
THE BARONS OF KINDERTON

The barony of Kinderton was one of eight baronies created by the first Norman earl of Chester. On being given lordship over the whole of the county of Chester by King William, Hugh d'Avranches, known as 'Lupus', meaning the 'wolf', and as 'Hugh the Fat', granted his comrades and loyal followers estates within the shire and in North Wales, in return for their military service to him, their counsel in administering his earldom and their performance of specific duties. The most important of these tenants-in-chief became known as the Cheshire barons.

1. GILBERT VENABLES

According to the pages of the Domesday Book, Gilbert, surnamed Venables relating to his place of origin in Normandy, was given a fief of several manors spread throughout the county: Eccleston, Alpraham, Tarporley, Wettenhall, Hartford, Lymm, High Legh, Wincham, Mere, Peover, Rostherne and Hope in North Wales. Additionally, for his services as the earl's hunter, 'venator', he was granted the manors of Newbold Astbury, Brereton, Kinderton, Davenport, Witton, and Blakenhall, Of these, Gilbert's most valuable manor was that at Eccleston, where he held land taxable on five hides with six ploughlands and a fishery on the River Dee all worth 50s in 1086. Hartford was another important manor as it contained 1½ salthouses in Northwich and had the service of a man-at-arms: Wincham also had a salthouse. At Lymm, Legh and Astbury he had income from church revenues. The total taxable assessment for Gilbert was based on 30 hides and he had about 50 ploughlands in addition to areas of woodland and meadow. All of this made him one of the most important vassals of the earl of Chester.

Ormerod, quoting from a pedigree roll at Adlington Hall, states that Gilbert was a brother of Stephen count of Blois and son of Eudo count of Blois. The known genealogies of that noble family do not support such a connection and it is far more likely that he was a son of a family that had resided at Venables for some time.

Nothing is known of Gilbert's life. One may surmise that he was involved with Earl Hugh and the other barons in invading North Wales during the years 1070 – 1092, and otherwise assisting in the defence of the county. At Eccleston there are the remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle which may have been Gilbert's stronghold. He does, however, occur as a witness to a number of the earl's charters.

2. GILBERT II VENABLES

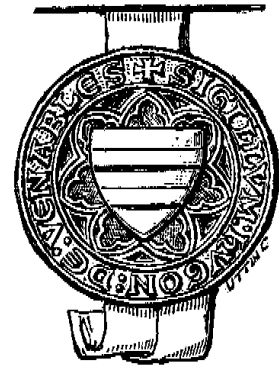
The next Venables person to occur in the records is another Gilbert, perhaps a son or even grandson of the first, who at some time between 1160 and 1173 witnessed one of the earl's charters. It is believed that one of his sons, Hamon, was granted estates at Marston, Wincham and Legh and so founded the Legh family of High Legh. Another son, Hugh, became successively the incumbent at Eccleston, Astbury and Rostherne churches.

3. WILLIAM VENABLES

The next lord of Kinderton, William, witnessed a charter of 1208-1213 and lived until at least 1228. He is the first to feature in charters concerning property in Hulme, Bradwall, dated to the late 12th century, which mention Michael Venables, his brother, and also another charter of about 1220 which mentions other family members - Hamon, Richard and Hugh who were also likely to have been brothers.¹ He probably died in 1240 when his son Hugh paid £50 'relief' (a payment made to inherit an estate) to the exchequer at Chester, suggesting he was succeeding to his father's estate.² William's son Robert was rector of Rostherne and died in 1298.

4. HUGH VENABLES

The first known member of the family to be named Hugh was the lord of Kinderton from about 1240 for only six or seven years. It seems that the seal he used on charters is the first evidence of the coat of arms bearing the two bars.



For some reason these arms appear painted among the spandrels of the wall-arcade on the south side of the nave in Westminster Abbey. The arms are alongside those of Roger de Monte Alto (1265-97); others in the arcade include: William, Earl of Ferrers and Derby (1239-79), William Longespee, Earl of Salisbury (1193-1254), William de Valence, Earl of Pembroke (d.1296), Roger de Mortimer (1231-1282), William de Percy (1192-45), Roger de Clifford (1189-1232), Roger de Somery (1208-73) and John de Verdon (1256-95); Fulc Fitz Warren (b.1220-64) and Robert de Thweng (1205-68).³ Each of these men lived in the mid- to late-13th century, but what do they have in common. Given their dates it would suggest that it is this Hugh Venables, or his son, who is commemorated here – but why?⁴ At one time the arms of Vernon, Malpas appeared on the north side of the nave, thus giving four of the eight ancient baronies of Cheshire being represented. Apart from the Lord Edward, later King Edward I, all Henry III's near relatives who were living when the Abbey was being rebuilt are represented in this range of shields. We find the arms of his brothers and brothers-in-law, his younger son and his sons-in-law. Do the arms represent benefactors?

5. ROGER VENABLES

Roger was declared to be the son and heir of Hugh in 1240 when he married Alice Penninton from Penninton, Lancashire. This marriage is the first to be commemorated on the Venables Screen in St Michael's church. He took possession of his patrimony about six years later and by 1252 he accounted for ten knights' fees, and again in 1277/8, when he paid £20 scutage (a payment for military aid).⁵ Roger is perhaps most noted for his disputes with the Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, over the advowson of Astbury church.

On 13 January 1260, Sir Roger Venables of Kinderton commenced proceedings to recover the church and won.⁶ His argument was based on the fact that when his ancestor was in the wardship of Earl Rannulph III (1182-1232), it was the earl who made the presentment. The abbot, Thomas, complained that the court ought not to be sitting on the matter as there was no

current vacancy for the post of priest so he left. A jury was empanelled to decide on the matter and the abbot was ordered to return but failed to do so and the proceedings went ahead in his absence. The jury found in favour of Roger and the abbot was fined for a false presentment. Abbot Thomas then appealed to the Lord Edward who ordered an inquiry as to whether there was any vacancy at Astbury.⁷

On 1 June 1260, the Abbot of Chester appeared at court with letters from the Lord Edward, dated 30 April, addressed to the justiciar ordering him to allow the objection he (the abbot) had made and to remit the matter of the vacancy of the parsonage at Astbury to the bishop as a matter of fact. A date was set for the hearing and parties were to attend. Roger Venables then stated that he had not been given sufficient notice of the hearing so the matter was deferred for a further two weeks. On the next occasion the bishop's reply had still not been received so the case was put off until 13 July. At the next hearing, the abbot produced the bishop's reply which confirmed that the post was not vacant and that the then incumbent should continue to enjoy his living, and that only when an incumbent had resigned or died should Sir Roger prosecute his claim for the advowson. On 31 August, the abbot presented the justiciar with the findings and as a result Sir Roger's nominee for the post was cancelled.⁸ Roger died shortly after which the monks considered to be a judgement of Heaven and recorded in their Chronicle that he died a 'wretched death'. He died in September 1260 according to the Chronicle of St. Werburgh's Abbey.

On 13 April 1260, the County Court decided that Sir Roger Venables who held the lands of Richard Done as the heir's guardian, ought to maintain the dead man's children because, having sold the lands, he was in receipt of due compensation for their wardship.⁹ That June, he came to an agreement with the children's mother, Mable, concerning their custody.¹⁰ It seems that Mable eventually obtained tenements in Crowton and Kingsley as her dower (an estate provided for a widow).¹¹

On 31 August 1260, a Hugh Venables, perhaps Richard's brother, was accused by a James 'Violator' of alienating his fee in Moorsbarrow, but Hugh declared he held nothing nor claims anything there from James.¹²

6. SIR WILLIAM II VENABLES

Roger was succeeded as lord of Kinderton by William II Venables who occurs in the later decades of the 13th century.

In 1280, William sued before the justiciar of Chester for the for the village of Hope in North Wales, which had once been held by his ancestor. King Edward I had granted the castle of Hope to Davydd, the brother of Llewelyn ab Gruffydd, Prince of North Wales.¹³ The ensuing political situation meant that Hope was lost as, in consequence of Davydd's defection, about the middle of June, 1282, Edward I. in person invested Hope Castle, which was then surrendered to him and which he then gave to his queen Eleanor, and then remained in royal hands. At the 'Inquest of Service' held in the County Court on 11 May 1288, it was declared that Sir William Venables held ten knights fees. For this he was required to provide, for each fee, one armed horseman or two unarmed horsemen, with all his footmen doing service in accordance with the Great Charter (Earl Rannulf's III's equivalent of the Magna Carta) and if the castle at Chester was besieged then he was to come with his force to drive the enemy away.¹⁴

William's first wife did not live long and he next married Margaret Dutton, about 1253. William II died in 1290.

Sir William's second son, another Sir William, was granted lands in Bradwell about 1285, and founded a family which resided there for many generations. This Sir William married a Katherine Thornton and got involved in a case concerning the advowson of Thornton le Moors church in 1303.¹⁵

7. HUGH II VENABLES

At Kinderton, William II was succeeded by Hugh Venables, who married Agatha Vernon, a daughter of the neighbouring baron of Shipbrook. Although he succeeded to the barony in 1290 he was still owing his relief in 1303/4 in which year he paid £20.¹⁶ He was fined in February 1292 for not having taken the order of knighthood which by having at least £40 worth of land he ought to have done and had those lands for fifteen months.¹⁷ He was one of the collectors of tax for the earl and had on two occasions not turned up at court to make payments.

About 1307 he relinquished all his family's rights to Newbold Astbury to his cousin's family settled there. He died in 1310 having ruled over the barony for about 18 years.

VENABLES OF ASTBURY

A branch of the family living at Astbury as lords of Newbold Astbury occur at an early date: they may be descended of a younger son of Roger Venables. On 27 January 1260, a Richard Venables sued Adam, the chaplain of Astbury, and his son Richard, over a tenement in Newbold. Basically, Richard as lord claimed disposal of the wood whereas the defendants claimed it as their tenement, part of their share of the township. Venables won.¹⁸ A death in Davenport occurred in the summer of 1260. Alcock, the shepherd of Davenport, was found dead in the fields by his wife and rumours were that Henry, the smith of Davenport, had killed him. Richard Venables and William, the reeve of Davenport, stood sureties for the accused man. Henry agreed to trial but no prosecution was brought against him and the township declared accidental death.¹⁹

Among the rolls of St Werburgh's there is the record of a further case concerning the abbey's dispute with the Venables family. Seemingly this time it was this junior line who had settled at Newbold (Astbury) who thought they were entitled to the advowson of the church. This family are probably represented by the badly worn effigies in Astbury church yard as one of them bore a shield of Venables differenced by three leopard's heads.

In July 1298, William Venables was the head of this particular family and had wanted to exercise the right to appoint the cleric at Astbury. Another Abbot Thomas made a claim against him for the advowson of Astbury church and put forward evidence that his predecessor, Simon, had successively installed Robert Burnell, John Stanley and Reginald Grey without objections and that before that a John (or Gilbert) Brereton had been appointed by Simon's predecessor. The jury declared that at the time of the previous presentation William Venables had been a minor under the guardianship of Roger Puleston who had claimed the advowson on behalf of his ward but had lost the case.

When the last incumbent died, William decided to enforce what he believed to be his rights. He placed thirty armed men inside the church and allowed no one in to perform divine services for fifteen days. He then locked the church and went away with the keys. Eventually he appointed a priest (Walter Thorp) to the living at Astbury. The court on hearing of this ordered William to appear before them which he failed to do so the court pronounced that as

he had failed to attend to account for his unlawful actions he should lose any rights to the advowson and pay damages of 50 marks.

King Edward I and his administrators now became involved. On 13 August, a writ was sent to the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield authorising the abbot to install his nominee to the 'vacant' position and on 26 September a writ was sent to Reginald Grey, the Justiciar of Chester, to seize some of William's property as surety for the 50 marks that had not been paid. On 7 October, a further writ was sent to the justiciar to send all the papers concerning the case to Westminster. Then, on 24 October, the sheriff was ordered to summon the bishop to show why he had not appointed a suitable parson to the living on behalf of the abbot. Matters were then left until the following year, when on 8 February, the justiciar was ordered to summon William to appear before the County Court at Chester a month after Easter (*i.e.* in late May) to show why the abbot should not have the right of advowson at Astbury. However, William on learning of this decided he would not wait until then and made a pre-emptive strike and turned up at a court session on Tuesday, 17 February, to plead his case.

