

'William Allington of Horseheath, Speaker in the Parliament of 1429-30'

by J.S.Roskell
1959

By kind permission of Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Extract
from 'Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society',
Vol.LII, 1959

The first paragraph mentions two papers, however just one is
included here as the other Allington lived in Bottisham.
The name is spelt here with a double 'l' whereas other
publications, monuments and road signs use just one 'l'.

WILLIAM ALLINGTON OF HORSEHEATH, SPEAKER IN THE PARLIAMENT OF 1429-30

PAPER I

J. S. ROSKELL

IN these papers I propose to deal with two of the fifteenth-century members of the family of Allington of Horseheath and Bottisham: William Allington, Speaker in Henry VI's sixth parliament which met in the autumn and winter of 1429, and his grandson, another William Allington, Speaker under Edward IV in two successive parliaments, the first of which ran for as many as seven sessions in two and a half years, that is between 1472 and 1475, and the other, in 1478, for no more than six weeks. The earlier William Allington was one of the two knights of the shire representing Cambridgeshire when he was Speaker: it was his only return to parliament. The later William, before he sat for Cambridgeshire in the parliaments in which he acted as Speaker, had already served as a parliamentary burgess for the Devonshire borough of Plympton (in 1467-8).¹

By at least one local authority (Clutterbuck) the Cambridgeshire family of Allington is stated to have had its origin at Allington in Devon. However this may be, the family seems only to have come into Cambridgeshire when it acquired half a knight's fee in Horseheath (in south-east Cambridgeshire) with the marriage of William, the father of the William Allington esquire who was Speaker in 1429, to Dionysia, daughter and heir of William Malet of Horseheath. Before he died, the Speaker's father had also acquired, perhaps by the same marriage, another half-knight's fee in Bottisham, some six miles east of Cambridge. The estates, besides these, of which William Allington was seised in the year before his Speakership, according to an inquiry into liability to a parliamentary subsidy levied on knights' fees in 1428, were all in south Cambridgeshire and within easy reach of Horseheath: one and a half fees in Wickham, one fee in Bergham, and quarter-fees in both Streetly

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

C.C.R. = *Calendar of Close Rolls.*

C.F.R. = *Calendar of Fine Rolls.*

C.P.R. = *Calendar of Patent Rolls.*

D.K.R. = *The Reports of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records.*

H.M.C. = Historical Manuscripts Commission.

P.P.C. = *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ed. N. H. Nicolas.

P.R.O. = Public Record Office.

R.S. = Rolls Series.

Rot. Parl. = *Rotuli Parliamentorum.*

¹ *Official Return of Members of Parliament*, vol. 1, pp. 315, 357, 360, 363; *Rot. Parl.* vol. IV, p. 336; vol. VI, pp. 4, 168.

and Melbourn. He then also held half-knight's fees in Duxford and Linton, two half-knight's fees in Hildersham, and a whole fee in Little Linton.¹ Some at least of his estates are likely to have come into his possession as a result of his own marriage with Joan, daughter and heir of William Burgh of Barningham (Suffolk). The Speaker's wife, who lived to within two years of his death—she died on 27 February 1445—was well connected, and her family relationships may have been as important to her husband as her lands: on her mother's side she was a great-granddaughter of John Stonore, Chief Justice of Common Pleas in the first half of Edward III's reign, a granddaughter of Sir John Berners of West Horsley (Surrey) and Berners Rooding (Essex), and a cousin of the Sir James Berners who, impeached by the Commons in the Merciless Parliament of 1388 as a friend of Richard II, was then executed.

The Speaker in his own lifetime, in fact before his Speakership, saw further and important acquisitions of property come into the possession of his family through the marriages (in the 1420s) of his eldest son, William, and his younger bastard son, Robert, to two sisters, namely Elizabeth and Joan, the granddaughters and co-heirs of Sir William Argentine of Great Wymondley (Herts). These included the manors of Great and Little Wymondley and Weston Argentine and other lands in Hertfordshire, in Graveley, Stevenage, Welwyn, Hitchin, Almesho, and Ippolitts, together with the advowson of the hospital founded by the Argentines at Royston, well-rents in Welwyn, and other estates in Norfolk, Suffolk and Buckinghamshire.

