

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the De Vere Estates, 1462-85

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Younger sons could be something of a problem for the nobility. While they gave dynastic security to the male line of the family, suitable endowment and occupation might present difficulties. Even a magnate as wealthy as Richard, Duke of York, would have found it difficult to endow three younger sons with enough lands to enable them to become prosperous nobles in their own right, and wealthy heiresses were not that abundant in late medieval England. As the youngest son Richard might indeed have been destined for the priesthood, had his father not claimed the throne. In this respect, as in many others, Richard was fortunate that his eldest brother became king in 1461, as it was then possible for him to be lavishly endowed with lands and title, and upholding his brother's claim to the throne became an eminently suitable role for Richard, one which he performed with some distinction until Edward's death in 1483.

Through his brother's patronage, and his own marriage to Anne Neville, Richard (along with his brother George of Clarence), became one of the two richest noblemen in England. Clarence's death in 1478 tipped the balance further in Richard's favour and made him by some distance the wealthiest magnate in England. This article is concerned with one aspect of Richard's endowment with suitable lands to support his ducal rank. It seeks to examine Richard as a landlord in a region peripheral to his landed interests, investigates his use of some of his more far-flung possessions, and will consider how his southern dominions fitted into the pattern of his northern hegemony during the latter stages of Edward IV's reign.

In February 1462 John de Vere, twelfth Earl of Oxford (1408-62), and his eldest son, Aubrey, were executed at the Tower for treason. The background to this episode remains obscure, but appears to have been due to treasonable correspondence with Queen Margaret, possibly with the aim of facilitating a Lancastrian landing on the Essex coast.¹ In August 1462 Edward IV settled the forfeited estates of John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, on his youngest brother, only to strip him of them again within a year, as a decision was made to allow the earl's second son to recover his family's estates and title. The estates were then granted, on 19 July 1463, during the minority of John de Vere, thirteenth

¹ For an attempt to provide some explanation for this episode see the author's 'The de Vere earls of Oxford, 1400-1513', unpublished Oxford D.Phil. 2004, pp. 141-51.

Earl of Oxford (1442-1513) to George Neville, then bishop of Exeter. De Vere was allowed to regain his estates, five months after his twenty-first birthday, on 18 January 1464.² Oxford's activities during the following decade have been the subject of much scholarship, and need little elucidation here, though suffice it to say that despite Oxford's restoration to the earldom, and various favours from the king to attempt to reconcile him to the new regime, he could in no way forgive Edward for the execution of his father and brother.³ Connected with Warwick by marriage, he joined his brother-in-law and Clarence against Edward IV, and acted with them throughout the sustained political crisis of 1469-71, which culminated in the Lancastrian defeat at Barnet. De Vere's earldom and estates were forfeit, and he was attainted in the parliament of 1472-75.⁴ He refused to submit to Edward IV after Barnet, becoming involved in attacks on Calais in April 1472 and in 1473 made an abortive landing on the Essex coast. Fleeing quickly when faced by the onset of the earl of Essex and Lord Dinham, he then seized St Michael's Mount on the Cornish coast. After a siege of a few weeks, and faced by mutiny among his eighty followers, he surrendered on condition his life was spared, and spent the next twelve years in prison in Hammes castle. Richard of Gloucester, on 4 December 1471, was once more granted most of de Vere's estates.⁵ He also acquired, a couple of years later, in circumstances that were perhaps controversial at the time, and have certainly become so subsequently, the estates of Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, widow of the twelfth earl, and a substantial heiress in her own right.⁶

What first must be established is which estates the duke held and for how long. This is an unexpectedly complicated task. At no stage did he hold all the

² *CPR 1461-67*, pp. 197, 287, 298. Why five months elapsed is unclear, but might, in the absence of other evidence provide a date for de Vere's marriage to Margaret Neville, sister of the Kingmaker, a marriage which, as Michael Hicks has plausibly argued, 'probably helped [him] to recover his family earldom of Oxford'; M.A. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, Oxford 1998, p. 234.

³ For Oxford's career up to 1485, see in particular *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward IV*, by John Warkworth, ed. J.O. Halliwell, Camden Society, old series, vol. 10 (1834), pp. 25-27; C.L. Scofield, 'The early life of John de Vere, earl of Oxford', *EHR*, vol. 34 (1914), pp. 237-42; Ross, 'The de Vere earls of Oxford', pp. 154-75.