William claimed that his ancestor, Richard Venables, during the reign of King Henry III (1216-1272), had possession of the advowson as part of his manor of Newbold and had accordingly presented his clerk, William Windeshore, and that this had been accepted by the bishop. From then, the legal right had passed down to himself. However, his case was not helped by the fact that two earlier generations, Richard and Thomas, when successively lords of the manor, had not taken advantage of their rights and left it to the abbot of Chester to install Brereton, and that his younger son, Thomas, again did not bother to make any appointments and left it to the abbot to install Stanley and Burnell.

The court again met on Tuesday, 21 April, when, surprisingly, William relinquished his claim in exchange for a grant of £20 and the remission of the earlier costs. The abbot's nominee, Reginald Grey was now formerly accepted as the rector. Perhaps someone had drawn his attention to the fact that back in the 1150s an earlier William Venables of Kinderton had confirmed his great-grandfather's gift of Astbury church to the abbey, which had been confirmed by Richard, bishop of Coventry.²⁰

This William Venables of Newbold maybe the man who appeared at court in Chester on 16 December 1281 who was sued by Richard Bradwell for taking beasts.²¹ On 21 January he was then attached – the jury found him guilty and 2s damages were awarded.²² He may also

be the William who on occurs in a case dated 9 August 1289. Randle Astbury sued Roger Pulesdon (Puelesdon), his wife Joan, William Venables, Adam the hunter of Utkinton, Robert who was Roger's huntsman, and Thomas of Woodhouses in Newbold, for possession of a small piece of woodland in Great Moreton 'sub Lyme'. Roger and Joan claimed they held the land as parceners with Henry Chamber and Adam Lynton. The jury found for the plaintiffs, though each did not actually know which bit they owned. The plaintiff was fined 2s for making a false claim. Similarly, Randle sued Roger and his wife, Adam the hunter, William Parker and William Wyvul for a very small piece of waste land – the outcome was the same.²³

In 1339, Richard Venables of Newbold was vice-justiciar of Chester.²⁴ The line seems to come to an end during the century as the Hawkeston family became lords of Astbury by the end of it. During the 1350s there were a number of grants of premises in Newbold Astbury in favour of the Hawkestones including the manorial rights.²⁵ About 1375, William Venables of Astbury's daughter Isabel married Thomas son of Sir Thomas Hawkeston, by which she was given the manor of Marchumley in Hodnet.²⁶

8. HUGH III VENABLES

Hugh II's eldest son was named William, but it seems he died before he reached his majority and so his younger brother Hugh became the heir.²⁷ Hugh was a minor when his father died (born about 1305) and so the barony was controlled by the Earl of Chester and in 1315/6 rents totalling £19 7s 3d from Kinderton and 69s 0¾d from Eccleston were paid into the exchequer.²⁸ For a time the Venables lands, or part of them, were under the control of William Mobberley, Hugh's guardian, for in 1326/7 Hugh Venables paid £50 into the exchequer as part of a total of £240 due from Mobberley whilst he had custody of the Venables estate.²⁹ This would suggest that Hugh had only then recently come of age. The cost of his relief was 80 marks (£52 16s) which apparently, he never paid for in 1358 he paid 16s 4d for a charter pardoning him for taking possession of his father's lands without licence.³⁰ he was given two years to pay the money due and paid an instalment of £26 13s 4d the following year.³¹ He is named as a knight 'chivaler' by 1350.³²

To digress. On 26 August 1346, the famous battle of Crecy was fought. In the retinue of Edward, Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, there served a knight names Sir Alexander

Venables – but who was he? Also serving, under the earl of Arundel, was Sir Richard Venables of Bollin, who according to the *Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, was a younger son of Sir Hugh II.

In 1354, Hugh created a park in the woodland area at Kinderton for which he paid £6 13s 4d for the privilege, and a further £7 11s 8d to have warren in his demesne lands of Kinderton, Sproston, Marston, Witton and Eccleton.³³

He was involved in an enquiry into his rights as the baron of Kinderton.³⁴ In mid- January 1358, Hugh appeared in court at Chester to plead against the Earl of Chester that he had a view of frank pledge in his demesne lands, along with ‘infangtheif and outfangtheif’, ‘wayfe and straye’, gallows, pillory, tumbrel, thew, stallage, stocks and pelfe. Each of these was explained to the court. ‘Frank pledge’ meant that he had the right to hold a court each Michaelmas to hear cases of bread and ale, breach of the peace, assault, hue and cry, and the obstruction of roads, before a jury of twelve men summoned by his steward. He had the right to fine people for wrongdoing, and in some cases by using other means. Bakers could be punished by the pillory for a fourth offence, butchers by tumbrell, and scolds by the thew. ‘Infangtheof meant that when a person was accused of robbery he would be brought before the local court within three days and if he agreed be dealt with by the court, but if he wished to be tried by the court at Chester he would be taken there. If convicted and liable to the death penalty he would be returned to Kinderton for execution. ‘Outtfangthief’ meant that if any of his tenants were convicted in any court then he ought to be brought back to Kinderton for any execution. ‘Wayfe’ meant the right to retain stolen goods left by the thief in his manor. ‘Straye’ meant the right to retain animals found grazing on his waste lands which were not reclaimed with one year. ‘Stallage’ was the right to charge merchants and butchers trading in his manor 4d a year. ‘Pelfe’ was the right to seize the goods and chattels of anyone convicted of a felony, and after allowing the earl his rights to any items, then to take the best of all the rest. The jury found in favour of the baron at a subsequent hearing in September 1358.

The right of execution continued for centuries and in the Kinderton court rolls for April 1598 there is reference to the fact that John Croxton of Ravenscroft held his lands by the service of finding for the said Thomas Venables and his heirs one hangman to hang murderers and felons whenever such work is required to be done within the manor This right, which may not have been exercised very often, resulted in Hugh Stringer being executed for murder of Ann Crannage and her daughter Cecilia at Sproston. John Croxton, gave John Lingard, alias

Barratt, 5s to carry out the execution on the 26 September.³⁵ Hugh married twice. First, he was married to Elizabeth, the daughter of his guardian William Mobberley. He then married Katherine Houghton from Houghton, Lancashire.

Hugh died on 22 October 1367. On the day he died he held: Witton and Le Cross (part of Witton), from the earl as of fee, worth £10 a year; Kinderton, Sproston, Marston, other parts of Witton and Le Cross, from the earl in tail, all worth 200 marks; and the advowson of the church of Rostherne and property in Middlewich. He was eventually survived by a son of the same name from his second wife.

During his time, 1337, as lord of Kinderton, Hugh witnessed the arbitration between his cousin Thomas Venables of Budworth and the abbot of Vale Royal. The abbey possessed the manor of Darnhall where the pool often overflowed into Venables' property and when it did so Thomas was in the habit of fishing in the pool. When opposed he resorted to arms to enforce what he considered his 'right to fish'. On one occasion he assaulted one of the monks, stole his and his companions bows, arrows and swords, and assaulted one of those men. In compensation Thomas paid 100s to the monk with a replacement bow, and 6s 8d to the man, and swore before the abbot not to fish in Darnhall Pool again. A Sir John Venables is also named as being present when the agreement was drawn up but he has not been identified. This Thomas Venables was brother of William Venables of Bradwall and both were sons of Sir William of Bradwall.³⁶ William was one of a number of armed men who set out to ambush the abbot of vale Royal on his return from Westminster. The abbot had been to plead his case with the king and queen against the 'bondmen of Darnhall' who were rebelling against his authority. The peasants were supported in their cause by many Cheshire gentlemen of whom William Venables was one. In an altercation in Rutland one of the abbot's servants was killed, whereupon Venables fled the scene and hastily returned to Cheshire.³⁷

9. WILLIAM III VENABLES

By his first wife, Elizabeth, Hugh had two sons. The first, William, married firstly Agnes Warburton about 1310, and then, having no children by her, he married Maud Vernon, about

1342, by whom he had two daughters who died young. Maud when a widow sealed a document with the arms of Venables impaling Vernon, *fretty, on a canton a crescent*. William III died in 1350. William's brother was John, who married Isabel Eggerton and had a son named William, but both father and son died in the lifetime of Hugh III. With the children of Elizabeth (née Mobberley) and their issue also dying before Henry III, succession to the barony passed to the eldest son of Hugh's marriage to Katherine (née Houghton).

William's step-brother, Thomas, was implicated with William Bostock and others in the murder of Abbot Peter of Vale Royal in 1340.³⁸ All of those involved swore to donate two pounds of wax to the monastery every year on the anniversary of the abbot's death for the rest of their lives in recompense.³⁹

10. HUGH IV VENABLES

Hugh, the fourth lord of Kinderton to be so named, was aged at least 21 years when his father died and so was able to take control of the barony from October 1367. His first marriage to Ellen Huxley, produced two children who died young. He next married Margaery Cotton and from her the family continued.

Before considering Hugh's life it is worth mentioning some members of the family of this time who cannot be identified. The first is Piers Venables, 'esquire', who was active in the summer of 1380, serving first under Sir David Hulgrave, and then under Sir Hugh Calveley, in the retinue of Thomas, earl of Buckingham, later to be duke of Gloucester. On 19 July 1380, the duke landed at Calais for an expedition which consisted of 5,060 men, about half being archers, which Richard II had funded by pawning the crown jewels for £10,000. The army advanced to Burgundy and at the gate of Troyes a skirmish was fought lasting about an hour. The expedition took a wide detour through northern France, swinging as far west as the County of Champagne, pillaging and burning. The French refused to be drawn into a general engagement. When Buckingham's army finally arrived in Brittany, the political situation had changed and peace seemed likely. In March 1381, the expedition returned to England. Also present were Thomas Venables, an archer, who served in the same company, and John who served under Sir William Windsor; both may be Piers' brothers. A Peter, a man-at-arms, also occurs in 1389 with the Duke of Norfolk in Scotland, with John and Andrew, who were also men-at-arms, in the same contingent. A John Venables, archer, occurs somewhat earlier on

the Rheims campaign of 1359, and in March 1378, under the captaincy of Sir Ralph St Ledger with the earl of Arudel. A Thomas had 'letters of protection' in going with Sir Thomas Cheyne to the castle of Marck, Calais, in December 1385. A Nicholas, archer, and a Henry, man-at-arms, served the king under in 1372. In May 1383, a Peter (Piers) Venables had 'letters of protection' on serving overseas in what was known as the 'Norwich Crusade' led by Henry le Despencer, bishop of Norwich, during which Sir Hugh Calveley was the military commander. Whilst a Thomas and a John appear in Ormerod's pedigree and may be the men mentioned there is no reference to any Peter, or Piers, Venables and yet his rank of 'esquire' suggests he was son of a knight. Did this member of the family die on active service during his father's lifetime? Assuming he was in his 20s when serving and therefore born about 1355, his father may have been Hugh III.⁴⁰

Hugh IV became sheriff of Cheshire in 1380 and remained in that office until his death six years later, but apart from that nothing is known of him and his name appears rarely in Middlewich documents. In 1380, he paid £400 to obtain from the king the wardship of Richard Bulkelegh, the young heir of the Cheadle lordship.

He died in first week of Lent, on Friday, 13 February 1383, and his son and heir, Richard, reached the age of 18 on 25 July that year. According to the *inquisition post mortem* held later that year his estates of Kinderton were valued at £100 a year and half of the manor of Newton, Wirral. An *inquisition* the following year stated that he held his estates by the performance of ten knights' fees, worth 200 marks, together with the advowsons of Rostherne and Eccleston. The widow Margery was awarded custody of two-thirds of the barony and the guardianship of her son Richard and a third part of the Cheadle estates which were still in wardship.

11. SIR RICHARD VENABLES

In July 1363, at Hulme, in Kinderton, Richard Venables son of Hugh and Margery (nee Coton) was born: he was baptised a few days later, on 25 July, in Middlewich church. Richard's coming of age was proved in an inquiry held at Middlewich in July 1384. Witnesses recalled the birth had taken place after Edward. Prince of Wales journey to Gascony, which had taken place in May 1363.⁴¹

The formal proof of what Richard inherited took some time and three attempts to get it right. The verdict given at Hugh's *inquisition post mortem* was not acceptable to the king's officials who had been given to understand that Hugh held other manors in the county independent of, and not members of the manor of Kinderton. A new inquisition was ordered to be returned into the office of the Privy Seal by 8 October 1384.

