Bridgwater Castle and Demesne towards the end of the Fourteenth Century

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THE subjects of this enquiry are the internal economy of a late medieval English castle and the administration of the demesne of which it was the head. The source is a series of Ministers' Accounts which have been preserved in the Public Record Office,[1] the earliest of which is dated 1347, the latest 1413, while the bulk of them lie within the last two decades of the fourteenth century. Within these twenty years is to be found much that helps us to determine the uses which the Castle then served, and to observe how the demesne, with the Castle as its head and the manors of Milverton and Odcombe as its limbs, was managed for the benefit of its lords.

The Mortimers at this time were Earls of March and Ulster. Their wide-spread possessions were scattered over England and Ireland, with Wigmore Castle in Herefordshire as their chief seat. During these years neither they nor their families seem to have come into residence in their castle of Bridgwater —not even in the hunting season when the Somerset forests of which they were the foresters-in-fee[2] could have given them bucks by the score for their chase and venison for their table.

[1] P.R.O. Ministers' Accounts 968/17, 19 to 29; 969/1 to 21; Accounts of Collector of Rents of Edward Gray, lord of Lisle, 1475, 969/22–3; Petitions to the Lord Chancellor, C1/27/184, C1/28/473. I should like here to express my thanks to Miss Carus-Wilson for having brought these valuable records to my notice, and to the Bridgwater Corporation for having procured photostats of them which have enabled me to transcribe and study them at my leisure.

[2] Greswell; *The Forests and Deer Parks of Somerset*, ch. xi, The Mortimer Foresters-in-Fee.

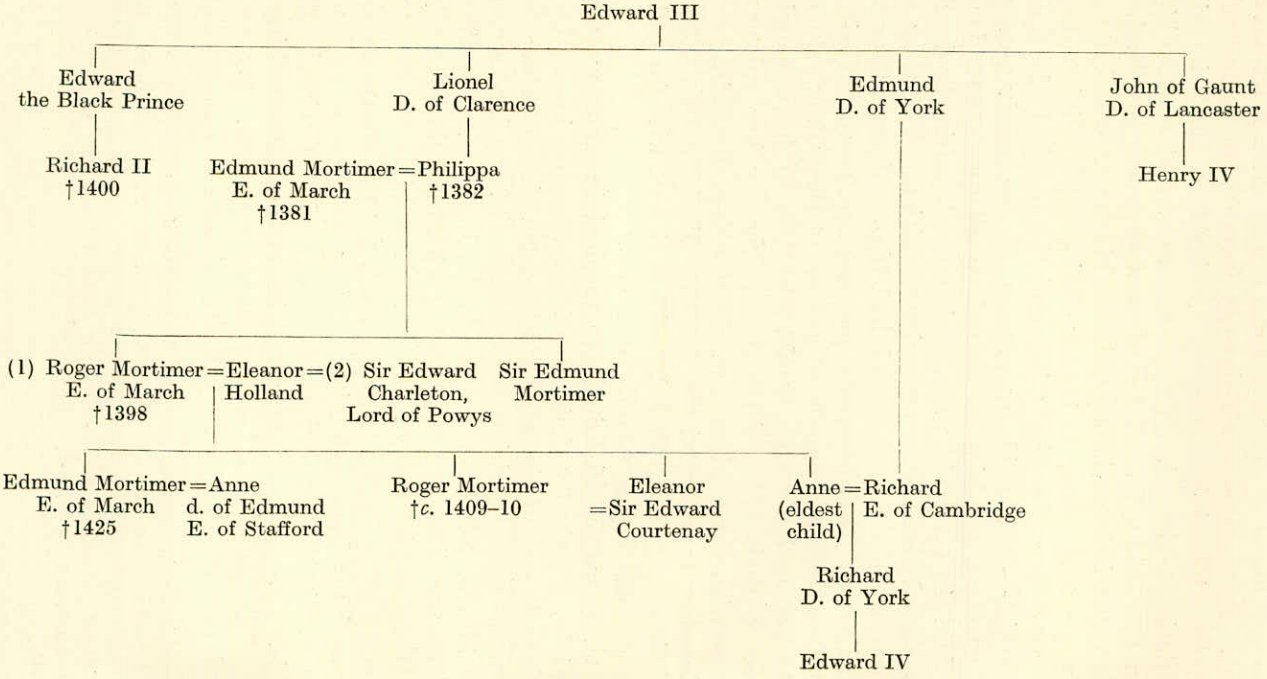
We see nothing of Roger who was a minor when Edmund died in 1381. Both ended their days in Ireland, the father ruling his estates with wisdom, the son seeking to control the wilder elements in the island. Nor do we see anything of Philippa, Edmund's royal wife. She died soon after her husband, and we learn that in her will she followed his example and left substantial sums of money to the two Bridgwater religious houses —the convent of the grey friars and the hospital of St. John the Baptist—duly paid by precept of the receiver-general. Nor do we see anything of Roger's small sons, the elder not more than six years old when their father's untimely death in battle placed them in a precarious position. For they were then nearest to the throne and, had Henry of Lancaster after Richard's deposition been of a less humane temper, their fate might have been as unenviable as that of the young princes of a later generation. One would like too to have caught a glimpse of their elder sister Anne, who by her subsequent marriage with the Earl of Cambridge, a far-off cousin, became grandmother to Edward the fourth. Their mother Eleanor, and their step-father, Sir Edward Charleton, who farmed the demesne, come before us only as names.[3]

All these we would fain have reached in some way more intimately, if only by their occasional presence in our Castle. But there is one of the family who from time to time comes among us, whose position as a member of the lord's council brings him to Somerset on the lord's business. Sir Thomas Mortimer was here in 1389, coming with his fellow councillors from Wyke Regis. From the borough archives we know that he was a visitor to the town in 1394, for the stewards of the gild merchant honoured him as they were wont to honour guests of distinction and made him a gift of wine.[4] Three years later he became entangled in an intrigue touching the Duke of Gloucester and was declared a traitor. He fled to Ireland, that second home of the Mortimers, and there died.[5]

[3] There is an interesting account of the Mortimers in Wylie; *Hist. of England under Henry the Fourth*, vol. ii, ch. 38, The Mortimers. It was Eleanor who appointed Geoffrey Chaucer forester of North Petherton park.

[4] *Bridgwater Borough Archives:* Som. Record Soc., vol. 53 (hereafter referred to as B.B.A. 2), p. 235.

