

# *Soldier and Speaker: Sir Richard Waldegrave's interactions with the court of chivalry and the Peasants' Revolt*

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Soldier and Speaker: Sir Richard  
Waldegrave's Interactions with the Court  
of Chivalry and the Peasants' Revolt



ADRIAN R. BELL, HERBERT EIDEN AND HELEN KILLICK

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# Soldier and Speaker: Sir Richard Waldegrave's Interactions with the Court of Chivalry and the Peasants' Revolt

ADRIAN R. BELL, HERBERT EIDEN AND HELEN KILLICK

Aged forty-eight and, in his own words, 'armed twenty-five years', Sir Richard Waldegrave described his military career in his deposition to the Court of Chivalry in the famed case of Scrope *v.* Grosvenor in the late 1380s. This brief autobiography lists his martial escapades in support of King Edward III in France – in the Calais Pale and Normandy – and also his travels outside Europe which took him as far away as Turkey. It is this overseas travel, coupled with the fact that Chaucer himself gave a deposition at the same hearing, that has led Anne Curry and others to suggest that 'there is much in [Sir Richard's] career to suggest that he was the model for Chaucer's knight'.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter we present a new edition and translation of this deposition alongside a critical evaluation of the source's value for the reconstruction of medieval military careers.<sup>2</sup> It was in Sir Richard Scrope's interest for witnesses such as Waldegrave only to speak of where they had been serving

<sup>1</sup> Anne Curry, 'Speakers at War in the late 14th and 15th Centuries', *Parliamentary History* 29 (2010), 8–21 (at 15). See also John S. Roskell, *The Commons and their Speakers in English Parliaments 1376–1523* (Manchester, 1965), p. 129, who speculates: 'there is, in fact, a remarkable resemblance between Sir Richard's careers and that of the knight of the prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (which may not have been entirely adventitious)'. For an alternative convincing argument for an exemplar see: Stefan Vander Elst, "'Tu es pelerine en la sainte cité": Chaucer's Knight and Philippe de Mézières', *Studies in Philology* 106 (2009), 379–401.

<sup>2</sup> The deposition was previously printed in *The Controversy between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry AD MCCCCLXXXV–MCCCXC*, ed. Nicholas Harris Nicolas, 2 vols (London, 1832), i, 165–6, ii, 374–7. This edition is

when they had also seen Scrope bear arms; therefore, what they did not disclose is also of importance. By utilising the Medieval Soldier database<sup>3</sup> and other sources, we will also fully reconstruct this illuminating career in arms to showcase the Court of Chivalry as a continuing inspiration for scholars when contextualised with other surviving evidence. We will also comment on Waldegrave's wider career as Speaker of the Commons in 1381 in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt (a subject that Anne Curry has also written on)<sup>4</sup> alongside an appreciation of his own position within local and national military and political society.<sup>5</sup>

Waldegrave's career in arms and as Speaker of the House also allows us to seamlessly bring together findings from two major projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in which Anne has had a leading role. 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England' project is well described in the appreciation of Anne's work in this volume. We are also able to further illuminate the career of Sir Richard from the work we are doing on 'The People of 1381',<sup>6</sup> an innovative new research project producing the most comprehensive interpretation of the Peasants' Revolt to date, on which Anne is a co-Investigator. 'The People of 1381' will shed new light on the complex economic, social and political dynamics of the rebellion, to enhance our understanding of its social ideology and cultural impact. Central to the project is the creation of a database to provide the first overview of events, places and people involved. The contribution of Anne in driving these two projects and the creation of two leading publicly accessible databases (probably amongst the largest set of online medieval nominal data in existence) is testament to her commitment to open research in its widest possible sense.

The Scrope *v.* Grosvenor case has been utilised by historians of the medieval military career to evaluate and describe the martial activities of English soldiers in the Hundred Years War, focusing on the late fourteenth century. The case, which concerned the right to bear the arms, 'dazure ove un bende dor' (*i.e.*, blue, with a band of yellow) was heard in the Court of Chivalry in the years 1385 to 1389.<sup>7</sup> The controversy was initiated when Sir

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printed in record type and contains several errors, hence the need for a new edition with abbreviations expanded, and an updated translation.

<sup>3</sup> [www.medievalsoldier.org](http://www.medievalsoldier.org).

<sup>4</sup> Curry, 'Speakers at War'.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Richard Waldegrave's political career has been well-documented by John S. Roskell, 'Sir Richard Waldegrave of Bures St Mary, Speaker in the Parliament of 1381–2', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology* 27 (1958), 154–75.

<sup>6</sup> [www.1381.online](http://www.1381.online).

<sup>7</sup> *Scrope/Grosvenor*, ed. Harris Nicolas; Philip Morgan, 'Sir Robert Grosvenor and the Scrope–Grosvenor Controversy', in *Courts of Chivalry and Admiralty in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Anthony Musson and Nigel Ramsay (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 75–94.

Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor noticed the similarity between their arms during Richard II's Scottish exhibition of 1385, remarkable for the large number of soldiers assembled for a short period, ostensibly by feudal request.<sup>8</sup> By general proclamation, all parties interested in the case were summoned to Newcastle upon Tyne for the 20 August 1385, but the hearing was quickly adjourned on that day.<sup>9</sup> Most of the depositions were heard in 1386 and the dispute was eventually adjudicated in May 1389 by Thomas of Woodstock, constable of England and one of the two judges of the Court of Chivalry, in favour of Sir Richard Scrope.<sup>10</sup> Grosvenor, who was ordered to differentiate his arms by using a bordure, did not accept the ruling and immediately obtained a top-level commission comprising the earls of Kent, Salisbury and Northumberland as well as several knights, clerics and doctors of law to hear his appeal.<sup>11</sup> The case was finally decided by Richard II, who confirmed Woodstock's ruling and additionally banned Grosvenor from bearing even differentiated arms.<sup>12</sup> Costs of 500 marks were imposed on him which he could not pay. In further humiliation, he had to plead poverty in parliament in 1391. After he retracted any accusations of deceit and falsehood, the costs were remitted, and the case ended with an enrolment of a memorandum confirming this.<sup>13</sup> Although ultimately Scrope won the case, the controversy is remembered for the number of depositions by militarily active witnesses on both sides of the dispute.<sup>14</sup> For scholars of the Court of Chivalry, there are other useful cases that can also add to our knowledge of the medieval military career, most notably *Morley v. Lovel and Grey v. Hastings*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> N. B. Lewis, 'The Last Medieval Summons of the English Feudal Levy, 13 June 1385', *EHR* 73 (1958), 1–26; J. J. N. Palmer, 'The Last Summons of the Feudal Army in England (1385)', *EHR* 83 (1968), 771–5; N. B. Lewis, 'The Feudal Summons of 1385', with a reply by J. J. N. Palmer, *EHR* 100 (1985), 121–31. To be reductive, the debate concerns Lewis positioning the feudal summons to raise large numbers and provide an impressive force, whilst Palmer counters it was done for financial expediency.

<sup>9</sup> *Scrope/Grosvenor*, ed. Harris Nicolas, ii, 27.

<sup>10</sup> *Scrope/Grosvenor*, ed. Harris Nicolas, ii, 163–474.

<sup>11</sup> *CPR 1388–92*, p. 40. Grosvenor alleged that Scrope had fraudulently interfered with the composition of the commission, see *CPR 1388–92*, pp. 51, 159.

<sup>12</sup> *CPR 1388–92*, p. 258; Morgan, 'Sir Robert Grosvenor', p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> *CPR 1388–92*, p. 337; *CCR 1389–92*, pp. 517–19; Morgan, 'Sir Robert Grosvenor', pp. 93–4.

<sup>14</sup> Philip J. Caudrey, *Military Society and the Court of Chivalry in the Age of the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge, 2019); Caudrey, 'War, Chivalry and Regional Society: East Anglia's Warrior Gentry before the Court of Chivalry', in *Fourteenth Century England*, ed. J. S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 119–46; Morgan, 'Sir Robert Grosvenor', pp. 75–94.

<sup>15</sup> Adrian R. Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century* (Boydell, 2004), pp. 140–50; Andrew Ayton, 'Knights, Esquires and Military Service: The Evidence of the Armorial Cases before the Court of Chivalry', in *The Medieval Military Revolution: State,*

Whilst extremely interesting, these statements of military service by soldiers have several shortcomings as witness statements; like all legal documents, they are often brief and formulaic.<sup>16</sup> Luckily for this chapter, we have the ‘Soldier in Later Medieval England’ database to provide substantiation for many of the claims made. It was highly unlikely that a soldier would make false claims in their depositions – the statements were made under oath and in the presence of contemporaries who could ‘call them out’. It was possible, however, for witnesses to understate their military service. We see this in the deposition by Sir Hugh Browe, a not insignificant figure in the military community, who clearly does not speak of his full career in arms, perhaps so he does not have to say where, in his case, he saw the Scrope arms, which would have been in detriment to the Grosvenor case which he was supporting.<sup>17</sup> This seems to have been a general feature of the case; as Philip Morgan comments: ‘Indeed the witnesses on both sides seem to have been bound by a kind of chivalric *omertà* when it came to knowledge of the occasions on which they might have seen the other claimant in the disputed arms.’<sup>18</sup>

Where does Sir Richard Waldegrave say he served, and saw the arms of Sir Richard Scrope, for whom he was a witness in this case? As we have stated, he says his age is forty-eight and he has been armed, or in military service for twenty-five years – so since the age of twenty-three. In his witness statement he mentions the earl of Northampton, William de Bohun – and as we will see, much of his early service outside of Europe was accompanying William’s heir, Humphrey de Bohun, along with a core group of retainers.

