The Barons Audley of Heley Castle And Hulton Abbey

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This article was first given as the Presidential Address to the North Staffordshire Field Club and published in that society's Transactions 1993-4. It was also published in issue 1 of 'The Audley Historian' in 1995.

I first became interested in the Audleys as a result of working at the Abbey and writing its history. To be certain that I had everything right, before I ventured into authorship, I checked every single reference already known, and among much else discovered the Collections for a History of Staffordshire. And in that marvellous array I first met the Audleys.

The only one I had previously known about was Sir James Audley, the Garter Knight who was **not** the Baron of Audley who was with his four squires at the battle of Poitiers. Initially we thought we had got him at Hilton, but he is far away in Poitiers in the church of the Carmelites, founded by his friend Sir John Chandos, and at his funeral the mourners were led by another even more famous friend, the Black Prince. I went to have a look there one day, but there is even less left of that church than there is of Hulton. (I asked for directions at the Poitiers Tourist Office, and they were most helpful, even ringing the University for information. It must have been quite a change from railway time-tables!).

The Audleys seem to have been a cadet branch of the De Verdons of Alton, and Henry de Audley, who had had both Heley Castle and Hulton Abbey built, was the second son of Adam de Audley who was at one time Custos of Chester during the minority of one of the Earls, Ranulph de Blunderville (Whitchurch). To be Custos presupposes a reliable man, and it also meant that Henry, much of an age, probably know the Earl from boyhood, which makes it less surprising that in later years he was one of the Earl's following, and was chosen to be his deputy as Sheriff of Staffordshire and Salop.

Henry had had an elder brother, also Adam, who is known to have served in Ireland with the De Laceys. Both were at least in their twenties when, in 1194, Henry witnessed a deed, and it is a fair assumption that Henry also served in Ireland, for when his brother Adam was killed in 1211, Henry inherited some lands he held in Dunley as well as being given his brother's Constableship of Cashel. Their father had died in 1204, so Henry was now Lord of Audley as well, and in the course of settling his brother's affairs, we find him confirming a grant originally given by Adam senior, to Robert le Blund of 200 acres of land in Chell and Burwardeslyme, for which Robert was to pay one pound of cumin pepper yearly. Pepper was not cheap. When all the debts to the King's Treasury and others were settled, Henry went back to Ireland and served with De Lacey until the latter's disgrace in 1214, when Henry transferred to the following of the Earl of Chester.

That Earl Ranulph de Blunderville was one of the few Magnates to stay loyal to the Crown in spite of all the provocation the current wearer, King John, was giving them, and when at last John was forced to seal Magna Carta, Chester was there with his knights and men in support including most probably Audley among the knights and Staffordshire men among the supporters. (It would be interesting to know what they made of it). John had still a year to reign and in those months he did his best to get even with his disloyal barons, ravaging his unfortunate lands in the process, while the French Army brought in by the barons ravaged the parts he missed. At last the King tried to cross the River Welland at the wrong time of the tide, losing all his baggage, including his crown, in the quicksands and was shortly dead from an unwise diet and sheer rage.

With King John dead there was a chance to start again. The French were ousted, and after their defeat at Lincoln they were glad to go. Henry III - a boy of nine - was crowned King, using one of his mother's bracelets, and the Earl of Pembroke was chosen to govern England for him. The Earl of Chester was one of his strongest supporters and among the appointments he was given was that of Sheriff of Staffordshire and Salop, and as I have said he made Audley his Deputy. By then Henry de Audley was getting on for forty. There is no record that he married more than once, and it was about this time that he married Bertrade de Meisnilwarin, who gave him a family of at least five sons and two daughters, Ranulf, James, Adam, Henry, Nicolas, Alice and Emma.

He also built his castle at Heley, exchanging land he held at Le Knole near Rye Hills, with Henry de Bettley for the purpose, and on the steep hillside above the road between Betley and Newcastle he erected the sandstone castle, reputedly from stone hewn from the deep dry ditch that surrounds it. There is too little left to say with certainty what it looked like, but others of roughly the same period had a tall central keep with outbuildings in the bailey. There are records, extant from a century later, for payments for cleaning Heley's great hall, whitewashing various buildings, and other repairs. It boasted a `*colehouse'* and in the middle 1300s there was a murder committed in its kitchen. By the early 1500s it was ruinous, and was more or less demolished by the Stafford Committee of Parliament in 1644 in case some desperate Royalist should try to re-fortify it. One or two fragments still show on the hilltop.

Henry de Audley was very proud of his castle and added a park nearby, the park still heard of in Silverdale. Henry III was sufficiently interested in the undertaking to give Audley 12 hinds towards the stocking of it. Parks then were not like parks now. They were fenced enclosures, sometimes large enough to hunt in, where animals, mostly deer, were kept. It ensured that food supplies were nearby. Nor was the killing all one way for there are records of a man being killed by a stag in Heley's park. At much the same time Audley founded Hulton Abbey and endowed it with quite a lot of land, some of which he had

inherited from his mother and some of which he had bought. For the rest of his life he considered himself the patron of the monks and looked after their secular interests - just as the Earl of Chester was looking after his Abbey of Dieulacresse at Leek.

By the time Henry had become by inheritance, gift, marriage and purchase one of the most important men in North Staffordshire, the days of 40 days castle guard for his manors now gone, commuted for a rent. Unfortunately, like so many of his kind, he liked a good law suit. One of them concerning Horton dragged on for 15 years, and even trial by combat didn't settle it, though Henry's man won.

The King trusted him and in 1226 made him Constable of Kermadyn Castle (Carmarthen), Governor of Cardigan Castle and allowed him to fortify a castle of his own at Redcastle, near to Hawkstone, on just such a hilltop as Heley. A little later he made him Governor of Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth Castles with responsibilities for the repairs to the defences and living quarters as well as the carriage of food and war materials to the King. He was also appointed to be Sheriff of Salop and Staffordshire for the first time, and when the King came of age in 1227 he confirmed to Audley all the lands he had previously held, including some that had been given him by the Earl of Chester. There was a gift of further land in Egmundun and Newport for which he paid yearly to the King one sparrowhawk on the Feast of St. Michael. In 1230 the King gave him the manor of Ford in Salop in fee farm for a rent of £12 per annum. These were the first lands he held directly of the King.

That same year Audley, approaching fifty, and his brother William, not much younger, were part of the army which the young King took to France, sailing from Portchester to St. Malo on ships the size of the Gosport Ferry. Apart from receiving the homage of the Gascon nobility little seems to have been achieved despite all the money it cost. Audley's standing was rising all the time, and when in 1231 the Earl of Chester granted to his sister Hawise all the county of Lincoln, Audley witnessed the deed in the kind of company that General Wrottesley said proved that while he might not yet be a baron by Writ, he was certainly regarded as one by tenure. He was also Sheriff again and still Sheriff when the Earl died a year later. Nor was he making any money out of it, for a year or two later the King is remitting the debts Audley contracted in his work as Sheriff and, as a mark of his favour, allowing him to bring his Irish crops into England without paying English Customs. Very recently it has been brought to my attention that there is an Audley's castle at the south end of Strangford Loch near Belfast. The picture showed a castle very like Rochester's and there was a quay for shipping nearby.

1237 found him Constable of Chester and Beeston castles, appointed after the death of the last Earl of Chester, John of Huntingdon. (One wonders if it was in Audley's time that the paintings recently discovered in one of the towers of Chester Castle were

made). That summer he went twice to meet the Welsh Prince Llewellyn, to treat for peace, though whatever he and his fellow treaty makers achieved, it did not last. Peace on the Welsh border never did last, even before the time of Edward I. Audley was now at least 64, an elderly man for those times, and the King appointed him to be Constable of his castle in Newcastle-under-Lyme, conveniently near to Heley, and with the manor of Newcastle included as well. He paid a rent of £69 a year for it to the King and in return was entitled to various dues from the manor and the small township of Newcastle.

