A FORGOTTEN KENTISH REBELLION, SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1470

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The chaos and confusion that shook England during 1470 and 1471 has long exercised the minds of historians. The chronology of this period is well known. Unrest broke out in northern England during the summer of 1470. Having declared for Henry VI, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and the king's wayward brother, George, Duke of Clarence, landed in the West Country in September and marched on London. Then, in October Edward IV's regime suddenly collapsed and the king fled to Holland with a few of his most trusted followers. Henry VI was briefly restored to the throne by the earl of Warwick and his Lancastrian allies. Yet support for the restored Lancastrian monarchy, known as the Readeption, was short-lived. The government fell in April 1471 and Edward IV was able to recover his throne after defeating first, Warwick at the battle of Barnet in April; and second, the Lancastrians at the battle of Tewkesbury in May.

Content with this general chronology, however, historians have glossed over the relevance of certain events. The sack of Southwark and its surrounding neighbourhood in late September and early October 1470, which is recorded in *The Great Chronicle of London*, is one episode that has received little more than a cursory examination.[1] In his biography of Edward IV, Charles Ross stated that it was news of the landing by Warwick and Clarence in the West Country in September 1470 that had sparked the Kentish rising at the end of that month. Unfortunately, Ross made no attempt to identify any of the rebels or explain their motivation for this attack. Although referring to a southern dimension of Warwick's multi-pronged strategy to seize power, Michael Hicks has made only passing reference to the assault on Southwark in his recent biography of the earl. As with Warwick's rebellion in 1469, where participants in southern England are described as 'indistinct because it was the northerners who proved decisive', Hicks briefly notes that in 1470 'Once again there were rebels in Kent, who pillaged Southwark'.[2]

Yet is this view entirely accurate? Does the part played by individuals from the South-East and London actually deserve more attention in this confusing period? And can more be gleaned from surviving records about the identity and motives of the rebels concerned? Additional research presented in this article will suggest that the episode at Southwark was integral to the overall success of Warwick's strategy to depose Edward IV. First, it will highlight the relationship between Warwick and Kent during the 1460s and his ties with certain members of the local gentry. It will then consider the account given in *The Great Chronicle* in the light of a previously ignored indictment in King's Bench which places the earl's Kentish contacts at the heart of the Southwark riots. Finally, it will explore the role that these individuals played in the Readeption government and their fate upon Edward IV's return to power.

The failure to explore the significance of Kent in Warwick's plans is surprising given the earl's widespread popularity in the region. His popularity originated in the politics of the late 1450s when he had conducted piratical raids on foreign shipping in the Channel, and in 1460, when he defended Calais against Lancastrian attempts to recover control. In the post-1461 settlement of power, Edward IV had granted him a powerful presence in the county. His appointment as Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports gave Warwick considerable influence in east Kent and uninterrupted lines of communication with Calais. Warwick's general authority in this region was augmented further by his appointment as chief steward of the duchy of Lancaster in the south, and his custody of the lands of his uncle, George Neville, Lord Latimer, which included the manor of Nevill's Fleet at Ash near Sandwich.[3] Since Warwick's brother, Edward Neville, Lord Abergavenny, was already a force in central Kent, the Neville family now formed the most powerful magnate bloc in the county.[4]

Using his influence and position in the county, Warwick developed a modest local affinity. At its heart was Henry Aucher of Newenden. Aucher's personal ties to Warwick dated from at least the late 1450s, when in March 1459 he was amongst those appointed to provide masters, mariners and other necessary supplies for Warwick's fleet. In July 1459 he was appointed customer of Chichester in Hampshire at the earl's suggestion. Aucher seemed to benefit from these ties during the early years of Edward IV's reign. He certainly maintained his naval links under the new regime. Between 1461 and 1462 he supplied the royal forces fighting in the north of England. He was even rewarded with 20*s*. for preventing plundering after the battle of Towton in March 1461. In July 1461 Aucher and Edmund Yns were

commissioned to take a force to sea for the defence of the realm. In December 1462 he was nominated to levy and collect the subsidies of tonnage and poundage in London.[5]