On Monday 31 October 1384, a further inquiry held in Chester and this returned that Hugh had held: the manor of Kinderton, with the advowson of the church of Rostherne; the manor of Bradwall; half of Sproston; the manors of Mersshton; Eccleston, with the advowson of the church; all held of the king in chief by knight's service. Plus, half the manor of Newton in Wirall, held of the heirs of Sir Adam de Banastre by rent; lands in Brereton worth 20s. yearly, held of Sir Laurence Dutton by rent; lands in Elton by Warmingham, held of the lord of Warmingham by rent. All of this was assessed at 10½ knights' fees.

This answer was again declared not acceptable and insufficient on 6 November, 1385, and a further inquest was ordered. Then, on 21 November, at Middlewich, the matter was resolved and it was finally agreed that Hugh Venables died in possession of the following:

The manor of Kinderton and half of the town of Sproston, held from the king and earl of Chester by service of one knight's fee.

The advowson of Rostherne church; value £80.

Bradwall manor held by service of a moiety of a knight's fee; value 100s.

Marston manor, held by service of a half of a knight's fee.

Witton manor, held by service of three-fourths of a knight's fee.

Eccleston manor, with the hamlet called 'Belgreve', and the advowson of the church, held by service; value 20 marks.

The township of Mere, with a moiety of the manor of Bollington, held from him by William Mere by service of a half of a knight's fee; value £20.

Wetenhale manor, held of him by Adam de Bostok, Richard de Manlegh, John de Hinklegh and Ellen Ardem, by service of a half of a knight's fee; value 20 marks.

Bridgemere manor, held of him by James de Bridgemere and Richard de Wybunbury by service of a half of a knight's fee; value £10.

Hartford manor, held of him by William Horton by service of a half of a knight's fee; value 20 marks.

Hunsterton manor, held of him by Richard de Hunsterton and others by service of a half of a knight's fee; value £10.

Le Lee manor (High Legh), held of him by Richard Lee by service of a fourth part of a knight's fee; value 100s.

Utinton manor and a half of Tarporley manor, held of him by John Done by service of three fourths of a moiety of a knight's fee; value £10.

The other half of Tarporley, held of him by Reynold Gray, lord of Ruthin, by service of a fourth part of a half of a knight's fee; value 100s.

Davenport manor, held of him by Sir William Legh and Joyce his wife, for her lifetime, by service of an eighth part of a knight's fee; value £10.

Wincham manor, together with a half of the manor of Pickmere, held of him by Margaret Wastnays and Alice her sister, by service of a half of a knight's fee; value £10.

Newbold manor, with the manors of Mykelmorton (Great Moreton) and Astbury, held of him by John Hawkeston, knight, by service of one knight's fee; value £20.

Castle Northwich, and two-thirds of a hamlet called 'Twenbrokes', a hamlet called 'Knyghteshulme' and the manor of Radnor, held of him by Ralph Wilbraham by service of a fourth part of a knight's fee; value 100s.

Brereton manor, and a moiety of the manor of Sproston, and two-thirds of the manor of Somerford, held of him by William Brereton, knight, by service of one knight's fee; value £40.

Arclid manor, held of him by Thomas Hassall and others by service of a thirty-second part of a knight's fee; value 40s.

The other half of Bradwall manor, with the town of Lytelstanthurl (Little Stanthorne) and lands in Oldwarton (Old Wharton) held of him by Thomas Berrington and others and John Bulkelegh by service of [a sixth part] of a knight's fee; value 100s.

Rostherne manor, held of him by Sir John Mascy of Tatton, by service of a sixteenth part of a knight's fee; value 100s.

These then were the lands that Richard inherited in July 1384. On 30 November 1385, further information was supplied to the escheator informing him of the split between Richard's inheritance and Margery's dower lands – normally a third went to the widow in dower.⁴²

Adam de Kyngesley, the escheator of Cheshire, was given an order to give Richard livery of his father's lands. An order was also issued to give Margery livery of her dower which consisted of Wetenhall, Hertford, Hunsterton, Lee, Northwich Castle, with Twenbrokes and 'Knyghtesholm', Bradwell with 'Litelstanthurll' and 'Old Warton', the advowson of Eccleston church.⁴³

In the same year, Richard with his sureties who included Sir Ralph Vernon, entered into a marriage agreement with Ralph Langton over his daughter Isabell, which stipulated that should there ever be a divorce between them, then Richard and Sir Ralph were to receive 400 marks and if she die without children a payment of £1 13 6s 8d be paid and be quit of any further payment. Richard's mother, Margery was discharged of any obligation by Ralph Langton entering into a recognisance with the king for the same sum.⁴⁴

Richard first occurs as a knight in a 1386 muster roll. He had a grant of 20 marks a year from 10 October 1397, the king having retained him in service for life; he had further grants as a member of the king's bodyguard in August and September 1398.⁴⁵

As Sir Richard he held the office of Sheriff of Chester as deputy to Hugh, earl Stafford, and then sheriff in his own right during the king's pleasure from 10 January 1387. He is found in a number of commissions and recognisances.

Richard occurs on 16 February 1399 to keep the peace towards John Winnington with sureties including Adam Bostock and William Venables. Eight days later he went to Ireland with William Brereton, leading 80 archers in the king's retinue. On 14 April 1399, he was commissioned to raise 80 archers for service in Ireland travelling by way of Chester and Burton on Wirral. He remained in Ireland for some time and was serving there when Richard II was deposed by Henry of Lancaster.

Other members of the family occur about this time. Henry Venables, esquire, had letters of protection on going to Ireland in June 1397. John Venables of Guilden Sutton, archer, in September 1398; William, archer; William, esquire, of Trafford. In 1404, a John Venables was an archer at the castle of Montgomery/Bishops castle with Lord Furnivall.

There can be little doubt of Richard's loyalty to King Richard II. Initially the change of dynasty in 1399 did not seem to trouble him given his commission to lead men into Scotland. In July 1400, Sir Richard led a contingent of twenty archers, part of a total of sixty men from Northwich Hundred to Scotland, part of a strength of 500 from Cheshire.⁴⁶ Also on this campaign were William Venables of Trafford with fifteen archers and William Venables of Bollin with twenty-four. The campaign came to nothing apart from burning and pillaging the border country. In September the army returned home to hear of a rebellion which had broken out in Wales under the banner of Owen Glyn Dwr, who had assumed the title of Prince of Wales. An alliance was formed between Glyn Dwr and the earl of Northumberland and his son Henry 'Hotspur' against king Henry. Hotspur travelled into Cheshire and with the help of Sir Richard and Sir Richard Vernon, recruited those who were once loyal to Richard II and distributed to them the late king's badge of a white hart. Rumours were put about that the deposed king was still alive and would show himself at Sandiway. A force of around 7,000 men marched south with the aim of meeting up with Glyn Dwr. At Shrewsbury their way was blocked by the Lancastrian king, Henry IV and his son, Prince Henry. The rebellion came to a head at the battle of Shrewsbury on 21 July 1403. Whilst Hotspur's army initially had the upper-hand with the expertise of the Cheshire archers, they were eventually overcome by superior numbers.

The defeat of the rebel army led to Sir Richard Venables being captured and being beheaded in the market square at Shrewsbury along with his neighbour Sir Richard Vernon. Their heads were conveyed by the sheriff of Shropshire to the mayor of Chester to be displayed on one of the city's gates 'for so long as they might last'. On 3 August a writ was issued

authorising the seizure of the deceased Sir Richard's property and to have it valued. His official writ of death was issued on 3 October which declared he left sons, Hugh and Henry, and a daughter Janet.

The barony of Kinderton was now granted by the king to Sir Richard's brother, William, constable of Chester castle.



The Battle of Shrewsbury by Graham Turner

12. WILLIAM IV VENABLES

William, Hugh IV's second son and Sir Richard's younger brother was born about 1365. Unlike his brother he declared loyalty to the new king and on 18 November 1399, was appointed constable of Chester castle.

This William fell heir to property at Golborne David, near Chester. Roger Venables, a younger son of Hugh III, about 1365, married Elizabeth Roter, nee Golborne, who was heiress of her father Sir William Golborne of Golborne David: an important match. Their only son, Hugh, who, although married, died childless and left his estates to a cousin, this William's grandson, another William. William's acquisition of the estates were confirmed by a charter dated 1418 and then entailed four years later. He also had a grant of the manor of Moston, in Warmingham, three years later.

King Henry IV granted the forfeited barony of Kinderton to William by a writ, dated 10 September 1403, and confirmed by the prince on 24 November. The income from the estates

were charged with an annual payment of £40 to Sir Richard's widow, of which she then acquitted half of it back to William from 15 August 1406.

On 7 September 1407, the earl granted permission for William Venables to make grants in favour of his nephew, Hugh. William granted to Hugh his father's property: 56 messuages, 300 acres of land, with a further 24 acres of pasture, woodland and meadow in Kinderton, Eccleston, Witton, Sproston, Bradwall and Hulme; property associated with salt-making in Middlewich and Northwich; and common of turbary and pasture in Legh and Berterton. This gift was for the benefit of Hugh and his heirs. Essentially, he was handing back the barony of Kinderton. This would suggest that the king was satisfied that Hugh, who would have been about eighteen at the time of the rebellion, took no part in it. It may also suggest that William, as constable of Chester, was on good terms with the earl of Chester and was able to plead on his nephew's behalf. Hugh also obtained from William further property and the advowsons of Rostherne and Eccleston.

William's allegiance to the new king and his son Prince Henry, earl of Chester, are perhaps indicated by gifts from the latter to William on 26 July 1401 of two fallow deer from Delamere Forest and then the following year, to 'William Venables of Kinderton', with four does. On 11 January 1404, he had a further six does and then two bucks and two does on 26 April 1407, and another two does the following April. These are somewhat unusual gifts and are perhaps of a personal nature.

Between 1408 and 1411 William was at loggerheads with the civic leaders of the city of Chester led by a Welshman named John Ewloe. Venables and fifty of his retinue were bound over to keep the peace towards the mayor and sheriff. The elections for mayor and sheriff in 1410, was disrupted by the armed intervention of Robert Chamberlain, a former sheriff and apparently a member of Venables's affinity. He was evidently unsuccessful, since the new mayor, Roger Potter, was one of the leading litigants against the former constable. In 1411 a 'day of reconciliation' or 'love day' was celebrated between Venables and the leading townsmen, and in 1412, under the terms awarded by the arbitrators, Venables and his affinity agreed to pay reparations to various citizens.⁴⁷

In February 1408, William and many others from Cheshire and Staffordshire went 'in warlike fashion' to Rocester on the Staffordshire/Derbyshire border to aid Hugh Erdswick in his feud with John Blount, to kill him and destroy the house of his mother Lady Sancha in Derbyshire.

Warrants of arrest were issued against Venables and the others.⁴⁸ A petition from Edmund le Ferrers complained that while he was on the king's service, Hugh Erdeswyk and others of the county of Staffordshire, and Hugh Venables and others from Cheshire, came to the town of Chartley, Derbyshire, and assaulted various of his tenants, killed one of his servants, trampled his lands and committed other damage, for which he asks for redress: the matter was eventually resolved in 1411.⁴⁹

By a lady named Blanche, William had four sons: Thomas, William (of Ridley), Piers and John. The eldest son who resided at Chester and Golborne, married Margery, daughter of Sir William Stanley of Hooton in 1437. They had a son William who eventually became baron of Kinderton (see William V below).

Thomas was made the subject of the fanciful tale about the dragon at Moston which led to the granting of the crest of a dragon devouring a child in 1560 on application of Sir Thomas II (see below).

13. HUGH V VENABLES

This Hugh was born about 1385 and as mentioned before he recovered his patrimony in 1407, perhaps then having just become of age. If that is so, it seems that the grant to his uncle William was perhaps one of wardship. He married a lady named Ciceley and had sons Hugh and Richard, along with daughters Joan and Elizabeth. Ciceley remarried Sir Ralph Radcliffe of Radcliffe, Lancashire, and died on 2 March 1435, when her grandson Hugh was said to be upwards of 28 years old.

