

sheriff, Henry Nottingham, colluded with colleagues to deny Thomas Waley right of appeal against conviction, or, as in the case of William Lucy (acting, ironically, as a peace-keeper), conspiring with his clerk Robert Morin at Stratford to kidnap Nicholas Rolleston in August 1322 for an invented trespass at Bearley. Rolleston plausibly claimed that his health had been undermined by a six-month detention at Warwick before judgement was given in his favour and Lucy arrested, fined £30 damages and distrained. Opportunities were ingeniously exploited: at Kenilworth Priory one day, Peter Mountford forced Saer Rochford's wife Elizabeth to pay him a huge £6,000 debt owing to the crown; while at Shotteswell, the parson's sister Matilda was sent to prison at Warwick by the sheriff, John Olney, who then received ten marks for releasing her, concealing the matter by pretending that she had died in prison.

Predictably, the most recurrent charges concerned retention of rebel goods forfeited to the king, especially at major residences like the castles at Warwick and Kenilworth. Indoors, anything of value was taken: at Kenilworth even the wardrobe of Mary Sheppey, lady-in-waiting to the constable's wife, Joan Cuilly, was ransacked, and her travelling capes, coats, blankets, quilts and bed linen disappeared. Outdoors, hunting and fishing were merrily pursued and farm animals taken. The remit of the leading officials was so wide and all-embracing as to offer maximum temptation. The Staffordshire knight, Thomas Rous, for example, already powerful enough as an associate of John Somery and Ralph Bassett in north Warwickshire and sheriff during the critical period of 1321-1322, was charged in March 1322 with investigating

*...all castles, manors, parks, lands and tenements...animals, stock and goods late of Contrariants found therein, and to enquire by oath...what were in the same at the date of their caption into the king's hands and whether any have been removed...and if so, when and by whom...*

He was also to try rebels gaoled at Warwick, pursue and arrest those still at large, and find and bring to the king Thomas of Lancaster's jewellery. He still had time to make profitable visits even to small villages where he extorted large sums of money from ordinary people, besides enjoying lucrative forays to Warwick and Kenilworth. At Kenilworth another official blamed him for appropriating a whole catalogue of the earl's goods, besides others belonging to Saer Rochford and John Lymesey, while taking deer and fish on the estate. At Warwick