11. Sir Richard Redmayn – a serious man?
1405-1413

[The Wars of the Roses] were fought by serious people for serious reasons.

Professor John Watts*, Teaching History, 2012*

By 1405 Richard Redmayn had reached the age of 50. If he stopped to think about it, he probably felt, as we all do at such moments, that he'd reached that landmark birthday far sooner than he could account for. His advance into middle age didn't, however, mean that Richard was slowing down. During the previous three years, he'd been as busy in royal service as at any earlier stage of his life. He'd served as sheriff and then as escheator of Yorkshire and been appointed to high-ranking commissions dealing with rebels who'd tried to overthrow Henry IV – but, as we'll see, Richard's service to the crown was only just moving into top gear. Over the remaining eight years of Henry IV's reign, Richard's work diversified and made increasing demands on him, both mentally and physically, as this example from the Spring of 1410 makes clear.

On Sunday 13th April 1410, Richard rode away from Harewood, the start of a journey of 150 miles north to Haudenstank, near Kelso in the Scottish borders, a regular meeting place for diplomatic discussions between Scots and English emissaries. Once there, Richard took part in negotiations intended to lead to a truce or permanent peace between the two countries. He then rode home to Harewood, staying just four days (hopefully with his feet up?) before riding south to Westminster (another 200 miles) to report on the negotiations to King Henry on 7th May. Finally, he rode home again, having covered 700 miles in not much more than four weeks.

That sounds exhausting but it wasn't Richard's first such journey in 1410. Back in the hostile weather of January, he'd ridden to Durham for an earlier phase of the negotiations, then south to Westminster to report to the king before heading home again. As someone who's been known to complain about the rigours of catching the warm and comfortable 6.50 am train from Leeds to London, I find the physical demands of Richard's journeys remarkable, even if riding was as natural to him as walking. Clearly Richard, in his mid-50s in 1410, was still extremely fit.

What drove Sir Richard to work so hard? The rewards he received from King Henry in the form of lands and income must have played a part but another motivation, given that his royal service continued into his late 60s, may have been a belief (in his family's tradition) in the importance of serving the king in the interests of the country as a whole. Richard's career also suggests that he was able and trustworthy so a third motive may have been that he found his work stimulating, that it provided an outlet for his intelligence, ability and experience.

This commitment to 'king and country' is why I've chosen Professor John Watts' words as the epigraph at the head of this chapter – Richard Redmayn does appear to have been a serious man who served his kings for serious reasons. This is not how most people today think of medieval noblemen and knights, who are often assumed to be driven solely by self-interest, ambition and the

desire for personal glory. However, John Watts' words, while written in the context of the Wars of the Roses, apply to men – and women – during all periods of the Middle Ages, people who were serious-minded rulers, politicians and administrators, grappling with the core questions of how to bring peace, order and effective government to the country.

This chapter therefore explores the evidence from the latter part of Henry IV's reign that persuades me that Richard was one of those 'serious men', beginning with the parliament that dominated his working life in 1406. After that I'll discuss Richard's other work on behalf of Henry IV and some of the men he worked with, topics which help build a picture of a man who served the king for 'serious reasons'. In setting out this interpretation I'm aware that Professor Carole Rawcliffe presents a different view of Richard Redmayn's motivation in her entry for Richard in *The House of Commons 1386-1421*. I'm never comfortable disagreeing with a highly-respected research historian but I hope that what follows is a persuasive counter-argument to Professor Rawcliffe's focus on the acquisition of land and wealth as Richard's major and, possibly, only motive for his royal service.

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At the end of chapter 9 we left Sir Richard in 1405, dealing with the aftermath of the risings led by the earl of Northumberland and by Archbishop Scrope. Later that year, Richard was a member of the king's army that recovered the town of Berwick from the earl and took control of his other major castles in the north-east. Returning to Yorkshire, Richard, as escheator, had his hands full dealing with the lands forfeited by rebels in the county and membership of a commission ordered to bring yet more disturbers of the peace in Yorkshire before the king's council. He also spent more time in the saddle attending a Great Council at Worcester. I do hope he had a rest over Christmas as he was soon on the road again, heading for the parliament summoned to meet in the New Year.

