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**The Rise of the Berkeleys: An Account of the Berkeleys of  
Berkeley Castle, 1243-1361. Part II: (i) The Berkeley Lands,  
(ii) The Berkeleys as Local Magnates**

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THE RISE OF THE BERKELEYS:  
AN ACCOUNT OF  
THE BERKELEYS OF BERKELEY CASTLE  
1243-1361

by WILLIAM JAMES SMITH

PART II

(i) *The Berkeley Lands*

WE do not know precisely what was included in the original grant of 'Berkeley and Berkeley-herness' to Robert fitz Harding in 1153. The barony was at first held in chief by the service of five knights, although, in accordance with the general reduction of *servicia debita*, by Edward I's reign a service of only three knights was being rendered, and this was the figure set down as the service due from the honour at Maurice II's death in 1281.<sup>1</sup> The manors of Hill and Nympsfield had been granted by fitz Harding to his second son, Nicholas, whose descendants held them throughout the period under review as half a knight's fee.<sup>2</sup> Similarly the manors of Beverstone and King's Weston were enfeoffed to Robert, the third son, as one and a half fees, passing from him to a Gurney and then to the ap Adams.<sup>3</sup> The barony in this attenuated form in which it came to Maurice II in 1243 comprised the manors of Berkeley (with the castle), Wotton-under-Edge, Bradley, Appleridge, Ham, Alkington, Hinton, Hurst, Cam, Symondshall, Coaley, and Arlingham. Of these Coaley was granted—when is not known—to Llanthony Convent, whence in 1351 it was returned to Thomas III in exchange for the

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Morris, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I*, Oxford, 1901, p. 64; *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, II (Edw. I), p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> John Smith, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. Sir John Maclean, Gloucester, 1883, I, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-4.

advowson of Awre.<sup>1</sup> Arlingham was granted in fee in 1274/5 to Maurice II's second son, Robert.<sup>2</sup>

Certain other lands and liberties had long been part of the Berkeley patrimony. Evidence as to the manor of Portbury is conflicting. Smith regarded it as anciently, though not originally, of the barony of Berkeley. But the inquisition of 1281 showed Maurice II as holding only half of the manor of the Countess of Aumâle (already seven years dead and her lands in the king's hand) as half a knight's fee.<sup>3</sup> In 1298/9, Smith tells us, Thomas II bought all the lands of Henry of Middleton, lord of part of Portbury.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the other half of the manor was included in this purchase. Henceforth the Berkeleys held the whole, though of whom and by what service the records do not always agree. At an inquisition in 1321 Portbury was included in the barony of Berkeley and covered by the service of the three knights' fees.<sup>5</sup> But in 1326 the manor was said to be held of Hugh de Courteney as one knight's fee.<sup>6</sup>

The manor of Slimbridge had come to Maurice I by his peace-making match with the Dursley Berkeleys. It was held in 1281 of Henry of Berkeley (of Dursley) as in free marriage.<sup>7</sup> By 1324 the manor had come to be treated as part of the honour of Berkeley.<sup>8</sup>

Bedminster, on the other hand, was always distinguished from the barony proper. The inquisition on the death of Gilbert de Clare in 1314 shows the manor as held of him by Maurice the son (to whom it had been granted by his father) by suit of court.<sup>9</sup> In 1349 Bedminster was held of Hugh Despenser as a quarter of a knight's fee.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I. H. Jeayse, *Catalogue of the Charters and Muniments at Berkeley Castle*, Bristol, 1892, pp. 165-6.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 148; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1330-4, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, II (Edw. I), p. 235.

<sup>4</sup> *Lives*, I, p. 189, citing charters in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>5</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, VI (Edw. II), p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> *Cal. of Inquis., Misc.*, II (1307-49), p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, II (Edw. I), p. 235.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. of Inquis., Misc.*, II (1307-49), p. 190.

<sup>9</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, V (Edw. II), p. 338; Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 225.

<sup>10</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, IX (Edw. III), p. 340.

Smith usually refers to Redcliff-street as a 'manor,' but it was actually part of the manor of Bedminster, and was precisely described at the inquisition in February 1327 as '100s. rent.'<sup>1</sup> It is there included in the barony, perhaps because the honour of Gloucester, to which it pertained, was in the king's hand.<sup>2</sup> Earlier, in 1281, Redcliff-street was said to be held of the Earl of Gloucester by the service of half a knight's fee and suit of court, but this most probably refers to the whole manor of Bedminster.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these manors, the advowsons of Slimbridge and Wotton,<sup>4</sup> and the gift of the wardenship of St. Katherine's Hospital, Bristol,<sup>5</sup> the family held the four hundreds of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, and Portbury, Bedminster, and Harcliff, in Somerset—the last a sub-division of Bedminster. A jury in 1275/6 declared that Henry of Berkeley, of the Dursley house, as well as Maurice of Berkeley, claimed return of writs, assize of bread and ale, gallows, and tumbrel in Berkeley hundred,<sup>6</sup> but the right of the fitz Harding Berkeleys does not seem to have been seriously challenged at any other time. In June 1330, when Thomas III had his charters confirmed, the king made an additional grant of return of writs within the hundred<sup>7</sup>—apparently the Berkeleys had not hitherto been able to show any specific warrant for the privilege. The three Somerset hundreds were said in 1283 to have been 'withdrawn' (*i.e.*, appropriated) in 1258 by Richard de Clare (who perhaps first granted them to the Berkeleys), but surrendered by him when

