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Edward Dallingridge: Builder of Bodiam Castle

Bodiam Castle, one of the most visually striking medieval castles in England, is situated in East Sussex on the river Rother, near Robertsbridge. In 1385 Sir Edward Dallingridge (c.1364-1393) was licensed to ‘strengthen with a wall of stone and lime and crenellate and construct and make into a castle his manor house at Bodyham [Bodiam], near the sea in the county of Sussex, for defence of the adjacent county and resistance to our enemies’.² This licence was issued at a particularly turbulent time in English history. England faced the threat of invasion from France and internal conflict during the reign of Richard II. However, interpretations of the function and purpose of the castle have been deeply divisive in the field of castle studies over the course of the last two decades. In the absence of documentary sources, with the exception of the licence to crenellate, attention has focused on the architectural evidence for the castle. The traditional view, as characterised by Thompson, is that Bodiam Castle was built to provide protection for the nearby coastal towns of Rye and New Winchelsea, which were navigable from Bodiam via the river Rother.³

However, since the 1990s, a new consensus on castle studies, particularly following from the work of Charles Coulson, using the evidence of licences to crenellate, claims that castle architecture in the Late Medieval Period was primarily motivated by symbolism and status.⁴ In his view, Bodiam has weak defensive features, such as an easy-to-drain moat, badly situated gun-ports, and thin walls, with the military themed architecture intended to convey a ‘message of power and deterrence’ through the studied exaggeration of features of defensive origin.⁵ In Coulson’s opinion, Dallingridge was a newcomer to the area, who needed to compensate for his

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² H. C. M. Lyte, G.J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1385-1389*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), p. 42.

³ A. H. Thompson, *Military Architecture in England during the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 322-3.

⁴ R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500* (Bollington: Windgather Press, 2005), p. 10.

⁵ C. Coulson, ‘Some Analysis of the Castle of Bodiam, East Sussex’, in *Medieval Knighthood, 4: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1990*, ed. by C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 1992), pp. 51-107 (p. 71).

lack of pedigree; by constructing a magnificent looking castle he was able to promote his wealth and social standing.⁶ This interpretation is contested by Platt, who stresses that Bodiam Castle was intended to serve a military purpose, but other authors, such as Creighton and Liddiard, have sought to move away from the ‘war or status’ debate.⁷

The most contentious issue regarding Bodiam Castle has centred on Dallingridge’s motivation in building the castle. Why would a member of the gentry build such an impressive castle at this particular time in Southern England?⁸ In the absence of other evidence, the study of Dallingridge’s life is important in understanding why Bodiam Castle was built. Previous studies on Bodiam Castle have been rather superficial in their treatment of Dallingridge, which has tended to reflect their views on the motivation for its construction; for instance, by laying emphasis on his social aspirations or his military career. This article will examine Dallingridge’s life to see what insights it provides into the circumstances in which Bodiam was built in the late fourteenth century. By looking at his family background, military career, political career and his financial holdings, it will show that the motivation for the construction of Bodiam Castle was influenced by the turbulent events of 1385, and served as a visual demonstration of Dallingridge’s social standing in east Sussex.

Family Background

By 1385 Sir Edward Dallingridge could undoubtedly be described as one of the leading gentry figures in east Sussex. A long-term career soldier, with close links to the Earl of Arundel, he had played a prominent role in the county’s affairs, representing Sussex in parliament on numerous occasions since 1379. Dallingridge’s important role rested upon his family’s wealth and income from landholdings, retaining fees and the profits of war. He represented Sussex in the parliament of 1385 (20 October-6 December), and a day after it opened, he was granted a licence to crenellate his manor at Bodiam.⁹ This licence was an important status symbol for Dallingridge and another step in the development of the fortunes of his family. It demonstrated Dallingridge’s

⁶ Ibid., pp. 102-106.

⁷ C. Platt, ‘Revisionism in Castle Studies: A Caution’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 51 (2007), 83-102; O. H. Creighton, and R. Liddiard, ‘Fighting Yesterday’s Battle: Beyond War or Status in Castle Studies’, *Medieval Archaeology*, 52 (2008), 161-169.

⁸ Gentry is defined here as a socio-economic group comprising the landowning elite, below the peerage, which had a group identity based upon the values of military and administrative service. For further reading see, R. Radulescu, and A. Truelove, (eds.), *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

⁹ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1385-1389*, p. 42; Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: October 1385’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116488>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

rise in social standing from being a member of the minor gentry to that of the castle owning elite. In subsequent years, he was to serve Richard II on a national stage and his son, John, was later made a Chamber knight of Henry IV.¹⁰ The construction of a castle was clearly a major undertaking by any individual even a wealthy member of the gentry.

