

The Missing Captain and the 'Mystery' Retinue

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THE MUSTER LIST

Among the muster and retinue lists for Henry V's campaign in France in 1415, held in The National Archives and shown on the 'Soldier in Later Medieval England' database (SLME), is one with the reference E 101/45/17 mm.1-4 (albeit that the date is marked with a question mark in the database). It details the muster of a large retinue of 79 men-at-arms and 386 archers, but the name of the captain leading the retinue is missing. Although it is not mentioned on the database, examination of the original document reveals that the first part of the record is badly damaged and any details of its leader, the purpose of raising the retinue and the names of a number of its principal participants are now illegible.¹ Even so, it is still possible to look for clues in the remaining list of names in order to try to establish who the captain may have been.

The first notable feature of the retinue is its sheer size. This number of men are only found following other captains on the campaign who rank within the highest echelons of the aristocracy.² Therefore it is likely that the man himself was an earl or even a duke. The indentures which survive show that the duke of York committed to bring a total of 400 men including 1 baron, 3 knights, 95 men-at-arms and 300 archers. The duke of Clarence indented for 960 men: made up of 1 earl, 2 bannerets, 14 knights, 222 men-at-arms and 720 archers and even the very militarily inexperienced duke of Gloucester promised 6 knights, 193 men-at-arms and 600 archers.

Likewise the earl of Norfolk (Earl Marshall of England) agreed to raise 200; 4 knights, 45 men-at-arms and 150 archers and the earl of Cambridge a further 210, Suffolk 159, the earl of Oxford 139 and the earl of Huntingdon 80. This is not to say of course that these commitments were met in full or exactly as contracted, but they give a good idea of what was expected by the Crown of men of this standing. It also shows that there was recognition that even these national figures varied in their ability to recruit and fund men of the right calibre.

This evidence is supported by the surviving muster and retinue lists held at The National Archives which allow us to see how close to their original recruitment commitments these captains were able to come. It also helps to eliminate men who might have led the retinue as the 'mystery' captain. The dukes of Clarence, Gloucester and York are all found with their men among The National Archives records for 1415, along with the earls of Norfolk, Suffolk, Oxford, Huntingdon, Arundel and March.

This leaves a dwindling list of men of suitable resources unaccounted for including John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford who had a long and distinguished career in the military campaigns in France during the reigns of Henry V and Henry VI. However, his role in 1415 was to remain in England as the King's Lieutenant guarding against insurrection and Scottish invasion.

¹ It seems that an additional 21 men-at-arms were involved, bringing their total to 100.

² Full details are given in the "Agincourt 600: English Army" section of the SLME website.

Similarly James Butler, earl of Ormond, was retained in Ireland as keeper of the peace in Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford and so was also absent from the French campaign that year.³

Henry Percy, the earl of Northumberland, while having the wealth to field a substantial retinue, was held captive in Scotland until 1416. Another possibility might have been Thomas Montague, earl of Salisbury, he having been restored to his father's lands in 1409 on 'coming of age' and being summoned to parliament in 1414. Yet, he did not receive full restoration of his property until 1421 and surviving documentation shows he only indentured in 1415 for a retinue of himself, 3 knights, 36 men-at-arms and 80 archers.

Lastly, Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick and captain of Calais in 1414, had in June 1415 been appointed by the king with others to govern the Welsh Marches and the counties of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire as protection against rebellion and military incursion. Thus he too, must be excluded from our considerations.

A LIKELY CAPTAIN

There remains then, only one possible candidate who might have committed himself to such a large-scale military and financial undertaking. Thomas Beaufort, earl of Dorset, born in 1377 was the youngest son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster and an able captain for whom no muster roll for the 1415 expedition has been found. His eldest brother was John, earl of Somerset, an experienced and successful military commander during both Richard II and Henry IV's reigns, who had died in 1410. His older brother, the second son of John of Gaunt, Henry Beaufort, was to become chancellor of England and eventually a cardinal. All three brothers were the issue of Gaunt's relationship with Katherine Swynford, originally the governess to his children and who became his third wife in 1396. She had previously been the wife of Sir Hugh Swynford of Lincolnshire who died in 1372. On marrying Katherine, John of Gaunt had received permission from Richard II and the Pope to legitimise the children of this union and they were given the name Beaufort after the castle that their father held in Champagne, France.

John and Thomas were brought up in their father's household in close contact with Henry Bolingbroke and his sisters. They were formally excluded from the succession to the English throne but relations between the half-brothers seems to have been amicable. The Beauforts became loyal and trustworthy servants of Bolingbroke when he became Henry IV and afterwards of his son Henry of Monmouth when he succeeded to the throne as Henry V.

John Beaufort had initially led some of the forces sent on behalf of Richard II to resist the invasion of England by Bolingbroke in 1399, but soon decided to join him. After Bolingbroke became king, both John and Thomas Beaufort brought retinues in support of his campaign in Scotland in 1400. John brought 39 lances (men-at-arms) and 160 archers and Thomas brought 5 lances and 24 archers, both retinues funded at their own expense.⁴

³ E. Matthews, 'Butler, James, 4th earl of Ormond' ,*ODNB* , <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4187>>, [Accessed 7 July 2018.]

⁴ G. L. Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort: A Study of Lancastrian Ascendancy and Decline* (Cardinal Beaufort), (Oxford, 1988), p. 13.

John Beaufort served as captain of Calais in 1403 and in the following year was made Constable of England. He was rather lacking in wealth to be a peer and G.L Harriss comments that he was "one of the service nobility, not a territorial magnate who could draw on traditional loyalties or forge bastard feudal ties".⁵ Even so, his considerable experience in France including much naval service, meant that he would have been well-known and respected among the men who formed the English military community in the early fifteenth century.

Thomas Beaufort was the admiral of a sizeable fleet in 1404 which patrolled the Dover Straits for 13 weeks. In 1405 he served with Henry Prince of Wales in the principality and gained a lot of experience in the garrisoning of hostile territory. In 1406 he was captain of Wigmore Castle. In 1408 he replaced his ailing brother John as captain of Calais and admiral of the North and West fleet. In 1412 he was made admiral for life and the earl of Dorset. Both brothers became Knights of the Garter and in 1413 Thomas was appointed captain of Calais castle for three years. In the same year he was also made lieutenant of Guienne and led a campaign in French-held Saintonge. As a result, Dorset would have been thought well-acquainted with all that was necessary to bring about the successful accomplishment of the expedition Henry V was planning.

We also know that in 1415, Dorset indented with Henry V to provide 400 men including himself, 1 banneret, 6 knights, 92 men-at-arms and 300 archers. The retinue under study seems to have provided a comparable number of men-at-arms as well as additional archers, comprising a total 486 men.⁶

Yet, can it be safely proposed that Thomas Beaufort was the leader of the retinue detailed in E101/45/17 m.1-4? He was certainly a strong supporter of the Crown and central to its military activities during the preceding decade. So we might expect to find some evidence of a previous personal connection to him among the personnel involved.