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, vii (Edw. III), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Redcliff street, like Bristol, was in Gloucestershire, while Bedminster, of which it was part, was in Somerset; they were thus the subject of different inquisitions.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, 11 (Edw. I), p. 235. In 1263 (*Close Rolls*, 1261-4, p. 284) Maurice II was referred to as holding one fee in Bedminster and Redcliff. But the service set down for Bedminster varied from a whole fee to a quarter fee or to suit of court only. Nothing can be safely inferred as to a separate service for Redcliff-street.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Lives*, 1, p. 143; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1321-4, p. 207.

<sup>5</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1324-7, p. 110. The Berkeleys were also patrons of the chapel of Longbridge, near Berkeley; *ibid.*, 1324-7, p. 249.

<sup>6</sup> *Rot. Hundr.*, 1, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Charter Rolls*, iv, 1327-41, p. 178.

impleaded by writ of *quo warranto*. However, the Berkeleys continued to hold them of the king in chief, exercising there 'all the liberties of free hundreds.'<sup>1</sup>

At an inquisition in 1278/9, it was said that Thomas of Berkeley and Joan, his wife, had usurped view of frankpledge and jurisdiction in Tolesland hundred, Gloucestershire, 'since the time of the death of the Earl of Winchester,' *i.e.*, 1264.<sup>2</sup> Joan's mother was Roger de Quincy's eldest daughter and co-heiress, and Thomas no doubt claimed these liberties—never made good—in right of his wife.<sup>3</sup>

Assize of bread and ale, attachment of criminals, and pillory, all within the bounds of the town of Bristol, were, according to an inquisition of 1275/6, among the franchises exercised by the lord of Berkeley, in addition to his gallows outside the town, (*i.e.*, at Bedminster)—and the jury 'did not know by what warrant.'<sup>4</sup> This almost certainly refers not to Bristol proper, but to Redcliff-street, which in 1229 had been incorporated into the town.<sup>5</sup>

Those, then, were the Berkeley lands inherited by Maurice II in 1243. They lie mostly within a few miles of the *caput*, the most distant of them only twenty miles to the south. Maurice added to them almost immediately, by his marriage with Isabel, daughter of Richard fitz Roy, the manor of Wenden, near Saffron Walden (sometimes described as two manors. Great and Little Wenden<sup>6</sup>). In 1327 and in 1361 Wenden was held, together with the manor of Matching, a few miles east of Harlow, of Richard de Plaiz, by service of two knights' fees.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly twenty years after this first important extension of the Berkeley lands outside the home district, Maurice II acquired by a covenant made in 1261 with Christine, daughter

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Misc.*, I (1219-1307), p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Hundr.*, II, p. 666.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Rot. Hundr.*, I, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup> *Trans. Bristol and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, LXX, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> A duality preserved in the modern name, Wendens Ambo.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, VII (Edw. III), p. 25, and X (Edw. III), p. 465.

and heiress of Robert Braunt, the manors of Bix, Stokenchurch, and Cuxham (in the Chilterns) and Faldingworth, near Market Rasen. He was to retain two-thirds of the manors in consideration of the labours he had expended in recovering them for Christine, she to hold the other third of him.<sup>1</sup> These manors were still held in 1281, but they disappear from view after that.<sup>2</sup>

Joan de Ferrers brought to the Berkeleys in 1267 the manors of Coston, near Melton Mowbray, and Eynesbury, close to St. Neots.<sup>3</sup> The former was held as one knight's fee of Edmund of Lancaster when he died in 1296, at a trivial rent. They both were alienated to a younger son in 1317/18, although the advowson of Coston was retained.<sup>4</sup> Another twenty years passed before the Berkeley estates again expanded, and, as before, marriage was the means. Maurice's match in 1289 with Eve de la Zouche was a rich one. Her portion included the manors of Brigmerston, near Amesbury, 'Middleston,' with the advowson (*i.e.*, Milston, half a mile from Brigmerston), Edingworth, four miles west of Axbridge, and Milverton, Somerset, together with £10 rent in Bridgwater. Maurice granted the manors to his second son, Maurice of Stoke Gifford, some time before 1322, keeping the Bridgwater rents.<sup>5</sup>

Early in the 14th century the Berkeleys began buying whole manors. Between 1302 and 1304 Thomas purchased Frampton-on-Severn, close to Berkeley, granting it out again the following year at a rent of 22 marks.<sup>6</sup> When Gilbert de Clare died in 1314 Thomas held of him the hamlet of Winterhead, near Axbridge, by service of a quarter of a knight's fee, and the manor of Eldersfield, near Tewkesbury, as one fee.<sup>7</sup> Gilbert's half-sister, Isabella, whom Maurice III married in 1316, had only a life interest in the manors of Shipton-under-Wychwood and

<sup>1</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1259-61, p. 474.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246 and 365.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189; *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, v (Edw. II), p. 387.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, v (Edw. II), pp. 338 and 341.