Edward Dallingridge had the good fortune to be born into a family that was ascending the 'social ladder'. His great grandfather, Roger Dallingridge, had been a member of the freeholding community.¹¹ Roger's son, John (d. 1335), did much to improve his fortunes by obtaining an advantageous match with Joan, daughter of Sir Walter de la Lynde. A series of minor appointments to offices in Sussex in the mid-1320s marked his acceptance into the gentry, and in 1335 he was distrained for knighthood, which means that he was assessed as owning land worth more than £40 per annum and was considered eligible for the rank of knighthood. John's son, Roger (c.1315- c.1380), inherited these lands on his father's death and substantially added to them through his marriage to Alice, one of three daughters of Sir John de Radingdon. Sir John was a wealthy east Sussex gentleman, who held estates across the county. On his father-in-law's death in 1350, he inherited his manors of Sheffield and four other manors in Sussex.¹² A subsequent marriage to another Alice, widow of Sir Thomas St Maur, who had been another wealthy member of the local gentry, led to the acquisition of the manor of Sheffield St Maur.¹³

He also participated in many of Edward III's early campaigns, such as serving as a man-at-arms in Scotland in 1336. Roger retained his hereditary duties in Ashdown Forest as a forester for Queen Philippa during her lordship of Pevensey. He also entered the services of the widowed Countess Warenne as her steward in the 1350s and when she died in 1361, he transferred his services to her heir Richard, Earl of Arundel. The influence of Arundel undoubtedly assisted in his appointments to offices and commissions in the county, including being appointed Sheriff in 1371 and serving as a justice of the peace in the 1370s. Roger also represented Sussex in parliament on four occasions between 1360 and 1377.¹⁴ In the space of a hundred years, therefore, the Dallingridges had risen from a freeholder family based in Ashdown Forest to one which held estates throughout Sussex and in Lincolnshire. Edward was to continue his father's legacy by maintaining close links to the Arundel family as well as holding offices in Sussex and

¹⁰ A. R. Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 2004), p. 219.

¹¹ N. Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 136 (1998), 123-132, (123-126).

¹² J. S. Roskell, L. Clark, C. Rawcliffe (eds.), *The House of Commons, 1386-1421, Volume 2* (Stroud: Alan Sutton for the History of Parliament Trust, 1992), p. 738.

¹³ Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 125.

¹⁴ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739.

undertaking military service. His father was also responsible for arranging his opportune marriage, in 1364, to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Wardieu of Bodiam, a wealthy man who held estates throughout the Midlands and south of England.¹⁵

Military Career

When he testified for Richard Scrope in the *Scrope vs. Grosvenor* chivalric court case, Edward stated that his first military experience was with the army of Edward III in the Rheims campaign of 1359-60, at the age of thirteen.¹⁶ This indicates that Roger Dallingridge was keen to promote his son's career through military service at an early age. Edward was definitely not a knight at the age of thirteen. However, eight years later, when he accompanied the king's second son, Lionel, Duke of Clarence, to Milan, as a member of his wedding party, he was described as a knight.¹⁷ As the Dallingridge family appears to have no links to the Duke of Clarence, this indicates that Edward had served in Ireland with the duke at some point during the 1360s. It is also possible that Roger Dallingridge was able to obtain a place for his son in Lionel's household as a result of his service for Queen Philippa.¹⁸ Edward may have been knighted specifically for the occasion, as part of the duke's grand entourage of 457 men with 1280 horses.¹⁹

Dallingridge again served in the retinue of the Earl of Arundel during John of Gaunt's expedition to France in 1369.²⁰ In the following year, Edward was arrested for failing to join the expedition of Sir Robert Knolles who had paid him wages in advance.²¹ However, in 1371 he again served with the Earl of Arundel on the naval expedition of Humphrey, Earl of Hereford.²² He next served in the retinue of Edward, Lord Despenser, in John of Gaunt's 'great chevauchée' during 1373.²³ Edward was likely acquainted with Lord Despenser as a result of their

¹⁵ Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 127.

¹⁶ This court case concerned a dispute over the right to bear a particular coat of arms; N. H. Nicholas, (ed.), *The Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy*, 2 vols (London: Samuel Bentley, 1832), p. 164.

¹⁷ H. C. M. Lyte, G. J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward III. A.D. 1367-1370*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), p. 40; M. Keen, *Chivalry* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 10.

¹⁸ Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 125.

¹⁹ W. M. Ormrod, 'Lionel, Duke of Clarence (1338-1368)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16750>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

²⁰ Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 13.

²¹ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1367-1370*, p. 475.