To establish whether this is the case, we need to examine what evidence there is about the origins of the men shown as mustered for campaign. At first sight it is rather a disappointing list. As a result of the damage to the beginning of the roll, there is no mention of any knights and most of the surnames of the men-at-arms are unfamiliar, even to the experienced student of this historical period. The list of archers is, as might be expected, still more unpromising, comprising large numbers of surnames probably based on the man's (or even a distant forebear's) occupation or place of origin.

THOMAS SWYNFORD (?- 1432)

⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

⁶ Only 79 of the names of the men-at-arms and their seniors are immediately visible but a possible, further 21 faint entries can be seen on the damaged portion of the muster roll.

Despite this, there is some encouragement. The first legibly named man-at-arms involved is a Thomas Swynford. There was a Thomas Swynford who was the son and heir of Sir Hugh Swynford and his wife Katherine Roet, later John of Gaunt's mistress, mother of John, Thomas and Henry Beaufort and later his third wife. Swynford was born in Lincoln and his age was proved in the year 1394/5. A witness, his mother Lady Katherine's chamberlain, recalled his baptism in 1373 and hearing her call for clothing of silk and gold to be provided for the ceremony, which took place in the church of St Mary in the Close, Lincoln.⁷ Sir Hugh Swynford held Kettlethorp Manor in the same county. Like Thomas Beaufort, Thomas Swynford had been raised in the same household as Henry Bolingbroke and had accompanied him on an expedition to Prussia in 1390. He had also served as a chamber knight to John of Gaunt.

As son of Katherine Swynford, Thomas was a half brother to Henry Bolingbroke and to all the Beaufort sons of Gaunt. In February 1396, Henry Bolingbroke was admitted to the Fraternity of Lincoln Cathedral accompanied by John Beaufort and Thomas Swynford. In 1399, on Bolingbroke's accession to the throne, Thomas became constable of Somerton Castle in Lincolnshire. He also became Richard II's gaoler at Pontefract Castle after his deposition (and was thought to be closely implicated in his death), a responsibility only suitable for the most trusted associate of Bolingbroke, now Henry IV.

By 1401 Swynford had been made steward of the Duchy of Lancaster Honour of Tickhill and in 1402 a royal chamber knight. During 1404-5 he acted as keeper of Calais in place of John Beaufort and for the next two years was closely involved in the negotiation of maritime truces with France in support of Beaufort. Yet, in 1406, there seems to have been an abrupt cessation of his employment in the royal household.⁸ Alison Weir says 'there is no further record of him being employed by the Crown' and from this time he served in the household of his half-brother Thomas Beaufort.⁹

Swynford had two sons, Thomas (1406 -1440), who also served in the household of Thomas Beaufort, and William, (died before 1482), who received a bequest of £400 and silver plate in Henry, Cardinal Beaufort's will, dated 1447.¹⁰ The Swynfords were then, closely connected to the Beauforts both in terms of family-ties and careers.

OTHER RETINUE MEMBERS AND THEIR ORIGINS

⁷ Alison Weir suggests that this date was an error on the part of the inquisition witnesses and he was actually born in 1367. A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford: The Story of John of Gaunt and his scandalous Duchess (Katherine Swynford)*, (London, 2008), pp. 80-88.

⁸ Swynford, Sir Thomas (1368-1432)', Simon Walker, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB). Portsmouth City Library.oxforddnb.com>. <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26859#:~:text=https%3A//doi.org/10.1093/ref%3Aodnb/26859>>

⁹ A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford*, p.274.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 275 and fn 96.

The remainder of the retinue list under investigation (that which is still visible), while not offering any similar notable participants, can still be usefully analysed, firstly in terms of what the surnames of the men can tell us. If this examination is restricted to more unusual names, it is possible for instance to identify locative or toponymic names that may give some indication of where a man came from, albeit that they should be used cautiously as they may in fact only indicate his previous origins.¹¹ Additionally, some of the rarer soldiers' surnames can be found in contemporary civilian sources like inquisitions post mortem, plea rolls or manorial accounts, again offering some clues to their possible home territory or property interests. Appendix 1 gives an outline of the measure of surname rarity used in this study.

Appendix 2 provides a list of 97 locative names found among those in the retinue and also counties in which these names can be found in fourteenth and early fifteenth century records. These have then been compared with the known property holdings of the Beauforts. The results of this approach are interesting as the names examined show some correlation with the location of properties known to have been held by the family before or at the time of the 1415 campaign, albeit only on the basis of being from the same county.

Furthermore, a search for the location of rarer surnames generally on the retinue list shows a similar level of match with Beaufort estates (appendix 3). From this it seems that a number of men are likely to have been recruited from within areas in which the Beaufort's had interests. This is despite G. L. Harris's suggestion that John Beaufort's property was too thinly spread for the family to have held much sway in a locality and Thomas Beaufort having too few lands in 1415 to be worth enfeoffing or protecting.¹²

LONG-TERM BEAUFORT CONNECTIONS

One other area of the retinue details provide some interesting information. A search has been made of the surnames in the retinue and a comparison made with their occurrence in other Beaufort retinues throughout the Hundred Years War. It reveals a significant number of families

¹¹ In a broad generalisation though, Richard Mc Kinley's work on surnames suggests that the majority of population movement in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was within county or adjoining counties; R. Mc Kinley, *The Surnames of Oxfordshire' 1977*, p. 78. So locative names may still be a fairly good indication of the region in which the person lived in the early part of the fifteenth century.

An examination of the poll tax registers of 1377-1381 also supports this conclusion. For example in the returns for Suffolk, 62% of identifiable locative names relate to that county and 84% to it or adjoining counties. C.C. Fenwick *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*: part 2, pp.504-536.

¹² G. L. Harris, *Cardinal Beaufort*, p.66, 81. The selection of counties as a representation of the area in which the Beauforts might have been able to recruit successfully is of course debatable. Any major lord's sphere of influence might have been larger or smaller based on a number of factors. However, it is noticeable in my own researches within Oxfordshire that while recruitment of retinues often drew upon parishes near-by the captain's own estates, the latter seldom provided men for them. The administration of the county did however underlie much of the social interaction of its higher status inhabitants and it is reasonable to propose that a retinue leader would have been able to raise men most easily through these networks. We might expect to see that reflected in the background of troops we are able to identify.

who supplied men over a period of years (even two or three generations) to the retinues of this family, which itself was involved in military campaigning over several decades.

Appendix 4 gives a summary of the retinue members whose surnames appear more than once in Beaufort retinues taking part in other campaigns over the first half of the fifteenth century. This suggests some substantial on-going loyalties existed, based on continuing military service by the families involved.