Hugh's *inquisition post mortem* recorded that he died on 26 May 1415, and that his son and heir, Hugh, had been aged 9 years in September 1414. His death at the age of thirty may have been the result of military activity.

14. HUGH VI VENABLES

This Hugh was born in 1405 and by the time he was nine years old he was already married to Petronella Dutton, daughter of Sir Piers Dutton. Being under age his estates were in the hands of the earl of Chester. His proof of age was taken at St Michael's church, Middlewich, on 1

October 1426, when several witnesses testified that he had been born on 29 September 1405 and that they remembered the time due to a variety of personal reasons.

He occurs in June 1435, entering into a bond with Nicholas Daniel of Darsbury, in favour of King Henry VI, in the sum of £380 14s 6d, that Nicholas would observe certain conditions he had agreed with the king.⁵⁰

In May 1438, he entered into a recognizance with the king in the sum of 200 marks upon condition that he shall appear in person before the king and council upon warning received, and meantime shall keep the peace toward all the people.⁵¹

Hugh often occurs in many feuds and documents of the time and particularly in relation to the abbey of Vale Royal. The abbot wrote to the king on many occasions complaining of various problems he had with local land owners, including Hugh. More than once the king wrote to him to order him to stop molesting the abbey, its people and property. About 1448, he was specifically ordered by the king to keep the peace with the abbot and yet continued 'riotes, extortions and oppressions' along with 'thorriobel and cruel murdres upon the servants tenants and mynystres of our said howes'. The justices of Cheshire were ordered to investigate the abbot's complaints and to have Hugh and his adherents imprisoned pending the case against them or their compensating the abbot. One accusation included destroying one of the abbey's mills, driving away cattle, threatening to kill the abbot, and refusing to allow the dispute to be settled by arbitration. What prompted the feuding we are not told but was no doubt associated with rights over property.⁵²

This Hugh might be the same man who served in France in the summer of 1449 in the garrison at Vernon castle under the earl of Kent, and, given that he died in September that year, whether that happened whilst in France. Earlier a Hugh Venables had served between 1434 – 36 and under the duke of York in 1441 in various places.⁵³

As a thirteen-years old boy he inherited property in Rudheath, Byley, Kinderton and Middlewich from his great grand-uncle Hugh Cotton of Rudheath (a member of the Cottons of Cotton, Holmes Chapel), who died in January 1417.⁵⁴ Cotton's death was probably whilst serving in France in Henry V's army, under the duke of Exeter.⁵⁵

He died on Sunday, 14 September 1449, without any issue a fact which prompted him being termed 'the impotent baron'. His heir was declared to be his twelve-years old nephew, Hugh son of Richard. His wife, Petronella, married again to Richard Booth but had no children by him either, so it was perhaps a problem with her fertility rather than with Hugh's.

This Richard would seem to be the same man who served in France at the garrison of Harcourt and again as a captain in 1432.⁵⁶

15. SIR HUGH VII VENABLES

Hugh was son of Richard Venables and Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Radcliff of Ordsall, Lancashire, who were married in 1437 (she next married Geoffrey Starkey of Northwich about 13 years later). Hugh was born on 2 February 1438.

He married Elizabeth, daughter of William Troutbeck of Dunham, chamberlain of Chester.

Sir Hugh espoused the cause of the Lancastrian party during the Wars of the Roses and at the Battle of Blore Heath fought on 23 September 1439 where he was severely wounded and died on Sunday 4 October. Incidentally, his brother-in-law, Sir John Troutbeck, was also slain at the battle. Sir Hugh died without children and once again the barony passed away from direct succession. The heirs were declared to be twenty years old Ralph Bostock of Bostock, son of Hugh's aunt Elizabeth, and twenty-eight years old Richard Cotton of Ridware, Staffordshire, son of Hugh's aunt Joan. This declaration sparked a dispute which was to last for half a century between members of the family and those of Cotton, Bostock and Savage (who inherited the Bostock claim) and their various allies.

16. HENRY VENABLES

Despite Bostock and Cotton being found to be the common law heirs and entitled to share the barony, a royal writ in favour of Henry Venables, Sir Hugh's great-uncle, was issued in 1460. Four years later, having no children, he settled the estates on William, son of Thomas Venables of Golborne, son of William IV Venables, the constable of Chester Castle.

Henry occurs in only one document relating to Middlewich. In July 1462 he was styled 'baron of Kinderton' when granted the temporary use of three salt houses in the town by a Richard Yardley.⁵⁷

Henry occurs many times in recognizances to keep the peace towards various individuals. His loyalty to the Yorkist king may have been suspect which may then have resulted in another writ, dated 13 June 1464, to Richard Cotton and Ralph Bostock, to have their shares of the barony, 'in consideration of the services done by them at their own cost in the northern parts in the retinue of the king and that of Richard earl of Warwick'. The result was prolonged feud between other members of the Venables family and the Cotton and Bostock families. Henry probably died about this time.

17. WILLIAM V VENABLES

This William was son of Thomas Venables of Chester and Golborne, and grandson of William IV, the constable of Chester Castle. William's mother was Margery, daughter of Sir William Stanley of Hooton. According to Ormerod he married twice. First, he married Petronella, daughter and heiress of a Sir Piers Caverswell, but for some reason the arms of that family were never quartered by later members of the Venables family. Next, he married Katherine, a daughter and one of the co-heirs of Robert Grosvenor of Hulme, Allostock, sometime after she became the widow of Richard Winnington, about 1490. Again, for some reason the family have never quartered the Grosvenor arms.

William was a prisoner in Chester Castle in the early years of King Edward IV's reign perhaps because his loyalty to the Yorkist dynasty was suspect.

William was the subject of litigation brought by Sir John Savage over rights to the barony of Kinderton. Actions began in the king's council in 1491. Sir John Savage won an action to recover the barony before the king's council in the late summer 1492, but William refused the decision and went into sanctuary in Westminster Abbey where he subsequently died.

His *inquisition post mortem*, held locally in 1494, recorded that he died in possession of the barony on 13 September 1492, and that his son and heir Thomas was aged 26 years.

18. THOMAS VENABLES

Thomas was born about 1468. He married Cicely, daughter of John Stanley of Weaver.

Thomas continued his father's litigation concerning the barony. He was summoned to appear before King Henry VII's council in 1500 and to produce title deeds. He refused stating that the matter ought to be resolved in the Cheshire courts and 'in non oder place'.⁵⁸

He was involved in numerous cases of riot throughout Cheshire during the 1490s. But his aggressive behaviour knew no bounds. Thomas was required to appear before the courts as Sir Piers Legh, Richard Delves of Doddington and a Thomas Agar of Northamptonshire, entered into a recognizance on 17 February 1495, to the king in 500 marks, for the loyalty and appearance of 'Thomas Venables, esquire'.⁵⁹ This was in connection with the treason of Sir William Stanley against the new reign. This was followed in October 1505 with Thomas Agard of Broughton, Northampton, gentleman, Thomas Venables of Kinderton, esquire, and Richard Cokkys of St. Botolph's by Billingsgate London, 'fisshemonger,' entering into two recognizances for 40 marks each and one for £40; to be paid in instalments: this was in 1512.⁶⁰

On 10 April 1498, he was given a commissioner of array for the Northwich Hundred. On 26 May that year, he had special livery of his father's estates. With his wife, he occurs in receiving a payment from Sir Thomas Lovel on 3 June 1505 for the advowson of Rostherne with some associated land in Kinderton and Rostherne. This was repeated in favour of Sir John Savage and his wife Anne (nee Bostock) and Thomas Cotton, all of which probably had something to do with a settlement of the longstanding dispute between the families.

He is listed as one of hundreds of men and women who were granted a general pardon by King Henry VIII on his accession; Thomas, described as of Kinderton, Golbourne and Middlewich and London, had his pardon dated on 19 June 1509.⁶¹

His *inquisition post mortem*, held in 1513/4 recorded that he died in possession of the barony on 15 September 1513, and that his son and heir, William, was then 22 years old. Most sources say that Thomas was slain at the battle of Flodden Field, fighting on the right wing of the vanguard under Sir Edmund Howard, the most famous confrontation between the English and Scots ever fought on British soil, but it seems he died six days later, most probably from wounds sustained during the battle.

19. SIR WILLIAM VI VENABLES

William was born about 1490. He first married Elinor Cotton and by that marriage healed the rift between their respective families over the inheritance of the barony. His second marriage was to Katherine Grosvenor.

His succession to the barony was to cost him £92 17s, but half of this was remitted in November 1514.

He may be the William Venables who served in France as a captain of a contingent of men in June 1524.⁶²

In 1526 he was sheriff of Cheshire. In that same year he and his wife commissioned a window in the Venables chapel of Christleton church (then at the east end of the south aisle) to be made and adorned with two shields of arms in which the Venables arms were impaled with those to represent the arms of his two wives. It is noteworthy that the usual Grosvenor arms were not displayed in the window, but those of the Eatons through whose heiress the Grosvenors at acquired property.⁶³

William occurs many times in official documentation and was one of a number of Cheshire men who were commissioned to make enquiries within the county. He was made a knight on 1 June 1533 at the coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn and occurs as such in a commission of the peace in May 1540.⁶⁴

William held a lease of the tithes of the dissolved abbey of Vale Royal for 60 years from July 1538 which was cancelled a few years later in favour of Robert Mainwaring.⁶⁵

Reports of offences committed in Cheshire were reported on in a letter, dated April 1535, to Thomas Cromwell in which it was said of William, 'that he lived in adultery with the wife of Sir James Stanley, and yet he keeps a bastard daughter of Sir George Holforth, by whom he has one or two children. Thus, he and his wife are in such strife that their riches are much decayed'.⁶⁶

During William's time he was in dispute with the prior of Launde over the advowson of Rostherne church. Launde had installed a William Hardwyche into the living and on 5 May

1529, William, along with Ralph Sneyd, whom he had presented to the rectory, and Richard Legh, tricked Hardwyche into leaving the church and when he did so barred the door against him. Sneyd then conducted the mass and ordered that no vicar could say mass in the church who was not his servant.⁶⁷

His inquisition post mortem was held in 1540 which stated he had died on 23 July when his son Thomas was aged 27 years.

20. SIR THOMAS II VENABLES

Sir Thomas Venables was born in 1513, the year his grandfather, Thomas Venables of Golborne David, died fighting the Scots at the battle of Flodden. This young Thomas was son of Sir William Venables, the first baron Kinderton of the Golborne branch, and Eleanor Cotton. When about six years of age he was contracted to marry Maude Needham, daughter to Sir Robert Needham of Shenton, Shropshire. Like his father, Thomas had more than one mistress. One of these was Anne, daughter of Ralph Bostock of Norcroft, by whom he had many bastard children.

During the Pilgrimage of Grace, Thomas led a small contingent of nine men under the command of the earl of Deby.

As heir to his mother he brought together his family's estate and a half share of the senior line of the Venables family – the barony itself. The other share of the barony was still in the hands of the Savage family as heirs of the Bostocks of Bostock, eventually though this Thomas came to an agreement with Sir John Savage and obtained his share thus uniting the baronial lands.

On his father's death in July 1540 Thomas inherited lands valued at £166 12s 8d a year. He also quickly took his place in local administration: he was nominated as sheriff of Cheshire in 1542, along with Sir Piers Dutton and Edward Fitton, but not selected as Dutton obtained the privilege. He became a Justice of the Peace the following year and then a member of the Quarter Sessions bench. In 1545, he was successful in becoming sheriff and again in 1556.⁶⁸ He occurs as a Commissioner of Benevolences 1544; Commissioner of musters in 1545 and 1548; was appointed to collect relief (taxes) in 1550; and to take inventories of the goods of churches and fraternities in 1553. From 1540 to 1572 he was the chamberlain of Middlewich.