[5] Wylie, *supra.*


Edward III
Edward the Black Prince
Lionel D. of Clarence
Edmund D. of York
John of Gaunt D. of Lancaster
Richard II †1400
Edmund Mortimer E. of March †1381
Philippa †1382
Henry IV
(1) Roger Mortimer E. of March †1398
Eleanor Holland
(2) Sir Edward Charleton, Lord of Powys
Sir Edmund Mortimer
Edmund Mortimer E. of March †1425
Anne d. of Edmund E. of Stafford
Roger Mortimer †c. 1409–10
Eleanor =Sir Edward Courtenay
Anne (eldest child)
Richard E. of Cambridge
Richard D. of York
Edward IV

The earls of March were indeed sole lords of Bridgwater Castle with the accompanying manor of Haygrove, but of the borough itself their lordship was only fractional. When the great William Briwer's grandson, William Braose, died, he left no male heir. As happened again and again in feudal families, when the great estates had to be divided among the daughters through lack of a male heir, there were curious fissions in the honours and manors of a great barony. Only a third of the borough went to Maud de Braose who married Roger Mortimer, while the larger portion passed to her sister Eve. At the time of our documents Eve's share, through the marriage of a daughter with Eudo de la Zouche, is in the hands of that family.[6] This cleavage in the lordship seems to have worked smoothly for there are no signs of friction between Mortimer and de la Zouche, though occasions enough for trouble must have arisen in the division of their profits or in infringements of prerogatives.

This division of the profits affects the form of our balance sheets somewhat adversely. Clumsy as were medieval statements of finance in general, their bulkiness is here greatly increased by the constant introduction of this trisection of items of income and expenditure. If only the accountant had seen how much labour might be saved by dividing his totals by three instead of carrying the process out in each detail, what hours of writing he might have been spared. The method of displaying the account in continuous paragraphs with latin numerals occurring at any part of each line is bad enough, but when we are reminded that each value is a third, we reach a grotesque pitch of redundancy. For all that, the calculations are on the whole wonderfully correct.

The position which these mesne lords hold between the borough and the king is growing strange and obsolete. There was a time when the lord might have been of service to his borough and might have acted as its protector in return for the revenue which he derived from it. But that is in the past and the burgesses, beginning to find the connection irksome, are feeling their way, very gradually it is true, towards greater

[6] *Bridgwater Borough Archives*, 1200–1377; Som. Record Soc., vol. 48 (hereafter referred to as B.B.A. 1), pp. xix to xxi.

freedom and a larger measure of self-government. Not that the monetary burden could be regarded as altogether unjust and unbearable. Their feeling would be rather a growing wonder that they should not keep these taxes and profits for the benefit of the town, of themselves in fact, instead of watching them disappear every Michaelmas into the treasury of lords whom they never saw.

Burdens not unjust nor unbearable, however. And so at this time at any rate, little difficulty was made about their payment. It was no domineering extortioner who represented the far away lords. Instead there were two men, burgesses of substance and standing, elected yearly by their fellows to act as the link between the borough and its lords. They were known as *prepositi burgi*, or, when English is used, as the borough reeves. Theirs was the highest office to which a burgess could rise on what we may call the lords' side of the town government, while that of the gild steward—the *senescallus gildae*—or, as he came to be called, the common steward, was the highest to which he might aspire on the community side.

This aspect of medieval town government, this contrast between what belonged to the mesne lord and what belonged to the *communitas*, has been recently made clear.[7] The evolution of the Bridgwater borough forms an excellent illustration.[8] The gradual development of the community using the gild officials as its ministers and employing the gild fines and amercements as its common fund, proceeded quietly through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, until in the fifteenth the office of common steward was replaced by the mayoralty and the reeve became an official of the community.

Every feast of St. Michael the Archangel, then, the borough reeves presented their account, so far as it concerned the Mortimers, to the receiver of the demesne. It was practically all on the credit side. Any expenditure made on behalf of the town, and it was but little in comparison, appears elsewhere. There were three main channels of income and these were (1) the burgage rents, (2) the issues of the borough, and (3) the profits of the courts.

[7] Tait : *The Medieval English Borough*, ch. ix. [8] B.B.A. 2, pp. xii to xv

When Bridgwater became a borough by a royal charter granted to William Briwer in 1200, all the incidents and services which the tenants of the manor had been accustomed to render to their lord were commuted to a single yearly money payment, now that they were free burgesses of a free borough. This was called the burgage rent—a shilling on every burgage. Many tenements were not more than half a burgage in size, and on these sixpence was paid. Indeed according to the fractional size of the tenement, however small, the rent was proportioned. If a tenant was behindhand with his burgage rent, the reeves had power to seal up his door, and he might not break their seal until he had satisfied their demand for the rent. From this penalty seems to be derived the name given to the period known as the durne-days or door-days. ' And the aforesaid William and Joan and John ', runs a lease of the year 1416, ' shall keep me the aforesaid Thomas and my heirs without challenge or damage in *les durnedayys* every year as long as they live '.[9] And again, from the durnedays arose the Durneday Court, an institution whose functions remain obscure and have not even yet been determined.[10]

The reeves worked from a rent-roll which by the time on which we are entering had become antiquated. Clumsiness again marks their methods, for instead of reforming the roll they credit their account with the sum total as it used to be and then debit it with details of what they describe as *defectus redditus* or losses of rent. At length, but not till 1396, the auditor interfered and a new rent-roll was prepared under his direction by which the reeves were to collect these rents in future. Their own burgage rents and those of their two beadles are always excused and appear as a rebate on the debit side of the account.

The second source of revenue for which these ministers were held accountable is described as issues of the borough. Under this head were included the toll from the shipping on the river, the toll from the weekly market and the toll from the several yearly fairs.

[9] Bridgwater Borough Archives (unpublished), No. 578 [1410], Sir Thomas Stawill.

[10] B.B.A. 2, pp. xviii–xix.

The port of Bridgwater held a considerable position in the maritime world of the west. The craft of those days could easily navigate the tidal waters of the Parret, and the quayside was lined with vessels trading not only with other parts of England, with Wales and Ireland, but also with France and Spain and Portugal. It is little wonder if the lords were tenacious of their rights over all merchandise that entered or quitted the mouth of the river and were jealous of any interference with them. Accordingly measures were taken in the borough court against a handful of men accused of seeking to divert the shipping to the harbour of Combwich lying on the river nearer to the sea. Two of the accused are described as burgesses of Bridgwater. A third was Nicholas Neath, twenty years later one of the borough reeves[11] and in his will described as burgess and merchant of Bridgwater.[12] A fourth was the rector of Otterhampton, in which parish Combwich lay. The others, though named, are unknown to us. For five years past, it was asserted, they had been preventing the lords from levying their lawful customs. Instances are given. Gylam the Breton for a ship laden with salt ; John Slepe of Ilfracombe for a creyer laden with herring ; Peter Doure of Cornwall for ' a boat called a pekard ' laden with fish ; these losses with a ship called the *Holke* of Tenby are estimated at the round sum of a pound each. To them are added two pounds for a barge twice filled with salt and corn, and five pounds for ' several other foreigners '. It is further alleged that during these years ' they forbade all merchants and many others who came with their merchandise to the town of Bridgwater, as they had been wont by right to come from of old to its market, declaring that they should not come to that town but should have their safe port and discharge of their cargoes at Combwich and not at Bridgwater, withholding the lords' custom and the liberty of the town of Bridgwater to the damage of this demesne of £100 ' —another round figure.

