called PALYCE … " of circa AD 1551, its location clearly defined by the reference to John Tanner's 4 acre holding in Church Field. As to the " … one piece of meadow … " held by John in AD 1289, it is suggested here that this equates to Philip Wastell's " … one enclosed parcel of meadow containing 1 acre … " of the c. 1551 rental (see (2) above) and therefore with the southern portion of the " ozier bed " to the east of PALACE MEADOW and the river Meon on the tithe map.

What sort of building would any house here of John de Drokenesford have been, both as a King's clerk in AD 1289 and, later on, as a bishop? To answer this it is better to think, not of a stone building, but of one built on flint and mortar foundations, its main structure being a substantial timber frame, infilled with more flint and mortar and / or with wattle and daub. There are no stones now in Palace Meadow but the long timber beam referred to above in (9) was there and so, below ground, may be the flint foundations and the remains of a moat. All the rest has disappeared from sight, either buried or carted away into the village or elsewhere for re-use. Perhaps another look at Midlington Farm will give some idea of any now-vanished de Drokenesford buildings in Palace Meadow or perhaps that idea can be gleaned more clearly from Mr. R. Whinney's description in his report of the excavation of the old manor-house complex just to the south of the church at Wickham, five miles south of Droxford (W.A.O., Report No 1). In this he refers to the late 12th / early 13th century buildings there as housing:-
(i): An aisled hall 20.5 metres long by 12 metres wide, having aisles each 2 metres wide and 5 bays each 4 metres wide.
(ii): A possible beaten earth and / or clay floor.
(iii): A hearth open to the roof and built of closely packed tiles, all stood on edge.
(iv): Partitioned-off service quarters and storage areas.
(v): A moat around the whole, broad and V-shaped, about 2 metres wide and 8 metres deep.
(vi): Fish-ponds, made by damming the stream to the south of the moat.
Perhaps a building something like this once stood in Palace Meadow in Droxford and was the home to the de Drokenesford family. Excavation may one day prove or deny this. Meanwhile, it is now time to leave this quiet little sun-trap corner of the village and to look instead around the manor of Droxford and its wider neighbourhood to see something of what John De Drokenesford himself saw as he grew up there and then left his home to enter into the king's service.

CHAPTER 10

Who were the persons whom John de Drokenesford saw about him as he grew up in the last quarter of the thirteenth century? Firstly, the then Bishops of Winchester, lords of the manor, and / or their Stewards as they visited Droxford to hold the manor courts and to dispense local justice to the tenants.

Some of these tenants were ‘free’ and some were ‘bond’, among the former being John de Molendinis, Richard de Midlington, Gilbert Horn and William de Swanmore. Of these free men, the “ ward and marriage “ was in the bishop’s hands and they were also among all the bishop’s free men on all his manors who had the duty imposed on them to “ keep “ St. Giles’ Fair at Winchester at the bishop’s will.

This great fair was held on St. Giles’ Hill and (to quote from a charter granted by King Edward III):-
“ … very many of the bishop’s tenants, who hold lands and tenements of him by (the) service of making suit (to him) at the Pavilion “ (a tent on the Hill in which the bishop’s judges dispensed an almost summary justice during the time of the fair) “ are bound to come … thither on each vigil of St. Giles, before six in the morning, to make their suit of service … and shall be prepared with horses and arms … . From among them the Justiciaries shall … select three or four (or more or fewer) to serve and tarry in the fair during its continuance and to carry out the executions and precepts of the said Justiciaries in all places within the seven leagues “ (i.e. of the fair) “ and at Southampton, as often as shall be needful for the safeguard of the peace and the fair … “. To put it briefly, the administration of justice across this area, a radius of about 20 miles around Winchester, was put, during the period of this fair, into the hands of the bishop alone. That a need for such a local arrangement for action had arisen is shown by the frequent incidents which had taken and still were taking place in “ the Pass of Alton “ in the mid- and late 1200’s. So many merchants travelling to and from Winchester with their trains of sumpter horses had been murdered or robbed in this wooded pass near Alton by outlaws (among them dispossessed supporters of the late Simon de Montfort) that King Henry III had recently given orders that the whole region should be disafforested.

Another important personage whom the young John de Drokenesford would have seen around Droxford was the king’s tenant-in-chief, the lord John de St. John, who had an interest in many manors up and down the Meon valley and who was a great servant of King Edward I, “ … one of those whom the king liked to have continually with him.” Then, again, there were the ‘knights of the shire’ of those days – men whose names, like John’s, indicated the places where their families had by now lived for at least a century and probably longer than that: men like Sir Baldwin de Bello Alneto (now Belney Farm, near Southwick, Hampshire); Simon de la Bere, who probably lived with his wife Dionisia and their son Peter at what is now Bere Farm, two miles south of Droxford; the large Burhunte family of Boarhunt, near Southwick; the de Ho(e) family of East Hoe, near Hambledon (one of whom, also an in-law of the Burhuntes, was sergeant of the king’s gaol at Winchester in AD 1236); and Sir Philip de Hoyvile of Soberton and Funtley, Steward to Bishop John Pontissara (Pontoise) of Winchester in AD 1282 and Sheriff of Hampshire from AD 1280 to 1282.

Then there were the de Lomer family from the now deserted village of Lomer on the top of Beacon Hill, near Droxford; Richard de Midlington, from what is now Midlington Farm; the de Seincler family from what is now St. Clair’s Farm, two miles south of Droxford; the de St. Philebert family; the Sauvage or Savage family of West Tisted; and the de Scures family of Wickham. Not least, there were Richard de Wallop, from what is now Wallopswood in Soberton, and the de Windleshores or Wyndesores, who held lands in Soberton by service at the king’s Exchequer – all of these names are worth noting now, for members of these families will reappear in due course on active service with John de Drokenesford in the Scottish wars of King Edward I.

As well as these greater or lesser families in the area there were also others of humbler status whose names are less familiar to historical record because they were engaged in no great thing but simply were born, christened, married, had families, lived, worked, died and were buried, all in the manor of Droxford – William Mody, whose daughter Matilda was married in AD 1286; Richard the smith (' faber '); Peter atte Parc, who was fined 12 pence in AD 1286 for felling an oak without permission; Henry the carter and Robert Ysak, the reeves in AD 1289 and 1291 respectively; Matthew of Waltham, the bailiff in both those years; William atte Hacche; Adam Makehayt; Cristi', the son of Robert the smith, fined 3 pence in AD 1289 for trespassing in the lord's corn; Cristina atte Dene, who paid 12 pence in AD 1291 to marry off her son John and 2 shillings (24 pence!) in the same year to do the same for her daughter Alice – all these and the many others paying their regular (or not so regular) rents and fines at their lord's Court for an enquiry; for a trespass; for raising a false hue and cry; for entry into parcels of land; for failing to carry the lord's corn; for recovery of a debt; for assaulting one another; for making bad beer; for keeping the wood badly – and for all the other various incidents and events of life in those days.

Then, further, there were the monks and the lay-brothers from the new abbey of Beaulieu and from the priories of St. Denys, Selborne and Southwick – all of which houses owned lands, rents and property to the north, the south and the east of Droxford and must have sent men out to look after them on a regular basis, the grants of such possessions to Southwick Priory being sometimes witnessed by inhabitants of Selborne and its area and those to Selborne Priory by inhabitants of Southwick and area.

All of these and many unnamed others, like the three ploughmen, two shepherds and one smith at Droxford and the 'keeper of the lambs … from the feast of St. John the Baptist to the feast of St. Michael', the young John de Drokenesford would have seen riding or walking about his village as he grew towards manhood and entered upon his long years of service in the King's Wardrobe – not looking after his royal master's clothes there but rather serving him in one of the closest and most widely ranging and responsible offices of state at that time. It is time now to look briefly at the Wardrobe's evolution, growth and constitution, before then passing on to a detailed narrative of John's duties and experiences there over more than twenty years.

CHAPTER 11

From the thegns and the housecarles of the Saxon kings to the knights of the Normans and on into Plantagenet times the King had always gathered round him a body of professional soldiers, known as his 'family' or his 'household'. These men formed the permanent core of his army and, together with his spiritual advisers, they travelled with him the length and the breadth of his possessions in England and in France, assisting him to enforce the law, to deal with enemies, to collect rents and to eat up the produce of his manors. They also watched him give expensive entertainments and gifts. Their number varied from about thirty in time of peace to over one hundred in time of war and, when summoned by the King, they were lodged 'within the verge' of his household, both they and their own personal 'families' (or brothers-in-arms) and the retinues of each of them. The remaining, and the less permanent, part of the English army – the mercenary knights and soldiers, the shire levies and others – were lodged, when hired or summoned to serve, 'outside the verge'. All these had to be supported and / or paid by the King – mounted bannerets in John de Drokenesford's service at 4 shillings per day,

mounted knights at 2 shillings, mounted squires and sergeants 1 shilling, infantry 'constables' 1 shilling, infantry 'vintenars' (commanders of 20 men) 4 (old) pennies and the ordinary foot soldier 2 (old) pennies per day.

To provide for the maintenance and the needs of his military family (not to mention his Queen and their personal family) the King also paid a number of officers whose duties were to run the various departments of his household. Among these officers were the chancellor, to oversee the royal clerks and chaplains, the stewards, in charge of the larder and kitchen arrangements; the royal butler and his staff; the chamberlain, to watch over the King's personal chamber and its ushers; and the constable, marshal, sergeants, watchmen, archers and so on who watched over and protected the whole royal court (some of them also preceding it in its constant movements to locate and to requisition accommodation and supplies where the King's local castle or manor could not of its own resources cater for all his followers).

All this had to be paid for, either from taxes and feudal dues collected by a long-winded procedure from the King's subjects into the country's Exchequer and then paid out to him from there to meet his bills and other charges or else out of his personal treasure. However, due to the constant demands upon his purse, that treasure was often much depleted and the King could not wait for the Exchequer officers to complete their procedures and pay to him the various monies collected from reluctant taxpayers, often with difficulty, by his shire-reeves (or sheriffs) and other local authorities in the towns and provinces.