Burford (excluding the borough), and 'Mars,' 'Faveld,'<sup>1</sup> and Stanley Pontlarge, near Winchcomb, and £8 rent in Speenhamland, Berkshire.<sup>2</sup> All these were lost to the Berkeleys when Maurice died in 1326.

Maurice's marriage to Isabella was the occasion of his granting to her lands in Kingston Seymour, Somerset—one-third of the manor and one-third of the advowson—the possession of which by Berkeley is thus now brought to our notice for the first time. It was held of Hugh Despenser, junior, by a service variously stated as one-third of a knight's fee with 7½d. rent, and half a knight's fee.<sup>3</sup> It was granted to Maurice of Stoke Gifford in or before 1321.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas III's marriage to Margaret Mortimer in 1320 gave him half the Gloucestershire hundred of Blidesloe, and half the manor and half the advowson of Awre (just across the Severn from Berkeley).<sup>5</sup> As early as 1316 he was 'lord or joint lord' or both—which presumably means that he already had the other half.<sup>6</sup> The hundred was still in Berkeley hands in 1368, while the manor was held of the king in 1361 by a token service.<sup>7</sup>

Some time before Maurice III's imprisonment he had acquired lands in Berwick-on-Tweed, holding them when he died in 1326, though no more is heard of them.<sup>8</sup> He had also a house near Baynard's Castle, London—afterwards known as Berkeley's Inn—which the family continued to hold.<sup>9</sup> He had also acquired, from an unknown source, one third of the manor

<sup>1</sup> Neither of which can be identified; 'Faveld' is etymologically unlikely to be Falfield.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 245; *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1323-7, p. 219; *ibid.*, 1327-30, p. 46; *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, III, p. 181. I find no evidence except Smith for 'Faveld.'

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 245; *Cal. of Inquis., Misc.*, II (1307-49), p. 228; *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, VII (Edw. III), p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 269.

<sup>6</sup> *Parliamentary Writs*, IV, p. 529.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 378; *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, VII, p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, III, p. 96; Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 274.

<sup>9</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1349-54, p. 606.

of Portishead, Somerset, still in the hands of his grandson in 1368.<sup>1</sup>

With Thomas III we find land-buying on a grand scale. He added to the estates he inherited nearly as much again, not counting what his second wife held for life. Many of these lands, however, were settled on a younger son, and thus permanently alienated from the main Berkeley family. At various times, beginning in 1327, Thomas bought the following manors: Tillington and two-thirds of Burghill, near Hereford, and Down Hatherley, near Gloucester;<sup>2</sup> one-fifth of Iron Acton, Gloucestershire;<sup>3</sup> half of Stock Denis, near Yeovil;<sup>4</sup> Tockington (with the advowson of the chapel) and Compton Greenfield, near Avonmouth;<sup>5</sup> Elston and Maddington (or Maiden Winterbourne), both near Amesbury;<sup>6</sup> 'Estanes,' Essex (possibly Easton, near Great Dunmow);<sup>7</sup> Langley Burrell, near Chippenham (with the advowson);<sup>8</sup> 'Orkesden' (which may be Orcheston, adjoining Elston and Maddington, just mentioned) and 'Childingston,' (which cannot be located);<sup>9</sup> Barrow, Somerset (which of the several Barrows is not known);<sup>10</sup> and, finally, Sages Livelode, near Berkeley, and Westonbirt, near Tetbury.<sup>11</sup>

Of Tillington, Burghill, Maddington, Barrow, 'Estanes,' 'Orkesden,' and 'Childingston' we hear nothing more, except that they appear in a list of manors the demesnes of which Thomas had in his own hands in some unspecified year.<sup>12</sup> Iron Acton and Sages Livelode were still Berkeley lands long after

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 273 and 379; Smith frequently calls it 'the manor of Portishead,' but he uses the term *manor* loosely.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325, citing charters in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326, citing charters.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330, citing charters; *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, XI (Edw. III),

P. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 327 and 330, citing charters in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-8, citing charters.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328, citing charters.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, citing charters.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, citing charters.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, citing fines in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329, citing charters.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 301-2, quoting ministers' accounts.

the period now under review. Down Hatherley and Compton Greenfield went to John, the son of Thomas's second marriage, the founder of the Beverstone Berkeleys.<sup>1</sup> Stock Denis was still held by Thomas at his death.<sup>2</sup> Tockington and part of Westonbirt also he still had,<sup>3</sup> the remaining part of the latter having gone to the John just mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Half of the manor of Elston seems to have been granted immediately after it was purchased to Maurice of Stoke Gifford;<sup>5</sup> the other half was still in Thomas's hands in 1344/5.<sup>6</sup> Langley Burrell with the advowson went to Sir Reginald Cobham as part of the marriage portion of Thomas's daughter, Joan.<sup>7</sup>