This was in the autumn of 1386. Six years earlier the same court had held an enquiry on a similar charge of withholding the lords' customs. John Cole, foremost among Bridgwater

[11] Bridgwater Borough Archives (unpublished), No. 541 [1412].

[12] *Somerset Medieval Wills*, 1383–1500, Som. Rec. Soc., vol. 16, p. 43.

merchants in these decades, was accused of having avoided payment during a term of twelve years of custom on 10,000 quarters of corn which he had sold to foreign merchants in the port, as well as on iron, fish, salt, wine and other merchandise.[13]

It must not be forgotten that Bridgwater was a prominent centre of the English cloth industry, and though woad, a dye stuff so important to its manufacture, does not appear at this time among our imports, there is much evidence later in our history that our vessels brought it across the Bay of Biscay in quantity as well as that wine with which our ships trading to France and Spain were at all times heavily laden.

Another glimpse of our local commerce is found in two petitions belonging to the fifteenth century which are among the records we are examining. They are addressed to the Lord Chancellor, the one by two Bridgwater merchants who complain of ill-treatment at the hands of Spanish merchants ; the other a counter-claim from the Spaniards now immured in Bridgwater prison. Wine bought at Bilbao for shipment to England and *hole woll clothes* from Bridgwater deposited in the Spanish port are the merchandise in dispute.

In the weekly market, as on the harbour quay, evasion of toll is the worrying burden of the lords' ministers. In the documents before us there is nothing new on the subject of the market, but the iniquities of ' foreigners ' who attempt to withhold custom—Taunton cloth-merchants and Shapwick butcher—have already been recorded.[14]

The yearly fairs so important to the countryside are three in number, the chief being that of the feast of St. Matthew, which has survived to our own day. Less business was transacted in the two which took place earlier in the year, the first on Ascension Day, the second in the week of Pentecost. Perhaps the most interesting fact relative to Bridgwater fairs to be found here concerns the original midsummer fair granted in King John's charter, ' a fair each year to continue for eight days, to wit, from the day of the Nativity of S. John the Baptist for eight days '.[15] Hitherto no reference has been found to this our earliest fair, but the reeves in their account for the year

[13] B.B.A. 2, p. 81.

[14] B.B.A. 2, pp. 196, 203.

[15] B.B.A. 1, p. 2.

1359, after stating the amounts of toll derived from the three fairs above mentioned, add simply—'For the toll of the fair of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist and for eight days, nothing this year because no merchants came.'

While the burgage rents brought in the largest sum to the mesne lords, the profits of the borough courts, though much less, exceeded all the issues of the borough put together. Elsewhere have been published rolls of the borough court which have happily survived, some among the borough archives and others in the Public Record Office.[16] Piepowder Court and Durneday Court have also been described.[17] Before leaving this side of the reeves' balance sheet, one deviation from the usual division between the lords should be noted. Of all the items, as has been said, one third goes to the Mortimers as a rule. The exception is that the whole of the profits of the Piepowder Court at St. Matthew's fair seems to have belonged to the Mortimers, and not the third only. No reason for the difference is given.

The payment of the market toll was partly made in kind. On the dorse of the Castle manor roll are set forth the quantities of wheat, maslin (*mixtillio*) or mangcorn, as this mixture of wheat and rye is Englished in one account, oats, beans and, in mid-fourteenth century, pilcorn or pillas,[18] all of which have been received from the borough reeves. From 1382 on is also entered the third of a pound of cummin which the Castle reeve has received from the same source and which he sells for a penny.

We have said above that there is little on the expenditure side of the reeves' account. They were simply collectors of revenue and had no further interest in what they had collected than to pay it in to other ministers. The castle reeve received from them the borough issues and the profits of the courts, and to the receiver of the demesne they paid the burgage rents or rents of assize.

Here let it be said that the multipliers which are given us from time to time for the comparison of values in other centuries with those of our own day are apt to be misleading. The

[16] B.B.A. 2, passim.

[17] B.B.A. 1, p. xxiiii, and 2, p. xviii.

[18] The naked oat.

better way for us is to examine some standard prices and wages in order to have in our minds an idea of what a penny or a pound stood for in the latter years of the fourteenth century. An unskilled labourer received 4*d*. a day, a mason or carpenter, 6*d*. Of the cereals, wheat fetched 6*d*. to 8*d*., maslin, 3*d*. to 4*d*., oats, 2*d*. to 4*d*. per bushel. Four horse-shoes with 32 nails were sold for 4*d*. Wax varied from 6*d*. to 8*d*. a pound. Lamp oil cost 1*s*. 4*d*. per gallon. Wine such as that given to Sir Thomas Mortimer cost 8*d*. per gallon. This is a safer method than that of multiplying all our figures by twenty or thirty, or any other figure.

We have the balance sheets of the borough reeves for sixteen several years. The earliest year is 1359, the latest 1406. But fortunately most of them lie closer together. Fortunately, because more knowledge can be gained from such accounts when successive years can be examined than when there are only scattered survivals.

One year is typical of the rest. Let us take that of 1386. On the credit side we have—Balance due to the lord, £9 6*s*. 0*d*. Rents of assize, £10 17*s*. 1¼*d*. Borough issues : River tolls, 3*s*. 9*d*., Market tolls, 10*s*. 2*d*. Fair of Ascension Day, 8½*d*. Fair in Pentecost week, 4*d*. Fair of St. Matthew's Day, 5*s*. Total 19*s*. 11½*d*. Profits of courts, £3 8*s*. 5¼*d*. Total receipts, £24 11*s*. 6*d*. On the debit side : Quittance of burgage rents to the reeves and beadles, 1*s*. 4*d*. Loss of rents, £1 18*s*. 2¼*d*. Steward's expenses 8*s*. 7*d*. Paid to Castle Reeve, £3 14*s*. 9¾*d*., Paid to Receiver of Demesne, £9 6*s*. 0*d*. Carried forward, £9 2*s*. 7*d*. Total, £24 11*s*. 6*d*.