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*Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Ayton and J. L. Price (New York, 1995), pp. 81–104, and Maurice Keen, ‘English Military Experience and the Court of Chivalry: The Case of Grey v. Hastings’, in *Guerre et société en France, en Angleterre et en Bourgogne, XIVe–Xve siècle*, ed. Philippe Contamine, Charles Giry-Deloison and Maurice Keen (Lille, 1992), pp. 123–42. Some of the deponents in *Scrope v. Grosvenor* mentioned a challenge a generation earlier of Thomas Carminow of Cornwall to Lord Scrope’s entitlement to use the arms, see: Nigel Saul, ‘The Carminows and Their Arms: History, Heraldry and Myth in Late Medieval and Early Modern Cornwall’, *EHR* 136 (2021), 1419–49. Thomas was a relative of the more prominent Sir Ralph Carminow, of a different branch of the family. Sir Ralph might have been attacked at the end of June 1381 by sympathisers of the rebels in Cornwall: see Andrew J. Prescott, ‘“Great and Horrible Rumour”: Shaping the English Revolt of 1381’, in *The Routledge History Handbook of Medieval Revolt*, ed. Justine Firnhaber-Baker and Dirk Schoenaers (London, 2017), pp. 76–103 (at p. 88).

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of recent scholarship on armorial disputes and the reliability of the depositions, see Morgan, ‘Sir Robert Grosvenor’, pp. 77–9, 87–9.

<sup>17</sup> Browe claimed he had not taken part in any major continental expeditions, despite serving in France in 1374 and 1378, even name-checked by Froissart for his efforts on the later campaign – see Adrian R. Bell and Tony Moore, ‘Hugh de Browe, John de Calveley and Richard de Vernon’, *Soldier Profiles* (2008) <https://www.medievalsoldier.org/about/soldier-profiles/divided-loyalties-hugh-de-browe-john-de-calveley-and-richard-de-vernon-at-the-battle-of-shrewsbury-1403/> (accessed 11/04/22).

<sup>18</sup> Morgan, ‘Sir Robert Grosvenor’, p. 87.



His witness statement only mentions three instances of military service, as it is restricted to those times when he has seen the Scrope family bear the arms under dispute. The first service mentioned is ‘the expedition of the late King Edward before Paris’, thus referring to the Rheims campaign of 1359 – the same campaign on which Geoffrey Chaucer was captured and ransomed by the French.<sup>19</sup> Then he states that he was ‘beyond the great sea’ (the Mediterranean), ‘in the company of the earl of Hereford [Humphrey de Bohun] at Antalya in Turkey, at a treaty which was made between Peter I of Cyprus and “le Takka”, lord of Antalya, when the king of Cyprus became Lord of Antalya’. The date of this event is contested, but the latest discussion puts this meeting in August and September 1361.<sup>20</sup>

The next military expedition mentioned is at ‘Bayenghem-lès-Seninghem ... in the expedition to Caux, when the Lord of Lancaster was commander-in-chief’. This currently lacks a firm modern location but refers to a standoff at ‘le mountain de Baligate’ or ‘Ballinghamhille’, during the earl of Lancaster’s campaign in Picardy and Normandy – the Pays de Caux – in 1369.<sup>21</sup>

If we read this at face value, then Waldegrave claims military service in Turkey once and France twice. This is another case of under-selling his contribution to the English medieval military community, as he only mentions those campaigns where he has seen Scrope, omitting those where he may have served with Grosvenor, or indeed those where he witnessed

<sup>19</sup> Witness statements for Waldegrave and Chaucer: TNA, C 47/6/2. Chaucer relays in his own words how he was taken [for ransom] on the Rheims campaign, *Scrope/Grosvenor*, ed. Harris Nicolas, i, 178, ii, 404. For details of how Chaucer’s ransom was paid, see Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records*. Oxford, 1966, pp. 24–5, for a list of ‘Contributions for Ransoms Made by the King, 12 January to 7 July 1360’ – and summarised <https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/chaucers-ransom-after-his-capture-france> (accessed 18/5/23).

<sup>20</sup> Adrian R. Bell and Tony Moore, ‘The Organisation and Financing of English Expeditions to the Baltic during the Later Middle Ages’, in *Military Communities in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Andrew Ayton*, ed. Craig Lambert, Gary Baker and David Simpkin (Woodbridge, 2018), pp. 181–210 (at p. 189).

<sup>21</sup> Our thanks to Dr Andrew Ayton for illumination on this point by email correspondence as Waldegrave is not the only deponent in this case to refer to this event. Andrew notes the following supporting references for this identification: ‘Morley v Lovell deponents refer simply to “le hille”, while the Anonimalle chronicle (*Anonimalle*, p. 60) calls it “le mountayn de Baligate”.’ As to where precisely it is, Sumption (Jonathan Sumption, *Divided Houses*, p. 40) plumps for Balinghem, James Sherborne, ‘John of Gaunt, Edward III’s retinue and the French campaign of 1369’, in *War, Politics and Culture in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. Anthony Tuck (London and Rio Grande, 1994), pp. 77–97 (at p. 84) locates them further SE near Tournehem-sur-le-Hem. Ayton also points out that Caudrey, *Military Society and the Court of Chivalry*, incorrectly assigns this service to Gascony, see Andrew Ayton, review of *ibid.*, in *History* 105 (2020), 324–5. To identify the exact hill being discussed by the witnesses seems to call for a field trip!

neither set of arms. Where else can careful study of the remaining sources show he travelled?