⁴ *Rotuli Parliamentorum* (hereafter *Rot. Parl.*), 6 vols, London 1767-77, vol. 6, pp. 144-45, 176-77. He was indicted of treason in 1472: The National Archives (hereafter TNA), KB9/41/38.

⁵ *CPR 1467-77*, p. 297.

⁶ A. Crawford, 'Victims of attainder; the Howard and de Vere women in the late fifteenth century' in K. Bate and M. Barber, eds., *Medieval Women in Southern England, Reading Medieval Studies*, vol. 15 (1989), pp. 67-69; M.A. Hicks 'The last days of Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford' in his *Richard III and his Rivals*, London 1991, pp. 297-316; C.D. Ross, *Richard III*, London 1981, pp. 31, 130.

de Vere lands, and his ownership of most was surprisingly fluid. The landed estates of the de Vere line, which Richard was granted in 1462, comprised forty-seven manors in ten counties, though most lay in Essex and Suffolk.⁷ This grant shows a considerable degree of confusion over the de Vere estates, and in particular those which the king had the right to dispose of. For example the manors of Calverton, Badlesmere, Hedingham Vaux, Downham and Kensington were all granted in August 1462 to Gloucester, but these estates were part of the jointure of Anne Stafford (died 1472), widow of Aubrey de Vere, who after her husband's execution, had petitioned for ratification of her right to these manors, a petition that Edward IV granted on 1 March 1462.⁸ Edward thus should not have granted these estates to Gloucester, nor did the de Veres have any right to the Cornish manors of Argalles, Treowynen and Burngallow, which had been a life holding of Alice Sergeaux, (d. 1452), wife of Richard, eleventh Earl of Oxford (d.1417), as her dower from her first marriage to Guy St Aubyn. Milton and Paston in Northamptonshire had been granted to Robert de Vere, brother of the twelfth earl in the 1430s, and had been subsequently sold to the de la Pole family, and once more the crown had no right to grant these manors to Gloucester.⁹ The inclusion of these manors, as well as one or two others, suggest the use of out of date documents, such as the inquisition post mortem of the eleventh earl in 1417 (the twelfth earl's inquisition post mortem was not ordered until 1464), rather than more up to date de Vere ones, and certainly the grant of 1462 contained, in addition to the examples of estates to which the crown had no right, a number of factual errors.

The grant of 1471 was of about the same size in terms of number of manors, but showed some changes from the earlier grant in the estates conveyed,

⁷ *CPR 1461-7*, p. 197. The estates were the castles, manors and lordships of Chipping Norton (one third of the manor) in Oxfordshire, Saxton, Castle Campes, Great Abington and Swaffham Bulbeck in Cambridgeshire, Poldue, Eathorn, Penhale, Tremodret, Trevelyn, Argalles, Trewynyan and Droungolou in Cornwall, Lavenham Overhall, Lavenham Netherhall, Aldham, Preston, Mendham and Cockfield in Suffolk, Castle Hedingham, Little Yeldham, Hedingham Vaux, Helions Bumpstead, Great Canfield, Stanstead Mountfichet, Steeple Bumpstead, Earls Colne, Crepping, Great Bentley, Cruswiche in Weeley, Fingrith, Doddinghurst, Prayors, Bourhall and Greyes (the latter three in Sible Hedingham), Easton Hall, Tilbury-iuxta-Clare, Beaumont, Downham and Wateshurst in Essex, along with the office of king's forester in Essex, Kensington and Wateshurst in Middlesex, Calverton in Buckinghamshire, Milton and Paston in Northamptonshire, Market Overton in Rutland and Fleet and Badlesmere in Kent.

⁸ *CPR 1461-7*, p. 76. Another error may have occurred here, as a further manor held by Anne, Wigston Magna in Leicestershire, appears to have been missed from the grant to Gloucester. It was excluded from the later grant to Richard in 1475 of Anne's lands, being given to Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers: *CPR 1467-77*, p. 565.

⁹ Northamptonshire Record Office, FitzWilliam (Milton) Charters 2289; TNA, CP25/1/179/94, no. 88; VCH, *Northamptonshire*, 4 vols., London, 1902-37, vol. 2, p. 513.

and it also eliminated the errors of the first allocation in 1462.¹⁰ At some point before 21 August 1475 this grant must have been surrendered, as on that date a fresh grant of de Vere estates, though fewer in number, thirty-five manors compared to forty-one, was granted to Gloucester.¹¹ This was presumably by prior arrangements, and was part of a general reorganisation of the duke's holdings. As Rosemary Horrox has argued, the diminution of the duke's East Anglian estates was a recognition of the fact that the north had now emerged as his main sphere of interest. The manors resumed by the king included the most valuable of the de Vere estates – Castle Hedingham, which was the old seat of the earldom, Earls Colne, Great Canfield, Great Bentley, and almost all of the Suffolk manors, including the wealthy lordship of Lavenham.