Moreover, Aucher was the brother-in-law of John Guildford of Rolvenden. Guildford, a royal annuitant since 1461, was lieutenant of Dover Castle from about 1465. His appointment was particularly significant for Kentish politics. Unlike Warwick's two previous lieutenants, Otwell Worsley and Henry Pilkington, Guildford was drawn from the local gentry. The family seat was at Rolvenden but a residence in nearby Tenterden, a member of the Cinque Ports confederation, was also maintained.[6] His appointment might even have been an attempt to strengthen Warwick's ties in the county. During the early 1460s the Nevilles had formed the most significant magnate bloc in the county where Warwick's brother, Edward Neville, Lord Abergavenny, was already a powerful local force. Yet the newly established regime of Edward IV had witnessed a concerted effort to recruit the principal gentry into the royal affinity. And by 1464, following the king's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the Kentish royal affinity was largely dominated by Sir John Fogge, Sir John Scott and the queen's Haute relatives. The effect was to reduce Neville influence.[7] As lieutenant of Dover Castle, Guildford held a powerful position. The lieutenant undertook the day-to-day administration of the Cinque Ports on behalf of the Warden. Based at Dover Castle he received and acted upon all correspondence from Westminster; he generally led local commissions, including commissions of array and muster; and he presided over the Court of St James, the increasingly powerful common law court of the Cinque Ports liberty. However, he was also a peripatetic individual, who conducted regular admiralty, criminal and civil inquisitions in the different ports. He was a man whose favour was assiduously courted by the different towns of the confederation. As such, he was able to exert considerable influence in the region.[8]

While failing to appreciate the relevance of the relationship between Warwick and Kent, historians are agreed that the events of 1470-71 have their origin in the increasingly acrimonious relationship between Edward IV and Warwick. This deterioration had become apparent during the later 1460s. Violence had erupted in the summer of 1469 when Warwick and Clarence briefly seized power. Despite making peace with Edward in September, the two had continued to plot. At the end of March 1470, after being implicated in Sir Robert Welles's Lincolnshire rebellion, they fled across the Channel to the French court. There they entered into an agreement with Queen Margaret and the Lancastrian exiles to restore Henry VI

to the English throne. By the autumn, Warwick was ready to strike. In contrast to 1469, a carefully planned strategy was formulated. Appeals were made in England for popular support, armed uprisings were organized to coincide with Warwick's arrival, a powerful and well-equipped fleet was fitted out in France, and a substantial expeditionary force was recruited, sufficiently strong to deter any would-be local opposition.[9]

Control of the capital was essential for the coup to be a success in the long term. The question for Warwick was how could the city be won over? Although he enjoyed significant popular support, the mayor, aldermen and merchants were overwhelmingly committed to Edward IV. Warwick therefore sought to combine his grass-roots support in Kent and the capital to bring pressure to bear on the city's authorities. Edward IV had remained aware of the threat to the capital should Warwick and the Lancastrians land in Kent. What measures were taken by the royal affinity in the county remain something of a mystery, at best they were haphazard and badly co-ordinated. Key figures were probably with the king in the north. Some, no doubt, remained in London. Others, like Thomas St Leger, were despatched to the West Country to rally support against an invasion there. This is presumably why Edward contacted relatively unimportant members of the gentry in the county. In a commission dated 7 September, William Swan of Southfleet was appointed to raise forces to resist a rebel landing in the county. If he could not stop the rebels, he was to retire on London and re-group.[10] Delays caused by an Anglo-Burgundian blockade of France, last-minute negotiations, and the inclement weather seemed to have led to the original departure date being put back. Whether this ultimately affected Warwick's choice of destination is unknown. It was certainly useful to have the king concerned by the possibility of a landing in Kent. In the event the invasion force landed in the South-West rather than the South-East in mid-September. The king, lingering in the north after suppressing Neville insurrection, was unable to respond. In October, news of the defection by the marquess of Montagu prompted him to flee to Lincolnshire. From there he took a ship to the Netherlands with a small band of followers, possibly including Sir John Fogge and Sir John Scott of Kent.