Waldegrave served with William de Bohun, earl of Northampton, in the royal campaign of 1359 – perhaps alluding to this at the beginning of his witness statement. We also know from a financial bond for a debt owed that he served with de Bohun alongside the Teutonic Knights in Prussia from 1362–3.<sup>22</sup> It is suggested that he also travelled to Italy with Humphrey de Bohun in 1366 and we can be sure that he served alongside Bohun during the French campaign of 1369, at the reopening of the Hundred Years War, as well as in two naval campaigns, in 1371 and 1372.<sup>23</sup> The assertion put forward by others that Waldegrave and de Bohun served at the sack of Alexandria in 1365 is difficult to substantiate and could indeed be a wobble.<sup>24</sup>

The career reflected in Waldegrave's witness statement is therefore quite some understatement – and demonstrates the care we need to take with the Court of Chivalry as evidence of a military career! In addition to the campaigns described above, we know from the issue rolls recording payment to those supporting Richard II's campaign to Scotland in 1385 that Waldegrave was paid £40 for his own service and that of his retinue of 2 knights (including himself), 7 men-at-arms and 18 archers – 29 soldiers in total. A

<sup>22</sup> TNA, DL 25/1638, /1639, /1989 and Bell and Moore, 'Organisation and Financing'.

<sup>23</sup> *CPR 1364–7*, pp. 303–4 – some caution here for evidence for travel to Italy as Waldegrave's appointment of attorney is dated 28 July 1366, while those for Bohun and others are dated 18 July and 4 August 1366 and they are not linked together. This may be from the compilation of the Calendar and to be sure, further checking of the original document in the TNA would be needed. It seems reasonable to assume they were all for the same journey – Roskell, 'Sir Richard Waldegrave', p. 158, is also cautious about this trip to Italy; 1369: TNA, C 76/52, mm. 18, 22; 1371: TNA, E 101/31/15, m. 1; 1372: TNA, E 101/32/20, m. 1. Also see Curry, 'Speakers at War'. Military references taken from 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England', [www.medievalsoldier.org](http://www.medievalsoldier.org) (accessed 7/4/2022) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>24</sup> In the sense of Winnie the Pooh following his own tracks in the snow. For discussion and sources see: Adrian R. Bell, 'The Soldier, "hadde he riden, no man ferre"', in *Soldier Experience*, ed. Curry, et al., pp. 209–18 (at p. 211–12). The History of Parliament biography for Waldegrave states he: 'was also party to the taking of Alexandria in the following year. It was during this eventful campaign that he won his spurs', Waldegrave, Sir Richard (c.1338–1410), of Walgrave, Northants. and Smallbridge in Bures St. Mary, in *HoC 1386–1421* – <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/waldegrave-sir-richard-1338-1410> (accessed 18/4/2022). This appears to be based on *Anonimale*, pp. 51 and 170 placing the earl of Bohun at the sack of Alexandria with Sir Miles Stapleton and several (unnamed) supporters. It is not likely that Bohun could have been present (and the editor notes that Stapleton was also not a participant as he had died in 1364). At most seven named English crusaders can be placed at Alexandria in 1365, and this includes Sir Stephen Scrope and Nicholas Sabraham, see Anthony Luttrell, 'English Levantine Crusaders, 1363–1367', *Renaissance Studies* 2 (1988), 143–53 (at p. 150).

retinue list accompanies the entry.<sup>25</sup> This appears to be his last service in arms; it is not mentioned in his deposition, presumably because, there, he would have seen both the arms of Scrope and Grosvenor being displayed, as it was on this campaign that the similarity was noted and the controversy first arose.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 8.1: Military Service of Sir Richard Waldegrave.\***

Campaign	Commander	Source
Rheims, 1359	earl of Northampton	Court of Chivalry
Satalia 1361	earl of Hereford	Court of Chivalry
Prussia 1362–3	earl of Hereford	Bond†
Overseas (probably Italy) 1366	earl of Hereford	Appointment of Attorney
France 1369	earl of Hereford	Court of Chivalry; Letter of Protection; Appointment of Attorney
Naval 1371	earl of Hereford	Retinue roll
Naval 1372	earl of Hereford	Retinue roll
Scotland 1385	Richard II	Issue Rolls

\* References already cited unless noted.

† TNA, DL 25/1638/1639/1989.

Having given an account of Sir Richard Waldegrave's military service, we will now turn to his political career, and in particular his role in the revolt of 1381. In his seminal paper on Sir Richard de Waldegrave, John Roskell stated that 'he [Waldegrave] does not appear to have suffered to any remarkable extent in the Peasants' Revolt'.<sup>27</sup> However, there is evidence that Sir Richard suffered personally at the hands of the rebels. This is acknowledged in his biographical entry in the *History of Parliament*, but the assault on him and further details leading up to this event are not widely known.<sup>28</sup>

Three months before the rising, on 16 March 1381, Sir Richard had been appointed to the commission led by the sheriff of Essex, John Sewale, to

<sup>25</sup> TNA, E403/508, m. 21, evidence collected during 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England' project but not available online. Roskell, 'Sir Richard de Waldegrave of Bures St. Mary', p. 167 does not mention the two knights in this retinue.