The estates in question were not negligible. The de Veres' reputation in the fifteenth century as one of the poorest English noble families in terms of their income is undeserved, and their estates not only provided a substantial income, but were also so concentrated in Essex and East Anglia that they allowed the earls, and had he so wished, the duke, the opportunity of considerable political influence in the region. In terms of actual income, John, twelfth Earl of Oxford would have enjoyed an income of a little under £2,000 *per annum*, perhaps £1,300 a year in estates inherited from his father, and £600 *per annum* from the estates of his wife, Elizabeth Howard. Due to the paucity of estate documents

¹⁰ *CPR 1467-77*, p. 297. The estates granted were as above, but not including Tremodret, Trevelyn, Argalles, Trewynyan and Droungolou in Cornwall, Calverton in Buckinghamshire, Badlesmere in Kent, Kensington in Middlesex, Market Overton in Rutland (recently lost by the de Vere family in a law suit, in Trinity term 1469, to Sir John Say and Thomas Prowet: TNA, CP40/832, rots. 345-47), or Tilbury in Essex, (assuming that 'Sible Hedingham' in 1471 covered the manors of Prayors, Greyes, Bourhall and Wateshurst, all in Sible Hedingham, and granted in 1461). It did include Langdon in Essex, Dullingham and Hinxton in Cambridgeshire, Great Hormead in Hertfordshire, Tattingstone in Suffolk (recently purchased by the 13th earl; *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, 6 vols, London 1904, vol. 5, p. 5; TNA, PCC, PROB 11/17, f. 89), Chesham and Aston Sandford in Buckinghamshire, and Roseneythorn and Predanneck in Cornwall.

¹¹ *CPR 1467-77*, p. 560. The estates granted were Sible Hedingham (presumably including the four separate manors of the 1461 grant, Vaux being separately listed here), Langdon, Doddinghurst, Fingrith, Cruswiche, Beaumont, Little Yeldham, Steeple Bumpstead, Helions Bumpstead, Easton Hall, Crepping, Vaux and Bures Giffard, all Essex, Great Abington, Saxton, Campes and Hinxton in Cambridgeshire, Crepping in Suffolk (purchased by the thirteenth earl between 1464 and 1471), Badlesmere in Kent, Chesham, Aston Sandford, Whichchurch and Calverton in Buckinghamshire, Kensington and Knotting Barnes in Middlesex (the latter usually described at this period as parcel of the manor of Kensington), Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire and Poldue, Eathorne, Penhale, Roseneythorn and Predanneck in Cornwall. This grant included the five manors held until her death in 1472, by Anne, widow of Sir Aubrey de Vere, which had been erroneously granted to Gloucester in 1462.

of both the de Veres and Gloucester in the second half of the fifteenth century, it is a little difficult to put exact figures on the annual value of the estates of the de Vere patrimony which Richard was granted by his brother, though something a little in excess of £1,000 *per annum* would probably be close to the mark.¹² In 1474, and through his own initiative, rather than through his brother's generosity, Richard acquired all the estates of Elizabeth Howard, Countess of Oxford, which due to the survival of two valors relating to these estates, one dated 1437-38, the other between 1485-1513 can be shown to have been worth some £600 *per annum*.¹³ While Richard never acquired all of the de Vere estates, those he held between 1471 and 1475 would probably have annually been worth about £1,600 *per annum*, with the figure dropping somewhat after the redistribution of 1475. Nonetheless this was a very substantial figure, which would have been of great importance to Gloucester.