²² The National Archives (hereafter TNA) E101/31/15 m1, from the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

²³ TNA E101/32/26 m1, from the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

participation in Lionel's journey to Milan in 1368.²⁴ In 1375, Dallingridge again served in Lord Despenser's retinue, as part of John of Montfort's, Duke of Brittany, and Edmund Langley's, Earl of Cambridge's expedition to Brittany.²⁵ In 1378 he served in the retinue of John Arundel as part of the garrison of Cherbourg, which was handed over to English control by Charles of Navarre in June.²⁶ According to his testimony as a witness in the *Scrope vs. Grosvenor* case, Edward again served in Brittany with the Earl of Buckingham in 1380.²⁷ However, Dallingridge could only have served for a limited time in this expedition because in July 1380 he was appointed to a commission to survey the defences of New Winchelsea, and by September of the same year, he had been wounded defending the Sussex coast (as will be discussed in more detail later in this section).²⁸ In 1385 he participated in the royal expedition of Richard II to Scotland, according to his deposition for *Scrope*.²⁹

On 19 November 1386, power was taken from Richard II and was given to a 'continual council' known as the Commission of Government.³⁰ Arundel was appointed as Admiral of England with instructions to disrupt the enemy's preparations for invasion.³¹ Edward took a prominent role on Arundel's flagship for the naval campaign of this year, undoubtedly due to his close links to the earl.³² Later that year, Edward appears to have participated in the Radcot Bridge campaign between the Lords Appellants and the favourite of Richard II, Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland, which almost led to the deposition of the king.³³ In 1388 Edward helped to finance Arundel's naval expedition of that year, but does not appear to have participated in it, and was appointed captain of the strategically important town of Brest for 1388-9.³⁴

²⁴ T. N. Pugh, 'Despenser, Edward, First Lord Despenser (1336–1375)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7550>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

²⁵ TNA E101/34/3 m1, from the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

²⁶ TNA E101/36/39 m10d, from the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

²⁷ Nicholas, p. 164.

²⁸ H. C. M. Lyte, G. J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1377-1381*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1927), p. 474; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1377-1381*, p. 566.

²⁹ Nicholas, p. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 592.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 594.

³² TNA E101/40/33 m1, from the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013]; Roskell, J.S., (ed.), *The House of Commons, 1386-1421, Volume 2*, p. 740.

³³ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1396-1399*, p. 341; Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 740; N. Saul, *Richard II*, (London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 185-190.

³⁴ Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 112; H.C. M. Lyte, G. J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1388-1392*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), p. 118.

Over a thirty-year period (1359-89), Dallingridge had served in many of the major expeditions against France indicating that he had ample experiences of campaigning in France, garrison duty, as well as siege and naval warfare. Many of these expeditions were unsuccessful in achieving their military objectives, yet could still be financially profitable for their participants.³⁵ Dallingridge's military career began due to his father's influence and his personal acquaintance with the Earl of Arundel. But he is likely to have been motivated, at least in part, by the prospect of financial gain. Ransoming captured combatants could be a highly profitable activity, and there is evidence that Dallingridge benefited from this during his time as captain of Brest.³⁶ These activities also meant that Dallingridge was able to cultivate relationships with a number of noblemen including several of the earls of Arundel, Edward, Lord Despenser, John de Montfort, Duke of Brittany, and later Richard II. It is also important to note that Dallingridge's military career was not over by 1385, when he obtained his licence to crenellate, even though some commentators have suggested that Bodiam was an 'old soldier's dream house'.³⁷ His military career was curtailed by the extended truce between England and France, which was enacted in June 1389.³⁸ Indeed, research has shown that it was not uncommon for militarily active members of the nobility and gentry to have exceptionally long careers, even by modern standards.³⁹ Warfare was therefore an important part of Dallingridge's life. This may explain why he chose to invest in military architecture, as a symbolic representation of his membership of the warrior elite.

However, his military experience was not limited to overseas expeditions. As a prominent member of the Sussex gentry he served as a commissioner of array in 1377, 1385, 1386, and 1392.⁴⁰ These were all critical years for the safety of Sussex and England. In 1377, a Franco-Castilian fleet attacked Rye and New Winchelsea on the Sussex coast, as well as the Isle of Wight.⁴¹ In the years 1385 and 1386, England was faced with the serious threat of a major French invasion. Later in 1392 there were fears that the expiry of the three year truce between England and France would lead to a renewal of war. Direct evidence of Dallingridge's

³⁵ J. Sumption, *Divided Houses: the Hundred Years War III*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 743.

³⁶ Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 127; Sumption, *Divided Houses: the Hundred Years War III*, p. 742.

³⁷ D. J. Turner, 'Bodiam Sussex: True Castle or Old Soldier's Dream House?', in *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1985 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 1986), pp. 267-277.

³⁸ Sumption, *Divided Houses: the Hundred Years War III*, p. 774.