As a rule the amount carried forward as arrears is about equal to the yearly sum of the burgage rents, but it is not always so. In 1395, for example, the account was squared and the balance was *nil*. The steward's expenses are those incurred at the monthly courts and are usually deducted from the profits. If we are to arrive at the total figures of the income derived by the lords from the borough we must of course multiply by three. Even so we must bear in mind that there are occasional expenses in connection with the borough borne by the lords which do not appear in the reeves' accounts.

These expenses concern chiefly three buildings, which seem

to have been grouped together and which probably occupied a site more or less identical with that of the modern Town Hall in High Street. They are the Gild Hall, the Common Bakehouse and the Gaol. To these may be added the two watermills.

At the Castle the Gildhall is alternatively known as the House or Hall of Pleas. Probably the latter is the older name for the building. The lords used it as their court-house. In the town records it is invariably called the Gildhall, for the community recognised it as the home of the Gild Merchant. These buildings the mesne lords kept in repair. One other structure also was their responsibility. That was the pillory.

In 1387 it was decided to reconstruct this instrument of correction. In the court rolls nine years earlier we read of the *old* pillory,[19] which suggests the existence of two already, and both of them outworn. And so the Castle authorities now provided two oaks for the work, felling them in the lord's wood, and it occupied a man three days to trim and make them ready for hauling. When they had been brought to town, a carpenter was hired who fashioned the new pillory and a ' thewe ' into the bargain. Of his wages the Mortimers' share was 4*s.* 6*d.*, and that gives us twenty-seven days as the time it took him at the rate of 6*d.* a day. The exact meaning of the word ' thewe ' is obscure, but it may have meant a ' cucking-stool ' —a stool of repentance, on which a scold was made to sit and endure the jeers and missiles of a hostile crowd.

So far we have been occupied with the relations of the borough to the Castle. We now come to the Castle itself.

The founder of the borough was also the builder of the Castle. Three weeks before he secured the charter whereby the borough took the place of the manor, he obtained from his sovereign a charter authorising him to build three castles, one of which was to be at Bridgwater.[20] This was in June, 1200. Briwer's stronghold far outlived the feudal age. It stood for nearly

[19] B.B.A. 2, p. 41.

[20] *Rotuli Chartarum*, 70. The year is not given, but the context and the place of origin lead me to conclude that it was granted in the second year of John's reign, 6th June.

four centuries and a half and was only finally dismantled after submitting to the might of Cromwell and Fairfax.

The Castle manor, whose government was quite apart from that of the borough, was conjoined with the manor of Haygrove, and the two were administered by one steward—*prepositus*—assisted by a hayward—*messor*. He controlled lands which almost entirely surrounded the town. On the right bank of the river lay Castle Field, where one day Monmouth's troops were to encamp before the fatal engagement with the royal army on Sedgemoor. On the left bank the meadows of Saltland stretched northward, often submerged by the tidal water overflowing imperfect banks and consequently, as the accounts tell us, from time to time unproductive of rent. The lord's park lay on the west—the Parks, where cricket is played to-day, mark the site or at least a portion of it. The manor of Haygrove flanked it to the south. Still further in the circle on the low ground were the meadows bordered by the Town Brook, as they still are, and stretching out to Hamp Brook, where the manor came into contact with land belonging to the abbey of Athelney. Not on one occasion only had the steward to call upon the abbot to scour the watercourse between them.[21] All these lands contributed directly to the needs of the manor or were farmed out to the lord's tenants.

We meet with place-names in the manor rolls and accounts which it may be well to leave on record here. Some still survive, others have disappeared, but to the student of field-names and their etymology they are sure to be of interest. Beyond Crowpyll was Saltelond with Fennyput and Poulesherne. Blakelond, also on the north, was close to the town gate. Twentiacre, Morewall, Frerenhey, Otteremede, Denemede—these may be placed to the south. Parkehegge and Westparkecorner suggest landmarks by the lord's park. Westwayer we know already as being the second horsepond, further up the stream than that in Friarn Street. Le Yoo is probably a landmark also—a solitary tree. And then we have Godelond, Tounesend, Chiw—a curious name for a meadow—Ferthing, Colidhey, Tweycrosse, Litelmede and Risemore with Risemoreford.

[21] B.B.A. 1, p. 191.

In addition to these outlying acres the manor had considerable possessions within the bounds of the borough. Such tenements were on the rent-roll which guided the borough reeves in their collection of burgage rents, but were cancelled item by item in their section of losses of rent because they were accounted for in the Castle account—*quia in compoto castri.* Among these tenements the Friars' property is estimated as equivalent to nine burgages. Castle Ditch, which in the fifteenth century may be regarded as a ward of the borough, seems during the preceding fifty years to have been gradually built over or leased to tenants. The yearly rental of this area —that part of the ditch which lay on the west of the castle— became standardized in the manor account as £4 4*s.* 6*d.* It is included in the rents of assize, the other components of which are the rents of the free tenants and farm of the demesne lands, £14 7*s.* 11¼*d.*, the farm of the horse-mill, £3 8*s.* 0*d.* and the rents of the villeins, £5 2*s.* 4½*d.*

One may guess that this horse-mill was within the precincts and had been originally intended for providing flour for the inmates so that their supply might be independent of the water-mills. Five horses were kept to furnish the driving power and a certain portion of the lord's meadowland was set apart for their feed. By the middle of the fourteenth century the mill was already farmed out with an adjacent garden at £3 10*s.* 0*d.* yearly.

We have called the unfree tenants of the manor ' villeins '. It is perhaps the best word in this connection to denote those whom our records call *nativi*, men who, while their relations with other men were equal, had no rights in law as against their lord. In one roll we read *nativus domini de sanguine*— the lord's villein by birth. The names of these surviving villeins are sometimes given and with one or two exceptions they belong to one of two families, Berecorn and Haygrave. The reeve of the manor, for some years, is either a Berecorn or a Haygrave. *Capitagium* appears as an item of manorial income ; the English equivalent is ' chiefage ' or ' chevage ',[22] literally a poll-tax. This is generally paid in wax and those on whom the tax is imposed are described as *nativi domini*, though

[22] Pollock and Maitland, *Hist. of English Law*, i, 418.

in 1347 they are called *garciones*. In 1395 chevage of a shilling is paid by three villeins ' for licence to dwell outside the lord's demesne this year '.