The Allingtons, regarded as a family, were clearly very far from being badly off. In 1436 the Speaker of 1429 and his two sons were together assessed to a parliamentary tax on incomes from land, etc., as being worth £196 a year. Oddly enough, in view of the results of the 1428 inquiry into his holding of knights' fees, William senior's lands in Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire together were now assessed at no more than £26 a year. One explanation of this strikingly low figure might be that he had settled a considerable part of his property on his sons, William and Robert. In 1436 these two were respectively assessed as worth £110 and £60 a year, and it is their lands which raise the family income to the substantial annual value of nearly £200. Most of this property, however, was outside Cambridgeshire. Both sons held estates in Norfolk, which their father did not. William junior, like his father, had lands in Hertfordshire, but also some in Buckinghamshire, where the father had none. The bulk of these extra-Cambridgeshire accessions evidently came through the sons' marriages. Robert's wife, Joan, died in May 1429, and most of the Argentine estates soon went to William junior in right of his wife, the other sister. It is very probably that which accounts for William junior's estates being greater in 1436 than his father's and brother's together.²

¹ Sir Henry Chauncy, *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, vol. II, p. 114; R. Clutterbuck, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertford*, vol. II, p. 542; Catherine E. Parsons, 'Horseheath Hall and its Owners', *Proc. C.A.S. n.s.* vol. XLI, pp. 204ff.; *Feudal Aids*, vol. I, pp. 179, 181, 182, 190.

² Chauncy, *op. cit.* vol. I, p. 317; J. E. Cussans, *History of Hertfordshire*, vol. II, p. 51; 42; G. Lipscomb, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, vol. I, p. 14; E. Hailstone, *History and Antiquities of the parish of Bottisham* (1873), pp. 108ff.; *Feudal Aids*, vol. II, p. 448; *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vol. IV, p. 42; *C.F.R. 1422-30*, p. 273; *English Hist. Rev.* vol. XLIX (1934), pp. 631-2.

The considerable increases in estate and reputation made by the family of Allington of Horseheath and Bottisham in the first half of the fifteenth century were very largely due to the successful career and family policy of William Allington, the Commons' Speaker in 1429. Before him little is known of the family, except for Robert Allington, an eminent clerk who had been Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1394. Robert's kinship with William — perhaps he was his uncle — may be safely presumed: in May 1398 Master Robert was one of William's feoffees in the manor of Horseheath. Possibly he assisted the latter's advancement.

By 1397 William Allington was a King's esquire. Precisely when he joined the royal service is not known. Apparently he was connected to Richard II's court by the beginning of 1394, for in January of that year he successfully petitioned for a royal pardon for a homicide committed in London. But he may as yet been attached simply to the retinue of John Holland, Earl of Huntingdon, Chamberlain of England, the King's own half-brother and a son-in-law of the Duke of Lancaster, and may have joined the royal household later as a result. Allington was certainly connected with John Holland by 28 January 1395, when 100 marks were paid into his hands at the Lower exchequer in aid of Holland's passage to Ireland to join the King. The tie became a close one: on 14 April 1399, now promoted Duke of Exeter for his share in the recent proscription of Richard II's enemies in the royal family and among the older aristocracy. John Holland made Allington one of his numerous attorneys when preparing for Richard's second and ill-fated expedition to Ireland: and by 11 July 1399 Allington was Treasurer of Calais, an appointment he almost certainly owed to Holland who was Captain of Calais. (Allington and the Duke's lieutenant were then ordered to leave off harassing the Mayor and other merchants in the Calais staple for payment of some of their fellow-staplers' bonds, which had been delivered to Allington to meet the garrison's wages.)³ Meanwhile it was as a King's esquire that on the eve of the Richard II's *coup* in September 1397 and shortly afterwards, Allington shared with Robert Cary (another King's esquire and a retainer too, of the Earl of Huntingdon) two royal grants: the first, made by a letter patent of 16 September, was a grant for their lives (in survivorship) of the Wiltshire manors of Woodrew and Calne: the second, by a patent of 7 October, gave them the right to hold the estates of the alien priory of Ellingham (Hants), then in the King's hands.

In 1399 Allington's lord, John Holland, after suffering a short imprisonment, found himself degraded to his former rank of Earl in the first parliament which met after the deposition of his half-brother Richard II. Allington had little trouble

¹ C.C.R. 1399-1402, p.561

² C.P.R. 1391-6, p 393; Exchequer, Issue Roll, P.R.O. E.403/549, mem.10. It is not inconceivable that William Allington's entry into the household of Richard II was contrived by his wife's cousin Sir James Berners. If this was so, it must have been before 1388 when Berners was executed. Alternatively, it is just possible that Allington was introduced into the King's service by the King's friend, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, sometime before 1387 when the Earl had to seek refuge from the Lords Apellant: the de Veres were patrons of the church at Horseheath, where the Allingtons mainly resided. But these are mere, unsupported coinjunctures.