³⁹ As can be seen by using The Soldier In Later Medieval England database; From the AHRC-funded database, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, <<http://www.icmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database/>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁴⁰ H. C. M. Lyte, G.J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward III. A.D. 1374-1377*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), pp. 496-497; H. C. M. Lyte, G.J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1381-1385*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), p. 588; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1385-1389*, p. 253; H. C. M. Lyte, G.J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1391-1396*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1900), pp. 90-91.

⁴¹ D. Prest, (ed), *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham (1376-1422)*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 2005), pp. 45-46.

involvement in coastal defence can be seen in an entry in the Calendar of Close Rolls for 17 September 1380. The calendar states that Edward, 'being by the king and council commanded to abide upon the defence of the sea shore of Sussex against the king's enemies, is grievously wounded at Bourne co. Sussex'.⁴² Dallingridge's patron, Arundel, was condemned, by Walsingham, for his inability to defend the Sussex coast in this year.⁴³ Dallingridge, along with others, was also made responsible for the fortification of the Cinque Ports of Rye and New Winchelsea. On 5 July 1380 he was appointed to survey the defences of New Winchelsea, although the defences were clearly still inadequate when the town was attacked at the end of the month.⁴⁴ He was also appointed to ensure the fortification of the town of Rye in April 1382 and from January to February of 1385.⁴⁵ Dallingridge therefore had extensive experience of combating French raiders whilst ensuring the defence of key coastal settlements. He was keen to demonstrate this in the architecture of Bodiam Castle by including key-hole shaped gun-ports, which were unusual for privately owned castles of the period. However, their small size and awkward locations suggest that they were intended to display Dallingridge's familiarity with contemporary developments in the defences of towns and castles in the south of England, as opposed to fulfilling a practical purpose.⁴⁶

Political Career

Dallingridge also played a prominent role in the local affairs of Sussex, and later in national politics. This included serving in nine of the thirteen parliaments that sat between the years 1379-1388. His father, as already mentioned, had represented Sussex on four occasions, and it seems significant that it was two years after his father-in-law's death, and one year before his father's death, that he attended his first parliament in 1379.⁴⁷ This represented Edward's ascension to a prominent position amongst the gentry of Sussex. The 1379 parliament was dominated by the government's financial problems, which led to granting of a graduated poll tax that however proved difficult to collect.⁴⁸ Edward and his father were amongst the commissioners for Sussex

⁴² Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1377-1381*, p. 474.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 566; Sumption, *Divided Houses: the Hundred Years War*, III, p. 385.

⁴⁵ H. C. M. Lyte, G. J. Morris, (eds.), *Calendar of the Close Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1381-1385*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1927), p. 123; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1381-1385*, pp. 519, 532, 525, 588.

⁴⁶ J. R. Kenyon, 'Coastal Artillery Fortification in England in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', in *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, ed. by A. Curry, M. Hughes (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 1994), pp. 145-148.

⁴⁷ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1377-1381*, p. 252-3; Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 124.

⁴⁸ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), 'Richard II: April 1379', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116478>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

appointed in August 1379 to investigate the discrepancy in receipts.⁴⁹ In the following parliament of 1380, frustration at the cost and conduct of the war led to the removal of the ‘continual council’.⁵⁰ Edward was one of the three knights appointed to a commission to investigate royal expenditure.⁵¹ It is possible that Dallingridge owed this position to the influence of the Earl of Arundel (III) who he had developed a good relationship with, having previously served with Arundel’s father and younger brother.⁵² This parliament also specified that the grant of taxation should be spent on an expedition to Brittany, which Dallingridge attended later that year.⁵³ In the November parliament, the continuing financial difficulties of the government led to the granting of a poll tax, the third granted in four years.⁵⁴ The parliament also specified that the commission, to which Edward had been appointed, should meet.⁵⁵

The neighbouring county of Kent was one of the places most affected by the Peasants’ Revolt, which began at the end of May 1381, with Sussex also affected by riots that targeted representatives of the local authorities and may have included murders.⁵⁶ Dallingridge, as a prominent member of the Sussex gentry, played a role in the suppression of the rebellion in the county and in subsequent commissions to punish malcontents.⁵⁷ The parliament of November 1381 was overshadowed by the Peasants’ Revolt, and it was undoubtedly due to fears of further insurrections that the Commons was induced to continue the wool subsidy.⁵⁸ This was also the case in the May parliament of 1382.⁵⁹ Dallingridge did not represent Sussex in the following three parliaments (October 1382, February 1383 and October 1383).⁶⁰ It is difficult to account for these absences as he appears to have been relatively inactive militarily in these years. For instance, there is no evidence that he served in Bishop Despenser’s Crusade to Flanders in 1383. In Dallingridge’s next parliament of April 1384, proceedings were dominated by discussion of a

⁴⁹ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: January 1380’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116479>> [Accessed 26 July 2013]; H. C. M. Lyte, (ed.), *Calendar of the Fine Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1377-1383* (London, 1929), p. 162.