Rumours of impending trouble seem to have reached the capital by 11 September, when to keep the peace, the mayor was to be attended by twelve well-armed men, and the sheriffs by forty men. Then on Saturday 15 September, on or about the day when Warwick and Clarence landed in the West Country and declared for Henry VI, the city was placed on a state of alert. Repairs to gates and portcullises

were ordered, ordnance was deployed and the city's forces were commanded to muster on Monday 17 September.[11] That the Kentishmen rose soon after Warwick and Clarence's landfall is well attested. Our knowledge of their sack of Southwark is derived primarily from *The Great Chronicle*. This account contains two important pieces of evidence. First, it states that towards the end of September 1470, a mixed host of Kentishmen and sailors had descended upon the town, whereupon it had systematically attacked the homes of Dutch and Flemish residents. Second, at about the same time, members of Warwick's affinity were involved in fermenting trouble in this area. During the course of the Kentish attack, *The Great Chronicle* records that Sir Geoffrey Gate, marshal of Calais and one of Warwick's councillors, gathered together numerous criminals and felons from sanctuary in Westminster Abbey and other churches. He then attacked London's prisons, including the marshalsea of the King's Bench, and released all their prisoners.[12]

On its own, *The Great Chronicle* does not offer any insights into the reasons which lay behind the Kentish onslaught. Xenophobia was a feature of late-medieval English society generally, and London in particular. Moreover, Flemings and Dutchmen were the main targets for such popular attacks. Nor does the account prove that the South-East was part of a co-ordinated attack by Warwick, or that the Kentish attack was linked to Gate's assault on the marshalsea. Nevertheless, an indictment surviving amongst the records of the Court of King's Bench places a different perspective on this episode and hints at a much stronger link between the two events. The indictment is written in typically formulaic terms. At the beginning of November 1471 a session of the Court of the Verge at Southwark heard that on 11 October 1470, Henry Aucher, esquire, Robert Aucher, gentleman, and William Squery, gentleman, all from Newenden in Kent, Robert Neville of London, gentleman, John Langrigge of Southwark, mercer, and John Broune of Southwark, yeoman, plundered the hospital of St Thomas in Southwark. It was a lucrative raid for they were able to carry off various goods and possessions belonging to Sir William Brandon valued at £300 in the safe-keeping of the master of the hospital, William Crosse.[13] The undefended hospital was an easy target for the rebels and seizing Brandon's goods would have been a popular action. As marshal of the marshalsea of the King's Bench and a retainer of the Yorkist duke of Norfolk, he could expect little sympathy from his former charges.[14]

Until now the link between the Kentish attack and Warwick's invasion has remained unclear. This indictment, however, indicates

that Kentish associates of Warwick were closely involved in the Southwark riots and quite possibly in the activities of Gate as well. It appears that Aucher was used by Warwick to co-ordinate the attack on Southwark from the Kentish end. He had long-standing links with the earl and his brother-in-law, John Guildford, had been the earl's lieutenant of Dover castle; he was familiar with the town, owning a residence there; he had held crown office in London as collector of the subsidies of tonnage and poundage; and his career in royal service during the late 1450s and early 1460s had strong naval overtones.[15] That support for Warwick was being marshalled in the county at the time of the rising is also apparent from the activity of certain Neville retainers during September. An entry at the end of the month in the Canterbury Chamberlains Accounts, for example, shows a Neville captain called Lovelace being paid £1 not to enter the city. Another entry records that a captain called Quint, later associated with Fauconberg in May 1471, was paid 13*s*. 4*d*. to do no damage there. Furthermore, at least one Neville retainer seems to have accompanied the Kentish force to Southwark. Richard Neville, named in the Aucher indictment, was almost certainly the same individual who had been serving with the Calais garrison in 1466.[16]

Warwick's coup was a success. Furthermore, prior connections to Warwick and active support for the attack on Southwark guaranteed the prominence of both Henry Aucher and John Guildford in Kent under the restored regime of Henry VI. It was, however, a short-lived Lancastrian restoration. Edward IV invaded England with a small force in March 1471. Unfortunately for the Lancastrian government, Margaret of Anjou delayed her return to England until 14 April. By this time, Edward had defeated Warwick at the battle of Barnet. Less than three weeks later, on 4 May, Edward defeated Margaret and the Lancastrian forces at Tewkesbury.[17] This naturally spelt the end of Aucher-Guildford domination in Kent. Although Fauconberg's rebellion soon afterwards drew significant support in the county, particularly from the Cinque Ports, both Aucher and Guildford kept their heads down.[18]

