

WAR, GOVERNMENT AND ARISTOCRACY
IN THE BRITISH ISLES, c.1150–1500

Essays in Honour of Michael Prestwich

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The Career of Godfrey of Crowcombe: Household Knight of King John and Steward of King Henry III

David Carpenter

A major theme in the work of Michael Prestwich, as in that of his father, J. O. Prestwich, has been the importance of the king's household knights. In his first book, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I*, published in 1972, Michael asked and answered such key questions as 'how were [knights] recruited for the household, how long did they serve, and what were their rewards?'¹ He showed that the knights, a body about 100 strong in 1284–5, formed the core of royal armies, and 'might also be used on matters of state quite unconnected with the business of campaigning.'² Thus they, or at least the most senior amongst them, acted at court as counsellors, abroad as diplomats, in parliament as members of the peerage, and in the localities as keepers of vacant bishoprics, commissioners of array, and enforcers of law and order. The household knights were central to Edwardian rule.³

Since Prestwich wrote in the 1970s, the thirteenth-century household knights have been studied by such scholars as Ruth Ingamells, Kenneth Lightfoot, Beth Hartland and Stephen Church.⁴ Church's book, the first devoted exclusively to the household knights of any reign, showed how many knights King John had, and how he recruited, used and rewarded them.⁵ They were just as essential to the maintenance of his rule as were the knights later in the century to the rule of Edward I or indeed the knights 100 years before to that of Henry I, the latter the subject of an influential article by J. O. Prestwich.⁶ It is very much

¹ M. Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance under Edward I* (London, 1972), p. 44. I well remember the party to celebrate publication on a sunny day in the garden of John and Menna's house in Headington. I am grateful to Nicholas Vincent for commenting on a draft of this paper.

² Prestwich, *War, Politics and Finance*, pp. 59 and 46–8 for numbers which fluctuated.

³ M. Prestwich, *Edward I* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 153.

⁴ R. Ingamells, 'The Household Knights of Edward I' (University of Durham PhD thesis, 1992); R. Ingamells, 'The political role of the household knights of Edward I', *TCE V*, pp. 29–36; K. Lightfoot, 'The Household Knights of King Henry III, 1216–1236' (University of Swansea, Ph.D. thesis, 2005); B. Hartland, 'The Household Knights of Edward I in Ireland', *Historical Research* 77 (2004), pp. 161–77.

⁵ S. D. Church, *The Household Knights of King John* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁶ J. O. Prestwich, 'The military household of the Norman kings', *EHR* 96 (1981), pp. 1–37.

within the context of this scholarly work that I offer here a paper on Godfrey of Crowcombe, household knight of John and a steward of the household under Henry III. His is a career I first visited in my thesis on sheriffs of Oxfordshire, which J. O. Prestwich supervised.⁷ There are many references to Godfrey in Church's book and Lightfoot's thesis, but there has been no single study devoted to him. If his career illustrates aspects of household knight activity now long familiar, it does so in particularly emphatic form, for that career was in every way remarkable: in its length, versatility, politicization and rewards. Godfrey's royal service spanned some forty years. He was marshal of the king's army, steward of the royal household, four times ambassador to the papal court, and, in the last age of the curial sheriff, long-standing sheriff of Oxfordshire. Three times he left the king's service, and three times he returned. He put together an estate of baronial proportions in a process which highlights both the resources of the king and the very different ways in which John and Henry III parted with them.

In origins, Godfrey was a Somerset man. His ancestral manors were at Crowcombe itself, on the western edge of the Quantock Hills, and at Beer Crocombe, some sixteen miles to the south-east. Crowcombe was held as one fee from the Somerset Beauchamps, barons of Hatch Beauchamp (just by Beer), and Beer from the lords of Weston Buckthorn, just over the border in Dorset, minor tenants-in-chief, who also had interests in Normandy.⁸ The date of Godfrey's birth is unknown, although it was probably in the 1170s or early 1180s. The first reference to him is in March 1204, and he died in 1246. Later there was a suggestion (rebutted) that near his end he was no longer *compos mentis*.⁹ The date when Godfrey became a household knight is likewise lost, but he had probably arrived by March 1204, when he is found with King John at Lichfield, very much in a household knight milieu.¹⁰ In the next year, Godfrey received his first reward from the king, a grant of land in Somerset worth 20s a year, a possession he characteristically sought to secure by obtaining a quitclaim from the previous holder.¹¹

What was Godfrey's route in? Many knights benefited from a family tradition of service in the royal household but there is no sign of this in Godfrey's case. His father, Wimond of Crowcombe, was a man of substance, between 1175–76 and 1183–84 paying a forest amercement of 100 marks, but this very

⁷ D. A. Carpenter, 'Sheriffs of Oxfordshire and their subordinates 1194–1236' (University of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1973).

⁸ *BF*, pp. 1469, 91, 1269; I. J. Sanders, *English Feudal Baronies* (Oxford, 1960), p. 51; *VCH Somerset*, iii, pp. 56–7; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 44; *CFR 1225–6*, no. 249; *PR 1211*, p. 230. Beer, together with a property at Brownstone in Devonshire, was originally held as two fees: (*CChR 1226–57*, p. 44). Brownstone was largely subinfeudated (*BNB*, ii, no. 624; *BF*, p. 797). For the Norman interests of the Weston family, see *CDF*, nos 506–12.

⁹ *PBKJ*, iii, no. 976; *ERF*, ii, pp. 1, 238.

¹⁰ *PBKJ*, iii, no. 976. Godfrey is here associated with Geoffrey Luterel, one of John's major household knights, for whom see Church, *Household Knights*.

¹¹ *RLC*, i, p. 57; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 44.

fact shows that he was in no favour with Henry II.¹² Nor were Godfrey's tenurial lords important to his advancement. In 1184 Wimond was in Normandy in the train of his overlord for Beer, William fitzJohn. Later, in 1226, Godfrey stood surety for the relief of one of William's successors.¹³ These were not, however, connections with a family which had any discernible link with the court. Robert de Beauchamp, the overlord for Crowcombe itself, was a minor on his father's death in 1199 and did not come of age till around 1212. It is nonetheless this minority which may provide the clue to Godfrey's rise, as Stephen Church has suggested, for custody of the Beauchamp lands was held from 1201 to 1202 by none other than King John's chamberlain, Hubert de Burgh.¹⁴ It may well be, therefore, that it was Hubert who brought Godfrey into the king's service. As we will see, the careers of the two men were to be closely interlinked.

In becoming a household knight, Godfrey had joined a select body of men, who were bound to the king by a special oath of loyalty.¹⁵ There was, however, an important distinction within this body between those who remained largely fighting knights and the much smaller numbers who rose to prominence as courtiers, military commanders, diplomats and local officials. It was only this second group which reaped substantial rewards from the king.¹⁶ Strikingly, almost from the start it was to this second group that Godfrey belonged. The desire for reward was certainly one force driving him on. Not for him his two-manor estate beside the Quantock Hills. Much harder to grasp are less material motivations. In June 1216, in a letter Godfrey may well have inspired, John urged the men of Rye to continue their 'good and faithful service' so that they might 'deserve reward from God and praise and honour from men'.¹⁷ Was such reward, praise and honour what Godfrey, too, was striving for? As for the characteristics and abilities which explain Godfrey's success, some of these – physical strength (he lived into old age) and military prowess – he doubtless shared with many another household knight. There must have been something more which singled him out: perhaps his intelligence and organizational ability; perhaps, hence his career as a diplomat, his courteous manners, fluent speech and handsome person.

Although precise evidence is lacking, it seems probable that Godfrey spent a good deal of his time between 1204 and 1214 at John's court. He certainly took part in the work of the steward, for in November 1207 he was getting in supplies of pork for that year's Christmas feast, the king's chief forester, Hugh de Neville no less, being told to obey his orders; this in a writ attested by John's steward,

¹² *CRR*, vi, p. 172; *PR 1176*, p. 159; *PR 1184*, p. 124.

¹³ *CDF*, p. 180; *CFR 1225–6*, no. 249.

¹⁴ Church, *Household Knights*, p. 32; *PR 1202*, p. 96; Sanders, *Feudal Baronies*, p. 51.

¹⁵ S. D. Church, 'The knights of the household of King John: a question of numbers', *TCE IV*, pp. 151–167; Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁶ Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 13–14.

¹⁷ *RLP*, p. 185b. Godfrey was in command at Rye.

William de Cantilupe.¹⁸ Two years later, in March 1208, Godfrey attested his first royal charters, a striking indication of his status within the inner circle of the court.¹⁹ Godfrey was also beginning his career as a diplomat. In 1209, he went to Poitou *in nuntium domini Regis*, and, in the next year, set out with two other household knights on his first mission to the papal court, a mission which must have required infinite tact given the Interdict and John's excommunication.²⁰ Godfrey was back in time to take part in John's Irish expedition of 1210, and then in 1212 returned to Poitou with 2000 marks for its defence, plus a force of four knights and fifteen armed serjeants.²¹ In 1213, once more in England, Godfrey was in the army mustered in Kent to repel French invasion. In 1214 he took part in John's Poitevin campaign where, described as the king's 'marshal', he presumably had responsibility for the discipline of military forces. He was also given custody of the castle at La Rochelle.²²

Godfrey had clearly, therefore, become one of John's most trusted household knights. He had also begun to reap rewards. In February 1208 he obtained from John a remarkable charter. This protected Godfrey and his heirs from any litigation save before the king or the chief justiciar, and allowed him and his heirs to hunt hares, foxes and wild cats everywhere save within the actual enclosures which protected the king's beasts. In addition, the men of Godfrey's lands and fees were freed from all suits of shires and hundreds and all exactions of the sheriffs. A last clause of the charter extended these privileges to all the lands 'which [Godfrey] is justly able to acquire within our kingdom of England'.²³ To build up a great landed estate was indeed the most obvious objective of Godfrey's life, one he pursued with huge attention and by means which sometimes seem both devious and disreputable. By December 1234, when he made his last major acquisition, he had amassed no less than nine manors or other significant properties, all held in hereditary right.

Godfrey, however, made an uncertain start on his acquisitive journey. For many *curiales* the route to fortune was marriage, and the most confident (William Marshal is the classic example) were prepared to wait for years until the great heiress came along. Godfrey, however, did not wait. By 1208 he had married Alice, the daughter and co-heiress of Walter de Cormeilles. Walter was a baron but the barony was small, and Alice had three sisters. Godfrey obtained a few fees and a share of the three hides at Tarrington in Herefordshire which formed the honour's *caput*: not, in other words, very much. Godfrey owed his wife to the king's steward, Peter de Stokes, and doubtless saw the marriage as cementing his position within the court circle in which he had just arrived, the more especially as another daughter went to Peter de Stokes' kinsman,

¹⁸ *RLC*, i, p. 97

¹⁹ *RC*, pp. 176b, 177. Godfrey does not become a regular attestor, however.

²⁰ *RLJ*, pp. 119, 151.

²¹ *RLJ*, pp. 183, 206, 222, 228; *RLC*, i, p. 126.

²² *PR 1215*, p. 94; *RLP*, p. 114; Church, *Household Knights*, p. 13.

²³ *CChR 1226-57*, pp. 137-8.