Both the common oven or bakehouse and the water-mills were farmed out, but of these the Castle received only a third, for they were shared with the other lord. But the farm of the pigeon-house—*columbare*—and its accompanying ' culverhey ' were the Mortimers' own for they lay within the Castle walls. The medieval pigeon-house is familiar to all who have seen that, for example, which is still standing at West Bower, but the ' culverhey ' is less known. It was the fenced-in ground surrounding the *columbare*, as the elements of the word suggest, and ' culverhey ' is still to be found as a field-name in the neighbourhood of Somerset manor-houses.[23]

The profits of the court held several times during the year are a further source of income, and when they include a heavy ' fine ' as well as the usual amercements, they are not inconsiderable. This court of the manor appears under the old Saxon name of hall moot[24]—' halmot ' or ' hallemot '—linking us with the days of Merleswain, when the manor of Brugie was among his widespread possessions, ere it came into the hands of Walter de Douai. Some of the court rolls survive and of these three have been published previously.[25]

We have already credited the Castle reeve with the issues of the borough and when we have added to this item the money rising from the sale of corn we can arrive at the total of the manorial income.

There are, however, too few years before us to strike a true average, but if we put it at round about fifty pounds, we shall not be far wrong.

We have mentioned meadowland which had been rendered unprofitable by reason of flooding from the tidal river. For this and other reasons certain losses of rent have to be entered on the debit side of the account. There is also the quittance of their own rents enjoyed by the reeve and hayward. There

[23] e.g. Puriton and Crewkerne.

[24] For a discussion of this term *see* Stenton, *English Feudalism*, 1066–1166, p. 42.

[25] B.B.A. 1, Nos. 266, 269, 272.

are the expenses of the clerk of the courts—borough and manor.

It is from the outlay on repairs or replacements that we have the best opportunity of finding material for reconstructing the Castle and its buildings. We find these disbursements debited in some degree to the account of the manor reeve, but more often to that of the receiver of the demesne.

The Castle area covered some eight or nine acres. It is to-day occupied in part by a medley of commonplace buildings and in part by the stately and well-ordered Castle Street, a unique specimen of eighteenth-century architecture erected by the Duke of Chandos, and the open space known as King Square. The ancient boundaries, however, are not difficult to trace. The Castle stood four-square with its east side abutting on the Parret just below the triple-arched stone bridge which carried the main road over the stream. On the other three sides it was originally protected by a moat, remains of which can still be found on the south under the shops of Fore Street, and on the north in the garden at the back of ' The Lions ', an eighteenth-century house of noteworthy appearance. The continuation on the west ran along the south edge of Cornhill and along the lane called in those days Castle Ditch. It is this section of the moat where the ground rose highest that seems to have become gradually filled in until the surface was high enough to be used for building purposes. The Castle stood on a low hill of marl, an outlying spur of the Quantocks, which rises somewhat sharply from the river-bank. It is unlikely that the ditch on the west side can ever have been deep enough to take the river water even at the highest flood. Even on the north and south slopes it would have needed a very deep cutting to reach the level. What water there was in it must have been gathered from the surface or from springs. When the drawbridge, which faced Cornhill, was to be rebuilt, three men were employed for six days in cleaning and scouring the moat from the bridge to the river-bank, in order to free the water and let it out. This would mean that the bottom was above the level of the river. The moat on the north side was a continuation of the Town Ditch which ran from West Gate to North Gate. Reed was grown in the moat which was

reaped, bound and carried to the Castle where it was stored to be used by the thatcher. There is a term used for measuring quantities of this reed which seems to have become obsolete and forgotten. In 1347 the reeve enters so many ' moux ', or it may be ' monx ', of reed, gathered in the Castle Ditch and used for thatching tenements.[26]

On the north side of the Castle, presumably outside the moat, there was a palisade—*palix*—of oak, and on one occasion the palisade on either side of the great gates was repaired. We may suppose its continuation thence down Fore Street, yet not necessarily.

The walls of this mighty stronghold were of red sandstone. In the middle of the east side was the water-gate—*porta castri versus aquam*—the entrance of which still stands with its triple arch. It is fifteen feet thick, and some of the flanking wall rising to a considerable height has survived and shows us how impressive must have been the grandeur of this massive building. A tower stood above this gate and as there was one at the corner angle ' facing east ' it is presumable that a similar turret adorned each of the other corners. Above the great gates, which with the drawbridge faced Cornhill, stood yet another, known as Delvys tower. The site of this main entrance to the Castle is marked to-day by the short street rising from Cornhill to King Square.

In the year 1387 might have been seen long teams of oxen, five, six and even seven yoke in each, approaching the town by way of South Gate and West Gate, leisurely yet surely dragging the timber-waggons in which oak and elm had been loaded by servants of the demesne and men specially hired for the work. In the previous year the foresters, John Janeswere and Robert Pecche, had come to the Castle that they might be consulted regarding a dozen good oaks which the king had allowed from his forest of North Petherton for the rebuilding of the drawbridge. These officials were in such a position of influence that it was thought expedient to propitiate them, ' that they might be well disposed in the lord's behoof ', and a gift followed —a yard of cloth for their footwear. Master John Carpenter,

[26] Another obsolete word of measurement occurs in the same year—' *In j kyppo lathorum empto ad idem* ij *d. ob.*'

who had contracted for the work then went out to the forest with his men to choose the oaks and with their aid the timber was felled, trimmed, sawn and made ready for hauling. Other oaks were felled also in the lord's park and fields, and household servants of the Master of the Hospital and others brought these into the town. At the same time was felled a small oak from which a boat was made and nothing is charged to the estate for the making because it was the gift of the constable for use on the moat. We have here further evidence, if it were needed, that the walls were not surrounded by a dry ditch. The wood belonging to Lord de la Zouche also made its contribution of oak, and from the land of the villeins came a dozen elms for making the scaffolding.

Then the masons and the carpenters and the blacksmiths got to work, and for days Cornhill was the scene of much toil and the sound of the hammers echoed across the market-place and re-echoed from the Castle walls. At length the bridge was in position and the counter-weights were hung and Master John Carpenter might look proudly on his work. Once again men might cross its strong planks, and walk through the great outer and inner gates and give the porter standing at the door of his lodge a friendly nod as they entered the outer bailey.

It was in the outer bailey that the ' shewes ' and the ' wynkeput ' were to be found. I would hazard that the ' shewes ' were shaggy dogs, the ' shoughs ' of which Macbeth speaks. The ' wynkeput ' was a construction built of wood and it has been suggested that it was the hutch or kennel in which ' wynkes ' (Welsh, *wenci* or *gwenci*) or weasels were kept and that their duties in the Castle were those performed in aftertimes by the harmless necessary cat.