The survival of a number of accounts relating to Richard's administration of these estates allows a limited investigation of his role as an absentee landlord of these estates. The most interesting of these accounts, an expense account of 1476-77, has already been published, but other aspects of Gloucester's role as landlord can be glimpsed in these documents.¹⁴ In the first instance, the estates were quite heavily burdened by annuities (appendix 1). The most substantial, at forty marks a year, went to Sir Robert Chamberlain, knight of the body to Edward IV, and later to Richard as king, recently MP for Suffolk, and an important local landowner.¹⁵ In addition there were fees to William Hopton, esquire, at £20,¹⁶ and to three lawyers, Morgan Kidwelly (£10

¹² The most reliable governmental figures are from the 1417 inquisition *post mortem* of Richard, 11th earl of Oxford; *CIPM*, vol. 20, pp. 201-7. Of the Inquisition *post mortem* of John, 12th Earl of Oxford, only returns from three counties survive, while an inquisition in 1475, after the 13th earl's attainder, valued the estates at some £659, a considerable underestimate. The earl's Inquisition *post mortem* in 1513 values these lands at £809 16s., not including some five manors for which no values are given; TNA, C140/10/23; C142/38, nos. 2, 31, 53, 56, 68, 83, 88, 118, 123, 130; E150/299/8; *Cal. Inq. Misc.*, 1422-85, pp. 230-34. Even the most reliable government figures, however, are likely to underestimate actual value by a third or more. Due to the accounting system of the earl's administration, the four surviving receiver-general's accounts of the 15th-century de Veres (1434-5, 1437-8, 1441-2, 1488-9) are in some ways less reliable than governmental inquisitions for establishing net annual income from manors; Rainham Hall, Attic box marked Miscellaneous; British Library, Add. Ch. 40009 a, b; Essex Record Office, D/DP_r 138, 139.

¹³ Rainham Hall, Box 24; Norfolk Record Office, ms. 1615.

¹⁴ R. Horrox and A. Sutton, 'Some Expenses of Richard Duke of Gloucester, 1475-7', *The Ricardian*, vol. 6 (1983), pp. 266-68.

¹⁵ J.C. Wedgwood, *The History of Parliament 1439-1509*, 2 vols, London 1936-8, vol. 2, pp. 170-71; R. Horrox, *Richard III: A Study in Service*, Cambridge 1989, pp. 77, 192n.

¹⁶ Hopton was one of Richard's feoffees in his grant of Foulmere to Queen's College,

p.a.),¹⁷ William Jenney (£2 *p.a.*)¹⁸ and John Sulyard (£2 *p.a.*).¹⁹ In addition to this, there were the usual ordinary administrative payments to officials, including Richard Pole,²⁰ his receiver, and John Luthyngton, his auditor. It is interesting, however, that Richard did not use the estates to build an affinity in the region. As Rosemary Horrox has argued, the most obvious basis for any affinity that might have established were the old de Vere connections. This, however, did not happen.²¹ Although he granted or confirmed annuities to a few former de Vere servants, he does not appear to have maintained links with those members of the wider de Vere affinity who had escaped the catastrophe at Barnet, a group of whom the Pastons are the best known, but by no means the only example. The annuities he did allow fell to a disparate group of men with whom he had had prior dealings. One possible explanation for Gloucester's failure to seek to more actively to build an affinity may lie in his position as an absentee landlord. Although Gloucester was a figure of national importance and could thus exert some influence from a distance, even he was unable to provide the 'hands-on' local lordship that all affinities needed to become a coherent group, as he was, conversely, able to do in the north.

Even though the estates were more heavily burdened with lawyers' annuities and fees than some others, the total outlay for these payments accounted for less than twenty per cent of the cash they might raise. What other use, then, did Gloucester make of these estates? As Richard Pole's account of 1476-77 makes clear, perhaps the primary purpose of the manorial revenue was to provide payment for purchases made on credit. Of the £399 generated by the estates in the receivership of Pole, £296 was spent in payments to London tradesmen. This may or may not have covered all the ducal expenses this year on what were in the main luxury items, but almost all the spare cash from the de Vere lands after £75 of fees and annuities were deducted went on this pur-

Cambridge, and in a grant to Middleham college: *CPR 1476-85*, p. 34; W. Atthill, *Documents Relating to the Foundation and Antiquities of the Collegiate Church of Middleham in the County of York*, Camden Society, vol. 38 (1847), pp. 84-85, and see below, p. 5; Horrox, *Richard III*, pp. 77-78. He died in 1483.

¹⁷ Kidwelly was in 1471 attorney-general to Richard, Duke of Gloucester: *CPR 1467-77*, p. 275. He was granted 6 manors in Dorset in tail male in 1484, for his good service against the rebels: *CPR 1476-85*, p. 453. See also Horrox, *Richard III*, p. 86.

¹⁸ Jenney (1415-83), serjeant-at-law 1463-81, and justice of king's bench, 1481-3, was knighted the day before Richard's coronation: Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, vol. 2, pp. 500-1.