⁵⁰ Given-Wilson, ‘Richard II: January 1380’.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739.

⁵³ Given-Wilson, ‘Richard II: January 1380’.

⁵⁴ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: November 1380’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116480>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ C. Oman, *The Great Revolt of 1381* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 32, 97-8.

⁵⁷ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-1385*, p. 74; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1381-1385*, pp. 69-71, 79, 84-86, 134.

⁵⁸ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: November 1381’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116481>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁵⁹ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: May 1382’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116482>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁶⁰ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-1385*, p. 227, 290, 414.

proposed peace treaty with France and the argument between the king and Arundel.⁶¹ In June 1384, Dallingridge was committed to custody for contempt of court during a special commission of *Oyer and terminer* at the suit of John of Gaunt.⁶² This marked the culmination of a long running dispute between Gaunt, who had acquired lands in Pevensey and Ashdown in 1372, which had previously belonged to his mother, Queen Philippa, and the local gentry who felt that he abused his authority.⁶³ Dallingridge, and other Sussex gentlemen, had waged a campaign of harassment and intimidation against the servants and property of Gaunt that dated back to June 1377.⁶⁴ He was soon released from jail in July, possibly due to Arundel's influence, and although he was re-arrested in October, he was soon freed in the following month.⁶⁵

After the government failed to gain support for the proposed peace treaty of Leulinghem, during the November 1384 parliament, the Commons were relatively generous in granting taxation to the government in order to pursue the war, but this was conditional on the king leading an expedition in person.⁶⁶ As we have seen, Dallingridge accompanied the expedition that the king later led to Scotland in the summer of 1385 and Dallingridge's licence to crenellate was granted on the second day of the 1385 parliament.⁶⁷ In that year, parliament's proceedings were dominated by unhappiness at the king's elevations to the peerage at the beginning of the Scottish campaign, this being due to the government's financial problems, leading to royal concessions; as well as funding for Gaunt's planned expedition to Castile.⁶⁸ The parliament of 1386, 'The Wonderful Parliament', began during the backdrop of 'The Great Invasion Scare', with Gaunt absent in Castile and with the Ghentish rebels defeated by the French.⁶⁹ The events of the parliament led to the impeachment of the Chancellor de la Pole and the effective removal of power from the nineteen-year-old king.⁷⁰ The king's resentment at the outcome of this parliament led to conflict with the Lords Appellant, resulting in the Battle of Radcot Bridge, and

⁶¹Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), 'Richard II: April 1384', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116486>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁶²S. Walker, 'Lancaster v. Dallingridge: a Franchisal Dispute in Fourteenth Century Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 121 (1983), 87-94 (90).

⁶³Walker, 'Lancaster v. Dallingridge', pp. 88-89.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁶Walker, 'Lancaster v. Dallingridge', p. 514-6, 523-5; Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), 'Richard II: November 1384', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116487>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁶⁷Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1385-1389*, p. 42.

⁶⁸Given-Wilson, 'Richard II: October 1385'.

⁶⁹Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), 'Richard II: October 1386', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116489>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

the ‘Merciless Parliament’ of 1388.⁷¹ Five of the king’s favourites were prosecuted for treason, as were members of his household.⁷² It is even possible that the Appellants’ contemplated removing Richard II from power. But this was abandoned due to disputes between Gloucester and Derby as to who should be king.⁷³ To cement their new hold on the government of England, the Appellants ensured that the members of parliament swore an oath to support them, and this was extended to the inhabitants of the counties. Dallingridge, due to his key links with one of the senior Appellants, Arundel, played a key role in the enforcement of these oaths in Sussex where he was appointed to assist the Sheriff in this task in March 1388.⁷⁴

Dallingridge’s extensive parliamentary career between 1379-1388 demonstrates his important position in Sussex society.⁷⁵ His service in nine parliaments far surpassed the careers of the next two longest serving individuals, William Percy and Edmund Fitz Herbert, who represented Sussex on five and four occasions respectively.⁷⁶ In addition, he was a parliamentary colleague of all of these men, save for John St Clare. Saul has argued that Sussex ‘does not give the impression of a local society organised in or around a magnate affinity’; however, the evidence for these years indicates that supporters of the Earl of Arundel were predominant in representing Sussex at parliaments.⁷⁷ William Percy, William Waleys, and Edmund Fitz Herbert, as well as Dallingridge, were all supporters of Arundel.⁷⁸ In contrast, John of Gaunt had a weak following in the county, with only one supporter, John St Clare, representing Sussex in October 1382.⁷⁹

Dallingridge’s parliamentary career ended, it appears, by appointment to the King’s Council in May of 1389, and his retention as a king’s knight in August of that year.⁸⁰ It is possible that the king had a deliberate policy of attracting prominent supporters of the Appellant Lords to his

⁷¹ Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), ‘Richard II: February 1388’, in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=116490>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 43.