By November 1471, the restored Yorkist regime had caught up with Warwick's former Kentish associates. Prosecutions were conducted for those who had participated in the sack of Southwark. The principal culprits, Henry Aucher, Robert Aucher, and Robert Neville surrendered themselves to the authorities on 3 February 1472 and were detained in the marshalsea of the King's Bench until their cases were heard. It is not known when they surrendered or for how long they were detained. Nevertheless, they appeared in court where they pleaded not guilty to the charges of insurrection and rebellion. Fort-

unately, they had already secured pardons and presented these in court. Henry Aucher's was dated 30 January 1472 and Robert Aucher's was dated 2 February 1472. Six Kentish esquires and gentlemen subsequently appeared and stood surety for the Auchers. They were then discharged. Similarly, in the wake of Fauconberg's rebellion, Robert Neville had been granted a general pardon dated 4 June 1471 which he presented in October 1472.[19] Of the remaining rebels, the outcome is less clear. It seems likely that they were all released from the marshalsea on bail. The case against John Broune was eventually dropped in Hilary term 1474. William Squery was still at liberty in 1473, although he was doing his best to avoid the clutches of the authorities. In the Easter term of that year a writ of *capias* against Squery was enrolled on the Plea Roll. He was subsequently outlawed but thereafter disappears from the records of King's Bench. It is not apparent when he eventually made his peace with the government. Finally, the fate of John Langrigge remains a complete mystery. No further action took place and it would seem that the case against him was dropped.[20]

Analysed in isolation, both the account of the sack of Southwark in *The Great Chronicle* and the indictment of the Auchers for sacking St Thomas's Hospital during October 1470 are unremarkable. King's Bench records are full of cases of riot, assault, and breaking and entering. Taken together, though, the chronicle and documentary evidence presents a powerful case for the active involvement of Warwick's southern connections in fermenting trouble in and around the capital during September and October 1470. What makes the indictment particularly noteworthy is the time that this incident took place and the personal connections of the Auchers. It places the one section of Kentish gentry with proven links to Warwick firmly at the heart of the Southwark riots and, no doubt, in the assault orchestrated by Sir Geoffrey Gate on the marshalsea of the King's Bench. They were not there by chance either. Instead, it now seems that they formed part of the carefully series of risings planned by Warwick to coincide with his landing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer would like to thank Jim Bolton for his helpful advice in the preparation of this article.

NOTES

[1] *The Great Chronicle of London* (1938), A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (eds), 211-12. See also C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *Chronicles of London* (1905), Vitellius A XVI, 181-2; John Stow, *Annals of London*, 422; J. Hardyng, *Chronicle* (ed.) H. Ellis (1812), 448; *The new chronicles of England and France* (ed.), H. Ellis (1811), 658-9.

[2] C. Ross, *Edward IV* (1974), 152; M. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford, 1998), 274, 300. Colin Richmond dismisses the Kentish host as a 'rabble' in contrast to the more disciplined host led by Fauconberg to London in May 1471: C. Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish rising of May 1471', *English Historical Review*, cccxxvii (1970), 677.

[3] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1461-67, 45; R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* (1953), i, 421-2, 429; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*; M. Mercer, 'Kent and National Politics, 1437-1534: The Royal Affinity and a County Elite' (University of London Ph.D., 1995), 82-3.

[4] *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1461-67, 71; E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (12 vols, Canterbury, 1797-1801), III, 477, IX, 210. Neville influence was strengthened in 1467 when Abergavenny was granted the wardship, marriage and custody of the lands of another Kentish noble, John Brooke, Lord Cobham: *The Complete Peerage*, new edition revised by V. Gibbs and later H. A. Doubleday (13 vols, 1910-49), i, 29-30; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1467-77, 175; Hasted, *County of Kent*, ii, 433; III, 463, 519; IV, 411.

[5] *Calendar of Fine Rolls*, 1452-61, 217; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, 145, 251; C. L. Schofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV* (1923), i, 167; *Calendars of Patent Rolls*, 1452-61, 494; 1461-67, 14, 102; *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1461-68, 55; *Calendar of Fine Rolls*, 1461-71, 73.

[6] Public Record Office [hereafter PRO], E 101/, 23/1/28, 32, 50, 53, 54, 57, 58, 60, 62; E 372/313-15 *sub* Kantia; *A Calendar of the White and Black Books of the Cinque Ports, 1432-1955* (ed.) F. Hull (Kent Records, XIX/HMC Joint Publications V, 1966), 55; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1461-67, 49; Centre for Kentish Studies [hereafter CKS], U 715/1 f. 146. For details of the Guildford family, see Mercer, 'Kent and National Politics', 32, 104-5. The identity of Henry Pilkington as lieutenant of Dover Castle is only known from: PRO, E 101/67/23/1 no. 32.

