

in the Libraries of some monasteries. For example in 1517 a copy of the early version of the Wycliffite New Testament was given to the brothers of the Abbey of Sion, this was without any evidence of heresy, and Henry VI presented one that he owned to the Carthusians of Sheen. The latter volume contains the non-heretical first chapter to the General Prologue.¹³ There is very little evidence for the general ownership of English Bibles between 1394 and 1526, as might have been expected had there been in existence a translation recognised by the Church, and which lay folk were encouraged to read. Much work by Miss Deanesley only brought to light 21 examples in the above period, and she examined, amongst other sources, 7578 wills.¹⁴ There were undoubtedly other copies, but in view of this evidence, not a great many.

Richard was thus not alone in reading the Bible in English in the 15th century, and he was certainly not necessarily a heretic to wish to do so. He was however certainly not conforming to the general actions but was acting independently, as he did at other times in his life.

It is hoped that in the September Ricardian an article describing the copy of the English New Testament owned by Richard will appear. This manuscript is interesting both because of its association with Richard and in its own right as an example of the earlier form of the translation.

13. Forshall and Madden, op. cit. I, p. lxxi, No. 156; p. xlvii, No. 60. The existence of this last copy disproves the suggestion in the National Portrait Gallery Exhibition Catalogue (p. 29) that Richard was the first English king to have read the Bible in his own tongue.

14. Deanesley, chapter XII, pp. 319-30, particularly pp. 332-7; Appendix 6. Apparently even Richard's mother, Cecily Duchess of York, did not own a copy (Deanesley, p. 343).

SIR EDMOND SHAA, Kt., P.C. 1427?-1488 LORD MAYOR OF LONDON

JOHN BLUNDEN-ELLIS

On 20th April 1488, Sir Edmond Shaa, Lord Mayor of London from October, 1482 to October, 1483, died. During his year of office, he was present and took part in one of the most dramatic and momentous periods in English history. His family, although obscure, seemed to have been fairly prosperous. Of Cheshire origin, the distinctive family name apparently originated in Williemus Schaw or del Shagh, Lord of Schaw, circa 1200. One ancestor of Edmond's, one Hugo de Shaw married a daughter of the Norman Earl of Chester Ranulph III, and gained "divers manors" into the bargain, probably in the neighbourhood of Middlewich in Cheshire.

Of the early life of Edmond Shaa nothing is known save that he was apparently early attracted to London to be apprenticed to a Robert Botteler, a goldsmith who flourished in the 1430s.

Edmond Shaa first enters the historical arena in February 1462 when Edward IV, freshly seated on the throne, appointed him engraver of the king's dies "*for all gold and silver monies.*"¹ From this point onwards his progress is almost meteoric for someone of, for London, insignificant birth. By the time he was married in 1466 he had become a fairly conspicuous figure in the Guild of Goldsmiths, having been elected Fourth Warden, and presumably fairly wealthy. The following year found him promoted to Third Warden and later in 1476, he was elected Prime Warden, the Guild's highest honour, having previously been elected Sheriff for London and Middlesex. Finally, on Monday, 13th October, 1482, the Feast of the Translation of St. Edward, Edmond Shaa was elected Lord Mayor of London being duly sworn in on 28th of the month and admitted before the Barons of the Exchequer. He was the two hundredth Mayor of London.

Shaa's Mayoralty was destined to cover one of the most turbulent and significant periods of English history. Even his period of office opened at an inopportune time as famine was prevailing in the city.

King Edward seems to have liked Shaa, since he gave him a great deal of coveted royal custom.² This favour may also have been linked to the fact that Shaa was Mayor of London, and London was Edward's city; London was loyal and he would perhaps need its help in the future as he had relied on London's loyalty in the past. The king purchased two hundred marks worth of gifts from Shaa for the Christmas festivities of 1482.³

It is at this period that Edmond Shaa's life becomes suddenly and irresistably interwoven with history. Edward IV died suddenly on 9th April, 1483 after catching a chill which, in his debauched condition, proved fatal. As the king lay naked on a marble slab at Westminster, messengers sped out from London bearing the news to Ludlow where the young King Edward V was esconced with his Wydeville uncle, Earl Rivers. In London, the Queen, together with the Marquess of Dorset manipulated the Council. Dorset, as a Marquess outranked all but the few dukes in the kingdom and consequently held great political potential. What followed is well known. The Wydeville power was built on sand; they were detested in London for what they were—a base-born family who had crept insidiously into the seats of Government.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the rightful Lord Protector was soon informed by Lord Hastings of the situation. Richard rapidly brought the potentially explosive situation under firm control, and accompanied by the florid Duke of Buckingham caught up with the king's entourage at Stony Stratford. With Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey arrested, Richard was firmly in the saddle.