<sup>26</sup> *Scrope/Grosvenor*, ed. Harris Nicolas, pp. 26–7.

<sup>27</sup> Roskell, 'Sir Richard de Waldegrave of Bures St. Mary', p. 163.

<sup>28</sup> L. S. Woodger, 'Waldegrave, Sir Richard (c.1338–1410), of Wargrave, Northants, and Smallbridge in Bures St, Mary, Suff.', *History of Parliament Online* (accessed: 16 December 2021).

investigate evasions of the third poll tax in Essex.<sup>29</sup> The extent to which this commission became active in Essex is unclear. It is likewise unclear if it was this poll-tax commission or a commission of the peace which was attacked on 30 May 1381 in Brentwood, the event which is generally regarded as the starting point of the rising. An indictment taken at Chelmsford after the revolt confirms that an attack on John Bampton, John Gildesburgh 'and other justices of the peace' on 30 May took place in Brentwood, but Richard Waldegrave is not mentioned as being present.<sup>30</sup>

After the rising, in the sessions held in the liberty of Bury St Edmunds by the earl of Suffolk's commission to adjudicate the rebels in Suffolk and Norfolk, there is an indictment by a jury from the village of Cavendish.<sup>31</sup> This claims that John Wraw had sent several unknown people to Bures St Mary to proclaim that the king himself requested them to rise and join the attack on the property of Sir John de Cavendish in the like-named village. If they refused to comply, their houses would be burned down.<sup>32</sup> Although no date is given for the agitation in Cavendish, it is likely that it happened around 12 June 1381 as it is known that Wraw had sent messengers to numerous places in south Suffolk about this time and urged the people to come to Cavendish where he and his band looted the parish church in which Sir John de Cavendish had stored his valuables. As this happened on 13 June, the agitation must have happened a day or two before.<sup>33</sup> At least one person from Bures St Mary is named as being present at Cavendish.<sup>34</sup>

On the same day the Cavendish church was looted, a group of rebels under the leadership of Thomas Fuller of Bures St Mary threatened Richard de Waldegrave. It is worth quoting the plea in full:

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1377–83*, p. 249.

<sup>30</sup> The poll tax commission comprised John Sewale, Sir John de Gildesburgh, William de Wauton, Sir Richard de Waldegrave, Thomas Bataill, the clerk Thomas de Wilford and the serjeant-at-arms John de Asshewell. John Bampton was not a member of the poll tax commission but of the Essex peace commission appointed in November 1380; *CPR 1377–81*, p. 571. However, it is not unlikely that at a later date Bampton joined the poll tax commission; see Nicholas P. Brooks, 'The Organisations and Achievements of the Peasants in Kent and Essex', in *Studies in Medieval History: Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and Robert I. Moore (London, 1985), pp. 247–70 (at p. 251). For the indictment of the attack at Brentwood see TNA, KB 9/166/2 m. 4.

<sup>31</sup> These indictments were considered to have been lost as they are not included in the commission file TNA, KB 9/166/1. However, some of the indictments were traced by Andrew Prescott in the king's bench recorda files, TNA, KB 145/3/5/1: Andrew Prescott, 'Judicial Records of the Rising of 1381', unpublished PhD thesis (University of London, 1984), pp. 150–2.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, KB 145/3/5/1 (unnumbered membranes).

<sup>33</sup> Juliet Barker, *England, Arise: The People, The King and the Great Revolt of 1381* (London 2014), pp. 295–9.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Deryng of Bures: TNA, KB 9/166/2, m. 2.

Pleas held at Sudbury before the aforesaid earl [William de Ufford],<sup>35</sup> Thomas de Morieux, William de Elmham, John de Bourgh, William Wyngefeld, John Holkham and Robert de Hotot, king's justices, on Tuesday 2nd July 1381.

<in the margin: Suffolk> Thomas Fullere of Bures St Mary, accused before the justices by William Davy [...] that on Thursday, 13th June 1381, he rose in rebellion and made various men [rise up] against the king and crown and making himself captain and leader of them and proceeding in a warlike manner. And he threatened the life and limb of Richard de Waldegrave, knight, and committed [...] and treasons in the aforesaid county. And because of this Thomas has been arrested and brought before the justices by the sheriff, and it was asked of him how he wishes to acquit himself of the charges of felony and treason aforesaid, and he declares that he is not guilty, and for good and ill puts himself upon the country. The jurors come and say that the aforesaid Thomas Fullere of Bures St Mary is guilty of the felony and treason of which he is accused. Judgement is therefore given that he should be beheaded, and his head placed upon the pillory, and that an inquiry be made into his lands and chattels. < in the margin: Beheaded><sup>36</sup>

Although the indictment does not state where the assault on Sir Richard took place, it is very likely that he was attacked at Smallbridge Hall in Bures St Mary. This hall, which was situated on the banks of the river Stour, had come into his possession along with the manor of Overhall and Netherhall at Bures St Mary through his marriage to Joan, widow of Robert de Bures, in 1363. Despite holding extensive property in Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Essex, Sir Richard took up residence with his wife

<sup>35</sup> The head of the commission empowered on 22 June 1381 (but not enrolled in the patent rolls) was William of Ufford, earl of Suffolk: TNA, KB 9/166/1 m. 1.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, KB 9/166/1 m. 43d. The right-hand side of the membrane is stained and faded; illegible text is indicated by square brackets:

Placita apud Sudbury coram prefato comite Thome de Morieux Willelmo de Elmham Iohanne de Bourgh Willelmo Wyngefeld Iohanne Holkham et Roberto de Hotot iusticiariis domini regis die martis proxima post festum apostolorum Petri et Pauli anno regni regis Ricardi secundi post quinto.