Of the buildings within, the largest may have been that known as Mortimer's Hall. The name cannot have been older than the latter half of the thirteenth century. It may have been that the new lord's name was given to the original building in which the hall moots were held or it may be that a new hall was built and distinguished from the old by the name of Mortimer. There is nothing to show us the purpose for which it was built, we are not told that the manor court was held there, and the only use which we know it actually served is

that of a barn, for hay was stored in it. In the year 1391 a considerable sum was spent on repairing the roof, and we can get some idea of its size from the fact that forty-five joists and wall-plates were renewed. Timber was felled, trimmed and fitted, and 700 feet of boards were sawn for the roofing. The timber was brought by six oxen from the Castle Valley. Finally the roof was leaded. While this restoration was taking place the hay was removed from the hall to the lodge by the gates and stored there.

The constable had his own lodge, and here it may be said that during nearly all the years under survey the three offices of constable of the Castle, steward of the manor and receiver of the demesne were all in the hands of one man. He was head and governor of all. As constable or keeper, he controlled the military defence of the place, should that be necessary. As steward, he presided at the meetings of the manor court. As receiver, he was responsible for the finance of the demesne.

The chapel was dedicated to St. Mark, and from the time of the foundation of the Hospital by William Briwer, mass was to be said daily at the altar by one of the brethren. Wine and candles for its service were supplied at the lord's expense, and a former earl had directed that 2*s.* should be allowed in each year for their provision. There was a bell-tower and from time to time canvas ropes for its bells are a charge, and on one occasion, in 1347, two ' fleylis '. Flails is a word still in use among ringers for the tongues or clappers.

In one year a penny was spent on a wooden stoop for holding the holy water ; in another year a penny purchased ' a new pyx for use in the chapel for keeping the bread with which the priest celebrates '. Both chapel and *columbare* were roofed with stone tiles brought from Rookscastle near North Petherton. In one year the chapel was twice stripped of its tiles by a gale of wind and the repair of these roofs is a frequent charge.

The well which supplied the drinking-water was large and broad, and though it is now partly if not wholly filled in with rubble, its site is known. It was near to the river and by means of winding steps the bottom could be reached whenever the water was exhausted. Some years ago within living memory, a youth descended and brought back with him a large

two-handled pitcher. When he reached the top of the steps he became troubled by the thought of being caught trespassing and threw his find, possibly antique and precious, back into the chasm.

Corn was stored in the Castle barn. The horse-mill, to which reference has already been made, belonged exclusively to the Mortimers, but of the profits of the two water-mills a third part only belonged to them. One of these was turned by the Town Brook and was called Little Mill. It was at the end of the present Blake Street, formerly known as Mill Tail. The site of the other is unknown, though in the last century there was a small mill turned by a stream further to the south. A fulling-mill stood on the lord's land of which two-thirds belonged to him and one-third only to de la Zouche, an unusual division, but this is reported to have become derelict before the close of the fourteenth century.

The kitchen with its oven calls for repair and the stables receive special attention against the coming of the lord's council. The ' punfold ' or pound in which strays were lodged is another important possession of the lord, for such strays if not claimed within a certain period became his property.

The dungeon, though no doubt sometimes serving its original purpose, was like Mortimer's Hall, used as a storeroom for hay. On one occasion it was provided with a shackle-lock—' shake-lok '—for its door, and in the previous year the receiver had brought from Bristol four padlocks—*ceruræ pendibiles*[27]—of which one was used for the water-gate, one for the cellar, one for the pound and one for the dungeon. At another time he bought three more in London.

Among the very few references to the Castle which appear in the Borough Archives one belonging to the year 1531 is of interest here. ' The resydew of the said landes won Sir Thomas Crane, prist of Bridgwater ',—he had become chaplain of Our Lady's Chantry twelve years earlier—' wrongfully withholdith and the evidence of the same, contrary to the kinges lawes,

[27] An editor of the accounts of a midland castle has translated these words ' hanging bars ', but our context at Bridgwater contradicts the word ' bars ' and makes ' locks ' preferable. Our receiver would never have troubled to buy bars in Bristol or London when a Bridgwater blacksmith could easily make them.

right and good consciance. And apon Seint Marke is day the xxij yere of the reigne of oure soverayne lord King Henry the viijth by the vertu of a subpena I came to Brigwater, than being maire of the seid towne of Brigwater John Bond, and in the chapell of Seint Marke in the Castell I the seid Jeffry Pembroke delyverid the subpena unto the seid Sir Thomas Crane, prist, where apon by the meanys of ye seid prist, John Saunders came unto me the seid Jeffry, and seid the kinge had no thinge there to do nor none shuld have. So they toke and putt me in prison and wold have putt me in the dungeon and they wold nott in no wyse obey the seid subpena.'[28]

A wider prospect opens now before us and we are no longer confined to the Castle and its immediate neighbourhood, for we have the Bridgwater demesne on our hands. This embraces on the west Milverton lying in its valley between Taunton and Wiveliscombe, and on the south Odcombe perched on its hill near to Montacute. In regarding these as limbs of the Bridgwater demesne we are following the caption; in reality each is in itself a demesne. Odcombe is a vill in the hundred of Houndsborough, and for our present purpose that is all we need know regarding its status. But Milverton is something more than a vill making part of a hundred. It was a borough, just as Bridgwater was, though how it came to be one we do not know. And it was something more than a borough, for some lord, whose possession it was, ' procured it ' —to use the words of Collinson—' to be erected into a hundred of itself and exempt from the jurisdiction of the hundred at large '.[29] In the thirteenth century we find the ' hundred at large ', that is the hundred proper of Milverton, including Ashbrittle and other vills, appearing before the justices in eyre, even as we might expect. But we also find the ' manor of Milverton ' ' appearing by twelve ', that is by twelve jurors,—as a borough or hundred would do,—and not by four only as a manor or vill would usually appear.[30]

When we reach the Exchequer Lay Subsidies at the end of

[28] B.B.A. unpublished as yet.

[29] Collinson : *Hist. of Som.*, iii, 13.

[30] *Somerset Pleas*, Som. Rec. Soc., vol. 11, pp. 315, 316.