As this was Richard's first parliament, I'm tempted to begin by exploring his overall experiences of parliaments – how many he attended, the process of election, travel and lodgings etc – but that's a major detour from my theme of Richard's royal service so I'll come back to these questions in a later chapter and here focus solely on what the parliament can tell us about Richard as a 'serious man'.

King Henry had called the new parliament to meet on 15 February 1406 because, despite the taxation granted at the previous parliament in 1404, he needed further income to pay for defence against France and on the Scottish border and to put an end to the rebellion led by Glyndwr in Wales. These dangers were underlined by the changing plans for parliament's meeting-place. Originally summoned to Coventry, the venue was quickly changed to Gloucester so the king would be near at hand if Prince Henry needed his support in Wales. Then, on 9 February, six days before parliament was due to meet, parliament was moved again – to Westminster – because French ships were reported to be gathering at the mouth of the Thames. Messengers had to ride fast to intercept lords and commons en route to Gloucester, tell them of the change of venue and that they now had until 1 March to reach Westminster for the opening of parliament.

Those already on the road included Sir Richard Redmayn and Sir Thomas Rokeby, the newly-elected knights of the shire for Yorkshire. They were expecting to be away from home for around two months (and so back in Yorkshire by mid-May) as all five parliaments of Henry IV's reign to date had

lasted between five and ten weeks. Instead parliament lasted until 22 December, more than twice as long as any other parliament of the reign. Debate did not fill the full ten months but still took up roughly 120 days spread over the three sessions:

- 1 March to 3 April – when parliament was prorogued for Easter
- 30 April to 19 June
- 18 October to 22 December (though this session may not have begun until early Nov.)

At least this gave Richard and Thomas the opportunity to return home between sessions.

At the end of this lengthy period, the outcome was that King Henry received the grant of taxation he needed but only after intensive examination of the condition of royal finances, whether crown money was being spent as wisely as possible and whether the king had the most appropriate councillors. None of this debate threatened Henry's position as king – this was 'loyal criticism' – but it does show how seriously lords and commons took the issues of government and finance.

We don't know what Richard Redmayn contributed to these debates because the rolls of medieval parliament do not record, as Hansard does today, the words of individuals. Instead the rolls are more like minutes, summaries recording the main issues discussed and the decisions taken – and checked by a committee of members at the end of the parliament to ensure the summary was correct. However, even without Richard's words, we can be confident that he needed to be on top of the detail of a series of complex issues in order to listen to and take part effectively in discussions in parliament itself (the Commons met in the chapter house of Westminster Abbey) or in less formal conversations with other members.

These were the major topics of those discussions:

- The readiness of the Scots to accept a truce or peace, following the capture at sea of the young King of Scotland which largely ended the danger of a Scottish invasion of the north.
- The changing strength of Glyndwr's position in Wales – Glyndwr was initially strengthened by the arrival of French troops. During 1406 Prince Henry's forces reconquered much of Wales but that success needed to be sustained against a possible Welsh fightback.
- The extent of the dangers of French raids on the English coast and to English lands in northern France, especially Calais, and to Gascony in south-western France. Discussion of these issues required up to date knowledge of French politics and the links between France and Glyndwr.
- King Henry's health after he suffered a stroke or heart attack in April, leading to much uncertainty and debate on the likelihood of his recovery, the suitability and competence of his councillors and the roles and rivalries of the Princes Henry, Thomas and John, of Archbishop Arundel and other leading advisers.
- The crown's ability to finance its wars and defence was at the heart of all these issues along with the question of whether the king was making the best use of the income he received. This also linked to the nature and patterns of trade because taxes on trade contributed

significantly to royal finances. Finally there was the constantly debated question of whether Henry was wasting money with excessive spending on his household and on the dowry of his second wife, Joanna of Navarre.

This list of the issues was formidable, each with its own history, nuances and complexities and with a range of alternative ways forward to argue over. Discussion was all the more intricate because of the links between these issues, thus Richard Redmayn needed to have a strong grasp of them all.