[7] M. Mercer, 'Lancastrian Loyalism in Kent during the Wars of the Roses', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, CXIX (1999), 230-1. For a fuller discussion of these developments, see Mercer, 'Kent and National Politics', 89-99.

[8] K. M. E. Murray, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports* (Manchester, 1935), 102-9, 132-7. Surviving records for the ports contain numerous entries of gifts and requests for favours from lieutenants. An entry dated 1-2 Henry V in a Romney Assessment Book, for example, records 'And in the costs of fish sent to the lieutenant of Dover to have his kind assistance for certain causes touching the estate of the Cinque Ports': CKS, TR 1020/4, p. 540 (Transcripts of New Romney Borough Accounts, 1404-16).

[9] Narrative accounts of this whole period are available in Ross, *Edward IV*, 126-54 and Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, 271-300. For a discussion of Kentish support for Warwick and Clarence in 1469 and 1470 see M. Mercer, 'Lancastrian Loyalism in Kent during the Wars of the Roses', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, CXIX (1999), 230-1 and Mercer, 'Kent and National Politics', 108-9.

[10] *Paston Letters, 1422-1509* (ed.) J. Gairdner (1895), ii, 409-10; Ross, *Edward IV*, 154. As it transpired Swan was not to be trusted for he was later implicated in Fauconberg's rising in May 1471: *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1467-77, 302.

[11] Corporation of London Record Office [hereafter CLRO], Journal 7, ff. 221r and v, 222r.

[12] *The Great Chronicle of London*, 211. That the threat came from Kent was finally established on Friday 28 September when it was recorded that the sheriffs, going to the Exchequer to take their customary oaths, were to be accompanied by 400 armed men because of fears of attack from Kentishmen intending to enter the city: CLRO, Journal 7, ff. 222v, 223r.

[13] PRO, KB 9/992/18. It is reported that after Warwick and Clarence's arrival in London on 6 October the 'Kentishmen' were 'peaceably remaining at Southwark' and that the authorities had scaled down their defensive arrangements, no longer feeling it necessary to guard the gates on the Bridge or the banks of the Thames. However, the Kentishmen were still to be prevented from entering the city by night: CLRO, Journal 7, ff. 222r and v.

[14] C. Wedgewood and A. D. Holt, *History of Parliament: Biographies of the Members of the House of Commons*, 1439-1509 (1936), 102-3.

[15] The involvement of the Squerys can probably be explained by Neville ties as well. Resident in Newenden and thus neighbours of the Auchers, the family had its own ties to the Nevilles. John Squery junior, for example, had used Warwick as a feoffee in 1466: Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, 222.

[16] Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish rising', 682; Canterbury Cathedral Achives, Chamberlains Accounts, F/A 5, f. 91. This Lovelace was possibly Richard Lovelace who had allegedly deserted the Yorkists at the second battle of St Albans in 1461. He had earlier fought with the Yorkists at Wakefield but following his capture had been forced by the Lancastrians to agree never to fight against them again: *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI written before the year 1470* (ed.) J. S. Davis (Camden Society, Old Series, 64, 1856), 108. For Richard Neville at Calais, see British Library, Add. MS 46455, f. 58 (the writer is grateful to Dr David Grummitt for this reference).

[17] For general accounts of the Readeption regime, see Ross, *Edward IV*, 154-8; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, 296-307.

[18] Richmond, 'Fauconberg's Kentish rising', *passim*.

[19] PRO, C 67/48 m. 23; *CPR*, 1467-77, 262; PRO, KB 27/841 rex 18v, 842 rex 4v; KB 29/101 rot. 5r. It is impossible to guess the names of other Kentishmen who might have been involved. The pardon role of 1471-2 does not contain the names of many Kentishmen at all. Moreover, in the case of Robert Aucher, his pardon does show him resident in Newenden. After providing numerous spellings of Aucher, he is then described as late of Rotherfield and Frant in Sussex: PRO, C 67/48 m. 20.

[20] PRO, KB 27/845 rex 15v; KB 29/101 rot. 5r, 103 rot. 30v.