Edward II's reign we find the ' hundred at large ' described as *forinsecum* or external, and the ' hundred of itself ' as *intrinsecum* or internal, terms which seem satisfying. But what are we to make of the division between the individual householders who constitute the *burgus* and those who constitute the *hundredum intrinsecum* ? There are twenty-five names in the borough, headed by the *dominus de Mulvertone*, of contributors to the subsidy, and the total amount of their contribution is two guineas ; in the internal hundred fourteen contribute a total of a pound.[31]

In one year of our accounts Walter Cheorl is described as collector of the hundred, and in the preceding year as its bailiff. The term ' bailiff ' suggests that the hundred was farmed out, a custom not infrequent among the seignorial owners of hundreds. Robert Herling is collector of rent both of manor and borough, while Thomas Proute is reeve of the borough. There is no mention of any steward of the courts, and one might be tempted to infer that the steward of the Castle presided also at Milverton and Odcombe, were it not that no travelling expenses for that purpose appear. In 1389 the sum of 13*s.* 4*d.* is entered as arrears of the late reeve of Milverton for the value of a pair of fuller's forceps, a forfeiture remaining in the hands of the receiver of Bridgwater. Messengers were sent both to Milverton and Odcombe to summon ministers to present their accounts. The journey to Milverton, about twenty miles, costs 4*d.* and the longer distance claims 6*d.* No less than 3*s.* 7*d.* was spent on such messengers in 1413, a sign possibly of growing unreadiness to respond to these feudal demands.

From the moneys received from Bridgwater, Milverton and Odcombe is made up the total of the receiver's credits. In 1397 and 1398 he is able to add large sums from Newton Plecy, now North Newton, of which more will be said presently, but the average amounts from the ordinary channels for nine years are : Bridgwater Borough, £8 17*s.* 4¼*d.*, Bridgwater Castle with Haygrove, £28 2*s.* 3¼*d.*, Milverton Borough and Manor with the Internal Hundred, £27 17*s.* 11½*d.*, and Odcombe Manor, £18 16*s.* 5¼*d.* The average total is £83 14*s.* 0¼*d.*

[31] *Kirby's Quest and Exchequer Lay Subsidies*, Som. Rec Soc., vol. 3, p. 277.

Against this income the receiver has now to set the items of expenditure. ' Necessary expenses ' always come first, and under this caption most regularly occurs parchment used for the statement of accounts. Almost as regularly the receiver declares that there is nothing this year for parchment for court rolls as that has already been charged in the steward's expenses. Items appear here which seem rather to belong to ' Castle costs ',—locks and keys, padlocks, bell-ropes for the chapel, a boat costing 8*s.* 4*d.* for the Castle store, and repair of the woodwork of the drawbridge. We have also the costs of an important inquiry held at Wellington including the entertainment there of a baron of the Exchequer who presided over it. Messenger's expenses have already been mentioned—those within the county—but after the death of Earl Roger, the receiver sent his clerk as far as Coventry to speak with Lord Edmund, the late earl's brother, and other executors of the will. He was allowed one horse, and the journey, which occupied nine days in September, cost ten shillings.

The ' costs of the Castle ', as the outlays on the repair or rebuilding of gates, walls, buildings, wickets and palisades are called, have generally been already met by the Castle reeve, and are here entered as a lump sum, but from the reeve's ' parcels ' which are usually attached to the receiver's account we learn many interesting details. Here are masons and carpenters, plumbers and tilers, plasterers and locksmiths ; here are their days of work and rates of pay ; here are their materials and occasionally their tools ; here it is, as has been shown, we have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with some at least of the features of the Castle. The fabric is maintained and the buildings, so far as we know them, are not allowed to become derelict, albeit some of them are diverted from their original purposes. The constable's house, the chapel, the various lodges, the barn, the dove-cot, the dungeon, the kitchen, the stables and the hall are all cared for and preserved.

And for all these outgoings which the receiver has to meet he has yet a large surplus of cash which must be placed in the hands of the lord's receiver general, the minister who acts as the treasurer for all the Mortimer demesnes. The receiver generally makes the journey himself, accompanied by a guard

of men, and it is usual for him to make it to London. In 1387 John Barre went ' on divers occasions ' and the cost was £1 6*s*. 8*d*. for taking ninety pounds to the capital. In other years three journeys were sufficient, the expenses being 20*s*. On one journey he sent William Heliere, the reeve of Milverton, in his place. For two years, 1391 and 1392, William Janet, the then receiver, made no journeys, but there is evidence that the receiver general himself was in Bridgwater in the former year and received £30, and that the receiver of Cranborne was among the auditors in the latter year and received a similar amount. In 1393 the receiver general was at Winchester when Parliament was sitting there, and Richard Chidiock brought there not only the Bridgwater payment for which he was responsible, but also £23 6*s*. 8*d*. from the demesne of Marshwood in Dorset. John Fitilton's journey to Bristol in 1398, although a much shorter distance, cost twice as much as Richard Chidiock's. He with others was accompanied by five men and six horses, and four days were occupied in the expedition. The sum carried was a large one—sixty-six pounds.

Twice a year, in spring and autumn, it was the custom of the auditors of the accounts of the lord's ministers to visit the Castle. Auditors, for though there was an auditor in chief, he was invariably accompanied by others, and they are styled auditors. The spring visit, recurring in March or April, was devoted to an inspection of the accounts—*visus compoti*—while in September the passing of the final account—*finalis compotus*—for the financial year was the object of their coming. The receiver of Bridgwater was responsible for the expenses of their journey and entertainment from the time they left Wyke Regis, or sometimes Marshwood, and during their progress through Odcombe and Milverton, until they finally left Bridgwater. This period might be as much as eight days, and the sum of expenses entered in our accounts varies.

The chief auditor from 1386 to 1393 is one Thomas de Hildeburgh. He is always accompanied by ' others ' who are unnamed, and on one occasion three clerks are mentioned as being with him. But in special circumstances highly placed ministers or members of the lord's council are in the company. *Dominus* Walter de Brugge, the receiver general, came in 1387, and again

in 1389 ; in the latter year Sir Thomas Mortimer was also here. In 1391 and 1392 Walter Pasford, the receiver of Cranborne in Dorset, is named, and Hugh Lancastre in the following year. *Dominus* Roger Warde, the clerk of the chief auditor, inspected the account in the unusual month of July, when he came from Cranborne. He made no second visit in September, but in June of the next year he again came to Bridgwater, arriving from Wigmore. This time beside passing the final account of the preceding year, he carried out the inspection usually made in the spring, and returned in November, this time from Stratfield Mortimer in Berkshire, when he passed the final account for the current year. It will be noted that the wonted regularity of the audit is no longer observed. Sometimes these visiting ministers inspected the Castle, buildings, mills and woodland of the demesne. On one occasion Thomas de Hildeburgh was accompanied by a special guard, for he was carrying the money from Marshwood *in partes Walliae* where he expected to find the receiver general. As this was in March, and our receiver had conveyed a large sum from Marshwood the previous month to Winchester, it looks as though the receiver general had quitted that city, and the auditor was bringing the money back with him in expectation of finding his chief, possibly at Wigmore.