<Suffolchie> Thomas Fullere de Bures Beate Marie coram prefatis justiciariis per Willelmum Davy de [...] die iovis in festo corporis christi anno regni Ricardi secundi quarto surrexit et fecit diversos homines sur[...] contra dominum regem et corone dignitatem et fecit se ipsum capitaneum et ductorem eorundem [...] et eundo modo guerrino. Et minavit Ricardum de Waldegrave militem de vita et membris [...] et producciones in comitatu predicto fecit. Et super hoc predictus Thomas captus. Et per vicecomitem coram [...] ductus et instanter allocutus est qualiter de felonis et produccionibus se velit acquietare [...] dicit quod ipse in nullo est inde culpabilis. Et de hoc bono et malo ponit se super patriam. Ideo fiat inde iurata iuratores veniunt qui de consensu ipsius Thome ad hoc electi triati et iurati dicunt quod predictus Thomas Fullere de Bures Beate Marie est culpabilis de felonis et prodicionibus unde impetitus est. Ideo consideratum est quod predictus Thomas decapitetur et quod caput suum figatur super collistridium per quod inquiratur de terris et catallis etc. <decollates>

in Smallbridge Hall.<sup>37</sup> In 1384, he received a licence to crenellate his mansion of 'Smallbrigge', and it was there that he made his will in April 1410.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, the indictment gives no further details about the severity of the threats Sir Richard was exposed to nor if his wife was also threatened, but the punishment which was meted out to Thomas Fuller (death by beheading) suggests that the attack on Sir Richard was considered grave. Although Thomas Fuller was not accused of any other offence in connection with the rising, the wording in the indictment – 'in warlike manner', 'treasonably' – clearly made it a capital crime.<sup>39</sup>

No manorial court rolls for Bures St Mary before 1400 have survived and therefore nothing can be said about Thomas Fuller. However, a rental of Rectory manor in Bures St Mary, dating from 1380–1, shows a Robert Fuller, potentially a relative, paying half a mark annually for a tenement and six acres in 'Powersfeld' and a further 6s. 4d. annually for eight acres of land in Sarah Fuller's tenement, likewise in 'Powersfeld'. Interestingly, interlined in this entry is the name 'Thomas Fullere' in a later hand.<sup>40</sup> The rental also reveals the extensive lands and properties Sir Richard de Waldegrave held of the 'priory of Stoke', including several messuages, croftland, pasture and a mill called 'Smallbreggemell' for which he paid 29s. annually.<sup>41</sup> He also farmed the priory's fish ponds in Bures St Mary for 2s. yearly.<sup>42</sup>

There is a possibility that Thomas Fuller served as a soldier the year before his execution. In June 1380, a Thomas Fuller of Essex received a letter of protection to go overseas under the command of Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Buckingham.<sup>43</sup> If this was the case, and the service had taken place as intended, then Fuller would have only just returned on 3 May

<sup>37</sup> For his landed property see Roskell, 'Sir Richard de Waldegrave', passim.

<sup>38</sup> *CPR 1381–5*, p. 410; Woodger, 'Waldegrave, Sir Richard'. The original house, built before 1362 was demolished and replaced in 1555; Smallbridge Hall, Bures St. Mary - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listings/the-list/list-entry/1194489> (accessed 16 December 2021).

<sup>39</sup> Considering that only twelve people are known to have been executed after trials before the earl of Suffolk's commission, Fuller might have been just unlucky to be caught in time to be brought before the earl's tribunal; for death sentences against the twelve people, see TNA, KB 9/166/1 mm. 43d–45d.

<sup>40</sup> Essex Record Office, D/DB M216. There are two more copies of the same rental with additions, interlined amendments and slightly different arrangements: D/DB M214; D/DB M215. The heading of the rental reads 'Rentale domini Prioris de Stoke'. It is unclear which priory this refers to. The Priory of Prittlewell in south Essex had the advowson of Stoke-by-Nayland church and the priory's estates in this part of Suffolk were known as Stoke Priory manor; see Walter A. Copping, *The Manors of Suffolk: Notes on their History and Devolution, I: The Hundreds of Babergh and Blackbourn* (London, 1905), pp. 229–30.

<sup>41</sup> Essex Record Office, D/DB M215.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> TNA, C 76/64, m. 4.