Walter de Stokes.²⁴ In purely material terms, however, the marriage was clearly a mistake. It left Godfrey with little alternative to the painful and painstaking process of building up an estate through a series of piecemeal acquisitions.

Godfrey's first two manors came between 1206 and 1208, when King John granted him Pinnockshire and Atherstone on Stour. The first was in Gloucestershire, on the western edge of the Cotswolds above Winchcombe, while the second, some fifteen miles to the north, was in Warwickshire, not far from Stratford on Avon. Both properties came from the 'lands of the Normans', the lands seized from those who had stayed in the Duchy after its loss in 1204.²⁵ Both, before their concession to Godfrey, had been held briefly by the Templars, who answered for a farm of £5 a year for Pinnockshire and £4 for Atherstone.²⁶ Both, after Godfrey's death, were said to be worth £10 a year.²⁷ Godfrey was not burdened with a farm, but John had been generous only to a point. The grants were merely during his pleasure, with no vestige of hereditary right. John might have granted Godfrey extensive privileges, but he had given him no permanent lands to go with them. Indeed, he managed to create some uncertainly over the privileges themselves. According to the charter of February 1208 these were indeed to be hereditary, but when, that July, a letter patent was issued proclaiming the concessions, they were to last only as long as Godfrey 'will be in our service by our order'.²⁸ That was often the reality with such grants, whatever their exact terms, as Godfrey was to find out several times in his career.

There was no question of Godfrey's service ceasing during the 1215–17 civil war, although, as Stephen Church has shown, a considerable number of household knights deserted, influenced by ties of neighbourhood, kin and lordship with the rebels.²⁹ A sense of honour, stressed in the letter to Rye, and a fear of loss, may have weighed with Godfrey. He was also under less pressure to defect than those who held in East Anglia and the North, the great seats of the rebellion. Indeed, Godfrey's lord for Crowcombe, Robert de Beauchamp, now of age, was himself a loyalist household knight, and, during the war, castellan of Oxford castle.³⁰ Godfrey's status within John's inner circle is revealed in 1215 by his attestation of royal charters at Christchurch (Hampshire) in January, at Marl-

²⁴ *CRR*, v, pp. 307, 309, 313; Sanders, *Feudal Baronies*, pp. 86–7; *BF*, pp. 100, 808; and *EYC*, v, p. 272 and no. 278 for the possibility that Alice was a widow.

²⁵ For the lands of the Normans, see N. Vincent, *Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester 1205–1238. An Alien in English Politics* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 29–31, 532. 'The lands of the Normans in England (1204–44)' has been the subject of an AHRC-funded research project at the University of Sheffield directed by Daniel Power.

²⁶ *RLC*, i, p. 5b; *PR 1207*, pp. 214, 197; *PR 1208*, p. 112; *BF*, pp. 51, 376, 618, 1338, 1356. Pinnockshire, which was linked to the adjoining Ford and Hyde, is not on modern maps but was in Temple Guiting and Didbrook. For Atherstone, see *VCH Warwickshire*, v, p. 3.

²⁷ *BF*, pp. 1406, 1276.

²⁸ *RLP*, p. 85; *CChR 1226–57*, pp. 137–8.

²⁹ Church, *Household Knights*, ch. 5.

³⁰ Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 32, 49.

borough in February, and at Dover in September.³¹ He also went on a mission to Poitou in March,³² and played a major military role in England: in October and November 1214 he was in charge of the king's serjeants and crossbowmen, and then from September 1215 was the commander at Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye, a vital position given the growing threat of a French invasion.³³ Doubtless as a reward for this service, he received in October 1215 the lands of the west-country rebels Nicholas and Hugh Puinz, worth £110 a year.³⁴

Louis's eventual landing in May 1216 placed Godfrey in a parlous position. He was ordered to stay at Rye, fortify it as best he could with men of the neighbourhood, and sustain the king's great ships there and at Winchelsea with 550 marks the king had given him; this in an order of 8 June issued by John at Devizes while Louis was advancing towards Winchester.³⁵ What precisely happened is unclear but eventually Rye fell to Louis and the order of 8 June is the last we hear of Godfrey's command in the area.³⁶

If Godfrey had some explaining to do, he was able to do it. In August, he gained, during royal pleasure, the extensive lands of the rebel, Henry fitzGerold, and was employed, with a fellow household knight, in receiving 100 marks owed John by the men of Bristol.³⁷ This is the last evidence we have for Godfrey's activities during the war, but he remained in favour with the government formed after John's death by William Marshal as regent for the nine-year-old Henry III. Indeed, it was through a royal letter, attested by the Marshal in January 1217, that Godfrey made the third of his great acquisitions. To Pinnockshire and Atherstone on Stour granted by John back in 1206–8, he now added Pitney and Wearne in Somerset, only ten miles from Beer Crocombe and worth at least £12 a year.

The Marshal's writ referred to 'the land of Pitney and Wearne which was

³¹ *RC*, pp. 205b, 218b.

³² *RLP*, p. 130; *RLC*, i, p. 190b; *PR 1215*, p. 29.

³³ According to Roger of Wendover, in the autumn of 1215, with a fellow household knight, Thomas of Erdington, Godfrey was amongst those sent to Rome to make the king's case against Stephen Langton. The two returned with the news of Langton's suspension and this was published at St Albans on 20 December: *CM*, ii, pp. 633, 635. Given the St Albans element, Wendover's account commands respect but it has problems. The royal letter appointing the proctors (13 September) mentions not Godfrey and Erdington but John Marshal and Geoffrey Luterel (*RLP*, p. 182). It was only on 9 September that Godfrey had been specifically 'sent' to take command at Hastings, Winchelsea and Rye, and on 18 September serjeants were despatched to stay 'with' him there (*RLC*, i, pp. 228, 228b). Orders to Godfrey as commander continue through to December. It is conceivable that he was discharging the post through a deputy, and he was sometimes associated with a fellow household knight, Amfred de Dene, but on balance I think Wendover was muddled by Godfrey's mission in 1209 when he did go with Erdington (*RLJ*, p. 151), and perhaps also, if he was writing in the later 1220s, by other of Godfrey's missions to the papal court.

³⁴ *RLC*, i, p. 233.

³⁵ 'Annals of Dunstable', p. 46; *RLC*, i, p. 274b; and see *RLP*, p. 185b.

³⁶ For Rye in 1217 see D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), p. 27.

³⁷ *RLP*, p. 195; *RLC*, i, p. 285.

of William Revel', which at first sight meant simply the land of some rebel (as William was) liable to be returned at the end of the war.³⁸ In fact, however, the land in question, part of the great royal manor of Somerton, had only been held by the Revels between 1202 and 1208, and thus could perfectly well remain in Godfrey's hands after the peace, as indeed it did. Godfrey's tenure was vulnerable to any future resumption of the royal demesne, but, on the other hand, might be made permanent by a grateful king once he came of age. (Grants in perpetuity were banned by the minority government until that date.) The Marshal's writ acknowledged the nature of Godfrey's prospective tenure, for it stated that he was to hold Pitney and Wearne 'for homage and service', a phrase which never occurs in connection with rebel land, but which was completely appropriate for land held in hereditary right from the crown.³⁹

The early minority of Henry III was a tricky time for John's former household knights, since many of them, Godfrey included, found themselves out of a job. This was inevitable given that, at Christmas 1217, the young king only had seven household knights.⁴⁰ Nor is there any sign that Godfrey was in the household of the regent, William Marshal, for all William's help in securing him Pitney and Wearne. Indeed, there is a gap in Godfrey's royal career lasting until 1220.⁴¹ Godfrey's colleague, Ralph fitzNicholas, left the king's service at this time and became the steward of his tenurial lord, William de Ferrers, earl of Derby.⁴² Godfrey himself also made a move, but one far more adventurous. He entered the service of none other than Falkes de Bréauté. Early in John's reign Falkes, as one of the king's serjeants, had been of far lower status than Godfrey. He was called plain 'Falkes' after, so the story went, the scythe (a very peasant weapon) with which he had killed someone in his father's meadow in Normandy. But his rise since then had left Godfrey far behind. After sterling service in Wales, by November 1214 he was commanding the royal serjeants with Godfrey apparently as his number two.⁴³ Next year he is found as steward

³⁸ *RLC*, i, p. 233.

³⁹ I have given here what I think is the most likely interpretation of 'the land which was of William Revel', but others are possible. John certainly granted land in Pitney and Wearne to William (*RLJ*, p. 35; *RLC*, i, pp. 49, 51) but there is no reference to this in the pipe rolls and William's holdings were presumably subsumed within those of his father, Richard Revel, in Somerton. The most important of these was the £12 worth of land he held between 1202 and 1208 (*PR 1202*, p. 85; *PR 1203*, p. 150; *PR 1208*, p. 103) and this seems coterminous with the £12 worth of land held by Godfrey in Pitney and Werne from Michaelmas 1217: *PR 1219*, p. 173; *BF*, p. 263, and see below, note 52. Richard also held 50s worth of land in Somerton from 1203 which likewise seems to represent land given to William in Pitney and Wearne: *RLJ*, pp. 35, 56; *PR 1203*, p. 150. If this too was included in the grant to Godfrey, it was recovered by Richard Revel at the end of the war: *PR 1219*, p. 173. It is just possible that the grant simply covered the 50s worth of land and that Godfrey got the £12 at a later date, but no writ giving him seisin of this survives. See also *VCH Somerset*, iii, 51.

⁴⁰ Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 117–18; Carpenter, *Minority*, p. 69.

⁴¹ Church, *Household Knights*, p. 129.

⁴² Church, *Household Knights*, p. 30.

⁴³ *RLC*, i, pp. 175b, 176.

of the royal household and thus again as Godfrey's boss. By the end of the war he was sheriff of seven counties across the midlands, keeper of numerous royal castles and, through marriage and wardship, 'the equal of an earl'. Clever, courageous and contemptuous of opposition, he was described by the Tewkesbury annalist as 'more than king in England'.⁴⁴ Godfrey was not serving the king, he was doing even better.

Thus it was that in 1218–19 Godfrey appears as Falkes' deputy at the exchequer, appointed to account for Essex and Hertfordshire, where Falkes had been in command for a brief period after the war.⁴⁵ What else Godfrey did for his new master we do not know, but he was certainly richly rewarded, for it was from Falkes that he received the manor of Milton, just outside Cambridge, the fourth of his manorial acquisitions. Falkes, who was sheriff of Cambridgeshire, had himself acquired the manor, in return for nominal services (a pair of gilt spurs a year), from Peter of Waterbeach. If, as seems the case, Godfrey held from the start in hereditary right, then he had done better from Falkes' service than from the king's. The downside was that Milton was something of a hot potato, as Falkes had extorted it from Peter – or so at least the latter alleged.⁴⁶ Falkes also had many other enemies, none more formidable than William Marshal earl of Pembroke, the son of the regent. That must have been brought home to Godfrey very forcefully early in 1220 when the Marshal claimed a charter in which he gave Falkes various Kentish manors had been wickedly forged in order to disinherit him. Both parties appealed to the witnesses in the charter, one of whom was Godfrey of Crowcombe.⁴⁷

In view of later events, Godfrey was, therefore, very lucky that later in 1220 his career in the king's service at last revived, enabling him to leave Falkes' profitable but perilous employ. There is no evidence beyond the conjunction of dates, but presumably this was thanks to Hubert de Burgh who, eclipsed during the Marshal's regency (and with far less to offer than Falkes), was now in command of central government.⁴⁸ In October 1220 Godfrey went out to Poitou to bring home the king's sister, Joan, the rejected bride of Hugh de Lusignan, on his return becoming one of the knights in charge of her in England.⁴⁹ Then, as the young king's establishment grew and he increasingly travelled with Hubert, Godfrey once again appears at court, acting as a senior household knight. It was clearly as such that in October 1221 he received money to buy the furred cloaks of the king's knights and clerks.⁵⁰

During the next year, however, Godfrey received a blow over Pitney and

⁴⁴ *Annales Monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard (RS, 1864–9), i, p. 64; Carpenter, *Minority*, pp. 20–1, 51, 78–9.