⁷⁴ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1385-1389*, p. 406; N. Saul, ‘The Sussex Gentry and the Oath to Uphold the Acts of the Merciless Parliament’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 135 (1997), 221-39 (223).

⁷⁵ April 1379, January 1380, November 1380, November 1381, May 1382, October 1382, February 1383, October 1383, April 1384, November 1384, October 1385, October 1386, and February 1388; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1377-1381*, p. 253, 356, 497, 107, 133; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-1385*, p. 227, 290, 414, 133, 600; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1385-1389*, pp. 119, 299, 495.

⁷⁶ William Percy (April 1379, January 1380, February 1383, October 1383 and November 1384), Edmund Fitz Herbert (November 1381, May 1382, October 1382 and November 1383); Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1377-1381*, p. 253, 356; *1381-1385*, p. 107, 133, 227, 414, 600.

⁷⁷ N. Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 56-7.

⁷⁸ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, p. 35, 56; A. Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy: The Lords Appellant under Richard II* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971), pp. 38, 115.

⁷⁹ S. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361-1399* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 132.

⁸⁰ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1389-1392*, p. 102; Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 741.

allegiance. However, Dallingridge could also have been chosen based on his socially and politically influential position in Sussex, which would have been strengthened by the construction of a new castle.⁸¹ His son, John, however, did not assume his position as a representative of Sussex until 1402.⁸² Dallingridge played a prominent role in the King's Council, which he attended regularly, serving for 207 days between 8 January 1392 and 21 February 1393.⁸³ In the spring of 1390, along with other members of the Council, he went on an embassy to France, during which he was to survey the defences of Calais.⁸⁴ Later in 1390 he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Brittany, due to his former relationship with its duke, which had included service with him in 1375, and from whom he had received a retaining fee.⁸⁵

As a result of unrest in London in 1392, which led to the arrest of the mayor and sheriffs, Dallingridge was appointed as keeper of London on 25 June.⁸⁶ Sir Baldwin Radington however soon replaced him in July because he was allegedly lenient to the Londoners.⁸⁷ By the time of his death, therefore, which occurred at some point between July 1393, when he was named on a commission of *Oyer and terminer*, and March 1394, when he was described as deceased, Dallingridge's career had progressed remarkably well.⁸⁸ He had changed from a Sussex gentleman, with mainly local interests, to a member of the King's Council, who played a role on the national stage. Seen in this context, Dallingridge's acquisition of a licence to crenellate, in 1385, appears to have been part of a successful strategy to elevate himself above his local peers by joining the castle owning elite, eventually leading to royal service. A comparison of recipients of licences to crenellate, granted during the reign of Richard II, suggest that these were mainly issued to lesser members of the peerage and gentry.⁸⁹ This was a group categorised by participation in military, parliamentary and royal service, as can be seen by the careers of Lord John Neville and Lord Michael de la Pole.⁹⁰ Therefore Bodiam Castle is likely to have been constructed, at least in part, to promote the social status of Dallingridge.

⁸¹ Saul, *Richard II*, pp. 267-268.

⁸² Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 742.

⁸³ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 741; N. Saul, *Richard II*, p. 253.

⁸⁴ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 741; Lyte (ed.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery) Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1387-1393* (London: H. M. S. O., 1916), p. 158.

⁸⁵ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 741.

⁸⁶ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1391-1396*, p. 100; Prest, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, pp. 286-287.

⁸⁷ H. C. M. Lyte, (ed.), *Calendar of the Fine Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A. D. 1391-1399*, (London: H. M. S. O., 1929), p. 51; David, *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, p. 287.

⁸⁸ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1391-1396*, p. 354, 388.

⁸⁹ P. Davis, 'English Licences to Crenellate: 1199-1567', *The Castle Studies Group Journal*, 20, (2007), 226-245 (pp. 242-243).

