

# SIR FRANCIS DODINGTON (1604–1670). A PROMINENT SOMERSET ROYALIST IN THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

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## SUMMARY

*Francis Dodington inherited the manor of Dodington, which had been in the possession of the Dodington family since the 12th century, in 1620 on the death of his grandfather, George. Francis was knighted by Charles I in 1625 and married Alice Hoby, the widow of John Sydenham of Combe Sydenham and Brympton in 1627. He served as sheriff of Somerset in 1631 and was a prominent Royalist colonel during the Civil War during which he acquired an unenviable reputation for ruthlessness and brutality. In exile during the Protectorate and Commonwealth, he was proscribed and his estates confiscated and sold. During his exile, Sir Francis married Dorcas Mary l'Anson, the daughter of Sir Bryan l'Anson of Ashby St Ledgers, Northants. After his return on the Restoration of Charles II, he received little support from the king and died in relative poverty in 1670.*

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

The family of Dodington<sup>1</sup> takes its name from the village of Dodington in Somerset (NGR ST172 406) which lies c. 13km north-west of Bridgwater. The manor of Dodington almost certainly derives its name from Dodo who, in the Domesday survey, held the estate of Stawe, which can be identified with the later manor of Stowey. The ancestry of

the 17th-century family of Dodington can be traced back to at least the late 12th century when William, son of Adam de Cunteville, was the first to be described as 'of Dodington' (Dunning 1985, 65–6).

By the late 16th century, the manor of Dodington had descended to Sir Francis Dodington's grandfather, George. George was his father's second son but in an indenture dated 25 September 1568 (Bates-Harbin 1936, 80–2) it had been agreed that the manor of Dodington, along with many other properties, should pass to George on his father's death. George's eldest son, John, was baptised at Dodington on 28 December 1573<sup>2</sup> and married Margaret Anketell at Combe Florey on 6 April 1600.<sup>3</sup> Margaret had been born around 1576,<sup>4</sup> the daughter of Christopher Anketell of East Almer in Dorset and Elizabeth Francis of Combe Florey (Rylands 1885, 6).

## EARLY YEARS TO 1625

John and Margaret's eldest son, Francis, was baptised at Dodington on 19 February 1603/4.<sup>5</sup> Francis was the second of nine children of John and Margaret baptised at Dodington in the period 1600 to 1617. In addition, it is certain that John and Margaret had a tenth child, Margaret.<sup>6</sup>

Nothing is known of Francis's early life but, by the early 17th century, it had become the custom for the sons of the aristocracy and gentry

to complete their education by spending one or two years at University (Porter 1997) followed by a similar period of time at an Inn of Court in London (Prest 1967, 20–39). Francis was admitted a commoner at Wadham College Oxford in 1619, paid his caution money in 1620 (Gardiner 1889, 55) and matriculated on 17 June 1621, aged 17 (Foster 1892, 411). He continued to live in the first north chamber of Wadham until 25 March 1622 and his caution money was repaid on 15 April 1622 (Gardiner 1889, 55). Foster (1892, 411) suggests that the Dorington<sup>7</sup> created MA on 1 November 1642 may refer to Francis but this seems unlikely.<sup>8</sup>

Francis' father, John, had been admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 24 February 1595 (Baildon 1896, 119) and, shortly after leaving Oxford, Francis followed in his father's footsteps and was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 26 May 1622 (*ibid.*, 190).<sup>9</sup> There is no record of him having been called to the bar but the following entry in the proceedings of the Council of Lincoln's Inn on 22 June 1626 (Baildon 1898, 263) almost certainly refers to Sir Francis.<sup>10</sup>

'For the difficultie which the M<sup>rs</sup> of the Bench, have found in the discovery of the first moover and occasioner of the affray made in this House betweene M<sup>r</sup> Arthure Pyne, of the one parte, and Sir Francis Dorrington (sic) and M<sup>r</sup> Harbottle Grimston, on the other parte, and to prevent greater mischeife, - It is ordeined that all further proceedinges therein shall cease.'

Before Francis went up to Oxford, his father, John, died and was buried at Dodington on 16 February 1617/18. His will, dated 1 December 1612, was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury by his wife, Margaret, on 17 April 1618 (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/131 as Doddington). Margaret survived her husband by 30 years, dying in late July or early August 1647.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, when Francis' grandfather, George, died on 25 September 1620 (Hawkins 1965, 104) and was buried at Dodington, Francis came into his inheritance as John's oldest son (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/138). Francis was only 16 years, 8 months old when his grandfather died, so he inherited whilst still a minor. Consequently, the Crown claimed wardship of Francis and the estate came under the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards (Bell 1953). The records of the Court of Wards for Somerset have been published by the Somerset Record Society

and these contain a valuable record of all the lands held by knight service and inherited by Francis. In summary these were (Hawkins 1965, 104):

'The Manors of Dodington and Bickenhall alias Bicknell with apps. and 59 messuages, 2 water mills, 59 gardens, 580 acres of land, 131 acres of meadow, 330 acres of pasture, 84 acres of wood, 160 acres of heath and bruery, 11/8d. rent and 1 pound of pepper with apps. in Dodington, Bickenhall, Greinton, Stogursey alias Stokegursey, Durborough, Holford, Huntspill, Taunton, Benington(?), Woolmersdon, Petherton, Petherham's Marsh, Stockland Gaunt, Nether Stowey and Cannington and common of pasture for all cattle in Neroche Forest, one-third of 3 messuages or tenements with apps. in Durborough and Huntspill, one-quarter of the Manor of Harpford with apps. in Harpford, Langford Budville and Thorne St. Margaret, one-ninth of 2 messuages or tenements with apps. in Catcott and Cossington.'

#### THE PERSONAL RULE OF CHARLES I

Francis was knighted by Charles I at Hinton St George on 27 September 1625 during a progress in the Western Counties (Metcalfe 1885, 185).<sup>12</sup> He married the widowed Alice Sydenham (Sydenham 1928, 144) at St Mary Magdalen, Milk Street, London on 24 November 1627 (Hughes-Clark 1942, 7):

'S<sup>r</sup> Francis Doddington of Doddington co. Somerset, knight & M<sup>rs</sup> Alice Siddenham of Combe Siddenham in said County, widdow, late wife of John Siddenham of Brainton, esquire. L[icence] from the Lord Grace of Cant[erbury].'