It therefore became customary for the King to short-cut the regular Exchequer route and for him instead to collect some of these monies directly from those obliged to pay them and to hold these funds in his personal 'chamber'. This, originally, was a place where the King could relax out of the public view and discuss affairs privately with a few highly-placed spiritual, military and lay friends close to him; but it eventually evolved into something much more than this – an office of account for his household with its own staff of household officers and clerks, effectively his own 'exchequer' under his personal control and orders. By the year AD 1200 it had become a skilled and efficient office, breeding intensely loyal servants to the King from the established English and French families under his rule, many of whom he also appointed to act for him in other fields – judicial, diplomatic, purchasing, building works and so forth.

Held in the chamber, in the custody of one of these officers, were the contents of the King's wardrobe, the storeplace of his personal treasury and, by AD 1200, the source of many of his payments, especially of his own and his domestic expenses and of those to his armies in time of war. Gradually, like the young cuckoo, the wardrobe grew more and more important until, by around AD 1230, it had taken over these duties from the chamber almost completely. It then went on to develop rapidly during the reign of King Henry III and by the time of his death and of the accession of his son King Edward I in AD 1272 it had become a force to be reckoned with. By then even the Exchequer had failed to restore its proper authority to receive all the realm's customs, taxes and feudal aids, these being now paid directly and on a regular basis to the Wardrobe. Later on, as a result of Edward I's Welsh and Scottish wars and of the Wardrobe's position then as paymaster to his armies, even this readier supply of cash did not flow in with the necessary speed and the Wardrobe began to live on credit, issuing credit notes and tallies, said to be redeemable at the Exchequer, to those whose accommodation, goods and services it urgently required. These, of course, could not be redeemed when presented there by the

holders because the direct payment of dues away from the Exchequer and to the Wardrobe had kept the former short of cash too. In consequence, the Crown's debts accumulated rapidly (by the death of Edward I in AD 1307 they are believed to have totalled at least £200,000 in the values of those days) and the Wardrobe's notes and tallies were regarded as worthless and unwelcome.

The staff of the Wardrobe were headed by the Keeper, below whom was the Controller and below him the Cofferer. Below these again were Ushers, Sub-ushers and Clerks to head the various departments – the pantry and buttery, the kitchen (including the poultery, larder, scullery and saucery) and the marshalsea (which handled the hundreds of horses used by the court). Within each of these groups again was a sergeant with a staff of his own to find accommodation and supplies for the court on the move, to drive and care for the wagon-horses and generally to look after his superiors in the household at all times. The Clerk of the Marshalsea was also responsible for moving the household about on its frequent journeys, providing, for example, three long carts (each with a carter) for the Wardrobe, one long and one short cart each (plus carters) for the pantry, buttery and kitchen and one short cart each (plus carter) for the larder, scullery and pitcherhouse. Each of these twelve carts had an outrider to watch over it and pack animals carried many other necessities, including the King's dining silver, his arms and clothing and his portable chapel. Also in this Clerk's care were the great war horses of the bannerets and knights (each horse worth some £50 in the values of those days) and the coursers and palfreys of the lesser knights and of the squires or valets (these smaller horses worth some £10 each). The maintenance of acceptable discipline in the household around the King was also a responsibility of the Wardrobe officers at this time.

The Officers of the Wardrobe (of whom more below) were paid by the King for their service in several ways. They received some wages and expenses payments, together with a 'robes allowance' (graduated by rank), but they were also rewarded frequently by being presented to Church livings which had fallen temporarily vacant (prebends, canonries and ordinary benefices) and by being given the wardship, until they reached the age of majority, of wealthy heirs and heiresses whose fathers had died. Towards the end of their service there were the possibilities of a pension and, very likely, of the next vacant bishopric. In his heyday in the Wardrobe, for example, John de Drokenesford received a robes allowance at banneret rate, held numerous livings and at least two wardships and received a pension. After he left the Wardrobe he was elected Bishop of Bath and Wells and now lies buried in Wells Cathedral.

Starting from the lowest rank in the Wardrobe (all the officers of which were allowed to sleep there, near the person of the King) the SUB-USHER was responsible for its baggage and equipment and often travelled ahead of the royal household to find accommodation for his colleagues. Above him, the USHER had charge of the wax candles and the fuel of the Wardrobe and was also responsible for the costs and organisation of its continued journeys with the King from place to place. In the early reign of King Edward I, at the time of the Welsh uprisings, this resulted in a Wardrobe procession alone of three carts, each having three horses, plus two more carts, each of these having four horses.

Next above the Usher was the COFFERER. As assistant to the Keeper, the head of the Wardrobe, it was he who held the keys to the coffers in which were kept its cash and its credit records. He also had charge of the counting-table at which the physical checking of Wardrobe transactions was carried out and at which its creditors were paid off and its debtors made to pay up.

Above the Cofferer was the CONTROLLER of the Wardrobe, so called because he kept the 'counter-roll' (i.e. 'counter' to the one kept by the Keeper) of all the receipts and expenses of the royal household: he was also responsible for the safe keeping of all Wardrobe records and archives. He had also a duty to watch the quantity and quality of the household's daily supplies and was supposed to sit down each evening with the Keeper and with the Steward of the household at the household account.

There were several Wardrobe Controllers who later went on to hold its highest rank – that of being its KEEPER, the chief financial officer of the household and the officer responsible for accounting to the Exchequer for all the monies which passed through the hands of the royal household. He and his two immediate subordinates were among the King's most confidential informal advisers and there is evidence that the Keeper at least knew some of the most secret of state matters.

This then was the general Wardrobe organisation when John de Drokenesford joined it as a youth and when, as Keeper later on, he had the charge of it during the Scottish expeditions towards the end of the reign of King Edward I. These expeditions will be considered below in more detail but it may be appropriate here to just list some of the Wardrobe's activities in those days of conflict and battle – for instance, it:

¬ acted as the pay office for the army and the navy;

¬ mustered the troops and led the shire infantry levies from their home counties to the general mustering point of the whole army;

¬ bought the necessary horses in England and abroad, 'appreciating' the value of each one if the Crown was to be responsible for it;

¬ supplied the troops with food, clothing, arms and armour and supplied all necessary stores to Scottish castles held in English hands;

¬ transmitted orders, conducted missions and gave out information;

¬ counted the dead and wounded after each battle or war, also checking which horses had been killed or had otherwise died or been lost and those which had survived to be 'restored to the Wardrobe'.

It is therefore clear that, in only one department of state, the Wardrobe in those days did the work of all the twentieth-century ministries of defence, supply, information and so on and in the words of an eminent historian, Professor Tout: " … it is not too much to say that the Wardrobe supplied the machinery through which it was made possible to administer the wars of Edward I ". Small wonder then that its finances eventually broke down under the strain of its responsibilities and that its debts at that king's death in AD 1307 amounted to over £60,000 in the values of those days, its accounts for the period of those wars not being settled for a quarter-century afterwards and even then being largely written-off as a bad job.

CHAPTER 12

King Edward the First had a problem – he had just returned to England from the Crusades in AD1274, two years after succeeding his father, and he found his kingdom more disturbed than ever. In earlier days (as reported by Matthew Paris in his chronicle for AD1249) his father had once had to deal in Winchester with some who, appointed by him to investigate murderous attacks and robberies in

Hampshire, had been themselves at least hand in glove with the criminals, if not actually of their number.

Then there had come the disputes and the battles with Simon de Montfort and his supporters – remembered by many as men who had fought for a just cause, many of the survivors of them now disinherited and outlawed from their lands and possessions and living rough in the woods and forests:-
" I must sing, my heart wishes it, in a grievous strain; in tears was made the song of our gentle baronage who, for sake of the peace so long deferred, let themselves be torn asunder … to save England … . It was worse that they had the good man (Sir Simon) dismembered, who knew so well all there was to know about fighting and keeping faith … . Because of their loyalty and truthfulness, which is all brought to naught, the flatterer will be able to reign, the fool in virtue of his folly."

So had it turned out and now Edward had to deal with the results: men who had turned from war to crime or to new rebellion or disorder; aristocratic feuds got out of hand; courts not able to enforce the law; embittered Montfort supporters who had only been able to buy back their lands by borrowing heavily at high rates of interest; sheriffs and bailiffs in league with some of the criminals, imprisoning men to force money out of them, holding out their hands for bribes: the whole system of Royal authority in disrepute and unreliable:-
" Who can tell truly how cruel sheriffs are?
Of their hardness to poor people, no tale can go too far.
If a man cannot pay they drag him here and there,
They put him on assizes, the juror's oath to swear.
He dares not breathe a murmur or he has to pay again
And the saltness of the sea is less bitter than his pain.

When a sheriff comes to abbey or to hall,
The best of meat and best of drink is brought to his call.
But all this store of dainties does the host no good
Unless a gift of jewels is dessert after food.
His grooms and his beadles must each have his share
And his lady wife must have a gown of rainbow hues to wear."

All this Edward began slowly to remedy on his return to the kingdom, listening to a wide circle of comment in the land, calling and listening to Parliament, outlining his policy in public instead of deciding it with a few favourites in private, organising his finances on a methodical basis and calming his fellow-countrymen by reining in the oppressions of his Royal officers.

Soon, though, another problem arose in the persistent Welsh uprisings under Llewellyn and his brother David which began in AD1277 and only ended finally when Llewellyn was killed in AD1282 and David executed in AD1283, Edward then remaining in Wales for some time to build his great castles and to keep the Welsh under observation. For these wars and castles he needed money, much more money than was coming to him from the normal receipts of Exchequer and Wardrobe, and in this need he borrowed, turning particularly to an Italian merchant banking family, the Riccardis from Lucca, to whom he allocated his main sources of income in return for substantial loans whenever he needed them.