¹⁹ Sulyard, MP for Hindon in 1472-5, was tutor to Edward Prince of Wales between 1473-83, serjeant-at-law 1478-84, and was promoted to justice of king's bench by Richard in 1484: Wedgwood, vol. 2, pp. 827-28; *CPR 1467-77*, p. 366.

²⁰ See Horrox, *Richard III*, pp. 85-86.

²¹ Horrox, *Richard III*, pp. 76-80.

pose.²² The estates represented an administrative convenience, and presumably saved a ducal official the ride from Middleham to London for the purpose. Further evidence of the role of the de Vere lands as an ready and convenient source of cash for ducal officials in the south can also be seen in Gloucester herald's expenses of £9 being assigned in two payments from the same source in 1481.²³

What is perhaps most surprising is that despite the diminished numbers of manors after the resumption of 1475, and the administrative usefulness of the estates for the payment of annuitants and London tradesmen, Gloucester began to grant away many of the manors. The process was more obvious after he became king, as he used the estates to reward East Anglian supporters, and indeed to encourage men to remain loyal, but was noticeable before 1483. One reason is immediately obvious – none of the estates of the ancient de Vere patrimony were alienated, as Gloucester had a secure enough title in a royal grant, whereby only his brother could deprive him of them. Yet, a number of estates from Elizabeth Howard's inheritance were alienated, and it might be that these lands were so used, because Gloucester's title to them was not felt to be as secure.

Religious institutions were the primary beneficiaries of Gloucester's generosity with the former Howard lands. In 1477, Gloucester's feoffees had granted the manor of Foulmere in Cambridgeshire, formerly held by Countess Elizabeth to Queens' College, Cambridge, in frank almain, to pray for the good estate of the king, the queen, Gloucester, his wife and son, and interestingly for the souls of John, twelfth Earl of Oxford and Elizabeth his consort.²⁴ Three more valuable manors, formerly held by Countess Elizabeth, were granted to that symbol of Yorkist dynasticism, St George's chapel, Windsor. In two little known deeds Gloucester, Sir John Huddleston, William Hopton and Thomas Barrow, granted the manors of Knapton (Norfolk), Chelsworth (Suffolk), and Bentfeldbury (Essex) to the dean and canons of Windsor, on 4 February 1480.²⁵ An indenture further elaborated on the terms of the grant, which were to solemnly celebrate the obits of the 'most excellent prince and lord, Richard, Duke of York, father of the said duke of Gloucester', on the penultimate day of December, and to pray for the good state of the duke of Gloucester and Anne his wife every day, and to provide for the obit of the duke, when

²² Horrox and Sutton, 'Some expenses of Richard Duke of Gloucester', pp. 266-68.

²³ See appendix 1.

²⁴ CPR 1476-85, p. 34; P.W. Hammond and A.F. Sutton, *Richard III: The Road to Bosworth Field*, London, 1985, p. 68.

²⁵ St George's Chapel, Dean and Canons of Windsor, MS XI P.12. The deed was witnessed by Sir Henry Wentworth, Robert Clere, Philip Bothe, Thomas Cotton and John Brampton, esquires, and *multis aliis*.

he should die.²⁶ He also endowed his new collegiate foundation of Middleham with at least two further manors, formerly held by the countess, Wigenhall and Fersfield, both Norfolk, worth annually £73.²⁷ Michael Hicks has suggested that the countess' remaining manors may have gone to Richard's other foundation at Barnard Castle College, which is very plausible, but without surviving documents relating to the college, cannot be verified.²⁸ In addition the duke also sold Wivenhoe to John, Lord Howard in 1480 for the substantial sum of 1,100 marks.²⁹

The dispersal of lands on such a considerable scale raises questions over Richard's financial position. Michael Hicks has commented

that when account is taken of properties resumed by the king, others lost for unrecorded reasons and the large number alienated in mortmain, it is clear that the duke lost far more than he bought, and that both the number of his estates and his income from them must have been declining.³⁰

The use of de Vere estates fit the pattern outlined by Professor Hicks very well. Of the sixty-two former Oxfordian manors held by Richard in 1473 (thirty-four granted by the king, and twenty-eight acquired from the countess), by 1483 many had been resumed, and most of the countess' estates dispersed, especially the more valuable lands among both the de Vere patrimony and the former Howard estates. Few landowners could afford to lose lands worth nearly £1,000 *per annum*, and whether Richard, with important responsibilities

²⁶ St George's Chapel, Dean and Canons of Windsor, MS XI P.11. The obits were held as arranged above in 1482 and 1483; XV.34.59; XV.34.60.

