

THE SHERIFFS OF SOMERSET

NOTES ON SOURCES

The system used has been to provide one or two references to each sheriff in order to provide some background of place and family. It is appreciated that not all the books quoted are of equal reliability and that errors may be found in the medieval, and even later, pedigrees in Collinson's *History of Somerset* and Hutchins' *Dorset*, but the existence of such pedigrees does show that the sheriffs belonged to landowning families of some standing. Since the office of sheriff involved the holder in considerable expense, it was usual for him to be the head of the family; there are exceptions to this — an unidentified John de Montacute in 1305, Walter Rodney in 1511, probably the John Pawlett of 1543, and at a much later date, John Freke Brickdale (1740), whose father seems to have been unwilling or unable to accept office, and Edward Esdaile (1824); but it can generally be assumed to be the case. The Close and Patent Roll Calendars would provide numerous references to the active country gentry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but to have collected all these would have over-weighted the present list with footnotes.

Where family histories are available as in the case of the Gorges, Luttrells, Stawells, Sydenhams and Wyndhams, these have been used. The *Complete Baronetage* has been used for those sheriffs whose baronetcies date from before 1800. The *Complete Peerage* can be used only in the case of those few who were created peers after they had served the office of sheriff. Burke's *Peerage, Baronetcy and Knightage*, and *Landed Gentry* have therefore been extensively used, although it is known that some early pedigrees are open to criticism and that errors do occasionally occur in the later ones. The *Peerage* used, unless otherwise stated is the 1952 edition, which was the most recent edition when these notes were begun.

The eighteenth century presents its own problems. It appears to have been the period when the shrievalty had become politically unimportant and socially unsought after. But a study of the sheriffs in Somerset suggests certain limitations on this generalization. Some long established Somerset families, who had survived the Civil War—the Horners, Luttrells, Sanfords and the Trevelyans of Nettlecombe, continue to appear as sheriffs, while on the other hand wealthy newcomers seem to have regarded the shrievalty as setting a seal on their new position in the county. Where the descendants of the eighteenth century sheriffs have remained in the county, they can be traced through the *Landed Gentry*; others are mentioned in Collinson; not many seem to rate an obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Probably research in MS. sources would tell one more of these "obscure" individuals, including Orlando Johnson (1735) to whom there is no reference in any of the obvious printed sources. In spite of Maitland's suggestion that the country gentleman was often

“burdened with the shrievalty much against his will” there does appear to have been a rise in the social standing of the High Sheriffs from the middle years of the nineteenth century and nearly all are to be found in the *Landed Gentry*. Supplementary information can be found in the obituary notices in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Arch. and Nat. Hist. Society* (that of Thomas Knyfton (d. 1877) is a remarkable example of the Victorian style of such tributes) and at a later date in Gaskell’s *Somerset Worthies* (c. 1910), *Who’s Who in Somerset* (1932), the *Who’s Who* and *Who was Who* Series and *Kelly’s Directories*. Obituary notices in the *Times* are another source which could have been used, had time allowed. In the twentieth century the idea seems to have grown up that the shrievalty is a reward for distinguished service in or indeed outside the county, Sir Matthew Nathan (1934) being perhaps the most notable example of such a newcomer to Somerset in the inter-war period. There was a unique occasion, at least as far as Somerset is concerned, in 1962, when a former under-sheriff, Col. Gilbert S. Poole, became High Sheriff, and it is also pleasant to have been able to continue this list to include the name of Col. Walter Luttrell (1960), whose family has provided eleven High Sheriffs for the county since 1401.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance given me by Col. Gilbert S. Poole and by the relatives of recent High Sheriffs in supplying dates and other information not to be found in current reference books.