³ C.P.R. 1396-9, p.520; C.C.R. 1396-9, p.508

however, in accommodating himself to the effects of the Revolution, and within little more than a month of Henry IV's accession he was again one of the King's esquires. The new King realized that, to succeed, he must apply a policy of oblivion and indemnity for the members of Richard II's household and retinue. Obviously, this policy involved risks with those who had been attached to and had supported him, and who had hoped to profit from his favour more exclusively than such a policy was likely to allow. But those who had had a stake in the pre-1399 regime must be given one, if possible, in the Lancastrian dynasty. The King needed to buy up loyalties, and it was more of a seller's than a buyer's market. Allington also salvaged his two-year-old interest in the manor of Woodrew (Wilts) with a grant for life (made on 6 November 1399) which he now no longer shared with Robert Cary. (Woodrew was stated to be worth 25 marks a year, and Allington was to have *housbote* and *haybote* in the royal forest of Blackmore besides.) Allington did, however, lose his interest in Calne and in the lands of the alien priory of Ellingham, and by January 1401 he had also lost Woodrew to another former esquire of Richard II's household who, dispossessed by him and Cary in 1397, had now joined the household of Henry IV and recovered his emoluments.¹

In January 1400 John Holland had been privy to the revolt of Richard II's supporters, had been put to death by a mob at Pleshey in Essex when trying to escape to the continent, and had incurred forfeiture for his treason. If Allington was still connected with the Earl, he managed to evade any personal repercussions from these events. The untimely death of the Earl of Huntingdon was probably very timely for such of his retinue as William Allington, who may well have regarded the demise of his lord with relief. Certainly, its long-term effects were advantageous to him. And for the moment, in 1400, all was well. It is true that, although appointed as royal escheator in Cambridgeshire on 24 November 1400, Allington did not hold this office beyond 3 February 1401 (instead of for the usual term of a year). On 16 May 1401, however, he was for the first time included in the Cambridgeshire commission of the peace. A year later (by patent of 11 May 1402) he was made a commissioner in the county for the arrest of seditious persons who were busy throwing doubt on the King's intention to keep his accession promises, etc.: a proper sign of royal trust. He remained a J.P. until February 1407 without interruption. In January 1403 he and other jurors in a Cambridgeshire assize of novel disseisin were being threatened by John de Windsor esquire, the heir of Sir William de Windsor (Edward III's notorious Lieutenant of Ireland). But before the end of this year Allington had clearly achieved an assured position in the royal service: on 14 July 1403 he was formally appointed (during royal pleasure) as Treasurer of the Exchequer of Ireland, an office which he had already been occupying at the beginning of June.²

¹ *C.P.R.*, 1396-9, pp. 191, 212; *ibid.* 1399-1401, p. 6; *ibid.* 1441-6, p. 262. Robert Cary was the son and heir of Sir John Cary, a former Chief Baron of the Exchequer who had incurred forfeiture for treason and been banished to Ireland during the Merciless Parliament of 1388.

² *P.R.O. List of Escheators*, p. 12; *C.P.R.* 1399-1401, p. 557; *ibid.* 1401-5, pp. 128, 234, 272; J. H. Wylie, *The Reign of Henry IV*, vol. III, p. 133 n.

This Irish appointment suggests that Allington had already joined the retinue of the King's second son, Thomas of Lancaster, who had been given the Lieutenancy of Ireland in the summer of 1401. Almost all that is known of Allington for the rest of Henry IV's reign relates to his connection with Thomas of Lancaster and to the latter's spasmodic interest in Ireland. In September 1403, not long after Allington's appointment to the Irish Exchequer, Thomas of Lancaster returned to England and, although confirmed in the Lieutenancy in March 1406 for a period of twelve years (subsequently restricted to a period of three years as from May 1408), did not again personally discharge his duty, except between August 1408 and March 1409. Allington may very well have returned to England with Thomas of Lancaster in the autumn of 1403, because in March 1404 he was called upon to act as a commissioner in Cambridgeshire to inquire into liability to pay the recently voted parliamentary subsidy on landed incomes and personal property and by the following month had been superseded as Treasurer of Ireland. He was confirmed in the Treasurership, however, on 14 July 1406, and from then on he presumably retained the office until June 1413, when Henry V certainly appointed a different Treasurer as well as a new Lieutenant of Ireland. In the first half of 1408, when Thomas of Lancaster was preparing for a visit to Ireland, Allington also made ready to go, and he clearly preceded or accompanied the Lieutenant across the Irish Sea in that year. On 28 January 1408 he took out royal 'letters of protection' for one year as going to Ireland with Thomas of Lancaster, on 18 May nominated four Cambridgeshire men as his attorneys in England, and on 1 June agreed to act himself as attorney in Ireland for John Norbury, Henry IV's first Treasurer of England (1399-1401) and an important supporter of the Lancastrian regime who also had his connections with the King's second son.¹ Allington's interest in the Irish administration was clearly dependent on his connection with Thomas of Lancaster.

