



The arms of Alan Bassett

A BIT MORE ON THE BASSETTS

The bounds of the Manor of Woking never fully corresponded with the bounds of Woking parish. Arthur Locke, in his study of the history of Woking⁷, noted

that originally 'the manor extended westward from the Hoe Bridge - Old Woking Road, but did not include Brookwood, the Hermitage or Bridley'.

Woking was part of the Forest of Windsor and subject to 'Forest Law'⁸. but according to Chris Howkins in his book 'Royal Tapestry', it does not seem to have been acted upon 'because the sheriff does not disappear from the records. He should do because he worked for Common Law. Forest Law was enforced by a royal bailiff.'

Having said that, it is clear that from time to time the forest law was strictly enforced. At various times the local landowners and barons sought to have the forest law lifted.

Woking remained in royal hands throughout Norman times. William II (Rufus) had apparently promised to reduce the amount of forest in Surrey, but as at least one historian noted, 'he never could keep a promise'. Rather than reduce it, he actually increased it, adding Woking, Brookwood, Guildford and part of Stoke (Guildford).

Henry I, Stephen and Henry II all inherited the manor of Woking, and at times may all have hunted in the area. It appears that there was no house here at that time for them to stay in however, so they either camped out in the forest, or returned to somewhere like Windsor.

Even after Richard I granted the manor out of royal hands in 1189, there was still probably little immediate need for a manor house here.

The main article in this section records the ownership of the various members of the Bassett family, starting with Alan who was the son of Thomas Basset of Headington in Oxfordshire, and brother of Gilbert and Thomas (who was also one of the knights accompanying King John at Runnymede in 1215).

When Alan died in 1233, Woking passed to his eldest son, Gilbert, who a couple of years earlier appears to have negotiated a truce between Henry III and Llewellyn of Wales.

He married Isabel, the daughter of William de Ferrers, the 5th Earl of Derby. She was the sister of Agatha, wife of Hugh Mortimer of

Chelmarsh and Eleanor, whose third husband was Roger de Leybourne.

Gilbert apparently was a member of the 'popular party', headed by his brother-in-law Richard, 3rd Earl Marshall, which brought him into conflict with Henry III, resulting in August 1233 in Gilbert (and his confederated nobles) being outlawed and orders being given for the destruction of the towns, castles and parks belonging to him (although it is not known whether Woking suffered at this time).

When the 3rd Earl Marshall died in May 1234, the King made peace with Gilbert, but as noted in the main article the relationship was up and down and although Gilbert was firmly on the kings side early in 1237, by Lent that year he was involved in a tournament held between barons of the north and the south (won by the south), which quickly turned into a real battle (four years before his illegal tournament at Guildford).

Gilbert and Isabel had a son, also called Gilbert, but he died in infancy (soon after his father), and as Gilbert's next brother (Warin) had died at the siege of Cardiff in 1232-33, the manor passed to his younger brother, Fulk Basset.

Fulk Basset had become the Dean of York in 1240, and in 1242 was made the Bishop of London.

Two years after inheriting Woking, he had to pay twenty shillings in 'aid' upon the marriage of Henry III's eldest daughter (Margaret) to the son of Alexander of Scotland and nine years after that, he had to find 40 shillings for the knighting of the King's eldest son!

We know that soon after Fulk inherited the manor, in August 1242, he entertained Henry III at Woking Park, and in September 1251 the king again enjoyed Fulk's company at Woking.

In 1257 Fulk (like his brothers before him) joined the king's Council, but withdrew the following year, possibly through ill-health and when he died a couple of years later (with no heirs of his own) the Manor of Woking passed to another brother, Phillip.

Phillip, like his brother, also added lands to the manor of Woking. Locke says that the Chancellor and the Chamberlain 'witnessed the deed by which he brought Mayford back into the manor' and that the lands of the Chamberlain 'figure even today in Chamberlands Bridge' (which no longer exists on the River Wey near Runtley Wood).

Phillip had married Elaine (the daughter of William Longespee, the Earl of Salisbury), but despite their having two daughters, they had no son and when Phillip died in 1271, the manor passed to his daughter - Aliva.

Aliva was then 26 years of age. She had married first Hugh le Despenser (the Justiciar, mentioned in the main article), but after he was killed at the Battle of Evesham in May 1265, she married Roger Bigod, the Earl of Norfolk.

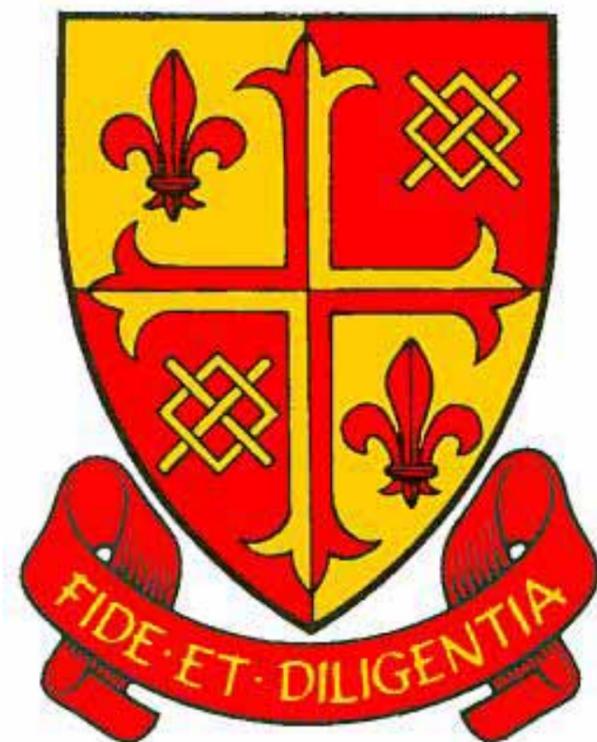
For some reason there appears to be confusion over Phillip's relationship to Despenser (although it seems quite clear to me) as in an article on the Basset Family produced for the Friends of Woking Palace in 2009, Philip Arnold states that 'Hugh Despenser was elected Justiciar of England in 1260 as was his son in law, Phillip Basset in May 1261', when clearly it was Hugh who was the son in law of Phillip and not the other way around!

It is in the survey carried out upon Phillip's death that we have the first written evidence for a manor house at Woking.

The house, however, was at that time considered worthless, although other parts of the manor brought the value of the holding up to £29.1.1 per annum.

When Aliva died in 1281, Roger Bigod tried to retain her estates by claiming that they had had a child, but 'a jury was empanelled to enquire - the birth of such issue, and whether male or female; in what house it was born; and in what church and at what time and in whose presence it was baptised'.

The result was that Roger Bigod withdrew his claim and Hugh le Despenser (the son of Aliva and Hugh le Despenser) inherited the manor of Woking. This Hugh le Despenser is generally known to historians as 'the elder Despenser' (more of which in a couple of weeks time).



When Woking was granted a coat of arms in the 1930's, the colours used were those of Alan Bassett.

William de Ferrers married first Sibyl, daughter and co-heir of William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke. They had seven children including Isabel, Agatha and Eleanor (mentioned above), but secondly he married Margaret, the daughter of Roger de Quincy, the 2nd Earl of Winchester by his first wife Helen of Galloway. Eleanor, therefore, became Margaret's step-daughter, but just to confuse you more Eleanor's second husband was Margaret's father, Roger de Quincy, making her both the step-mother and step-daughter of Margaret!

Eleanor's third husband, Roger de Leybourne, was Lord of the Manor of Byfleet.