

What makes it unlikely that such cases were exceptional is the continued deterioration of the situation throughout the Midlands during the autumn and winter of 1321-22, charted in page after page in contemporary record-keeping. By February 1322, however, the rebel cause was faltering and directionless: confronted by the king's unusual decisiveness and the return of the reinstated Despensers, Roger Mortimer had unexpectedly surrendered. Rebuffed in Leicestershire, where citizens told him that 'they despised his commands, and bore him no good will', Thomas of Lancaster set fire to Burton-on-Trent before disappearing north hoping to liaise with the Scots. His midland estates, now officially forfeited, were promptly looted by all and sundry: at his favourite Kenilworth, a hoard of £3,000 in coins and £40 in gold and precious stones disappeared even before his constable, Hugh Cuilly, surrendered the castle after an improvised blockade staffed partly by Coventry citizens. Shortly after, the stolen treasure resurfaced at Coventry Priory, where it was received by the prior himself, a harsh and unpopular associate of the Despensers. This whole tortuous affair, including a six-day siege of the priory, rankled for several years: one later climax came in a bizarre case of witchcraft involving a plot hatched in a cottage outside the city to kill the prior, the two Despensers and even the king, a plea to the Pope at Avignon and a general aura of hysteria. Such events capture the feelings of the times as well as the heavenly portents quoted earlier and the later fables of miracles produced by the corpses of executed rebels. The almost indiscriminate feuding would continue for several more years; but the violence at Burton marked the last flicker of anything resembling organized rebellion in the Midlands. It was followed a week or so later by the insurgents' decisive rout at Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, on 16 March 1322.<sup>37</sup>

Boroughbridge, followed six weeks later by the York Parliament dominated by the triumphant Despensers, might appear as a clear

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<sup>37</sup> *CPR 1321-1324*, pp. 149 ff; *Historical Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, William Salt Archaeological Society, ix, 1888, pp. 95-8; Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, p. 309; *CCR 1318-1323*, pp. 511-13; S. Shaw, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire*, 2 vols, London 1798-1801, i, p. 17. Kenilworth: *CChR 1300-1326*, pp. 441ff; R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, London 1953, pp. 28-9; *CCR 1318-1323*, pp. 519-20, 525. Witchcraft: J. Röhrkasten, 'Conflict in a monastic borough: Coventry in the reign of Edward II', *Midland History*, xviii, 1993; *Select Cases in the Court of King's Bench under Edward II*, IV, ed. G.O. Sayles, Selden Society, lxxiv, 1955, pp. lix-lx; summary, *VCH, Warwickshire*, ii, p. 56.