In a military capacity he first served when he led a small contingent of nine men under the earl of Derby in Lancashire during the Pilgrimage of Grace. In 1544, he took part in the Earl of Hertford's invasion of Scotland and was knighted at Leith, on 11 May following the burning of Edinburgh and Leith, along with a number of other Cheshire gentlemen.⁶⁹

The following April, the Earl of Shrewsbury appointed him to lead 3,000 men against the Scots, but he excused himself and wrote to Shrewsbury from Northwich on 26 April 1545:

*that having appointed him, amongst other gentlemen, to lead 3,000 men harnessed for war into the North parts, signifies that the King has given him the office of sheriff of this shire during pleasure, and he is also commissioned by the Commissioners in the marches of Wales to cause the country to make bulwarks and beacons all along the sea coasts, for defence, "being all naked and without any manner artillery or ordnance for that purpose," and to warn the country to repulse any landing of the enemy; and begs that he and his company may tarry at home for these and other the King's affairs, with which, as common officer of this shire, he is charged, as bearer can declare.*⁷⁰

However, he did return to Scotland in 1549 when he, with Sir John Savage, was involved in another invasion and part of the English garrisoning policy the outcome of which was not a success. On 27 February that year he had been responsible with Sir William Brereton and William Moreton for raising troops from the Northwich Hundred.⁷¹

Thomas attended the funeral of king Henry VIII as a gentleman of the chamber to Prince Edward and by the time of Elizabeth's accession he had already served three rulers as a soldier and the first household subsidy of the new reign, in 1558, assessed him among the 'old pensioners' as receiving £66 8s.4d. His standing at court and in the county perhaps explains his election to the Parliament of March 1553: he sat with Sir Thomas Holcroft, with whom he had been knighted in 1544. In the bishops' letters of 1564 he was described as 'unfavourable to sound religion', which suggests he had Catholic leanings. Evidence of his participation in at least one local dispute survives: a Chancery writ was issued early in 1575 against him and his son Thomas on behalf of a creditor, William Bromfield, another gentleman pensioner.⁷²

He does not seem to have sat in the Commons under Queen Mary but Sir Thomas Venables sat in Elizabeth's second Parliament and despite an unfavourable report on his religious outlook in 1564 he was retained as a justice until his death on 19 July 1580.

Being a Catholic sympathiser, he was listed as one of those justices in Cheshire unfavourable to Elizabethan religious policies.

As soon as the Parliament meeting of March 1553 was over, Thomas acquired 11 salthouses in Middlewich and Nantwich, all former monastic properties, for which he paid £236. It is, of course, with regards the administration of the town of Middlewich that there is evidence of Thomas' activities. In March 1555, he obtained Letters Patent of a renewal for 21 years of his father's lease of the town of Middlewich and the office of chamberlain there; he had already held the positions since his father's death in 1540 and paid the Crown £21 1s for the privilege. It seems also that, contrary to custom, he acted as steward of the courts in Middlewich, so in 1568 a George Harvey was appointed chamberlain and he subsequently granted the same to William Brereton eight years later. In 1582, on payment of £300 Brereton granted the same to Sir Thomas' son, Thomas Venables. During this time until his death Sir Thomas remained as steward and his name appears in a number of documents. On 21 July 1591, Thomas junior was required to surrender his offices and the rights to hold a market in Middlewich in order that Queen Elizabeth could grant Letters Patent to Thomas Egerton, his wife Elizabeth and her sister Mary Venables (Thomas' daughters) of the chamberlainship and the market.

In 1560, Sir Thomas was concerned over the legitimacy of his coat of arms and petitioned for a formal grant.

According to the inquisition into his possessions he held; the barony of Kinderton along with the hamlets of Curtishulme, Briaryhulme and Brotherhulme along with the advowson of Rostherne church. In addition he had the manor and advowson of Eccleston with the hamlet of Belgrave; the manors of Wincham, Witton, Arclid, Hunsterston, Bridgemere, Bradwall, Mersheton, Moston, Cotton Golborne David, and half of the manor of Sproston, As baron of Kinderton he had the homage, services and rents of William Brereton for Brereton, the other half of Sproston, part of Somerford, and lands in Little Stanthorne and Old Wharton; John Davenport for his manor of Davenport, Marton and Withington; Ralph Egerton for Newbold and Astbury; Edward Bellot for Moreton Acumlow; John Mere for Mere and half of Bollington; John Legh of Booths for the other part of Bollington; Sir John Holcroft for Hartford and Horton; Richard Lea for Lea near Wybunbury; Ralph Done for Utkinton and Tarporley; John Talbot for lands in Pickmere; Thomas Wilbraham for lands in Castle, Twembrooks, Radnor Wincham and Knightshulme; Peter Warburton of Arley for lands in Castle and Twembrooks; the Paver sisters for lands in Twembrooks; Richard Brereton for

three parts of Rostherne manor and John Legh of Booths for the fourth part; Sir John Savage and Richard Brereton for the manors of Wettenhall and Alraham; Richard Hatton for Hope in Bradwall; Henry Delves for the manors of Doddington and Blakenhall; and Thomas Pershall for Checkley, Staffordshire; William Leversage for Wheelock and the heirs of William Launcelyn for Little Meols, Wirral. He also had lands in Elton, Middlewich, Milton, Hanley, Tetton, Wharton and Christleton, along with ten salt houses in Middlewich and three in Northwich with half of the profits of the leadsmithy there. Total value of the estate was given as £118 12s 3d. and, by virtue of a settlement dated 1563, he had settled everything on his eldest son Thomas, then aged 21 years. Perhaps he feared his estate would be seized given his religious tendencies.

To say the least Sir Thomas Venables was very important, wealthy and of much prestige. Other equally important individuals, such as Sir John Savage, Sir John Holcroft and William Brereton, were beholden to him for some of their property interests.

By Maude Needham Thomas had three sons: Thomas born about 1542, Anthony and James. He also had three daughters: Katherine who became wife of Piers Legh of Lyme; Eleanor who married Henry Mainwaring of Kermincham in 1553; and Agnes, wife of Robert Collier of Staffordshire.

Sir Thomas died on 19 July 1580.

21. THOMAS III VENABLES

Thomas was born in 1542/3. His first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Brereton of Brereton; a marriage not only of two neighbouring families, but of two of the most important and influential families in the county. Thomas was betrothed to Elizabeth when aged ten years and eventually the couple had a son, Thomas (who pre-deceased his father) and two daughters, Elizabeth and Mary. Elizabeth and her children are depicted in a brass dated 18 June 1591 which is fitted to the north-east wall of the church. The inscription reads:

'Here lyeth buried under this gravestone Elizabeth Venables, the wife of Thomas Venables Esquire Baron of Kynderton ye eldest daughter of Sir William Brereton of Brereton, Knight.

Who dyed the ninth day of June 1591'



Following Elizabeth's death in July 1591, Thomas married Anne, daughter of Sir Cotton Gargrave of Nostell Priory, Yorkshire, a member of Parliament, and had three more children: Peter, the eventual heir to the barony, Charles who died in infancy in January 1603, and Mary, who married Humphrey Mackworth (see below).

His marriage to Anne was an important match as Sir Cotton Gargrave, was son of Sir Thomas Gargrave, a wealthy Yorkshireman, who was elected speaker in Queen Elizabeth's first parliament in 1559 and widely known for his address to Parliament of 25 January 1559 in which he urged Queen Elizabeth I to take a husband and marry. He also served as High Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1565 and 1569, and as vice president of the Council of the North. He purchased Nostell Priory in for £3560. Sir Cotton married twice and had sons Thomas Gargrave; Sir Richard Gargrave, MP; Anne Venables; Mary, a maid of honour to Quenn Anne of Denmark; Elizabeth Fenwick; Frances Tempest, and Priscilla Holt.⁷³ Sir Cotton died on 16 June 1588, aged 40.

Thomas was particularly interested in genealogy and obtained the services of Sampson Erwicke, an antiquary of Sandon, Staffordshire, to draw up his family tree. As a reward for his 'great paynes trouble and charges', , in April 1597, Thomas granted him permission to hunt in the deer park and to take a buck in summer and a doe in winter each year for the rest of his life.⁷⁴ The seal to the document showed the crest of a wyvern devouring a child, but without the arrow of the weir.

Thomas Venables was one of those in Cheshire 'whose houses are greatly infected with popery'.⁷⁵ In December 1601, he secured a Parliamentary Bill for an Act for the assuring of the patronage of the vicarage of Rostherne and a room for a scholar in the Cathedral Church of Christ, Oxford, for himself and his heirs 'for ever'.⁷⁶

Thomas Venables died on 8 December 1605. His funeral possession from Kinderton to Middlewich church was an elaborate affair. The procession was led by the conductors of the funeral in black coats and carrying black staves. They were followed by the poor people, in twos, dressed in gowns and carrying pencils. Two more conductors dressed in black carrying staves. Next came local yeoman in coats and in the midst of them Sir Thomas' standard carried by Thurstan Colier, his motto carried by Richard Colier family and then his pennon carried by Peter Mainwaring.⁷⁷ Then followed a Mr Coney, on his own, William Venables, Geoffrey Bromfield, Robert Venables, Hugh Venables, in twos, John Venables on his own, John Gargrave, Robert Gargrave, John Legh of Booths, Geoffrey Shakerley, Richard Egerton of Ridley, Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey. Next, came the knights: Sir Richard Ashton from Lancashire, Sir Thomas Smith, Sir Thomas Holcroft and Sir William Brereton. They were followed by Robert Mainwaring holding the deceased's crest, Roger Mainwaring with the shield and Hugh Mainwaring with the heraldic tabard. The preacher was accompanied by a

herald, presumably Randle Holmes, Then came the coffin and at the corners the last four marriages of Cotton, Needham, Brereton, and Gargrave were displayed on banners born by Mr Daniell, Richard Ashton, Edward Leigh and Peter Leigh, Immediately behind the coffin walked Sir Peter Leigh as the representative of the chief mourner, the two years old Peter Venables, and four assistants, Richard Gargrave, Robert Needham, Mr Marbury and Mr Mainwaring of Kermincham.⁷⁸

Following her husband's death Anne remarried Sir Edward Bushell of Worcestershire.⁷⁹ Bushell was a servant to Ferdinando Stanley, Earl of Derby, in 1591, a gentleman usher to Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, and had been knighted at Whitehall on 19 December 1604, and became an equerry to James I and Charles I. She bore him two sons, John and Thomas. Anne, continued to live at Kinderton, presumably with her new husband, caring for her young son. She died at Northwich on 11 September 1634 and her funeral procession was no less elaborate than her late husband's. The cortege left her home at 'the Lodge' and made its way to St. Michael's church. At the head walked William, Herbert, Rafe Holbrooke, John Culcheth, Gawen Duncalf. They were followed by Mr Oldfield carrying the heraldic pennon, and he was followed by Randle Vernon and Rafe Carter. Just in front of the coffin were the preacher, Mr. Shenton, and the family doctor, Dr Bentley from Northwich. Mrs Venables carried two children, Mary and Sara Venables, immediately followed by Jane Kettill, the maid. The baron, Peter Venables came next followed by John and Thomas Bushell, and then grandsons Thomas and Gilbert Venables. Next, Messrs Waterhouse and Fenwick followed by friends and relations who were not dressed in black.⁸⁰

22. PETER VENABLES

Born 7 December 1603. He was educated at Lincoln's Inn. He married twice. His first wife was Mary, daughter of Sir Richard Wilbraham of Woodhey. His second wife was Frances, sister of Sir Robert Cholmondeley, later to be Lord Cholmondeley and Earl of Leinster, whom he married in 1628.

When he inherited the barony it is estimated that his income from his estates and salt workings were worth £3,450 a year.

He was made Sheriff of Cheshire in 1633-34 and became a Justice of the Peace by 1634. He was appointed as an MP for Cheshire, along with Sir William Brereton, in November 1640,⁸¹ and in that year had a commission to collect a subsidy for the relief of the army in 'northern parts'. The following year he, and Sir William Brereton, had a commission to disarm recusants in the county,⁸² to collect subsidies in the county, and, in 1642, a commission of array. Under the new monarchy, he again had commissions to raise money in 1660, 1663 and 1664.