In 1330 a large purchase was made from Thomas ap Adam—the castle and manor Beverstone, anciently part of the honour of Berkeley, together with the manors of Over, Gloucestershire, Barrow Gurney, Somerset, and Monewden, Suffolk (with its advowson).<sup>8</sup> Thomas still held the first three when he died—Barrow Gurney of Edward Despenser as of the honour of Gloucester.<sup>9</sup> Monewden never appears again among the Berkeley lands, so presumably Thomas sold it (despite Smith's statement, apropos the manor of Yewdon, Buckinghamshire, bought in 1345/6 and quickly re-sold, that 'for ought I could ever find,' that was 'all the land hee at any time parted from after he had once purchased').<sup>10</sup>

When Thomas married again in 1347, his wife had for life from the Veels, her first husband's family, the manors of Charfield, Tortworth, Huntingford, and Veelham, all in Gloucestershire, Plympton, Devon, and Abington, Alton, and Penleigh, in Wiltshire.<sup>11</sup> The manors of Netherham (*i.e.*, Low

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Lives*, 1, p. 350, citing numerous fines, charters, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, XI (Edw. III), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Lives*, 1, p. 350.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347, quoting charters in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348, citing fines and charters.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 507.

<sup>9</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, XI (Edw. III), pp. 7 and 117.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Lives*, 1, p. 328, citing fines in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

Ham) and Hamburrel, one quarter of the manor of Exton, near Winsford (all in Somerset), and, in Wiltshire, the hamlet of Bere Revel (with the advowson), and lands in, or the manors of, Chelworth and Caldecote (*i.e.*, Calcutt), both near Cricklade, with the advowsons of both—all these she held in fee and transmitted to her grandson by her first husband.<sup>1</sup> These were thus never Berkeley lands in the true sense of the term, though under Berkeley control for a time.

In 1351 Thomas acquired for life or for seven years, whichever should be longer, the Wiltshire manors of Sheldon, Chippenham, Lowden, and Westland, and the hundreds of Chippenham, Bishopstone, and Dunley in the same county.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the whole manors and fractions of manors dealt with so far, the Berkeleys held smaller tenements, ranging from a carucate to a few acres, or a house or a shop, in many places up and down Gloucestershire and Somerset, too numerous to mention separately. They also held manors—mostly close to Berkeley and probably ancient Berkeley lands, which are brought to light only through a chance reference by Smith or in the public records. Some were held by enfeoffed knights of the honour; others had been granted to important household officers. A few are mentioned only when alienated, as, for example, Wick (close to Berkeley), Morecote, and Weston Lawrence (near Avonmouth), which were granted to a younger son between 1314 and 1320.<sup>3</sup> Rockhampton was, according to Smith, held by Maurice III on his death in 1326, although a few years later it was granted by the king to Maurice of Stoke Gifford as 'of the inheritance of John Gifford.'<sup>4</sup> Woodmancote, near Dursley, held of the lord of Berkeley by knight service, was 'bought in' by Thomas in 1348/9 and immediately granted to his youngest son, John.<sup>5</sup> Syde, near Painswick, and Cerne-cote also went to John,<sup>6</sup> but how they came to be in Berkeley

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Lives* I, pp. 346 and 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330, citing charters; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1350-4, p. 188.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 209 and 268.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273; *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, IV, p. 423.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 329 and 350.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350.

hands we do not know. Maurice of Stoke Gifford held the manor of Uley, near Dursley, by knight service of his brother in 1347.<sup>1</sup> Purton and Little Marshfield (the first certainly, the latter probably, close to Berkeley), Thomas III granted to one of his household knights, William of Cheltenham.<sup>2</sup> Another of the Berkeley knights, Thomas of Bradeston (or Breadstone), held, as his ancestors had long done, the manors of Breadstone and Stinchcombe, also near to the *caput*.<sup>3</sup> We hear nothing of Upton St. Leonard's, close to Gloucester, before 1326, when Maurice III held at his death two messuages and two virgates there of the king in chief, half by serjeanty, half by a money rent. When Thomas III died in 1361, however, he is recorded as holding the 'manor.'<sup>4</sup>

Finally there are three manors to which Smith makes solitary references—Westcote, which he says was held in 1281, though he could not even tell its county;<sup>5</sup> 'Snedham,' presumably Sneedham's Green, near Gloucester; and Great Rollright, Oxfordshire. These last two, according to Smith, were held in 1326.<sup>6</sup> Of the first acquisition of these three manors by the Berkeleys and their final disposal, we have no knowledge.

In 1330 Thomas had apparently thought of leasing all the *corpus* of his barony and a few of the outlying lands, for on 18 October in that year he had licence to demise them for a term of life or years.<sup>7</sup> Suspicions of the impending coup against Mortimer were abroad by that date, and Thomas, as Mortimer's son-in-law, must have shared them. The step proposed may indicate a desire, frustrated in fact by shortness of time, to place his patrimony in friendly hands for a time, in case of temporary disgrace. There is no evidence that the licence was acted upon.

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, ix (Edw. III), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 313, citing 'Wardrobe accounts,' and p. 342.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282; *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, x (Edw. III), p. 479.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, vii (Edw. III), p. 85, and xi (Edw. III),

p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> *Lives*, I, p. 150; there is a Westcote near Stow-on-the-Wold.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273 and 274.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1330-4, p. 10.