Meanwhile, Lord Mayor Shaa and his sheriffs, White and Matthew, were arrayed in gowns of scarlet and together with the city's swordbearer and over four hundred members of the civic guilds rode out to Hornsey to welcome the king and Gloucester and conduct them to the city. The Wydevilles meantime, their support having crumbled away, ignominiously decamped, the Queen

1. Calendar of Pat. Rolls 1. Edw. IV, vide Appendix 3.

2. Styrpe, Book 5, p. 186.

3. Vide Appendix 3. 1 Edw. IV.

scuttling into sanctuary with a great horde of Royal Treasure to which she was not entitled.

During the momentous month of June, 1483, the Lord Protector must have felt the capital seething with treason and so Shaa was awarded the rank of Privy Councillor, making sure of the support of the city authorities.⁴ Also, Edmond's bother Ralph was made Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Stillington's confession to the Protector's council made it essential for Richard to accept the throne whether he wanted it or not. Doubt had been cast on the legitimacy of Edward V; what was more, he was a mere boy and no fit ruler at times such as these. England needed a strong king and captain, tried in battle, and of unquestioned flawless lineage. The Lords agreed, it was inevitable. Sir Edmond Shaa, Lord Mayor of London formally offered the crown of England to Richard Plantagenet at Baynard's Castle on 26th June, 1483; an event which is vividly portrayed in a painting by Sigismund Goetze.

Richard's coronation, as we know, was one of the most elaborate and spectacular in history. The Lord Mayor of London held high honour in his position in the procession that wove its way from Westminster Hall to the Abbey. The Mayor traditionally held the rank of earl, being one of the three to precede the newly created Duke of Norfolk holding the crown, immediately prior to Richard himself.

At the coronation banquet, Sir Edmond exercised his right as Mayor to act as the king's cupbearer during the ceremony. As well as being a high honour this was very lucrative as he was entitled to keep all the valuable cups and vessels so used, in much the same way as the king's Champion, Sir Robert Dymmock, was entitled to keep the cup from which he drank after delivering the traditional challenge.

Shaa seems to have been well liked by King Richard as he favoured the Mayor with many transactions as his brother had done before. On 1st December, 1483, the king sold Sir Edmond a great quantity of silver plate to the tune of £550 13s 4d, the king according to Stow, calling Shaa "*his merchant*." On the following 6th January the king, at a banquet in Whitehall, gave Sir Edmond

*"a Cuppe of Gold garneised with perle and precious stone . . . to th' use of the Cominaltie of the said Citie"*⁵

As a further mark of the trust with which King Richard held Shaa, the Mayor obtained early appointments on two royal commissions which meant in effect, that Sir Edmond was appointed a Judge of Assize. On 10th December, 1483, Sir Edmond along with certain others was appointed to investigate who might have committed treasons during the abortive and inept rebellion of the Duke of Buckingham and to confiscate the property of the guilty.

Sir Edmond, as well as being a distinguished goldsmith, also dealt successfully in precious stones and it was probably through Richard's special sanction that he received letters patent on 25th February, 1484 entitling him

4. Baddley, page 38.

5. Sharpe: London and the Kingdom I, p. 324.

“ to bring out of the Obeisance of France, and out of the Parts beyond the Sea, to this our Realm of Englande, al maner of Metal of Gold, and al maner Metal of Silver . . . and al maner of Pearls and precious stones, set or unset polished or unpolished . . . ”⁶

Perhaps it seems strange that Richard should have conferred so much trust on a man who had such intimate friends as Reginald Bray, an insatiable Lancastrian; however, Richard was wont to trust those whom few others would tolerate. In any case, Sir Edmond at least rose to the trust bestowed on him by Richard and served the king well. But with the coming of the new administration after Bosworth in August, 1485, Sir Edmond seemed equally at home and received a writ under the Privy Seal for the working of gold and silver for the new Tudor King.

6. Strype's Stow, Book 5, p. 186.



Argent, a chevron between three fusils ermines, a bordure gules. The Arms of Sir Edmond Shaa, now the full Arms of the Stockport Grammar School.

The use of an unbordered shield here would be incorrect, as Sir Edmond was not the eldest son of the family. The simplicity of the Arms with the absence of supporters or crest denotes its high antiquity.

The motto: "Vincit Qvi Patitvr" can be translated as "He who endures, conquers," an appropriate motto for a man such as Sir Edmond.

