

SEARCH

RESEARCH EXPLORE GALLERY SCHOOLS ABOUT

MEMBERS ORAL HISTORY
CONSTITUENCIES
PARLIAMENTS
SURVEYS

Home Research > Members > 1386-1421 > SHIRLEY, Sir Hugh (c.1362-1403)

GO TO [1386-1421](#) 1422-1504 1509-1558 1558-1603 1604-1629 1640-1660
SECTION 1660-1690 1690-1715 1715-1754 1754-1790 1790-1820 1820-1832
INDEX A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **S** T U V W X Y Z

SHIRLEY, Sir Hugh (c.1362-1403), of Lower Ettington, Warws. and Shirley, Derbys.

Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1386-1421*, ed. J.S. Roskell, L. Clark, C. Rawcliffe., 1993
Available from [Boydell and Brewer](#)

[PREVIOUS
BIOGRAPHY](#)[NEXT
BIOGRAPHY](#)

Constituency

[LEICESTERSHIRE](#)

Dates

[1393](#)

Family and Education

b.c.1362, s. and h. of Sir Thomas Shirley of Shirley by Isabel, uterine or bastard sis. of Ralph, 3rd Lord Basset of Drayton; nephew and h. of Lord Basset. *m.* bef. 1390, Beatrice (c.1366-20 Apr. 1440), da. of Sir Peter Brewes (*d.*1377) of Wiston, Suss., sis. and event. h. of Sir John Brewes (*d.*1426), 1s. [Sir Ralph*](#), 5da. Kntd. bef. June 1392.

Offices Held

Commr. of weirs, Leics., Notts. June 1398; array, Notts. Dec. 1399; oyer and terminer, Derbys. Mar., July 1401; to make proclamation of Henry IV's intention to govern well, Derbys., Leics., Warws. May 1402; of inquiry, Notts. June 1403 (Sir Hugh Annesley's estates).

J.p. Notts. 28 Nov. 1399-*d.*, Derbys., Warws. 16 May 1401-*d.*

Constable of Castle Donington, Leics. 15 Mar. 1400-*d.*¹

Master of the King's hawks 27 Mar. 1400-*d.*

Master forester of Duffield Frith, Derbys. 23 Feb. 1402-*d.*

Chief warder of Higham Ferrers park, Northants.²

Biography

The Shirley family had held the manor of Lower Ettington in the male line since the Conquest, but derived its name from another of its manors, acquired subsequently in the 12th century. To these holdings the Shirleys added 'Houne' and other properties also in Derbyshire, and Barnham, far away in Suffolk. Sir Thomas Shirley, reputed to have fought at Crécy and Poitiers and noted for his benefactions to the college in the Newarke, Leicester, where he was buried 'in a large and stately monument', left his son and heir, Hugh, still an infant at his death, which occurred shortly before April 1362. Hugh's



Biography Detail

[Constituency](#)
[Family & Education](#)
[Offices Held](#)
[Biography](#)
[End Notes](#)

Related Resources

[1386-1421 Members](#)
[1386-1421 Constituencies](#)
[1386-1421 Parliaments](#)
[1386-1421 Surveys](#)

mother, either an illegitimate daughter of Ralph, Lord Basset (*d.*1343), or more likely that lord's stepdaughter, then made a widow for the fourth time, took as her fifth and sixth husbands Sir John Woodhill (*d.*1367) and [Sir Gerard Braybrooke I*](#) (*d.*1403). It was to Braybrooke that in 1372 John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, sold the wardship of the Shirley estates for a single payment of 100 marks. Hugh would appear to have come of age shortly before March 1383, when he confirmed his mother in her life tenancy of the lands of his inheritance, his own full possession being thus deferred for about ten years. The Shirley estates were to provide him with an annual income of at least £40 a year.³ But he and his son were to acquire holdings of much greater value (at least six manors in Leicestershire, two more in Sheldon, Warwickshire, and Ratcliffe-upon-Soar and Colston Basset in Nottinghamshire) through the generosity of his uncle, Lord Basset, who had no children of his own. Hugh clearly rose in his uncle's estimation as he grew older, for although in 1376 he had been mentioned no higher than fourth in succession in an entail of certain of these manors and would only have inherited them if Basset himself and three others had died without male issue, by January 1390, when Basset came to make his will, he had decided that his nephew should inherit all of the estates he held in fee simple, provided that he and his heirs adopted the surname of Basset and bore his arms. Not all of the manors so demised passed to the Shirleys in Sir Hugh's lifetime, for some were held in dower by Lord Ralph's widow until her death in 1402, and others were retained by Basset's trustees for the effective implementation of the many bequests specified in his will. Nevertheless, it was this bounty which made Shirley a landowner of considerable substance in Leicestershire, the county he was to represent in Parliament.⁴