Some twenty years later, in 1349, Thomas had licence to entail certain of his lands, *viz*, the castle, manor, and hundred of Berkeley, the manors of Ham, Appleridge, Alkington, Hinton, Wotton, Symondshall, Cam, Coaley, Slimbridge, and Upton St. Leonard's, with the advowsons of Wotton and Slimbridge churches.<sup>1</sup> The licence was acted upon.<sup>2</sup> Portbury and the castle and manor of Beverstone were similarly entailed in 1352.<sup>3</sup>

An analysis of this record of the Berkeley lands over a period of 120 years reveals two distinct processes. In the first place something was done—perhaps as much as opportunity permitted—to consolidate the old patrimony. The purchase of the other half of Portbury and part of the neighbouring Portishead, and of Frampton and Sages Livelode, both close to Berkeley, are examples of this process at work. The marriage with Mortimer's daughter, adding half of Awre and half of Blidesloe hundred to the other half of each already in Berkeley hands, greatly strengthened the family's position in the region west of Severn facing the *caput* of the barony. The second process, which began in earnest only after 1300, reaching a crescendo under Thomas III, involved the buying and selling of manors up and down the country—mostly in the west, largely in Gloucestershire and Somerset, but occasionally as far away as Suffolk. The purpose of these deals is hidden from us. Whether they were primarily speculation in land, or whether their function was to provide elbow-room for a course of progressive agriculture or intensive sheep-farming, we cannot tell. A few such purchases afforded appanages for younger sons. But one thing is certain. During the second half of the period here considered the Berkeleys' traffic in land was very evenly balanced—as far as we know they acquired almost three score manors, while just about the same number were disposed of, in one way or another.

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1348-50, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, VII, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 329, quoting 'fines in the common bench'; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1350-4, p. 294.

(ii) *The Berkeleys as Local Magnates*

No better evidence is likely to be found as to the importance of the position held by the Berkeleys in the West Country than the executive and judicial commissions issued to them, for if the king wanted his orders to be obeyed, he had to work through the powerful magnates on the spot. The system of government through royal commissions to the earls, barons and gentry in the counties grew up only gradually, and evidence for the 13th century is scarce. There is little to show just what weight the name of Berkeley carried in Gloucestershire or Somerset before the year 1297, and none at all to suggest that it represented a predominant influence. The Berkeleys had their hundreds—three in Somerset, though Harcliff was very small and really part of Bedminster, and two in Gloucestershire (only one before about 1315). But both Somerset and Gloucester were counties of numerous small hundreds.<sup>1</sup> Thus the areas over which the Berkeleys exercised permanent jurisdiction amounted to only a small fraction of the two counties in which their lands mostly lay.

Besides the legitimate exercise of ancient franchise and the power which flowed naturally from the possession of large estates with lordship over numerous feudal tenants, we catch an occasional glimpse of tyranny and coercion—the way-laying of a traveller in 1273, for example,<sup>2</sup> and a revelation in Portbury manorial accounts for the year 1316/7 that Maurice (not yet lord of Berkeley) bribed a jury with a pound and hostile witnesses with forty-nine shillings, to avoid being presented before a commission of trailbaston.<sup>3</sup> In 1330 the complaint was lodged against Thomas III by the ancient enemy of his house, Berkeley of Dursley, that the sheriff of Gloucestershire and others the king's ministers in the county were his household servants, receiving his wages and livery.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gloucester had 30 hundreds, Somerset 47; by comparison, Herefordshire had 11, Worcester 5, Warwickshire 4, and Oxfordshire 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Hundr.*, 1, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, 1, p. 242.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307, quoting 'petitions in parliament.'

The crisis of 1297 gave Thomas II, as a leading 'loyalist,' a temporarily important position in a large region of the west. In that year and the three years following he received several commissions of various kinds for Gloucestershire and Somerset (where his standing was well-established), for Worcestershire (where perhaps he already had his manor of Eldersfield), and for Devon and Dorset (where he seems to have had no land or connections of any importance).<sup>1</sup>

Early in the next reign, in December 1307, a Berkeley (Maurice the son) received the first of numerous general commissions to conserve the peace in the county of Gloucester.<sup>2</sup> On that occasion a neighbour, John ap Adam, stood first, but on most subsequent occasions the name of Berkeley headed the list. In the tense weeks following the execution of Gaveston this same Maurice (apparently regarded by the king as loyal) was made keeper of the peace for Gloucester town, with a commission to repair the defences.<sup>3</sup> Berkeleys were occasionally constables of Gloucester and of Bristol.<sup>4</sup>

A commission to conserve the peace in Gloucestershire, issued a few weeks before Bannockburn to Maurice (probably already in Scotland) and two others,<sup>5</sup> had a tragicomic sequel symptomatic of the confusion which followed the humiliation of the king and the ascendancy of Lancaster's party. Six months after the battle, in December 1314, Maurice and others were appointed to investigate the activities of the conservators of the peace of Worcestershire and Herefordshire and to punish them according to their demerits.<sup>6</sup> The conservators of one county were being set to punish their colleagues in the next. But one of this second commission, Richard de Baskerville, was actually a conservator of the peace in Herefordshire,