Alice Sydenham was the daughter and heiress of William Hoby of Hayles in Gloucestershire. John Sydenham died on 10 March 1626/7 and his son, John, aged 3½ inherited as a minor (Hawkins 1965, 65).<sup>13</sup> Sir Francis had also inherited as a minor in 1620 and the records of the Court of Wards enables a comparison of the extent of the Sydenham and Dodington estates to be made. The Dodington estate was valued by office at £26/7/- and sold to Sir Francis's mother for £400 (*ibid.*, 104–6) while the Sydenham estate was valued

by office at £41/17/- and sold to the executors for £1200 (*ibid.*, 65–8).

Alice brought to her marriage with Francis not only the Sydenham manors of Combe Sydenham and Old Cleeve but also Hoby lands in Gloucestershire which had been settled upon her by her father William Hoby as her jointure (Hawkins 1965, 67). When Alice died on 20 January 1652/3 it appears that these lands were not immediately returned to the Sydenham family (CPCC 1889, pt 2, 1257), and depositions were taken at Taunton on 22 September 1653 that Alice Dodington had in fact died and that these lands should be returned to the Sydenham family (Sydenham 1928, 144–5).

The Stogumber parish register<sup>14</sup> records the baptism of John, Sir Francis's oldest son (and as far as is known his only son by Alice Hoby) on the 8 October 1628.<sup>15</sup> The Dodington Parish Register records the burial of a daughter of Sir Francis, Alicia on the 11 February 1630/1.<sup>16</sup> The absence of a baptismal entry in either the Dodington or the Stogumber Parish Registers suggests the possibility that Alicia may have been stillborn. These are the only parish register entries traced relating to children of Sir Francis and Alice Hoby.

During the Civil War, Sir Francis gained a reputation for ruthlessness, bordering on barbarity but his earlier life provides some evidence for this trait. The Western Circuit Summer Assize Orders for 1631 (Cockburn 1976, 39–40) record what the editor describes as a bitter feud based on prestige and from a deep personal enmity, between Sir Francis and Sir John Wyndham each striving to have their nominee appointed as sole alehouse keeper at Monksilver. A second indicator is that Alice Hoby's daughter from her first marriage, Catherine Sydenham, married Joseph Bampfield, the royalist and later protectorate spy, who found Sir Francis, his stepfather-in-law, 'monumentally difficult' (Loftis and Hardacre *c.* 1993, 156).

Sir Francis was pricked for Sheriff of Somerset in November 1630 (Hughes 1898, 125). To take on the shrievalty at this time was particularly challenging. The poor corn harvests throughout the whole of England in 1629 and 1630 saw a doubling in the price of both the poorer grains (oats, rye and barley) as well as that of wheat. Somerset, however, was particularly hard hit as a consequence of the high unemployment in the clothing industry resulting from the diminution of overseas trade during the five years of war with Spain and France and the refusal of merchants to

export in protest over tonnage and poundage. Sir Francis's assumption of the shrievalty coincided with the issuance by the Privy Council of the Book of Orders (Barker and Bill 1631) in January 1630/1 setting out the response the Council expected from the justices and sheriff to the worsening situation. The remedies suggested (poor relief, provision of work and securing adequate supplies of local grain) were not novel but the requirement that local quarter sessions should return quarterly certificates reporting the actions they had taken to the Privy Council, was. This new requirement caused considerable resentment, since most local magistrates felt they could judge the needs of their communities better than the Council in London. The Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (CSPD 1629–31 and 1631–3) list 26 communications to and from Sir Francis during the year of his shrievalty all dealing with the price and availability of corn for the relief of inhabitants. The whole period of personal rule by Charles I from 1628 to 1640 saw increasing burdens and responsibilities falling on the magistracy and shrievalty in respect of the Book of Orders, Ship Money, Control of the Militia etc. (Sharpe 1992). These are discussed, with particular reference to the county of Somerset, in a detailed study by Barnes (1961).

Although Sir Francis was well qualified by social status to be appointed a JP he was not so appointed until he was pricked for Sheriff in November 1630. This suggests a reluctance on Sir Francis's part to be involved in county affairs (he could not decline appointment as sheriff) and, although he was prohibited from sitting on the bench during his shrievalty, this reluctance appears to have persisted even after he stood down as sheriff. In the period November 1631 to October 1638 Sir Francis only sat twice as a justice at the Quarter Sessions and was only asked by his fellow justices, either alone or with others, 'to investigate, resolve, order etc.' three times, whereas the comparable figures of, for example, Sir Henry Berkley, were eight and 39 (Bates-Harbin 1908). Nevertheless, in 1640, Sir Francis could not avoid serving as one of the 33 commissioners appointed for Somerset to raise subsidies for 'the relief, and for the further relief, of His Majesties armie, and the northern parts of the Kingdom' (Raithby 1819, 66, 89; Barker and Bill 1640).

Sir Francis's reluctance to take a prominent part in county affairs in the period 1632 to 1640

may possibly be explained by the leading role he took in Somerset in opposing the collection of ship money. During the six years, 1634 to 1639, in which the Privy Council attempted to collect ship money, Somerset had the distinction of troubling the Council over its collection more than any other county (Barnes 1961, 213). The Sheriff was given discretion in the determination of the rate of assessment but was advised by the Council both to take into account personal as well as real property and at the same time to use the rate for other common payments, which in Somerset meant the Hinton Rate Assessment (Barnes 1959, 210). This contradictory advice opened the door to continual challenges to the assessments proposed by the sheriff. Normally the sheriff, from a position of power and prestige and with the support of the Privy Council, would be able to resist these challenges but in Somerset the opposition was led by powerful magnates with equal or greater power and influence with the Council than the sheriff. Barnes identifies the leaders of the opposition in Somerset as Sir Robert Phelips, Sir Henry and Sir Charles Berkeley and Sir Francis Dodington (*ibid.*, 214–15). For example, in 1636 Sir Francis organised the complaint from the Portbury, Hartcliff and Bedminster hundreds against their assessment; in 1637 the complaint of Barrow tithing was contained in a petition from Sir Francis and he also complained in 1636 about an over-assessment of his (or more strictly, his wife's) lands in Gloucestershire (*ibid.*, 219, n. 25). The fact that Sir Francis was a prominent supporter of the king during the Civil War, suggests that his opposition to ship money may have been motivated more by self interest than altruism.