It is now, about AD1283/84, time to return to the young John de Drokenesford, born probably between AD1265 and 1270 and probably thirteen to eighteen years old at the close of those Welsh wars. It seems unlikely that he would have been with the King then but it was usual in those days for youths to leave home at an early age to study or to serve and it is therefore likely that he was completing his studies for – or perhaps was already at – his duties in the King's household, even if not already on the Wardrobe staff. It is not known for sure where he was educated but the following facts probably indicate that it was at the new young university at Oxford:-
(i): His official Register later in his life, as the Bishop of Bath and Wells, contains frequent references to Oxford but none to any other seat of learning.
(ii): His brother, Roger, was a Master at Oxford in AD1305 and received a loan of 40 shillings at that date from Merton College.
(iii): In AD1264 Walter de Merton, " … once chancellor of the illustrious lord Henry, King of England, son of King John … ," endowed from the profits of two of the manors which he held (i.e. Maldon and Farleigh) " … a house which I wish to be called … the House of the Scholars of Merton … (which) … by the authority of John, Bishop of Winchester " (i.e. John de Pontissara, otherwise John of Pontoise) " and the consent of his Chapter, I set up, found and establish in the said manor of Maldon for the perpetual sustenance of twenty scholars living in the schools of Oxford, or elsewhere where a centre of studies may happen to flourish … . The aforesaid scholars shall be of my kindred, as long as honourable and able men who wish to make progress can be found there. And when such persons cannot be found among my kinsfolk, up to the full number stated above, then other honourable and able persons, especially from Winchester diocese, shall be sought in place of those required to make up the aforesaid number. " (This 'House' was transferred from Maldon to Oxford in AD1274 and is sometimes considered to have been the first 'college' there).
(iv): The Register of John de Pontissara as Bishop of Winchester shows that in the year AD1306 the executors of the will of John de Pontissara, late the Bishop of Winchester, established a 'chest' (or strongbox) in the sum of two hundred 'marks' (= £133 : 6s. : 8d.) for the use of Masters and Scholars at Oxford (where the deceased Bishop had once been the Chancellor).

What more likely then than that somewhere about AD1280, John de Drokenesford would probably have been some fifteen years old, there were not enough of Walter de Merton's 'kinsfolk' to make up the full twenty in the House of the Scholars of Merton and that John, Bishop of Winchester, was therefore asked to nominate one or more 'honourable and able persons' from his diocese to bring that House up to its full complement? And what more natural perhaps than that the experienced and practical Bishop should thereupon cast his thoughts around the families of his 'free men' and remember a promising young man at Drokenesford whom he considered (and who later proved himself) to be both honourable and exceptionally able? At all events, John de Drokenesford was clearly a capable and a well-educated young man, promoted as he later was from being a mere clerk " … residing in the Wardrobe to help there … " in AD1285/86 to being its Controller (and therefore its second-in-command) in November AD1290, only five years later.

CHAPTER 13

It is time to leave all further consideration of John de Drokenesford's early days and to follow instead

the clear thread of his story from the documents which tell it. As just noted, he was paid in AD1285/86 for work done in the Wardrobe, not in England but in Gascony, where it seems he may have stayed for the whole three years or so of the King's visit there until AD1289. From a description of him as "Clerk of the Marshalsea" in the Wardrobe Accounts for the year AD1287, and as he sometimes made purchases for the stable, it is possible that he served in that department of the Wardrobe for much of those three years. At all events he reached a significant day in his career on 20 November 1288 when, about 23 years old, he was appointed to be an Usher of the Wardrobe with the duties outlined above (in chapter 11) and entitled to a daily wage of four and a half pennies and to an annual allowance for robes of three and a half marks (i.e. £2: 16s.: 8d.). At that time the Keeper of the Wardrobe was William de Luda (otherwise, William of Louth).

In the printed volumes entitled "English Historical Documents" there is a copy of 'The Household Ordinance of 13 November 1279' which sets out in one section one of these duties, interesting enough to be repeated here:-
" The usher of the wardrobe ought to have the wax and the wick, both for making-up and for keeping in store … (and he ought to) weigh out the livery (i.e. the allowance of candles) each night and (to) weigh again the next day what remains (i.e. the candle-ends), so that by the weight he can know the amounts used each night and the total sum at the end of each year. And this same usher when he has received the candles, made by weight, shall put them in safe keeping, or in his own keeping, and deliver to the chandler the amount needed for each night. And the chandler shall have nothing in his keeping except the amount for the night, as the usher delivers it."

On 12 August 1289, on his return from Gascony, King Edward I landed at Dover, bringing back with him the Wardrobe staff and many others of his Household. Perhaps rumours had reached him that things in England were not as they should be but before all else he began to make a visitation of shrines which, between his landing in August and 22 December 1289, took him and his retinue from Dover to Walsingham in Norfolk; back to Westminster in October; then to Amesbury, Salisbury, Bindon Abbey in Dorset, Odiham in Hampshire and so back to Westminster in December.

During this progress it rapidly became clear to him that the rumours were well-founded and that many in high places, judges and royal officers among them, had been lax beyond belief in their duties, even corruptly oppressing his subjects. Thomas Weyland, for instance, chief justice of the Bench of Common Pleas, had amassed vast estates in East Anglia, had been accused of incitement to murder and had fled to the sanctuary of a church rather than face his accusers. The King was furious and he struck hard and swiftly, turning for help in this to those men he knew he could trust, the men who had just been with him in Gascony – John de Pontissara, Bishop of Winchester, trained in the law and highly regarded by the King; Robert Burnell, the King's Chancellor; Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln; Sir John de St. John, the great Hampshire landholder; William Latimer, a former companion on the Crusades; and William of Louth and William Marsh, the Keeper and the Controller of his Wardrobe respectively.

There followed a great wind of shake-up throughout the land, royal proclamations inviting complaints to this tribunal. These were made in great numbers against judges, bailiffs and financiers, all of whom were quickly dealt with. Thomas Weyland, for instance, was dismissed from his position, his lands were seized and he was given the choice between a trial and probable imprisonment or abjuration of the realm. He chose the latter and accordingly in March 1290 he plodded as a felon " … ungert, unshod, bare-headed, in his bare shirt, as if he were to be hanged on the gallows, having received a cross in

his hands … " down to the port allocated to him (Dover) in the time permitted for him to do so and did his utmost to find an immediate passage overseas, having in the meantime to walk out each day into the sea up to his knees to show his willingness to go. Ralph de Hengham, another chief justice, this time of the King's Bench, was fined eight thousand marks (or £5333: 13s. :4d. in the values of his days), a vast sum of money for him to have to pay. His brother judge, Solomon of Rochester, was fined half this sum and probably thought he had got off lightly. Yet from all this turmoil there were those who benefited from the judgments upon the miscreants and one of these was John de Drokenesford who on 10 April 1290 was presented by the King to the living of Moneweden in the diocese of Norwich, which living was " … in the King's gift through the felony of Thomas de Weylaund, who has abjured the realm."

It was now, possibly because he had served the King's tribunal (to four of whose members at least – Pontissara, St. John, Louth and Marsh – he must have been well-known), that John's career began to soar rapidly. In May 1290, one month after the King's appointment of him to Moneweden, he succeeded Walter Langton as Cofferer of the Wardrobe (on Langton's promotion to Controller) and only six months later on 20 November 1290 he succeeded him again, this time as Controller on Langton's promotion to Keeper. John was still only twenty-five years old.

CHAPTER 14

It will be remembered from chapter 11 that the Cofferer of the Wardrobe held the keys to the coffers containing its cash and its credit documents and that he also had charge of the counting-table at which its transactions were physically checked. The Controller of the Wardrobe kept the 'counter roll' of its receipts and expenses (i.e. against the Keeper's roll) and kept its records safely.

These were high and well-rewarded positions in the King's service and so it is not unusual to find John de Drokenesford now with enough money in hand to take advantage of a new and paying activity – moneylending, a practice which increased greatly amongst non-Jews towards the end of the thirteenth century. For that increase there were various reasons, the principal among them being a desire of English merchants for capital to expand their fields of trading; the need to borrow to live of rebels who had forfeited many, if not all, of their lands for unsuccessfully supporting Sir Simon de Montfort; the King's declared policy of expelling the Jews (the traditional moneylenders) from England; and, not least, a degree of 'status spending' to keep up with the de Joneses a mile down the road or perhaps elsewhere in the shire. For these reasons men borrowed now from those with the money to lend and among these were the royal clerks of the Wardrobe, from its Keeper Walter Langton downwards (and he proved himself to be a hard creditor to those who borrowed from him).

For such lending some security was needed and this was provided for the lender in AD1290 by a relatively new procedure known as an 'enrolled recognizance of debt'. This required the borrower to acknowledge in a court of law (his acknowledgement then being 'enrolled' on that court's rolls) that he owed his lender a certain sum which was to be repaid at a specific time and that, if he failed to do this, he had lands and chattels in identified counties on which the sheriff could levy to recover the debt. John de Drokenesford's activity in this field began around June 1290, the month following his promotion to Cofferer, when he lent £1 : 13s. : 4d. to Michael Crok (some hundreds of pounds in today's money) against Michael's lands and chattels in the county of Southampton. The Croks were

an established Hampshire family and as Michael appears again in AD 1303 at Boarhunt in Hampshire as one of the witnesses to a charter deed then executed there by John de Drokenesford he may well have been a member of John's regular retinue. Thereafter John is found lending frequently: to Robert Poterel, citizen of Winchester, 50 marks (£33 : 6s. : 8d.); to Richard de Midelington at Droxford £6 : 0s. : 0d.; to John le Convers, a sergeant of the King's household, 20 marks (£13 : 6s. : 8d.); and to Nicholas, Bishop of Kildare, 40 marks (£26 : 13s. : 8d.). But John was also a borrower himself: £20 : 0s. : 0d. exactly on one occasion from Walter de Langton, the Keeper.

But now the King and his Queen, Eleanor, were again on the move and so the Wardrobe must go too. Earlier that year, between 20 February and 28 April 1290, they had travelled from Westminster to Abingdon to Quenington to Feckenham to Woodstock to Amesbury to Winchester to Chichester and from there back to Westminster for the Easter parliament and for the marriages of their daughters, Joan and Margaret. Now, on 21 July 1290, the Wardrobe's three long carts were re-loaded and they set off once more from Westminster, this time heading north to Northampton, where the King confirmed on August 28th a treaty made in July between commissioners acting both for England and for Scotland under which it was agreed that the King's young son, Prince Edward, should later on marry the infant Maid of Norway, heir to the throne of Scotland ever since her grandfather King Alexander III had galloped over a cliff one wild and stormy March night on his way home. Here, in the Midland shires, the King and Queen visited shrines and went hunting, the King also hearing suits and petitions, until the meeting of a further parliament in the autumn at Clipstone in Nottinghamshire to deal with the kingdom's needs and to arrange the details of a new European crusade which King Edward was to lead

Now though there began to mount those troubles for the King which were never to leave him for the remaining seventeen years of his life. Hard on the end of this parliament came first a rumour that the little Maid of Norway had died at the end of September during a rough North Sea voyage back to Scotland; and then a report that, following her death, the Bruce family of Scotland and others with a claim to the throne there were gathering their men and preparing to do battle for it.