How close and constant was this connection of Allington's with the King's second son is clear from the fact that by September 1407 he was one of his feoffees in the lordships of Burstwick and Skipsea and other estates in Holderness (Yorkshire), which had been forfeited first by Thomas of Woodstock in 1397 and then by the next grantee, Edward of Norwich (Duke of Aumâle and later Duke of York), in 1399, at which time they had been conferred on Thomas of Lancaster. When Thomas of Lancaster was killed in France in the battle of Baugé in March 1421, of the original and still continuing feoffees only Bishop Henry Beaufort of Winchester, Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, and William Allington were then alive; the committee of feoffees had, however, been expanded to include Ralph Lord Cromwell and others, sometime after Thomas of Lancaster's creation as Duke of Clarence in July 1412. In February 1423 the feoffees conveyed their estate for forty years to a syndicate (formed to repay the late duke's debts), with remainder to the Crown. This syndicate included none of the original trust. Nor did it include any of Clarence's executors. The latter, appointed on 10 July 1417, when the duke was about to go to France with Henry V's second great expeditionary force, included three of the original

¹ *C.P.R.* 1405-8, pp. 203, 212, 391, 433, 440; *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, p. 254.

feoffees, Henry Merston clerk, Sir John Colville, and William Allington, in addition to Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, and Sir John Pelham.¹

Sir John Pelham, who was also an executor of Henry IV, had been Treasurer of England at the end of that King's reign when a party, headed by the Duke of Clarence and Archbishop Arundel, had successfully commandeered control of the royal authority. Clarence and his elder brother, the Prince of Wales, did not always see eye to eye. This Clarence group was then in opposition to a political *bloc*, headed by the Prince of Wales and his allies, the two surviving Beaufort brothers (Henry and Thomas), which had previously dominated the royal council from the end of 1408 to the end of 1411. And Clarence's marriage with the widow of John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, had only helped to widen the breach between himself and the late earl's brothers. What immediate effect, if any, this breach in the solidarity of the royal family had upon Allington's career, it is impossible to determine. He was quite clearly intimately attached to Clarence and a member of his household staff. But nothing is known of him from the time of his proposed visit to Ireland with Clarence in 1408 until 1414, apart from a casual allusion in the *Close Rolls* to his being arbiter in August 1409 in a dispute regarding a house built at Newmarket about which the *headboroughs* of the town were in some way disturbed.²

After his accession in March 1413, Henry V's earlier quarrel with his next younger brother, the Duke of Clarence (who from now until his death in 1421 was heir-presumptive to the throne), was overlaid by other considerations regarding which the two brothers were in full agreement. Especially was this so from 1415, when the French war largely absorbed the energies of them both. Meanwhile, Allington acted as a J.P. in the borough of Cambridge from May 1414 until April 1415, as sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire from Michaelmas 1414 until December 1415, and from then until December 1416 as the royal escheator in the same two shires.³ Clearly, he was *persona grata* with Henry V's administration.

Appointed executor to the Duke of Clarence on 10 July 1417, a fortnight before Henry V's second expeditionary force embarked for the conquest of Lower Normandy, Allington stayed on in England. And he became, at least for a time, a member of the royal council left behind to guide Henry V's younger brother John, Duke of Bedford (then *Custos Anglie*), in English affairs. Perhaps we may regard him as being in some sense the Duke of Clarence's representative at the council board. There is a record of his attending a council meeting on 20 October 1417.⁴ On 28 November following, after an absence of over ten years from the commission, Allington was again appointed as a J.P. for Cambridgeshire; this time his commission lasted until July 1420. It may also be mentioned that in May 1418 he was appointed as a commissioner for sewers eastwards to the sea from a line joining Cambridge

¹ C.P.R. 1405-8, p. 363; *ibid.* 1422-9, p. 59; *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, IV, A 6967; P.P.C. vol. III, p. 31; *The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443*, ed. E. F. Jacob, vol. II, pp. 293-6.

² C.C.R. 1409-13, p. 204.

³ C.P.R. 1413-16, p. 417; P.R.O. *Lists and Indexes*, IX, *List of Sheriffs*, p. 13; *List of Escheators*, p. 13.

⁴ C.P.R. 1416-22, p. 84; *Chichele Register*, *loc. cit.*; P.P.C. vol. II, p. 218.

and Spalding, and also as a commissioner of array in Cambridgeshire. On 12 July following, however, at the Lower Exchequer he was paid £40 (by assignment) for his expenses and passage-money (*passagium maris*), as being then about to proceed to France, by the King's order, *in presenciam suam*.¹ The moderate amount advanced suggests that his retinue was only a small and personal one, and, therefore, that there was perhaps no intention that he should engage in active service. It is more than likely that he was already earmarked for employment in some administrative capacity in what were soon to become the back-areas of the Conquest.