In the Lay Subsidy Roll for 1641 (Howard and Stoate 1975, 222), Francis Dodington Kt is assessed for £12 at Barrow and the returns for the hundreds of Hartcliff and Bedminster (*ibid.*, 223) and for Portbury (*ibid.*, 253) are signed by Francis Dodington and Samuel Gorges as commissioners. In the 1642 Lay Subsidy Roll (*ibid.*, 288–95) Sir Francis is assessed for eight separate properties in the hundred of Williton (some jointly with Joan Saffyn) with a total assessment of £3/10/7. If Sir Francis *did* take the Protestation Oath it was not in his home county (*ibid.*, 1–179).

## CIVIL WAR

In early June 1642, the Royalists in Somerset started to canvass signatures for an overtly pro-Royalist petition to Parliament.<sup>17</sup> Sir Simonds D'Ewes records that:

‘Sir Francis Dodington sent it [the petition] to Bath to George Williams and Dick Chapman and desired them to further it by getting hands to it in that city’ (Snow and Young 1992, 66)

The existence of this petition was prematurely revealed to Parliament when, on 13 June, the House of Commons received a copy of a letter from Alexander Popham, a staunch Parliamentarian, addressed to his MP father informing him that a petition was circulating in Somersetshire in which there were great aspersions laid upon Parliament and Popham confirmed that it was generally believed that the copy sent to the mayor and aldermen of Bath was sent to them by Sir Francis Dodington (CJ, 13 June 1642 and LJ, 14 June 1642). The Commons reaction on reading the petition was to resolve that ‘Sir F. Dodington and Sir Charles Berkeley be summoned forthwith to attend this House presently’. There is no evidence that either Dodington or Berkeley responded to this demand but events were moving swiftly.

On 11 July, William Seymour, the Marquis of Hertford, was ordered by the king to proceed to Somerset and raise forces there on his behalf. Meanwhile, Parliament had nominated William Russell, Earl of Bedford, as Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and subsequently he assumed the leadership of the Parliamentary forces in the county (Underdown 1973, 29). In late July 1642, Hertford, having established his headquarters in Wells, was joined by many of the county's leading magnates, including Sir Francis, at the conclusion of the Summer Assizes in Bath. The Wells corporation attempted to distance themselves from the approaching hostilities by handing over the keys of the magazine to Sir Francis and selling (not giving!) the ammunition to the Royalist forces (*ibid.*, 36). This was reported to Parliament (Somerset 1642) and on 5 August it was resolved by the Lords and Commons in Parliament ‘that Sir Ralph Hopton, M. Tho. Smith, Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir Francis Dodington be forthwith sent for as delinquents’ (CJ and LJ, 5 August 1642). At the end of August, the House of Commons increased the charge to one of treason,

resolving (CJ, 30 August 1642) that ‘Francis, Lord Seymour... Sir Francis Dodington... shall be accused by this House of high treason in the name of themselves and all the Commons of England’.

On 6 August, Hertford was driven out of Wells (Fowler 1642a) and retreated first to Somerton and then to Sherborne Castle (Chadwick Healey, 1902, 3–6, 9–11). When King Charles raised his standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642, Sir Francis Dodington was a standard-bearer (Nicholas 1955, 202). On 25 August Bedford arrived at Sherborne but, given the Royalist sympathies of the townspeople, with too small a force to effectively besiege the castle. Nevertheless his cannon were able to inflict sufficient damage to the castle battlements that, on 19 September, Hertford sought a ‘parley’ in which it was agreed that he would deliver up the castle if Bedford would permit him and his followers to return to their own manors (Fowler 1642b; Bayley 1910, 59). In the event, Hertford retreated to Wales and Hopton marched with the remainder of the Royalist forces into Devon and thence to Cornwall. However, by the end of 1642 the Parliamentarians had achieved effective control of the county of Somerset.

Sir Francis was captured by the Parliamentarians shortly after the fall of Sherborne Castle. Vicars (1644, 182) records that:

‘about the midst of Octob aforesaid the Earl of Pembroke.... brought to Town along with him the Earl of Bath, Sir Henry Berkeley, Sir Ralph Sidenham, Sir Francis Dorrington (sic), Sir Hugh Pollard and others taken about Sherborn by the Earl of Bedford’s forces in those parts whereupon it was ordered .that they should be committed to several Prisons and Impeachments to bee forewith drawne up against them.’

In February 1643, Sir Francis petitioned the House of Lords seeking release from custody (LJ 8 February 1643) where he states more specifically:

‘That he was taken at Tavestocke, in the County of Devon (where he was about his Occasions), and thence sent up to the Parliament, and committed; whereupon he remained a Prisoner, in the Gatehouse and Winchester House, for the Space of Fourteen Weeks, to which in all Humility, he submitted himself, in daily Hopes of his Deliverance, by his Trial, or otherwise, by the Clemency of this House, upon Bail, till

there might be time for his Trial.’

Sir Francis was one of just over 50 prisoners who, due to overcrowding in the Parliamentary prisons in London, were transferred to Windsor Castle on 11 January 1643 (Morshead 1957, 22). In his petition, Sir Francis goes on to say:

‘That afterwards he was removed to Windsor Castle, where he hath remained about the Space of a Month. That your Petitioner is very sickly, and is now restrained to one Room there (wherein there are divers other Prisoners) so inconsistent with the sick and infirm Estate of his Body, that he is in great Danger of his Life, if he should continue there. The Petitioner’s most humble Suit therefore is, that, for the Preservation of his Health, he may be a Prisoner to Mr John Brigham of Westm, who will give good Security for his true Imprisonment, till the great Affairs of the Kingdom may give Way for the Petitioner’s Trial.’