Much worse for the King was to follow. Whilst considering this report he received another from a white-faced messenger which put far from his mind all thoughts of Scotland, of England or of any of the other kingdoms of this world: his much-loved Queen and wife, Eleanor of Castile (also known as 'Eleanor the Faithful') was dying at the house in Harby in Nottinghamshire where he had left her to rest as a guest whilst he went on to the parliament at Clipstone. Dropping everything else, the anxious King and husband rode furiously the twenty or so miles to her bedside, arriving in time to spend only a few short days with her before she died, in his arms, on 28 November 1290 at the age of only forty-six.

Edward was inconsolable: for two entire days he shut himself away, hardly eating or drinking and writing only brief notes – " … in life I loved her dearly, nor can I cease to love her in death … ". Then he stirred himself and emerged from his seclusion to escort his beloved wife's body back to London, raising a beautiful stone cross, carved by English hands, at every place where the sad procession stayed overnight – at Lincoln, Grantham, Stamford, Geddington, Hardingstone, Stratford, Dunstable, St. Albans, Walthamstow, Cheapside and Charing in London. The journey of some 130 miles took them ten days and the crosses, paid for by the dead Queen's executors, are believed to have cost some £50,000 (some millions of pound in today's money). She was buried in Westminster Abbey and a

chronicler of her day wrote of her: “ To us she was a loving mother, the pillar of the whole nation “. The staff of the Wardrobe mourned too – and they watched over their lonely King, now alone at Christmas for the first time in very many years.

CHAPTER 15

From now onwards King Edward became ever more closely concerned with the affairs of Scotland, a country which exercised him greatly until he died on campaign near its borders in July 1307. Close to his hand at almost every turn of these affairs was John de Drokenesford.

The sudden death in AD1290 of the young Maid of Norway left wide open the question of who should succeed to the throne of the kingdom of Scotland and a dozen or more eager claimants immediately entered their bids for it. No agreement between them could be reached and Edward of England was therefore asked to arbitrate. This he began to do in May 1291, demanding first that he be acknowledged as Scotland’s overall lord. This demand led to much heart-searching among the Scots and had the effect of weeding out some of the claimants. However, it was eventually accepted by the remainder and the issue of a successor was then debated (a) by forty assessors selected by one of the main contenders, John de Baliol, (b) by another forty selected by Baliol’s chief opponents, the Bruce family, and (c) by twenty-four Englishmen of King Edward’s council. In the following year this body of 104 announced its decision in favour of John de Baliol and Edward arranged John’s coronation at Scone on 30 November 1292, breaking the existing seal of Scotland and requiring Baliol to do homage to him, Edward, as Scotland’s overlord.

Needless to say, this high-handed procedure, although perhaps regarded as necessary by Edward to protect the northern border of his kingdom of England, did not go down well with the Scots, especially when they saw King John of Scotland summoned later on to appear in person in the English king’s courts on what were purely Scottish matters and to provide Scottish troops for that king’s imminent war with France. Having, nonetheless, complied with these demands King John returned to Scotland only to find himself subjected there in July 1295 to the control of a board of twelve ‘advisers’ – four earls, four barons and four bishops – who forthwith began to seek an alliance against Edward with King Philip IV of France, a very shrewd and wily operator.

On hearing this news Edward exploded into action. He ordered Baliol to surrender Scottish border castles and boroughs to him, he issued writs in every English shire for the seizure of all Baliol’s lands and property there, he summoned a large army to meet him at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in March 1296 with horses and arms and he collected together a fleet of ships from the ports of eastern England. Then, on 28 March, he first sacked Berwick-on-Tweed (putting thousands of its men to the sword) and then rebuilt it to his own defensive and administrative pattern, thereafter marching on round Scotland to impound the Scottish state records and regalia and the coronation stone at Scone (the latter not eventually returned to Scotland until November 1996, just over 700 years later). Next, he enforced Baliol’s submission to him, sent him off into lasting captivity in England and held a parliament back at rebuilt Berwick at which he required full homage from all the nobles and people of Scotland. Some gave it, some did not, but many of them bode their time and waited their chance. Having done all this, and now aged 57, Edward left Scotland in the administrative hands of some of his toughest officials and returned to England with the sense of a job well done. John de Drokenesford and the Wardrobe

followed him back, John having been promoted on 20 November 1295 to be its Keeper and having now as its second-in-command (as Controller) another Hampshireman from a little village near Alton, John de Bensted. Bensted served in this position for ten years until AD1305 and was then made Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both of these Johns had earlier probably followed the king with the Wardrobe into North Wales again for the autumn, winter and spring campaigns of AD1294/1295, when he dealt with the final Welsh rebellion there under Madog ap Llewelyn, a rebellion which had broken out just as Edward was about to leave on an expedition to Gascony and which was dealt with just as energetically as the Baliol/Scotland problem a year or so later. John de Drokenesford's former superior as Keeper, Walter de Langeton, was now the king's Treasurer and it seems that John, even in his new post as Keeper, was still borrowing from him, acknowledging a debt of £100 to him on 20 May 1296 (many thousands of pounds in today's values).

It is of interest here to bring in a document which shows some of John de Drokenesford's responsibilities during the preparations for the above attack into Scotland. This comes from the King's Memoranda Roll, 24 Edward I, is dated 23 January 1296 and reads in part:-
" … To cause to come to Newcastle-upon-Tyne from the Ist. March onwards £1000 each week … for 1000 men-at-arms and 60,000 foot soldiers and for other expenses of the household … and that there be sent thither at the beginning … for two weeks, or three, or four £10,000 or £15,000 or more; and, afterwards, according to what … the business shall demand ". These were millions of pounds in today's values but even so they were not enough for on 24 March 1296 an order was issued to the king's treasurer and chamberlains to deliver £20,000 more to the king's clerk, John de Drokenesford, Keeper of the Wardrobe, for the expenses of the household and for other business of the king and this was followed by like orders for £10,000 in June and for £20,000 in November of the same year.

At this date, when John was about to go to the Scottish wars, it is interesting to review this army which King Edward was able to raise at such relatively short notice. First and foremost were the barons or bannerets and their retinues of his own household, all wearing their individual and distinctive liveries: and then there were the other great lords of the realm, each one of them with their own similarly uniformed followers. Secondly, there were the knights of the shires with their own men, some of these knights perhaps already themselves in the retinues of the greater lords. (In this connection it is significant that in January 1296 – the month just mentioned above – an enquiry was ordered throughout the land to identify all persons who were either already knights or who were worth £40 per year in land and to ensure that all these were equipped with horses and arms for the defence of the kingdom. Eleven months later, in November, all £20 freeholders were actually distrained to become knights, with all the martial responsibilities which that entailed, and were liable to fine if they did not). All these, with their esquires (sometimes called yeomen), sergeants and troopers were mounted men, the leaders riding the great war-horses covered with chain-mail over linen and the esquires and lower ranks riding smaller 'rounceys', partially covered at least with either a lighter mail or with boiled leather. Some of these will appear later by name in the retinue of John de Drokenesford on active service in Scotland.

After the mounted men came the infantry, the men from the shires who had been 'called up' – crossbowmen, archers and spearmen among them – each paid two pence per day and each marching along in his steel cap and padded boiled leather hauberk under the command of his own officer and N.C.O.s. Finally, there were the support services – the armourers, the smiths, the carpenters – and the wagons of the Wardrobe, carrying their pay.

CHAPTER 16

Having dealt with Wales and, as he thought, with Scotland too King Edward now looked southwards to his kingdom of Gascony, seized recently by the French King Philip IV and which Edward was now determined to recover. To do this he needed yet more money, together with an alliance or two to help him along. As to the alliances, one was made in January 1297 with Count Guy of Flanders (cemented by a treaty for the marriage of Edward's son, the Prince Edward of Wales, to one of Guy's daughters) and another had been made at about the same time by the marriage of Edward's daughter, Elizabeth, to John, Count of Holland. As to the money, there were ways and means …

One of these means was for Edward to ask his subjects for a grant of taxation and this he did at a parliament at Bury Saint Edmunds in November 1296, one at which he came into contentionwith the clergy. Recording this, Peter Langtoft (a contemporary Augustinian canon from Bridlington in Yorkshire) describes in the chronicling medium of the day what happened: after persuading the earls, barons and knights to grant him " the tenth penny " in aid and the merchants to grant him the seventh the King turned to the clergy, who had promised him similar help. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Winchelsey, was in a cleft stick and " studied an answer " before saying to the King:- " Sire, for God there above, do not be angry … the pope is our head, he keeps and rules us; he has made a statute which binds us strictly … that tenth, nor twentieth, nor moiety (half), nor part, no one of us give to thee or to other, without his commandment as our authority ". Replied Edward, " Sir clerk, thou hast spoken folly. Promise is debt due, if faith be not forgotten … you will not be able to escape this aid! " and, when he was asked to send a messenger to the pope about the problem: " Sir clerk, I have no need of thy sending to consult the pope ", thereupon withdrawing his royal protection from the clergy until, eventually, a compromise was reached and an agreed grant was paid.

Another of these ways and means, all of them of intense interest to the Keeper of the Wardrobe as a matter of money supply, brought the King in the spring and summer of AD1297 into collision with the wool merchants of England. This time he made an order (a 'prise') for wool and hides to be commandeered throughout the country for his use and to be conveyed to designated ports for export on pain of imprisonment and total confiscation of the wool if this was not done. His order stated quite clearly that the wool of English, as opposed to foreign, merchants should not be seized, thereby implying that they would be allowed to keep it if they paid customs on it; whereas the stocks of the foreign merchants would be taken from them, sold for the King's immediate money needs and its value eventually reimbursed to them by the Exchequer via the normal and much slower sources of income supply to him. However, the barons of the Exchequer decided that not enough " foreign " wool would be there to be taken and so, after discussion in the King's Council with John de Drokenesford and others, they extended the seizure of stocks to certain English merchants too, some of who thereupon complained forcefully to the King and got this second order reversed.