⁹⁰ A. Tuck, 'Neville, John, fifth Baron Neville (c.1330-1388)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19945>> [Accessed 24 September 2013]; A. Tuck, 'Pole, Michael de la,

Landholding and Finances

Dallingridge benefited financially from his military and political career, yet was wealthy in his own right from his landholdings. As previously mentioned, he inherited lands from his father and substantially added to his estates through his marriage to Elizabeth Wardieu, in 1364. Indeed, upon her father's death in 1377, Dallingridge acquired a large number of estates, in Sussex, Kent, and the Midlands.⁹¹ In the absence of a set of accounts for Dallingridge, or a list of his assets at his death, such as provided by an Inquisition Post Mortem, any discussion of his wealth will be incomplete. However, the primary sources do provide insights into the extent of his landholdings, and so allows for speculation on how the construction of Bodiam Castle was funded. His position as a knight in 1367, at the age of 21, is significant due to the property requirements for this rank which was acquired, at least in part, from his father's estates, as well as from the dowry of his wife.⁹²

In his early years, a significant proportion of his income was likely to have been obtained from retaining fees. In 1374, John de Montfort, Duke of Brittany, who he was to serve with in Brittany in the following year retained him for £40 annually.⁹³ In the same year, Lord Despenser, whose retinue he had served in for John of Gaunt's campaign of 1373-4 also retained him for £40 annually and he kept this fee even after Despenser's death in 1377.⁹⁴ However, his main acquisition of wealth appears to have occurred in 1377 when he inherited his father-in-law's estates. He thereby acquired a concentration of estates in eastern east Sussex and Kent, as well as properties throughout the Midlands; although a few of these manors were quickly sold off.⁹⁵ On his father's death in 1380, he acquired the bulk of his estates, though his younger brother, Walter, also shared of the inheritance.⁹⁶ In the same year, Dallingridge's links to John Arundel ensured that, on the latter's death, he acquired a share of the alien priory of Frampton.⁹⁷ In 1382, he appears to have sold off the bulk of his Midland lands to William de Burgh, a judge subsequently

first earl of Suffolk (c.1330–1389)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22452>> [Accessed 24th September 2013].

⁹¹ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739.

⁹² Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 10.

⁹³ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 739; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1374-1377*, pp. 443, 470; Lyte, *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1377-1383*, p. 46, Lyte, *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1383-1391*, p. 346.

⁹⁵ Lyte, *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, 1387-1393*, pp. 5-6; L. F. Salzman, (ed.), *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 1: Edward II to 24 Henry VII*, (Lewes, 1916), 51 Edward III, f. 2474.

⁹⁶ Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 738, Salzman, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 1 Richard II*, f. 2480.

⁹⁷ Lyte, *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1377-1383*, pp. 126, 180.

convicted at the Merciless Parliament, and Theobald Warde.⁹⁸ There is only evidence for two estates being sold, however the payment of 1000 marks seems sufficiently high when compared to his sale of Hollington manor in 1377 for 200 marks; suggesting therefore that a significant transferral of properties took place.⁹⁹ At least part of this windfall was reinvested in the manor of Iden, north of Rye, in 1383, but the greater part of it is likely to have contributed towards the construction costs of the castle.¹⁰⁰ The sales in 1385 and 1386 of two Sussex manors may have further contributed towards the funds for the building works.¹⁰¹ Through patronage, he also acquired significant assets in future years. In 1388, he acquired the alien priory of Wilmington in return for which he had to pay its fee farm of 100 marks directly to the garrison of Brest for their wages, the latter which he was captain of.¹⁰² In 1389, he benefited from the sale of lands forfeited by the judge Robert Bealknap in the Merciless Parliament, through the purchase of two Sussex manors, Wilting and Hollington, near to Hastings for £202, the latter of which he appears to have sold earlier in 1377.¹⁰³ Later in 1389, he was retained by the king for 100 marks a year, in return for not paying the farm for Wilmington, which was now due to the Exchequer.¹⁰⁴

The construction of a castle was a major undertaking, in terms of planning and financing, which appears to be borne out by the timeline. Following his inheritance of lands in 1377 and 1380, he then liquidated his Midlands estates in 1382. Dallingridge then acquired a grant of a weekly market and yearly fair at Bodiam in 1383. In 1385, he acquired a licence to crenellate his manor at Bodiam, in 1385 and 1386 he sold two further estates in Sussex, and in 1386 he acquired a licence to divert a watercourse to his mill at Bodiam. The earliest possible construction date of the castle would have been 1377, when he acquired the lands. However, the sale of lands in 1382, and the acquisitions of grants from 1383-1386 imply that work may have begun around the time of, or shortly before, the licence to crenellate. The castle was certainly in existence by February 1396, and a construction period of roughly ten years or less seems reasonable.¹⁰⁵ Coulson has

⁹⁸ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-1385*, p. 228, 606; Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739; Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1381-1385*, p. 180.

⁹⁹ Lyte, *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous, 1387-1393*, pp. 7-8; Salzmänn, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 51 Edward III, f. 2474*; Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 739.

¹⁰⁰ H. C. M. Lyte, (ed.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II. A.D. 1383-1391*. (London: H. M. S. O, 1906), p. 115.

¹⁰¹ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1385-1389*, p. 90; Salzmänn, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 10 Richard II, f. 2561*.