The one major clue that we have to Richard Redmayn's standing amongst the members of the Commons was that he was chosen by the Commons as one of six members who were to audit the accounts maintained by the treasurers of war. This was an important role given the immense amount of money being spent on defence and parliament's concern that the money was not being spent as effectively as possible.

(The idea of an audit sounds very modern but was very much part of Richard Redmayn's world. He and his household officials would have conducted audits on the finances of his own estates, based on detailed records of income and spending and he would also have kept detailed records in other roles, for example as sheriff of Cumberland or Yorkshire. Royal financial records were extremely detailed, carefully compiled and much used (as we'll see in a later chapter) so everyone at the parliament in 1406 knew what an audit entailed and expected it to be completed with precision.)

Exploring the backgrounds of the other five auditors gives us a sense of the company Richard Redmayn was in and why his being chosen suggests that he was well-respected by his peers. All had extensive experience in royal service, most were in their fifties and one (possibly two) in their forties. There were three highly lawyers, one London merchant and alderman, and two soldiers – Sir Richard Redmayn and Sir Hugh Luttrell. All had served Richard II as well as Henry IV and several were veterans of Richard II's court. Luttrell, like Richard Redmayn, had been in Ireland with Richard II in 1394 and 1399 and was an experienced jouster. They were clearly not strangers to each other.

Unfortunately the records no longer exist to prove that the audit was carried out but that doesn't detract from my conclusion that for Richard Redmayn to have been appointed to this group he too must have been regarded by his peers as a capable, intelligent 'serious man' who would act in the wider interests of the country.

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Once returned from parliament, Richard returned to a familiar round of royal service. In August 1407 he was appointed to a commission *'touching all treasons, insurrections, rebellions and felonies within the counties of York, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmoreland*.' The following spring, as we saw in chapter 10, Richard almost certainly played a part in ending the Percy threat at the battle of Bramham Moor in 1408 and was one of the commissioners who negotiated with the pardoned rebels over the fines they were to pay.

Other responsibilities were as a Commissioner of Array in the West Riding in 1410 to raise troops in expectation of an invasion from Scotland and, in 1411, membership of a commission to deal with 'evildoers' who lay in ambush to murder Robert Gare, a leading lawyer in York and the north. In

addition to these continuities, Richard took part in negotiations with Scottish ambassadors over truces, initially in April 1409, then twice in 1410 as described at the beginning of this chapter. That's several pages ago in terms of text but I still feel physically uncomfortable at the thought of Richard spending that month or so in the saddle while riding 700 miles.

More surprising was Richard's appointment as Sheriff of Cumberland for the year from December 1411. This was the fifth time Richard had been Sheriff of Cumberland but it was ten years since the previous occasion, a decade when his service was increasingly in Yorkshire. There must have been a reason for Richard's re-appointment in Cumberland but what it was is unknown – perhaps a lack of candidates in the north-west, a need to impose a greater degree of royal authority in the region?

During this year, he must have spent more time at Levens Hall, his Westmorland home. Sheriffs were expected to live in the county and the volume of work required his presence. It's hard to gauge exactly how much work was involved but the detail that's given me the greatest sense of the weight of work is a statistic that doesn't even relate directly to Richard – and that statistic is that in thirteen months during 1333-34 the Sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire received about 2,000 letters and writs which required action. While some of those documents from the crown simply needed reading and others forwarding to another recipient that's still an average of about 35 communications a week that needed reading, identifying what needed doing as a result and then taking action. The sound of hooves bringing and taking messages must have been constant. Much of the drudgery of the role – compiling records and details of expenses, drafting letters etc – was the work of clerks and administrators but the role of Sheriff was no sinecure and Richard did this eight times, taking up eight years of his career as a whole.

In contrast, other appointments may have taken up less time than they might appear to require. For example, Richard's membership of the Commission of the Peace in West Riding was more nominal than active. It was his name and those of other leading gentry in the West Riding that gave the commission its authority. Research by Dr Simon Walker shows that Richard only once claimed expenses for attendance at the quarterly sessions and, while this may underestimate his attendance, it was not unusual for men of Richard's status to make only occasional contributions. The real work was done – and was expected to be done – by the royal justices and gentry with legal experience who were the core of the commissions of the peace.