Life in AD1297 for King Edward and his Wardrobe officers was therefore becoming difficult, the more so in that the King's friend and his Seneschal in Gascony, John de St. John, and many others had been ambushed and captured on 30 January whilst taking relief provisions through a narrow pass near Belgarde to hard-pressed Gascon and English garrisons. They were, to quote Peter Langtoft again: " … led by their spy, who tells them for truth that in the company of the French … were no more than five hundred men-at-arms, having lied by a thousand or more. … Sir John de St. John, combating with the sword, and eleven knights are taken in the flight and eighteen gentlemen of their esquiery ".

Edward reacted to this news with energy. At a parliament at Salisbury he told all there: " I am castle for you, and wall, and house … my land of Gascony is lost through treason; I must recover it … I have undertaken the expedition … it is the duty of each of you by name to pass with me; of that, not a soul has excuse by evasion ". He himself would lead an army to Flanders and he would send another army to Gascony under the hereditary earl marshal of England, Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk. " Oh no, Sire!" said the earl marshal (supported in this by England's hereditary constable, the earl of Hereford) and went on to remind the King that none of his barons nor any of their feudal followers owed him any service overseas unless they were paid at the King's cost, by agreement. Says Langtoft again: " The King took the speech angrily to heart, spoke haughtily … and commanded the earl to equip himself, for, whether he would or not, go he must or quit there the office of the marshalship. Earl Roger replies that so lightly he will not think of there resigning his office; and out of the Court he departs without further dealing there ". Thereupon the King sent for Geoffrey de Genevile, presented the rod of the marshalship to him and ordered the arrest of Norfolk and Hereford. They, hearing of this, armed their men; a bishop interceded with them on England's behalf; and the two earls agreed to discuss this matter and others with the King if he would meet them at St. Albans. But, says Langtoft: " The King, Sire Edward, cannot wait … he raises his sail without company of earl and goes suddenly to arrive in Flanders. Never in time back was such a sovereign served thus by his people when he was going to make war ".

The King did not go to Flanders alone, though he sailed from Winchelsea with a much smaller army than he had hoped for – some 100 bannerets and knights and about 570 squires, two thirds of whom were his own Household troops. His cavalry numbered no more than 200 instead of perhaps the 2000 that there might otherwise have been and he also took with him some 5000 Welsh and 3000 English archers on foot. Amongst those Household troops were the Keeper of his Wardrobe, John de Drokenesford, then about 29 years old and leading 3 knights and 29 troopers; and the Controller of his Wardrobe, John de Bensted (i.e. Bensted, near Alton, Hampshire), leading another 2 knights and 13 troopers. The names of these retinues are not known but it is likely that some of them also served with their two leaders the following year in Scotland and their names are known then and will be set out shortly in a later chapter.

The King sailed for Flanders at the end of August 1297, having just escaped death when his horse shied and threw him from the ramparts of the newly-built port of Winchelsea in Sussex. His army of some 9000 men, their horses and supplies were carried in a fleet of about 300 ships, most of them requisitioned in the usual way from the harbours and ports of eastern and southern England. These English seamen were often a quarrelsome bunch and they ran true to form on this occasion, those from the Cinque ports fighting a pitched battle with those from Yarmouth at the Flanders end of the voyage, several of the ships being burned, others looted and over 150 men killed. Caught up in all this was the 'Bayard' from Yarmouth, aboard which was the Wardrobe and all its equipment. They were all saved from imminent destruction during the fight by the quick wits of Philip de Hales, who cut the ship's moorings and so let it escape.

Trouble continued to build for the King. Even before he left for Flanders, Scotland had again begun to blaze, this time under the hand of William Wallace, supported by Robert the Bruce. Wallace had now risen against his English overlord, had become popular with the ordinary Scot and had attacked many

English garrisons in Scotland. As a result, King Edward had left orders before he sailed for another army to be raised and sent north to arrest Wallace and to bring him in to English justice. A thousand horse and 50000 foot soldiers had therefore marched on Stirling, led by the earl of Surrey, John de Warenne, an elderly soldier in his late sixties. On 11 September 1297 he met Wallace's troops at the battle of Stirling Bridge. Wallace hid his men until much of Warenne's army had crossed the single narrow wooden bridge over the River Forth and then seized the bridge, cut the English off and fell upon them, cutting them to pieces as they tried to deploy in the confined area in which they found themselves. Langtoft again:- " … while the earl was sleeping in the morning, William Wallace laid siege to the head of the bridge; of spears and gavelokes none ever saw before so thick an assemblage; the earl fled, the English died there, the Scots pass there quit ".

Still in Flanders, Edward heard with dismay the reports of this defeat and of the encouragement drawn from it by the Scots. Beset too by political and taxation problems back home and by lack of success in his expedition he made a truce with Philip and set about returning to England at the end of the winter. Orders were issued on 4 February 1298 by " Edward the King's son " to the Warden of the Cinque Ports, to the barons and men of the port of Sandwich, to Dover, Hythe, Romney, Hastings, Winchelsea, Portsmouth and Southampton: " As the King proposes to return to England shortly (you are ordered) to proceed in person immediately upon sight hereof to each of the said ports and to cause all the ships thereof that are suitable for the conveyance of men, horses and other necessaries to be prepared without delay with bridges and hurdles, so that (you) shall have them thus prepared with sufficient sailors and mariners at Sluys in Flanders on the first Sunday in Lent at the latest in order to make speedy passage of the King and his subjects there. … The King will send to (you) shortly John de Drokenesford, Keeper of his Wardrobe, to satisfy the expenses incurred in this behalf.

At the same time the barons, bailiffs, men and communities of all ports on the south-eastern and eastern coasts of England and the Sheriffs of all the eastern and southern counties were ordered to observe the new truce. To John de Drokenesford himself (apparently after some delay in assembling all the ships) the King wrots:- " As the King needs at least 100 ships for his passage and for that of his subjects with him to England … and as he cannot have more than 20 ships … from … Yarmouth upon this occasion, as he understands, he orders John to provide without delay in such manner that the King may have the remaining 80 ships … from the ships of the Cinque Ports … . He is enjoined not to neglect this as he loves the King and his honour, and to use all diligence in this behalf, so that the said passage shall not be further delayed. " Ten days later Adam Gurdon was ordered to go to Portsmouth and " … induce the bailiffs and community … to cause all the ships of that town to be … sent to Sluys in form aforesaid. " On Friday, 14 March 1298, " … the King, coming from Flanders, touched about the ninth hour in the port of Sandwich and on the morrow, Saturday, about the first hour, John de Langeton, the King's chancellor, in the King's chamber at Sandwich, before the King's bed in his presence and at his command, in the presence of Sir R. de Grey, Sir John de Drokenesford, Keeper of the Wardrobe, and Sir John de Benstede, delivered the seal which the King used in England while he was in Flanders, under the chancellor's seal, to W. bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, the treasurer, to be kept in the treasury, and the King forthwith in the presence of the aforesaid delivered to the chancellor the great seal which he had with him in Flanders, under his privy seal with his own hand. "

King Edward was back in his English Kingdom and again in full control. At the age of 59 years he was just about twice as old as his Keeper of the Wardrobe, John de Drokenesford.

CHAPTER 17

King Edward the First had now one fixed resolve – to hammer Scotland until he had welded it into a part of his Kingdom. What he was not to know was that this would take up the remaining nine years of his life and that his self-imposed task would still be uncompleted then and would be unsuccessful thereafter. Immediately upon his return to England, however, he set about it and at this point much detail comes to light about Sir John de Drokenesford and his personal retinue, many of them Hampshire men like himself. This information comes from a series of records published in AD 1887 by Henry Gough under the title of " Scotland in 1298 ", a book which opens its recital with an account by Gough of the pattern of King Edward's actions in that year.

This account states that, whilst he was still in Flanders, he issued writs under his son's hand ordering a body of several hundred horsemen and a substantial army of several thousand foot-soldiers, mostly from Wales and the Welsh border and the north of England, to march to Durham and to Newcastle-upon-Tyne for action against Scotland. At about the same time he also sent writs to a large number of the Crown's military tenants to be ready with horses and arms to accompany him northwards. On 30 March 1298, after his return to England, more writs were issued to these tenants, ordering them instead to be at York by the feast of the Pentecost. On the same date over 200 more tenants, knights and their men were also summoned. On 8 April several thousand more foot-soldiers were called-up from Wales and Cheshire, duly armed and marched to Carlisle. On 10 April the King issued a writ to the army commander, telling him to get to York by Pentecost in the utmost secrecy and together with others to confer with him. Other earls received like orders, among them that earl marshal who had refused to go with the King to Flanders. The Scottish lords were also summoned and were given plainly to understand that if they did not attend then they would be regarded as enemies. The sheriffs of the English counties were ordered to send knights, burgesses and citizens. On 15 April writs were issued to various sheriffs for the purchase of wine, wheat, oats, meat, fish and other supplies for the army, some to be sent to Berwick and some to Carlisle.

By 20 April 1298 the King and presumably the Wardrobe and other divisions of his household had started to journey north and were at Harrow. Visiting various shrines on the way they travelled on to Ely (6 May), Bury St. Edmunds (9 May), Thetford, Walsingham, Lincoln and so to York, arriving there on 24 May, the eve of Pentecost. There, on the next day, a parliament was held to which the Scottish lords failed to come or to present their excuses. Three days later Patrick, earl of Dunbar, was appointed captain of the garrison of Berwick and nineteen sheriffs in 25 English counties were required to make proclamation that the military tenants and knights previously summoned should now appear with their men at Roxburgh on 23 June. On 30 May the King left York and reached Durham by 16 June and Alnwick by the end of that month. By 3 July he had travelled via Chillingham to Roxburgh and found awaiting him there an army said to have totalled several thousand horsemen and several tens of thousands of foot-soldiers, many of them Welsh. It was probably the largest single army which the country had ever seen and it is convenient here to pause and look at its nature before joining John de Drokenesford and his men at the battle of Falkirk.