A carving made by Sir Francis of his coat of arms on the wall of the prison chamber over the Norman gateway of Windsor Castle still attests to his imprisonment there (Morshead 1957, pl. iv). The House of Lords accepted Sir Francis’s proposal that he be released into the safe custody of Mr John Brigham of Westminster (LJ 8 February 1643). Neither House appears to have formally resolved to release Sir Francis from ‘safe custody’. Morshead (1957, 22) says that Sir Francis escaped before August 1643 but it was common at this stage in the Civil War that the authorities were prepared to either lose sight of such persons or release them in reciprocal deals with the opposing faction. However, by whatever means Sir Francis gained his liberty, it seems he kept a low profile during the remainder of 1643, despite the fact that, after the battle of Roundway Down on 13 July and the subsequent fall of Bristol, Hopton and Hertford re-established Royalist control of the West of England (Chadwick Healey 1902, 57–8).

Sir Francis re-emerges in December 1643 when he was sent by Hopton to recapture the isolated Parliamentary stronghold of Wardour Castle, near Tisbury. Wardour had been a Royalist stronghold until its capture by Sir Edward Hungerford in May 1643. Col Edmund Ludlow, who had been placed in command of Wardour on behalf of the Parliamentarians, recognising his exposed position had already made preparations for an

extended siege: a raid in December on carts and horses going to Shaftesbury market furnishing him ‘with three month’s more provision than we had before: which we had no sooner taken in when the enemy drew around the castle, and from that time blocked us up more closely’ (Firth 1894, 61). Sir Francis brought with him an engineer and miners from the Mendips who set about undermining the castle. Ludlow held out for three months but eventually the miners were successful and, with the walls breached, Ludlow was obliged to agree terms for the surrender of the castle. The four conditions Ludlow agreed with Sir Francis were quarter without distinction for the lives of everyone, civil usage for all his party, not to be carried to Oxford and a speedy exchange (*ibid.* 78).

With these assurances Ludlow surrendered Wardour but Sir Francis failed to honour his undertakings. Amongst those of Ludlow’s men taken at Wardour were two soldiers who Ludlow claimed:

‘having formerly been pressed by them [the Royalists] and their consciences not giving them leave to serve them, chose rather to come to us and be besieged with us than have liberty to range and oppress the country with them (*ibid.*, 79).’

Ludlow claimed they were covered by the quarter without distinction clause of his surrender terms but Sir Francis claimed that they were Royalist deserters and as Ludlow describes it the two soldiers were condemned and most perfidiously executed (*ibid.*, 80). Secondly, Doddington did carry Ludlow to Oxford where he was eventually imprisoned in the castle (*ibid.* 86).

In June 1644, Doddington turned his attention to Woodhouse, a mansion near Frome (Walker 1705, 39). This was in the possession of Henry Wansey, a Warminster watchmaker, on behalf of Parliament, and in mid-June Sir Francis laid siege to it (Underdown 1973, 75). Ludlow, now released from Oxford Castle, came to the assistance of Wansey with a force of 300 men but on 7 July he and Alexander Popham were routed by Sir Francis on the heath above Warminster common where his forces slew over 100 Parliamentarians and pursued them in their subsequent flight to Salisbury and Southampton ‘with such ferocity that out of 300 not 40 got into Southampton’ (Walker 1705, 40). Sir Francis was now free to return to Woodhouse

and, provided with two cannon from the armoury at Bristol, he quickly made a breach and assaulted it, killing 20 and taking 80 prisoners. Sir Francis ordered twelve of the prisoners, mostly clothiers, to be hanged from the same tree, in lieu of six Irish rebels who had been executed at Wareham by Colonel Sydenham on the orders of Parliament (Firth 1894, 95). After these executions Doddington ‘could hardly be induced to spare the rest’ (Walker 1705, 39) and they were only saved by Hopton’s timely intervention, ordering such butcheries to cease (Firth 1894, 96).

The most notorious atrocity associated with Sir Francis (see, for example, Underdown 1973, 75; MacLachlan 1997, 179) occurred around this time. Bulstrode Whitelocke records that:

‘It was certified by Letters, that Sir Francis Doddington meeting an honest minister upon the way near Taunton, asked him Who art thou for, Priest? who answered For God and his Gospel: whereupon Doddington shot the Minister to death (Whitelocke 1682, 96).’

The general sense of outrage that Sir Francis’s actions engendered is shown by the fact that at least two of the widows of those executed at Woodhouse were compensated from the proceeds of his sequestered estate. Alice Caraway was awarded a pension of £5 yearly in October 1648 out of Sir Francis’s sequestered estate on account of ‘her husband having been hung by that bloody tyrant Sir Francis Dorington (as his name is then given)’. In 1650, she petitioned the Wiltshire Quarter Sessions for payment, since the estate having been sold and the sequestration discharged, she had lost her pension (Macray 1901, 122). In January 1650, Katherine, the widow of Hugh Miller petitioned the Committee for Compounding for an order for payment from the Treasury of the £20 a year, allowed to her by the Committee of the West from the sequestered estate of Sir Francis Doddington, who, ‘after taking Woodhouse in Somersetshire hanged her husband and her son, Edward, after barbarously mangling them alive’ (CPCC 1889, 2172). In June 1655, Katherine had to petition the Council for the reinstatement of the pension which the Committee of the West had paid until March 1653 but now said that she required a new warrant from the Council (CSPD 1655, 208).

In May 1644 both Houses of Parliament considered a petition for some reward from the daughters of Captain Robert Turpin, who had

been executed at Exeter along with 16 others by Sir Francis Dodington (LJ, 20 May 1644). It is not clear whether this relates to the taking of Wardour or was a separate action by Sir Francis. It was agreed to refer this to the Committee of the West and request that the Lord-General Essex 'inform himself of the Matter of fact, and to do therein as his Lordship shall seem just'. It appears that Essex failed to do 'what seemed just' since on 25 September 1646 the Dorset Standing Committee, on the petition of Capt Robert Turpin's three daughters Thomasin, Tabytha and Hannah, ordered that:

'John Hunt, gent (who is tenant to some of the lady Bankes' estate) pay unto the said petiçionrs the sume of thirtie pounds out of the first rents that shall grow due out of the sayd Ladie Bankes' estate after Mychaelmas next, to be divide equally between them (Mayo 1902, 10).'

