

successful adventurer' Roger Mortimer of Wigmore. Already powerful in Worcestershire and having served the king well in Gascony, Wales and Ireland but linked by marriage to the Beauchamps and the Berkeleys and allied to rebel lords like Hugh Audley, Roger Damory and John Maltravers, Mortimer was soon to eclipse everyone in his meteoric rise to power, acquiring Beauchamp estates in Worcestershire and Warwickshire in the process. When the Despenser threat to his own Welsh interests drove him to rebellion, it was under his banner that many of the previously-named enlisted in the anti-Despenser campaign across the midlands.<sup>30</sup>

It is unclear to what extent the midland attacks were pre-planned or exactly how they were stage-managed; one crucial source, the invaluable Parliamentary Writs, has, perhaps significantly, an unaccountable gap for the summer of 1321 which has led historians either to ignore these several defining months, or even to assume that 'much of the summer passed without any further confrontation between the two camps'. But the Despensers themselves later claimed unambiguously that the rebels 'allied themselves together by oath and writings without the king's leave' before launching their attacks on St Barnabas's day, 11 June. Thomas of Lancaster had convened rebellious assemblies at his Pontefract headquarters in February and May, and an undated secret letter clearly refers to one of these: the magnates 'and all the others', it states, are assembled at Pontefract, ready 'to go with us in England and Wales ...and live and die with us in our quarrel'. The midland attacks began, therefore, if the Despenser petition is to be believed, between the Pontefract meeting of 24 May and the further, much-discussed one, at Sherburn-in-Elmet in Yorkshire on 28 June; and the seizure of Warwick Castle by the rebels, about 9 June, may have been intended as the opening signal. The Despenser petition was not enrolled until Parliament met at York in May 1322, some six weeks after the collapse of the rebellion at Boroughbridge and the prompt execution of its leader,

---

<sup>30</sup> The major barons figure prominently in all the *Calendars* etc, already cited, *The Complete Peerage*, and many also in the useful *Knights of Edward I*, ed. C. Moor, Harleian Society, lxxx-lxxxiv, 1929-32. A few are included in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, including Roger Mortimer for whom, remarkably, no biography yet exists. Those who forfeited lands are listed (incompletely) in PRO, *Lists and Indexes*, v, part 1, pp. 440-62. The more modest gentry have to be traced in the relevant volumes of *VCH*, the many local history publications and transactions, specialised historical studies and, with difficulty, medieval legal records at the Public Record Office (e.g., Assize Rolls, King's Bench records etc.).