It may of course be argued that in some cases, the captains and commanders involved in particular campaigns were providing the only opportunity for military employment at that time and any professional fighting man would have offered himself for paid service to whichever retinue leader was involved. However, this relies perhaps too much on an assumed impetus from the individual soldier. Ayton proposes that retinues were often formed very much according to the retinue leaders' personal opportunities to recruit and so the captain would largely have used their own network to raise the majority of soldiers, rather than being accessible to men from any part of the country.¹³ The findings of this small study seem to indicate that a Beaufort was able to recruit significant numbers of men from within a network of families with a military tradition connected with his own family's service, as well as from the geographical areas in which he and his family had property holdings. However, only about a third of the E101/45/17 m.1-4 retinue with an apparent long-term Beaufort family military service link can be shown as likely to have been recruited from, on or near their estates. So it seems that most of the men who renewed their family's service were not those who were found in areas with potential Beaufort influence, although a number of those local contacts had made themselves available to the retinue on this occasion.

Ayton, while focusing on the fourteenth century, emphasises that recruitment of soldiers throughout the Hundred Years War depended on the campaign manpower requirements, the numbers of men available and the agency the recruiters had in reaching them. A captain could draw men most easily from his estates, the regions in which he was influential or from groupings he had access to, like men who gathered at the campaign embarkation ports in the hopes of joining a retinue. Some would have had to rely in part on sub-contractors who used their own networks. These factors varied over time. Even so, the captain would surely have wanted the experience and reliability of men that gave stability to his retinue. So every effort would have been made to reach families (even outside the captain's normal areas of activity) who had offered men with proven military ability in the past. A captain (or his family) who had a successful record of campaigning encouraged a positive response and led to a tradition of following the same banner even over several generations. In the case of the Beauforts, this would have been beyond doubt and assisted by their being 'of royal blood'.

¹³A. Ayton, 'Military Service and the Dynamics of Recruitment' in *The soldier Experience in the Fourteenth Century*, 2011, ed A.R. Bell and A. Curry, p. 13.

SO THE CAPTAIN IS IDENTIFIED?

Thomas Beaufort earl of Dorset's personal part in the 1415 campaign was considerable. He was admiral of the expeditionary fleet and as constable of the army interviewed Raoul le Gay, a French priest captured early in the siege of Harfleur. Furthermore, he took part in the negotiations with the French garrison for its surrender. He was also made warden and captain of the town before the main force left for Calais: it being said that the king handed the keys to him personally. Two months after the battle at Agincourt, the Privy Council asked the king whether he intended Beaufort to continue as captain of Harfleur, knowing that he was keen to return to England. In fact, he was only allowed to return temporarily, so his presence was seen as important to the retention of such a valuable prize.

Yet, there is a problem in tracing the expeditionary activities of Dorset's retinue in 1415. If the men detailed in E 101/45/17 m.1-4 were indeed recruited by him, it is surprising that they did not make up a major part of the Harfleur garrison under his captaincy in the first quarter of 1416.¹⁴ There are a large number of simple surname matches though.¹⁵

Examination of the sub-indentures various men made with Dorset to serve from the spring of 1415 show that they were present at Harfleur.¹⁶ Men like John Harpelay, Jankyn Bermyngham, Thomas Bolron and Thomas de Dewihirst, all with distinctive names, form part of a wider group of 16 exact name matches with men on the garrison muster list.¹⁷ In addition a further 14 men are found at Harfleur who have exact name matches with men mentioned in Dorset's will of 1426. These include household members, witnesses and beneficiaries, including well-known or rarer names like John Bermyngham, John Blount, John Rixton and Thomas Sandon.¹⁸ A number of surname matches are also present, possibly relatives of soldiers at Harfleur who had perhaps become connected to the household after the 1415 campaign. This shows that at least some of the men-at-arms who are found on the garrison list were likely to have been part of Beaufort's original retinue and probably the entire remainder of his company joined him there after the siege.

If Dorset's retinue was in the main transferred to the garrison then, this still leaves the 'mystery' retinue (E 101/45/17 m.1-4) to be accounted for: a very large body of men including Thomas Swynford, a name so closely associated with Dorset. Apart from its size, there is little information to work with. The damage to the surviving muster roll makes it impossible to see the details of the most senior members of the retinue. Interestingly though, Swynford, as the first legible name (at

¹⁴ SLME, E101/47/39.

¹⁵ Appendix 4 shows 37 surname matches but only 8 exact name matches, of which 7 are more common names (a rarity rating of less than 1 in 50).

¹⁶ The National Archives catalogue dates the indentures from 21st March - 20th March 1416.

¹⁷ SLME, E101/47/39. Interestingly though, while some of these men's surnames can also be found in areas associated with Beaufort estates, the majority come from Lancashire and at least some from the Duchy of Lancaster, his father, John of Gaunt's lands, then held by the king.

¹⁸ Sir John Blount was Thomas Beaufort's lieutenant when he was admiral in 1410. L. F. Woodger, 'Blount II, John of Sodington, Worcs' *HoP*, <www.historyofparliamentonline/volume/1386-1421/memberblount-sir-john-1425>, [Accessed 15th November 2022].

least the twenty second on the list) is not even shown as a knight. Then Dorset himself had indented in 1415 to bring 400 men. The retinue under study is actually rather larger but must have been provided by a man of comparable status. Who else then, might have raised such a force in 1415?

THE YEAR IN QUESTION

There is, however, another possibility. The National Archives catalogue gives the date of the muster roll as 3 Henry; 21st March 1415 - March 20 1416, but it was noted earlier that the SLME database marks the date with a question mark.¹⁹ This follows the Public Record Office cataloguer's views in the nineteenth century but the SLME website editors' query is because as a result of the damage to it, there is no detail on the piece which allows dating with certainty. It might not then relate to the 1415 campaign at all. Apart, apparently from Thomas Swynford (1367?-1432), nobody on the list is identifiable with any degree of confidence. Swynford himself had been militarily active since being placed in Henry of Derby's retinue by John of Gaunt at a young age.²⁰ In 1403 he served in Wales with many other men whose surnames are found on the E 101/45/17 m.1-4 retinue list. However, in 1403 he is clearly identified as a knight on the roll of retinues and his status would not have been overlooked on the muster list now under examination as it was a basis for his payment for his military service.²¹ Further, according to those authors who have studied his career, his name does not appear on any other extant record of military service until the first of three letters of attorney between 1427 and 1429 and then without details of his rank. By then Thomas Beaufort, now duke of Exeter had died but in any case the documents do not give a captain. Nor, according to the literature, does any other source give Swynford as having served as a campaigning soldier in France after 1403, with Beaufort or with any other captain.²²

It seems unlikely then that Thomas Swynford, Dorset's relative and long-term follower was actually the man found in the letters of attorney in 1427-9. As previously mentioned though, he did have a son also named Thomas and who was eventually knighted. He would have been 21 in 1427. The letter of attorney gives no details of the holder's rank which suggests that the man concerned was not a knight.²³ On this basis we can be sure that Thomas Swynford junior (1406-1440) was the man on the muster roll on E 101/45/17 m.1, not least because a man of Sir Thomas senior's rank would be recorded as a knight, being paid a higher daily rate than a mere man-at-arms and would never be found so low on the list. Additionally, it is probable that when, following Henry V's death in 1422, Thomas Beaufort, now duke of Exeter, returned to England to take up the guardianship of the young Henry VI, Sir Thomas Swynford senior, returned with him as a

¹⁹ SLME, E101/45/17 mm.1-5.