In August 1644, Sir Francis played a pivotal role in the defeat of Essex at Lostwithiel. Essex, having raised the Royalist sieges at Lyme and Plymouth, inexplicably pushed deeper into the Royalist heartlands of Cornwall and by early August found himself surrounded by the superior forces of the king and Prince Maurice at Lostwithiel. Parliament's response was to send 2000 horse and dragoons into Somerset and Dorset in an attempt to prevent supplies reaching the king and on 14 August, 500 Parliamentary horse under General Middleton fell on a Royalist supply train at North Petherton. Although, at first, the Parliamentarians did well and captured several wagons (Vicars 1646, 10), the arrival of Sir Francis from Bridgwater totally routed the Parliamentarians, killing at least 30, thus allowing the supply train to reach the king (Clarendon 1826, 544<sup>18</sup> and Walker 1705, 64). On 20 August, Middleton reported to Parliament that he had driven Sir Francis Dorrington (sic), with eight other Colonels to Minehead (CSPD 1644, 439): despite this, Middleton was unable to provide any effective support to Essex. On 28 August Sir Francis won a cavalry action at Bridgwater (Walker 1705, 69) and three days later the king was brought news that Essex was attempting to break out from Lostwithiel. The king, supposing that they would make for Liskeard or Launceston, sent a note to Sir Francis (as Dorington), who had 1000 horse in Devon, to stop their march there (Symonds 1859, 62). In the event, however,

Essex's cavalry, after a night flight, safely reached Plymouth, but Essex himself was forced to flee to Plymouth by boat, leaving 6000 infantry under Skippon to treat for surrender (Woolrych 2002, 290). The importance of Sir Francis's intervention at North Petherton is underlined by the fact that when the Commons came to consider the Lostwithiel disaster the blame was not attributed to Essex but to Middleton who had failed to carry succour to Essex in time (Bayley 1910, 214).

On 14 September Sir Francis took Ilfracombe (Walker 1705, 85) and on the 19th Sir Francis was ordered by a Royalist Council of War held at Exeter to block Taunton and to consult with Lord Hopton and others with a view to blocking Lyme (Hodgkin, 1897, 101–2). However, it was later ordered that Col Edmund Wyndham and others should blockade Taunton so, presumably, Sir Francis was sent to Lyme. In the autumn of 1644 a series of inconclusive actions and sieges took place across Dorset between the king's forces and those of Parliament (Bayley 1910, 219–23) but by 19 November Sir Francis had rejoined the king's army at Hungerford accompanied by 500 horse out of the west country with a view to wintering at Oxford (Walker 1705, 120).

By late 1644 there was mounting war weariness in the country as a whole. Parliament was increasingly divided between Presbyterian and Independent factions and, as the Independents assumed ascendancy in Parliament, the Scots became less committed to an outright victory. These three factors all encouraged the search for a negotiated settlement. The Scottish Commissioners were the main initiators of a new set of peace proposals, 'The Propositions of the Houses to the king at Oxford, and subsequently discussed at the Treaty of Uxbridge presented to the king on 24 November 1644' (Gardiner 1906, 275–86). Proposition 14 was a long list of people, including Sir Francis, who were to be exempted, on account of their part in the war up to this time, from receiving a pardon under any Act of Oblivion. Overall, the propositions were quite unrealistic for a king who still had a viable army in the field and although it suited Charles to appear amenable to overtures for peace, by late February 1645 the peace initiative had collapsed.

Away from the fighting, in late January 1645, Sir Francis was an intermediary in the collection of rents from the Gillingham (Dorset) properties of Edward Nicholas, one of the king's Secretaries of State (Nicholas 1955, 202). In March 1645,

the Prince of Wales ordered, 'to draw together under Sir Francis Doddington all soldiers of the County of Somerset who have heretofore lived in any of his Majesty's armies or garrisons and have withdrawn themselves from their colours' (Routledge 1872, 259). On 30 April 1645, Lord Digby 'earnestly recommended that all horse stationed in the county be drawn together under Sir Francis Dorrington [sic] on the borders of Wilts and Somerset to prevent the rebels relieving Taunton' (ibid., 264). The final battle of the first phase of the Civil War took place at Naseby on 14 June 1645. It is inconceivable that Sir Francis was not present at that battle but I am not aware of any primary source that confirms his presence.

Nicholas (1955, 202) says that Sir Francis went into exile in 1648 after being exempted from pardon. There do not appear to be any contemporary accounts of his presence in England after 1645 but this is, perhaps, not unexpected, given that he still stood accused by Parliament of treason, that he was specifically excluded from the Act of Oblivion and his widespread reputation for unacceptable brutality in the prosecution of the Royalist cause. There are, however, a number of pointers that he may have gone into exile very soon after the Royalist defeat at Naseby. Sir Francis's son, John, says in an autobiographical letter written late in his life (Ramsey 1930, 118) that: 'After the battle of Naseby my father carried me into France, so to Livorne, whence he sent me to Coñple [Constantinople] where I remained six years'. 'Carried me' seems to imply that Sir Francis accompanied John to France and Italy. Secondly, in his 1660 petition for relief under the Bill of Indemnity (see below), Sir Francis says 'y<sup>e</sup> Petitioner for his fidelity to the king's service was declared a delinquent and forced to live in exile above 14 years' (House of Lords Journal Office papers: (HL/PO/JO/10/1/293). This would correspond to continuous exile from very shortly after the battle of Naseby. Thirdly, in August 1648, King Charles listed the chief commanders aboard a Royal Navy fleet that had been sent out to confront the Parliamentary fleet under the Earl of Warwick. The list of 16 commanders starts with Prince Charles and Prince Rupert and ends with Sir Francis Dorrington (sic)<sup>19</sup> (Charles 1648). This suggests that by 1648 Sir Francis was not alone in supporting the Royalist cause on the sea rather than on the land.