For some three years life was quiet, for when next we hear of him he is off to Wales again, once more trying to make peace. This time, 1241, the King was there too, and afterwards the Royal cavalcade came back through Newcastle, and King Henry, well known for liking his comfort, disliked the accommodation prepared for him. Audley was given orders for repairs and alterations, also the cash do do them. At much the same time he was given, more personally, leave to have a three day fair at Betley, on the Vigil, Feast and Morrow of St Margaret, which occurs some time in the summer. Fairs were money spinners!

A strong feeling comes over that he was the valued and trusted supporter of the King, and in 1244 we find that his son James had been given to wife Ela the daughter of William de Longspee, who was the son of the Earl of Salisbury, which Earl was a bastard son of Henry II, the King's grandfather - a not too distant relative of the King himself. As a bride gift from her mother, Ela brought with her the manors of Stretton and Heredwyk in Oxfordshire, but Stretton at least never seemed to have become part of the Audley patrimony for Ela left it later to her youngest and favourite son - Hugh.

In the autumn of 1246 both Audley and James were in Worcester where they were among the witnesses of a Royal Charter. Not much later Henry Audley died, for James swore fealty for his lands on 19th November 1246. There was a lot to inherit even after James's mother had her widow's share. Altogether there seem to have been 19 manors in Staffordshire, 8 in Salop and various others elsewhere. There is some evidence too that the Bishop of Lichfield was concerned lest some land that James held of him might be given to Hulton Abbey - a small sign that the non-monastic world was getting worried about how much of the country was getting into the hands of monks, nearly all of whose Orders had their headquarters outside the Realm. James had to promise not to give any more away. Like his father before him he was Constable of Newcastle's castle, and he had to get repairs done too. Some were to the castle pool whose state was `damaging to the King's fish'. There was further work to be done when Henry III came through in 1256. (The pervading smell of new paint on a Royal visit is nothing new!) James was also in the Courts a great deal, either as a complainant or defendant, as well as keeping an eye on the business affairs of his mother and his aunt Emma, a lady who married three times and was always having trouble with her dower rights.

Sometime in the 1250s James exchanged some land in Apedale and Chesterton together with a 50 shilling rent in Nantwich, for the manor of Kenardesley, held by Thomas de Kenardesly. Thomas had not been strong enough to hold his manor against the Welsh, but James held it peaceably enough for five or six years, until he was called to be one of the brilliant train that went with Richard of Cornwall, the King's younger brother, when he went to Aachen to be crowned King of the Romans. Audley left Kenardesley in the care of his uncle Griffith ap Madoc, (Emma's first husband), but Griffith held it barely a month before the Welsh drove him out. Even if James knew before he got back to England there was nothing he could do. As soon as he was back, he mustered his men, and put the Welsh out in their turn. In a short time he restored matters, erected or re-erected some small buildings and left deputies in charge while he returned to England. But he was hardly out of sight when the Welsh came back and burned the lot! The chronicler, Matthew Paris, says that on this occasion **some** of James's brothers were killed, and I wonder if here we have the answer to the burial that was found at Hulton Abbey in the 1930s when the report said that the bones showed signs that the owner had been burnt alive. By then there was real war on the Marches, and James was very busy there. The seeds of what is called the Barons' War were already sown, aggravated by two bad harvests, and the trouble with the Welsh gave some of the Barons a good reason for putting themselves on a war footing and raiding their neighbours' lands and the countryside generally. Henry III was well into middle age now and his ways of ruling did not help. (For a start too much money, needed elsewhere, was being spent on Westminster Abbey). So, as they had done to his father, the Baronage presented him with a long list of grievances, this time known as the Provisions of Oxford. As a result a group of influential men were made into a council to advise the King. Audley was one of them, and his brother-in-law Peter de Montfort, who had married Alice de Audley, was another. Matters might have resolved themselves but for Simon de Montfort (no relation of Peter) and the war started soon afterwards. Peter sided with the Barons and Simon de Montfort but James stayed with the Crown and King, one of the few men of standing in Staffordshire who did so.

Of all kinds of war, civil is the worst for it puts brother against brother. 700 years later on we can't tell what sort of effect it had on the Audley family, but some effect there must have been. As soon as the trouble really began James was sent to replace his brother-in-law as Constable of the two castles of Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth. (Quite often one finds James doing the same work his father had done, including being Sheriff of Staffordshire and Salop). But it was also the kind of war where sometimes it helped to have kinsmen on the other side. James seems to have had the chance to get a captured nephew released after the Battle of Northampton, but another side seems so peculiar to us. By this time James and Ela had a family of at least five sons and a daughter, and in August 1264 we find him letting the six year old Nicolas be taken as a hostage by the other side. The

reasons are lost in the mists, but unlike many hostages, Nicolas was lucky: he passed into the care of his aunt Alice and her husband Peter de Montfort, and in time came safely home. But there is room to wonder if this was at the root of James's sometimes troubled marriage. Ela's feelings must have been beyond belief.

I'm not going into the details of the Barons' War. James spent much of it on the Welsh Marches, and just before the Battle of Evesham he was sent to Lancashire to bring reinforcements from there. It is doubtful if he arrived before the battle. Possibly he was glad, for Peter de Montfort was killed there as well as Simon de Montfort, and Peter's two sons had narrow escapes. Within the month James was in Wales again, this time raising the siege of Hawarden Castle, and in November he is, yet again, making peace with the Welsh. It would seem that he had diplomatic gifts like his father had had. The following year he was appointed Justiciar of Chester, and as such was very busy. He also kept an eye on his widowed sister's business affairs in addition to those of his mother and his aunt. About this time there is a court case in which it states that James and Ela were living apart. Even if they had not been, she would not have seen much of her husband.

He had wanted to go to the Holy Land with Prince Edward, but the King would not let him go. He wanted him to be Justiciar of Ireland. There is a faint chance that he was able to go on Pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostella before he crossed to Ireland, and I hope he did for Santiago was his name Saint, and James would need all his prayers for the work he was sent to do. He was amongst the fighting almost as soon as he got there, but his biggest problems were the feeding and equipping of his men. For that he needed money and a great deal of it. If there was any from the Treasury it was soon exhausted, and he borrowed wherever he could, with the result that his personal finances got into the gravest disorder, and before he could put them right he was killed, said to have fallen from his horse and broken his neck. He comes down as a man so wedded to his work that it is a little surprising and slightly amusing to find an item in the Forest of Cannock accounts that ... James de Audley, his son James, his chaplain, his squire and others unknown had taken two deer and were to be called to account for it.

He left five sons and possibly another and a daughter, and was succeeded by his eldest son, James. The others were Henry, William, Nicolas, Hugh, Joan and possibly Giles. James did homage for his lands on 29th July 1272, but his inheritance was far from undiluted joy. His father was scarcely in his grave when his creditors came swarming in. English merchants, Irish townspeople, an aunt of the King, the wife of Roger Mortimer, Walter de Merton (Bishop of Rochester whose tomb in Rochester Cathedral I have known all my life), even the Friar preachers (the Dominicans), and worst of all the King's Treasury. For the moment at least the local estates were in the hands of his uncle Nicolas who is called a clerk. The new King Edward I had promised some money to the Friar preachers of Newcastle, and Nicolas was told

to give it them out of the money James owed to the King. But for the rest, the King's accountants pursued the family remorselessly as one by one four sons and two grandsons inherited. It seems a little unfair as the money had been spent on the King's business.

