

Fulk Peyforer's Wages

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When a group of magnates seized control of the government of England in 1258, one of their priorities was the reform of local government. They replaced most of the sheriffs, made the new sheriffs swear not to oppress the counties, and changed the way in which the sheriffs accounted for their counties. The usual practice was for sheriffs to pay a fixed farm, and keep for themselves any surplus they managed to collect, which clearly gave them an incentive to squeeze as much as possible out of the counties in order to enrich themselves. The sheriffs of 1258 were to be custodians, who gathered the revenues due from the counties, and delivered it all to the Exchequer, together with particulars setting out the detailed sources of the cash they had collected; in return, custodians usually expected to receive a fixed payment for their services. One oddity about the appointment of the 1258 sheriffs was that there was no mention of how much they were to be paid; and at the end of their term in office, when they presented their accounts and delivered the cash, again there is no record of them receiving any payment. One of these sheriffs, Fulk Peyforer, provides an example of how they had to wait to be rewarded for their services. He also demonstrates how local government continued to function under both royalist and reforming regimes.

H.W. Ridgeway drew attention to the group of 'trimmers', including Fulk Peyforer, who served both king and barons.¹ Fulk was sheriff of Kent on three occasions. He seems to have been typical of the class of men who kept local administration running. He was a minor tenant-in-chief, holding the manor of West Peckham by the serjeanty of keeping a hawk for the king. He also held lands in Kent from the earl of Gloucester and other landowners, and was active in the local land market from 1236 onwards. He served as a justice of gaol delivery for Rochester in 1256.² One might assume that he had personal motives for supporting the reforming regime which expelled the king's foreign relatives: Fulk was forced to give up an action for disseisin against Gunceline de Badlesmere, a knight in William de Valence's household, 'because at that time Gunceline had so many allies and

¹ H.W. Ridgeway, 'Mid thirteenth century reformers and the localities: the sheriffs of the baronial regime, 1258-1261', in *Regionalism and Revision: The Crown and its Provinces in England 1200-1650*, ed. P. Fleming et al. (London 1998), p.82.

² *The Book of Fees*, nos.1379, 662, 663, 666 etc.; *Kent Feet of Fines*, ed. I.J. Churchill et al., Kent Arch. Soc. Records Branch XV (1956), nos.127, 138, 152 etc.; CPR 1247-58, p.471.

supporters, namely William de Valence and others ... that he [Fulk] was wholly despaired of being able to press suit.’³

Fulk’s interests seem to have been limited to Kent, but within the county he had evidently achieved a certain standing. This was demonstrated when he was chosen as one of the four knights to represent Kent in the reformers’ initial inquiry into the grievances which had built up under Henry III’s rule.⁴ It was confirmed when he was chosen as one of the wave of new sheriffs appointed by the reformers in the autumn of 1258.⁵ These sheriffs were supposed to behave very differently from the local officials who had discredited the old regime: they were to do justice to all, not to impose excessive burdens on their hosts when travelling around their counties, not to take gifts worth more than 12d., and to remain in office for only one year. In addition, although this was not spelled out explicitly, they were to be custodians rather than farmers: ‘For when the sheriff comes at the end of his year, he will be allowed on his account the reasonable expenses which he will have incurred in keeping his bailiwick, ... and for this we give him of our own revenues, since we wish that he shall have no reason to take anything from someone else.’⁶

This implied a major shift in the relationship between county, sheriff and Exchequer. The usual practice was for the sheriffs’ accounts, as recorded in the pipe rolls, to begin with the *corpus comitatus*: the traditional annual farm due for the county, established in the twelfth century, minus deductions for *terrae datae*, the properties which had been granted away or leased out. In the case of Kent, the *corpus comitatus* amounted to £201 a year. For several years, the sheriff of Kent had been Reginald of Cobham, appointed in 1251 to keep both the county and the manor of Milton for a fixed farm of 520 marks (£347) a year.⁷ This sum, described as a profit, was to cover all the revenues of the county as well as the rents and proceeds of agriculture at that manor; anything produced over and above that sum would be Cobham’s reward.⁸ Cobham died in December 1257,

³ *The 1258-9 Special Eyre of Surrey and Kent*, ed. A.H. Hershey, Surrey Record Soc. 38 (2004), xxxi, lxi.

⁴ *CPR* 1247-58, p.646.

⁵ *CPR* 1247-58, p.655; *CFR* 1257-58, no.1178 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_055.html); W.A. Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff* (1927, reprinted 1968), pp.171-2.

⁶ *The Ordinance of Sheriffs, Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion 1258-1267*, ed. R.F. Treharne, I.J. Sanders (1973), pp.118-23.

⁷ *CFR* 1250-51, no.367 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_048.html).