CORRIGENDA

- p. 3, line 5, for p. 213 read p. 313.
- p. 14, line 2, for 1336 read 1339.
- p. 20, 1426, for 1445 read 1446.
- p. 21, 1434, for Carant read Carrent.
- p. 23, Edward IV, for 1460-83 read 1461-83. The appointments of sheriffs in November 1460 were probably made by the Duke of York in Henry VI’s name.
- p. 24, 1474, for the dates, 1586, 1587, 1597, read 1486, 1487, 1497.
- p. 34, 1594, for *Street*, 10, read *Street*, 107.
- p. 35, 1602. For Mayo read Maye. This name appears as Mayo in the *P.R.O. list*, but Collinson is almost certainly correct in referring to him as Maye. John Maye of Charterhouse entered his pedigree in the 1623 Visitation of Somerset and no Mayo family appears in this or the earlier Visitation or in Collinson.
- p. 37, 1632, for Humphrey Walrond read Henry Walrond.
- p. 56, 1814. G. E. Allen’s dates were 1766-1850 *Burke’s L.G.* 1952.
- p. 59, 1851, for Kynfton, read Knyfton.
- p. 61, 1875, for Georges read Gorges.

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I. SIR GILES DAUBENY (d. 1445), sheriff 1426.

From the brass in South Petherton Church, by permission of Country Life Ltd.



Nicolaus Wadham Armiger
As L^o
Hanc effigiem Rev^o Vire L^o n^o
Coll: Gardiano. A. 1710
Printed for Henry Parker, Print & Book Seller, 22. St. in Strand London.



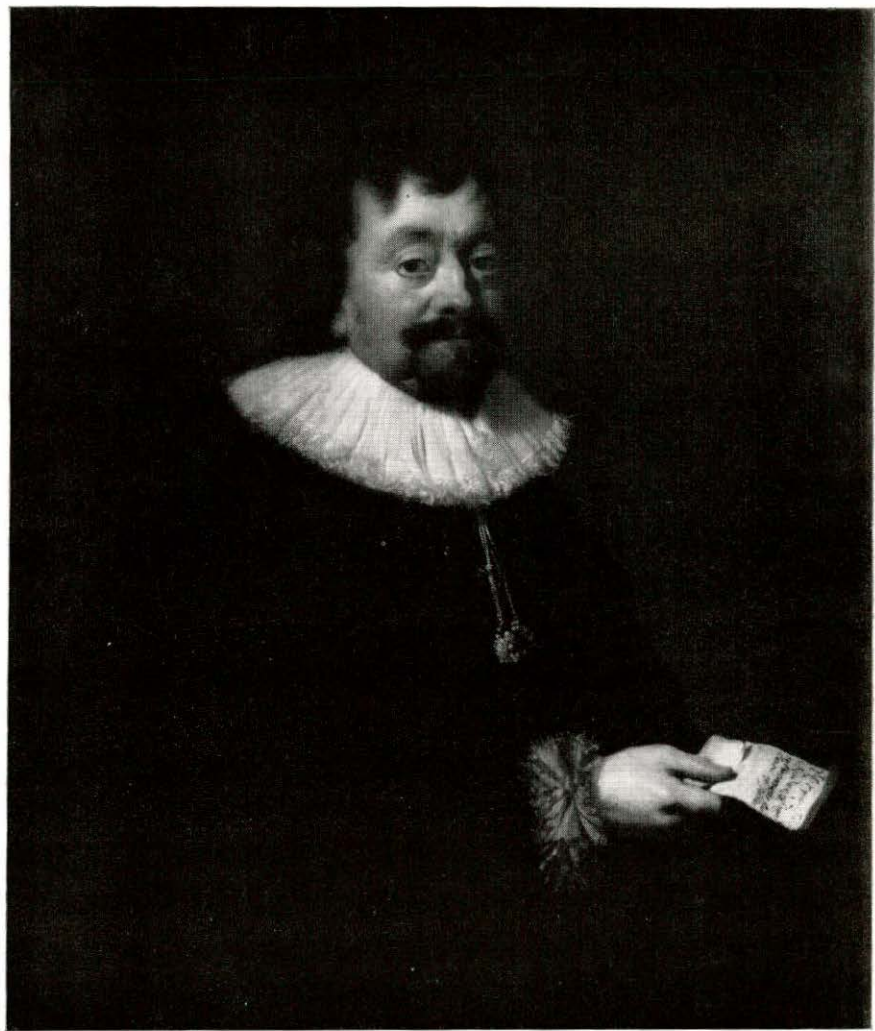
Coll: Wadhameus Fund^o
1609
Geo. Wadham, F. R. S. p. e. s. d. e. m.
Summa et Humil: & Observant.
D. D. L. H. Parker.