⁴⁵ *PR 1218*, p. 66. In the event, no account was rendered.

⁴⁶ *CChr 1226–57*, p. 44; *Bracton*, ii, p. 65; *CRR*, viii, pp. 191–2; *VCH Cambridgeshire*, ix, p. 179.

⁴⁷ *CRR*, viii, pp. 250–2; *Bracton*, ii, p. 91.

⁴⁸ Hubert's limited ability to help clients in the early minority is a point made in Church, *Household Knights*, p. 119.

⁴⁹ *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, p. 255; *RLC*, i, p. 459b.

⁵⁰ *RLC*, i, pp. 471; 477b; *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, p. 317; *CFR 1220–21*, no. 123.

Wearne. In 1219 the justices in eyre in Somerset recorded that he held there 'by the council of the king',⁵¹ but, whatever the sanction, it availed nothing when a general resumption of the royal demesne was carried through in June 1222. Although this commanded general agreement and was not implemented in any partisan fashion, the loss of Pitney and Wearne was still a bitter pill. Godfrey delayed the surrender as long as he could and, in the end, as we shall see, managed to recover the property.⁵² If, however, Godfrey reflected that Falkes had thus been more generous than the king's government under Hubert, it did not prevent him supporting Hubert in the great crisis at the end of 1223 which led directly to Falkes' fall.

Judging from the tone of the letters addressed to him, Hubert himself had once been close to Falkes, another warning against positing too clear-cut a divide in this period between aliens and Englishmen. The situation, however, was changing. Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, the king's former tutor, deeply resented the control of central government achieved by Hubert de Burgh after the Marshal's resignation in April 1219. By 1223 he was allied with the earl of Chester and a group of sheriffs and castellans, several of whom – for example, Falkes, Peter de Maulay and Engelard de Cigogné – were foreigners like himself.⁵³ In these circumstances, Hubert saw that if he could follow the resumption of the royal demesne with a redistribution of the king's castles and sheriffdoms, he would both slash the power of his enemies (who had the largest share of local office), and do his duty in protecting the rights of the king, thus winning the support of Archbishop Langton and Langtonian-minded bishops. On 10 December 1223, as a first step towards such a redistribution, Hubert and his episcopal allies took the decisive step of giving the king control over his seal, a move they could claim had been authorized by the Pope.⁵⁴

It was at this point that Godfrey entered the fray, for two days later, on 12 December, he was sent to Rome with the clerk, Master Stephen de Lucy, to explain what was happening. Clearly he was completely trusted by Hubert, in whose presence, and in that of the bishops of Bath and Salisbury, the king attested the writs which authorized the mission.⁵⁵ How '*fideliter and attente*' Godfrey and Master Stephen acted in Rome the king was soon to learn from a letter sent by his clerk, William de Sancto Albino. They had to combat the envoy of the dissidents, Robert Passelewe, no mean task judging from his plausible,

⁵¹ *BF*, p. 263.

⁵² *CFR* 1221–2, no. 213; *PR* 1221, pp. lix–lxi. Note that Godfrey's case is that treated in the enrolled writ (which refers to 12 librates of land in Somerton rather than specifically to Pitney and Wearne). In the event the sheriff was responsible only for a quarter of the 1221–2 year, not the half the writ envisaged: *PR* 1222, p. 48.

⁵³ For Godfrey's possible role in Maulay's ejection from Corfe and the sheriffdom of Somerset and Dorset in 1221, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 201. It is difficult to believe Godfrey liked Maulay holding such power in his home county.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, *Minority*, p. 321.

⁵⁵ *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, pp. 417, 481.

passionate and perverted version of events preserved in the Barnwell annals.⁵⁶ The Pope himself, writing to the king, rejoiced at the news announced ‘*voce consona*’ by Stephen and the ‘*nobilis vir, G. de Craucumbe ... viri utique providi et fideles*’, but went on to lecture the king on the virtues of moderation and impartiality.⁵⁷ Since, however, he gave no concrete help to the dissidents, Godfrey’s mission could be accounted a success. Doubtless this was partly thanks to the 500 marks which he and Stephen borrowed to expedite their affairs at the papal court.⁵⁸

Godfrey was back in England in time for the fall of Falkes de Bréauté, transporting money and harness to the king during the siege of Bedford castle.⁵⁹ He also reaped his share of the spoils, being granted in September 1224 Falkes’ manor of Down Ampney, this during the king’s pleasure to sustain him in the king’s service.⁶⁰ Down Ampney was the fifth of Godfrey’s great acquisitions, and perhaps the most valuable, worth, according to a 1237 inquiry, some £40 a year. The manor was in south Gloucestershire, in the fertile plain between the Cotswolds and the Wiltshire Downs, and was lands of the Normans. King John had taken it from Ralph Taissun and John de Préaux and given it to Warin fitz Gerold, from whom it seems to have passed to Falkes on his marriage to Warin’s daughter.⁶¹ Godfrey at once began rebuilding the houses at the manor: in 1225 the king asked eleven local landowners to give him timber to assist with the works.⁶²

Godfrey might certainly think he needed sustenance, because a month after the concession of Down Ampney he was off back to the papal court, again with Stephen de Lucy, this time to correct papal impressions about Falkes’ fall. The king, as he informed the Pope, had ‘placed many things in the mouth of our messengers’, and their oratorical labours can be glimpsed in a long letter they sent home.⁶³ They met first a group of cardinals at Viterbo and rebutted various falsities put about by the envoys of the king of France, Louis VIII, who had just over-run Poitou. Then, in Rome, where they encountered general despair about the state of the kingdom and considerable opposition to their ‘*narracionibus et peticionibus*’, they visited the cardinals individually and saw the pope ‘*in secreto*’. ‘Whatever the Pope decides about our business, God directs our acts and our wills (*voluntates*). Whatever Rome does, you should follow your own path (*vestrum*)’, the letter concluded defiantly.⁶⁴

In the next year, 1225, Godfrey’s diplomatic activities were equally intense,

⁵⁶ *DD*, no. 136; Carpenter, *Minority*, p. 305.

⁵⁷ *RL*, i, pp. 540–1.

⁵⁸ *RLC*, i, pp. 627, 652b.

⁵⁹ *RLC*, i, pp. 615, 640.

⁶⁰ *RLC*, i, pp. 621b, 647.

⁶¹ *BF*, pp. 51, 618, 1406; *CRR*, xiii, no. 920; *CR 1227–31*, p. 135; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 61; I would like to thank Dr Tony Moore for help with Down Ampney.

⁶² *RLC*, ii, p. 61.

⁶³ *DD*, nos 149 and 153; *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, pp. 477, 479; *RLC*, ii, p. 3b.

⁶⁴ *DD*, no. 153 and no. 162 for a further letter.

for he went abroad on three occasions (twice with Master Stephen) in connection with the settlement with the king of France which a papal legate was trying to negotiate. In August he was forgiven debts for his labours and expenses overseas.⁶⁵ In the commission for the last of these 1225 missions, in October, Godfrey is styled for the first time the king's steward.⁶⁶ In household terms, he had reached the top. When the king began to issue charters in 1227, Godfrey (if at court) now appeared regularly amongst the witnesses, as he had never done under John. If he was placed below the bishops and barons, in the company of his fellow stewards he came above all the other household officials.⁶⁷ Godfrey must have owed his appointment to the king, whom he certainly knew how to please, and also to Hubert de Burgh, who remained, until his fall in 1232, the effective head of the government, attesting nearly every charter.⁶⁸

The steward was head of both the household knights and the domestic offices which looked after the household's daily food and drink. Every evening, with the keeper of the wardrobe, he was supposed to hear the account of the household, checking the servings of food and drink against the expenses claimed by the kitchen, pantry, buttery and other offices.⁶⁹ It was usual for the king to have three or four stewards in office at any one time. Godfrey himself, judging from his position in the witness lists, was junior to his long-standing colleague, Ralph fitzNicholas, who is found as steward a few months before him in 1225, but was later senior to John fitzPhilip and Amaury de St Amand. While it was perfectly possible for all the stewards to be at court simultaneously, there was no necessity for this, which meant that Godfrey's appointment did not impinge on his diplomatic career. Indeed, one reason for his elevation was probably to give him more status in his diplomatic activities. Godfrey thus went overseas twice in 1227, thrice in 1228, and once more in 1229, the mission in September 1228, to appeal against the election of Walter of Eynsham as archbishop of Canterbury, being his fourth and last to the papal court.⁷⁰

1225 did not only mark Godfrey's elevation to the stewardship. It also saw his appointment as sheriff of Oxfordshire, castellan of Oxford castle and keeper of the king's manor, houses and park at Woodstock. The king, calling Godfrey his steward, attested the relevant letters, in Hubert's presence, on 31 December.⁷¹ This appointment gave a major new dimension to Godfrey's career. The county and castle of Oxford and the keepership of Woodstock represented money,

⁶⁵ *RLC*, ii, pp. 42b, 47, 56, 64b, 83; *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, pp. 580, 552–3.

⁶⁶ *Pat. R. 1216–1225*, p. 552; *RLC*, ii, p. 83.

⁶⁷ All references to the attestation of charters come from *WL*, the two volumes of royal charter witness lists of Henry III edited by Marc Morris.

⁶⁸ See *WL*, i, *passim*.

⁶⁹ For the steward, see J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship*, 2nd edn (London, 1963), ch. x and Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 8–11. The evidence for him presiding over the nightly account comes from the time of Edward I but had probably been in force much earlier: *English Historical Documents 1189–1327*, ed. H. Rothwell (London, 1974), p. 584.