The sons might fairly be called the unlucky generation. Four out of five of them succeeded to the Lordship of Heley in ten years, and in each case there was a relief (death duty) to be paid. Also in two cases, and very nearly three, a widow□s third had to be found, and at the start of the ten years there is a chance that Bertrade was still alive. Family money was tight quite apart from the enormous amounts owed to the Treasury. James had not begun to deal with the problems when he died, and his brother Henry succeeded. His chance to deal with it didn□t last long either though when the King (Edward I) discovered that he was really ill, he gave him an extension of time to produce his papers and his reasons for non-payment. Ela was still a force to be reckoned with. Her demands for her dower had come almost before her husband was buried, and her gift to monks was not to Hulton, but was to Trentham Priory. It was dated from Heley Castle.

Henry died sometime early in May 1276, his Inquisition Post Mortem (IPM) being dated 26th May. His heir was his brother William, □

'aged 21 last St Luke's Day (October 18th)'. Yet another relief was due, though from the purely financial point of view one saving grace was that the eldest brother James' widow had herself died 8 days previously - and she had been drawing her widow's dower from the estates even though she had remarried. Ela had now lost her husband and two sons in the space of four years.

William was a soldier in the King's service in Wales when he succeeded and for the rest of his life he was either in the King's army or had leave of absence to straighten out his family's business affairs. At least twice those affairs took him to Ireland and Dublin, and nearer home his remaining sister-in-law was always causing trouble with her dower rights, or what she was doing with her dower lands which were only hers for her lifetime and which would then return to the Audleys. She too had remarried. The feeling comes down the centuries that Lucy did not like William and was trying to squeeze every last farthing she could from his estates. In addition Florentine money lenders were attacking his Shropshire and Herefordshire lands for a payment of £85 6s 8d. I wondered about that quite a lot before I found the answer. Notus and Bergarius of Florence were not just money lenders, they were sellers of horses, the big war horses needed by fully accoutred knights, and William would have needed more than one. He was also assailed by Nicolas de Stafford, when, with Henry de Lacey (Earl of Lincoln), he was sued for suit and service for free tenements they both held of him in Caldon, Ruston, Hylton and Burslem. The Audleys were still paying feudal dues for Hulton Abbey 60 years after the foundation.

One New Year, the King agreed to remit £100 of his debts and he was also allowed to remit £45 which his father had not been able to

collect in Newcastle in 1264/65, 15 years before! At much the same time he was given 6 does, presumably for the herd at Heley. But when everything had been added up, and after abstracting a sum the Treasury agreed was owed to the Audleys, there remained a debt of £949 11s 0d to the crown as well as the other debts James de Audley had owed elsewhere. For those days it was a vast amount of money.

Quite what William intended to do about the debts we don't know. He may have considered marrying money as his brother subsequently did, but the events of Spring 1282 put it all out of his mind. On the Eve of Palm Sunday, in a violent storm, the Welsh Princes attacked and stormed the Castle of Hawarden, sacked it and went off with the Justiciar they found there as their prisoner. From the King downwards the English were outraged. The army was mustered and moved fast. Everyone was sick and tired of the endless warfare on the borders. By the end of the summer, a summer full of rapine and slaughter by the Welsh, the King had got them trapped in the angle opposite the Island of Anglesey; a pincer movement with Edward himself on the mainland and Luke de Tany in command in Anglesey. As a result of a TV news item I was given the information that proves that William was with the King in the summer with a retinue of 3 knights, 12 troopers and 16 lances (a lance was 3 men), 63 men in all. In October he drew £29 17s for a week's wages for 5 constables, 540 archers and 27 captains of 'twenties', and that week ended on 29th October. By the 6th of November he was certainly in Anglesey.

The reasons for what happened next are still debated, but for my money there are two possibilities, and neither is treasonable nor unreasonable. A bridge of boats had been built to cross from Anglesey to Menai, but early November brings either heavy mists or driving north-westerly gales on that coast. They might have tried to get across under cover of mist, but I think it is more likely that De Tany knew there was a gale brewing and he feared for his bridge. Either way, he and his army of some 300 knights and men-at-arms crossed, and the Welsh ambushed them. Grimly they fought their way back to the beach only to find the tide had come in and for armoured men the bridge was now out of reach. Sixteen knights with 17 squires and over 200 foot soldiers had crossed the water and none of them got back.

Sir William de Audley was one of them, and modern science has proved almost beyond doubt that the shattered bones with their sword and axe cuts that we found at Hulton are indeed his. If he was typical of the rest, then there was desperate fighting on that sea shore as the waves washed idly to and fro, and the seagulls cried. I would add that it was not unusual for the Welsh to cut their foes to pieces after death as well as before, and we never did find Sir William's head.

So once again a brother succeeded. Nicolas was serving in Wales at the time and it is to be hoped that he was not one of those who found his brother and companions. He got his lands within a very short space of time, on 8th January 1283.

He is the brother we heard of as taken hostage when only six, but during their childhood there is more to be found in the records about his younger brother Hugh who seems to have lived at Windsor, under the lee of the castle, and to have had something of the King's interest. Hugh was never Lord of Heley, even though he became the best known of the brothers. He married well, but died in prison in 1325, having backed the wrong side in Lancaster's rebellion of 1322. At least his head stayed on his shoulders, which is more than many of his friends managed.

Nicolas married as soon as he could, to Katherine Giffard who brought him lands in Hereford-shire and commotes and a castle in Wales. She bore him three children, a girl Ela, Thomas, known sometimes as 'the boy baron', and another Nicolas who would in time succeed his brother. As Nicolas spent most of his time as Lord of Heley in the King's army in Wales, or Scotland or Gascony, he can't have seen much of his children.

In the early years, his brother Hugh seems to have been with him quite a lot, as they served in Wales, over much the same ground along the north coast that William had fought over before them. When Edward I turned his attention to Scotland, neither Nicolas or anyone else had been that way before. Edward needed money for his campaigns so he summoned a Parliament to grant it, and it is most probably to this Parliament that Nicolas was summoned by Writ as a Baron, to become the first Baron of Heley.

Having got his money, Edward set off. By the end of March he was in sight of Berwick, and because one of the defendants killed his nephew, Richard of Cornwall, with a crossbow, which I have a feeling was a prohibited weapon at the time, Edward sacked the town once he got into it. A week later, the Scots retaliated with raids through Coquetdale and Redesdale and with barbarities as bad as anything done in the previous century. IPMs for the northern counties, both then and for the next hundred years, often speak of lands being worth nothing, having been wasted by the Scots.

We know that Nicolas was with the army, though only occasionally can we pinpoint him. He must have been at Berwick while Edward had the defences rebuilt, and he was certainly at the battle of Dunbar, which the English won. And unless he had fallen sick, of which there is no mention in the records, he was with the army when Edward set off to subdue Scotland. Ten days after the battle Edward had captured Roxburgh. On the 6th of June he was at Holyrood Abby watching while Edinburgh, on the ridge above him, was reduced. (We are not told how it was done though I do wonder if the 26 skeletons of young men found when work was done in the castle in the last decade might have had something to do with this siege). On the 13th, it was Linlithgow, and on the 14th Stirling surrendered. Then it was Perth. On July 2nd John Balliol, King of Scotland, submitted and abdicated at Brechin on the 9th before being sent to England in custody. On the

15th, the English reached Aberdeen and at the end of the month the Moray Firth was in sight. After that Edward turned back and came nearer the eastern coast, through Arbroath, Dundee, Perth and Edinburgh, getting back to Berwick again on August 26th 1296.