The regular annual stipend of the minister who served the lord as constable of the Castle as well as steward of the manor and receiver of the demesne was five pounds. This does not seem a large sum for reward of such triple responsibility when one remembers that it is the same amount as an unskilled labourer, fully employed, would earn when we except fifty-two Sundays and thirteen saints' days from the days of the year. The constable had of course board and lodging free, but even then the pay seems small. Possibly he performed legal work outside his regular duties. The only occasion on which he appears in any other capacity is one in which he is acting as one of the executors of Sir John Trevet's will, and there is nothing to show that Fitilton was acting here in a professional capacity.[32]

In the year 1391 William Janet ceased to hold the offices of

[32] B.B.A. 2, pp. 236, 237.

constable and steward, but continued to act as receiver at the reduced salary of £1 6*s.* 8*d.* This was by arrangement with the lord's council, and Richard Clyvedon, filling both the other offices, was paid £3 0*s.* 0*d.*

There is an item on the expenditure side of the 1397 and 1398 accounts which shows us how the treasury of one of the lord's demesnes could be drawn on to meet a liability in a distant county. Payment is made to Sir Matthew de Gourney for the farm of property in Blethvagh in Radnorshire.

When Edmund Mortimer died in 1381, his heir was still a minor, and the forests with the rest of the estates were in the King's hands. It was then that ' a grant for life, during the minority of the heir, was made to the King's Knight, Peter de Courtenay, of the custody of the King's Park of Petherton and his forests of Exmoor, Neroche and Mendip '.[33] In 1391 Sir Peter was in arrears of his payments for eight whole years, amounting at the rate of £40 a year, to no less a sum than £320. Steps were therefore taken by the lord's council to recover the money, and the receiver general sent a letter written in French to the receiver of the demesne. It was to the following effect :

' Very dear friend, I am sending you an Exchequer writ of *Nisi prius* and inform you on my lord's behalf that you are to notify the sheriff of Somerset to perform his office duly touching the said writ both as regards the jurors whose names I send you and in other respects, and that you yourself, if possible, will be at Wellington on Wednesday, the first of March. And in the same evening pay for the expenses of Sir William Douebrugge, baron of the Exchequer, the same night and the morrow for his food, and these expenses will be allowed you at the next inspection. On the other hand will you take the utmost care that the arrears of your bailiwick be ready to hand against the coming of myself and the auditors to Bridgwater which will be within these next three weeks, if you would safeguard yourself and your sureties, and yourself moreover from blame—and in case my coming to the said parts at that time through other business affecting my lord cannot be, then will you hand over all moneys that you have in hand to Thomas

[33] Greswell, *ibid*, p. 158.

Hildeburgh and Walter Pasford by indenture arranged between you and them. To God (I commit you), very dear friend, and may He have you in His Keeping.
Written at London, 12th February.

(Signed) WILLIAM DE BRUGGE.'

Accordingly William Janet, the receiver followed the instructions thus given. He paid Walter Pasford, who was the receiver of Cranborne, thirty pounds, but nothing this year to the receiver general direct. He passed on the writ of *Nisi prius* to the sheriff that a jury might be secured and sworn. He not only paid four jurors to come to Wellington, but he gave a *douceur* to the under-shiriff ' that he should be well disposed in the same business aforesaid '. The Baron and others with him were entertained at the lord's expense for a day and night and we have a copy of the inn bill. It was in the time of Lent and consequently the menu contained much fish—dried hake, buckhorn or dried haddock, herring, fresh milwell[34] and ling, hake, conger and plaice, oysters and mussels.

Some success seems to have followed the proceedings, for under the heading of ' Newton Plecy ' in the account for 1397 there is a payment of £60 from Sir Peter, and in the following year one of £40.

Courtenay stood high in Henry the Fourth's favour and became governor of Calais and constable of Windsor.

To sum up, these documents have given us something which we had been unable to learn from the archives that are stored in the borough strong-room, numerous as they are. They have told us far more about the relations existing between the community and the Castle than we had known ; they have given us an insight into the interior of the Castle and its economy ; and they have made clear to us the financial system of the demesne.

There are as yet no signs of friction between the community and its lords. In the affair of 1381, when many burgesses were in revolt against the alleged tyrrany of the Hospital, the Castle for us is silent and might not exist. It may be recalled,

[34] *Cf.* mulwellfyche, *Paston Letters*, i, p. 490.

however, that William de la Zouche lodged a complaint about that time against certain persons who had prevented his steward from holding his court and levying the profits, and ' certain persons ' included the Master of the Hospital and three of the brethren.[35] This, the only interference of the lords, suggests that they were not against the people. Six years later the breeze seems to have blown over, for, as we have seen, the servants of the Hospital were in that year working side by side with those of the Castle.

And what purpose does this great building, designed two hundred years ago as a military stronghold, serve in these last years of the fourteenth century ? It is still regarded as a fortress outwardly, and money is spent freely in maintaining in good condition walls, drawbridge, gates, towers and moat. Yet with the exception of two ' gonnes ' or catapults, sold by the steward for a mark (13*s.* 4*d.*), there is no mention of a single weapon whether upon or within the walls. Nor do our documents tell at any time of a garrison of any kind. Should need arise, so long as the soundness of the structure is maintained, armed men could easily be received into it and the Castle would prove a serious obstacle to any foe seeking to pass the river whether from the east or from the west.

We have said already that it was not used as a family residence by the lord. It simply housed his servants in his absence. It served the purposes of a manor-house and—we must not forget—a bank ; and occasionally, a prison. In certain respects Bridgwater Castle is typical of the English castles of the later middle age : they ceased to be military, they became more domesticated.

As to the demesne, we leave this short study with admiration for the methodical administration exercised in it by the lord's ministers. It is much better than we, belonging to an age of far more refined business methods, might have expected. There is a satisfactory regularity in the arrangements for supervision and auditing, and this is accompanied by a certain flexibility whereby one demesne is able to work in with another when the circumstances suggest a departure from custom. It all in-

[35] Dilks : *Bridgwater and the Insurrection of* 1381, Proc. Som. Arch. Soc., vol. 73, pp. 61, 62.

volved much journeying and sometimes the minister bears heavy responsibility in getting treasure from one town to another, an aspect of medieval life which we are able to see clearly with Jusserand's admirable help.[36] Possibly occasional slackness and dishonesty occurred—the miller, who was also bailiff for Lord de la Zouche, exacted more toll than was his due[37]—but on the whole the picture is not unpleasing.

[36] Jusserand: *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (XIV Century)*.

[37] The reader will be reminded of Chaucer's miller 'Wel coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes'. A contemporary of our Thomas Foot.