Peter Venables is named in a case of *Mackworth v. Owen* that came before the Court of Chivalry in 1639. Humphrey Mackworth complained that Thomas Owen had called him a false and 'base fellow' at a public assembly in Shrewsbury and maintained that Richard Owen had said that he was a liar, and that he and the churchwarden Thomas Betton were 'ten times better' than Mackworth. He added that Betton had called him a knave and wished him 'hanged when he came first to Shrewsbury'. Betton also endeavoured to hire shoemakers to perform a shaming ritual when Mackworth passed through the Shrewsbury streets towards his house with his new bride and brother-in-law, Peter Venables, the Baron of Kinderton, together with a retinue of gentry. Mackworth explained that this 'kind of ringing and beating with hammers, is not used, but by way of disgrace, scorne and obloquy, when notorious and common offenders or most infamous persons passe by, and soe commonly knowne and observed in that place.' Interestingly whilst the Venables family seem to have been catholic and Royalists, the Mackworths were Puritan and Parliamentary supporters.⁸³

Peter was elected to Parliament in the place of Sir Thomas Aston, a strong monarchist and episcopalian who had previously represented Cheshire. As a member of the Long Parliament, on 3 May 1641, he took the Oath of and voted against the attainder of Strafford.⁸⁴ On 17 January 1642, £300 was paid to Peter and Sir Wm. Brereton to be disposed of for the relief of the distressed Irish.⁸⁵ In July 1642, he was ordered to appear before Parliament to be examined concerning the printing of a paper, *The Resolution of Hereford*. This paper was a manifesto in support of the Protestant religion, the king's just power, the laws of the land and the liberty of all subjects, and it would seem that Peter had had some hand in its publication and was therefore required to satisfy the House of Commons as to his activities in the matter.⁸⁶ Peter's servant Humphrey Page was arrested and brought to Westminster to give evidence. That September, Peter's membership of the House of Commons was suspended due to his frequent absence until such time as the cause of it had been determined.⁸⁷ In January

1643 he made a loan of £500 as required by Parliament for the Supply of the Necessities of this Kingdom, and of Ireland.⁸⁸

His commitment to Parliament was perhaps doubted. His kinsman Sir William Brereton described him as ‘very virulent in his courses against the Parliament ... an enemy to reformation and a tyrant among his tenants’. In January 1644, he was officially discharged from Parliament ‘for deserting the service of the House and being in the King’s quarters and adhering to that party’.⁸⁹ A writ was issued by the Speaker of the House of Commons in February 1646 for an election to take place to replace Peter Venables as an MP.⁹⁰

He joined the King at Oxford during the Civil War, though, unlike his son, he was not in arms. He is listed as attending the Oxford Parliament of January to April 1645, though for some reason he was one of those who attended late.⁹¹

Having been a royalist during the Civil War he was assessed in July 1644 as having to pay a fine of £2000 for his delinquency and to compound for his estates which were under sequestration. Peter, his wife Frances, and their son Thomas travelled to London in May 1646 to plead for their estates. As a safeguard they had sent a Mr. Fenwick (a relation of Thomas’ wife) ahead in April to plead for protection for their journey through Parliamentary lines. Brereton opposed any composition for Peter Venables on the grounds that he had taken ‘very virulent courses against the Parl’, and because he was likely to be vindictive towards any of his tenants who supported Parliament.⁹² On appearing before the Committee for Compounding, Peter admitted he had been a supporter of the late king; of being a member of the Long Parliament; and of having sat on the Oxford Assembly (1644-5). He sought mitigation through not having served in arms against Parliament and pleaded that his son, who had done so, had ceased a year before. In January 1647, a warrant was issued for Peter’s arrest as he had not paid his initial fine and Frances requested that she and her friends be allowed to remain on the estate as tenants paying the going rate for rent. In June 1648, the Committee finally announced that Peter’s fine was set at two-thirds the value of his estate which came to £9,800 and for his son at one sixth (£2,500). Peter then begged for time to pay a quarter of the fine to avoid sequestration and on the basis that Parliament had declared that fines of two-thirds could be reduced by half if at least a quarter was paid. This was agreed to. Peter made a further appeal to have the whole fine cancelled and in June 1648 the total fine for both father and son was set at £6,150, to be paid at the rate of £330 a month, though initially they had been ordered to pay within three months.⁹³ He promptly paid a portion and

gave assurances on payment of the rest, however, the County Committee continued to prevent him access to his estates. In May 1651 Peter appealed the local decision and the fact that, due to some supposed crime, his estates were to be sold despite him having now paid the fine in full. The Committee in London then ordered the local committee to simply place Peter's estates under security.⁹⁴

For some reason or another, in July 1647, Mrs Venables was granted a pass to visit Caen, Normandy, with two servants – the question which cannot be answered is why at this difficult time did she wish to make such a journey?⁹⁵

About this time, early 1648, the vicarage at Rostherne became vacant owing to the death of William Shenton. Many parishioners wanted Adam Martindale to take the post and approached Peter Venables, as patron, to approve him. Venables in reply said that when he had the power to do so, he would do what was right. In his diary Martindale records that those who approached Peter were wary of his temper.⁹⁶ The political situation favoured Martindale who on 26 March 1650 was appointed to the vicarage.

With the Restoration, Peter remained loyal to the Crown and was listed as one of the Cheshire Royalists in 1658, and, with the Restoration of the Monarchy, was again returned as a member of Parliament for the county in 1661. He was still serving as a 'Knight of the Shire' when he died in 1669 and is noted as sitting on a number of Parliamentary committees during the 1660s.⁹⁷

He is named in the Poll Tax returns of 1660 and was one of the Parliamentary commissioners for the Act which introduced the tax. In the lists Peter was said to have an income sufficient for him to be taxed at £30 a year. Also listed are his sons Peter and William, and daughter Ann, who, as single people and aged over sixteen years, were taxed at the usual 1s. Peter had thirty servants who were each taxed at 1s. Interestingly, one of the servants is named Thomas Venables: according to Ormerod he had a son named Thomas (see below) who is not actually listed as such. The Hearth Tax, four years later, shows that at Kinderton Hall there were 48 taxable fire-places which suggests a substantial house. Arguably it was one of the largest houses in central Cheshire as Vale Royal was assessed with 28 hearths in 1664, whilst Brereton Hall, for which there is no assessment is given for 1664, had 38 in 1668. In this latter year the assessment for Kinderton Hall with its lodge and washhouse was somewhat down at 32 hearths and in 1674 it was 41 hearths.⁹⁸

Peter Venables, baron of Kinderton, died on 13 November 1669 and was buried in the family chapel in the north aisle of Middlewich parish church six days later.

Peter's son by his first wife, Thomas, married Grace Fenwick, daughter of Sir John Fenwick of Wallington, Northumberland. Fenwick was a rich and powerful individual who served as an MP from 1645 until his death in 1676. Unfortunately, Thomas pre-deceased his father and so the barony passed to Peter's grand-son and namesake. By his second wife, Peter Venables had five sons: Gilbert, who was baptised at Macclesfield on 11 March 1630 and died on 30 October 1654 and was buried at Middlewich on 1 November; Robert, born in 1631, who married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Stanley of Alderley; Peter, 1632-63; William (see below); and Frances who was christened in 1637 and died young. His daughter Ann married a Francis Fowler, alias Levenson, of Shropshire. The service, and the couple's confirmation beforehand, was conducted by the bishop of Chester.⁹⁹ Ormerod states that she died at Kinderton on 17 August 1677 aged 25 years but there is no record in the Middlewich registers of her burial.

About this time there is a reference to a John Venables, esquire, baron of Kinderton. A John Weld wrote to a Robert Reade concerning Venables who 'from late threatening speeches, has cause to suspect that some malicious complaint may be preferred to the King against him'. The writer prays to have notice of any petition presented against Venables that month.¹⁰⁰ But who was he? Does the writer really mean Peter?

As regards Peter's younger son, William, we have some information. In 1657, he brought a suit against a John Draper in Middlesex regarding money matters. Then, in December, 1683 he is recorded the chain of title for Sutton Farm in Middlesex. Sutton Mill was conveyed by Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey, esquire and his son Richard to William Moreton of Moreton. It passed through several hands until it was conveyed to William Venables of, esquire in September 1680. William Simcocke of Congleton, skinner gave a bond to William Venables of Middlewich, esquire in March, 1681. William then gave a mortgage to Dame Rebeccah Lytton of Saint Andrews Holborn, Middlesex in 1683.

To the east of Enfield, Middlesex is Hadley and South Mimms. In Hadley at St. Mary Church is the burial monument of William Venables, Esquire who was buried in 1687. Also there are monuments to Sir Roger Wilbraham, knight and Elizabeth the daughter of Thomas Wibraham, Esquire of Cheshire.

In 1687, a suit was filed by William Venables, youngest son of Peter Venables, Esquire, late Baron of Kinderton, deceased against Anthony Headley, and Thomas Headley regarding the Manor of Long Witton (Northumberland), sold by William Fenwick to Peter Venables, Esquire. The suit referenced The Carne House, which was demolished, iron mining, and Sir William Fenwick's manor of Rothley. Also noted was the Headley's house and farm in Ewsley called Toft Lawes, and the rights of common pasture and customs of the manor. (27 Charles II)

William Venables' will dated 22 April 1687 appoints his niece Mary to be his sole heir and executor. It mentions that he had various tenements, including salt houses in Sutton, Parme, Kinderton, Midlewich and Clive, some of which had been occupied by his 'late' brother, Robert Venables. He also had property in Northumberland which he purchased from a Thomas Headley. His bequest to Mary of his estate, together with his gold, silver, plate, jewels and rings was subject to her marrying a person suitable in quality and state', otherwise the will would be void.¹⁰¹ William was buried at St Mary the Virgin church, Monken Hadley, Middlesex, on 23 October, 1687.

23. PETER VENABLES

This Peter was the last of the line to be baron of Kinderton. He was christened at Macclesfield parish church on 1 July 1632 as 'Peeter Venables'. The choice of Macclesfield rather than Middlewich is curious. What was the family's connection with Macclesfield, especially when one considers that his uncle and two daughters were both christened there?

Like his grand-father, this Peter also had a number of royal commissions to raise finances in the county in 1672, 1677 and 1679.¹⁰²

On 17 June 1671, he married Katherine Shirley, daughter of Sir Robert Shirley of Stanton Harold, Leicestershire. By her he had two daughters: Catherine, born on 23 October 1672 and baptised at Macclesfield on 30 October, and Anne born on 7 May 1674 and baptised at Macclesfield on 26 May. The Shirleys were an eminent family of baronets, her father being the 4th baronet, and Catherine's brother Robert was elevated to the peerage as Earl Ferrers in 1711.

She was also a grand daughter of Robert Devereaux, earl of Essex, and a favourite of Queen Elizabeth.

She occurs in November 1688 when she obtained a pass to travel, with her servants and attendants, down to Wightam, near Oxford, and return.¹⁰³

Katherine Venables died, aged 64, on 6 July 1717. She left a will dated 7 October 1715 which was proved in December 1719.¹⁰⁴ In it she asks to be buried between her late husband and her daughter Catherine in the north aisle of Middlewich church, 'belonging to the Family of Kinderton', and that no more than £50 was to be spent on funeral costs. An interesting feature of her will is the



reference to family portraits. To 'her' Lord Abingdon, her son-in-law, she gave his own portrait and that of his 'late ladys' (her daughter Ann), a picture of the late Sir Robert Shirley (her father) and his lady, and Mr Shirley and his lady. A picture of the late countess of Huntingdon she gave to Lady Lainsborough. She also ordered mourning rings for his lordship worth £10 and for Lady Lainsborough that they might remember her. To her niece, Lady Catherine Shirley, she gave whichever bed she might like with its furniture and everything else in the room where the bed was to be found, along with a 'japan' cabinet, her 'Cheney', linenware, a locket and five diamonds left to her by her own daughter, books, seals and rings, and ordered another mourning ring worth £10. More pictures are mentioned this time those of Catherine's mother and father and of her aunt Vernon. She then absolved the Reverend Mr Hawes of St James, Westminster of the money he owed her. Servants Catherine Lowndes and Rebecca Kay each received £20 and all her clothes. Other servants also benefitted: those who had worked for her during the past six months were to have a year's wages over and above what was due to them, and those who had worked for less time, three months wages. Poor widows already in receipt of her charity were to get a further 20s. These women were then to have mourning clothes and rings purchased for them with a total of £40 given to the executors who were named as Charles Cholmondeley of Vale Royal and William Watts of Newton, Middlewich. All her belongings and the remainder of the estate was then to be sold and the money raised paid out to poor householders of Kinderton and Sproston 'as my Executors shall think the greatest objects of my Charity'.