Throughout his career Shirley served the house of Lancaster, linked by the ties of lordship forged in his youth while under the guardianship of John of Gaunt. Having been contracted on 14 Mar. 1386 as the duke's esquire to serve in his army overseas, he probably stayed with Lancaster, engaged in his wars in Spain and France, until the duke returned to England late in 1389. Duke John's high regard for him was expressed in the award of two annuities for life: the first of £20 charged on the issues of the honour of Leicester; the other, which he shared with his wife, Beatrice, of as much as 100 marks derived from the honour of Tutbury. In the 1390s Shirley was among the duke's chamber knights, while his wife also had a place in the household, as one of the Duchess Constance's closest companions. Furthermore, he also enjoyed the esteem of Gaunt's son and heir, Henry of Bolingbroke, who in 1391-2 gave him a present of some jewellery. Shirley established strong ties with other leading Lancastrian retainers, such as [Sir Walter Blount*](#), for whom he provided securities at the Exchequer in 1392, [Sir John Bussy*](#) and [Sir John Dabrichecourt*](#). These three all came forward on his behalf in August 1394 to offer guarantees under pain of £200 that he would keep the peace in future towards [Sir Thomas Erdington](#)†. His dispute with Erdington concerned property at Barrow-upon-Soar from which Sir Thomas had long sought to oust Lord Basset; Shirley had kept up the feud with a midnight raid on Erdington's own manor-house there at the head of a band of 200 armed men. In the spring of 1397 Sir Hugh was in London making preparations for a voyage to Bayonne, probably on Lancaster's business, and in the will John of Gaunt made on 3 Feb. 1398 he was left a bequest of 100 marks. Richard II evidently considered it worthwhile to procure Shirley's compliance following the seizure of the ducal estates by the Crown a year later: on the point of departure for Ireland on 24 May 1399 he issued orders to the duchy officials for the continued payment of his annuities.⁵ Yet there could be no question but that on Henry of Bolingbroke's return from exile two months later Shirley would go to his side; indeed, he was soon made a bachelor to the new King, Henry IV. In January 1400 he assisted in putting down the earls' rebellion in support of the deposed monarch; and royal commissioners sent to Castle Donington (previously held by the rebel earl of Kent) made him keeper of the castle for its safe governance, an appointment formally ratified by the King on 15 Mar. On the same day Shirley was granted an annuity of 40 marks for life from the issues of the lordship of Donington, and although this was subsequently reduced to 25 marks when the full amount of his other annuities was revealed, henceforth he could still expect to receive £103 6s.8d. a year from the revenues of the duchy of Lancaster, a sum not including fees paid for his official posts as master of the King's hawks (dating from that same month) and master forester of Duffield. Loyalty to the house of Lancaster had made him a wealthy man. The King could confidently rely on him to perform functions of local government in the Midlands, as a j.p. and commissioner, and sent him a personal summons to attend the great council of August 1401 as one of six commoners selected from Nottinghamshire.⁶