A chronicler wrote, `*He had conquered Scotland and searched it through in 21 weeks.*' Not quite all Scotland as we know it, but definitely most of inhabited Scotland as it was then. Audley followed his King and Staffordshire men followed Audley, but no word has come down to us of what they thought of what they had seen. Not even when 2000 Scottish landowners came to Berwick to pay homage.

Next year the King was in Gascony and Nicolas was there too - the only place he seems to have managed to avoid was Ireland, being permitted to let others act for him there. The greater magnates muttered and refused to go to Gascony, saying it was the King's personal inheritance that he wanted from the French, and not England's. Edward allowed this, and cut them down to size later. He was scarcely back from France when Scotland was again in revolt, so back there they went. And who knows, perhaps behind him Nicolas had Arrowsmiths from Betley, Bowmans and Beresfords from Alstonfield, and Thicknesses, Balterlys and Podmores from the Audley area. All these names occur in his IPM. For those days, the army was huge - and hungry too - for the supply ships met headwinds and could not keep up with them. But, in time, they were back over the border, and in time too came the news that Edward wanted. Wallace was coming his way, and Edward wanted William Wallace very badly, for he was the one who had begun the present rebellion when he had defeated the English at Stirling not long before. They met at Falkirk on the 22nd July 1298, and Nicolas was among the heavy cavalry that swept across the field and completed the rout of the Scots.

He did have some life away from the army, even if not much, for there are records of him being licensed to give away some land in Newhall and Aston to Combermere Abbey (the mother house of Hulton) and he is also mentioned with his wife's dowry which had got into the King's hands when her father died, was to be returned to Katherine and `*her husband Nicolas de Audley*'. After that the next news of him is his IPM taken on 17th September 1299. He was 41 and his wife would survive him for more than 20 years, and spend much of her time trying to pay off his debts.

His successor was his son Thomas, a boy of 11, and for the first time in nearly 30 years the inheritance went from father to eldest son. Thomas never actually had his inheritance, for he was not quite 19 when he died. Edward I and after him Edward II had men to reward, and the obvious way to do it was to let them have the guardianship of an under-age heir, and/or the profits from his lands until he reached his majority, meantime paying a rent to the King. As a result of Edward's wars there were a number of under-age heirs. There had been and would be in the future heirs who had only wreckage to inherit because

all the good had been squeezed out of the estates by unscrupulous men. In Thomas's case his Wardship was given to one of the Hugh le Despencers, either father or son, both of whom came to grisly ends. At 14 his lands were in the custody of Amadeus of Savoy, but when Thomas died very early in 1308, his IPM said that they were in the hands of Piers de Gaveston until the heir came of age. The mould was made and for the next 30 years an Audley heir would find his lands in the `care' of a King's favourite. His heir in 1308 was said to be his brother Nicolas who was 18 on the last Feast of St Martin (11th November). Gaveston would thus have three years of the fruits of the inheritance, and if, as was thought possible, Thomas's wife Eve was with child, he would have them for considerably longer.

In fact, Eve herself did quite well. She had no child by Thomas, but she had her widow's dower, which included the manor of Audley and a third of Endon, and she was married again not much over a year later to Thomas de Ufford. After him she married Sir Robert de Benhale, and there is a suspicion that at one point she was also married to one of the Audley cousins, though proof is wanting. Suffice it that after a marriage of only a few weeks, Eve drew her dower rights until 1369, a clear 60 years after the death of her first husband, the Boy Baron. It doesn't often get a mention when James the Baron's tangled affairs are in question. Thomas's IPM is another mine of information about the men and women who lived and worked on his lands in this area and in Alstonfield. Both he and his father had a house by Aldersgate in London, for which they paid dues to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul. This was possibly because as Baron, Nicolas was attending Parliament, although Thomas was too young to do so.

The second Nicolas would not make old bones either, though he crammed a lot into the years he had. Like so many of his family he was a soldier, and the fighting in his time was in Scotland. The biggest problem was the King's favourite, Piers Gaveston, who had most of the Audley lands. Edward II, who had succeeded his father in July 1307, was besotted with him. The Barons hated him, partly because of his minor birth (his father was a squire only), but mostly I suspect because he had a witty, and for those who were his butts, a rather cruel tongue. He called the Barons rude names. Warwick was `The Black Dog of Arden', Lincoln, who was distinctly fat, was `Pot Belly' and so on. Eventually the Barons got Edward to send Gaveston out of the country. He was back almost on the rebound, and spent Christmas of 1311 with the King, and was still in Edward's company when Edward went north to get away from the Barons, calling themselves the Lords Ordainers, who were keeping Edward very much under their thumbs. The King's party were at York, and then Newcastle-on-Tyne, and there his cousin, Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, nearly caught him, having come across the Pennines with his army. (The best road at that time was probably Hadrian's Wall or the vallum behind it). Lancaster did catch the Queen and the Royal Treasure. Edward and Gaveston got away to Tynemouth, and then by boat to Scarborough Castle, where Edward

left his favourite, sure that he was safe, while he went to York to raise an army. Unfortunately for Edward the Barons were already at York, and very soon after at Scarborough where, after a fortnight's siege and with food running out, Gaveston surrendered. He had been promised a legal trial for coming back into England without leave, and he was being taken to Wallingford for his trial, when he was abducted from a night halt by the Earls of Warwick, Lancaster and Hereford. Then after a travesty of a trial (or no trial at all), he was beheaded on Blacklow Hill, near Warwick, on June 17th 1312. Edward never forgave either the perpetrators or their supporters.

There was a backlash of support for the King throughout the country, from the other earls who had had their word broken for them, downwards. With the country behind him, Edward could force a public apology from Warwick and the rest in return for an amnesty. There is a list of 471 men who obtained pardons for acts of one sort or another against Gaveston, including killing him. Nicolas is 245th on the list, too far down I think to have had any hand in the latter crime. The three Earls head it, and amongst the others are 12 important Staffordshire men. Richard and Peter de Limasi were Nicolas's own knights, and the two Trussels with Roger de Swynnerton and Hugh de Meunille must have been at least acquaintances.

There is no saying that Nicolas was with Lancaster's army. It is possible because Gaveston still had most of his lands, and those of the Earl of Lancaster were close by at Newcastle. Moreover, Nicolas had yet to swear his fealty in spite of the fact that he was nearly 23. Even more he was hoping to marry the widowed Countess of Lincoln, who was step-mother to Lancaster's wife. The story of that marriage casts one or two lights on the way things could get satisfactorily completed in spite of the odds. Lincoln's first wife had died in 1309, and he was a heavy, portly man when Joan was married to him - hardly any girl's dream. But she had a very large widow's dower, which in a new husband's hands could do much to raise his standing. If Nicolas hesitated - almost penniless as he was - Joan might well have made the running to prevent herself being married to a second elderly lord. They had married without the King's leave, and had not paid him his fee, and it was not long before all her dower lands were impounded. Her marriage had been given to Ralph de Monthermer, a very ordinary squire before he married, as her second husband, one of the King's sisters. Monthermer wanted 900 marks as compensation. Nicolas had not got such a sum, but he did have friends and three of them joined forces with him, and told Monthermer that if the 900 marks remained unpaid then he might levy it from their goods and chattels. It did not come to that, and by 26th July 1313 Monthermer was satisfied. Joan's dower lands were returned to her very soon afterwards, including Knesale where on 2nd December 1313 her son James was born. James's Proof of Age has survived but nowhere in it is there any mention of his father being in the house or in the vicinity, which accords

with the various Letters of Protection Nicolas had at that time for service on the Scottish border.

Nicolas got his chance (at last) to pay his homage on March 27th 1314, when the Chancery Rolls state that the Audley lands had been in the King's hands for over 15 years since 28th August 1299 when his father died. It is as well that Nicolas could not know that in December 1316 they would be back in the King's clutches, to finish up in the hands of the even more grasping favourite, Roger de Mortimer.

