

AN EARLY KENTISH MILITIA ROLL

By FELIX HULL, B.A., Ph.D.

WHEN Henry V set out on the campaign which reached its climax in the battle of Agincourt he wisely realized that the shore of this island was as vulnerable to invading armies as that of France. In accordance with precedent, therefore, and lest the French should attempt a diversionary campaign in the south-eastern counties, Commissioners of Array were appointed in 1415 to raise suitable bands of the militia to face the potential invader.<sup>1</sup> Among the Commissioners for Kent was Sir John Darell, who had purchased the Calehill estate only a few years earlier,<sup>2</sup> and when the residue of the archives of Darell of Calehill came into the County Archives Office late in 1953, a roll was found among these MSS. which may indicate in some measure, the zeal of Sir John in carrying out military duties during his sovereign's absence.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately the roll in question is incomplete, its beginning and ending are both missing and any exact title or date is irretrievably lost. Of its character as a militia list there is no doubt. In dating it at about 1415, the evidence of handwriting, the appearance in this roll of at least twenty-four persons named in contemporary deeds in the Darell or other collections, and the place of Sir John Darell among the Commission of Array for that year, have all been borne in mind.

The surviving part of the roll is a parchment membrane approximately 29 inches long by 6½ inches wide, written on both sides and about 22 inches of the text on each side is complete. It is divided into sections comprising seven of the seventeen boroughs of the Calehill Hundred.<sup>4</sup> The list for one of the seven is incomplete and there are fragments surviving for at least two more boroughs. The "borough" an early administrative unit peculiar to Kent, was intimately linked with the hundredal organization of lathe and county and bore little relationship to that more modern organism—the parish. It seems,

<sup>1</sup> Col. J. Bonhote, *Historical Record of the West Kent Militia*, p. 18, and Rymer's *Foedera*, Orig. Edn., vii, 539.

<sup>2</sup> Hasted, vol. III, p. 224, says that Darell purchased Calehill from Thomas de Brokhull in 12 Henry IV (1410-11). For this actual deed see Kent Archives Office, Darell MSS. (Cat. mark U386 T1/1).

<sup>3</sup> Darell of Calehill MSS. (K.A.O. Cat. mark U386), the roll is U386 03/1.

<sup>4</sup> According to Lambarde the boroughs were: Nashe, Felde, Hayslathe, Sandpit, Charte, Welles, Charing, Sandhill, Acton, Eastlenham, Stanforde, Pluckley, Edisley, Halingarse, Sednor, Halmeste, St. Johns, Grenehill, but St. Johns seems to have been insignificant and an assessment for an aid, c. 1490 (K.A.O., U386 05/1), only gives the 17 main boroughs.

however, that the boroughs given fell approximately into the following parishes : Sandpett and Filethe in Charing ; Edesle, Grenehelde and Sedenore in Egerton ; Halyngherst and Stoneforde in Smarden. This may well represent the whole of Egerton parish and a large part of Charing and Smarden, but it means that the record for Little Chart, Pluckley and Westwell is entirely missing.

Within this borough arrangement the names are set out roughly in two columns, the first listing those responsible for providing fighting men, the second giving the names of the men chosen and some indication of military rank. In all, 140 complete names survive, the first column containing 128 of these. The second column of 53 names adds only twelve new ones, the remaining 41 fighting men being also listed as providers. Unfortunately, beyond the indication of military rank, noted below, there is little evidence of the status of the persons involved, only John Pemel of Edesle, baker, and John Swyft of Halyngherst, tanner, being given their occupations. On the other hand no fewer than nine women appear in the list of those responsible for finding militia-men.

Between the Statute of Winchester, 1285,<sup>1</sup> and the Act of 1662,<sup>2</sup> numerous statutes related to the militia, and modified the existing system of liability to provide arms and of responsibility on the part of the high constables of the hundred to view arms twice a year. Beyond the statutory obligation laid upon all men, not clerics, from the age of 15 to that of 60, to provide arms and to serve when called either within their own locality or, in the event of invasion, within the country, no detailed provisions were laid down for the method of apportioning liability for service. Until the sixteenth century when the modern lieutenantancy system came into being, this duty lay with the Commissioners of Array working through the high constables, and we have little knowledge of the practical arrangements made.