By this time Henry V's armies had overrun the whole of Lower Normandy, and his main force was threatening Rouen. The siege of the Norman capital began on 30 July 1418 and lasted till 19 January 1419. Certainly by 6 October 1418 William Allington was in France, for he was then appointed to share in the arraying of troops, including those of Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter. On 26 October 1418, and again on 22 January 1419, immediately after the taking of Rouen, he was made a member of an embassy empowered to treat with the French for a final peace and for an interview between the Dauphin and Henry V.² And then, in letters dated at Vernon-sur-Seine on 1 May 1419, Allington was appointed Treasurer-General and Receiver-General of Normandy (in succession to John Golafre, esquire). This was a post for which his previous administrative experience at Calais and in Ireland was perhaps thought to qualify him. A fortnight later he indentured to serve with a retinue of six men-at-arms and eighteen archers (later increased to eight and twenty-four). About this time he was made controller of the salt-garner at Vernon and also at Fécamp. What Allington's official salary now was, is not known. But on 12 April 1419, before his appointment, he had been granted certain houses at Harfleur, and on 18 December 1419, after a visit to England which ended with his return overseas in the household-retinue of the Duchess of Clarence, he was given an annual royal pension of £100 sterling. By January 1420 he also had possession of lands and lordships at Iville-sur-Seine and 'La Lounde', in the *vicomté* of Pont Audemer, given him by the Duke of Clarence.

As Treasurer of Normandy, Allington held an office which was exacting in its requirements. In August 1419 he had been authorized, for example, to array the different garrisons in the province every quarter or half-year, and in February 1420 he was ordered to receive homages in the King's name. He was also appointed to hear disputes between the Admiral of Normandy (the Earl of Suffolk) and any sea-captains. He rendered his accounts at the year-end in the Norman *Chambre des Comptes* at Caen, where he himself had his headquarters.³ In the meantime, moreover, the scope of his administration had been enlarged with the extension of the conquest: on 24 January 1420, in letters dated at Caen, he was formally appointed Treasurer-General not only in the Norman Duchy but also elsewhere in France

¹ C.P.R. 1416-22, pp. 450; 200; 198; Exchequer, Issue Roll, P.R.O. E 403/636, mem. 9.

² D.K.R. vol. xli, App. 717, 733.

³ *Ibid.* vol. xlii, App. 318, 320, 325, 339, 344, 356, 372, 400; Exchequer, Accounts Various, P.R.O. E 101/187/14; T. Carte, *Catalogue des Rolles Gascons*, etc. vol. 1, pp. 323, 333, 357; J. H. Wylie and W. T. Waugh, *The Reign of Henry V*, vol. III, p. 243 n.

throughout the *pays conquis*. And this office he held until the death of Henry V in August 1422. The importance of Allington's enlarged authority can be gauged from his salary of £4 *tournois*, or roughly 12 shillings sterling, per day (half as much again when riding abroad on duty), and also from the fact that his receipts for his last sixteen months of office amounted to some £58,325 and his expenditure to some £59,537 sterling.¹

In addition to what Norman estates and property he had already obtained, Allington secured a house at Honfleur in August 1421 (at precisely the same time as he was authorized to negotiate sales of houses there to Englishmen wishing to obtain them), and in February 1422 he had a grant for life of the lands of Warranville in the *vicomté* of Caen.² By this latter date he had had for nearly a year an additional interest in Caen, the centre of his administration, having been granted by Henry V the custody of both the castle and town from the time of the death of the previous custodian, Sir Gilbert de Umfraville, who had been killed in the battle of Baugé on 22 March 1421, when the Duke of Clarence also lost his life.³ As Treasurer-General in Normandy, Allington had also been involved in a certain amount of diplomatic business: on 7 July 1420 he had been made one of the commission appointed to treat for a reconsideration of the conditions of the English truce with the Duke of Brittany; on 10 February 1421, along with the Earl of Suffolk and the English *bailli* of the Cotentin, he had been made one of the conservators of this truce; and on 26 March following, four days after disaster befell Clarence at Baugé, he was appointed a commissioner to redress infractions of the truce.⁴

Under Allington's Treasurership, Normandy at any rate was financially stable and self-supporting, although it was able to make little contribution to the conduct of the war. And Allington remained Treasurer-General of Normandy and the 'Conquest' after the Duke of Clarence's death, sufficient indication that his administration was regarded as adequately efficient. There is, however, no record of Allington retaining his office after the death of Henry V at the end of August 1422, and the likelihood is that he soon returned to England after that event. He was certainly back in England by 13 February 1423, when he entered into recognizances for 1000 marks, the more important one of them being a form of guarantee to the widow of Sir William Argentine, whose two granddaughters Allington's two elder sons were soon to marry. And on the very next day (14 February 1423) he became sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire and occupied the office until November following.⁵ During his term he was also appointed once more as a J.P. in Cambridgeshire (by patent of 7 July 1423), an office he now went on to hold continuously until 1439.⁶ The year 1423 must have been one of great business for Allington: in addition to being sheriff, he must have been very preoccupied as a feoffee of the Clarence

¹ Exchequer, Foreign Accounts, P.R.O. E 364/61, mem. B; Wylie and Waugh, *op. cit.* vol. III, pp. 254-5.