In the campaign of AD 1298, says Gough, the cavalry was divided into four battalions, the third of these under the King's personal command and made up of many of his household. These battalions were divided into companies, each led by a knight banneret and each such banneret riding under his own blazon of arms, displayed on a square or an oblong banner, and each paid four shillings a day.

Following the bannerets rode the 'simple' knights (later known as 'knights bachelor'), each of them riding under a long pennant with a pointed tail and each paid two shillings per day. After them rode the esquires, sometimes called 'valets', and after these the sergeants, bringing up the mounted rear. All these mounted men had their horses 'appraised' (i.e. recorded and valued) as they joined the army and these mounts were then paid for if they were killed or otherwise lost in the King's service.

The infantry were commanded by officers called 'centenarii' (leaders of 100 men) and 'vintenarii' (leaders of 20 men) and it is noteworthy here that the offices of 'centenier' and 'vingtenier' have survived into the twentieth century in the Channel Islands. The King often supplied the army with its equipment and victuals but often also these had to be sought and bought privately from the traders who were never very far from its flanks or its route of march.

In this great army and among the 46 'banners' (i.e. bannerets) of the King's battalion rode Sir John de Drokenesford, Keeper of the Wardrobe, and his personal following of three other knights, his brother Michael de Drokenesford, his clerk Walter de Bedewynde and his 21 'valleti' (valets or esquires). They are all listed in Gough's book by name, together with their horses, and for one of them at least there survives a 'letter of protection', a document granted by the King to men active on his service in the field in order to safeguard their lands and possessions from action by their creditors during their enforced absence from home. In this case the letter is granted to Roger le Savage during his service in Scotland and was sought on his behalf by " Johan de Rokenesford ", apparently an original signature by John de Drokenesford, perhaps having some link with a still surviving house at Binsted, near Alton in Hampshire, which he later acquired and which is still called " Roxfords " to this day.

CHAPTER 18

Having had a general look at King Edward's army, it is time now to bring into focus from the ' Falkirk Roll of Arms ' and the ' Rolls of the Horses ', printed by Mr. Gough in his book, the cavalcade from Hampshire which rode to Scotland to join the third (the King's) battalion – " La batayle le Roy " – in the great Army now assembling at Roxburgh.

Riding at their head on a great spotted ' powis ' war-horse (i.e. one bred in Powys and valued at 30 marks, or £20, in AD 1298) came Sir JOHN DE DROKENESFORD himself, the Keeper of the King's Wardrobe, his banner borne beside him by an esquire and showing a device on it described in heraldic terms as: " Quarterly, or and azure, [4] roses counterchanged " – that is, the banner divided into quarters, two diagonally opposed being gold in colour, the other two being blue, each of the quarters having on it a rose (a five-petalled rose having been an early heraldic device).

Following their commander, the banneret, there rode three knights – Sir ROGER LE SAVAGE on a bay horse also valued at 30 marks; Sir HUGH DE ST. PHILEBERT on a dun coloured horse worth 40 marks (£26: 13s: 4d); and Sir JOHN DE SCURES on a dappled horse valued again at 30 marks. Before looking further down the trotting column, what more id known of these three ' officers ' ?

¬ Sir Roger le SAVAGE (whose name in the list first follows his leader) may just have been that Roger who is described in ' Knights of Edward I ' as having served that king in Gascony in AD 1295, in Flanders in AD 1297 and 1298 and now in Scotland in AD 1298. This Roger died however in AD 1299 and there

is another, more likely, Sir Roger le Sa(u)vage who was a Commissioner of the Cinque Ports on 8 May 1299 and who was much employed thereafter by both kings Edward I and II on their business in Gascony and elsewhere in France and also in various official positions in England. Whichever it was now in Drokenesford's company he had estates in Kent – but it may be noted also that the charters of Selborne Priory refer in the AD 1230's to land held in West Tisted (Hants) by a Henry le Sauvage and again in AD 1242 to this Henry's widow, then called Cecilia de Westistede: the charters of Southwick Priory (Hants) show a Sir James le Sauvage as Sheriff of Hampshire from AD 1256 to 1258 – so he seems to have had Hampshire links too. At all events, the second Sir Roger above bore arms described as " … de argent a vi [6] lioncels de sable … " and the Wardrobe Account for the year to 20 November 1300 shows a payment to ' Lord Roger le Sauvage ' of 60 marks (£40) " … in reparation for … " one light bay war-horse with three white feet and a star on its forehead, valued by himself and returned to the baggage-train at Carlisle (' Karliol ') in August 1300, following another Scottish Expedition (of which more later).

¬ Sir Hugh de St PHILIBERT, riding a dun horse and bearing arms " Bendy of 6 argent and azure ", was the fourth Sir Hugh since AD 1200, son of the third Sir Hugh and a ward of the Earl of Cornwall in AD 1278/79 because he was then a minor. In AD 1298 therefore he was not more than 40 years old. He had served in Wales with that earl in July 1297 and also overseas in that year. His mother was Euphemia, his wife Alice, he died on 31 December 1304 and his son and heir (then a minor) was John. In August 1300 he received 70 marks (£46: 13s: 4d) on returning one brown bay war-horse to the baggage-train at Carlisle and in the next month a further £13: 6s: 8d for the return to the baggage-train at Drumbogh of an iron-grey dappled pack- or draught-horse, so valued by his squire ('valettus'), RICHARD DE LA MORE. Sir Hugh's Hampshire links in AD 1298 are not clear but the Southwick Priory charters refer on 27 January 1195 to " Hugh de Sancto Philiberto " as a witness to a document signed at Bitterne (Hants) and also around AD 1230 to " … the house of William de Sancto Philiberto … " somewhere in Southwick village or elsewhere on the Priory's lands.

¬ Sir JOHN DE SCURES (or D'ESCURES) came from an old-established Hampshire family, settled at Wickham, five miles south of Droxford, for many years past. His arms were " … de azure frette de or … " and in later life he was appointed Sheriff of Hampshire (AD 1321), Constable of Winchester castle and Commissioner of Array in Hampshire (AD 1322). He lived at least until AD 1342 and was therefore probably in his twenties in this campaign of AD 1298.

Following these three knights in Drokenesford's company there came twenty-three other men, all described as his ' valletti ' or ' esquires ', apart that is from MICHAEL DE DROKENESFORD (" … his brother … ") and WALTER DE BEDEWYND (" … his clerk … "). Listed briefly, with what is known about each of them, they were:-

¬ JOHN FLAMBARDE on a black horse with a star on its forehead and three white feet (worth 20 marks).

¬ HENRY DE FARNHULLE on a bay horse with a star on its head (20 marks).

¬ MICHAEL DE DROKENESFORD on a white horse (worth £12) - he had a grown son Michael living in AD 1310 so was himself at this time probably 20 to 25 years old.

¬ HAMO LESTMOR on a piebald red horse (£10).

¬ THOMAS LAUNCELEVEIE on a black horse (£12) - he seems to have been from the Lancelevee family who held property in Hampshire and Hannington, near Basingstoke, and at ' Prallyngworth ', between Botley and Burridge.

¬ THOMAS DE BURHUNTE on an iron-spotted horse (£12) - he came from the large family of that name at Boarhunt, near Southwick Priory, Hampshire, who are often mentioned in that priory's charters - he seems to have been the son of Sir Richard de Burhunte, to have had a wife Margaret by AD 1327, to have had a son John and to have died in AD 1339 - the Wardrobe Account for AD 1299/1300 shows that he received £3 for a horse of his which he had lost when he came in haste from Scottish parts to the King at Westminster as the messenger of lord John de Drokenesford - Thomas again seems to have been about 25 years old in AD 1298.
¬ JOHN LE SAVAGE on a white horse (£12) - presumably a kinsman of Sir Roger le Savage mentioned above.
¬ JAMES (' JACOBUS ') DE MOLENDINIS on a bay horse (12 marks, about £8) - an important name to find listed as it shows a ' Drokenesford ' connection with the ' Molendinis ' family discussed earlier - in AD 1301 this James acted as John de Drokenesford's agent to buy crossbows for the King at Linlithgow - in AD 1302 he was granted 22 acres near Isington in Woolmer forest (Hampshire) - and in AD 1316 John de Drokenesford, by then the bishop of Bath and Wells, had it recorded in his official Register that he had appointed James to be his bailiff for Wells and ordered all men to respect him as such.
¬ STEPHEN DE BANNEBURY on an iron-spotted horse (16 marks, about £10).
¬ WALTER DE WYNDESORE on a bay horse (£10) - there are references to this family in the Southwick Priory charters from AD 1180 onwards, holding land as tenants-in-chief at Soberton (near Droxford) by the serjeanty of weighing the money received at the King's exchequer.
¬ JOHN DE LOUMERE on a black horse with white back feet (£5) - the long deserted former medieval village of Lomer lies high up on the top of Beacon Hill some four miles northwest of Droxford, near the present Lomer Farm, and references to this family are found in the Southwick Priory charters from the early 1200's onwards.
¬ WILLIAM DE FAUCOMBERGE on a brown bay horse (10 marks or £6: 13s: 4d).
¬ HENRY URRY on a black horse (also 10 marks).
¬ JOHN DUREME on a black horse (also 10 marks).
¬ ROBERT DE HAMME on a spotted horse (also 10 marks).
¬ RICHARD DE LA MORE on a sorrel horse (15 marks or £10).
¬ GILBERT WUDEROVE on a black horse (6 marks or £4).
¬ WALTER DE BEDEWYNDE on a black horse with one white back foot (12 marks or £8) - Sir John de DROKENESFORD's ' clerk ' and, some ten years later in AD 1309, described in the Calendar of Chancery Warrants as former Cofferer of the King's Wardrobe during the time of John de Drokenesford's Keepership of that office.
¬ ADAM DE STANIE on a black horse (10 marks).
¬ BENEDICT DE BLAKENHAM on a sorrel horse with a star on its head (14 marks or £9: 6s: 8d).
¬ RICHARD DE COLESHULL on a sorrel horse with four white feet (8 marks or £5: 6s: 8d).
¬ THOMAS DE BUREWELL on a bay horse (12 marks).