Naturally only a proportion of persons liable for service were called up at any one time and this roll indicates that each borough was assessed for so many archers and so many fully armed men up to between one-third and one-half of the liable population. Once the assessment was made it would appear that a further division of responsibility was accorded within the terms of the Statute of Winchester which provided for the maintenance of weapons and armour on a strict property basis. All those owning less than five pounds but more than two pounds worth of real estate were to provide swords and bows and arrows and the poorest of all classes were required to maintain bows and arrows or bolts according as they lived without or within the Royal Forest. The more wealthy found other weapons and armour

<sup>1</sup> 13 Edward I, st. 2, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 13 & 14 Charles II, c. 3.

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according to their estate. It would seem, therefore, that the high constable for Calehill arranged his people on this basis, so that the great majority were liable to find archers and only a few more heavily accoutred soldiers. It is on this property basis too, that the incorporation of women into the list can be understood. Actual service was not theirs to give, but as property owners they were responsible for finding arms and, if need be, men. A more subtle arrangement seems to have been at work also, for the persons providing soldiers are grouped together in twos, threes, or fours, each group being responsible for one man. Without considerably more evidence than is available it would be dangerous to argue much from this arrangement, but it may be suggested that the number of persons thus grouped gives some indication of their social position. This would be both reasonable and equitable and would account for the distinction of Thomas Whitsparrok of Halyngherst who provides Ralph Hitchys, archer, himself, as compared with John Homersham jun., Thomas Gateman, Robert Hersynden, William Halyngherst, Richard Tornour and John Aylard of the same borough who between them only provide one archer.<sup>1</sup> The same suggestion also helps to explain why the groups usually chose one of their number to act on their behalf, while individuals more often procured the services of substitutes.

A measure of uncertainty also lies in the rank of the soldiers as given. The 44 archers present no difficulty, but each borough was responsible for providing one "pavacarius," who appears to have been a man bearing a large shield or a fully armed soldier. In five cases groups of persons provide these men and choose one of their own number for the duty, but in Grenehelde there is no indication of any such group, the entry merely reading: *Tota Borgh'j pavacarium Et Johannes Pemel pavacarius*. This may indicate that John Pemel alone in that borough was of sufficient standing to provide or serve in that capacity. So, too, at Stonforde John Glovere and William Berman provide John Wysenden as *pavacarius* and these two are termed *inventores*, i.e., "finders" or "providers." This term is not used elsewhere and may be used here solely because they do not choose either of themselves to serve.

In the borough of Sandpette in Charing a further complication appears in the person of Henry Colbach, "armatus." The distinction implied by this rank is unknown, nor do we know how the "armatus" differed from the "pavacarius." It is the only case of its kind, Colbach serves in his own right, and all that seems safe to say is that he must have been a man of considerably greater means than the archers listed for the borough. This is borne out by the slight evidence of his connec-

<sup>1</sup> Although this argument may apply within any one borough it might be dangerous to try to compare the boroughs without far more knowledge of the basis of assessment.

tions in the parish. In the year 1414 a Will was registered in the Consistory Court of Canterbury of Henry Colbache, vicar of Charing, in the course of which "Magister" Henry Colbach is appointed executor.<sup>1</sup> We do not know the relationship of these men, nor whether the executor of 1414 could be the "armatus" of the following year, but at least it can be suggested that our Henry belonged to a rather more notable Charing family with clerical connections.

The transcript which follows remains as close to the original as possible with all normal Latin abbreviations extended and the Latin forms of names retained. It is offered for its value as an early nominal roll, its interest as a medieval militia list and its special character as a list of some of those men of the hundred of Calehill who might aptly be termed the "Home Guard" of 1415.

[First 7 inches of roll badly damaged.]