² D.K.R. vol. XLII, pp. 416, 431.

³ Foreign Accounts, *loc. cit.* mem. C.

⁴ D.K.R. vol. XLII, pp. 375, 401, 412.

⁵ C.C.R. 1422-9, p. 68; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 13 (but cf. C.F.R. 1422-30, p. 12).

⁶ C.P.R. 1422-9, p. 560; *ibid.* 1429-36, p. 614; *ibid.* 1436-41, p. 579.

estates and as the late Duke's executor. (A royal pardon for Clarence's unlicensed enfeoffments was secured for a fine of 1000 marks on 12 February 1423, but probate of his will was not granted in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury until 23 November 1423.)¹

If only Clarence had not perished in the foolhardy engagement at Baugé, now, after Henry V's death, and during the minority of Henry VI, as the eldest of the latter's uncles, he would have become either Protector of England or Regent of France. This would have meant an incalculable but potentially substantial advantage to William Allington. For the development of Allington's career, the death of Clarence was sheer tragedy. The great prizes were no longer in prospect. But clearly, even as things were, work as Clarence's feoffee and executor would keep Allington in touch with the government, and his experience might yet be turned to some account. What now were his relations with the Dowager Duchess of Clarence (Margaret) is not known, but her relations with the uncles and natural protectors of her sons by her first marriage (John and Edmund Beaufort), namely with Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, and Thomas, Duke of Exeter, are likely to have been cordial. And it is possible that Allington's inclusion as a sworn member of the royal council on 25 January 1424, when the council established in 1422 was slightly changed in the second parliament of the reign, was due to Beaufort influence.² He had, however, another connection in the council in Ralph Lord Cromwell, whose feoffee in the castle and manor of Tatershall and other Lincolnshire property he had already become by 27 February 1422 when a royal writ licensed the conveyances which brought the trust into being.³ In July 1424 Allington's fee as a member of the council was fixed at £40 a year (minus 4s. for each day of absence), the normal rate for one of the rank of esquire. There is record of his attendance at council meetings in February and July 1424, in February 1425, and in July 1426, and he was still a member in March 1427.⁴

During this time of his membership of the council William Allington was one of the group of kinsmen and friends of John Holland, Earl of Huntingdon (the son of Allington's first lord of that same name and title, a cousin of the Dowager Duchess of Clarence, and a prisoner in French hands since the battle of Baugé in March 1421), who in July 1425 advanced money for his ransom. Sir John Cornwall, the earl's step-father, had taken prisoner Huntingdon's captor, the Comte de Vendôme, and was prepared to release him on certain conditions to allow the liberation of the earl. Allington's subscription to the ransom-fund was 200 marks. The earl was only one of a number of notables, not all of them Cambridgeshire men, with whom Allington was connected at that time. In December 1425 he appears as a feoffee of the young Walter Lord FitzWalter in respect of an acre of land and the advowson of the church

¹ *C.P.R. 1422-9*, p. 59; *P.P.C.* vol. III, p. 31; *Chichele Register*, *loc. cit.*

² *Rot. Parl.* vol. IV, p. 201.

³ *C.P.R. 1422-9*, p. 212.

⁴ *Rot. Parl.* vol. V, p. 404; *P.P.C.* vol. III, pp. 155, 166, 199, 266; vol. VI, p. 312. In the Privy Seal Warrants for Issue there are authorizations dated 25 January 1425 and 25 January 1426 for the payment of Allington's fee as royal councillor at the Receipt of the Exchequer (P.R.O. E 404/41/162; E 404/44/170).

at Great Tey (Essex), and by July 1426 he was one of the feoffees of William Fleet, the tenant of the abbey of St Albans in the manor of Moor Park in Rickmansworth (Herts), who were then licensed to crenellate the manor-house, to empark 600 acres, and to have rights of warren.¹ His interests as feoffee-to-uses were later to include the Cambridgeshire estates belonging to William Fynderne at Weston (by 1431), and also those of Sir Walter de la Pole, a kinsman of the Earl of Suffolk, at Sawston and Darnford, the heir to which was to be (in 1435) De la Pole's grandson, Edmund Ingoldsthorpe, son-in-law of John Lord Tiptoft, a very influential member of the royal council in the first half of Henry VI's reign. (Sir Walter de la Pole had himself been a retainer of the Duke of Clarence in Henry IV's reign.) Allington also became (by 1434) a feoffee at Castle Combe (Wilts) for Sir John Fastolf, K.G., of Caister, a close connection of the Duke of Bedford during the whole of his regency in France, but formerly (in Henry IV's and Henry V's reigns) another member of Clarence's retinue.² From how far back these various private connections of Allington's date, it is not possible to say, but he had been connected with Sir Walter de la Pole as early as 1414, and in June 1420 Sir John Ingoldsthorpe (whose son married Sir Walter's daughter) had made him one of his executors. A former Usher of the Chamber to Henry IV and Henry V, Sir William Asenhill, Ingoldsthorpe's brother-in-law, was one of Allington's co-executors of the Ingoldsthorpe will. It was Sir William Asenhill and Sir Walter de la Pole who were chosen as knights of the shire for Cambridgeshire to the parliament of 1423-4, when Allington, as sheriff, conducted the election.³