²⁷ *British Library Harleian Manuscript 433*, ed. R Horrox and P.W. Hammond, 4 vols., Upminster and London, 1979-83, vol. 3, p. 143; Athill, *Documents Relating to Middleham*, p. 15. For the foundation see also J. Raine, 'The statutes ordained by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, for the college of Middleham dated July 4, 18 Edward IV (1478)', *Archaeological Journal*, vol. 14 (1857), pp. 160-70. Michael Hicks and Rosemary Horrox note another grant of de Vere manors to Middleham. According to the former, the College was granted 6 manors in 1480, the latter does not specify a date. Both cite North Yorkshire County Record Office, ZRC/17503: Hicks, 'Richard III as duke of Gloucester', in his *Richard III and his Rivals*, p. 267; Horrox, *Richard III*, p. 79. This document is, however, an enfeoffment of all of the countess's manors to Sir John Pilkington, Sir John Hudilston, William Hopton and Thomas Barrow on 19 February 1474, and is not directly connected to Middleham college, a fact emphasised by a note in an early modern hand on the dorse which states 'This in no respect concerns the Deanery of Middleham - never being mentioned in it.' I have been unable to find a grant matching that described by Hicks and Horrox.

²⁸ Hicks, 'Richard III as duke of Gloucester', p. 267n.

²⁹ *CCR 1476-85*, p. 216; *The Household Books of John, Duke of Norfolk, 1462-71, 1481-3*, ed. A. Crawford, Stroud 1992, pt. 2, p. 18.

³⁰ Hicks, 'Richard III as duke of Gloucester', p. 271.

in the North, and substantial associated expenses, could afford this, is open to question.³¹

As king, Richard could not only afford to be even more generous with grants of lands from the de Vere estates, but it was imperative that he should do so, to attempt to convince the more sceptical political society in the south of England to support his tenure of the throne in the face of external threats. Perhaps his most important southern supporter was John Howard and to him went the greatest rewards. The dukedom of Norfolk aside, in 1483 he granted twenty former de Vere manors in tail male.³² In 1484 nine more de Vere manors were granted to Sir Robert Percy, controller of the Royal household, in tail male; seven, including Castle Hedingham, were assigned to Sir Thomas Montgomery for life; John Grey of Wilton received the two Buckinghamshire manors of Chesham and Whitchurch; Hauxton in Cambridgeshire was alienated to a yeoman of the crown, John Abell; Walter Chanderell was granted Aston Sandford in Buckinghamshire, and Calverton in the same county went to Thomas Bryan, chief justice.³³ This constituted most of the estates still in his hands, as well as a number that had returned to him when he took the crown.

In little over a decade, Richard, as duke and king, and King Edward, had dispersed and scattered almost the entire landed estate of the oldest earldom in England. Yet by the autumn of 1485 every single grant had been reversed with Richard's defeat at Bosworth, and the return of John de Vere. The earl, who had been imprisoned in Hammes castle since his surrender at St. Michael's Mount had, with the help of his gaoler, James Blount, escaped to Henry Tudor, shortly before the latter's invasion of England, and de Vere had led the Tudor vanguard at Bosworth. He went on to play a key role in Henry VII's regime, fighting for him at Stoke in 1487, Blackheath in 1497, and in the invasion of France in 1492, and was also one of the few nobles that Henry trusted completely. He died in 1513 at the age of seventy-one, leaving over £8,000 in good, cash and debts owed to him to be disposed of by his trustees.³⁴

Many of the recipients of the earl's lands in the period of his exile had of-

³¹ For a discussion of Richard's financial position overall, see Hicks, 'Richard III as duke of Gloucester', pp. 247-81; Ross, *Richard III*, pp. 24-26

³² Bumpstead Helion, Great Canfield, Stanstead Mountfichet, Crepping, Great Bentley, Cruswich in Weeley, Fingrith, Doddinghurst, Hedingham Vaux, Easton Hall, Beaumont, Langdon (all Essex), Swaffham, Dullingham, Hinxton (Cams.), Badlesmere (Kent), Poldue, Eathorn, Penhale, Predanneck and Roseneython (Cornwall): *CPR 1476-85*, pp. 359, 497; Ross, *Richard III*, p. 165. For an account of most of these manors and other Howard estates see BL, Add.Ch. 16559, published in *Household Books of John, Duke of Norfolk*, pp. xlvi-iv.