⁸ TNA: PRO E 372/95 rot. 13, and similarly in succeeding years.

and the same arrangement for a payment of £347 a year, to cover both county and manor, was continued for the remainder of the year 1257-58.⁹

Fulk Peyforer had very different responsibilities. He had to demonstrate to the Exchequer how he had collected revenues, and how he had spent the money he collected. At the end of his year in office, he produced particulars of account (*particule*) for the county. These showed what he had collected from the sheriff's tourn, the hundreds, and twelve meetings of the county court. A note was added at the end of the particulars, comparing the actual proceeds for the year with the £201 of the established *corpus comitatus*: 'Sum total £112 9s. 10d., which total is not enough to complete the *corpus* of the county, but lacks £88 16s. 1d. And therefore he does not answer for any profit.'¹⁰

Peyforer also accounted for the manor of Milton, which produced £190 after paying for wages and running expenses. Taken together, county and manor had produced £302, of which he delivered £106 cash to the Treasury, spent £145 locally (for example, for repairs to Dover and Rochester castles, as instructed by writs in the king's name), and still owed a further £51 from the revenues of Milton. When Fulk left office, he was also considered to owe the £89 difference between actual county revenue and the *corpus comitatus*.¹¹ These sums do not include any payment for Peyforer himself. Neither his particulars of account nor the audited county and manorial accounts in the pipe rolls include any indication of Peyforer receiving any reward for his year of service. The same is true for all the other custodial sheriffs of the year 1258-59: so far as the records for that year indicate, there were no arrangements for them to be paid.

Almost all these sheriffs were replaced in the autumn of 1259, but the new sheriffs reverted to farming the counties. The custodial experiment may simply have involved too much administrative effort, but there was no statement of the reasons why it had been dropped. For the next few years, as the reforming regime gradually gave ground to the king, Kent and Milton were farmed for 500 marks (£333) a year.¹² The county was committed first to John of Cobham (Reginald's nephew), then successively to the royal stewards Robert Walerand and Roger Leybourne, so that it was firmly under royal control. Meanwhile, Fulk Peyforer continued to serve in administrative roles: in 1260 he was an assessor for the tallage in the south-eastern counties, in 1263 escheator in Kent.¹³

⁹ *CFR* 1257-58, nos.153, 373 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_055.html); TNA: PRO E 372/102 rot. 18.

¹⁰ TNA: PRO E 389/79, E 389/80.

¹¹ TNA: PRO E 372/103 rot. 10, 10d; E 372/104, rot. 6, 6d.

¹² TNA: PRO E 372/104 rot. 6; E 372/106 rot. 5; E 372/107 rot. 7d, 6d.

¹³ *CPR* 1258-66, pp.76, 291.

Simon de Montfort's victory at Lewes in May 1264 led to another shake-up of the sheriffs, with a wave of new appointments, once more as custodians, and once more including Fulk Peyforer as sheriff of Kent. Although the Exchequer ceased to function for several months, there is a record in the originalia roll of the announcement. Rather optimistically, it informs the people of Kent that peace has been restored, and that the king, by the barons' advice, has committed Kent and Milton to Fulk to keep 'in the form provided by him and the aforesaid barons, so that he answers for the issues arising therefrom at the Exchequer.'¹⁴ Again, the terms of the appointment remain vague, and there is no indication of how Fulk is to be paid.

Fulk remained sheriff until the fortunes of war reversed, and de Montfort was defeated at Evesham. Roger Leybourne then returned as sheriff, with the task of suppressing the remaining rebels. But during a little over a year in office, Fulk seems to have kept the machinery of government running. His particulars of account¹⁵ show that he collected £79 from the sheriff's tourn, the fixed payments of the hundreds, and fifteen sessions of the county court. The county courts are an impressive record of the administrative routine being maintained in extraordinary times. They met on a Monday, every four weeks, from 23 June 1264 to 20 July 1265 (except when the regular schedule would have meant meeting on the feast of the Purification, and the court was moved back by one week). The final note is for Sunday 16 August 1265, when nothing was collected because that was the day when lord Roger [Leybourne] received the county. One oddity about the record of the county courts relates directly to the political crisis. In the summer of 1264, de Montfort gathered a vast peasant army in Kent, to face a threatened invasion from France. For some time de Montfort and the court were based in Canterbury, from where he negotiated with the French, and issued the Peace of Canterbury.¹⁶ But de Montfort evidently found time to involve himself in more routine matters while he was in Kent. Fulk Peyforer's particulars note that he collected nothing from the county courts on 18 August and 15 September 1264 'because the lord king was present and the pleas were held by the earl of Leicester.'¹⁷

After his second term in office, Fulk again presented his accounts. He had been sheriff for a year and a quarter, so the *corpus* of the county came to £252, but the money he had collected was not enough to cover this amount. His account for the manor of Milton recorded net revenues of £179, as well as the outstanding debt of £51 for Milton from 1258-59. The Milton account noted: 'He does

¹⁴ CFR 1263-64, no.272 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_061.html); CPR 1258-66, p.325.