1381.<sup>44</sup> Because Bures St Mary is right across the Essex–Suffolk border it might be that the clerk made an error when he recorded Fuller’s home county. However, there is also a Thomas Fuller of Fobbing in Essex, who was indicted for unspecified actions during the rising, who would be a candidate for the recipient of the letter of protection.<sup>45</sup>

Although the extent of Sir Richard’s suffering at the hands of the rebels is not known, he clearly had first-hand experience of the rising – an experience which surely must have shaped his opinion of the events in general when, four months after his attacker was sentenced to death at Sudbury, Waldegrave was elected Speaker of the House of Commons. On 18 November, Waldegrave tried in vain to be excused from this office.<sup>46</sup> No doubt he was aware of the contentious nature of the discussions about how the government should proceed after the rising. Yet, in his assessment of the causes he decried numerous abuses of power by the government and its officials, beginning with the ‘bloated’ household of the king, the chancery and the law courts which employed an excessive number of servants (‘familiers’) who oppressed the poor commons. Requisition without proper compensation, and constant attacks by the enemies of the realm despite endlessly paying taxes and subsidies made matters worse and caused ‘the said mean commons to rise and commit the mischief they did in the said riots’.<sup>47</sup> Sir Richard also warned that if the government did not immediately put things right even greater mischief (‘greindre meschiefs’)<sup>48</sup> would follow, and he advocated the granting of pardons to those who had been involved in the revolt.

Even though Waldegrave discredited the rebels as ‘menues communes’, he took up their demand to remove bad officials and counsellors (‘les malx officers et conseillers’) and replace them with more ‘virtuous and sufficient’ ones.<sup>49</sup> Waldegrave’s association with Sir Richard Scrope was based on political as well as military service, as in December 1381 Scrope was reappointed as chancellor (having previously served in this office from 1378–80), as a result of the Commons’ push for reform.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> It is also likely that another soldier and rebel, John Peper, landed in England on 3 May before joining the rebellion by 2 June 1381. John Peper of Linton, People and Places – [http://1381.online/people\\_and\\_places/?story\\_id=8](http://1381.online/people_and_places/?story_id=8) (accessed 18/4/22).

<sup>45</sup> TNA, KB 9/166/2 m. 3.

<sup>46</sup> ‘... s’afforceast de lui avoir excusez de cel office de vantparlour’; ‘Richard II: November 1381’, *PROME*, item 9.

<sup>47</sup> ‘... les dites menues communes lour moever, et faire le meschief q’ils firent en dit riot’; *ibid.*, item 17; see also R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381* (2nd edn, London, 1983), pp. 330–1.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Richard II: November 1381’, *PROME*, item 17.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, item 17.

<sup>50</sup> Brigette Vale, ‘Scrope, Richard, first Baron Scrope of Bolton (c.1327–1403)’, *ODNB*; W. M. Ormrod, ‘The Peasants’ Revolt and the Government of England’, *JBS* 29 (1990), 1–30 (at 23–4).

From what we have detailed of the military career and travels of Sir Richard Waldegrave, together with his political roles, he does seem to have been a man of his times. Indeed, based on his later survival we could say he was a man for all seasons. It is interesting (and perhaps ironic, given the role that Waldegrave played in the granting of pardons to the rebels)<sup>51</sup> that towards the end of Waldegrave's life we find him securing pardons for himself. Sir Richard did not serve militarily again after 1385 and seems to have tried to stay removed from the Appellant crisis of 1387–8. Nevertheless, he did take a pardon in November 1397, probably to serve as additional security to avoid any backlash from the king for any perceived lack of loyalty, ten years before. This did not remove the stigma entirely as it appears he paid another fine and took a further pardon in June 1398, perhaps suggesting that Richard II suspected a lack of loyalty during this crisis period. He survived the deposition of Richard II and did not seem to suffer under the reign of Henry IV, dying in 1410 at the age of 72.<sup>52</sup>

This chapter has presented a reassessment of the testimony of Sir Richard Waldegrave in the Scrope–Grosvenor trial and explored this document in the context of other sources which give new insight into his military and political careers. Using the records in the Medieval Soldier database, we have drawn a portrait of an extensive and wide-ranging military career, and simultaneously illustrated the limitations of depositions in armorial disputes, in which accounts of military service were rarely complete. The intersection of Waldegrave's military and political careers is illustrated through his role as Speaker of the House of Commons, an office which Anne has demonstrated was held almost exclusively by career soldiers in the late fourteenth century.<sup>53</sup> The military character of government in this period is reinforced by the reappointment of Sir Richard Scrope to the position of chancellor in the aftermath of 1381, in part at the instigation of Waldegrave as Speaker. Waldegrave's personal involvement in the events of 1381, as victim, gives a new perspective on his role in the reaction of the government to the revolt. The fact that he was personally threatened makes his measured and reasonable response, and his advocacy for pardon, perhaps surprising. However, we could speculate that his personal experience with the rebels gave him some sympathy with their circumstances. If the rebel Thomas Fuller was indeed a soldier recently returned from France, Waldegrave's own military

<sup>51</sup> See Helen Lacey, "Grace for the Rebels": The Role of the Royal Pardon in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, *JMH* 34 (2008), 36–63.

<sup>52</sup> Pardon 14 November 1397, Roskell, 'Sir Richard Waldegrave', p. 170, citing TNA, SC 8/252/12555, also *CPR 1396–9*, p. 184; and 12 June 1398, TNA, C 67/30, m. 15. Our thanks to Dr Helen Lacey for expansion on the taking of pardons at this time and references, see Helen Lacey, *The Royal Pardon: Access to Mercy in Fourteenth Century England* (York, 2009), pp. 162–8.