II. NICHOLAS WADHAM (d. 1609), high sheriff 1585.
 From a print of the portrait at Wadham College, Oxford.



Photo: the late A. K. Wickham

III. SIR JOHN WYNDHAM (1560-1645), high sheriff 1604.
From the monument (probably by Nicholas Stone) in St. Decuman's Church.



IV. SIR ROBERT PHELIPS (d. 1638), high sheriff 1625.
*From the portrait (artist unknown) in the National Portrait Gallery,
by permission of the Director.*

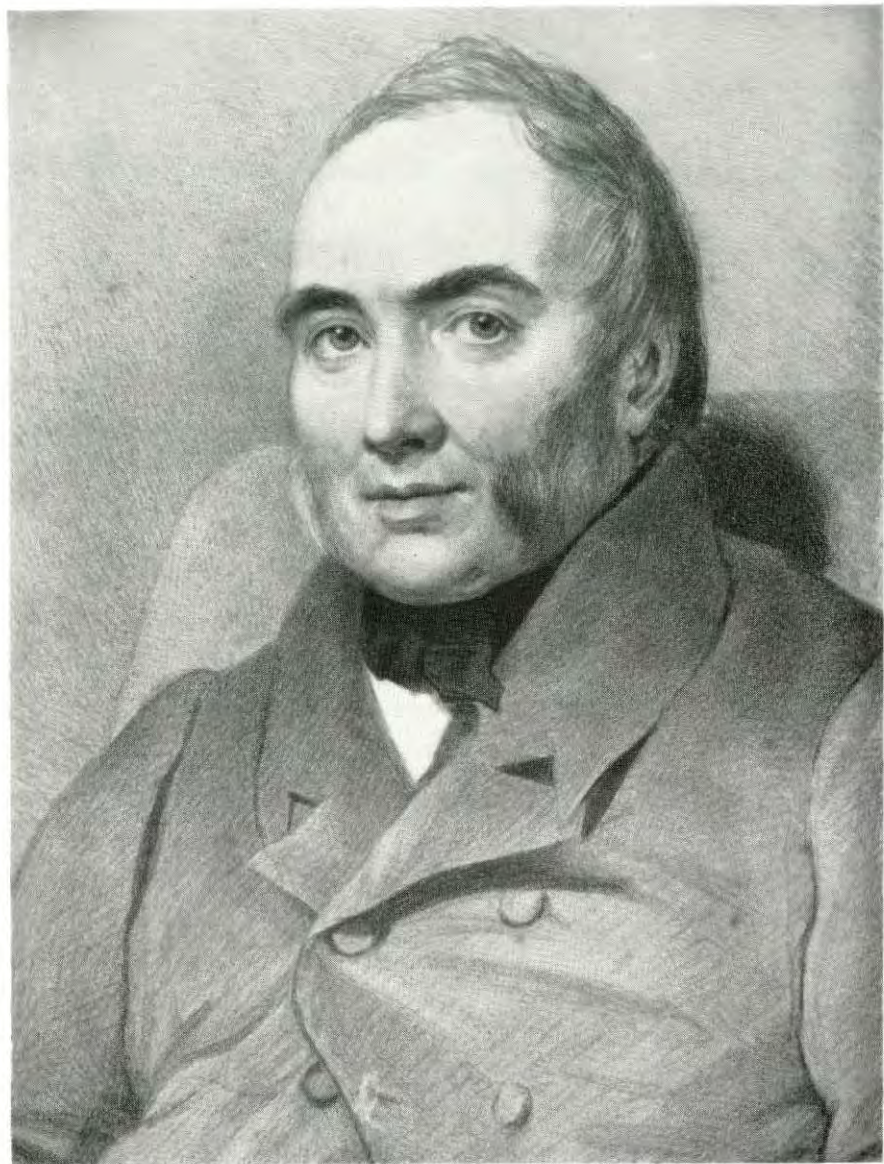


Photo: R. C. Sansome

V. VINCENT STUCKEY (1771-1845), high sheriff 1822.

From a lithograph in the Society's possession.



Photo: R. C. Sansome

VI. FRANCIS HENRY DICKINSON (1812-1890), high sheriff 1853.

From a drawing in the Society's possession.



VII. SIR CHARLES E. H. CHADWYCK-HEALEY (1845-1919),
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