The people mentioned in Catherine's will indicate the family's social standing. Lord Abingdon (1673–1743), was styled Hon. Montagu Bertie until 1682 and Lord Norreys from 1682 to 1699: he assumed the name Venables shortly after his marriage to Ann (*see below*). The 'aunt Vernon' referred to will be Catherine's sister Dorothy's mother-in-law, Muriel, wife of Sir Henry Vernon of Sudbury. 'Lady Lainsborough' will be Frances, Dowager Viscountess Lanesborough, the widow of Viscount George, an Irish politician: in her widowhood she became a wealthy woman owning property in Surrey and elsewhere but how she comes to be named in Catherine's will is not known – perhaps just friends.

Peter died on 18 January 1680 and was buried at Middlewich two days later. He left a will dated 29 January 1675 which was proved on 20 February 1680.¹⁰⁵ He asked to be buried in 'my buryal place in my Chappell in Midlewich Church' and that his funeral charges be no more than £100. He appointed his wife, Katherine, Sir Jeffery Shakerley of Hulme and Ralph Wilbraham of Woodhey as his executors. His wife Katherine was given the right to reside in 'the Lodge' during her widowhood and to have his coaches and coach horses.

When making his will Peter had just two daughters, then aged seven and five years, but the wording anticipates other children and hopes for at least one son. In the event that he had no sons, then the will specified that his daughter Katherine and one of her children was to inherit the whole estate, with males inheriting before females and in order of age. Should she not have children, then one of the sons or daughters of Ann were to likewise inherit. Should she also fail to have children then the estate was likewise to go to the offspring of first, his sister Mary, and then the children of his 'halfe blood' uncle Robert Venables of Golborne, then his other 'halfe blood' uncle, William, and then the family of his 'halfe blood' aunt, Anne Leveson. It seems he suspected that his uncle Robert might frustrate his wishes in which case, were he to do so, his entitlements would become void.

In accordance with the settlement made when he married sums of money were allocated to his children. Here, he refers to the possibility of having sons. Any younger sons and daughters were each to have £100 each. Any daughters surviving him were to have £40 a year for maintenance until they reached the age of eight and then £80 a year for the next ten years and a further £4000 as a 'child's portion' on their eighteenth birthday. His sisters of 'halfe blood', Felicia and Ann Sneyd (his mother had remarried Richard Sneyd of Keele, Staffordshire), were to each have £100 on attaining their eighteenth birthdays.

Peter was particularly concerned that the name of Venables continued, so he ordered that should any of his daughters, or daughters of his relations inherit, then their respective husbands were to take the name of Venables and bear his coat of arms 'in chiefe' or otherwise forfeit their estate in favour of the next in line. By virtue of a codicil, he gave his cousin Richard Legh of Lyme £20; his steward Ralph Lowndes £20 a year for life; cousin Humphrey Briggs, £5 to buy a ring; Ralph Pownall, his servant at Witton salt works, £50; and his 'immediate' servant Thomas Booth £10 a year for life.

A very lengthy inventory once accompanied the will dated 29 January 1680 which is now lost.¹⁰⁶ It totalled £2413 and referred to the following buildings and rooms. Inside the hall: the hall, the little parlour at the side of the hall, buttery, small beer cellar, ale cellar, wine cellar, kitchen, larder, pantry, brew house, booting house, two dairies, Mr. Legh's chamber, Ladies lodging chamber, little grey chamber, library, dining room, pink chamber, brown chamber, little green chamber, chamber over the little parlour, new nursey, Madam Mary Venables' chamber, old nursery, Mrs Eleanor Hulton's chamber, maid's chamber, stair head chamber over the old nursery, turret chamber, furthest garret over the dining room, middlemost garret, nearest garret, chamber over the evidence room, wash house, cheese chamber, first chamber over the washhouse, and garret over the washhouse. Which suggests at least three-dozen rooms within the hall. The outbuildings included the lodge, garden house, stables and coach house.

As mentioned above Peter left two daughters when he died 19 January 1679/80. Katherine became the wife of Robert, earl Ferrers, who died shortly after her father without children. Anne, became the wife of Montague, lord Norreys, earl of Abingdon, on 22 September 1687, when aged thirteen. She became a particularly favoured lady of the bedchamber to Queen Anne from 12 May 1702 to November 1705, when she resigned, and again from January 1712 until Queen Anne's death in 1714. Anne died on 28 April 1715 and was buried at Rycote, Great Haseley, Oxfordshire.

24. MONTAGUE VENABLES-BERTIE

Montagu Bertie, lord Norreys, 2nd Earl of Abingdon (1673-1743) inherited the earldom of Abingdon together with Rycote upon the death of his father James Bertie, 1st Earl of Abingdon in 1699. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and commissioned captain, at the age of

12, of a troop of horse raised by the University of Oxford during the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion in 1685.

On 10 November 1687, the king allowed Montague Bertie, Lord Norris, son and heir apparent of the Earl of Abingdon, to assume the name and arms of Venables and to have the said arms registered in the College of Arms. This was done in accordance with Peter Venables' will. The arms granted later that month were Quarterly of Six, in the first, VENABLES and BERTIE (*Argent, three battering rams fesswise in pale proper, headed and banded azure*) quarterly; in the second, WILLOUGHBY; in the third, BEAK ; in the fourth, UFFORD ; in in the fifth, NORREYS ; and in the Sixth and last, LEE.¹⁰⁷ He was also allowed by licence to take the surname of Venables. Curiously a note adds that this was cancelled and 'entered into the promiscuous book'.¹⁰⁸

Montagu Venables-Bertie became MP for Berkshire in 1689 and then for Oxfordshire in 1690, 1695 and 1698-1699. He was also High Steward of Oxford, 1699-1743: Constable of the Tower, 1702-1705; Chief Justice in Eyre south of the Trent, 1702-1706 and again 1711-1715; Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, 1702-1705, 1712-1715; a Privy Councillor to Queen Anne, 1702, and to George I in 1714. On 8 October 1705, the Earl was removed from all of his offices by Queen Anne, but became one of the Lord Justices, Regents of the Realm, in the intervening period between the death of Queen Anne and the arrival in Great Britain of George I in August 1714. In 1715, he was a Jacobite sympathiser and during the rebellion King George ordered the earl of Abingdon to raise the militia of Oxfordshire, but that he refused. He died on 16 June 1743 and was buried in Rycote Chapel.

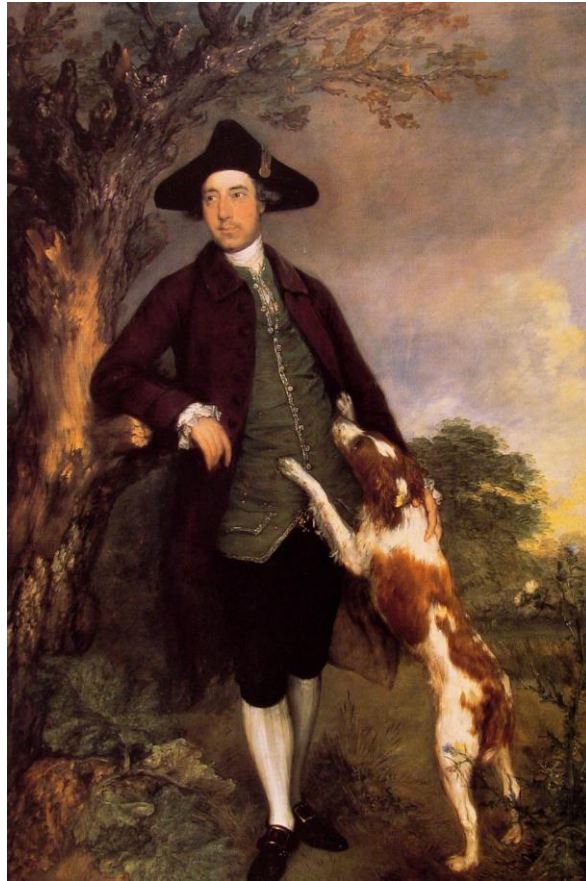
25. GEORGE VENABLES-VERNON

As Anne and Montague had no children, the barony continued through Mary, Peter Venables' only surviving sibling, the wife of a Thomas Pigot of Chetwynd, Shropshire, whose only child, Ann, married Henry Vernon of Sudbury. When she died in April 1714, she left a son George who was born on 9 February 1710. In accordance with Peter Venables' will, George took the name of Venables-Vernon, assumed the Venables arms.

He sat as a Member of Parliament for Lichfield from 1731 to 1747 and for Derby from 1754 to 1762. and, in that later year, was created Lord Vernon, baron of Kinderton, by King George III and summoned to the House of Lords.

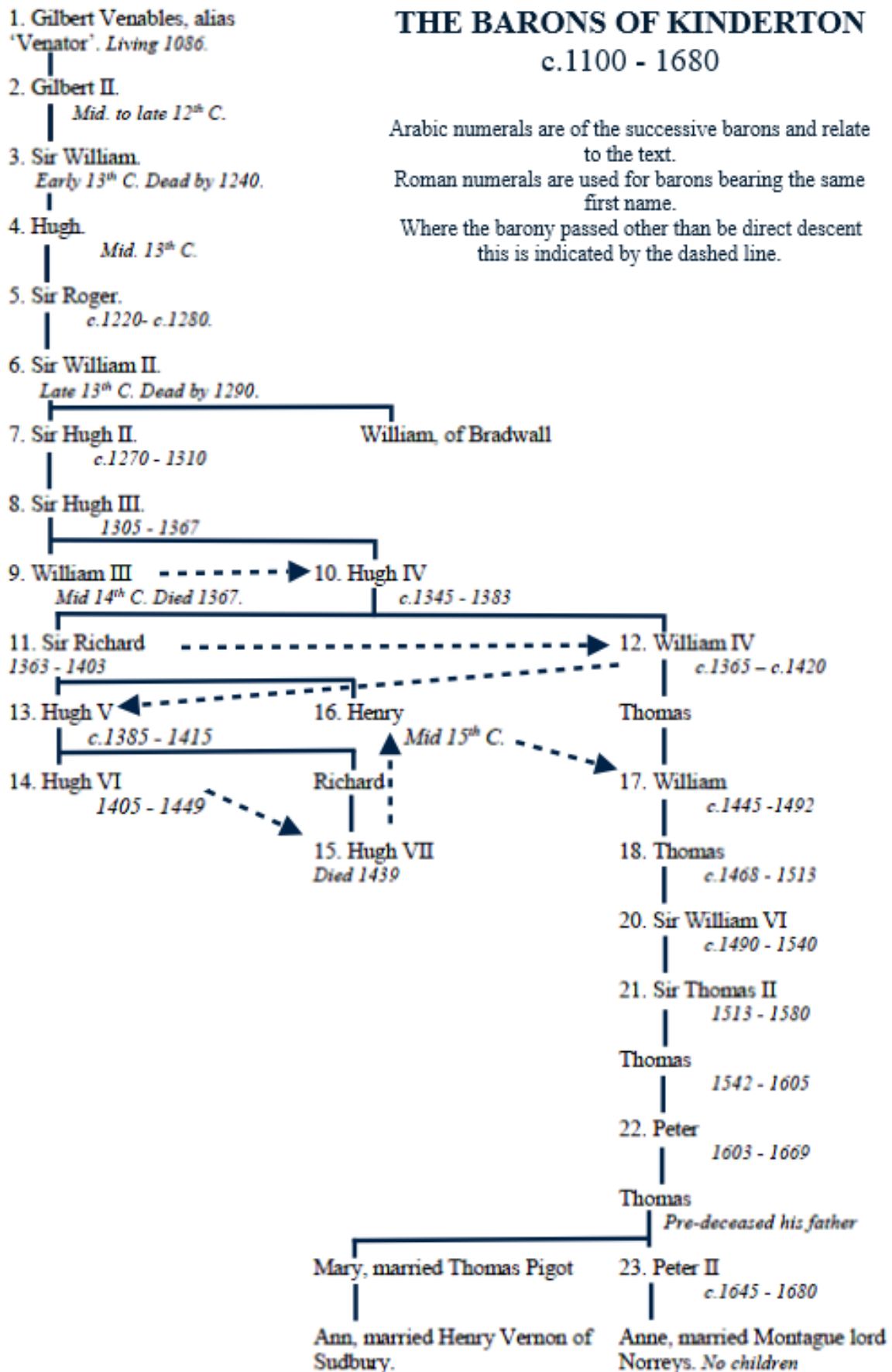
*"George the Third, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth; To Our Right Trusty and Well-beloved George Venables Vernon of Kinderton Chevalier, Greeting. Whereas Our Parliament, for arduous and urgent Affairs, concerning Us, the State and Defence of Our Kingdom of Great Britain and the Church, is now met at Our City of Westminster; We, strictly enjoining, command you, under the Faith and Allegiance by which you are bound to Us, that, considering the Difficulty of the said Affairs, and Dangers impending, all Excuses being laid aside, you be personally present, at Our aforesaid Parliament, with Us, and with the Prelates, Nobles, and Peers, of Our said Kingdom, to treat of the aforesaid Affairs, and to give your Advice. And this you may in no wise omit, as you tender Us and Our Honour, and the Safety and Defence of the said Kingdom, and the Dispatch of the said Affairs. Witness Ourselves, at Westminster, the Twelfth Day of May, in the Second Year of Our Reign."*¹⁰⁹