.... Archerarius

.... m'....[?]omie — Archerarius

Thomas Stompard — Archerarius

[about 2 ins. of roll blank]

....at Watere sen. — Archerarius

..[qui]bus Henricus atte Watere — Archerarius

....us....

Henricus ate....

[about 1 in. of roll blank]

*Borgh' de Filethe*

....d — Archerarius

.... — Archerarius

.... pro quo Ricardus filius suus — Archerarius

Wi[llelmus] ....u'

Rogerus Payn [*struck through*]

} pro quibus Rogerus Payn —

Archerarius

Willelmus Lowe — Archerarius [*added*]

Henricus Dodynton

} pro quibus Henricus Dodynton —

Archerarius

Thomas Stonhouse, sen.

Robertus Robyn

Willelmus Walyngthame

} pro quibus Willelmus Walyngthame—

Archerarius

Walterus Conseyl

Robertus at Wode

Willelmus Chelynton

} pro quibus Willelmus Chelynton —

Archerarius

Thomas Best

Willelmus Beste

<sup>1</sup> K.A.O., P.R.C. 32/1.f30.

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*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium*

Thomas Davy	}	j pavacarium pro quibus Thomas Davy pavacarius
Willelmus Runham		
Johannes [?Run]ham		
Johannes Stokelot		

*Borgh' de Grenehelde*

Thomas Munde, sen.—archerarius Robertus Warener [*all added*]

Henricus Smyth	}	pro quibus Johannes Bromle—Archerarius
Johannes Bromle		
Willelmus Bachelor	}	pro quibus Willelmus Bachelor—Archerarius
Thomas Chilton		
Johannes Fokes		
Thomas Oulegate		
Laurentius Newlonde	}	pro quibus Laurentius Newlonde— Archerarius
Thomas Bachelor		
Thomas Godard		
Thomas Monde, jun.	}	pro quibus Willelmus Munde—Archerarius
Ricardus Godard		

*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium Et Johannes Pemell pavacarius*

*Borgh' de Sedenore*

Thomas Petynden	}	pro quibus Willelmus Coltfole—Archerarius
Willelmus Coltfole		
Johanna at Watere	}	pro quibus Willelmus Chilton— Archerarius
Willelmus Chilton		
Anic' [?Anicia or Avicia] Sedenore	}	pro quibus Robertus Warener [ <i>struck through</i> ] —Archerarius
Anic' Sedenore [ <i>struck through</i> ]		
Johanna Sedenore		
Robertus Warener	}	pro quibus Henry Marbeler [ <i>written above</i> Robertus Warener <i>struck through</i> ] —Archerarius
Henricus Marbeler		
Ricardus at Welle	}	pro quibus Ricardus Pemell—Archerarius
Johanna at Welle		
Ricardus Pemell	}	pro quibus Robertus Burgoys—Archerarius
Willelmus Sedenore		
Thomas Pemell		
Ricardus Donstalle	}	pro quibus Robertus Burgoys—Archerarius
Robertus Burgeys		

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*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium*

Willelmus Wardon	}	j pavacarium pro quibus Johannes Pemel —pavacarius
Robertus Sedenore		
Johannes Newe		
Johannes Pemel at Crowche		

*Borgh' de Stonforde*

Willelmus Bocher	}	pro quibus Nicholaus Bocher—	Archerarius
Nicholaus Bocher			
Johannes Bocher	}	pro quibus Thomas Bocher—	Archerarius
Thomas Bocher			
Willelmus Ricard, sen.	}	pro quibus Willelmus Wytherynden—	Archerarius
Johannes Berman			
Willelmus Wytherynden			
Johannes Hilgarden, sen.			
Thomas Glover	}	pro quibus Johannes Hilgarden, jun.—	Archerarius
Johannes Hilgarden, jun.			
Laurentius at Melle	}	pro quibus Willelmus Ricard, jun.—	Archerarius
Johannes Denys			
Willelmus Ricard, jun.			