²⁰ A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford*, p. 186.

²¹ SLME, E101/43/21 m.1. Standing Force, Wales (Carmarthen and surroundings).

²² There is an interesting reference in the French Rolls to a Thomas Spirling of Kent who is the subject of a letter of protection as the victualler of the castle of Calais in the retinue of Sir Thomas Swynford, lieutenant of the castle. This was issued on the 14th October 1415, two days after the expeditionary force left Harfleur and fifteen days before the battle at Agincourt.

²³ Letter of attorney: SLME, C76/109 m.6. Swynford junior is mentioned in Thomas Beaufort's will as heading the list of his household esquires and servants: A. J. Elder, *A Study of The Beauforts, (The Beauforts)*, Phd 1964, Bryn Mawr College, pp. 128-29. He received 50 marks (the largest bequest).

valued member of his household. Exeter was to die in 1426, and it has been concluded that Sir Thomas Swynford senior was not militarily active again before his own death in 1432.

A LATER DATE AND A DIFFERENT CAPTAIN?

This proposal would still fit well with the size and composition of the retinue. As pointed out previously, such a large body of men is likely to have been captained by at least an earl. So the young Thomas Swynford could well have followed his father by joining the ranks of another Beaufort retinue before his knighthood. There are three possibilities, all the sons of John Beaufort, 1st earl of Somerset. Although John Beaufort (1403-1444), who had become the 1st duke of Somerset in 1418 and his younger brother Thomas, count of Perche (1405-1431, a French title with the rank of earl from 1430), were both militarily active, they were captured at the Battle of Baugé in 1421. Thomas was not released until 1430. He campaigned late in that year when he was present on Henry VI's coronation expedition and then at the siege of La Charitie' sur Loire.²⁴ He died soon after the siege of Louviers in 1431. John was not released until 1438.

The third candidate for the captaincy, who would provide the same convincing connection with the apparent geographical and military background of the soldiers detailed in the retinue, is Edmund Beaufort (1406-55), younger brother of John and Thomas. He eventually became 2nd earl of Dorset and then 2nd duke of Somerset. He is found on the SLME database with a letter of attorney for the first time in 1427 during a military expedition in France.²⁵ At this time he was merely a knight and the count of Mortain, a French title given to him linked to a grant of land in English-held France. It was not until 1441 that he was to succeed to the earldom of Dorset, and then 1444 and 1448 for the earldom and dukedom of Somerset respectively. He is shown as an earl for the first time on a muster roll in 1430 with himself as captain, though this presumably is because his title of 'count' was seen as an equivalent status also given to his brother Thomas, count of Perche on the same basis in a letter of attorney in 1431.²⁶ In any case, Edmund had already begun to develop a distinguished military career and may have led the men recruited through a network of Beaufort family contacts in his brother the duke's absence, or with the help of his influential uncle, Cardinal Henry Beaufort, been able to raise such a body of men in his own right.

It would not be surprising then, to find Thomas Swynford junior, the son of Thomas Beaufort duke of Exeter's closest supporter and half-brother, being part of one of Beaufort's nephews' retinues. Thomas Swynford the younger served as a soldier until at least 1436 and died in 1440. He is shown on the SLME database as a knight for the first time on a letter of attorney in 1431.²⁷ According to the inquisition post mortem of his father, he was 26 in 1432, so it is equally possible that the

²⁴ M. K. Jones, *The Beaufort Family and the War in France 1421-1450 (The Beaufort Family)*. PhD, Bristol, 1982.

²⁵ SLME, C76/109, m.12.

²⁶ SLME, ADE, IIF 4069U. Edmund Beaufort was apparently styled 'earl' at least from 1438 according to *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, G.E. Cokayne and G. H. White; vol. XII, pp. 49-50 ('*The Complete Peerage*').

²⁷ SLME, C76/2113, m.4.

young Swynford served either Thomas Beaufort, count of Perche (but only in late 1430 - late 1431) or Edmund Beaufort his younger brother, who was militarily active between 1427 and 1431.

This hypothesis also helps to explain why so many of the names in the retinue listed without their captain are only surname matches with the men in the Harfleur garrison in 1415-16 despite the large number of surname matches as such. If the men in the garrison were indeed often following retinue leaders who had indented with Dorset, and we have established that families supplied men to the ranks of both men-at-arms and archers in Beaufort retinues over 3-4 decades, it follows that the same surnames would be likely to appear on a retinue list in the 1420s-30s led by another Beaufort. There would not be a substantial number of first name matches though, unless the fighting sons were frequently named after their father.

A FURTHER SEARCH

It seems then that rather than E101/45/17 m1-4 providing details of Dorset's retinue for the 1415 campaign and for the siege of Harfleur in the same year, the muster list for his company there has been lost like many others.

Consequently a further attempt must be made to not only identify who was the leader of the unidentified retinue but also when it was operative. To help with this, an examination of the men on the muster list with rarer surnames and who appear in other campaign and garrison muster lists has been undertaken and a list of 40 men with exact name matches compiled. Nine of these have surnames that are found no more than 1 in 8000 times on the lists which make up the SLME database.²⁸ This identifies which years these men with distinctive names can be shown as serving with another captain and so provides a means of eliminating those years from those which might relate to the 'mystery' list. Additionally, as the list is attached to a further membrane (E101/45/17 m.5) which details a retinue of 66 men led by Sir William Eure, and so may have been active in the same campaign, a similar search was used on the men following Eure (although it is possible that this membrane has been erroneously joined to E10145/18 m.1-4 at a later date).²⁹

The result has been to suggest that the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 retinue did not campaign in any of the years 1417, 1420, 1421, 1426, 1429 or 1430. Other less rare names are found in other years but are not so reliable an indicator. The soldiers listed on E 101/45/17 m.5 look unlikely to have been active in 1418, 1419 and 1420.

²⁸ Mystery retinue: William Pudsay, Robert Dyghton, John Colynson, John Hemyngton, John Welburn, Thomas Bawdewyn, William Hebbe, John Wyseman, John Hogard. William Eure (Evers) retinue: William Tuchett. However, it is possible that men were only indented for periods of three or six months and in some cases in the same year, and so can be found on more than one muster list in the same year. Examples are John Hanson in 1429 and John Lyndesay in 1430.

²⁹ Careful examination by the late Kim Hughes, forensic handwriting expert, revealed very subtle differences in the handwriting on mm. 1-4 and m.5. Further discussion of m.5 is given in an addendum below.