1314 is remembered chiefly for the Battle of Bannockburn which the English lost - but whose lessons did much to bring about the victories in France. Nicolas might have been there, he was certainly in the area, a Fine Roll payment of 500 marks for his retinue of mounted men is in the records. If he was there he was one of the luckier ones, unlike the young Earl of Gloucester whose death left his sisters dividing his enormous estate between them, the root cause of much trouble in the next decade, with, of course, an Audley closely involved. But that one was Hugh, and he was never a Lord of Heley.

Nicolas died towards the end of November in 1316. He was barely 27, and his life had at last begun to settle down. He had a happy marriage, a strong and healthy heir and a small daughter. Heley was comfortable with hangings on the walls, with gold and silver cups, with silver spoons at the table and beautiful furnishings in the chapel. In his park there were at least 80 beasts. He was taking up the civic duties of his rank, sitting on Commissions of Oyer and Terminer, and leading the hunt for evil doers. I think he was buried at Hulton Abbey, for 3 years after his death, again at the end of November, we find Joan at the Abbey, granting a Deed to a Chell tenant. Was she there for her husband's anniversary mass?

So once again a minor inherited, and this time he was only three. It was going to be a long time before he got control of his lands. This child is the one I call James the Baron, to distinguish him from his kinsman, James the Garter Knight, who was the grandson of the younger brother of Baron James's own grandfather. James the Baron was head of his House, and a man whose life spanned almost the entire fourteenth century, who survived the battle of Crecy and the siege of Calais as well as three visitations of pestilence, who learned early in life that Might is all too often Right, who came into conflict both with his King as well as with that King's enemies and with his heir Nicolas more often than either. Even so when he came to the end of his own life, Nicolas said in his will that he was to be buried at the end of his father's tomb in their Abbey of Hulton. In due time we found both of them, though their marble tombs have gone.

James was born at Knesale in Nottinghamshire - about 10 miles north-west of Newark-on-Trent, and at his baptism was lifted from the font by his father's cousin James de Audley (eldest son of Hugh) who was his godfather. (In the fourteenth century there are quite a lot of James de Audley, not all closely connected with Heley, and they take

a little sorting out at times. The godfather was later to father the Garter Knight.

James the Baron was three when his father died, and this time Joan did not remarry. I haven't found it yet, but I expect she paid a fee to be allowed to stay a widow. She had her dower from Audley, as well as her dower lands from Lincoln, so the fact that Nicolas was hardly in his grave when his lands were assigned to Ranolph de Camoys would not leave her penniless. At the same time James's marriage was given to Roger de Mortimer. The best place for a three year old is with his mother, and one hopes it was so with James. At the same time if Joan was at Heley, then James was all too well placed to see his mother's household knights riding out on their lawless ways adding to the mayhem and general trouble in the area at that time. Two families were having a local war, and far too many people joined in gleefully. Even Joan's clerk, Thomas of Warwick, got involved and seems to have got rather more than he bargained for. But these were local fights even if very disturbing for the non-combatants. It was a very different matter and much more serious for the Audleys and their men when the Earl of Lancaster rebelled in 1321.

This was not a local flurry, for Lancaster was first cousin to the King and was aiming at his Crown. For the reasons that were still probably as good as when they sided with the Earl at the time of the Gaveston affair - Heley sided with him again - and chose the wrong side. For once Edward II behaved as Edward I would have expected, and it did not take him long to get matters under control again. By then, Lancaster had been executed (first cousin or no), Hereford was dead, killed at Boroughbridge, and a good dozen of the other chief supporters had been hanged - or worse. The Audleys paid for their rebellion with everyone else. Joan and her sister-in-law Ela were heavily fined, the elder Hugh de Audley (great-uncle of James) was in prison till he died in 1325; the younger Hugh, his son, was a hunted fugitive, and, worst of all, John Giffard, brother of Katherine de Audley hung on a gallows for months. If Nicolas had still been alive he could well have been beside him. Beside all that, the fact that Joan's household knights had also been fined or imprisoned, and 7 cartloads of treasure had gone missing were minor details. In the case of the treasure, it was there quite visibly on the Eve of Epiphany (January 5th 1322) at the gates of Tutbury Priory, but it never arrived at the castle, and no-one has seen it since - and according to the records Edward II looked very hard for it. But there are accounts of Robert de Holand pillaging goods and chattels of Lancaster's supporters, Joan among them, in that area, while further north Roger Corbet had removed the 80 beasts from Heley Park. Peter de Limasi and other members of Joan's household were captured at Burton Bridge, and I rather doubt if Peter was freed in spite of paying a fine and losing his lands, for he died in York very early in 1325 of a natural illness. One finds that statement sometimes in the plea rolls, and it usually means that gaol fever got them before the hangman did. (If Joan had taken her children with

her when she retired to Tutbury, then James was even closer to warfare than he was when he had been at Heley. He was then eight).

Roger de Mortimer was another who was in prison, and by the time Ela de Perers died in 1325, James's wardship had been given to Ranolph de Camoys. Joan was already dead, so presumably the children were with Camoys. But all that changed when Mortimer escaped, got to France and when the Queen went to visit her brother the French King - being totally tired of her husband who had got another favourite - enamoured her to the point where he became her lover, and returned to England with her. There was more fighting, and at the end of it the favourites (the Despencers) were dead, and Edward was a prisoner, soon to die himself. Mortimer was showered with honours, lands and above all with power. James de Audley was not the only one who became his ward.

With Edward murdered, Mortimer was the virtual ruler of England. As well as sons he had seven daughters and he married them off to men who could be very useful to him - as he thought. One boy was only seven. James at fourteen and a half was mature in comparison. He was married at Hereford at the end of May 1328 to Joan Mortimer, in a double ceremony, with Beatrice Mortimer marrying Edward de Brotherton, a grandson of Edward I, as the other couple. Queen Isabella and her son Edward III were present, and I cannot imagine that the Bishop of Hereford, also a connection of Mortimer, allowed such a splendid affair to take place anywhere but in his Cathedral with himself performing the ceremony. Later there was a tournament. One way and another it must have been a day that Hereford in general remembered for a very long time. Mortimer did not live to see something which happened 18 years later, when 6 of the brothers-in-law and a nephew were all at the battle of Crecy, which may be a record for one engagement.

Not long after the wedding James undertook to pay Mortimer the enormous sum of 10,000 marks to be rid of his guardianship. We don't know what caused this, whether it was the marriage, or what Mortimer was doing to his estates, or just Mortimer himself, but even though James had been heir to aunts as well as his parents, that payment must have had its effects on James's finances for a long time.

Edward III bided his time. He knew all about Mortimer being the Queen's lover. He knew that Mortimer was ruining the country, and nearer home he had made the King look a complete fool with his bad advice during fighting on the Scottish border. When the chance finally came - for Mortimer was very well guarded - he took it, and on 19th October 1330 a band of his followers got into Nottingham castle by a secret passage up through the rock, and then in spite of the Queen's pleas to `spare gentle Mortimer', took that arrogant man prisoner. A month later Mortimer died the same death he had meted out to the younger Despencer. As it happened, during that month Edward was 18, and there was no longer a need for a Regency of any sort. A year

later Edward allowed Mortimer's widow to have the hacked remnants of her husband's body for burial. But Mortimer's tomb has vanished, as has Wigmore Abbey, while Despencer's equally hacked body still lies in its tomb by the High Altar of Tewkesbury Abbey.