While still a member of the royal council, William Allington was appointed on 23 July 1426 to act as a royal commissioner for the raising of Crown loans in Cambridgeshire, and almost the same commissioners were reappointed for this purpose on 13 May 1428. At the time of this last commission Allington was again sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire; he acted from 7 November 1427 to 4 November 1428. On 28 April 1429 he was commissioned to inquire into concealment of royal feudal revenues and other sources of income in Cambridgeshire.⁴ It was to the next parliament after this that, along with Sir William Asenhill, his former fellow-executor to Sir John Ingoldsthorpe, Allington was himself elected as knight of the shire for Cambridgeshire, the election being held by Sir Walter de la Pole, his successor as sheriff. Rather surprisingly, it is the only occasion on which Allington so served, and he must have been by now at least in his middle-fifties. What is even more surprising is that the Commons elected him as their Speaker,⁵ especially because there were as many as four ex-Speakers among them, including the Speaker of the previous parliament. Whether Allington was still even technically a member of the royal council is doubtful. He was certainly no longer an attender of its

¹ *C.C.R.* 1422-9, pp. 270; 261; *C.P.R.* 1422-9, p. 351.

² *C.C.R.* 1429-35, pp. 185, 340; *C.P.R.* 1422-9, pp. 465; 368.

³ *C.C.R.* 1413-19, p. 195; W. M. Palmer, 'History of the Parish of Burgh Green', *Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, 8vo Proc. vol. LIV, p. 89.

⁴ *C.P.R.* 1422-9, pp. 355, 482, 552; *List of Sheriffs*, loc. cit.

⁵ *Rot. Parl.* vol. IV, p. 336.

meetings. But his conciliar experience between at any rate 1424 and 1427 is likely to have now stood him in good stead.

The parliament met at Westminster on 22 September 1429, and its first session lasted until 20 December; it was then prorogued to 14 January 1430, from when it sat until 23 February. The outcome of the two sessions was of considerable importance. The English conquest in France was imperilled by the French recovery first set in motion by Joan of Arc with her relief of Orleans, and it was thought needful for Henry VI to be crowned as King of France to help balance the effect of this new turn of events and of the coronation of Charles VII. But Henry must first be crowned in England. And so he was, in the middle of the first session of this parliament, on 6 November. By this act the troublesome Protectorship of the Duke of Gloucester came to an end, the actual exercise of the royal authority still remaining vested in the council. An attack that was made at this time on Cardinal Beaufort, one of the several clashes in these years between Gloucester and his uncle, faded out when, near the end of the first parliamentary session (18 December), the Lords resolved that, although a cardinal and legate of the Roman See, Beaufort should not merely be admitted to membership of the royal council but should even be urged to attend its meetings (except when Anglo-papal issues were on hand). The Commons endorsed the Lords' view of the situation on 20 December when, in making their grant of a second tenth and fifteenth (payable at Christmas 1430), additional to one already granted on 12 December (and due on 14 January 1430), they prefaced it with a special recommendation of the Cardinal of England. It was the least they could do: Beaufort's diversion of the English forces from his Crusade in Bohemia in the previous summer to the help of the Duke of Bedford in France, had lost the Cardinal much credit at the Roman Curia. So, in another way, had his loans to the Crown cost him dearly: in the last year or so alone they had run to nearly £24,000. Knowing Allington's background, we may suspect that as Speaker he had had some share in this recommendation of the Lower House. The Commons could well afford their own extravagance in conceding a double subsidy, for these grants were the first grants of direct taxation of the regular sort to be made in parliament for eight years. Tunnage and poundage were renewed merely until the next parliament. In the second session, however, the wool-subsidy was continued until November 1433, and the time for the payment of the second tenth and fifteenth was advanced to 18 November 1430. In what they probably regarded as an all-out effort to save the situation in France, now so seriously endangered, the Commons had risen to the occasion in their traditional role of grantors of taxes. The young King was at least enabled by their votes to leave England in April 1430, for his crowning in his mother's country, with a company fit to answer the requirements of protocol, and to some extent fit to meet the immediate needs of the military situation.