CHAPTER 19

On 7 July 1298 the King moved, first to Redpath, then to Fala, Lander and Dalhousie and then to Braid, about three miles south-west of Edinburgh, arriving there on 11 July. He met none of Wallace's forces on the way but his own army was much troubled by sickness and by a shortage of supplies, this being eventually relieved by the arrival of supply ships near Kirkliston on the Firth of Forth, where the King

waited until 20 July. During this wait a quarrel broke out between the English and the Welsh and eighteen English were killed. Not unexpectedly, the English took their revenge and many of the Welsh thereupon deserted to the Scots.

During this enforced wait also King Edward heard that the Scots were concealed in the Forest of Selkirk and he therefore advanced his army to the moor of Linlithgow and passed the night of 21 July there. In the darkness of that summer's night two events took place: the King's great war-horse trampled upon him, breaking two of his ribs; and William Wallace moved up his men and set them in array to give battle. Let the chronicler Peter Langtoft of Bridlington once again take up the tale as a news item of his times:-

" On the day of the Magdalen, after Midsummer,
The wretched people of Scotland and Galloway,
As many as were bred and born in the Marches,
Each with spear in fist ready to do mischief,
Are come to Falkirk in a morning,
Arranged in order of battle against the English,
In their vanguard back was placed against back,
And point of lance on point in squadrons so serried,
Like castle in plain surrounded with wall …

King Edward sees them coming down the meadow,
He shouts to his barons, ' Let us advance in God's name ! '
Then earls and barons spur their steeds …
The knights on the other side who were mounted,
When they see the banner of Edward the wise
With the three leopards displayed in the field,
Now fled - and left without aid
All their footmen …
The army of the common soldiers was now severed
By the power of the English, who had no mercy …
The Welsh gave no assistance in the battle,
They voluntarily took their position on a mountain
Until the battle there was terminated. "

Wallace, says Mr. Gough, escaped but his martial career was ended as the King, once his ribs were mended, now moved around Scotland sorting things out to his satisfaction. He was at Stirling from late July until 9 August and Sir John de Drokenesford delivered various things to the Constable there at this time, John Sampson: amongst them items for the Castle's chapel service, flour, wheat, beans, barley, malt, oats, salt, one box of almonds, 317 live cattle and sheep, a cauldron and a fork for the oven. Sir John kept one half of the indenture under which all these were delivered (a 13th. century delivery note) and John Sampson held the other half.

" After the battle " says Peter Langtoft " the King came back,
He gave the custody of the realm of Scotland
To his English barons, by whom he believed he should
Curb the Scot, that he would rebel no more ".

This was to be a vain hope and, having returned to England and having married in September 1299 a second wife, the Princess Margaret of France, " … in whose little finger there is more goodness and beauty, whoever looks at her, than in the fair Idione whom Adamas loved … ", King Edward, now sixty years old, returned in the spring of AD 1300 to his fourth invasion of Scotland. His young wife went with him as far as Yorkshire, where she gave birth to a son, but the King, his Wardrobe and his Household went on to join his army and his fleet at Carlisle. Thence they advanced into Scotland and in July besieged the small castle of Caerlaverock for a week, until it surrendered on the fifteenth of that month: not an outstanding attack in itself but one which, described in the graphic words of Langtoft, transports us to the very scene:-
" Then the weather changes, the showers come,
(The English) descend from the mountains into the plains and valleys,
Overflow the rivers, cover the ditches,
King Edward knows not on what side to pass the fords,
Changes his roads, takes the easiest.
A poor little castle called Caerlaverock
King Edward takes, no soul found in it,
Except rebalds who hold it, vanquished at the entrance ."

Not, in truth, a great venture but one which nevertheless gave rise to another remarkably detailed eye-witness account, probably that of a herald riding with the army, in which are described the banners and arms of the nobles and the knights-banneret who took part in it:-
" And the king with his great household
Immediately set forward against the Scots,
Not in coats and surcoats,
But on powerful and costly chargers,
In order that they might not be taken by surprise,
Well and securely armed.
There was many a rich caparison
Embroidered on silks and satins;
Many a beautiful pennon fixed on a lance;
And many a banner displayed.
And afar off was the noise heard
Of the neighing of horses;
Mountains and valleys were everywhere
Covered with sumpter horses and waggons,
With provisions, and the train
Of the tents and pavilions.
And the days were fine and long,
So they proceeded by short journeys,
Arranged in four squadrons …

HENRY the good EARL OF LINCOLN … ,
Leading the first squadron,
Had a banner of yellow silk
With a purple lion rampart …
And WILLIAM LE MARSHALL,

Who in Ireland had the chief command,
A gold band engrailed
Bore on a red banner …
JOHN the good EARL OF WARENNE …
… who well knew how to lead
Noble and honourable men …
His banner with gold and azure
Was nobly chequered.
Yellow, with a black cross engrailed,
JOHN DE MOHUN bore there …
Ready to lower their ventailes,
Thus the divisions went on their march …

EDWARD, LORD OF THE IRISH,
KING OF SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND,
PRINCE OF WALES AND DUKE OF AQUITAINE …
On his banner were three leopards
Of fine gold, set on red,
Courant, fierce, haughty, and cruel;
Thus placed to signify that,
Like them, towards his enemies,
The King is dreadful, fierce and proud;
For none experience his bite
Who are not envenomed by it.
Nevertheless, he is soon reanimated
With gentle kindness,
If they seek his friendship,
And are willing to come to his peace …

Of the good HUGH LE DESPENSER …
The banner was quarterly
With a black baton on the white,
And of red fretty yellow …
Of the good HUGH DE COURTENAY
I have not forgotten the banner,
Of fine gold with three red roundlets,
And the label was azure …

The fourth squadron, with its train,
EDWARD THE KING'S SON led,
A youth of seventeen years of age,
And newly bearing arms …
(He) bore, with a blue label,
The arms of the good King his father.
Now God give him grace that he be
As valiant and no less so …

THE LIFE OF JOHN DE DROKENESFORD – (page 39)

The brave JOHN DE SAINT JOHN
Was everywhere with him,
Who on all his white caparisons
Had upon a red chief two gold mullets …
JOHN DE ST. JOHN, his heir …
… bore the name of his father
And also his arms with a blue label … "
(… and so the herald's list goes on and on and none will have failed to note in it the names of ' the good ' Hugh de Courtenay and ' the brave ' John de St. John and his like-named son).

Now, when this long cavalcade reached the castle:-
" Then might be seen houses built
Without carpenters or masons …
Of white cloth and coloured cloth;
There was many a cord stretched,
Many a pin driven into the ground,
Many a large tree cut down
To make huts; and leaves,
Herbs and flowers, gathered in the woods,
With which they were strewn within.
And then our people dismounted.

Soon … the nave arrived
With the engines and provisions.
And then the footmen began
To march against the castle …
Behold the tumult begins;
With them is intermixed
A great body of the King's followers,
All whose names if I were to repeat,
And recount their brave actions,
The labour would be too heavy for me,
So many were there and so well did they fight …

Brother Robert … sent there
Many a stone by the robinet …
Bends and bends again, puts stones in the sling,
Discharges and splits everything he hits …
And when they saw that hold longer
They could not, or endure more,
The companions begged for peace
And put out a pennon
But he who displayed it
Was shot by an arrow, by some archer,
Through the hand into the face.
Then he begged that they would desist,

For they will give up the castle to the King
And will come out upon his mercy.

And Marshal, and Constable,
Who were already established there,
At that notice forbade the assault,
And these surrendered the castle to them.
Then they came out in number
Of different sorts sixty men
Who were beheld with much astonishment.
But they were kept and guarded
Till the King disposed of them,
Who gave them life and limb
And to each a new robe.
Then was the whole host rejoiced
At the news of the conquest of the castle
Which was so noble a prize … ."

But all this was something of a hollow victory in the end, for during the next weeks it rained continuously on the King, on John de Drokenesford, on his followers and on the whole English army who consequently found themselves back in Carlisle at the end of August 1300, wet through and once again short of food and supplies. The Wardrobe Account for the year which ended on 20 November 1300 gives the names of some of de Drokenesford's men who were with him in that year:-
SIMON, his smith.
HUGH DE HALUGHTON, his palfrey-man.
ROBERT DE HALUGHTON, his groom.
THOMAS DE BORHUNT (i.e. Boarhunt, Hampshire), his messenger.
ALAN, another palfrey-man.
ADAM DE STANEYE.
JAMES DE MOLENDINIS (N.B.), one of his ' comitiva ' or ' company '.
JOHN DE LOMER, his ' vallettus ' or ' esquire '.
WALTER, his cook.
MICHAEL DE DROKENESFORD, his brother.
WILLIAM DE FAUCUMBERG, his ' scut ' , ? the esquire who carried his shield.
JOHN DE WALEYS, another ' vallettus '.
RICHARD DE LHORD, another ' vallettus '.
His six knights HUGH DE ST. PHILIBERT, ROGER LE SAUVAGE, THOMAS DE CHAUCOMBE, RICHARD DE BORHUNTE, JOHN DE SCURES and JOHN DE LYNDHURST, each paid two shillings per day for the 33 days from 5 July to 6 August 1300.
Their eighteen ' scutifers ' (see ' scut ' above), each of these paid twelve pence per day for the same period and including JOHN DE STINEGORE, STEPHEN DE BANNEBURY, RICHARD DE LA MORE and THOMAS DE BLAKENHAM.

It is interesting to note at this point just how energetic and active Sir John de Drokenesford had to be in the performance of his duties as Keeper. In his book " Edward I " Mr. M. Prestwich relates how

Drokenesford left the King's court at Holmcoltram on 10 October 1300 to go to Newcastle to arrange for victuals for the army to be sent North. During the next fourteen days he then went in sequence to Dumfries, to Skinburness (near Carlisle), back to Newcastle, back again to Carlisle, then to oversee the provisioning of the castles at Lochmaben, Dumfries and Caerlaverock and thence to York - in all an average ride in the saddle of some 20 to 30 miles on each of those fourteen days. It is also interesting that from the April of this year, following the Statute of St. Albans (designed to promote more economy at the Court), Drokenesford, in his Office as Keeper of the Wardrobe, and his followers were no longer entitled to eat in the King's Court as they had done hitherto but now had to be fed instead out of a fixed allowance of £200 per year, paid to the Keeper for himself, his clerks and the esquires of his department. The Wardrobe thus became a little society on its own, its staff now directly dependant on their chief for their food and quarters.