¹⁰² Lyte, *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1383-1391*, p. 230, 278; Roskell, Clark, Rawcliffe, *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, p. 741.

¹⁰³ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1389-1392*, p80; Salzmänn, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 51 Edward III, f. 2474*; J. L. Leland, 'Bealknap, Sir Robert (d. 1401)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1809>> [Accessed 26 July 2013].

¹⁰⁴ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1389-1392*, p. 102.

¹⁰⁵ Lyte, Morris, *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1392-1396*, p. 499.

suggested that Dallingridge built his castle in response to his lawsuit with Gaunt in 1384.¹⁰⁶ But the evidence suggests that the decision to build Bodiam Castle was part of a carefully planned process, which Dallingridge may have started as early as 1377.

An important question that has not been asked, or answered, is why did Dallingridge build his castle at Bodiam as opposed to elsewhere? This may have been because he inherited the lands around Bodiam in 1377 and as a result, he was already settled in and familiar with the area. A more likely reason seems to be size of the manor estate at Bodiam and Salehurst, which comprised of 750 acres, and he appears to have acquired a further 100 acres in 1387.¹⁰⁷ Although there is limited data for his other estates, three of them in the western part of the county were no more than 80 acres each.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, it is remarkable how concentrated his lands were in eastern east Sussex and in Kent, with all the properties in close proximity. This is in contrast to his lands in western east Sussex, which were more dispersed. The decision to build the castle at Bodiam also appears to have been motivated by financial considerations. The acquisition of the weekly market and yearly fair (1383) meant that Dallingridge could benefit from the trade of the region that consisted of the export of raw materials for the industrial markets of Flanders and North France, and the import of considerable quantities of manufactured goods from these regions.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

Dallingridge's career can be seen as one characterised by success, in a military, political and financial sense, which continued throughout the course of his life. Why then did he feel the need to build a castle at Bodiam? It has been argued that it was built in order to promote Dallingridge's social standing and lack of pedigree in an area in which he was a newcomer.¹¹⁰ The construction of a castle, in an area in which his estates were concentrated, effectively created a lordship seat for Dallingridge, which undoubtedly strengthened his position throughout the county. However, by 1385 he was already a well-established member of the east Sussex gentry society, which was characterised by its cohesive nature, with substantial wealth, and strong ties to

¹⁰⁶ Coulson, 'Some Analysis of the Castle of Bodiam, East Sussex', pp. 105-106.

¹⁰⁷ Salzmann, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 11 Richard II*, f. 2574.

¹⁰⁸ H. C. M. Lyte, (ed.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem Preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward III. A. D. 1358-1361*. (London: H. M. S. O., 1906), p. 437; Salzmann, *An Abstract of Feet of Fines for the County of Sussex, 10 Richard II*, f. 2561; Saul, 'The Rise of the Dallingridge Family', p. 123.

¹⁰⁹ R. A. Pelham, 'Studies in the Historical Geography of Medieval Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, 72 (1931), 157-184.

¹¹⁰ Coulson, 'Some Analysis of the Castle of Bodiam, East Sussex', p. 98.

the Earl of Arundel, the resident magnate in Sussex.¹¹¹ His acquisition of a licence to crenellate marked his acceptance into the castle-owning elite, which led to royal service and a significant increase in social status. This character study has also shown that Dallingridge travelled widely across Europe in his lifetime to England, Scotland, France, Italy, and possibly Ireland suggesting that the influences for his castle-building may have been more diverse than has previously been considered. Therefore Bodiam Castle should be seen in a wider European context, as opposed to a solely English one.

The construction of the castle was clearly a long-term process, but the trigger for acquiring the licence may have been caused by the tense political circumstances of October 1385. The location of the castle appears to have been dictated by the geographical location and size of his estates in that part of the county, which also had the advantage of being close to the river Rother that allowed the creation of a designed watery landscape.¹¹² An additional factor to consider is that the construction of a castle in an area that had already been attacked, could have been intended as a sign of patriotism, and the wording of the licence indicates that Dallingridge was seeking to portray himself as a protector of the local community in the crisis years of 1385-1386. Arundel had been strongly criticised for his failure of leadership in protecting Sussex from raiders, and this could be interpreted as an attempt by Dallingridge to assume leadership of the community in this area. Therefore the motivation for the construction of Bodiam Castle can be explained as Dallingridge's desire to create a visual symbol of his authority, which promoted his social standing, and to capitalise on the fears caused by threat of invasion from France.

¹¹¹ Saul, *Scenes from Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400*, p. 60.

¹¹² O. H. Creighton, *Designs Upon the Land: Elite Landscapes of the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell, 2009), pp. 5, 77-80.

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