Even if the foregoing analysis takes us in the right direction, we should also consider whether the service to which the retinue were assigned has been correctly identified. Although the SLME database shows the contingent as intended for expeditionary land service in France, this was an assumption by the nineteenth century Public Record Office cataloguers, presumably based on the similarity of the record to other military service records known to have been for this purpose. Alternatively, it may just be that this muster roll was found with expeditionary records labelled as such. Any original description is obscured by the damage to the beginning of the roll. Could it be possible though that this large group might actually have been allocated to naval service? The details provided on the E101/45/17 m.5 roll about Sir William Eure's retinue, which has not been deemed by the cataloguers as on naval service, might still support this. This is because it is accompanied by a short note saying that the men had boarded ship in Scarborough and Hull bound for "a muster on the sea" (a meeting of ships?) between Southampton and the Isle of Wight. This would assume again that the retinues shown on E101/45/17 m.1-5 were from the same year.

Dorset was, of course, admiral of the fleet that took the English troops across the channel in 1415 and his campaign muster list has not been found elsewhere, so E101/45/17 mm.1-4 could be the document concerned. Yet it is a very large retinue, much larger than most other naval retinue lists on the SLME database, although there is one led by Hugh Courtney, Earl of Devon in 1418 which is comparable in size.³⁰ However, the suggestion that this might be a naval expedition can be rejected on the basis of the ratio of men-at-arms to archers listed. Naval contingents typically comprised a ratio of 1:2 men-at-arms to archers whereas it was 1:3 for land service. The company shown in E101/45/17 mm.1-4 was much closer to a 1:3 ratio.³¹

Similarly it might be suggested that these men could have been mustered for service in one of the major garrisons in France. However Anne Curry, in her PhD thesis examines in depth the evidence for the manning of these bodies of men and does not identify any garrison larger than 320.³² She gives the average size in 1428-29 as 83.1. Nor does [appendix 4](#) of the present study identify any but the occasional exact name match between the retinue under examination and the men found in a number of garrison companies between 1415 and 1440. So again, this possibility does not look hopeful.

To return then to the search for a land campaign which might require the formation of such a substantial retinue, two additional possibilities present themselves. Firstly, Michael Jones mentions that Edmund Beaufort, count of Mortain since April 1427, was to have supported his uncle Henry Beaufort on a crusade against the Bohemians in 1429.³³ In the event, because the war in France had begun to go very badly for the English, due to the reinvigoration of the French troops inspired by Joan of Arc, Henry agreed that the men already recruited by July 1429 could be diverted to support the duke of Bedford. It could be that the retinue discussed here was part of the 2750 men originally agreed to be raised for this different purpose.³⁴ In fact, there was a good

³⁰ SLME, E11/49/34 m.1-6.

³¹ See A.R. Bell, A. Curry, A. King & D. Simpkin, *The Soldier in Later Medieval England*, Oxford, 2013. pp. 95-100.

³² A.E. Curry *Military Organisation in Lancastrian Normandy 1422-1450 (Military Organisation)*, PhD. Teeside Polytechnic, 1985. Vol.1. P. 240.

³³ M. K. Jones, *The Beaufort Family* p. 66.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 78.

deal of discretion allowed to the cardinal as to the exact number of men to be found and it is probable that recruitment for the original purpose was only partly completed when the expedition was hurriedly assembled. M.K. Jones shows that the payment made by the English Exchequer for the second quarter of service was for 50 lances and 950 archers.³⁵

The men were mustered and embarked at Sandwich, arriving in Paris by 25 July. The troops were then deployed according to Bedford's orders and Mortain was given the important role of commanding the military activity along the frontier of East Normandy. This included the captaincy of the garrisons at Neufchatel-en-Bray, Gournay and Gisors in the Norman Vexin, as well as attacking and reoccupying towns lost to the French. These garrisons could support an army with detachments and some were mustered alongside the troops made available by Bedford to lay siege to Etrepagny. Ratcliffe suggests it is reasonable to assume that Beaufort's force was about 600 strong.³⁶ So it was appropriately commensurate with the status of an earl. This might have been because Beaufort had recently been made count of Mortain and his uncle Henry Beaufort had raised and funded the additional troops that made the action possible. On this basis, it would seem then, that the retinue detailed in E101/45/17 mm.1-4 could have been involved in this part of the war. Likewise Thomas Swynford (still not a knight when obtaining a letter of attorney on 21 April 1429) might have been part of this contingent.

The second action giving cause to raise a retinue of the size and composition under investigation occurred in the following year. M.K. Jones in his PhD thesis mentions the return of Thomas Beaufort, count of Perche, to the French campaign in 1430.³⁷ He did not, though, accompany Henry VI on his only military expedition which culminated with his coronation as King of France in Paris in 1431. A force of 5000 soldiers had been raised in support of the campaign. Yet, if Thomas was not there, his uncle, Henry Beaufort, certainly was. He had made a large loan to the Crown to help fund the coronation and had a pivotal input into the English Grand Conseil in France.³⁸ In return, he had negotiated a key role in France for Thomas. It was agreed that he would lead a new retinue that provided mobile support wherever it was needed. His first commitment was to support the king's Burgundian allies by assisting the captain of the fortress at La Charite-sur-Loire which was under siege by the French. A retinue of 120 men-at-arms and 360 archers was mustered in Rouen for this purpose at the end of August 1430 (again partly funded by a loan from the cardinal). It seems they were only there for a short while and the troops were paid just one month's wages in advance and then they were moved elsewhere. By 11 November, Perche was in Paris with a smaller detachment defending the city and in late November at Amiens with what is described as a 'small force'.³⁹

The composition of this retinue is interesting for this study, not only because it was led by a Beaufort, but because of its size. It is of course sufficient for an earl but it is also very close to the manpower that can be identified on the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 roll. Although the retinue indented

³⁵ Ibid. p. 67 fn.2: receiver general's accounts for Normandy 1428-9.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 76 fn.6. Refers to H.L Ratcliffe, *The Military Expenditure of the English Crown 1432-35* (*The Military Expenditure of the English Crown*), Oxford M. Litt thesis), 1979.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 37.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 76 fn.6.

³⁹ Ibid p. 79.

for in 1430 had an additional 20 men-at-arms and 26 fewer archers, this might well have been because some of the beginning of the roll is lost, or that the recruitment of the precise number intended by the captain was not possible. Given the expected ratio of 1 man-at-arms : 3 archers for a land army, it might be proposed that the retinue was actually supposed to be 120 men-at-arms (including the captain) and 360 archers, but that an attempt had been made to replace a deficit of 10 men-at-arms with an extra 30 archers. Certainly it was sometimes allowable for captains to replace a shortfall in men-at-arms recruited with an increase in archers in this way.