Lord Vernon was married three times and several of his descendants gained distinction. He married firstly the Hon. Mary, daughter of Thomas Howard, 6th Baron Howard of Effingham, in 1733. After her death in 1740 he married secondly Ann, daughter of Sir Thomas Lee, in 1741. After her death the following year he married thirdly Martha, daughter of Simon Harcourt, younger son of Simon Harcourt, 1st Viscount Harcourt, in 1744. Lord Vernon died in August 1780, aged 71, and was succeeded in the barony by his son from his first marriage, George. His second son from his third marriage, the Most Reverend the Hon. Edward Harcourt (who assumed the surname of Harcourt) became Archbishop of York and was the grandfather of Sir William Vernon Harcourt and the great-grandfather of Lewis Harcourt, 1st Viscount Harcourt. Lady Vernon died in 1794.



Portrait of George Venables Vernon, 2nd Lord Vernon, by Thomas Gainsborough (1767)

THE BARONS OF KINDERTON
c.1100 - 1680



THE GRANT OF ARMS AND CREST, 1560

Harleian MSS 139 & 1116. Another version is 2119, fo.40r-v and also MS Ashmole 840/388 but these are without the trick of arms.



To all and singular, aswell nobles and gentles and kings, heraults and officers of Armes, as othars which these presentd shall see reed or heare Laurence Dalton Esquire al's Norrey principall herald and kinge of armes of theaste weste and north parties of England ffrome the Ryver of trent northward, Sendeth due and humble Comendat'ons and gretings, Fforasmuche as Annciently ffro' the begginyng, hit hath byn devysed & ordeynedd, that the noble and valiannte acts of worthie p'sons, have byn noteworthy Com'ended to the world withe Sundrye monuments and tokens of honor for the Remembrance of their good deserts, As amonge the Greks Inscricpion of Trophes, amonge the Remains The erection of Statute and Image wth titles and appellacions of honor, and of more Later dayes wt the most pte of nations, Bearinge of Signes and tokins Shilds called Armes wche by the demonstracons and Evidence of noble mens prowes, vertue and valyantues that To evry man Accordinge to their deserts and worthines be dyversly dystributed. Whereby suche signes and tokins of the worthie and Couragious might Appeare before the Unworthie Coward and Ignorant. Even so ys yt yet observed that such as have meryted or done Comendable Service to their prince or coutrey, shold

not be beforgotten and so put in oblivion, but Rewar'ded wth some token of honor for the same. The Rather to move and styrre others to the Imytac'on of Like worthynes and noblenes, howebeyt consideringe that hit is not possible for any worldly thinge to contynence Longe in one State, But that in contynewance of tyme hit maie be altered, now yet any worthie or valient acte to be had contynewally in Remembrance but that in presse of tyme hit maie be forgotten, hyt was not theerfore without great pervidence ordeyned and yet is. That their shold be officers and Heraulds of Armes, To whose office hit shall be appropriat nott only to kepe in Register the Armes, petegrees and discent of nobles and gentles wt their worthies and valiant acts, But also should have power And autoritie to sett fowarth and allowe unto the worthie Some awgmentacon token or Remembrance of noblenes for their saide worthines whereby the desente of ye saide worthie and valient p'sons myght not be forgotten And so drowned in the bottomles pitt of oblyvion. Wheirfore Consideringe The Worthie valyant and Comendable Service some tyme done by Thomas Venables of Golborne in the Countie of Chestr gentleman, who was Lynyally dycscended frome Sr Gilbert Venables knight Coosyn garma' to kinge William Conquror and came with hym into England at the Conquest thereof, and was younger sonne to the Earle of Blevile, To whome was gyven thearldome or Barony of Kyndeton, and bare these Armes, Blewe two barres silver, and for his Creste a demy Dragon geules yssuyng out of a wylson or wyere to take fyshe in sylver, wche saide Armes and crest the saide Thomas Venables of

Golborne dyd Lawfully bare. In whose tyme yt chanced a terrible dragon to remayne and make his abode in the Lordshippe of Moston in the saide countye of Chester, wheare he devoured all suche p'sons as he laid hold on whereof said Thomas Venables heringe tell of, Consyderinge the pytyfull and dayly dystuction of the people wthowte Recoverie who in followinge Thexample of the Valiant Romaines and other Worthie men, Not Regardinge his owne Lyfe, in Comparyson of the comoditie and savegard of his cuntrye menne, dyd in his owne p'son valiantlie and Courragioslie set on the saide dragon, where firts he shotte hym throwe wth an Arrowe, and Afterwarde wth other weapons manfullie slewe hym, At wche instant Tyme the said dragon was devowrringe of a child, ffor the whiche his worthie and valiant acte, was geven to hym the said Lordshippe of Moston by the anncestors of thearle of Oxford, then Lord of the ffee their. And also evr sence the sade Thomas and his heirs in Remebrance theiof have used to beare aswell in their armes, as in their Crest, a dragon. The wche althowghe he had very well meryted to beare, yet for that he toke and bare it without authorities, he did offend Theirin. The wche abuse the Right worshipfull Sir Thomas Venables knight called Barron of Kinderton nowe is Righte heire Lynyallye discended, weyinge and Consyderinge, dezired me the said Norrey tosette fowerth unto hym Tharmes of his Ancestors wthe theArmes of suche mariage as they maryed wthall (whereunto he ys Righte heire and hath possessions thei of) together, also wth Awgmenttacon aswell in his Armes and crest, of this worthie acte of his said p'decessor. Which request beinge so Just and Reasonable I could not Lawfullye denye the same, But by the power & authority to my office annexed and attributed, have here sett forwerth his owne Armes wth other Comynge to hym by dyscent and Ratefied and Confirmed to hym and his posteritie in Awgementaacon aswell in his Armes and Creste, as ffolloweth. Ffirst the coate of his owne name of Venables, blewe ii barres silvr, The second for Golben silvr a crosse S..... betweene iiii martletts geules, the thirde The awgementaacon vert a dragon silver scald and p'cidd throwe the body wth an Arrowe gold hedded and ffethered silvr. The ffowrth for Eccleston Sable ii pyles in chefe wavee silvr. The vth for Cotton blewe an Eagle dysplayed silvr, and the sixt for Venables as affore is declared blewe ii barres silvr Brought in by Cotton by matchinge wth one of the heirs generall of Venables, The crest uppon thelme a dragon silvr scaled an piced thrpwe the bodie wth an arrowe gold hedded and fethered silvr devowringe of a child Chernell heired gold, sett on a wyer, or wilson Silvr banded bleweon a wrethe silvr blewe and Red, mantled Red Lynedd syvery botoed gold as ore playnely appeareth depicted in this margent. To have hold and Enjoye the said armes crest and awgmentaacon to the sade Thomas Venables knyghte and his posterytie to use beare and shewe in Shild Coate armoure or otherwise and therein to be Revested at his or their libertie and pleasure wth their dewe difference for evermore. In witnes dated the 30th of october in the Second year of ower Sovereigne Lady Quene Elizabeth Etc. Ano Dni 1560.

This is the trewe copie of the Letters Patent granted unto the Right Worshipfull Sr Thomas Venables knight Barron of Kindeton by Laurence Dalton Esqyre als Norrey Kinge of Armes of Theast West and north p'tes of England, The 30th of october in the second yeare of the Raigne of or Sovereigne Lady Quene Elizabeth etc no 1560, Thoroughly Expanded By the Record Thei of Remaynyng in owr office of Armes

By me Rychemond
Herauld of Armes

Edmond Knyghte
Als Ruge dragon

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- ² Stewart-Brown, R. (ed.), *Cheshire in the Pipe Rolls*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 92 (1938), p. 57
- ³ 'Inventory of Monuments of Westminster Abbey: The Church', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London, Volume 1, Westminster Abbey* (London, 1924), pp. 17-76. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/london/vol1/pp17-76> [accessed 26 December 2017].
- ⁴ The painted inscription says Roger Venables but that was repainted in 1954 and is not necessarily the original name.
- ⁵ *Pipe Rolls*, pp. 87, 101
- ⁶ Stewart-Brown, R. (ed.), *Calendar of County Court, City Court and Eyre Rolls of Chester, 1259-1297*, Chetham Society, vol. 84, p. 30. Hereafter *CCR*.
- ⁷ J. Tait (ed.), *The Chartulary of Chester Abbey*, part 1, Chetham Society, vol.79 (1920), pp. 217-21. Hereafter *CA*. R.V.Burne, *The Monks of Chester* (19620, pp. 32/3.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *CCR*, p. 16.
- ¹⁰ *CCR* p. 21.
- ¹¹ *CCR*, p.26
- ¹² *CCR* p.29
- ¹³ Samuel Lewis, 'Holywell - Hyssington', in *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (London, 1849), pp. 430-440. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/wales/pp430-440> [accessed 26 December 2017].
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- ¹⁶ *CA*, p. 40
- ¹⁷ Ormerod, G., *The History of the County Palatine of Chester*, vol. III, 2nd edition, revised and enlarged by Thomas Helsby (1882)., p. 188
- ¹⁸ *CCR*, p.11.
- ¹⁹ *CCR*, p..33.
- ²⁰ E. K. McConnell, *The Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, in the Thirteenth Century*, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, vol. 55 (1903), pp. 52-5.
- ²¹ *CCR* p. 38.
- ²² *CCR* p. 41
- ²³ *CCR* p. 144/5
- ²⁴ Brownbill, J. (ed.), *The Ledger Book of Vale Royal Abbey*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 68 (1914), p.84. Hereafter *VRLB*.
- ²⁵ 'Deeds: C.1781 - C.1800', in *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds: Volume 2*, ed. H C Maxwell Lyte (London, 1894), pp. 449-451. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ancient-deeds/vol2/pp449-451> [accessed 24 December 2017].
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- ²⁸ *CCR*, p.83
- ²⁹ *CCR*, p. 101, 105
- ³⁰ *CCR*, p.250
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- ³⁶ *VRLB*, pp. 124,125.
- ³⁷ *VRLB*, p.40.
- ³⁸ *VRLB*, p.21.
- ³⁹ *VRLB*, p.156.

⁴⁰ Information on military activity has been taken from the AHRC-funded 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England Online Database', dev.medievalsoldier.org, accessed 11 Dec. 2017.

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- ¹⁰⁶ The inventory is referred to in Lawton, p.45.
- ¹⁰⁷ *CS*, 1st series, vol. I, p. 44
- ¹⁰⁸ 'James II - volume 3: November 1687', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James II, 1687-9*, ed. E K Timings (London, 1972), pp. 93-110. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/jas2/1687-9/pp93-110> [accessed 26 December 2017].
- ¹⁰⁹ 'House of Lords Journal Volume 30: May 1762, 11-20', in *Journal of the House of Lords Volume 30, 1760-1764* (London, 1767-1830), pp. 264-274. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lords-jrnl/vol30/pp264-274> [accessed 26 December 2017].