On that day in November 1330 when Mortimer died, James the Baron was not quite 17, and he had already seen service in the Scottish wars. His eldest son Nicolas was almost certainly born and probably the next one, named Roger. Nicolas was betrothed before he was out of his cradle and married even younger than James. Where there is room to wonder about the relationship between James and Joan, Elizabeth seems to have loved her husband right to the day in 1400 when her will said that she was to be buried `with my honourable husband Lord D'Audley'. She was also prepared to fight tiger fashion for their rights whenever she felt James was over-riding them. But that was later. At the time of the marriage she was Lady Elizabeth Beaumont, daughter of Lord John Beaumont and his wife Alice, Countess of Buchan, and almost certainly felt she had been married off beneath her station. Two sisters married a Count and an Earl, and another was the wife (probably the second) of Henry, Duke of Lancaster. Elizabeth was married to the heir of only a Baron, and one at that who seemed immortal!

Two sisters, Joan and Margaret, joined Nicolas and Roger in the early 1330s. James was still serving in Scotland and continued to do so until some sort of peace was patched up. According to the seventeenth century Staffordshire historian and antiquary, Chetwynd, Edward III considered James had served him so well that he cancelled the debt to Mortimer, which had been transferred to the Crown on Mortimer's attainder. This is borne out by a document in the Close Rolls dated 27th November 1334. Edward waived it because Mortimer had levied it when James was still a minor. In view of various things that happened later, it has to be remembered that James was barely a year younger than the King, and with Mortimer as guardian must have come into contact with Edward on a purely social level quite often as a boy. He was of the King's generation while James the Garter Knight was 10 years younger, and although 8 years older than the Black Prince, was more of the Prince's generation.

When James's wife Joan died is not clear, but by 1342 James seems to have had a son James by his second marriage to Isabella, believed to be the daughter of Lestraunge of Knokyn. This time the marriage seems to have been really happy though, as sometimes happens, the children of the first marriage were not as happy about it as was their father. He had been in Scotland as Governor of Berwick and Justiciar of Edward's lands in Scotland at the time of Sluys in 1340, (Edward's first win in the Hundred Years' War), then in 1343 he went overseas on the King's affairs with his cousin the younger Hugh, long restored to favour and now Earl of Gloucester. When the war flared up again and the new Earl of Lancaster took an army to Gascony, James and his men were part of that force. This Earl, Henry, was the nephew

of the Thomas who rebelled in 1322 and was a totally different sort of man, who in his own time was renowned for his courtesy and diplomatic abilities as well as his fine fighting and campaigning skills. Later, as I have said, he married Elizabeth de Audley's sister. Documents survive that give the names of many of James's men. Some were his tenants, but not all, for now the King paid his leaders to recruit the best men for the job, no longer sending out summons for all men between 16 and 60. These days men were clothed and armed uniformly - and were well trained. It was the day of the long bow, and the finest bowmen in Europe were the English and the Welsh. The Damparts and the Rouleghs were probably James's own men, but Ovyoteshay is from further south in the county. They were among the mounted archers. Tromwyn, Chesworthам, Grendon, Cruwe, Griffin, Vernon, Massi, Hodnet, Woore, Swynnerton, Meveral, even Kerdyf, are among the men at arms, the heavy cavalry. They left Heley on 26th April 1345, joined the Earl on the 18th May, and were then paid by him. The one knight, Sir John Tromwyn, had 2s a day, the 40 esquires 1s a day and the mounted archers 3d. Nicolas was there too with Lancaster, either as a page or a young squire.

It was a very successful, but hardly remembered campaign, and when winter came Lancaster stayed in Gascony with many of his men. James came home, and went out again with the King the following year on what became eventually the Crecy campaign. James, later to be the Garter Knight, went too. This new campaign was necessary because, during the winter, the French had counter attacked in Gascony and retaken some of the towns captured by the English the year before. Edward knew that this time he needed to cut the French lines of communication and destroy as many of their supplies as he could. so while people thought he was going to Gascony, instead he sailed to Normandy, to land at La Hogue, not so very many miles from the Sword and Juno beaches of the last war. he took with him the best equipped army to leave England till the BEF in 1914, and it included a large `engineering' section, as well as fighting men and their retinues. (I ought to point out that the war began partly for trade reasons and partly because Edward considered he had a better claim to the crown of France than the man who was wearing it. This accorded to English law if not French!)

Normandy was not expecting the invaders and they landed almost unopposed, and for 24 hours unloaded baggage and horses. Then they formed into three divisions, and set off down the Cherbourg Peninsula, burning and looting in classic *chevauchee* style. There were two Marshals, the Earl of Warwick and de Harcourt (a Frenchman at outs with his own King), and the Constable of the Army was the Earl of Arundel. James the Baron was always with Arundel, James KG always with the Black Prince.

Until they reached Caen, the ships sailed parallel with the army with enough men at arms and archers still on board to give strong support if needed. After the taking of Caen, the booty was so great

that Edward sent his navy home with it and the prisoners and marched away from the sea. There would come a time when he would need that support and it would not be there. The trail of destruction continued, but by then the French had recovered from their surprise, and were breaking down the bridges to trap the English, and they had to move as far along the Seine as Poissy before they found one that could be repaired, letting not only the men across but also the precious baggage wagons, which carried all the spare equipment as well as more loot.

King Philip of France was on their heels now, and what had been a leisurely plundering expedition turned into a chase with the impassable Somme in their way. For three days they marched along its banks, getting closer and closer to the sea, with food running short, the sun making ovens of their armour and the thick dust rising in clouds as they made their passage. worse still for the mounted men, many of the horses had died and they were forced to trudge along carrying all the weight of their equipment. They were trapped and from the King down they knew it. Edward asked his officers to find out if any of the prisoners knew of a way across the river, and if he did and would tell of it then the King would free him and his companions and give him money too. A man called Gobin Agace came and informed the King of the ford at Blanchetacque where there was a way across on the chalk at low tide.

Either one of the Audleys might have heard him tell his news, both were certainly in their places next morning when the army marched down to the ford in the early mists, and then the men waited by the ford with their eyes over their shoulders in case the French came before low water. By mid-day they could start across, and Hugh le Despencer - whose father had come to a traitor's end in the previous reign - splashed down into the water to lead the bowmen as they fought their way across under covering fire from their friends still on the bank. The opposition on the far bank fled or died and the army poured across, only just in time, the water rising round the wheels of the last wagons and the rear-guard fighting off the van of the French before they too could take it to the water. One or two didn't make it and were taken prisoner. Some French tried to follow till deterred by English arrows, but the main French army had to watch impotently as the English marched away from them. The English had needed a miracle and had been given one, the kind our generation got at Dunkirk.

It had been a magnificent feat, but it only delayed the inevitable. From then on Edward was looking for a good defensive position and when he found it at Crecy, he was on land that was part of his mother's dowry. He set out his out-numbered divisions, two in front and the third behind as a reserve. He took command of that one himself and watched the battle from a windmill that commanded a view over the whole battlefield. The Prince of Wales was in nominal

command of the first division, where James KG was also. The Baron was in the second division with Arundel, guarding the Prince's wing.

Froissart tells of the long nerve-stretching delay as they waited for the French to move forward, of the flight of crows (birds of ill omen) that flew over both armies, and the torrential rain that drenched them all before the battle ended, leaving the sun well down in the western sky, shining straight into the eyes of the French.