Allington's former headship of the financial administration of Normandy and the other English conquests in France may well have been his most important single qualification for the Speaker's office. He is also likely to have had a personal knowledge of the circumstances of the recent disputed parliamentary election in Hunting-

donshire, where the sheriff, Sir Walter de la Pole, a friend of his, had been prevailed upon to hold a second election on the grounds that the first had been subjected to undue pressure by intruders from Bedfordshire. This disputed or amended election, together with other disputed elections in Buckinghamshire and Cumberland, may well have been behind one of the most important of the petitions which the Commons put forward in this parliament: that which resulted in the Statute defining for the first time the electorates of the counties as their forty-shilling freeholders, a Statute that was to be in force for the next four centuries.¹ Another successful petition submitted by the Commons in this parliament was one which drew attention to cases of blackmail by threats and deeds of arson in the borough and county of Cambridge and also in Essex, and which requested that such acts be henceforward regarded as treasonable. Another petition put the blame for these occurrences on Irish, Welsh, and Scottish scholars at the University of Cambridge, but this was not approved by the King's Council.

Himself from Cambridgeshire, the Speaker quite possibly had a hand in these complaints. He was a J.P. in the county and, in the second session of the parliament, was made a J.P. in the borough of Cambridge, not for the first time. (He held this additional office from 28 January 1430 to 18 February 1432.) Although he was never again to be knight of the shire, he continued to serve on local commissions. On 6 March 1430 he was once more appointed a commissioner for raising Crown loans, in Huntingdonshire as well as in Cambridgeshire, the creditors' security being the recently voted parliamentary subsidy. A year or so later, on 26 March 1431, he was again appointed a loan-commissioner in both these counties, and a few days afterwards, on 12 April, he was put on the inquiry in Cambridgeshire into liability to contribute to the special aid of £1 per knight's fee (or £20 of annual rent) voted in the parliament of January 1431. In the middle of the following month, on 14 May 1431, he headed the witness-list of an important enfeoffment of Cambridgeshire and Middlesex estates by John Lord Tiptoft.²

The information about William Allington, however, now begins to thin out, and it is sometimes difficult to sort what little evidence there is into what relates to him and what relates to his elder son, another William. It is very likely that the five Breton prisoners-of-war from St Malo who on 12 December 1431 were given a safe-conduct to return home to collect their ransoms for payment to William Allington, were the son's and not the father's prisoners. It was certainly the younger William who sat for Cambridgeshire in the 1433 parliament. But it is the father who is likely to have been the Crown-loan commissioner in the county appointed in February 1434. In May following, William senior and his younger son Robert, both described as 'of Horseheath', were among the Cambridgeshire notables sworn to keep the King's peace and not 'maintain' those who infringed it, William junior (as ex-knight of the shire) being a commissioner to receive the oaths (along with the Bishop of Ely and Lord Tiptoft). It was William senior who in January 1436 is likely to have

¹ J. S. Roskell, *The Commons in the Parliament of 1422*, pp. 16-20.

² *C.P.R. 1429-36*, pp. 614; 51, 125, 135. *H.M.C. Report, MSS. of the Duke of Rutland*, vol. iv, pp. 86-7.

been both a commissioner of array in Cambridgeshire and a commissioner for the assessment there of a parliamentary tax on landed income, and it was also apparently he who in the following month was the recipient of a privy seal writ from the council asking for a loan of £40 towards the equipment of an army which was to be sent across the Channel under the command of the Duke of York.¹ It was clearly William senior who was still being appointed J.P. in Cambridgeshire in the commissions of March 1437 and of March and July 1439 (for the William Allington who was appointed J.P. in November 1439 is designated 'junior'). On the other hand, it was certainly the Speaker's son who was escheator in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in 1436-7, sheriff in the next year, and knight of the shire in the parliaments of 1437 and 1439-40. With his exclusion from the commission of the peace in November 1439, William Allington senior drops right out of sight, and all we know of him afterwards is that he died on 19 October 1446 and was buried at Horseheath, where his 'brass' still describes him as having been once Treasurer of Ireland and Treasurer of Normandy.²

Members of William Allington's family remained locally influential, although for a time no more than that. His son and heir, William, was sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire for a second time in 1450-1 and was a J.P. in Cambridgeshire from 1439 continuously until 1458, and from 1455 to his death in 1459 in Suffolk as well. This younger William, however, only survived his father by thirteen years, and his career never came to much. He had probably grown up in his father's shadow. Although he appears to have seen active service in the French war, he achieved no distinction there, not that this was very easy to do when ground in France was being more or less steadily lost. Having a bigger estate and income than his father, he was probably more easy-going. He at least kept safe what he had. But he made little impact. He was content to let his two sons pick up brides in local Cambridgeshire families, respectably well-off but not spectacular in any way. It was William, the younger of these sons, who became Speaker in two of Edward IV's parliaments, nearly half a century after his grandfather's Speakership in 1429.

¹ *C.P.R.* 1429-36, pp. 355, 385, 523; *C.F.R.* 1430-7, p. 261; *P.P.C.* vol. iv, p. 328.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* n.s. vol. xli, pp. 2, 4, 50.