## EXILE

On 14 March 1649, Parliament ordered that:

'Charles Stuart, eldest son of the late King, James his second son ... Sir Francis Doddington. ... all of whom had been plotting or assisting the rebellion in Ireland, should be proscribed and banished as Enemies and Traitors of the Commonwealth, and die without Mercy, wheresoever they shall be found within the Limits of this Nation. And that their estates shall be confiscate for the use of the Commonwealth.' (CJ 14 March 1649; CSPD 1649–50, 39)

Despite this proscription, in August 1649, Sir Francis petitioned to compound with lands extended for debts of £2000, whilst he was a creditor to Sir Thomas Salisbury for £4000 (Newman 1981, 212; CPCAM, 1121). Not surprisingly, Sir Francis was denied composition under the Treason Act (Gardiner 1906, 388) and on 16 July 1651 the Committee for Compounding was authorised to sell the estates of 73 delinquents, including Sir Francis Doddington (Firth and Raitt 1911, 520). The vast majority of Sir Francis's estate was sold by the Committee in six sales in August and September 1652 (CPCC, 2557–8). As was common, most of the sales were made to relations of the delinquent. Sir Francis's son, John, purchased Loxton and Barrow Minchin (the latter, jointly with Sir Francis's brother, Christopher and Sir Francis's son-in-law, John St Albon). Christopher also purchased Durborrow and, jointly with others, Doddington, Stogursey and Honibere Lilstock. Sir Francis's sister Mary and her son Ralph Freake bought Pawlett, tenants purchased two houses and land in Durborrow and houses in Durham parish, Bristol were sold to John Wildman. It is not clear to what extent Sir Francis re-established full control of these manors after the restoration, certainly, there was litigation with his son over the control of the manor of Barrow (see below).

The sale of Combe Sydenham manor was delayed by a petition from Sir Francis's wife, Alice, that her allowance of one-eighth of her husband's sequestered estate should be continued and paid for out of the rents of Combe Sydenham, her jointure from her first husband, Sir John Sydenham (CPCC 1256). Combe Sydenham was eventually sold in December 1653 to John Ware,



trustee to Alice's grandson, John Posthumous Sydenham the eighth (CPCC, 2558).

In late 1652, the possibility of an Act of Oblivion resurfaced and on 14 June 1653 the Council responded, rather haughtily, to a petition from Sir Francis that he be pardoned under any such act:

'To answer the petition of Sir Francis Dodington, that if he be pardoned by the Act of Oblivion, he needs not any order of the Council and if he stands excepted, Council thinks not fit to give any order therein.' (CSPD 1652-3, 411).

It has proved difficult to establish where and how Sir Francis spent the majority of his time in exile. There is evidence that he spent at least the early part of his exile in France since, on 3 November 1655, a peace treaty between the Kingdom of France and the Republic of England, Scotland and Ireland was signed containing a clause that 20 named persons including the future Charles II and Sir Francis 'shall not stay ... in the Kingdom of France beyond 40 days after the Exchange of the Ratification of the Treaty nor shall they ... return ... to the Kingdom of France' (Knapton 1732, 161).

At some point during his exile, Sir Francis married Dorcas Mary I'Anson, the daughter of Sir Bryan I'Anson of Ashby St Ledgers, Northants and his wife Mary Bryars (Hutchins 1796, facing p. 297). The I'Anson family were committed Roman Catholics. In 1644, Dorcas's brother, Brian, writing from Spain as 'a sonne of the church in Spaine', to his father and brother in England described them as of the Church of Rome in England (I'Anson 1644). The I'Ansons were also staunchly Royalist and were almost certainly in exile during the Commonwealth and Protectorate. It is not known when the marriage between Francis and Dorcas took place but it is unlikely to have been before the death of Sir Francis's first wife, Alice Hoby, on 20 January 1653 (CPCC 1257).<sup>20</sup> Collinson (1791, 519), states that:

'Upon the destruction of the royal party [Sir Francis] fled to France, and there maintained himself several years by selling English knives and buckles, till at last a French widow took compassion on him and married him and by her he had two sons, both bred up in the French army.'

It appears, however, that Collinson was misinformed about Sir Francis's wife and children.<sup>21</sup>

#### AFTER THE RESTORATION

Collinson (*ibid.*, 519) also says of Sir Francis:

'After the Restoration, Sir Francis Dodington lived privately at Dodington; and though his estate had been greatly wasted by what he did in the civil war, yet he could never be prevailed upon to ask anything of the crown, having engaged himself, (as he always declared) on a mere principle of conscience.'

This is manifestly untrue. Within a few months of the Restoration of Charles II Sir Francis petitioned the House of Lords 'that a proviso for his relief may be inserted in the Bill of Indemnity' (LJ 12 July 1660). The text of his petition is given in the House of Lords Journal Office papers (HL/PO/JO/10/1/293).

'Most humbly bechesh That y<sup>e</sup> Petitioner for his fidelity to the King's service was declared a delinquent forced to live in exile above 14 years and in fine had his estate confiscated sold at undervalue: particularly one part of it, due by mortgage from one Winsor of Gloucestershire in the vullue of £1200 and ... was of him discovered to the Commisises & bought for a smaller sum. However y<sup>e</sup> Petitioner is content to allow what was by him dully paid to the State but doth most humbly beseech this Hon<sup>ble</sup> House to take your Petitioner's distressed condition into consideration & and insert into the Bill of Indemnity a Proviso to relieve your petitioner in his just & lawful demand for soe much as is yet due & unpayd  
ffra Dodington

And your petitioner a shall ever pray &c'

On 2 October 1660, the king referred the petition from Sir Francis to the Lord Treasurer Southampton with a view to making provision for Sir Francis from the Irish estates of Gregory Clement, a regicide, who had recently been executed for treason. Treasurer Southampton reported back to the king on this proposal on 20 November 1660 but there is no evidence that Sir

Francis received any financial support as a result of Southampton's report (CTB, 87).

In 1660, Sir Francis's son, John, became Secretary to Richard, second Earl of Carbery, Lord President of the Welsh Marshes (Gower 1661, 202). Through Carbery's influence, John obtained for his father the post of Commissioner in the Excise of Ale and Beer worth £200 pa (Ramsey 1930, 121). Sir Francis, being by now a Roman Catholic, was unable to hold the post himself and his nephew, William Coward, held it for him, retaining £50 whilst Sir Francis retained the remaining £150 (CSPD 1670, 272). In 1668, Sir Francis petitioned the king asking for a lump sum of £1500 in exchange for the £200 per year 'so that he may pay his debts' (CSPD Addenda 1660–70, 733) but this must have been rejected since Sir Francis was still in receipt of the £200 per annum at the time of his death in 1670.