¹⁵ TNA: PRO E 389/81.

¹⁶ J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (1994), pp.290-6; Adrian Jobson, *The First English Revolution* (2012), pp.124-5.

¹⁷ TNA: PRO E 389/91 rot. 1: *nichil quia dominus Rex fuit presens et per comitem Leyc' tenebantur placita.*

not answer here for the true value ... because all that time was in the war.’¹⁸ In the autumn of 1266, the Exchequer, now firmly under royal control, looked at Fulk’s two terms of office under the reformers, in 1258-59 and 1264-65. It received instructions from the king that Fulk should not be held liable for failing to produce the full amount of the *corpus* in either term; he should be given allowances for his reasonable expenses as sheriff; and he should be allowed to claim for the expenditure of £80 which he had paid to Henry de Montfort, former constable of Dover castle, for supplying the castle. In February 1267, the king instructed the Exchequer to make allowances to Fulk for his failure to produce the full *corpus*, because he did not collect enough in 1258-59 and because he could not do so in 1264-65 due to the disturbances in the kingdom; he should be pardoned these amounts, because he should not sustain any loss on account of his service to the king.¹⁹

In the 1266 pipe roll, all Fulk’s debts were added together for a comprehensive settlement. From his two terms as sheriff and keeper of Milton, he owed £573, from which various amounts could be deducted, including £70 in cash to the Treasury, and the £80 for Henry de Montfort. And at last they included payments to Fulk himself: for his expenses as keeper of the county in 1258-59, £40, and for Milton, £10; as keeper in 1264-65, £37 10s. for the county and £12 10s. for Milton. In addition, it was finally recognized that he was not to be held responsible for the full *corpus* of the county from either time when he was sheriff, because his particulars of account showed that he did not collect enough to complete the *corpus*. After all these deductions, he owed just 5s. 6d.²⁰

Despite having served as sheriff for the full period of de Montfort’s rule, and having presumably been associated with him when the king’s court was based in Kent and de Montfort took over Peyforer’s role in the county court, Fulk was clearly on good terms with the returning royalists. The rebels had put Fulk in charge of a strategically vital county, when England faced the threat of a foreign invasion, and he had provided support for the rebels in command of the key stronghold, Dover castle. The royalists reimbursed him for his services, and duly made allowance for his expenditures in support of the rebels. Not only did Fulk at last receive payment for his term of office some seven or eight years earlier, he was once more in official employment. As early as December 1265 he was employed to extend the lands of one of the king’s former enemies. He was a justice of gaol delivery in Canterbury in 1268, and a justice of the Jews in 1272.²¹ He was a

¹⁸ TNA: PRO E 372/109 rot. 9d, 12d.

¹⁹ TNA: PRO E 159/41 m. 1d. *Close Rolls 1264-68*, p.289.

²⁰ TNA: PRO E 372/110 rot. 6d, 5.

²¹ *CPR 1258-66*, p.651; *CPR 1266-72*, p.230; *Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews*, VI, ed. Paul Brand, Jewish Historical Soc. (2005), p.53.

collector of the tax of one-twentieth in 1269.²² In 1267-68, for three-quarters of the year, he was even sheriff of Kent again, and keeper of Canterbury castle, and again he held office as custodian.²³ There was the usual delay, but in 1271 the pipe roll recorded that he was to be allowed £30 for his services, as that was the rate he had been paid when he was keeper before.²⁴ Since 1260, in right of his wife, he had held the serjeanty of custody of the palace of Westminster and the Fleet prison. He died in 1277, leaving estates worth some £50 a year.²⁵

It seems that Fulk was typical in having to wait for payment for serving as sheriff in 1258-59, and for his subsequent terms. I have found payments (or rather allowances against their debts) for nine of the sheriffs of 1258-59, recorded in the pipe rolls between 1261 and 1274.²⁶ Several sheriffs, like Peyforer, served both the king and de Montfort, and their services to the reform regime were rewarded by the royalists after de Montfort's defeat. There may be further payments buried somewhere in the pipe rolls, but it would appear that the the sheriffs appointed in 1258 to provide a more honest and accountable system of local government had to wait up to fifteen years for their services to be recognized.

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²² *Kent Hundred Rolls Project*, Kent Archaeological Society:
<http://www.kentarchaeology.ac/khrp/hrproject.pdf>.

²³ *CFR 1267-68*, no.844 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_065.html); *CPR 1266-72*, p.173.

²⁴ TNA: PRO E 372/112 rot 23; E 372/115 rot. 6d.

²⁵ *Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews*, VI, 29.

²⁶ The latest payment I have found is to the heirs of William de Engleby (sheriff of Lincolnshire 1258-59) in the 1274 pipe roll: E 372/118 rot. 4.