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls, 1292-1301*, pp. 383, 464, 467 and 472; *Cal. of Close Rolls, 1296-1302*, p. 395; also *Trans. Bristol and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, LXX, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls, 1307-13*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 480 and 484.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1327-30, p. 130; *infra*, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls, 1313-17*, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

and thus had the duty of punishing himself! In Devon and Cornwall also, two of the inquisitors had been conservators of the peace in those counties.<sup>1</sup>

In 1327, when Thomas III, as a prominent supporter of the new régime, was in a powerful position in the West Country, he and John Maltravers were 'principal and chief keepers of the peace' in a solid block of eight counties—Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Dorset and Herefordshire.<sup>2</sup> Such a situation never recurred, although in the following year Thomas was a commissioner of oyer and terminer in the five shires of Gloucester, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Southampton.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter Thomas never acted in more than two counties at once. Moreover, the earls were now beginning to head local commissions, and henceforward Thomas was generally subordinate to the Earl of Devon, Warwick or Arundel.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until 1312 that the Berkeleys were employed in the commissions of array which had become common under Edward I.<sup>5</sup> And that was an isolated occasion, not repeated for twenty years. From 1337 to 1346 Thomas III received many such commissions, not merely in his own county, but in Herefordshire, Somerset, Worcestershire and Wiltshire—sometimes as the principal with the sheriff and one or two knights, sometimes as subordinate to one of the earls.<sup>6</sup> On one occasion, in 1338, he was, with the Earl of Arundel, an overseer of commissioners of array, receiving the same year a joint commission of array and oyer and terminer in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire—a powerful position indeed.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1313-17, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 297.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, 1340-43, p. 94; 1338-40, pp. 274 and 484.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps because in Edward I's reign this work was done generally by men of a lower rank.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 312-20, citing Scotch, Gascon, French and Almain Rolls; *Foedera*, II, p. 1070.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1338-40, pp. 134, 137 and 141. Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 313, states that in this year Thomas was commissioner of array in Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire also.

It will be seen from what has been said that the only county in which the Berkeleys regularly acted in judicial or executive capacities was their own, Gloucestershire. There, next to the earls (whose place in the commissions was probably often only formal) they were pre-eminent. Their substantial estates in Somerset were never enough to give them anything like the same position in that county, where, indeed, they were no more often employed than in Dorset, where, as far as is known, they had no land at all. Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Wiltshire saw them now and again, and, on rare occasions, Devon and Shropshire. These last two counties represented the extreme limits (apart from the exceptional years 1327-8) of the area in which they could be effectively employed.

(iii) *Factors in the Rise of the Berkeleys*

To portray the steadily growing prosperity of the Berkeleys and the fluctuating importance of the role they played in the country's affairs is one thing. To explain them is another. An adequate explanation is, indeed, out of the question, if only because we know practically nothing about the factor of personal character, which was, obviously, of decisive importance. We can only record, for example, that Thomas II in 1297 sided with the king instead of with his old comrade-in-arms, Bohun; we cannot hope to understand why. And so with a score of other questions.

To some extent the influence which the Berkeleys exercised upon events was no doubt a reflection of the increase in their wealth. There is very little to suggest, on the other hand, that high office, loyal service, and kinship with the king added manors to the Berkeley estates or put silver in their coffers. Only in the case of the more or less landless younger son, Maurice of Stoke Gifford, is the reverse true.<sup>1</sup> The salaries paid for such positions as keeper of Berwick (£1,000 plus the king's gift of £600) or seneschal of Aquitaine<sup>2</sup> (2,000 pounds

<sup>1</sup> *Infra*, pp. 119-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Trans. Bris. and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, LXX, p. 72.

Tournois—about £500 sterling) are impressive, but when they are compared with a banneret's pay of four shillings a day, it becomes obvious that the holder was intended to defray out of his salary the wages of a retinue and perhaps other expenses as well. Payment, moreover, was often years in arrears—Thomas III had allowance in 1335 of the £600 promised to his father for taking the custody of Berwick in 1315.<sup>1</sup> Certainly there would be valuable perquisites attaching to such posts and to the local offices which Thomas III, especially, filled so frequently. But at best the fruits of office can only have provided a small part of the money which the Berkeleys spent on purchases of land from about 1300 onwards. The main source must have been saving out of income.

Evidence is not lacking that for the earlier part of the period under consideration the lord of Berkeley was continuously short of ready money. When, in 1242, his eldest son must needs serve in Gascony—so that the father might be excused a fine of 60 marks—a hundred marks were borrowed from an Oxford Jew to equip him for the journey, repayment being eventually excused by the king.<sup>2</sup> When the same contingency arose ten years later, Berkeley went to the king and borrowed 60 marks, being allowed to spread repayment over two years.<sup>3</sup> In 1260 the king remitted Maurice's debt of 16 marks for the space of three months.<sup>4</sup> Shortage of money was common enough in the Middle Ages. But the emptiness of the Berkeley coffers in this period, from about 1240 to 1260, is in marked contrast to the ease with which they found large sums in the 14th century, well before the time when the Black Death had made money more plentiful. Part of the explanation lies, perhaps, in the thousand mark fine which Maurice I paid in 1189 for confirmation of his charters and the thousand pound relief exacted immediately afterwards from Robert II, his

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1333-7, p. 444.