FURTHER DIFFICULTIES AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES

This promising possibility of Perche as our captain would seem to be disproved however, with the discovery late in the development of this study, of a mention of Thomas Swynford Knight as captain of the Vernon garrison, taking up his appointment for 3 months on 23 December, 1429.⁴⁰ In fact Sir Thomas Swynford senior is also mentioned as captain of Ardevon from 24 December 1418, in the same research and that he retained that post until 12 September 1424. So, the older Swynford was campaigning much longer than previously thought and it is not impossible that it was he who was captain at Vernon. However, it seems more likely that he had retired from active military service by this time at the age of 61.⁴¹ The captaincy at Vernon (which was part of Queen Catherine's dower) lasted three months and it is interesting to note that the succeeding captain was Sir John Beauchamp, son of Sir William Beauchamp of Powick and Thomas Swynford junior's brother-in-law. So, if as seems likely, the younger Thomas Swynford was involved at Vernon, it would imply that he was part of the 'mystery' retinue before his captaincy and knighthood.

Given Thomas Swynford junior's apparent age of 23 in 1429, he is not likely to have been knighted much earlier and it is necessary to identify an action which would have required the muster of such a sizeable retinue taking place when Swynford had become old enough to fight. He is found in France three times between 1427 and 1429 at a suitable age. This coincides with the return of the duke of Bedford to France in February, 1427 with a large force preparatory to the siege of Montargis, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Edmund Beaufort had a retinue of 2 knights, 40 men-at-arms, 120 archers and the muster of the full contingent took place at Sandwich in February.⁴² ⁴³ Thomas Swynford could have been with him. Yet the limited size of Beaufort's retinue makes this unlikely to be the action concerned.

Then in 1428 a large force was led by the earl of Salisbury which laid siege unsuccessfully to Orleans. Again, Swynford might have taken part, but at first sight, this does not offer the apparent links to the Beauforts found in this study.

⁴⁰ A.E.Curry, *Military Organisation*, vol 2. Appendix VII.

⁴¹ Swynford senior is also found in Henry V's presence in France in the latter part of 1422 (details to be provided in the intended publication of a separate research item).

⁴² SLME, E404/43/158.

⁴³ Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR) 1422-29, 404.

Lastly, in 1429 there was the provision of the reinforcements requested by Bedford already described which gave such a substantial role to Edmund Beaufort as count of Mortain.

It is difficult not to think that Thomas Swynford junior's career would always have been intertwined with Edward Beaufort's in that they were cousins and both closely linked to Henry Beaufort. They are each found going to France with the return of Bedford from England. They were of very similar ages, and grandsons of Katherine Swynford. Their first letters of attorney were only two weeks apart on 26 February and 14 March 1427 when Thomas was 21. His uncle had secured him Elizabeth Beauchamp, heiress of Sir William Beauchamp of Powick as his bride by the same year.⁴⁴ In a codicil to his will, dated 9 June 1421, Henry V had bequeathed Elizabeth land worth £200 a year on condition that she married on the advice of family members and Swynford's uncle, Sir Thomas Beaufort. Evidently the Beaufort and Swynford families connection was close and active at this time.⁴⁵

It is entirely possible then that Thomas Swynford junior was part of Edmund Beaufort's company in 1427, but it was not large enough to be the one we are looking for. It would put Swynford in the field with Mortain at the beginning of his military career though, with the likelihood of his continuing to support him in future campaigns. It is also interesting to consider whether Swynford might have been one of the 32 or 36 unidentified men knighted just before the English coronation of Henry VI which took place on 6 November 1429. This would have given him time to arrive in France with his new status sufficient for his promotion to garrison captain at Vernon six weeks later.⁴⁶ It would also narrow the period in which the mystery retinue might have been active to 1428-1429.

In deciding which of these possibilities seems most likely, there is a helpful pointer.

Professor Anne Curry has advised me that the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 roll is clearly the product of the English Exchequer as it was found among records kept in England. This shows that the retinue concerned must have been part of an expeditionary force setting out from England and funded by the English Exchequer. This allows us to discount the retinue led by Thomas Beaufort, count of Perche in 1430, which is known to have been funded by the Treasurer General of Normandy, even though the size of his retinue was so similar to the one under consideration.⁴⁷ The nineteenth century cataloguers at the Public Record Office, with all their experience of the fifteenth century military documents were aware that the retinue had to be part of an English expeditionary force

⁴⁴ A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford*, p. 275.

⁴⁵ L.S. Woodger, 'Beauchamp, Sir William of Powick'. *HoP*, <www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/beauchamp-sir-william-1421> [Accessed 15 November 2022].

⁴⁶ William A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, London, 1906. It appears that Swynford junior was still unknighthed when he was apparently a juror in Middlesex at Thomas earl of Salisbury's inquisition post mortem on 2nd February, 1429: C139/41/57. However his father was still alive and it may have been him as although the status of owners and tenants was given in the record, this seems not to have been the case for the jurors.

⁴⁷ British Library Add. Ch. 1171-2. This also applies to the suggestion that E101/45/17 mm.1-4 might have described a garrison in France as Professor Curry has confirmed that at least from 1421, these were also always funded by the English authorities in France.

but, it seems, wrongly suggested 1415 as the most likely possibility. Yet this conclusion presents another problem.

A RETINUE THAT FITS THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

If the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 retinue was part of an English expeditionary force it should be easily identifiable from the records of warrants for issue or the issue rolls, which are both complete. A search of these does not produce a record of a payment for a retinue of comparable size.⁴⁸ This removes the mystery retinue's possible involvement in the redeployment of the crusading force as reinforcements in France in 1429. As a result, there is only one remaining possibility. If there is no single retinue recorded which might comprise this body of men, it must form part of a bigger retinue and not be distinguishable itself. There was just one such company of men and this was the single, large expeditionary force which was raised by Thomas Montacute, earl of Salisbury, in 1428. The duke's indenture included 6 bannerets, 34 knights, 559 esquires and 1800 archers.⁴⁹

Even so, there is no known surviving set of muster lists identifiable for this field army and we must rely on a number of indentures made between Salisbury and his men-at-arms and a few letters of protection and attorney to gather something of who was involved. However, these could only have comprised a small part of Salisbury's army and an attempt has been made to find more participants among the men with known connections to the earl. These include not only the tenants of his lands but also the jurors shown in the inquisitions post mortems on his estate held after his death in late 1428/early 1429, who were chosen as men living within the counties in which his properties lay. In addition the SLME database provides details of the men serving at the garrison of Falaise under his captaincy in 1428, those who followed him at the siege of La Ferte Bernard in 1426 and those on campaign with him in 1423.

Then, a comparison has been made with the records in the SLME database to identify where these men are found serving in the military campaigns in France immediately after Salisbury's death in November 1428 and through the next three years (1429-31). The proposition is that those men are likely to have been present there as a result of their service with Salisbury in 1428.

The results are shown in [Appendix 5](#).⁵⁰ A total of 78 men are found as associates of Salisbury between 1423 and 1428 and serving in France from after Salisbury's death. Of these, over half

⁴⁸ There is an interesting possibility in 1423 when Thomas Beaufort led a retinue of 200 men at arms and 600 archers to France but this would make Thomas Swynford only 17 on his first active service and the 'archer' and probably the 'men-at-arms' components of the retinue much larger than is the case in the retinue in question.