In 1664, Sir Francis petitioned the Privy Council for the place of Commissioner for Reprisals in the Port of London (CSPD 1664–5, 151) but it does not appear that his request was granted. In January 1665, Sir Francis was appointed a prize sub-Commissioner<sup>22</sup> for the port of Bristol in respect of prizes taken in the second Dutch War of 1665–67 (Haley 1968, 176, n. 1). In October 1666, the Commons agreed to commute the hearth tax and replace it with monetary grant to the Crown (CJ 19 October 1666). Sir Francis petitioned the king for 'the trust of a commissioner in what Parliament shall settle with the crown in lieu of hearth money' (CSPD, addenda 1660–85, 164) but he appears to have been unsuccessful. In February 1669, Sir Francis petitioned the Treasury Commissioners for the place of Comptroller of Customs at Minehead void by the death of Henry Pinkney. This was referred to the Treasurer Commissioner but again it does not appear that he was appointed (CSPD 1668–9, 184).

Sir Francis's relationship with his eldest son, John, appears to have been problematic, possibly due to John's adherence to the Parliamentary cause after his return from the Levant in 1651. One of the main areas of friction after Sir Francis's return to England in 1660 were the steps that had been taken by John and Francis's brother, Christopher, to preserve his estate when it was sold by the Treason Trustees in 1652. In 1667, this culminated in a Chancery action between Sir Francis and his son (TNA C/10/103/47). Amongst the issues in dispute was

the ownership of the Manor of Barrow which Sir Francis claimed he owned but his son 'believeth that it was settled upon him in consideration of marriage in Tayle or in fee after the complainants life'. Sir Francis claimed that he was entitled to an annuity of £100 for life whereas his son claimed it had been agreed that the annuity should go towards the payment of Sir Francis's debts. Sir Francis claims that his son owed him £200 in respect of the sale of the manor of Lilstock, his son 'utterly denyeth that he undertook to pay the same or any other of [Sir Francis's] debts though he had paid many wherewith he was in no way chargeable'. The outcome of this, and apparently other, lawsuits can be judged from the provisions in Sir Francis's will (see below), where there is a complex provision 'whereby my sonne and heir Jo: Dodington esquire by arbitration and by decree after High Court of Chancery is and was to give me Nyne hundred pounds as alsoe one hundred pounds more for severall sumes of money expended by me in suits of law'. The will states that John is only to benefit from the £150 income from his commissionership in the excise of ale and beer 'if he shall pay unto my Executors the said one thousand pounds within one month after my decease': if John does pay the £1000, then Sir Francis's executors are required to 'release unto my said sonne a certaine judgement of ffive hundred pounds which I recovered against him upon a verdict of law'.

Sir Francis died in late 1669 or early 1770.<sup>23</sup> In his will (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/332), Sir Francis requests that he be buried at North Stowey but the parish register of Nether Stowey does not record his burial and it has not been traced in any other Somerset parish.<sup>24</sup> His will broadly favours his second wife, Dorcas Mary, and his two children by her, James and Henrietta Calliope. His eldest son, John is left nothing and John's two sons, John and George, only inherit in the event that James and Henrietta fail to leave male heirs. The £500 noted above is the only provision for John contained in Sir Francis's will, though presumably there was some entailed estate not mentioned in the will. Overall, Sir Francis appears to have died in relative poverty. About half the will concerns the disposition of the £150 pa he received from the commissionership in the excise of ale and beer, the continuance of which was, of course, at the discretion of Charles II. He left his three executors 'fifty shillings apiece yearly (beseeching them to

accept of soe small a recompense out of a ruined Estate)'.<sup>1</sup>

#### LATER HISTORY

From his first marriage to Alice Hoby only his son, John (1628–1673), is known to have survived his father. In August 1669, he was appointed secretary to Thomas Bellasyse, Viscount Fauconberg who had been selected by the king to undertake an embassy to Venice (Dodington 1669). When Fauconberg concluded his embassy in September 1670, Dodington remained as English Resident in Venice until November 1672 (CSP Venetian 1671–2, 311). A detailed account of John Dodington's time in Venice is given by Ramsey (1930, 62–170).

Absence abroad did not prevent John from petitioning the king for continuance on his own behalf of his father's Commissionership of Appeals in the Excise. Sir Francis's widow, Dorcas, cross-petitioned on behalf of her son James and on 13 June 1670 Lord Keeper Bridgeman advised the king to find in favour of John (CSPD 1670, 272). This same issue resurfaced in January 1674 when Dorcas was again a petitioner on behalf of her son, James (CSPD 1673–5, 111). It has not proved possible to trace any later references to Dorcas nor to her children. Grigson (1877, 156) records that in 1704, 'Lady Dodington, relict of Sir Francis Dodington Knt was Lady of Hopton House Manor in Little Cressingham ...'. The identification of the Lady of Hopton House with Sir Francis's widow is, however, problematic.<sup>25</sup>

Sir Francis's eldest son, John, died in December 1673 as a result of drinking (with two others) 'five quarts of wine at the Bear in Leadenhall Street' (CSPD 1673–5, 44). In the January 1674 his widow, Hester, requested support for herself and her six children (CSPD 1673–5, 111).<sup>26</sup> John and Hester's second son, George [1656–1720] amassed a fortune in business and Parliament (Cruickshanks et al. 2002, 887–90) which he used to commission Vanbrugh to design and build Eastbury at Tarrant Gunville in Dorset (Whistler 1954).

#### ABBREVIATIONS

CJ	Journals of the House of Commons: Vol. 2 (November 1640) to Vol. 9 (December 1678). Published 1802.
CPCAM	Calendar of the Proceedings of the

Committee for the Advance of Money 1642–56. HMSO 1888.