⁷⁰ *CLR 1226–40*, pp. 47, 54, 81, 128, 130; *CR 1227–31*, pp. 94, 118; *Pat. R. 1225–32*, p. 203

⁷¹ *Pat. R. 1225–32*, p. 9; *RLC*, ii, p. 92.

power and status. As sheriff he ruled over an important Midlands county, which marched well with his properties in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. As castellan of Oxford, he enjoyed what almost became his own private castle (it was little used by the king). As keeper of Woodstock, he played host to the court when it visited the palace, and shared with the young king schemes for its improvement. An interest in building was something the two men had very much in common.⁷² This does not mean such curial custodies had no corresponding value to the king and the justiciar. Admittedly, there was no political or strategic purpose in putting Godfrey into Oxfordshire at the end of 1225; his predecessor, the county knight Walter Foliot, was a perfectly safe pair of hands. Nonetheless, a spread of curial sheriffdoms enabled the government to keep tabs on the localities, and also increased the power of men who were major pillars of the regime. Both Godfrey and his fellow steward Ralph fitzNicholas (sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire between 1224 and 1236) became more formidable players for the king and Hubert as well as for themselves by combining their positions at court with office in the localities – or, at least, that was the idea.⁷³

To retain the Oxfordshire offices for life and improve, from his point of view, the financial terms on which they were held, became one of Godfrey's major objectives. He did not, of course, run the county in person. That was the job of Robert de Haya (unfortunately unidentifiable), who accounted for Godfrey at the exchequer and appears as sheriff in royal letters, records of law cases, and the witness lists of local charters.⁷⁴ The ability to give jobs within the Oxfordshire custodies to followers and kinsman was not the least of their values to Godfrey.⁷⁵ This does not mean that he was uninterested or even uninvolved in local affairs. Sometime between 1226 and 1228 as 'steward of the king' he attested a charter of the abbot of Eynsham, along with Robert de Haya 'then sheriff' and assembled local worthies.⁷⁶ Probably he received a stream of letters from Robert keeping him and thus the court abreast of local affairs, and informing him about lands which might fall into the king's hands, intelligence which was to be vital in facilitating his two major acquisitions in Oxfordshire.

What, then, of Godfrey's acquisitions? By the end of 1225, with twenty years' service behind him, he had still to acquire anything permanent from the king. He held Pinnockshire, Atherstone on Stour and Down Ampney, all lands of the Normans, but all merely during the king's pleasure. Pitney and Wearne, royal demesne, he had gained and then lost. His only permanent acquisition,

⁷² In Godfrey's first year in office, £164 was spent on the repair of Woodstock and Oxford castle: E 372/70, m.23d. Another £48 was spent between 1227 and 1229 on the castle alone: TNA: PRO E 372/72, m.23; E 372/73, 31d.

⁷³ For curial sheriffdoms and their decline see chapter 8 of D. A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London, 1996).

⁷⁴ Carpenter, 'Sheriffs of Oxfordshire', p. 217.

⁷⁵ For Godfrey's nephew as under-sheriff, see below, p. 45. For places found for Godfrey's lesser connections, see *Pat. R. 1225–32*, pp. 128, 439; *CPR 1232–47*, p. 93; *PR 1242*, p. 50.

⁷⁶ *Eynsham Cartulary*, ed. H. E. Salter, 2 vols, Oxford Historical Soc. 49, 51 (1906–7), i, p. 324.

Milton in Cambridgeshire, had come from Falkes de Bréauté. In this he was in much the same position as many other *curiales*, including, indeed, Hubert de Burgh, all stymied by the ban placed on the king making permanent alienations until he came of age. The pressure from these men for reward was at least one reason for the final lifting of the ban in January 1227, before Henry was actually twenty-one.

Godfrey was not slow to cash in. He obtained a series of royal charters during the course of 1227, all conceded during periods when he was at court. The first, however, was curious. Issued on 12 May, it confirmed Ralph de Ruperes' gift of Pinnockshire and Atherstone to Godfrey and his heirs.⁷⁷ Yet Godfrey had received these properties not from Ralph but from King John, who had taken the de Ruperes' lands into his hands as lands of the Normans. There is no sign that the king ever restored them. Logically, therefore, Godfrey should now have been granted the lands by the king, not by Ralph de Ruperes. What was going on? The answer is that Godfrey must have secured the grant from Ralph sometime before 1227, thus safeguarding himself against the latter's restoration. This grant now made it possible for Godfrey to pretend that he was simply asking for the confirmation of the gift of another, not extracting an escheat directly from the king. The smaller the favour, he must have calculated, the easier to obtain it and the greater one's continuing deserts.

Godfrey followed up his charter for Pinnockshire and Atherstone with others which confirmed Falkes' gift of Milton, granted him a weekly market and yearly fair at Crowcombe, and finally, best of all, gave him Down Ampney in hereditary right, though with the reservation (normal with lands of the Normans) that the king could restore it to the right heirs if he wished.⁷⁸ During the following year, Godfrey was able to replace this first charter for Ampney with another which, this time, promised him an exchange if the manor was restored to the heirs.⁷⁹ How the good and the great accepted these concessions was revealed in the witnesses to the 1227 charters, who included earls and bishops as well as fellow *curiales*.⁸⁰ The testimony was important. When Godfrey got his second charter for Ampney in January 1228, there was no one of high status at court, apart from Hubert de Burgh (earl of Kent as well as justiciar), to witness it. Godfrey solved the problem by simply re-using the witness list of the first charter, which also included the earls of Cornwall and Pembroke.⁸¹

For all these advances, Godfrey could not feel secure. In April 1229 he obtained new charters for Ampney, Milton, Pinnockshire and Atherstone, charters the same as the old save for the change of date and witnesses, almost

⁷⁷ *CChR* 1226–57, p. 39; *WL*, i, p. 31.

⁷⁸ *CChR* 1226–57, pp. 44, 54, 61; *WL*, i, pp. 34, 42, 47.

⁷⁹ *CChR*, p. 67; *WL*, i, p. 47. For further grants of property at Down Ampney see *CRR*, xiii, no. 920; *CR* 1227–31, p. 135.

⁸⁰ *WL*, i, pp. 31, 34, 42, 47.

⁸¹ *WL*, i, pp. 47, 52.

certainly a sign of anxiety.⁸² Then suddenly, in October 1229, he was stripped of both the sheriffdom of Oxfordshire and the custody of Woodstock.⁸³ The background here was almost certainly the king's first major quarrel with Hubert de Burgh. Henry had set his heart on the expedition to France which, in alliance with the duke of Brittany, would bring about the recovery of the Angevin empire. Yet, when he arrived at Portsmouth in mid-October 1229, he found a lack of shipping for the transport of his army. Furious, he drew his sword on the justiciar and would have killed him (according to Roger of Wendover) had not the earl of Chester intervened. Henry's anger seems also to have turned on Godfrey. In 1226 the latter had been at Portsmouth to organize the dispatch of the expedition which rescued Gascony, and he probably played a similar role in 1229, hence his absence from court after 6 September, and the king's punitive wrath when he found things incomplete.⁸⁴

In the event the 1229 expedition was postponed until the following spring and the king's relations with his ministers were soon straightened out. In November Godfrey recovered his Oxfordshire offices.⁸⁵ The traumatic episode, however, profoundly altered his conduct. Hitherto he had been frequently absent from court on special missions and assignments. He had spent far less time there than his fellow steward, Ralph fitzNicholas. Now he saw the dangers. From October 1229 until his fall in May 1233, he rarely left the king's side.

Doubtless helped by his near-permanence at court, Godfrey pushed on with developing his landed estate. His Christmas present in 1229 was a charter establishing both a fair and a free warren at Milton, a concession supported by letters close both to the chief forester, Brian de Lisle, and the sheriff of Cambridge-shire, who was to read the charter in full county court and proclaim the fair throughout his bailiwick.⁸⁶ The next few months, during which the king rallied support for his French expedition, were a good time generally to extract concessions. Godfrey gained another charter for Crowcombe which altered the date of the market.⁸⁷ He also, triumph of triumphs, recovered Pitney and Wearne, the royal demesne that he had lost in the great resumption back in 1222. He recovered them, moreover, not during the king's pleasure, or even for life, but in perpetuity in hereditary right. The grant was topped off by the concession of a free warren, and linked to a gift of timber to start work on a new grange. Godfrey was now so much in favour that, when the court reached Portsmouth, he was able to replace this first charter for Pitney and Wearne with a second

⁸² *CChR* 1226–57, p. 94; *WL*, i, p. 93. Godfrey once again used the original witness list for Ampney but had new ones for the charters for Milton, Pinnockshire and Atherstone, which were less important since they only confirmed the gifts of others: *CChR* 1226–57, p. 94; *WL*, i, p. 93.

⁸³ *Pat. R.* 1225–32, p. 276; *CR* 1227–31, p. 221; *CFR* 1228–9, no. 512.

⁸⁴ *RLC*, ii, pp. 114, 114b, 117b, 118b; *Pat. R.* 1225–32, p. 35; *CLR* 1226–40, pp. 151, 152.

⁸⁵ *Pat. R.* 1225–32, p. 313. Godfrey's successor, Robert of Lexington, never accounted.

⁸⁶ *CChR* 1226–57, p. 108; *WL*, i, p. 85; *CR* 1227–31, pp. 279, 280.

⁸⁷ *CChR* 1226–57, p. 117; *WL*, i, p. 91; *CR* 1227–31, p. 319.

which added in some villein properties in next-door Langport.⁸⁸ At the same time, Godfrey also improved the terms on which he held the Oxfordshire sheriffdom, being allowed to answer henceforth for a thirty-mark annual increment above the old farm of the county.⁸⁹

The 1230 expedition, damp squib though it was, had no effect on the favour in which Godfrey now basked. Back in England that winter, when the king was briefly separated from the chancery, he sometimes used Godfrey's seal to authenticate letters.⁹⁰ In the following year Godfrey obtained charters which allowed him to enclose his wood of 'Heibar' (unidentified), confirmed the exemptions granted by John back in 1208, reduced the service owed for Down Ampney from a half to a quarter knight, and licenced a market, fair and free warren at Beer Crocombe. (At Beer, too, he had reduced the amount of knight service he owed). There were also deer to stock the park at Beer and fish (200 bream) to do the same for the pond at Atherstone.⁹¹ Not a bad haul for one year, but it was almost small change. Much more important, in the years 1231 and 1232, were the sixth and seventh of Godfrey's major acquisitions, both from lands of the Normans. Both involved him in what may seem questionable activities.

The first of the manors was Sibford Gower, near Bloxham in north Oxfordshire, valued at £10 a year. Here the intelligence and power Godfrey derived from the sheriffdom was vital. According to his own version of events, given in a later law case, the lord of Sibford, Thomas Gower, had been in Normandy at the time of its loss, but had sent away (presumably to England) his wife, Isabella, and Thomas his son. On her husband's death, Isabella had managed to gain possession of the manor, though only 'at the will of the king'. She had then (apparently in 1231) attempted to intrude her son into Sibford as the heir, something, given that she only held during the king's pleasure, she had no right to do. When Henry III heard of this (it is not said from whom but one can guess), he ordered Godfrey as sheriff to take the manor into the king's hands, and then granted it to him and his heirs in hereditary right. So went Godfrey's story. That Henry granted him the manor hereditarily is certainly true. The relevant instrument was dated 24 June 1231. Whether Godfrey had received any authorization for possessing the manor before that is far less clear. There certainly was a writ which ordered the sheriff to give him seisin during pleasure, but in fact this writ was dated 2 July, a week *after* the grant in hereditary right. It looks as though Godfrey had taken possession without authorization and then

⁸⁸ All the charters had the full works in respect of letters to the sheriffs ordering their implementation. *CChR* 1226–57, pp. 115, 119; *WL*, i, pp. 90, 91; *CR* 1227–31, pp. 304, 306, 308, 330. For the allowance, TNA: PRO E 372/80, m.31.

⁸⁹ *CFR* 1229–30, no.260; *PR* 1230, p. 246; Carpenter, 'Sheriffs of Oxfordshire', pp. 219–20.