It was at this stage in Shirley's career that his title to the Basset estates received a serious challenge from Edmund, earl of Stafford, Lord Basset's coheir in right of blood, who having succeeded to a number of Lord Ralph's manors under the terms of entails made in

the early 14th century, nevertheless considered Shirley to have usurped his interest in the rest; and Sir Hugh's failure to change his name to Basset as required by his late uncle no doubt gave him a pretext. However, in an agreement apparently made on 20 July 1403, Earl Edmund formally 'granted' Shirley the estates Lord Basset had willed to him, with reversion in default of male issue to the Staffords, which concord the earl was bound to honour under pain of £12,000. The indenture was never sealed, for on the following day both men were slain at the battle of Shrewsbury. A tradition, well established by Shakespeare's day, has it that they were two of the three knights (the other being Shirley's colleague, Blount) who, clad in royal armour in order to impersonate the King, successively encountered and fell in single combat under the victorious arm of the earl of Douglas, their deaths being avenged by a fourth champion, Prince Henry.⁷

Shirley left a widow, Beatrice, a son, Ralph (still a minor) and five unmarried daughters. Henry IV showed concern for their welfare: on 10 Sept. following he granted Beatrice custody of the Shirley estates to the value of £44 10s. a year, and on Oct. he gave her Ralph's wardship and marriage. Furthermore, when When shown the unsealed agreement made between Sir Hugh and the earl of Stafford, he commanded that the accord be kept as if formally ratified by law. From 1406 Beatrice possessed a lease of four of the Basset manors (as granted her by Lord Ralph's feoffees) to hold until her son attained his majority; and following that event she formally conveyed to him the family estates in return for a regular pension.⁸ She became heir to her brother Sir John Brewes's lands (six manors in Sussex and another in Buckinghamshire) at his death in 1426, but never took possession, for Sir John's widow retained them as her jointure until she died in 1449 (whereupon they passed to Beatrice's grandson, another Ralph). Left a wealthy widow with an income of at least £92 a year, and probably much more, Beatrice outlived her husband by 37 years, dying in 1440.⁹

Ref Volumes: 1386-1421

Author: L. S. Woodger

Notes

1. Somerville, *Duchy*, i. 573; DL42/15, f. 94.
2. DL42/15, f. 23.
3. J. Nichols, *Leics.* iii. 707-8, 716; *VCH Warws.* v. 78-79; E.P. Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana* (2nd edn.), 1, 26, 28, 373; W. Dugdale, *Warws.* 620-2; *CP*, ii. 4; *Reg. Gaunt, 1371-5*, no. 386; Leicester Mus. Archs. Ferrers ms 26 D53, no. 342.
4. *CPR*, 1374-7, p. 358; *CAD*, v. A11357, 11372; *CP*, ii. 4; Shirley, 29, 376; *Coll. Top. et Gen.* vii. 393; Ferrers ms 26 D53, no. 1583; *VCH Warws.* iv. 202.
5. Shirley, 373; DL28/1/3; *CPR*, 1392-6, p. 98; *Procs. Chancery Eliz. I* ed. Caley and Bayley, i. p. vi; *CCR*, 1392-6, p. 367; 1396-9, pp. 473-4; *Test. Vetusta* ed. Nicolas, 143; Ferrers ms 26 D53, no. 2049; S.K. Walker, 'John of Gaunt and his retainers, 1361-99' (Oxf. Univ. D. Phil. thesis, 1986), 234.
6. *CIMisc.* vii. 44, 59; DL42/15, ff. 10d, 23, 96, 98; *CPR*, 1399-1401, p. 239; *PPC*, i. 159, 162.
7. *CAD*, v. A11358; Harl. 4928, f. 68d.
8. C137/12/12; *CPR*, 1401-5, pp. 263, 373; DL42/15, f. 157d; Shirley, 381-3, 385, 388; Ferrers ms 26 D53, no. 343.
9. *Suss. Arch. Colls.* v. 6, 8; xxiii. 190; liv. 156, 160, 165; C139/29/42, 101/65; Ferrers ms 26 D53, nos. 102-3; Shirley, 385-6; *VCH Bucks.* iii. 148; *EHR*, xlix. 632.

GO TO [1386-1421](#) [1422-1504](#) [1509-1558](#) [1558-1603](#) [1604-1629](#) [1640-1660](#)
SECTION [1660-1690](#) [1690-1715](#) [1715-1754](#) [1754-1790](#) [1790-1820](#) [1820-1832](#)
INDEX [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)