CPC	Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding 1643–60. HMSO 1889–92.
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers Domestic. 1630 to 1675. HMSO. 1860–1939.
CSP Venetian	Calendar of State Papers relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice: Vol. 28 (1647) to Vol. 38 (1673). Published 1927–47.
CTB	Calendar of Treasury Books 1660–1667. HMSO 1904.
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue. <a href="http://estc.bl.uk">estc.bl.uk</a>
LJ	Journal of the House of Lords: Vol. 5 (April 1642) to Vol. 13 (March 1677). Published 1767–1830.
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury: TNA, PROB 11.
TNA	The National Archives

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The family surname will be invariable spelt 'Dodington' even where the primary source has used 'Doddington'. The subject of this article will be referred to as Sir Francis to avoid confusion with other members of the Dodington family.
- <sup>2</sup> Dodington Parish Register. Somerset Heritage Centre, D/P\dod/2/1; Phillimore, W.P.W. and Bell, W.A. *Somerset Parish Registers*, Vol. 6. Phillimore & Co., London, 1905, 25–39; Somerset and Dorset Family History Society, Parish Record Indices.
- <sup>3</sup> Combe Florey Parish Register. Somerset Heritage Centre, D/P\co.fl/2/1/1.
- <sup>4</sup> Margaret's baptism has not been traced: she does not appear to have been christened at either Combe Florey or Almer, although her sister, Elizabeth, was christened at Almer in 1579 (Fry 1907, 6).
- <sup>5</sup> 'the sonne of Mr John Dodington'.
- <sup>6</sup> Lines 46–47 of John's will (PCC: PROB 11/131) dated 1 December 1612 and proved 17 April 1618 reads 'bequeath unto my foure daughters which are named Margaret Marie Katherine and Elizabeth equally to be divided between them ...'. Margaret Dodington and John St Albon were married at Dodington on 8 October 1622 (see footnote 2 above). An indenture of 1 August 1625 (Marshall 1877, 29) between 'John St Albon... and Margaret

- his wife' mentions 'Francis Dodington Es<sup>qre</sup> and Christopher Dodington gent, brethren of the said Margaret'.
- <sup>7</sup> Although Sir Francis's surname is normally given as Dod[d]ington interchange with Dor[r]ington does occur where the context, or other evidence, unambiguously shows that Sir Francis was intended. Examples include contemporary print (eg Fowler 1642a; Charles 1648), 18th and 19th-century lists, calendars etc (eg CSPD 1644, 439, 446, 448 and 476) and even memorial inscriptions (Andrews 1930, 29). When the reference is to Sir Francis Dor[r]ington, the identity with Sir Francis is strengthened by the fact that no Francis Dor[r]ington was created knight or knight bachelor in the period 1560–1630 (Metcalf 1885; Shaw 1906), Shaw listing only Sir Francis Dodington under the headings Dodington, Doddington, Dorrington etc.
- <sup>8</sup> From September 1642 until at least February 1643, Sir Francis was imprisoned, on the orders of the House of Commons, in the Gatehouse, Westminster as a delinquent (CJ, Wednesday 8 February 1643) though it is not impossible that the Royalists at Oxford did show their support by awarding him an MA.
- <sup>9</sup> 'son and heir of John Dodington of Doddington co. Somerset arm. Decd.'
- <sup>10</sup> The probability that this 1626 Lincoln's Inn entry refers to Sir Francis is supported by Sir Francis's later behaviour.
- <sup>11</sup> Her will (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/ 201 (as Margaret) is dated 23 July 1647 and probate was granted on 19 August 1647.
- <sup>12</sup> This was a very early knighting by Charles 1, about the 51st in his reign, Charles having succeeded on 17 March 1625 and preceded those created at his coronation (Metcalf 1885, 185).
- <sup>13</sup> See also a typescript loosely inserted in the Somerset Heritage Centre's copy of Sydenham 1928.
- <sup>14</sup> Stogumber Parish Register. Somerset Heritage Centre: D\P\stogm/2/1/1 and 2/1/2. 'John son of Sr ffrancis Dodington'.
- <sup>15</sup> 'Alicia ye daughter of Sir Francis Dodington kt was buried'.
- <sup>16</sup> The complete text of the Petition is given in the Journal of the House of Lords for 14 June 1642.
- <sup>17</sup> This is the only reference to Sir Francis in the index of Clarendon's *History*.
- <sup>19</sup> That this refers to Sir Francis is confirmed by the fact that on 18 November 1648, Sir Francis wrote from a ship, the *Admiral*, to Sir Edward Hyde saying that the approach of Lord Warwick's fleet had alarmed them and that they were in no position to resist the expected attack and that the Duke of York must hasten to Brill (Routledge 1872, 446).
- <sup>20</sup> Unlikely both on the grounds of potential bigamy and from the fact that Sir Francis's will (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/332) requests his executors to 'breed my sonne James Dodington fitt for the trade of a Linen Merchant in London' which suggests that James was aged less than 14 in 1669.
- <sup>21</sup> Although Sir Francis may have met Dorcas l'Anson in France she was not French. Nor is there any evidence that she was a widow: the l'Anson pedigree in Hutchins (1796, to face p. 297) and the genealogical table in l'Anson (1915) both show Sir Francis as the only husband of Dorcas. Sir Francis's will (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/332) mentions only a son, James, and a daughter, Henrietta Calliope, and not two sons. In addition, Dorcas's petition *re* Commissioner of Excise (CSPD 1670, 272) mentions only one son, James. This suggests that if two other sons had been born to Sir Francis and Dorcas they must have died before 1670 and it is inconceivable that they would have reached an age to be bred up in the French army before the family's return to England.
- <sup>22</sup> Prize sub-commissionerships were awarded at the express command of the king, as a reward for services rendered to the Royalist cause.
- <sup>23</sup> He signed a codicil to his will on 24 November 1670 and probate was granted on 6 May 1670.
- <sup>24</sup> North Stowey parish register: Somerset Heritage Centre: D\P\n.sty/2/1/1; Somerset and Dorset Family History Society Index of Somerset burials.
- <sup>25</sup> There is no evidence that either the Dodington or the l'Anson families had significant interests in the county of Norfolk. It appears that Grigson's information is derived from Blomefield (1769, 436) where the reference is to Lady Dorrington (sic) and there is no mention of her being the relict of Sir Francis. It is, however, given some support by the will of a James Doddington of London Esq. (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/411 as Doddington)

dated 19 July 1685 and on which probate was granted on 6 October 1692. In his will James mentions lands, tenements, hereditaments and copyholds in the County of Norfolk. James left all his property to his wife Elizabeth but regrettably no other family relationships are mentioned.

- <sup>26</sup> These include John (1654–79) who died a bachelor and intestate (Ramsey 1930, 169); George (1656–1720); Diana (1657–?); Arabella (?–1720] who died a spinster (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/577 as Doddington) and Alicia (?–1721] who married Jeremiah Bubb and died in 1721 (PCC: TNA: PROB 11/578).

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