The English bowmen became a legend in their own lifetimes that day, the armoured knights and squires, also fighting on foot, had much to do as well, for sheer weight of numbers meant that there were times when the French did reach the English lines. In particular, the Prince's division suffered, but when help was sought from the King he only said, `Let the boy win his spurs'. Froissart, anxious for the reputation of the Black Prince, would have us believe that his was the only division engaged, but it was not so. Arundel's men were also fighting, and one of them, Robert de Brente, a tenant of the Baron's was killed near to him. (The following year his executors were excused all further demands for the war on James's testimony.) Darkness came before the fighting ended, and men dropped where they stood and slept. In the morning, the black-robed clerics went down the valley with the heralds to try and find out who was dead in the shambles, and came back with a list that was almost past believing. The blind King of Bohemia, whose three-feathered crest the Black Prince adopted, was at the top, and the unfortunate levies ridden down by the impatient knights were at the bottom, in all over 30,000 men. In comparison, the English had got off lightly, but there were still funerals to hold before the King could move on.

He reached Calais three days later, and having looked it over, the walls manned and the gates closed, knew he could not take it by assault. So he settled down to starve it out and save his own men. He had a little town of timber houses with roofs of reeds and broom built between Calais and the river - markets were held there. A year is a long time to life under those sort of conditions, and it cannot have been long before the marshy nature of the nearby ground began to affect them all and dysentery made its appearance as well as more ordinary illnesses. Many of Edward's men died, including the Earl of Surrey. General Wrottesley, who served in the Crimean campaign last century, said that conditions at Calais were vastly worse than they had been in the Crimea, `But Edward had not had newspaper correspondents to tell the world what they were like'. One occasion I would have liked to have seen occurred in October, a few weeks after the siege began. Edward was granting pardons for all the offences men had committed up to a few days before, though they had to remain with the army for the pardons to remain effective. There were at least 800 to be pardoned that day. The queue must have wound right round the camp. Both Audleys were in it, quite clearly separate persons, so were all the Earls, as well as lesser men, one of whom was

Richard, son of John in the Wro of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Presumably the messuage and land was where Roe Lane is now.

The horses suffered as well as the men, and in May 1347 James was, with some 30 other commanders, on this side of the Channel looking for remounts. Then came the news that King Philip was at last moving to the aid of his subjects, and the commanders were bidden to hasten back and leave the horses till another time. Philip came no nearer than Sangatte before he realized that he could not break through the English lines, and under the gaze of eyes straining from the walls of Calais, retreated again. Calais held out until August, and then surrendered, and like the four squires of Poitiers, the six burghers of Calais are famous. When Queen Philippa knelt before her husband and begged for their lives, the two Audleys must have been among the crowding soldiers who saw it happen.

After that their ways parted. James KG stayed with the Prince and served him as a soldier and administrator till he died of fever in 1369 at the age of 47. The Baron, on the other hand, seems to have returned to England to meet a long series of court cases. Some he won and some he lost, as when he insisted that the presentation to the church at Chetelton belonged to him as guardian of the under-age heir. Unfortunately for him, the Abbey of Dieulacresse, founded by the Earls of Chester was also interested. They invoked the Prince of Wales, who was also Earl of Chester, and considered himself the heir of the old Earls and so patron of the Abbey. Two or three haughty letters went to James from the 17 year old Prince, and Chetelton stayed with the Abbey.

1348 and 1349 saw Europe, then England and afterwards Scotland and Ireland, ravaged by the Great Pestilence, called the Black Death, and though James and his family escaped, his tenants in Devon were badly hit and so was Hulton, his Abbey. To help them he gave them the profits from two churches. We think that is the reason why he had the communication from the Pope that had the Bulla Seal attached.

March 1350 found him summoned, with a dozen of his rank, to advise the King on the safety of the country. He held a lot of land in south-west Wales, inherited from his mother's family, the Martyns, he being the last heir of sisters and a brother who died childless. The land included Newport, near to Cardigan. The Martyn family had founded the Abbey of St Dogmaels, and it was the discovery of that fact that was the key to much else for me.

In 1351 a James de Audley was leading the relief force to St Jean D'Angelys in company with Sir John Chandos, Sir Bartholomew Burghersh and Sir Ralph Ferrars. The other names suggest that it was more likely to have been James KG, but if it was James the Baron then it was his swan song. In 1353 he was officially exempted from foreign service, so long as he still provided fighting men in the numbers his estates warranted, and led them himself if England herself was

threatened. At the same time Edward gave him one of those all-encompassing pardons. It is almost certain that we found the remains of James at the Abbey, and when Miss Sue Brown examined them, she said that many of the bones in wrists, hands, knees and elbows had all the padding on the ends of them worn away. He also had three bones in his neck fused, and osteo-arthritis in his spine. I possess a copy of the medical report. To be given exemption at the age of 39, when most of the rest were fighting for at least another decade, argues that his state must have been very visible. It might also account for the fact that in later years he seems to have had a hair-trigger temper!

Domestic troubles flared up in the summer of 1352. Later events showed that it had been simmering for some time. Nicolas and his full blood brother Roger, both grandsons of that far from law-abiding man Roger de Mortimer, led a band of men into the parks and castles of Redcastle and Heley, drove off 500 sheep worth £100 and did some looting in the buildings. A lot of what was taken seems to have been armour, bascinets, aventals and so on. The herd in the parks suffered as well. Some of the men had ridden with James to Gascony and Crecy, others might have been his tenants, but no real reason for the trouble is given. (Nicolas was also causing trouble in Cheshire.) It has to be remembered that the Black Death had badly thinned the number of people still left to till the land, and James would sit on the Commission of the Statute of Labourers a few years later. Possibly he wasn't keen on having to pay more for labour in his fields. Certainly he was chronically short of money, had been so for a long time and would be for a long time to come.

We get an interesting list of some of his possessions when he was accidentally caught up in someone else's troubles. In 1352 he had left quite a lot of property at the house of Robert de Gyen at Bristol, and Robert was in trouble with the King to the extent that all his goods and chattels were taken into the King's hands. I found his IPM. He died at Fulham in January 1353, his next heir being his nephew who was a clerk and who was currently in the prison of the Bishop of Wells. James petitioned for the return of his property, and mentioned `in the nursery at the side of the hall' money, a great bugle horn, a gilt chalice and paten, a book of romance, a charter of pardon for felonies, riots, terrorisings and other small things, together with 2 long towels, all in a long chest. There was linen in a coffer in the lowest chamber of the tower, and on a cord in the same tower were hanging trappings for war horses, embroidered with the arms of Audley. There was also bed linen. Another coffer held silver table ware, 56 different pieces, together with 24 silver spoons and `one cross with the staff of 5 pieces of silver'. There were rings, brooches and other jewels in a little coffer within it. Lady Audley also had jewels and money there. Separate cases held 2 of her hoods and a `noted breviary, 3 books of romance and 2 pairs of linen robes'. I'm not surprised that James wanted it all back, particularly the pardon. In view of the fact that his youngest sons

were called Roland and Oliver, I would put a small bet on one of the books of romance owned by Lady Audley being the 'Song of Roland'.

James was also having trouble on his Devon estates, where a fair on his manor of Holdsworth was disrupted by riots caused by armed men, who had injured his men and ruined his profits. Worse, Richard Durecombe, who seems to have been his bailiff, went off with £40 of James's money, and when he was arrested was released by friends and again James's men were hurt. It took 3 years to get Durecombe before the courts.

The full background reasons for James's actions in 1353 are not clear, but do leave one wondering if he was trying to protect the interests of his second family against Nicolas and Roger, and, of course, Elizabeth, who had yet to give him a grandson (and never would). Some of his manors in Somerset and Devon he pledged to the King, and others were remaindered to the King after the deaths of James's sons. He now had 6 sons from his two marriages as well as 4 daughters. They were Nicolas and Roger, James, Thomas, Roland and Oliver; Joan and Margaret, a second Margaret and Catherine. I have been told that some of the Audley men had red hair, and I think that both James and Nicolas must have had it. Neither was very tall. James (and we could measure him) was about 5 feet 8 inches, and Nicolas was left his body armour in his will, and it would not have been much use if their were not of a size.