⁹⁰ *CR* 1227–31, pp. 460, 461; *Pat. R.* 1225–32, p. 418.

⁹¹ *CChR* 1226–57, pp. 137, 142, 143, 144; *WL*, i, pp. 102, 104, 105 (20 July), 109, 110; *CR* 1227–31, p. 470; *CR* 1231–4, pp. 15, 16. For knight service at Beer owed to the lords of Weston Buckthorn: TNA: PRO CP 25(1) 282/8, no. 51; *CChR* 1226–57, p. 44.

told the king about it. Only subsequently did he get a writ to cover his action. Godfrey also took another precaution. Since Sibford was held from the earl of Warwick, not the king, he secured the earl's confirmation of his tenure.⁹²

The second manor was Corsley in Wiltshire, valued at some £20 a year. In fact Godfrey had held this manor since at least 1225, but only as custodian of the under-age Thomas de Biseleg. Since this was one of the very few wardships Godfrey obtained from the king, one wonders whether he anticipated subsequent events. One can only hope he did not precipitate them. For when Thomas de Biseleg died, apparently still under age, unmarried and childless, the heir was a Norman. The manor thus escheated to the king and was granted in January 1232 to Godfrey – granted, moreover, at once in hereditary right, with a promise of an exchange if ever it was returned to the heirs. There was also a licence for a market, fair and warren. Godfrey celebrated his possession by immediately beginning work on a new manor house. In 1235, just to be completely sure of his tenure, he brought the heir, William fitzRichard, to England, and got him to surrender all his rights.⁹³

In this period Godfrey also improved his position in Oxfordshire. Previously he had held the county and castle of Oxford and the manor, houses and park of Woodstock merely during the king's pleasure. Now, by a letter patent in December 1231, he was granted them for life. At the same time his private profit was increased. First, the increment he owed above the county farm was reduced from thirty to twenty marks. Second, instead of accounting for all the issues of Woodstock above the farm, he was now simply to account for the farm itself, leaving him with everything raised above it. These concessions potentially doubled the private profit Godfrey could make from the Oxfordshire custodies since the days between 1225 and 1229 when he had been stuck simply on a £40 annual allowance.⁹⁴

Godfrey's charters of 1231 had been attested, far more than those of 1227–28, simply by Hubert de Burgh and fellow *curiales*, a sign of the narrowing base of the Hubertian regime.⁹⁵ There was also, from December 1231, an ominous new arrival in the witness lists, namely Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester.⁹⁶ The bishop had returned to England the previous summer, determined to bring down Hubert de Burgh, his vanquisher in the great crisis at the end of 1223.

⁹² *BF*, p. 614; *CChR* 1226–57, p. 135; *WL*, i, p. 104; *CR* 1227–31, p. 521; TNA: PRO Just 1/695, m.4d (*The Oxfordshire Eyre, 1241*, ed. J. Cooper, Oxfordshire Rec. Soc. 56 (1989), no. 305). For an earlier dispute over Isabella's tenure of Sibton which split the Oxfordshire county court: *CRR*, x, pp. 267, 344–6; xi, no. 1843; see *VCH Oxfordshire*, x, p. 235.

⁹³ *RLC*, ii, p. 63; *BF*, p. 381; *CChR* 1226–57, pp. 148, 190–1; *WL*, i, p. 109; *CR* 1231–4, pp. 25, 35; *CPR* 1232–47, p. 87; *VCH Wiltshire*, viii, pp. 15, 16.

⁹⁴ *PR* 1225–32, p. 455; TNA: PRO E 372/76, mm.18, 19; Carpenter, 'Sheriffs of Oxfordshire', p. 221. The calculation here as to profit depends on the £15 annual allowance for keeping Woodstock which he eventually received from Michaelmas 1231. See below p. 43 and note 111.

⁹⁵ *WL*, i, pp. 102, 104, 105 (20 July), 109, 110.

⁹⁶ *WL*, i, pp. 110, 112.

In the vicious struggle which now ensued, Godfrey was in the thick.⁹⁷ He was one of the beneficiaries of the extraordinary oath taken on 2 July 1232 at Burgh in Norfolk, the justiciar's ancestral home, in which the king swore, on pain of papal excommunication, never to infringe the charters he had granted to various *curiales*, Godfrey included. He was also one of the small group who witnessed the even more extraordinary oath taken at the same time by the justiciar, on the king's orders, to coerce the king to keep his oath, should he ever seek to break it.⁹⁸ If Godfrey's participation in these desperate and contentious compacts shows him firmly on Hubert's side, that would be understandable. He owed much of his career to the justiciar, and had been the government's spokesman at Rome during the crisis of 1223–24. He now saw many of those then ousted returning to power, including Peter de Rivallis (des Roches' son or nephew), who, as chamberlain and treasurer of the wardrobe was placed over the household stewards, a complete reversal of the normal order of things.⁹⁹ No wonder de Rivallis later described Godfrey as his enemy.¹⁰⁰

The uncertainty of Godfrey's own position in Hubert's last weeks may be reflected in a remarkable charter discovered by Nicholas Vincent.¹⁰¹ It was issued at court, during this period, by Simon de Monfort and was witnessed, amongst others, by Hubert as justiciar, Ralph fitzNicholas as steward, and Peter de Rivallis as chamberlain and treasurer. Godfrey's name then follows, the last on the list and without any title. Had he been removed from his stewardship? The answer is almost certainly not, but it is surely significant that the recorder of the charter seems to have thought so.¹⁰² Not long after this Hubert himself had gone. Was it on his last day, 29 July, at Woodstock, that, in the presence of Godfrey and Ralph fitzNicholas, he hurled '*verba probrosa et turpia*' at the king – this according to charges Henry later brought against him?¹⁰³

It is testimony to the civilized rules of political conduct, so different from the Tudor age, that Hubert was simply allowed to ride away from court. It was only in late September that Henry, alarmed by his movements, suddenly decided to arrest him. There now followed the most dramatic episode in Godfrey's career, for it was he who went through the night to arrest his former patron. Did Godfrey volunteer for this mission to prove his loyalty to the new regime? Was he sent as the person most likely to persuade Hubert to come quietly? Was he

⁹⁷ For what follows see Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III*, ch. 3 (on the fall of Hubert de Burgh), and Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, ch. 8.

⁹⁸ Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, p. 53; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 164; *WL*, i, pp. 119, 120.

⁹⁹ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 295. When de Rivallis attested his first charter after he became treasurer of the wardrobe he was placed beneath the stewards. In a charter of 7 July, and in all those he attests after that, he appears above them: *WL*, i, pp. 117, 120–1, etc.

¹⁰⁰ *CRR*, xv, no. 1289.

¹⁰¹ N. Vincent, 'Simon de Montfort's first quarrel with King Henry III', *TCE IV*, pp. 174–5, 177.

¹⁰² Godfrey continues to attest royal charters in his usual place between his fellow stewards fitzNicholas and fitzPhilip. In one list, in December 1232, he is specifically described as steward: *WL*, i, pp. 120–5.

¹⁰³ *CM*, vi, p. 74.

simply the only senior man available? Whatever the case, finding Hubert, the host in one hand, a cross in another, taking sanctuary in a chapel at Brentwood, whither he had fled naked from his bed, Godfrey seized him and brought him back to the Tower of London in chains. Such conduct amounted to a scandalous breach of sanctuary, and soon had to be reversed, but there was some excuse. According to Wendover, Godfrey was told to bring Hubert back on pain of hanging, with the king waiting up for his return. Even the official account acknowledged that he had acted out of fear of the king. He had also tried, speaking *ex ore Regis*, to get Hubert to come peacefully, and when that failed, had at least avoided a Becket-type denouement.¹⁰⁴

If Godfrey hoped by his actions to ingratiate himself with the new regime, he was disappointed. His chances can never have been great, as we have seen. Yet his position was far from hopeless. He might come to terms with Richard Marshal, earl of Pembroke, with whom des Roches was initially allied. He might also exploit the continuing regard of the king. As the crisis developed Godfrey resisted an attempt to get him away from court (as a forest justice in Cambridgeshire), and secured from the king a series of letters proclaiming previous concessions and protecting him from future demands and accounts.¹⁰⁵ He also made sure of his hold of Milton by securing a quitclaim from Peter of Waterbeach,¹⁰⁶ and regularized the position at Pinnockshire and Atherstone on Stour by arranging, in effect, to hold the manors direct from the king.¹⁰⁷

None of this stopped the blow which fell on 25 October when Godfrey was summarily dismissed, by a writ authorized personally by the king, from the Oxfordshire sheriffdom, despite his life grant less than a year before.¹⁰⁸ Yet, as with Hubert de Burgh earlier in the year, Henry found it hard to part with his old minister. He continued to use his seal, gave him (in November) a handsome gift of deer to stock the park at Beer Crocombe, and allowed him to continue as keeper of Woodstock and Oxford castle.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, when Henry was at Woodstock in January 1233, and planning with Godfrey the repainting of the palace's great chamber, he granted him Oxford castle and Woodstock once again for life.¹¹⁰ This time, moreover, the concession was made by charter, a distinct step up from the previous letter patent, and specified, as the letter patent did not, that Godfrey should receive a £15 annual allowance for keeping Woodstock.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ *CM*, iii, pp. 226–8; Rymer, *Foedera*, I, i, pp. 207–8 (*CPR* 1232–47, p. 29).

¹⁰⁵ *CFR* 1231–2, nos 30, 97, 184; *CR* 1231–4, pp. 45, 134; *CChR* 1226–57, p. 165.

¹⁰⁶ TNA: PRO CP 25(1) 24/14, no. 22. For Peter's attempt to recover the manor: *CRR*, xiii, no. 917.

¹⁰⁷ *CFR* 1231–2, no. 97. The king conceded that for as long as the lands of the Normans were in his hands, the gilt spurs Godfrey owed annually for the properties should be rendered henceforth to the exchequer and not to Ralph de Ruperes and his heirs.

¹⁰⁸ *Pat. R.* 1225–32, p. 507; *CFR* 1231–2, no. 304.

¹⁰⁹ *CPR* 1232–47, p. 2; *CR* 1231–4, p. 162.

¹¹⁰ *CLR* 1226–40, p. 194; TNA: PRO E 372/77, m. 18. *CChR* 1226–57, p. 174; *WL*, i, p. 126.

¹¹¹ *CChR* 1226–57, p. 174; *WL*, i, p. 126; Carpenter, 'Sheriffs of Oxfordshire', p. 204. Godfrey secured a letter to the exchequer setting out the terms of the charter in full and telling it to

Godfrey's charter was attested by Richard Marshal but by neither des Roches nor de Rivallis. The Marshal's break with the regime in February 1233 and withdrawal from court may thus have weakened Godfrey's position.¹¹² For a few months more he remained at the centre of affairs, authorizing writs and occasionally lending the king his seal.¹¹³ On 16 May, as in April 1229, he was able to replace several of his old royal charters with new ones.¹¹⁴ This, however, was like the vote of confidence in a football manager just before his sacking. Nine days later, in a writ authorized by Peter des Roches, Godfrey was ordered to surrender both Woodstock and Oxford castle to Engelard de Cigogné, victim of the 1223 changes, close associate of des Roches and, like him, from the Touraine. The life-grant had thus proved worthless. At the same time, Godfrey was removed from court. From November 1229 till May 1233 his name appears with monotonous regularity amongst the witnesses of royal charters. Thereafter it is totally absent. Godfrey was out.¹¹⁵

For the next eight months, virtually nothing is known of Godfrey. Then, suddenly, in February 1234, as the bishop's regime began its collapse, he reappeared at court and remained there.¹¹⁶ He was thus present at Gloucester in May for the reconciliation between Hubert and the king. When Hubert, in a remarkable ritual designed to reduce the king's humiliation, came into the royal presence barefoot, arms naked to the elbow, Henry was so overcome with emotion that he would have swooned to the ground, '... but as the earl of Hereford him held and sir Godfrey of Craucombe'.¹¹⁷ The moment, one would have thought, must have been equally traumatic for Godfrey himself.