CHAPTER 20

In AD 1301 King Edward invaded Scotland again to place his own men there in positions of authority and among the resulting documents of that year, written in French and dated 20 October, is an account rendered by James de Molyns for the expenditure of 20 marks (or £13 : 3s : 4d.), received from " Sire Johan de Drokenesforde, tresourer de la Garderobe (de) notre seigneur le roy " for the purchase of crossbows, quarrels and belts to be sent to the King at Linlithgow. With this money he bought 8 crossbows ' a tour ' for 10 shillings each, 16 crossbows ' for two feet ' for 4 shillings each, 16 belts at 18d. each and 3000 quarrels for a total of £4 : 10s : 0d. Among other things he also bought four pairs of panniers in which to pack the quarrels and paid a total of 12d. to the packers of them. Two hackney horses were hired for 13s : 6d. to take two loads of quarrels from London to York and the lad sent in charge of them on that journey was paid 3 shillings. The crossbows went by cart (under the eye of one crossbowman who was paid 4 shillings) and James de Moleyns' own expenses for 21 days in London to buy this equipment and see it safely packed and despatched came to £1 : 11s : 4d. Clearly, he was out of pocket on this expedition but perhaps recovered the extra costs at a later date. Alternatively, perhaps, he was reimbursed in other ways for, in August 1302, the Patent Rolls show not only John de Benstede and John de Drokenesford, King's clerks, being granted 20 and 88 acres of wasteland RESPECTIVELY IN THE King's forest of ' Wolvemere ' (Woolmer in Hampshire) at a rent of 4d. per acre (with licence for them to enclose, cultivate and put beasts upon it) but they also show a grant of 22 ½ acres at the same rent to James de ' Molendinis ' " … in a place at La Thenputhull by Isentone (i.e. Isington) at the west end of Alsiesholt (Alice Holt) in the forest of Wolvemere ." Two months or so later, on 23 October 1302, Henry de BURHUNTE and his mother Margaret (widow of Henry) conveyed one messuage and one carucate of land in " Bensted iuxta [next to] Aulton (Alton, Hampshire) " to Lord John de Drokenesford and among the witnesses to this conveyance are some now familiar names - Lord John de ST. JOHN, John de SCURES (of Wickham), Richard de BURHUNTE (Boarhunt), James de NORTON (near Selborne), Nicholas WYARD and, not least, James de MOLENDINIS. This property still stands next to the churchyard at Bensted (where lies a famous 20th century soldier, Field Marshal Lord Bernard Montgomery) and is still called " ROXFORDS " (cf. the signature mentioned above in chapter 17 - " Johan de ROKENESFORD "). From this time onwards John de Drokenesford began to add to his property interests, especially in that part of Hampshire between Alton and Gosport, and did so at a steady rate. Many of these can be discovered under his or his family's names in the Hampshire volumes of the Victoria County History.

Between AD 1303 and his death in AD 1307 King Edward I found it necessary to re-enter Scotland on more than one occasion and whilst he was there in June 1303, in which invasion he had crossed the Forth by prefabricated bridges brought round by sea, a no doubt nervous messenger reached him and his Keeper of the Wardrobe at Linlithgow with the startling news of a " Great Wardrobe Robbery ! " several weeks earlier - news which brought John de Drokenesford hotfoot by horse to London to investigate. One can almost hear his sharp intake of breath as he hears the news - the crypt below the Chapter House at Westminster Abbey, used to store some of the Wardrobe possessions, has been broken into and treasure and coin worth millions of pounds (at 1990's values) has been stolen!

What had happened and what caused the King to set up an immediate commission to investigate and to send de Drokenesford to make official examination of the break-in was that a bankrupt trader named Richard de Podlicote (i.e. of Pudlicott), having spied out the land and made one earlier, smaller and successful raid on the Chapter House in August 1302, had now decided on a much more serious theft. For five years past the King and the Court had been based not in Westminster but in York and there can be little doubt that the Westminster discipline and security had become lax in the King's absence and that de Podlicote took advantage of this. So, making friends (if not actual acquaintances) of some of the Palace officers and some of the monks in the Abbey, he resolved, just before Christmas 1302, to enter the Chapter House through thirteen feet of solid stone and said in his confession later that he spent the whole of the late winter and the early spring of AD 1303 in doing so. At the same time, he said, he had arranged for a public path near his growing hole to be closed and to be sown with rapid-growth hemp-seed to hide it and to provide a temporary concealment for the fruits of his proposed theft. Eventually, on 24 April 1303, he clambered through his tunnel and found himself surrounded by so much gold and silver that he stayed there gloating for nearly two days. Coming to his senses on April 26 he withdrew from this Aladdin's cave, taking with him precious plate, jewels, relics, gold florins, rings, brooches, girdles and even Crowns. Some of this was sold by him and his accomplices in places as far away as Northampton and Colchester but when he was arrested at last on 25 June he still had with him valuables worth over £2000 in the values of his days.

News of this robbery reached the King on 6 June and fourteen days later John de Drokenesford arrived at the Abbey from Scotland, accompanied by the Keeper of the Tower of London, the Justices, the Mayor of London and the Prior of Westminster. As a result of their investigations the Abbot of Westminster, more than forty monks and more than thirty other persons were arrested and sent to the Tower and a lengthy trial followed, lasting two years. At its close de Podlicote, the sub-Prior and the Sacrist of the Abbey, the Keeper of the Palace Gate (William de Paleys, under whose bed had been found many of the valuable items) and a John de Ramage (suddenly spending beyond his usual means) were all found guilty and were hanged. The Abbot and most of the others were released. A silver goblet was fished out of the Thames, precious plate was found hidden behind tombstones in a neighbouring grave-yard and other pieces of treasure gradually surfaced elsewhere, sometimes in the most unlikely places and circumstances. What John de Drokenesford thought of all this and what the King said to him is not known but the certain outcome, from what is known of the two of them., is that from this date onwards the security of the royal treasure would have been vastly improved - the travelling Wardrobe itself, for instance, was guarded by a ' Vintenarius ' named Dickon and by his company of twenty-four cross-bowmen.

CHAPTER 21

The Scots continued to trouble King Edward. From Stirling on 20 May 1304 he ordered the Sheriffs of several counties to cause all crossbows, quarrels, bows and arrows " … exposed for sale … " to be brought for his use to assault the castle of Stryvelyn. In August 1304 Stirling Castle was surrendered to him and a year later his old enemy William Wallace was captured, brought to London, summarily tried in Westminster Hall and savagely hanged, drawn and quartered for treason. But now the Scots had a new leader, Robert the Bruce, crowned King there on Palm Sunday 1306, and Scotland was still in turmoil.

During these years John de Drokenesford steadily extended his property interests, acquired benefices, loaned money - and tried to recover it. In October 1306 the parson of Abbots Worthy in Hampshire, Stephen de Stratton, still owed him £29 from a time when he was John's bailiff and receiver at his benefice of Childewell with the charge and administration of all his goods there. He now managed to scrape 15 shillings together and send it to John. Despite threats of distraint and a writ he still owed John the balance five years later.

The King was now ageing visibly but in AD 1306 he went north yet again with his Queen, John de Drokenesford and others of his Household. On 29 September they arrived at Lanercost Priory, near Carlisle, and whilst there the King fell sick of an illness which was to detain him there until early in March 1307. It is not clear what this sickness was but that it was something painful and serious is indicated by the fact that among the many ointments, oils, powders and drugs ordered for the King's doctors by John on 8 September 1306 (before the party even reached Lanercost) there were plasters and laudanum and, more significantly, balsam and spices for anointing and embalming " … the body of the Lord King … ". That the King was not totally incapacitated however is shown by the fact that during his illness Robert the Bruce's brother, Thomas, was captured alive and brought to the King at the Priory, where he was sentenced to be hanged and beheaded in Lent 1307. As our olf friend Peter Langtoft wrote:- " … King Edward … made his progress as far as Lanercost, where he is laid down ill, until God above has restored his strength … ".

Peace, however, King Edward was not to have. Whilst " … King Robin [i.e. Robert the Bruce] still in moors and marshes wandered in his turbulence … " an Easter Parliament was held at Carlisle in AD 1307 and William Wallace's brother, John, was captured and sent to judgment and execution in London. All this took its toll on the weakened King and after leaving Carlisle on horseback on 3 July he travelled only six miles in three days to Burgh-on-Sands, where he could go no farther and died on 7 July in the arms of members of his Household, his Keeper of the Wardrobe no doubt still close to him but his young Queen far away in safety at Northampton. Listening to his old Royal master's last messages and payers, John de Drokenesford heard this tough old warrior King turn finally to his self-pleasing 23-year-old heir, the Prince Edward, and tell him to wrap his bones in a hammock and carry them before the army until victory over the Scots was obtained. The King was sixty-eight years old. Said Robert the Bruce of him:- " I am more afraid of the bones of the father, dead, than of the living son ". Wrote Peter Langtoft of him:- " Thirty-four years, eight months and five days, I tell you, he reigned over England by established law. By reason and right he maintained the monarchy.; Of vigour and worth, and full of understanding, he had no equal in ruling a lordship ". Thought John de Drokenesford as he watched the new King Edward II ignore his dead father's last order and, instead, return to London: " We shall all miss him. We shall see some changes now, I fear ".

Perhaps, for a while, after watching the burial of his late Lord King's once mighty frame, amid all the solemn funeral ceremonial of Westminster Abbey, he was at last able to get away for a few days' rest and return to his quiet home at Droxford, beside the placid little River Meon with its green, summertime meadows and its contented chuckle as it flowed then - as it still does - past the grey church and the busy homes and fields of the little village and its people sheltering then - as they still do - in the bowl of the hills behind it. Let us say farewell to him there but not forget him and his generation, who walked or rode these lanes - as we still do - and who served this Land so well in their days here.

THE END

Author: Gordon Hope, 1990