Then James was in more trouble, this time for trespass and extortion in Gloucestershire and Somerset. The King showed clemency. James had been fined £2000, but Edward said that James had given his Oath to the King and Council that he would mend his ways, and for that, and 'for other causes moving him' he was halving the fine to £1000 and his son Nicolas was to help him pay it. The 'causes' might refer to the illness afflicting James - probably acquired fighting Edward's battles - or, indeed, that he had known him a long time. The Earl of Stafford was one of the sureties for them. He was the most important man in Staffordshire and also married to an Audley, Margaret, the daughter of the younger Hugh. In addition he was a long-time colleague. By this time it was 1354, and on the 2nd of December Edward gave James and Nicolas another of those all-encompassing pardons.

The Battle of Poitiers was fought on 19th September 1356, and a nephew and a son-in-law were there, as well as James KG; but neither of his sons of military age fought there. Nicolas was in dire trouble in England. He and some of his followers had rescued some impounded cattle and a servant of the Sheriff of Herefordshire had been killed. All the offenders were pardoned, but what it cost them is not stated.

James sat on the Commission of the Statute of Labourers for 2 years, and at about this time he was giving daughters in marriage. Catherine, a daughter of the second marriage, married Thomas Spirgenel, the King's Yeoman, and was given a manor in Wiltshire and

25 marks of rent by her father. The elder Margaret had married Roger, the son of Lord Roger Hillary, the Chief Justice. Joan, the eldest daughter, had married John Tuched, and a little later the second Margaret married Fulke Fitzwarin, whose wardship James had bought some time previously. At this time even Nicolas was sufficiently in accord with his father to be given the manor of Edgemond in Salop.

When the temporary peace between England and France collapsed again in 1359, the King went back to France with his army. James stayed at home, though both Nicolas and Roger went. Roger was with the Prince of Wales, Nicolas with his cousin, the Earl of March (the Mortimer attainder had been lifted years before). It was late in the season for campaigning, and conditions went from bad to very bad indeed. Edward wintered in Burgundy, but supplies, particularly forage for the horses, gave out, and spring being very late, Edward was forced to move south. On the heathland just to the north of Chartres (which hasn't changed much in the centuries since), his steel-clad army was caught by one of the worst storms in history, and cold, hail and lightning killed hundreds of horses and many man. Edward viewed it as a sign from Heaven, and said he would accept any peace compatible with his honour. At Bretigny on May 8th 1360 he sealed such a peace with the Dauphin. The King of France had been a prisoner in England since Poitiers, and the Dauphin was a much cleverer opponent for Edward. Roger de Audley was one of the many casualties of this campaign.

The sons of James's second marriage were growing up now, and in 1361 he made provision for them, settling various manors in Devon on them. Totnes and `Ilfridicombe' are two that were mentioned. He also had a grandson, even if not an Audley one, for Margaret Fitzwarin bore a son on the 2nd March 1360. When Margaret was up and about again, there was a feast at James's house at Combe Martyn of sufficient magnitude to be remembered 21 years later. At much the same time, the Prince of Wales gave James and his wife licence to hunt on Dartmoor. I think that James was probably spending more time in the south than at Heley, though that castle was still being kept in good order. Remembering the endless quarrels between them, and I am far from having listed them all, it is surprising to find as late as 1362/3 a payment in the accounts of Heley castle for the repair of the rooms of the Lord Nicolas. Yet within the year James was trying to break the entail for Newport in Camoys (the one near to Cardigan). He failed. Another item in those accounts concerns `Richard the Krypel', who was being paid a wage of 3d a week. I wonder if this was Richard, son of John in the Wro, who was at Calais. I've also wondered if his was the skeleton found at Hulton with dislocated hips.

Then James was in real trouble and perhaps this case discloses the background to much that had gone before. I have always had the feeling that there was no love lost between Nicolas's wife and her father-in-law, James the Baron, and I think she nudged Nicolas into

many of his confrontations with his father. This time she took the Baron to Parliament for breaking an indenture he had made with her mother at the time of her marriage to Nicolas (it was probably a dowry payment). At that time James was 17, and either still in wardship to Mortimer, or just facing the fact that it had cost him 10,000 marks to be rid of him. It was sorted eventually, but James had to pay heavy damages and find sureties for £6000 until the damages were paid.

In 1367 he was on a Commission of Array, choosing men for the army - and probably enjoying himself in a familiar atmosphere. Bad times came back in the early 1370s, for he lost a number of his family. James and Oliver died and so did his daughter Catherine Spirgenal together with two sons-in-law. John Touchet was killed in a battle with the Spaniards off La Rochelle in 1371, and Fulke Fitzwarin died too. By 1374, the Baroness, his wife, was gone as well. We think we found her remains, beside her husband, a small lady with delicate bones.

James lived on, his relationship with Nicolas as bad as ever. Two or three times in the 70s they were both summoned to make provision for defence in case the French attacked Wales - these were the only times they did anything in concert. Nicolas's behaviour was getting more and more lawless and some time about them he was threatened with being declared an outlaw and he was only saved because he was needed at Newport Castle in case the French invaded.

James got another summons to was in 1377, and about then he lost another son, Roland. He had been attending Parliament for many years and was still attending the year before he died. He even had a summons to war in 1385, being then 72. I presume some clerk got out the wrong file!

He must have been in Devon in 1383 because he and his son Thomas were in dispute with the Abbot of Buckfast about weirs in the river. It did not get to court because friends intervened and settled it. For once James seems to have come off best, for the Abbot was to include prayers for Audleys past and present in several services and was also to put up and keep in repair `two figures of their shields of Arms in the glass of the eastern gable in the church, and two others in the glass of the gable of the Lady Chapel'. It was the Abbot who had to pay a fine into the Treasure. Thomas died before his father and is buried in Audley Church.

That left James with just one son, the childless Nicolas, for whatever she was, or thought she was, Elizabeth never provided an heir for the Barony. Perhaps towards the end there was a reconciliation between father and son, for when James died in the spring of 1386, Nicolas was remembered in his Will, to have £100, a dozen of silver vessels, and all his body armour. James's grandson, another Fulke Fitzwarin and Fulke's uncle Philip were to have the rest of James's armour, plate and mail. His daughter Margaret and the monks of Hulton were also remembered. Also an otherwise unknown Jenkin de Audley.

They buried the Baron in front of the High Altar of his Abbey, with 5 great tapers of wax about his coffin, and many other candles. Twenty pounds was to be distributed to the poor, who were asked to pray for his soul. I have to say that I have a very soft spot for James, that pugnacious, round-headed and probably red-haired man, whom I feel was in many ways as much sinned against as sinning.

Nicolas had 5 years as Baron before he was brought to lie as he had asked 'in a marble tomb like my father's at the end of his tomb'. Being Baron had not noticeably calmed him down. Less than a decade later Elizabeth joined her 'honourable husband'.

The succession passed to the Touchets. There were no more Audleys of Heley Castle and Hulton Abbey.

Brothers-in-Law at Crecy

Thomas, Earl of Warwick (1314-1369)	Lawrence, Earl of Pembroke (1319-1348)
John, Lord Charlton (1316-1360)	Sir Peter de Grandison (1298-1358)
Sir Thomas de Braose (1300-1361)	James, Baron Audley of Heley (1313-1386)

Nephew at Crecy

Earl of March (died 1360)

Principal Sources: Plea Rolls, Patent Rolls, Close Rolls, Fine Rolls for the reigns of Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, Edward III and Richard II