The next two years were the climax of Godfrey's career. He resumed his career as a diplomat, going on a mission to the Emperor Frederick II, recovered his Oxfordshire offices, made his last major acquisitions, and achieved a new prominence at court. He thus took his share, as one of the stewards, in presiding

enrol them, which it did: *CFR 1232–3*, no. 87; *Memoranda Rolls 1231–3*, no. 2808. The letter patent of December 1231 had simply said that Godfrey was to hold Woodstock at the due and accustomed farm: *Pat. R. 1225–32*, p. 455. There seems to have been debate about what that was because the king, probably in November or December 1232, ordered the exchequer, on Godfrey's behalf, to inquire in its rolls what previous keepers had answered for in the time of Henry II and Richard I, and what allowance they had received: *Memoranda Rolls 1231–3*, no. 223. The charter embodied the results of the inquiry although puzzlingly the pipe rolls have no accounts for Woodstock before 1224. In April 1233 Godfrey secured a letter which ensured the exchequer accorded him the new terms from Michaelmas 1231: *CFR 1232–3*, no. 174; TNA: PRO E 372/76, m.18.

¹¹² *WL*, i, 126. However, the charter was witnessed by Peter de Maulay, now back at court.

¹¹³ *CPR 1232–47*, pp. 8, 14; *CR 1231–4*, pp. 182, 193, 206, 209, 214; *CLR 1226–40*, pp. 210, 214.

¹¹⁴ *CChR 1226–57*, p. 181; *WL*, i, p. 134. De Rivallis attests these charters but not des Roches.

¹¹⁵ *CPR 1232–47*, p. 16. Godfrey last attests on 4 May: *WL*, i, pp. 133–4.

¹¹⁶ For the February date, Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p. 433.

¹¹⁷ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, 2 vols (London, RS, 1887), ii, line 10831. Robert's source for this episode was the annals of Hailes: 'A critical edition of the Annals of Hailes (MS. British Library Cotton Cleopatra D.iii, fols 33–59v), ed. M. N. Blount (University of Manchester M.A. thesis, 1974), p. 53.

with the great judge, William of Raleigh, over the newly created court *coram rege*.¹¹⁸ He also played a larger role than before in general business. True, the evidence for that is, up to a point, misleading, as it simply reflects the greater frequency with which the chancery recorded on whose authority it issued royal letters. In the stable days of Hubert's power such notes appeared relatively rarely. Thereafter they are much more frequent, doubtless indicating the desire of the chancery to cover itself in times of political uncertainty. None the less, with des Roches, de Rivallis, Stephen of Seagrave (Hubert's successor as justiciar) and Hubert himself gone (he was never restored to office), and with the justiciarship itself left vacant, there was unprecedented space in which Godfrey could act. Thus it was that between June and December 1234 he authorized fifty-six royal letters, as opposed to forty-five authorized by the king and twenty-six each by Walter Mauclerc, bishop of Carlisle, and Ralph fitzNicholas. In the next year fitzNicholas and Godfrey headed the list, authorizing twenty-eight and twenty-six letters respectively.¹¹⁹

Some of the letters Godfrey authorized related to his duties as steward; they dealt with such matters as payments to knights and the purchase and distribution of wine and other supplies.¹²⁰ Others – appointments to sheriffdoms, licences to enter and leave the kingdom, restorations of lands seized by the king, and gifts of wine, deer and timber – show his role in the general business of government.

One of the writs which Godfrey authorized in May 1234 was of crucial importance in easing him back into Oxfordshire. This was the appointment of Engelard de Cigogné as castellan of Windsor and Odiham, which cleared the way for his replacement as sheriff of Oxfordshire by John le Brun, none other than Godfrey's nephew and former ward. (A Gloucestershire knight, he was the son of Godfrey's sister-in-law.)¹²¹ This gave Godfrey all the real power (it was he who was eventually ordered to surrender the sheriffdom), without the troubling prospect of having to account at the exchequer.¹²² Shortly afterwards, Godfrey himself replaced Engelard at Oxford castle and Woodstock, this under the terms of a charter which granted him the custodies for life, the third to do so!¹²³ At Woodstock, where the king spent thirty-six days in 1235, work was carried out on a new marshalsy. At Oxford, where Godfrey was given firewood for his hearth in the castle, no less than £197 12s was spent in 1234–35 on a

¹¹⁸ *CRR*, xv, no. 1048; see pp. xxviii–xxix, xxxvii–xxxix (by Meekings); for the mission to the emperor, see *TNA: PRO E 372/79*, m.21d., a reference I owe to Ben Wild.

¹¹⁹ *CRR*, xv, pp. lxi–ii.

¹²⁰ For example, *CR 1231–4*, pp. 430, 434, 442, 490.

¹²¹ *CPR 1232–47*, pp. 49, 50. Engelard had become sheriff in May 1233. For John see *CFR 1225–6*, no. 282; *BF*, pp. 1338, 440, 444.

¹²² *CPR 1232–47*, p. 141. For Godfrey as sheriff see also *The Oxfordshire Eyre, 1241*, no. 759.

¹²³ *CFR 1233–4*, no. 235. The charter rolls themselves are missing for this year. The terms were the same as in the charter of January 1233 save that the manor and hundred of Wooton which had come into the king's hands in 1233 were also included.

new tower.¹²⁴ In terms of his custodies, Godfrey had thus put the clock back to before 1232, but, in one important respect, he also advanced further. Sometime in 1234 he seems to have become constable of the Tower of London, a position held before his fall by Hubert de Burgh himself. Here Godfrey used as his deputy his brother-in-law, Hugh Giffard, who had married another of his wife's sisters.¹²⁵

So what of Godfrey's wife, Alice de Cormeilles? Remarkably, during this period, she too began to enjoy the king's favour. Before the 1230s there are few references to her but Godfrey was evidently concerned for her welfare. In 1228, before he departed on his last mission to the papal court, he secured a royal letter which promised that, in the event of his death, Alice might gain her inheritance and dower without difficulty, and would not be forced to re-marry so long as she wished to remain single.¹²⁶ Evidently Godfrey was not prepared to rely simply on the provisions of Magna Carta, which promised widows just that. It was not unusual for King Henry, warm-hearted and affectionate, to make gifts to the wives of his *curiales*. Yet his sudden attention to Alice between September 1234 and July 1236 seems altogether exceptional. During that period she received no less than seven separate gifts, three of firewood for her hearth and four of deer. It seems unlikely that Godfrey alone could have secured this degree of favour for his wife. Alice must surely have been at court, winning the king's affection for herself. She was almost certainly there for the New Year gift-giving celebrations at Guildford in 1235, when she gave the king a silk belt decorated with gold and silver.¹²⁷

During these years, Godfrey also made further developments to his landed estate. In April 1234 he signalled his return to court by securing a charter allowing the creation of a substantial park at his manor of Corsley in Wiltshire, later adding a license for a free warren, a market and a fair there.¹²⁸ Then, in October 1234, came his final major acquisition from the king, Piddington, some ten miles north-east of Oxford. The manor, valued at £20 a year, had been in the hands of Godfrey's fellow household knight Joldewin de Douai, having escheated to the king with other lands of the count of Boulogne. Godfrey had kept a close eye on it, and when Joldewin died in the autumn of 1234 he was

¹²⁴ *CPR 1232–47*, p. 64; TNA: PRO E 372/79, mm.31, 32. The amount spent is underestimated in *HKW*, ii, p. 773.

¹²⁵ I deduce this from *CPR 1232–47*, pp. 93, 127; *CR 1231–4*, pp. 581, 582. Hugh's formal appointment in 1236 probably marks the moment of Godfrey's dismissal: *CPR 1232–47*, p. 140. For the relationship: *RLC*, i, p. 301b; *ERF*, i, p. 329.

¹²⁶ *Pat. R. 1225–32*, p. 201.

¹²⁷ *CR 1231–4*, p. 521 (and for a gift in 1231, p. 484); *CR 1234–7*, pp. 23, 135, 204, 218, 222, 283; for Alice's gift, see TNA: PRO C 47/3/4/1, a source which is the subject of a forthcoming paper by Ben Wild.

¹²⁸ *CR 1231–4*, p. 413; *CChR 1226–57*, pp. 190–1; Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Twyne 24, p. 646, which has material from the lost cartulary of Studley priory. I am grateful to Nicholas Vincent for bringing this source to my attention.

able to secure it from the king in hereditary right.¹²⁹ This was quickly followed by Godfrey's ninth and last significant acquisition, which came not from the king but from Gilbert Marshal, the new earl of Pembroke. The stream of presents from those who desired access to the king, and wished to process business at court, must always have been a major source of income to the stewards. Gilbert, however, decided that he needed something more formal and permanent. He had been much at court since his succession in the summer of 1234 and was well placed to gauge the power of Godfrey and Ralph fitzNicholas. Accordingly, in December 1234, with the king's consent, he granted them in hereditary right part of his manor of Long Compton in Warwickshire. Godfrey's share was less than fitzNicholas', but it still amounted to a carucate of land in demesne and seven virgates held in villeinage. It also sat nicely with Pinnockshire and Atherstone, from both of which it was roughly fourteen miles distant. Godfrey soon secured a confirmation of his tenure from Long Compton's overlord, the countess of Hereford.¹³⁰

From his beginnings, with his two ancestral manors, Godfrey had, therefore, more than quadrupled his landed estate. His revenue from land certainly exceeded the median baronial income between 1160 and 1220 of £115 a year, and probably approached the average of £202 a year.¹³¹ (The valuations which we have for seven of Godfrey's new manors put their annual yield at £136.)¹³² Beyond that, of course, there was also the income, perhaps as much again, which came from Godfrey's Oxfordshire offices, and his career at court. Godfrey, unlike many *curiales*, never seems to have used his own money to make major acquisitions.¹³³ He had no need. Of the nine properties, all were given to him, seven by the king.

Godfrey's acquisitions had a clear regional focus, being largely confined to five contiguous counties: Somerset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. Only the manor he gained privately (from Falkes de Bréauté), Milton in Cambridgeshire, was further afield. The formation of this estate was helped by Godfrey's knowledge of the local situation in Somerset, where his ancestral lands lay, and in Oxfordshire, where he became sheriff. Still more important was Godfrey's position at court, for that, too, revealed what was coming into the king's hands, and provided wonderful opportunities to make a play for it. It was still a difficult and time-consuming business, however. John's suspicious nature, the long minority of Henry III (during which no grants in perpetuity could be made), and the factional rivalries at court thereafter ensured that. Godfrey was unlucky in that his career coincided with the growing belief that the royal demesne should be inalienable. Only one of his properties, Pitney

¹²⁹ CR 1227–31, p. 49; CR 1231–4, pp. 202, 533; CR 1234–7, p. 2; BF, p. 614.