³³ *CPR 1476-85*, pp. 430, 434, 452, 514; *Harkian Manuscript 433*, vol. 3, pp. 145-46.

³⁴ 'The last testament and inventory of John de Veer, thirteenth earl of Oxford', ed. W.H. St John Hope, *Archaeologia*, vol. 66 (1914-15), pp. 310-348.

fered them back to the earl within a few days of Bosworth, as arriving in London with the new king de Vere was importuned with:

grete suyt and labour...for matyers concernyng hym sylf...ffor than such personys as had occupyed his landys by gyfft of kyng Edward or by purchas were ffayn to restore it wyth alle such proffytis, as they hadd parcevyved of the said landys by alle the tyme of his absence.³⁵

This must have been gratifying for the earl, and the situation was clarified when at Henry VII's first parliament the earl's attainder was reversed and he was restored to all the estates that he had held in 1471, together with those of his mother, who had died in 1473.³⁶ Some recipients, of course, were less enthusiastic about returning the estates. The most persistent in clinging onto a grant were the dean and canons of Windsor. While the reversal of de Vere's attainder in the parliament of 1485 entitled him to recover all the lands of his parents, there was a blanket exemption to all proceedings in the parliament given to a number of religious institutions including St George's. Whether this went unnoticed for a time, or more likely St George's chose not to challenge one of Henry VII's most important and influential supporters, de Vere had actual possession of the estates for the rest of his life. However, at some point the earl or his council must have realised the shaky legal ground on which he held these estates, as in the parliament of 1495, he received confirmation of his title to the estates held by his mother, and in proving his title, brought a number of witnesses to prove what he described as the malicious and unlawful way that Gloucester had acquired the estates from his mother. These accounts have provided considerable ammunition for Gloucester's critics, and Michael Hicks, among others, has argued that so much of them 'can be verified that the remainder should be credited'.³⁷ This parliamentary act should have ended the matter, but shortly after the earl's death in 1513 St George's tried again. They petitioned the king claiming that Gloucester had bought the estates from Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, and had then sold them to the king for £1,000,

³⁵ *The Great Chronicle of London*, eds. A.H. Thomas, and I.D. Thornley, London 1938, p. 239.

³⁶ *Rot. Parl.*, vol. 6, pp. 281-83.

³⁷ *Rot. Parl.*, vol. 6, pp. 473-74; Hicks, 'Last Days of Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford', p. 301. See also the discussion of Oxford's motives for the particular timing of this move, and the testimony of the witnesses he called, in the latter, pp. 297-316. It may well be, however, that it was the specifics of the potential problem over the manors previously granted to St. George's that dictated the timing of this act, rather than the political restoration of Thomas Howard between 1489 and 1495 (with whom Oxford was on very good terms throughout Henry VII's reign), which Michael Hicks posits as one of the fundamental reasons for Oxford's actions.

who granted them to the college in fee simple, until the earl of Oxford wrongly regained the estates under colour of his parliamentary restitution. They then went on to allege that the 'earl not long before his decease at the suit of the suppliants [St George's] called to memory his wrongful occupation of the said manors in avoiding of the danger to his soul appointed that his counsel and the suppliants' counsel should have met this present term in London to have had some communication and some good direction to be had in that matter'.³⁸

This account raises some very interesting questions, but is in part inaccurate, and undoubtedly deliberately so. It seems highly unlikely that 'not long' before his decease the earl was considering that the manors in question should go back to St George's, as just seven months before his death, in September 1512, he was making careful arrangements in his will about the use of the manors. Knapton and Chellesworth were to be held by a group of feoffees, headed by Sir Edward Howard and Sir William Waldegrave, to the use of the earl's nephew and heir and his wife, Anne Howard, for term of their lives, and then to descend to their lawful heirs.³⁹ Bentfeldbury in Essex, along with six other manors, was in the hands of a number of feoffees, who were seised for the term of twenty years to use the profits for the performance of the earl's will. This makes it highly unlikely the earl was considering returning the manors to St George's.⁴⁰ Secondly there was nothing 'wrongful' in the occupation of the manors. On the contrary this was done by authority of two acts of parliament. Lastly, what do we make of the claim of the sale to King Edward for £1,000 of these manors, and that it was he who granted the estates to St George's, when we have clear documentary evidence that it was Gloucester, along with his feoffees, who granted the manors, for the obits of his father and the good of his soul, with no suggestion of any money changing hands? On the available evidence this would suggest that the dean and canons in this petition were guilty of downright falsehood in their efforts to regain possession of the estates. Nonetheless the petition was partially successful, as they were granted the first part of their petition, the possession of the estates during the minority of the earl's nephew and heir, though the second part, the king's 'favour for the preservation of their possession of the manors and for the obtaining of their right and title against the said now earl' was not, as the manors descended to the fourteenth earl of Oxford and his heirs.