⁴⁹ H. L. Ratcliffe *The Military Expenditure of the English Crown*, p. 24. The indenture is printed by Stevenson in *Letters and Papers*, 1 404-14. It included clauses allowing substitution of men at arms by archers. Salisbury did not manage to recruit all the knights bachelor and did substitute archers for men at arms. He crossed to France with only one knight banneret, 2 knights bachelor, 440 men at arms and 2250 archers (issue rolls E403/686 under 19 July, and in foreign accounts E364/64/3, cited in Ratcliffe.

⁵⁰ Men known to have been in other men's retinues in France before Salisbury's death have been excluded.

came with a background of previous military service with Salisbury. Of the rest, the largest group (21) were jurors at Salisbury's inquisitions post mortem and very few were his tenants. One of the jurors, though, was a Thomas Swynford.⁵¹ Also noteworthy is that the men concerned are often found in the retinues of Salisbury's principal captains (Suffolk and Rempston) or those who continued the siege of Orleans after his death (Talbot, Scales, Fastolf, Willoughby, the Lisle brothers, Stanlaw and Gough).

THE EVENTS AND OUTCOME OF THE SIEGE OF ORLEANS IN 1428

To understand how these men might have come to be found in so many different retinues from 1429 onwards, it is necessary to rehearse briefly the events of the siege and afterwards. Disastrously, Salisbury was mortally wounded on October 27, soon after the siege began and the command transferred to William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk.

Alfred H. Burne in his *'The Agincourt War; A Military History of the Hundred Years War from 1389-1433'* says the army was in disarray after Salisbury's death and Suffolk took it to winter quarters in surrounding towns leaving only a small garrison under Sir William Glasdale.⁵² He suggests that soon after John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, arrived on December 1, the siege was begun again and he and Thomas, Lord Scales were closely involved in its command. Sir John Fastolf was also active and led the force that eventually triumphed at the Battle of the Herrings outside the city in February 1429. Unfortunately, Lancelot de Lisle, another English captain, had been killed by defenders of Orleans' gunfire in January. The subsequent arrival of the French army nominally led by Joan of Arc, forced the English to withdraw from the siege on the 8th of May and they split their forces with 700 men going to Jargeau with Suffolk and the remaining army going with Talbot to Beaugency. The French did not challenge this withdrawal, but on hearing that Fastolf was approaching with a new army, besieged Jargem and captured Suffolk. The English garrison there was 'put to the sword'. The French also bombarded Beaugency and its captains, Matthew Gough and Richard Gethin, quit the town. Talbot's force eventually met the French at Patay and they were led by some of the best English commanders including Thomas Lord Scales, Sir Thomas Rempston (who fought with Exeter in 1423 and was part of Salisbury's original army by August 1428) and Sir Walter Hungerford (fought with Dorset in 1403).

It must be assumed that Salisbury's original army had suffered many casualties during these actions and the retinues involved had probably been much reorganised as the English sought to secure the region. Certainly, Salisbury's personal retinue would have been reallocated to other campaign captains for the rest of their period of service.

THE MYSTERY RETINUE

⁵¹ 'Mapping the Medieval Countryside' (MMC) website E CIPM 271-2. Inquisition Post mortem (IPM) 12 February 1429 Westminster, Middlesex. TNA C139/41/57 mm.17-18. None of the jurors are given a rank (although tenants are), so we cannot be sure whether this is Swynford father or son.

⁵² Alfred H. Burne, *The Agincourt War; A Military History of the Hundred Years War from 1389-1433*, (2014).

This leads us back to the retinue described in E101/45/17 m.1-4. What evidence is there for their involvement in the same campaign? There is no direct mention of another earl being involved in Salisbury's indenture with the king for this expedition but there was a solitary knight banneret who crossed the channel with the expedition. It may be that as he only had a french title, Mortain could have been deemed as such and paid at a lower rate. Therefore, if we assume that he could have been present, we might expect that a number of his retinue would also be found serving in France either intact as a retinue or joining those of other captains after Salisbury's death.

The results of a search to establish if this was the case is shown in [appendix 6](#). Some 55 men can be identified serving in France in other captain's retinues from late 1428-31. Once again they are found in a variety of retinues, particularly garrisons and at the siege of Louviers and they are also often listed as followers of the key captains who had previously taken part in the siege of Orleans. Such a similar profile to the men previously serving with Salisbury is intriguing but close examination confirms that there is no overlap of the men associated with Salisbury and the men led by the unidentified captain of the retinue described in E101/45/17 mm.1-4. This confirms that the men concerned were fighting in France at roughly the same time but suggests that while the latter group may have been part of Salisbury's overall army, they seem to have been following a different captain. They were part of a retinue sufficient for the status of an earl but unless they were raised by Salisbury without any previous loyalties or connections so far discovered, they were recruited by another one. The question is whether it might have been a Beaufort.

FAMILY AND OTHER CONNECTIONS

At the time that Salisbury was recruiting, only Edmund Beaufort, quite recently created count of Mortain, was able to campaign, both his brothers still being in captivity. We can see that he had served in France in 1427 and M.K Jones says he probably returned to England at the end of his six-month indenture.⁵³ He could have returned in time to muster with the men Salisbury had raised for service in France under indentures which commenced between March and May 1428. Interestingly, Mortain is not to be seen in any record, civil or military, until Henry Beaufort his uncle's preparation for the Hussite crusade in the first half of 1429. Yet his career had started well in 1427, with his serving with John, duke of Bedford, and it seems likely he would have wished to continue to campaign in France when opportunities for further honours and reputation were available. His cousin, Thomas Swynford junior did obtain a letter of attorney on 12 May 1428 for a period of service in France. In fact, this is the same day that Sir William Drury received an identical letter. Drury, who lived in Rougham in Suffolk, was Swynford's brother-in-law having married his sister Katherine prior to 1428. Drury's captain is given as John, duke of Bedford, but this may only refer to the latter's role as overall commander (regent of France). Consequently, it is not possible to definitely confirm who he was serving with. However, William had, like Swynford, been a member of Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter's, household, a Roger Drury man-at-arms had served in the Harfleur Garrison under Exeter in 1415-16 and a Nicholas Drury, archer was to be part of the expeditionary force led by John Beaufort duke of Somerset in France in 1443. It is quite

⁵³ M. K. Jones *The Beaufort Family*, p. 38.

feasible then that Mortain, Swynford and Drury were on campaign together in 1428.⁵⁴ In fact there may be some supporting evidence of this in that there is a letter of protection which was issued to an unnamed ‘Swynford’, man-at-arms in March 1426, who was captained by Salisbury. Unfortunately there is another ‘Swynford’, man-at-arms; a John Swynford who served in France in 1420, 1423 and 1429 so it is not possible to be sure which man was involved in 1426. If it were thought that it was Thomas Swynford, it would show a previous military service link with Salisbury.⁵⁵

A further interesting entry on the letters of attorney for 1428, significantly again on the 12 May is one for John Beaufort, earl, serving in France.⁵⁶ This is surprising because Somerset, as already mentioned, was still in captivity following the battle of Baugé in 1421. It may be that there were hopes of his release in time to join the campaign, and negotiations for the payment of his ransom might have been active at the time but ultimately not successful. If this was the case, the recruitment of a suitable retinue would have been necessary and might have been undertaken in his absence. Once it became clear that Somerset would not be able to lead them, it might well have fallen to his younger brother to become their captain.