¹³⁰ CChR 1226–57, pp. 188–9; WL, i, p. 139; *The Warwickshire Hundred Rolls of 1278–9. Stoneleigh and Kineton Hundreds*, ed. T. John (Oxford, 1992), p. 317; VCH Warwickshire, v, pp. 53, 55.

¹³¹ S. Painter, *Studies in the History of the English Feudal Barony* (Baltimore, 1943), p. 170.

¹³² BF, pp. 318, 614, 618, 1406, 1766; CChR 1257–1300, p. 150; TNA: PRO C 132/46, no.3.

¹³³ For acquisitions at Taddington near Pinnockshire, see CChR 1226–57, p. 44.

and Wearne, came from the demesne, and that took some doing. On the other hand, he was extremely lucky that his career equally coincided with the lands of the Normans coming on stream. The latter were indeed the great bank on which the post-1204 kings drew for patronage, with *curiales* seeking payments in, in the hope of benefiting from payments out. Five of the manors Godfrey gained from the king thus came from this source, while another came from the former lands of the count of Boulogne. There was still a problem, however, for the king usually kept open the possibility of returning such lands to the heirs.

In acquiring his lands, Godfrey had thus to proceed stage by stage, with great care and patience. He usually obtained properties first during the king's pleasure, and only later in hereditary right; he tried to protect his tenure by securing confirmations and quitclaims from overlords and previous holders; and he guarded against changes in the political climate by replacing old charters with ones up to date. Having acquired land, Godfrey did not simply sit back, any more than he did on his two ancestral manors. On the contrary, one of the most striking features of his activity is the way he endowed his properties with markets and fairs, and adorned them with houses, granges, parks and fishponds. Here, again, the king's patronage was vital, for he licensed the free warrens, markets and fairs, and gave timber for the buildings, deer for the parks and fish for the fishponds.

Godfrey's landed estate must have brought him an income far beyond anything strictly necessary for his support in the king's service, especially when one adds in the Oxfordshire offices. Edward I, after all, thought a wardship worth £50 a year quite sufficient for his steward Hugh fitz Otho.¹³⁴ Although, moreover, Godfrey could make visits while travelling with the king, he had little leisure to enjoy his estate before retirement, and when that came it was unwelcome. What, then, motivated his acquisitions? One obvious hypothesis is that he wished to set up his descendants, yet here we come to a problem, for it is absolutely clear that Godfrey's marriage to Alice de Cormeilles was childless. Had there been a child (even if it died in infancy), then Godfrey, on Alice's death in 1239, would have enjoyed a life interest in her inheritance. As it was, it passed to her sisters and their descendants.¹³⁵ Of course, the hope of children may have fired Godfrey's early endeavours, but by the time he was securing lands in hereditary right in and after 1227, he must surely have feared that his marriage, already some twenty years old, would be childless. Nor, judging from what eventually happened, did Godfrey intend his estate to pass to the nieces who were probably his heirs.

We need, therefore, to find a different perspective on Godfrey's lands, and, up to a point, this is provided by his relationship with Studley priory. Godfrey's connection with Studley, a nunnery some seven miles north-east of Oxford, presumably began with his appointment as sheriff at the end of 1225. Perhaps

¹³⁴ *English Historical Documents 1189–1327*, ed. Rothwell, p. 581.

¹³⁵ *ERF*, i, p. 329.

it strengthened with the acquisition of Piddington, less than four miles from the house, in 1234. Godfrey's influence on the priory's behalf may well be reflected in the gifts of firewood and building timber it received from the king between 1231 and 1235.¹³⁶ At some point, moreover, a close kinswoman, Alice of Crowcombe, became a nun at the house, and then in 1251, five years after Godfrey's death, its prioress.¹³⁷ As we will see, it was to Studley that Godfrey determined to leave at least some of his property. The desire to do so may well have been a factor behind some of his later acquisitions.

An early wish to found a dynasty and a later one to endow a priory, were not, however, the only reasons for Godfrey's acquisitions. A far more continuing and insistent motive, we may think, was to demonstrate his worth as a great *curialis*, or, to put it as Godfrey might have done, in the terms of the 1216 letter to Rye, to show that his faithful service had indeed won him praise and honour from men. There was, therefore, no necessary conflict between Godfrey the man of property and Godfrey the man of principle. The one was testimony to the other. That testimony was most obvious in the localities. Crowcombe manors must have stood out like beacons in the landscape with their markets, fairs, parks, ponds and buildings, with their influx of merchants and craftsmen, and with the long carts clogging up the roads as they brought in timber for the various works from the neighbouring forests. On more than one occasion the king issued orders allowing such transport free passage.¹³⁸ Doubtless, when the new manor houses were finished they evoked the kind of awe evinced by Matthew Paris when describing the house built by one of Godfrey's successors, Henry III's steward, Paulinus Peyvre, at Toddington in Buckinghamshire.¹³⁹ In Somerset, of course, where Godfrey gave the same treatment to his ancestral manors as he did to his acquisitions, there was a particular resonance. Here was the local boy made good.

Even more important was the effect amongst those who really counted, the magnates and *curiales* at court. Although the king never stayed long enough on a Crowcombe manor for it to leave a mark in the chancery rolls, several were close enough to the royal itinerary to entertain the court or individual courtiers en passant. Indeed, we know that Godfrey welcomed the king to Piddington, near Oxford. Thus he could appear to his colleagues and rivals as a gracious host as well as a great builder. Equally important was Godfrey's success in winning such concessions from the king in the first place, or, before 1232, from the king and Hubert de Burgh. The witness lists to Godfrey's charters reveal both those who

¹³⁶ *CR* 1227–31, p. 526; *CR* 1231–4, pp. 62, 115, 188; *CR* 1234–7, p. 145; *CChR* 1226–57, p. 174; *WL*, i, p. 126.

¹³⁷ *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste*, ed. F. N. Davis (Canterbury and York Soc., 1913), p. 408. It is natural to think that Alice was named after Alice de Cormeilles but an earlier Alice of Crowcombe is found in 1199: *PBKJ*, i, nos. 2582, 2639. For Studley, see *VCH Oxfordshire*, ii, pp. 77–9.

¹³⁸ *CR* 1227–31, p. 502; *CR* 1231–4, p. 35.

¹³⁹ *CM*, v, p. 242.

approved the grants, and those who were impressed by them. Such favours were the most potent proof possible of the value set on Godfrey's faithful service.

At the start of 1236, Godfrey thus seemed at the height of his power, but everything was about to change. The king's marriage to Eleanor of Provence that January brought both a new minister, the queen's uncle, William bishop-elect of Valence, and a reform of the king's finances. *Curiales* were now removed from their local custodies, which were placed under county knights or special keepers who were to answer for the full value at the exchequer. For the third and last time, Godfrey thus lost his Oxfordshire offices, once again despite his life grant of Woodstock and the castle.¹⁴⁰ Unlike his colleague Ralph fitzNicholas, Godfrey managed to hang on to his stewardship, but the respite was brief. During the course of the great parliament (the first *eo nomine*) of January–February 1237, which confirmed Magna Carta and granted taxation, he vanishes from court, apparently being replaced as steward by the magnate John fitzGeoffrey. John's appointment to the king's council had been demanded by the parliament, but whether it also called for Godfrey's dismissal is unknown. Matthew Paris at least thought that Godfrey's fall from favour (to which he gave no precise date) was unjust and ascribed it to the king.¹⁴¹ Yet Godfrey was sufficiently *persona grata* to receive gifts of deer in both June 1237 and January 1238.¹⁴² Thereafter, however, he suffered over six years of neglect. Given that Godfrey was still vigorous in mind and body, I doubt very much whether his retirement was voluntary.

There was one compensation (or was it perhaps an aggravation?), namely the subsequent career of Godfrey's brother-in-law, Hugh Giffard. Godfrey had plucked him from the humdrum life of a Wiltshire knight and made him his deputy at the Tower of London.¹⁴³ On Godfrey's dismissal in 1236, Hugh had then entered the king's service, where his rise, along with that of his wife Sybil (Godfrey's sister-in-law), was meteoric. Clearly Sybil had the same ability to please at court as had her sister, Alice of Crowcombe. She acted as midwife at the birth of the Lord Edward in 1239 and went on to a long career in the queen's service. Hugh himself became head of the prince's establishment at Windsor. The couple became the parents of an archbishop, a bishop and two abbesses.¹⁴⁴ At least Godfrey now had time to enjoy his estates, but there lay a rub. Hitherto litigation had been on his own initiative, designed to enforce his rights and secure his titles.¹⁴⁵ Now, before the Oxfordshire eyre of 1241, Thomas

¹⁴⁰ *CPR 1232–47*, p. 141. For a definitive account of these reforms, see R. Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance under Henry III 1216–1245* (Oxford, 1987), ch. 2, and see also Carpenter, *Reign of Henry III*, pp. 166–71.

¹⁴¹ *CM*, iii, p. 383; *CM*, iv, p. 191; *WL*, i, pp. 160–1; *CRR*, xvi, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.

¹⁴² *CR 1234–7*, p. 453; *CR 1237–42*, p. 19.

¹⁴³ For Hugh in Wiltshire see *CRR*, xii, nos 843 and 1476; *Pat. R. 1225–32*, pp. 78, 213; *BF*, pp. 708, 720.

¹⁴⁴ *CPR 1232–47*, p. 140; M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 27, 32, 100, 105–6, 222; Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1962), p. 458.

¹⁴⁵ *CRR*, v, pp. 307, 309, 313; vi, pp. 14, 71, 127, 172, 223, 277, 352; *CRR*, xiii, nos 917 and 920; *BNB*, ii. no. 624.

Gower junior brought an assize of novel disseisin against him for the recovery of Sibford Gower. Godfrey evidently judged it pointless to stand on his charter of King John which protected him from litigation save *coram rege*. Instead, he appeared before the justices, and told the story we have recited earlier, eventually producing the writ which had first given him seisin. It was to no avail. The next year, it is Thomas Gower, not Godfrey of Crowcombe, who is found in possession of Sibford.¹⁴⁶

Godfrey, however, was far from finished. His wife Alice had died in 1239. At some time in the next few years (certainly before February 1244), he married again. If he hoped at last for heirs, he was disappointed, but his wife, the widowed Joan de Somery, did bring him dower lands in Essex and Cambridge-shire.¹⁴⁷ More was to come. According to Matthew Paris the king, just before he left for Poitou in 1242, recalled to his favour 'which they never deserved to lose' both Ralph fitzNicholas and Godfrey of Crowcombe.¹⁴⁸ FitzNicholas joined the king in Poitou and soon resumed his career as steward. Godfrey, by contrast, gave the king £10 to stay in England, although exempted from such payments by a charter he obtained in 1232.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps Paris misdated his return, but return Godfrey did. In the summer of 1244 the king moved north in force to confront the king of Scotland. On the way, at Geddington, Godfrey suddenly re-appears, next below Ralph fitz Nicholas, amongst the witnesses of a royal charter. It looks as though, in a moment of political tension, he had been recalled to the colours. Certainly Godfrey, far from his own lands, was doing more than just paying a polite visit to court. He attested again at Doncaster, and then when the king reached Newcastle was commissioned with the King's Bench judges to hear assizes at York.¹⁵⁰ Next year, he attested in March, April, May, July and November at such places as Ely, Windsor, Woodstock and Worcester.¹⁵¹

So, forty years after he first appeared at court, and now presumably at least in his sixties, Godfrey was back. The change in his fortunes was encapsulated in a five-mark fine he and his wife made for a concession in February 1244. Later in the year, after Godfrey's return, the fine was pardoned.¹⁵² Gifts now flowed as of old: wine for Godfrey, game for his wife, deer for the park at Beer Crocombe, fish for the pond at Atherstone.¹⁵³ Yet there was also a change, one which reflected an awareness that Godfrey was near the end of his career, indeed of his life. For the issue in 1245 became not, as of old, what lands the king would

¹⁴⁶ *The Oxfordshire Eyre*, 1241, no. 305; *BF*, pp. 823, 837. The judgement does not survive. Perhaps it turned on the date of the writ which gave Godfrey seisin (see above, pp. 40–1).