Were there any gaps in Richard's royal service? The paragraphs above could imply that he was working full-time for Henry IV but, assuming that his major work is visible in the sources, there were lengthy periods – much of 1407, May 1408 to April 1409, the latter part of 1410 and much of 1411 – when Richard was free of urgent royal demands and had time for his family, for leisure and for overseeing the administration of his estates at Levens and Harewood. For example, as we saw in chapter 10, family issues in the form of William Ryther's abuse of his wife, Sybil, were a priority in the spring of 1408. The death of his friend, Henry Vavasour, in 1412 may have been another occasion when family and friends came first – and that idea of 'family and friends first' makes me wonder whether Richard and Elizabeth ever shared our very 21st century concern for life-work balance! Could this be another cat-sitting moment? We can't know whether Richard and Elizabeth worried about this and took steps to balance Richard's activities but I wonder if the issue did

sometimes cross their minds, particularly when Richard was away from home for longer than expected or the need to deal with rebels or lawbreakers meant a sudden change of plan.

Identifying times of leisure does not, however, detract from the sense that Richard's work suggests that he was a serious-minded man who served his king for serious reasons and that he was trusted by the king and royal administrators to carry out his work at a high standard. Further evidence to show that he was trusted and respected by others is provided by the identities of the men he worked with. Identifying all the men Richard worked with during Henry IV's reign is worthy of an MA thesis at least – far too big a task for this project – but a revealing example (in addition to the discussion above of Richard's fellow auditors at the 1406 parliament) comes from the commission in August 1407 '*touching all treasons, insurrections, rebellions and felonies within the counties of York, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmoreland*.' This commission had only six members, including Richard Redmayn, but they were an impressive group:

> John, duke of Bedford – the king's third son. Aged 18 in 1407, gaining his first military experience in the north, alongside the earl of Westmorland. One of the most capable late medieval noblemen, Bedford later governed England while his brother, Henry V, was campaigning in France and was Regent of France during the minority of Henry VI.
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> Ralph Neville, earl of Westmorland – the king's brother-in-law. Westmorland was a major figure at the court of Richard II but an early supporter of Henry IV in 1399 and became King Henry's most trusted and authoritative supporter in the north.
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> William Gascoigne – Richard Redmayn's neighbour in Yorkshire, he was a distinguished lawyer and royal judge, appointed Lord Chief Justice in 1400, a position he held until Henry IV's death in 1413.
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> Sir Ralph de Euer – a Durham landowner who served the crown and the bishop of Durham for four decades. He was a knight of the shire five times, a Sheriff four times and filled many other roles, including Lieutenant to the Duke of Bedford when Bedford was Constable of England in 1411.
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> Sir Thomas Rokeby – held lands in Yorkshire and Westmorland, was Sheriff of Yorkshire and of Northumberland, led the king's army in defeating the Percy forces at Bramham Moor in 1408, fought at Agincourt and was a knight of the shire in 1406 (with Richard Redmayn) and in 1423.

In 1408 the same men plus two others were also given the task of negotiating with the pardoned rebels over the fines they were to pay. The additional members were John Conyers, a lawyer and landowner in North Yorkshire and Sir Robert Waterton from Methley, 15 miles south of Harewood. Waterton was one of King Henry's most trusted supporters, accompanied Henry on Crusade to the Baltic in the 1390s, was one of the first to join Henry when he landed in Yorkshire in 1399, was continuously involved in the royal administration and one of the executors of the King's will.

These men were, therefore, highly experienced and, with the exception of Bedford, all mature men – Gascoigne and Euer were slightly older than Richard Redmayn, Westmorland and Rokeby a little younger – and all were capable and trusted servants of King Henry. The one "youngster", the duke of Bedford, was highly intelligent and trained from an early age for the responsibilities of government. As a group, working to preserve Henry's throne and the good order of the realm, they must have expected their colleagues to exhibit high standards of public-service and be well-informed, dedicated and intelligent. There was no space in their world for passengers who could not live up to the king's expectations so Richard Redmayn must have been worth his place amongst such capable individuals. From Richard's perspective, working with such men must also have felt a significant responsibility. He couldn't have felt comfortable in the company of Bedford, Gascoigne and the others if he wasn't thoroughly well-informed on events and the people involved in them and had clear, well-evidenced views on what the king's policies and actions should be. Richard's abilities are underlined by the fact that in later years Bedford appointed Richard to a variety of roles. Given Bedford's own abilities, this was the greatest compliment to Richard's capabilities and royal service.