<sup>2</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1242-7, pp. 11, 16 and 144.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1259-61, p. 57.

successor.<sup>1</sup> Those were enormous sums to pay from an estate worth, possibly, £200 a year, and they might well have crippled the family for a generation or two.

It is more than probable that it was the lands which Maurice II and Thomas II acquired between 1242 and 1289, mostly by marriage, partly by Maurice's covenant with Christine Braunt,<sup>2</sup> that repaired the family fortunes. Wenden, in a rich corn-growing region, was a particularly valuable gain, which the Berkeleys did not sell until more than a century and a half had passed.<sup>3</sup> These manors probably increased the Berkeley revenues by half, very largely explaining the family's comparative affluence in the early 14th century. Even in 1284, Thomas was able to pay a debt to some Lucca merchants at the rate of two hundred marks a year,<sup>4</sup> and in 1298/9 he began that career of land-buying which, continued by his grandson, gained momentum decade by decade. By 1328 Thomas III was able to give more than £1,000 with his sister in marriage,<sup>5</sup> and double that sum, in addition to land, when his daughter married in 1343.<sup>6</sup>

It is evident that this regular outlay of money in land could have been maintained only if expenditure was kept below revenue. This policy must have been carefully pursued during most of the period with which we are here concerned. As it happens, we can see it being applied by Thomas III. His accounts for 1328 showed a surplus of £452; in 1335, £659; and in 1346 (by no means the peak of his wealth), more than £1,150.<sup>7</sup>

The Berkeleys, generation after generation, were shrewd

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> When Thomas II was on business in London two servants and four horses were continually employed in fetching bread from Wenden for the use of his household; Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 167, citing the Wenden accounts for 7 Edw. II in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, I, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 388.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 348, quoting charters in Berkeley Castle.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306, citing wardrobe accounts.

and progressive landlords. Maurice II continued his father's policy of reducing land to severalty and enclosing it and of commuting services to money rents.<sup>1</sup> His son, Thomas II, let out much more land, generally at 18*d* an acre, we are told, some of it old grants at 1*d* to 6*d* an acre which he bought up.<sup>2</sup> The effect of all this is strikingly reflected in the comparison of the annual value of Berkeley, Ham, Appleridge, Wotton, Cam, Coaley, Hurst, Hinton, Alkington and Slimbridge (roughly, the *corpus* of Berkeley) in the year 1281<sup>3</sup>—£279 9*s* 3*d*—with the value given at an inquisition of 1324 of substantially the same group of manors (Berkeley, Ham, Wotton, Cam, Coaley, Alkington, Slimbridge and Symondshall)—£606 18*s* 4½*d*.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas III, suiting his management to changed circumstances, revised the policy of commutation and leases, buying back hundreds of freeholds made by his ancestors, and working the demesnes of nearly all his manors himself.<sup>5</sup> In Beverstone, for example, an old enfeoffment which he purchased in 1330, he bought out the freeholders whose lands were intermingled with the demesne and stocked the manor with 1,500 sheep specially bought for the purpose.<sup>6</sup> Thomas made himself a sheep-farmer on a big scale—witness his help to the king with his wool in 1340.<sup>7</sup>

Thus astute (and probably ruthless) estate management, progressive husbandry, and sound domestic economy seem to have been the real foundations of the Berkeley fortunes. Rich

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Lives* 1, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9; Smith gives many more details of the improved husbandry which Thomas practised.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. of Inquis., Misc.*, II (1307–49), p. 190. In 1436 James of Berkeley admitted an income of only £333 (H. L. Gray, 'Incomes from Land in England in 1436,' *English Historical Review*, XLIX, 1934, p. 617), but the estates had been divided when Thomas V died in 1417 without a male heir of his body. Cf. Sidney Painter, *Studies in the History of the Feudal Barony*, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, pp. 301–2 and 331.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>7</sup> *Trans. Bris. and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, LXX, p. 78.

marriages played their part. Loyalty and unflagging energy in the service of the king (except in the two periods of general rebellion) combined with an apparent absence of extravagant personal ambition to ensure a steady measure of royal favour (based to some extent upon kinship) which, although not manifested strikingly in munificent gifts, did serve to preserve the Berkeleys from extreme wrath when they were defeated rebels. As to the factor of personal character, all that we can feel certain of is that not one of these Berkeleys was a nonentity, while we might reasonably infer a good deal of resource and forcefulness, and not a little cunning, as family traits during this period.

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## APPENDIX

## MAURICE DE BERKELEY OF STOKE GIFFORD

Maurice, second son of Maurice III, was born about 1296. His part in the opposition to Edward II has already been referred to.<sup>1</sup> From the very beginning of the new reign he was a favoured servant of the king. In September 1327 he began a six-months' custodianship of the royal castle of Prudhoe.<sup>2</sup> He was a stop-gap keeper of the Tower of London for three weeks in April and May following.<sup>3</sup> Seven months later, the day after Christmas, he became constable of Gloucester 'during the pleasure of the king and Queen Isabella'.<sup>4</sup> In January 1331 and again just before his death he had the custody of Bristol Castle.<sup>5</sup> In June 1330 Edward III retained him for life, 'to attend him always,' alone in time of peace, and with fourteen men-at-arms in time of war, granting him for life the farm of Andover and £90 rent from Kirkstall Convent in Yorkshire.<sup>6</sup>