There are also other intriguing possible retinue connections with the Beaufort family. These have arisen from a new piece of research carried out on the damaged section of the E101/45/17 m.1, which is not shown in the SLME database. This involved an examination of the roll with ultra-violet light. While it is difficult to be certain, a number of names have been deciphered among which are some possibly worthy of mention.⁵⁷ Here though we shall note just one: a John Cropello who appears on the retinue list just six lines above Thomas Swynford.

While the name Cropello as such has not been traced in contemporary records, it may have been meant for Croppel or Crophill and the latter presents an interesting suggestion. Alison Weir in her book *Katherine Swynford, The Story of John of Gaunt and his scandalous Duchess*, mentions that Thomas Swynford senior married a Jane Crophill of Nottingham and that she was mother to Thomas Swynford junior. Weir says that the family are mentioned several times in Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire during the fourteenth Century. They may have originated from Cropwell Bishop and Cropwell Butler in Nottinghamshire and had been mayors of Nottingham and were kinsmen of the royal family.⁵⁸ A John Crophill of Easton was a juror at the inquisition post mortem of John Saltby at Folkingham, Lincolnshire in 1447.⁵⁹

This seems to be the only record of a ‘John Cropello’ as a soldier but a John ‘Crepelet’ did receive a letter of protection to serve in France in 1430.⁶⁰ In addition, a John ‘Cropwell’ and a Roger ‘Crophelle’, men-at-arms had been part of Henry IV’s expedition to Scotland in 1400 and a Robert

⁵⁴ We know that there were two knights bachelor crossing to France with Salisbury, so perhaps Drury was one of them.

⁵⁵ BL Add. Ch. 94: Field Service, siege at La Ferte Bernard. It may be significant though that John Swynford never applied for a letter of protection whereas Thomas Swynford always did, suggesting that it was Thomas who was with Salisbury in 1426.

⁵⁶ C76/10 m.9.

⁵⁷ My thanks to Anne Curry for her help here. See also, appendix 6.

⁵⁸ A. Weir, *Katherine Swynford*, p. 190.

⁵⁹ ‘MMC website, E-CIPM 26-507; John Saltby.

⁶⁰ SLME, C76/112, m.18.

'Crophull'/'Croppell' esquire is mentioned twice in the lists of the campaign in France in 1415 as a member of the duke of Gloucester's retinue.⁶¹ Robert Crophill could be the man who served as a juror in 1431 at the inquisition post mortem of John Thorp at Nottingham.⁶²

It may be then, that this 'John Cropelo' was a man of some military experience who in 1428, had joined his relative Thomas Swynford in a retinue led by a fellow Beaufort kinsman.⁶³

On a less familial level, we should perhaps also take note of the apparent connections between men detailed in the letters of protection for May/June 1428 and those serving on other campaigns with a Beaufort. These include John Shardelowe, knight, another member of Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter's household in the 1420s and captained by Edmund Beaufort in 1427; Robert Cressener of Suffolk who also served with Mortain in 1436 and Theobald Gorges, knight of Wraxall, Somerset, who was captained by John Beaufort, duke of Somerset, in 1440. Cressener gives Salisbury as his captain and the others' leader is unidentified, yet the presence of these men in 1428 may provide a further basis for proposing that a Beaufort family member was also involved in that campaign.

So taking into account the apparent long-term links between the Beaufort family and many men of the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 retinue, Thomas Swynford junior's participation and the apparent wider family involvement, it is at least plausible that the retinue was led by Mortain in 1428 as part of the army that Salisbury took to France. Similarly, it seems likely that many of the company stayed on campaign in France, even if Mortain himself had returned to England to lead Henry Beaufort's intended crusade of 1429. After the reverses in France suffered by the English in that year, Mortain was involved with the reinforcement of English forces elsewhere in France, leading the troops originally intended for the crusade. So, it is not until he and his brother Thomas led retinues at the siege of Louviers in 1430/31 do we see among their members, several exact names matches with men on the E101/45/17mm.1-4 list (see appendix 6).

One further piece of evidence for the date that the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 retinue might have operated is that a number of them are also found in English civilian records as individuals contributing to feudal aids in 1428 and 1431 (See appendix 7). This indicates the possession of land holdings directly from the king in chief and so a close relationship with the House of Lancaster at the time concerned. There is also Thomas Rephyngam of Lincolnshire and Thomas Hoakk of Gloucester who are found on the lists of oaths taken not to support peacebreakers in 1434.⁶⁴

⁶¹ E101/41/1, m.67; E101/41/1, m.22; E101/44/30, no 1, no1, no4.

⁶² MMC website, E-CIPM 24-730; John Thorp.

⁶³ It is also worth noting a further family connection in that Salisbury had in 1421 married Alice Chaucer, a cousin of the Beauforts and Swynfords, who lived at Ewelme close to the earl's seat at Bisham, Berkshire.

⁶⁴ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Henry VI: 1436-1441*. (CPR) Vol. III (1st ed.). London: H. M. S. O. 1907, p. 434.

CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of connections which suggest that the retinue described in E101/45/17 mm.1-4 was made up of men who were active militarily and civilly in the late 1420s-early 1430s and might well have been a target for recruitment by the Beaufort family. As we already know, many of their family members can apparently be seen in Beaufort retinues over 30 years in the first half of the fifteenth century. Of course, other magnates could have supported Salisbury in his expedition with a large body of men but there is no record of this, or any indications that this was the case, despite a prolonged search. Nor, even if Salisbury himself would seem to be the most obvious candidate for the captaincy of the retinue, is there any evidence to support this.

Yet, if Mortain was on campaign with Salisbury in 1428, he is also missing from any contemporary record of it and it is not possible to confirm his presence without new information. It is conceivable, for instance, that, although a Beaufort raised this retinue, he did not actually accompany them to France. In that case the men on the E101/45/17 mm.1-4 list might still have been part of Salisbury's own retinue on the campaign.

So, the writer does not claim to have revealed definitively the date of the muster list described in E101/45/17 mm.1-4, nor solved the identity of its captain with any certainty. This paper simply puts forward some interesting circumstantial evidence to propose that the date concerned is not 1415, but, rather, likely to be in the late 1420s. It also suggests that there are no convincing alternatives to the Salisbury expedition of 1428. As to the captain, there are a number of indications that the 'earl' concerned was a member of the Beaufort family and if that was so, and if the date of the campaign proposed is correct, it would seem that only Edmund Beaufort, count of Mortain, could possibly have led the retinue.

THE END