³⁸ The petition is TNA, C82/398, and the patent C66/620, m. 24; both are summarised in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J.S. Brewer, R.H. Brodie and J. Gairdner, 23 vols in 38, London 1862-1932, vol. 1, pt. ii, no. 2482(1).

³⁹ TNA, PROB 11/17, ff. 87v-88. The marriage between the earl's nephew and Anne, daughter of Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey had taken place shortly before the will was made. There were a series of indentures made between the two earls as to the lands John and Anne were to hold in jointure.

⁴⁰ TNA, PROB 11/17, f. 88v.

The story of the de Vere estates between 1471 and 1485 sheds some light on Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Since it was practical to use the estates when in his hands to pay London tradesmen and southern annuitants, it may well be that it was Richard's officials that found such southern estates administratively convenient. Such matters were however of secondary importance to Richard, and it is in the dispersal of the estates that we see Gloucester's personal decisions, and his changing priorities as duke of Gloucester and then king of England

Appendix One: Annuities, Fees and Expenses paid by Gloucester, Charged on the Former De Vere Estates.

TNA, DL29/637/10360A (account of Richard Pole, receiver, Michaelmas 1476 – Michaelmas 1477, for 25 manors in Essex, Kent, Cambs., Bucks., Oxon., Middlesex, and Suffolk).

Fee of Richard Pole, receiver – £13 6s. 8d.

Expenses of the same – £8

Fee of Robert Chamberleyn, knight, senior and forester in Essex, Cambridge-shire, Norfolk and Suffolk, at 40 marks p.a.

Fee of John Luthyngton, auditor, £20

Fee of John Sulyard, retained with the lord for counsel, by letters patent of the lord – 40s. p.a.

Fee of Morgan Kidwelly, retained with the lord for counsel at £10 p.a. – £20

Fee of Katherine Haute at 100s. p.a., conceded to her for life by letters patent of the said duke – 100s.

TNA, DL29/295/4848

(Annuities from an account of some of the countess's former manors, and other estates in East Anglia, 1480-1).

m. 1: William Hopton, esq., for life by letters patent of the duke of Gloucester (date not given), on the manor of Blaxhall, £20 p.a.

William Jenney, serjeant at law, for life, by letters patent of the duke (no date given), 40s. p.a.

John Vavasour, receiver of the duke, given from the proceeds of his office £9 14s. 8d.

m. 2: John Honyngton and Elizabeth his wife, recently a servant of Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, £4 13s. 4d., p.a. confirmed by the duke, from issues of Great Oakley, Essex.

Thomas Hopton, 40s. paid of 60s. p.a., conceded by the duke for life, from the issues of Great Oakley.

- m. 2d. James Arblaster (100s. p.a.), John Power (66s. 8d. p.a. and Elizabeth Wynchyham (40s. p.a.), from manor of Little Oakley, granted by Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, and confirmed by the duke.
- m. 3: William Hopton, esq., senior, 15s. p.a., by letters patent of the duke, dated 6 February 1473, from the issues of East Bergholt.
- m. 3d.: Robert Cok, 30s. p.a. for life, conceded by said duke.
Richard Langley, a life annuity of 60s. 8d., conceded by Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford for life, and confirmed by said duke.

TNA, DL29/430/6910

(Fees, expenses and annuities from an account of 18 former de Vere manors in Essex, Kent, Buckinghamshire and Middlesex, 1480-1).

To Gloucester herald for expenses going to Calais, 100s. from manor of Badlesmere, Kent, granted under signet and sign manual at Middleham, 18 July 1481.

To same, for same, £4 from Badlesmere, 6 March, 1481.

To John Vavasour, £10 in fees, for his office of receiver of the lord, granted by letters patent of the duke.

To William Lee of London, for life, 9s. conceded by the duke under his signet and sign manual, London, 20 February 1478, and a further 48s. 9d. conceded by letters patent of John, recently earl of Oxford, to the same, confirmed by a warrant of the duke, under the signet and sign manual, on 20 November, 1473.