Maurice already had from his father or grandfather the manors of Brigrmerston and Milston in Wiltshire and Milverton in Somerset, as well as the old Berkeley lands of Bradley and, perhaps, Uley (which

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. Bris. and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, LXX, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, IV, pp. 87 and 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 345.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1330-4, p. 47, and *ibid.*, 1345-8, p. 546.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1327-30, p. 530.

he certainly held when he died).<sup>1</sup> He had purchased from Thomas ap Adam in April 1330, when his brother was buying in the same quarter, the manors of King's Weston, near Bristol, and Aylburton, near Lidney.<sup>2</sup> The king gave him for life in December 1332 Marden, near Hereford, and Winforton, close to Hay (both Mortimer escheats), granting them in fee four years afterwards.<sup>3</sup> Six weeks later, in January, came Fulbrook and Westhall and lands in Upton, Taynton and Swinbrook (all close to Burford), to hold at first at their rent of a little under £49 (reduced to £20 in 1335), and finally, in 1337, to hold in fee.<sup>4</sup>

A more munificent gift was bestowed on him in 1334—the custody of the lands of Gifford of Brimpsfield (once a powerful neighbour of the Berkeleys), formerly in the hands of John Maltravers.<sup>5</sup> They included Brimpsfield manor and castle, Stoke Gifford, King's Stanley, Rockhampton, Stonehouse and 'Walls,' all in Gloucestershire, and Corton, Sherrington, Codford, Stapleford and Ashton (*i.e.*, Ashton Gifford), stretched in a line along the Wyle Valley between Heytesbury and Wilton.<sup>6</sup> Three years later he had all except Brimpsfield in fee—Brimpsfield also in 1339.<sup>7</sup> Nearly all these grants cite Maurice's good service to the king. This splendid endowment of land was, however, not all. Smith tells us that in 1339 Maurice was discharged of all his debts to the king,<sup>8</sup> while in 1343 a rare if comparatively trivial token of the king's grace was bestowed on him—two tuns of wine a year for life from the prise of Bristol.<sup>9</sup>

There is little or no record of the services which in the 1330's inspired this generosity, but we are better informed from 1339 onwards. In that year Edward crossed to the Low Countries, and Maurice accompanied him as an intimate member of his household. He is described as one of the king's secretaries and a member of the council, and, as such, took part in embassies to Count Lewis of Flanders.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, ix (Edw. III), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1327-30, p. 507.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1330-4, p. 123, 1334-8, pp. 423 and 519; *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1330-3, p. 515.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, iv, pp. 342 and 447; *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1334-8, p. 423.

<sup>5</sup> *Cal. of Fine Rolls*, iv, p. 423.

<sup>6</sup> 'Walls' cannot be identified. Brimpsfield castle had been destroyed by Edward II at the end of 1321, which is no doubt why Maurice chose Stoke Gifford for his chief residence.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1334-8, p. 563; 1338-40, pp. 400 and 446.

<sup>8</sup> *Lives*, i, p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1343-6, p. 62; isolated gifts of odd barrels of wine were common.

<sup>10</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1338-40, pp. 397-8.

An order for payment to Maurice in the summer of 1342 shows the size of the retinue which he was about to take overseas. As banneret he had at his back four knights, fifteen esquires, and twenty horse-archers—a company not much inferior to that which his brother the lord of Berkeley was accustomed to lead.<sup>1</sup> The twenty-eight sacks of Sussex wool (worth £6 a sack) assigned to him as wages, represented pay for him and his men for almost precisely three months. Maurice's troop on this occasion was about half that of the Earl of Oxford, the least of the earls, and one-fifth that of the Earl of Gloucester, the greatest of them.

Early next year Maurice was with the king in Brittany, and, if we are to believe Smith, was one of the embassy which negotiated the truce of Malestroit.<sup>2</sup> That summer he was on the Scottish border, being appointed with Henry Percy and Thomas de Lucy to arrange a truce with Douglas.<sup>3</sup> Maurice was at the head of a company in the Crécy campaign.<sup>4</sup> According to Smith he had six knights, thirty-two esquires and thirty horse-archers, with two hundred foot as well,<sup>5</sup> but the precise agreement between these figures and those he gives for the company of Thomas III when summoned to the siege of Calais suggests a confusion between the two brothers.<sup>6</sup> Maurice died in the camp before the walls of Calais on 12 February 1347.<sup>7</sup> In token of appreciation of his services his son, Thomas, aged thirteen, had the keeping of his own lands and the profits of his own marriage.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1341-3, p. 570; 1343-6, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Lives*, I, p. 252; Smith says 'early in February,' but the truce was signed on 19 January.

<sup>3</sup> *Foedera*, II, p. 1230.

<sup>4</sup> Ten of his men had their crimes pardoned after the battle (*Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1345-8, p. 483). Judging by the lists of such pardons, a very large proportion of the English army were confessed felons.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *Lives*, I, p. 254, quoting 'Rot. obsid. Calesii.'

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. of Inquis. Post Mortem*, IX (Edw. III), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. of Patent Rolls*, 1345-8, p. 260.