<sup>53</sup> Curry, 'Speakers at War'.



experience might have given him some insight into the frustration caused by England's defeats at the hands of the French, and an awareness of the urgent need for reform.<sup>54</sup>

### Document

#### **The deposition of Sir Richard Waldegrave in the cause of arms between Richard Scrope and Robert Grosvenor**

Court of Chivalry, Westminster, 15 October 1386.

Contemporary copy; enrolled.

TNA, C 47/6/2.

#### **Edition**

Et cez attestacions ensuantz furent pris devant le dit monsieur Johan de Darwentwatre le quinzisme iour del dit moys doctobre en le refreitour del Abbeye de Wymonstre en le manere qe sensuit.

[...] <sup>55</sup>

*<in the margin: vi>* Monsieur Richard Waldegrave del age de xlviii ans armez par xxv anz product pur la partie de monsieur Richard Lescrope iurrez et examinez. Demandez si lez armez dazure ove un bende dor apperteignent de droit et de heritage au dit monsieur Richard Lescrope, dist qil ne oiast unques dire la contrarie mes qe lez ditz armez ount este toutdys comunement dit lez armez de Lescropes par tout soun temps et pur tiels reputez et de veille auncestrie com il ad oy dire en temps qe le count de Northampton estoit vivant. Demandez par qi il sciet qe lez ditz armez apperteignent a dit monsieur Richard, dist qe devant Parys il vist le dit monsieur Richard armez en mesmez lez armez et monsieur Henri Lescrope a baner a mesme le temps ove un labelle blanc en la viage de roy Edward qi mort est et autres de son lynage ove differencez. Et auxi il vist outre la grande mere monsieur William Lescrope armez en mesmez lez armez ove un labelle en la company del count de Hereford en Turkye a Satillie a un trete qi fuist fait par entre le roy de Cipre et le Takka Sire de Satellie, mes adonc le roy de Cipre fuist seigneur de Satellie; et a Balynghamhille le baner de monsieur Henri et en la viage du Caus quant monsieur de Lancastre estoit cheftayn monsieur William Lescrope, le fitz a dit monsieur Richard, armez en lez ditz armez ove un labelle. Demandez sil oiast unques

<sup>54</sup> This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number AH/S011765/1) and is available via Open Access under the licence CC BY-NC-ND.

<sup>55</sup> Here follow the depositions of Edward Dalyngrige (Dallingridge) and William Moigne, not reproduced here.

dire quele fuist le primer auncestre de monsieur Richard portantz lez armez, dist qe non qar depuis qe cest debate fuist commence il ad oy dire qe lez auncestres de dit monsieur Richard sount deuenz droit de conquest; et devant qe cest challenge estoit fait il oyast dire qils estoient venuz gentils hommes dauncestre. Demandez sil ad oy dascune challenge ou interupcioun fait pur lez ditz armeez par monsieur Robert Grovenour ou par ascun de cez auncestres ou par ascun en soun noun au dit monsieur Richard ou a cez auncestres, dist certeynement qe neuple.

### **Translation**

And the following testimonies were taken before the said Sir John de Derwentwater on 15 October in the refectory of the abbey of Westminster, in the manner as follows:

Sir Richard Waldegrave, aged forty-eight, armed twenty-five years, deposed on behalf of the party of Sir Richard Scrope, sworn and examined. Asked as to whether the arms ‘dazure ove un bende dor’, belonged by right and heritage to the said Richard Scrope he says that he had never heard anyone say to the contrary, but that the said arms were always commonly said to have belonged to the Scropes, throughout his lifetime, who were reputed to be of ancient lineage, as he heard, in the lifetime of the earl of Northampton now living. Asked as from whom he knows that the said arms belong to the said Sir Richard, he says that he saw Sir Richard so armed in the expedition of the late King Edward before Paris, and at the same time Sir Henry Scrope with his banner, on which were the said arms with a white band, also borne by others of his lineage, with differences. And also, beyond the great sea he saw Sir William Scrope so armed, with a white band, in the company of the earl of Hereford at Antalya in Turkey, at a treaty which was made between Peter I of Cyprus and ‘le Takka’, lord of Antalya, when the king of Cyprus became lord of Antalya. And at Bayenghem-lès-Seninghem the banner of Sir Henry was displayed; and in the expedition to Caux, when the lord of Lancaster was commander-in-chief, Sir William Scrope, son of the said Sir Richard, similarly bore the arms with a white band. Asked whether he ever heard who was the first of Sir Richard’s ancestors to bear the arms, he says that he had not, because since the dispute first began, he had heard it said that the ancestors of the said Sir Richard acquired the right from the Conquest, and, before this challenge, he had heard that they came as noblemen of ancient lineage. Asked if he ever heard of any challenge or interruption made by Sir Robert Grosvenor, or his ancestors, or any in his name, to the bearing of the arms in question by Sir Richard or his ancestors, he says that he certainly had not.