¹⁴⁷ *CPR 1232–47*, p. 419; *BF*, p. 922; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 347.

¹⁴⁸ *CM*, iv, p. 191.

¹⁴⁹ *TNA: PRO C 60/38*, m.3; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 165.

¹⁵⁰ *WL*, i, p. 192; *CR 1242–7*, p. 259.

¹⁵¹ *WL*, ii, pp. 4–6, 9.

¹⁵² *ERF*, i, p. 412; *CPR 1232–47*, p. 419; *CR 1242–7*, p. 219. The fine was itself for the temporary possession of a privilege he should have had under his 1208 charter from King John.

¹⁵³ *CR 1242–7*, pp. 228, 298, 299 (see *CR 1227–31*, p. 470); *CR 1242–7*, pp. 370, 379; *CLR 1240–5*, p. 296.

give Godfrey, but what lands Godfrey would give the king. This may well have been a reason why he was brought back to court in the first place.

Despite the loss of Sibford Gower, Godfrey was still possessed of ten significant properties, all held in hereditary right. What was to become of them? Godfrey had no children, but he did have heirs. One was Claricia of Crowcombe, who was later to claim the manor of Milton.¹⁵⁴ Another was his 'niece' Petronilla. Since Godfrey had married her to his ward, John le Brun, son of his first wife's sister, it seems likely that Petronilla came from the Crowcombe side of the family. Perhaps both Claricia and Petronilla were daughters of a sister or brother. If so, both could expect a share of the Crowcombe estate.¹⁵⁵ Godfrey, however, decided otherwise. He evidently preferred Studley priory with his kinswoman Alice to Claricia, Petronilla and John le Brun. And John himself, who had settled down to the ordinary life of a Gloucestershire knight (in 1258 he became sheriff under the terms of the Provisions of Oxford), had no power to stop him.¹⁵⁶ What now happened must have required a good deal of negotiation between Godfrey and the king, since royal consent was necessary for the disposal of anything held from the crown. The king, moreover, had a clear objective of his own, namely to recover what he had himself once given away.

Thus it was that in or before May 1245, Godfrey granted the king the reversion of Pinnockshire and Atherstone on Stour (his first acquisitions from King John).¹⁵⁷ At some time he must have done the same for Down Ampney, Pitney and Wearne and Piddington.¹⁵⁸ Most probably, it was in return for these concessions that the king allowed Godfrey to grant the final manor he held from the crown, Corsley in Wiltshire, to the nuns of Studley. Certainly in April 1245 he issued a confirmation of Godfrey's gift, a gift which shows that the nuns were to support two chaplains celebrating divine service daily for the souls of Godfrey and his second wife, with one chaplain also celebrating daily for the Virgin Mary (to whom Studley was dedicated), and the other for all the faithful departed.¹⁵⁹

With his royal manors gone, Godfrey had still his ancestral estates to dispose of, together with the properties he had gained from sources other than the crown. Crowcombe itself he now gave to Studley priory, this time for the souls of both his wives, Alice and Joan.¹⁶⁰ He also endowed the nuns with both a

¹⁵⁴ See below, note 163.

¹⁵⁵ Petronilla is described as Godfrey's 'niece' in the charter cited in note 162 below.

¹⁵⁶ In his debts as sheriff of Gloucestershire the exchequer allowed John a surplus he had run up during his time as sheriff of Oxfordshire, twenty-two years before: TNA: PRO E 372/80, m.27.

¹⁵⁷ CR 1242–7, pp. 309–10. The spurs here must refer to the ones owed for these manors.

¹⁵⁸ There is no specific evidence for this but these manors all returned to the king on Godfrey's death: ERF, ii, p. 1; CChR 1226–57, p. 331; CR 1247–51, p. 160.

¹⁵⁹ CChR 1226–57, p. 283.

¹⁶⁰ J. Dunkin, *Oxfordshire. The History and Antiquities of the Hundreds of Bullingdon and Ploughley*, 2 vols (London, 1823), i, p. 138 where the charter is transcribed from the patent rolls of Richard II, see CPR 1381–5, p. 478.

£6 annual rent from his second ancestral manor at Beer Crocombe and the property at Long Compton in Warwickshire, which he had gained from Gilbert Marshal.¹⁶¹ There was little now left for John le Brun, but there was something, for Godfrey granted him and his heirs Beer Crocombe itself, less the annual payment to Studley and a life interest for John's wife, Petronilla (she was still there in 1284–5).¹⁶² Godfrey had one final arrangement to make, and it was for Joan, his second wife. Initially he had assigned her in dower the manor of Milton just outside Cambridge. (This was the property he had acquired from Falkes de Bréauté.) But then he went further, though in a roundabout way. When the king visited Piddington, probably at some time in 1245 or 1246, Godfrey granted Milton to Robert Mucegros and his heirs and assigns. He was, it was later affirmed, *compos mentis* when he did so. Mucegros, the steward of the queen, was a fellow Somerset man, and quite possibly a Crowcombe protégé. He may well have facilitated Godfrey's return to court (he attests Godfrey's first charter when back). He also attests all the surviving charters in which Godfrey disposed of his estates. The idea now was for Mucegros to grant Milton, as eventually he did, to Joan in hereditary right, which meant that, unlike dower, it could pass to her heirs.¹⁶³

It is impossible to know how far these dispositions accorded with Godfrey's original intentions. Did he see the return of the manors to the king as almost the final blazon of his loyal service? Or had the king softened Godfrey up through recalling him to court and then exploited his infirmities? One can understand why Godfrey gave Crowcombe itself to Studley, for that was deeply symbolic, like giving himself to the house. But did Godfrey wish to endow Studley with more royal manors, and why, in the end, did he choose Corsley, and not the next-door Piddington? Perhaps the king retained that because it was close to Oxford. Was the queen, too, involved, hence the role played by Robert Mucegros? Perhaps Joan, with Milton under her belt, was always intended for the man who became her next husband, the queen's Savoyard kinsman and future royal steward, Ebulo de Montibus.¹⁶⁴ Another rising *curialis* who became a favourite of the queen, Geoffrey de Langley, also profited, securing Atherstone.¹⁶⁵ Langley

¹⁶¹ *Warwickshire Hundred Rolls*, p. 317.

¹⁶² Somerset Record Office, Taunton, Wyndham papers DD/WY Box 7, amongst Bundle T1 (I am most grateful to Nicholas Vincent for sending me a transcript and photocopy of this charter); *FA*, iv, p. 272.

¹⁶³ *Bracton*, ii, p. 98 (which shows that the point of the grant to Mucegros was to get round the legal rule that a husband could not make a gift to his wife); *CPR 1232–47*, p. 450; *CChR 1226–57*, p. 347; *CPR 1247–58*, p. 79; *ERF*, ii, pp. 127, 238. In a settlement in 1252 Joan and Ebulo acknowledged Claricia of Crowcombe's right to Milton. She then granted it to them hereditarily for a £10 annual payment, half of which was to come from Joan's dower in Beer Crocombe: TNA: PRO CP 25(1) 283/13, no. 265; *CPR 1247–58*, p. 239.

¹⁶⁴ Howell, *Eleanor de Provence*, p. 52–53. For Robert, see Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, pp. 201–2; Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, pp. 15, 23.

¹⁶⁵ *CChR 1226–57*, p. 331; *The Langley Cartulary*, ed. P. R. Coss (Dugdale Society 32, 1980), p. xii.

did, however, have to give land in exchange, and if other *curiales* were circling round hoping for a share of the spoils they were beaten off. In the short term at least, the manors remained with the king.¹⁶⁶

Godfrey of Crowcombe's last appearance at court was in November 1245 at Worcester.¹⁶⁷ By the next year he may well have retired to Studley. At any rate, builder to the last, in August 1246 the king granted him timber to make a *solarium* there. A gift of wine followed in September. Two months later, Godfrey was dead.¹⁶⁸

For all the abundant evidence, no account of Godfrey's life can really be complete. Until his attachment to Studley priory becomes apparent, we know little of his religious attitudes. When he cried out in his letter home from the papal court, 'God directs our acts and our wills,' did that reflect a real sense of a life lived with divine support, something certainly apparent in his old patron, Hubert de Burgh? We can equally only speculate, as we have done, as to how far ideas of faithful service and the desire to obtain praise and honour from men shaped Godfrey's actions. What, of course, we do see, in the fullest measure, is Godfrey's extraordinary versatility in the royal service, and his success and methods in building up a landed estate. That success was much greater under Henry III than it had been under John. Like many others, Godfrey received land from John only during royal pleasure.¹⁶⁹ From Henry he gained seven manors in hereditary right. The contrast with Edward I is even sharper. As Michael Prestwich has put it, Edward 'was careful not to make hereditary grants of estates in England. Even those household knights who rose from relatively humble origins in the course of the reign received relatively little from the Crown.'¹⁷⁰ Yet it is but fair to add that Henry, apart from Pitney and Wearne, gave escheats rather than royal demesne and, in the end, recovered what he had lost. In his final treatment of Godfrey, Henry III appears almost Edwardian.

¹⁶⁶ In 1253 Pinnockshire was granted to Hayles abbey but in return for an annual rent: *CPR 1247–58*, p. 204. Down Ampney was eventually granted to Edmund, the king's second son, who enfeoffed one of his knights: *CChR 1257–1300*, p. 161. Pitney and Wearne went to Eleanor of Castile and then were granted with Piddington to Alan de Plugenet in return for a quitclaim of the New Forest: *CChR 1226–57*, pp. 149–50; J. C. Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile* (London, 1995), p. 188.

¹⁶⁷ *WL*, ii, p. 9.

¹⁶⁸ *CR 1242–7*, pp. 452, 459; *ERF*, ii, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ Church, *Household Knights*, pp. 90–4.

¹⁷⁰ M. Prestwich, 'Royal patronage under Edward I', *TCE I*, p. 52. Edward did, however, concede land to household knights through marriages and wardships: S. L. Waugh, 'The fiscal uses of royal wardships in the reign of Edward I', *TCE I*, p. 57.