Before the onset of ill health, Sir Edmond spent the next few years attempting to entrench himself among the county gentry of Essex with not a little success. He made out his Will on 20th March, 1488, during his final illness. In his Will, he remembered with obvious affection the scenes of his early youth. Bequests were made to St. Mary's Church in Stockport where his father and mother lay buried, and gowns and money were distributed to two hundred poor persons within the parish. In his Will he also decreed the founding of the Stockport Grammar School to serve the surrounding area. Sir Edmond's personal prayer is preserved by the school to the present day when it is read traditionally by the Headmaster at the Founder's Day ceremony held in March:

"Omnipotens Deus qui conspicias nos omni virtute destituti: Interius exteriusque custodi: ut ab omnibus adversitatibus muniamur in corpore et a pravis cogitationibus munda mur in mente: Per Iesum Christum Dominum Nostrum Amen."

Sir Edmond died on 20th April, 1488, precisely one month after setting down his Will, and was buried at the church of St. Thomas of Acre in London, later destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. He was survived by his widow, Dame Julian Shaa, and his three children, Hugh his heir aged about twenty-two, and two daughters. Hugh died in 1491 without issue, and the lines of the two daughters eventually became extinct. And so the man who became Lord Mayor of London and offered the crown to Richard Plantaganet has no direct living descendants.

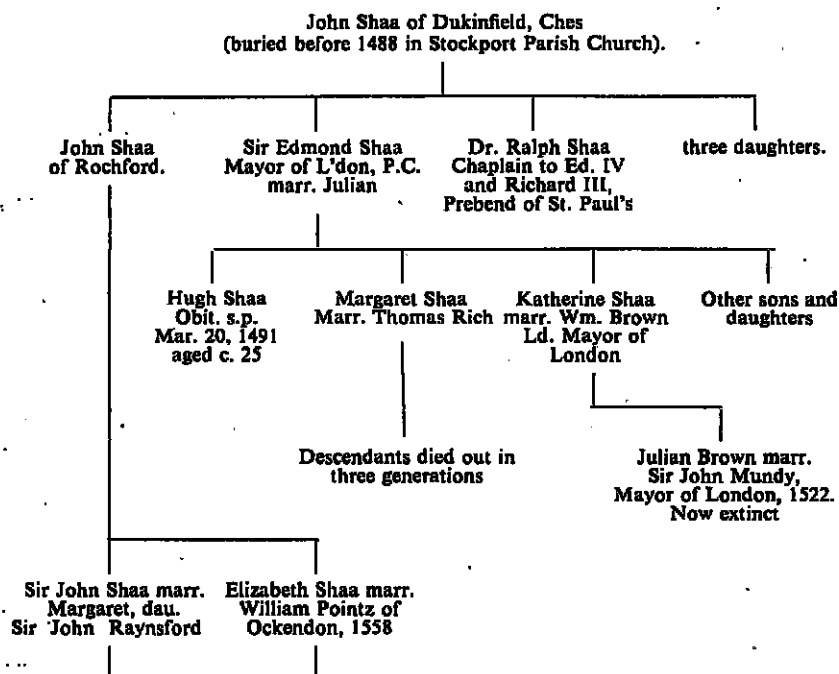
Having prospered in the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII illustrates that Sir Edmond was a man of tact and discretion and no mean politician, as such a pedigree necessitates. It is doubtful whether he had any direct loyalty to either Lancaster or York despite his Lancastrian connections and background. His philosophy for survival in those sad and tempestuous times probably echoed the words of Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, to remain loyal to the bearer of the crown, even if that bearer were a wooden post impaled in the ground. Sir Thomas More wrote that Shaa acted "*upon his own advancement . . .*" but even remembering that More's inaccurate, myopic and totally partisan view was wildly hostile to anyone who dealt amicably with Richard III, is it not true that More's criticism is levelled against most men who rise from humble origins to great eminence? And cannot the ultimate downfall of some such men, like the downfall of Richard III be attributed to the most destructive human emotion of jealousy?

7. Stockport G.S. Founder's Day programme.

A more comprehensive life of Sir Edmond Shaa may be found in "The History of Stockport Grammar School" by Benjamin Varley. (Manchester University Press).

PEDIGREE OF SIR EDMOND SHAA

There is no published pedigree of Sir Edmond Shaa, but a pedigree of Sir John Shaa may be found in the Visitations of Essex and is included in Varley's "History of Stockport Grammar School" from which this below is copied.



Contributions for the September, 1974, issue of the magazine should be sent to the Editor by 15th July, 1974. All material **MUST** be typed on one side only. The Editor reserves the right to cut or alter and if necessary, to condense contributions at his discretion without reference to contributors.