

Peter Lymesey, another member of the north Warwickshire landholding élite and a trusted Lancaster retainer, while keeping a variety of crown appointments, was similarly overbearing. Exploiting the death of a husbandman, Roger Attleborough of Over Whitacre, by dispossessing his daughter Joan of her rightful inheritance, he was then faced with court action following a brave petition from this 'pauvre femme', as the record states, and threatened witnesses 'that if they should come before the justices, they should be killed, burnt and maimed'.<sup>24</sup>

A final example of this imperious breed is John Pecche, one of the king's most active servants in Warwickshire. The two John Pecches, father and son, of a family long distinguished in both spiritual and military affairs, were lords of Hampton-in-Arden, Wormleighton and Fenny Compton and, like their peers, did not easily allow dissent. In an obscure dispute at Wormleighton John Pecche the younger joined with Prior Alexander and his clerics of nearby Chacombe in 1315 to ruin the livelihood of John Port and his wife Agnes by a campaign of harassment, destroying property, killing and stealing livestock, devastating ripening crops and seizing produce – all at the height of the great famine. Later, after serving as the king's constable in Warwick town and castle in 1321, commanding an armed guard charged with arresting local malefactors, and then fighting for the king in Staffordshire, Shropshire and finally at Boroughbridge in March 1322, he led a protracted vendetta against a troublesome local family, the Dunheveds of Dunchurch, a manor allegedly mortgaged to Pecche. The case involved unpaid debts going back years, disputed inheritance and eventually murder. Events had already come to a head in 1319 when several members of the Dunheved family were charged with gang rape and fled the district for a time, before the murder of Pecche's local rent collector, another Dunheved, brought a further climax some years later. Having already seized his suspect, John Dunheved, Pecche arrived one midnight with his wife and an armed gang, broke into the family home in Dunchurch, stormed into Margaret Dunheved's bedroom, seized her by the arm with his mailed

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Worcestershire Historical Society, 1894, 1909, ii, pp. 112-16; *Historical Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, William Salt Archaeological Society, 3rd series, 1911, p. 352; Dugdale, *Antiquities*, pp. 716, 920.

<sup>24</sup> *VCH, Warwickshire*, vi, pp. 8-9: this 'blatant case' (Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, pp. 51, 63) is calendared *verbatim* in *RP*, i, p. 401, from PRO, SC8/6/260 (Ancient Petitions).