*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium*

Johannes Glovere	}	Inventores. Et Johannes Wysenden—	pavacarius
Willelmus Berman			

[*On dorse of roll*] *Borgh' de Sandpette*

Henricus Colbach—Armatus		
Ricardus Pyece—Archerarius [ <i>all added</i> ]		
Ricardus Tubbe—[Archerarius <i>added</i> ]	}	pro quibus Robertus Triton [ <i>struck through</i> ]—Archerarius non arr'
Henricus at Hooks		
Johannes Cole	}	pro quo Robertus Triton [ <i>added</i> ]
Willelmus Haukere		pro quibus Johannes Triton—Archerarius
Johannes Triton	}	pro quibus Ricardus Beste—Archerarius
Henricus Walyngame		
Johannes Chapman		
Ricardus Beste		

*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium*

Johannes Swon	}	pro quibus Johannes Swon—pavacarius
Johannes Wealdish		
Thomas Calhill		
Ricardus Curteys		

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*Borgh' de Edesle*

Thomas Borlynge	}	pro quibus Johannes Smythiot—	
Johannes Smythiot			Archerarius
Johanna Wyldemed	}	pro quibus Willelmus Burghassh'—	
Johannes Baldok			Archerarius
Willelmus Burghasshe	}	pro quibus Johannes Pemel, baker—	
Agnes Welshe			Archerarius
John Pemel, baker	}	pro quibus Johannes Wanden—	Archerarius
Ricardus Oulegate			
Thomas at Frithe	}	pro quibus Johannes Wanden—	Archerarius
Johannes at Frithe			
Thomas at Frithe jun.	}	pro quibus Willelmus Baldok—	Archerarius
Johannes Wanden			
Robertus Bourne	}	pro quibus Thomas Jekyn—	Archerarius
Willelmus Baldok			
Margareta Elmherst	}		
Johannes Philipot			
Johannes Barlynge	}		
Johannes Beste			
Thomas Jekyn			

*Tota Borgh' j pavacarium*

Johannes Beste at Helle	}	pro quibus Ricardus Stonhouse—	
Willelmus Hoke			pavacarius
Anges Swyft			
Willelmus Stonhouse			

*Borgh' de Halynghest*

Thomas Whitsparrok—	Archerarius	pro quo Radulphus Hikkys	
Henricus Burden—	pro quo Petrus Garynton—	Archerarius	
Henricus Thornherst	}	pro quibus Ricardus Aylesbury—	Archerarius
Johannes at Chirche			
Robertus Lombehist	}	pro quibus Thomas Robyn—	Archerarius
Radulphus Wytheryngbrook			
Thomas Robyn			
Johannes Homershame, jun.	}	pro quibus Johannes Aylard—	
Thomas Gateman			Archerarius
Robertus Hessynden			
Willelmus Halyngherst			
Ricardus Tornour			
Johannes Aylard			

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Johannes Swyft, tannere	}	pro quibus Johannes Beste—Archerarius
Johannes Newenden		
Willelmus Bromle		
Johannes Beste		
Willelmus Robyn	}	pro quibus Willelmus Knok—Archerarius
Johannes Knok		
Willelmus Knok		
Willelmus Philipot		
Thomas Brewere	}	pro quibus Willelmus Helstrete— Archerarius
Jacobus Tubbell		
Willelmus Marlere		
Ricardus Holmherst		
Willelmus Helstrete		

[Last 7 ins. of roll badly damaged.]

Katerina at Melle	}	[pro] quibus Johannes Frend—Archerarius
....		
....		
....		
....		
....	}	[Tota Borgh' j pavacarium] j pavacarium pro quibus Willelmus at Wode— pavacarius
....		
....nay....		
Robertus (?) Wory		
Willelmus at Wode		
Simon Swan....		Swan archerarius
Robertus....		
Johannes S....		

[Borough heading missing]

....Webbe—Archerarius  
 .... —Archerarius  
 .... —Archerarius  
 .... ..selwode—Archerarius

[1 inch blank]

....Swift—Archerarius

[1 inch blank]

.... Henricus Salmon—Archerarius  
 ..s ....eman—Archerarius