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My focus throughout this chapter has been on Richard Redmayn's work and on those he worked with, evidence that in my view suggests he was 'a serious man' who served his kings for 'serious reasons'. That said, he did profit from his work through rewards from the crown. For example, in 1406 the king gave the wardship and marriage of a royal ward, Richard Newland, to Richard Redmayn, enabling Sir Richard to profit from the Newland lands and the possible sale of the boy's marriage. He also received a £20 payment to cover his expenses in the north in 1405 on government business and received an annuity of 40 marks (a little over £13) as a member of the royal household.

Such rewards prompted Carole Rawcliffe, writing in *The House of Commons 1386-1421*, to see Richard Redmayn's actions far differently from the positive interpretation that I've put forward. Professor Rawcliffe sees Richard as driven by his desire for wealth and power, suggesting, for example, that he '*was keen to stand (for parliament) in 1406 so that he could negotiate the terms of a grant of a royal wardship'* (the grant mentioned above). This interpretation is consistent with her overall view of Richard Redmayn's career, exemplified by her statement that Richard supported Henry IV in 1399 because he '*was anxious to gain custody of (Brian Stapleton's) possessions'*.

While Professor Rawcliffe's view is certainly consistent, in my view it's one-dimensional, based on assumptions about Sir Richard's motives for which there is no direct evidence. For example, neither of her statements that I've quoted in the previous paragraph are based on specific evidence that tell us about his motives. That said, my own argument is also an assumption, a hypothesis I can't be certain about but, overall, I think it likely that Richard had a wider set of motives than just the desire for profit, especially as the rewards and favours he received were relatively low-level compared with the number and variety of roles that he took on and then continued to shoulder through the reign of Henry V and on into the reign of the infant Henry VI in the early 1420s when Richard was well into

his sixties. In arguing this I'm minded of the words of Professor Colin Richmond which I quoted in chapter 8:

> *'Men were not Pavlovian dogs, jumping at the chance of a fee, a rent charge, a stewardship here, a parkership there … We must not try to eliminate the subtleties, the richness of the texture of choice and decision lords and men were daily engrossed in.'*

On balance, it's the quantity of work that Sir Richard Redmayn undertook, the range of very able people he worked with and the fact that two very capable kings, Henry IV and Henry V, continued to appoint him to major responsibilities that persuades me that he was a serious man who served his king for serious reasons. In doing so, he more than maintained his family's wealth and status and the good worship, the respect, in which he was held by his contemporaries. That, I hope, made all those miles in the saddle feel worthwhile.

How do I know?

Notes on my sources and reading for Chapter 11

I haven't used any new sources or books for this chapter. The core materials have been:

Professor Rawcliffe's article on Richard Redmayn in *The House of Commons 1386-1421* volume IV and her article on the constituency of Yorkshire in volume I of the same series. These entries are also available online at:

https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/redmayne-sir-richard-1426

https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/constituencies/yorkshire

The Calendars of Patent Rolls for Henry IV's reign for 1405-1408 and for 1408-1413

https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031079588&seq=5

https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015031079570&seq=5

The Parliament Rolls for the parliament of 1406 which is available online (for a subscription) at

https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval?page=2

For information about Richard Redmayn's colleagues I used other volumes the *The House of Commons 1386-1421* series and the on-line Dictionary of National Biography.

Background information on the events of 1405 to 1413 came from Chris Given-Wilson's *Henry IV* and A J Pollard, *Late Medieval England, 1399-1509*.

Simon Walker's article 'Yorkshire Justices of the Peace 1389-1413' is included in *Political Culture in later medieval England: essays by Simon Walker*, ed. M J Braddick, 2006