

Chapter Three : Cross-Country Travels

Ralph’s mobility strikes home immediately in each of the two years of accounts. In both, he rode over 1200 miles. A continuous record of travel is an unusual survival in private papers; tracing movement is more often reliant on sources such as letters. Occasionally exceptional journeys are noted in detail, for example the Petre family’s tour from Essex through the west Midlands in 1577.¹ Much more commonly, however, travel expenses were little more than scant figures on grubby scraps of paper, often a claim for re-imbusement rather than a record. <https://www.ralphsheldon1537-1613.info/pdf-pages/Sheldons-Journeys.pdf>



¹ Edwards, *John Petre*, pp. 90-93.

Much of the information which enables us to track Ralph's journeys is no more than payment of gratuities to the servants of those he visited, calculated on a scale in relationship to the host, not the servant. Providing the name of the host and thus an identifiable destination, no motive is ever revealed. Most entries are for the normal expenses of keeping the horses on the trot – Ralph did not travel by coach: fodder, called horse meat, shoeing, mending reins, saddles or straps, entries which are far more numerous than those which note the feeding of humans! Notably absent are indications of any intermediate stopping points for refreshment on days when Ralph clearly spent most of the daylight hours in the saddle;² equally intriguing is the consistent shortness of his stays, often only overnight.

On many, even on most, occasions Ralph rode with only one or two companions, one of them his secretary, Robert Jones, responsible for most of the entries in the accounts.³ They travelled without maps and largely without benefit of roads, routes determined, and shortened, by ferries as well as bridges or fords and planned to avoid marshy ground. Halts to seek directions must have been numerous, at least on more distant, less frequently taken, journeys. Because horseback makes for a very flexible form of travel Ralph could use tracks now used largely by walkers; some of the distances he covered would have been very much shorter than today's car journey but, at an average speed of 4 miles an hour, very much slower. Local routes were already familiar; some can be guessed, though those further afield must remain speculative. Going from Weston to Sudeley he almost certainly rode over to Wolford and Lemington, through Dorn and Batsford to strike across his own pastures at Upton Owld and continuing southwestwards along a now unclassified road towards Cutsdean to drop down to

Sudeley, thus avoiding the steep Cotswold hills and deep valleys shown so graphically on the tapestry maps. His route from Weston to Worcester would take him up the Knee Brook valley past Chipping Campden to drop through



The upstream side of the bridge at Bidford on Avon; built originally in the fifteenth century, the semi-circular arches mark repairs carried out after deliberate destruction in the early 1650s.
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Broadway across the flat land towards Evesham. Travelling towards Beoley from Weston, some 40 odd miles, he is likely to have picked up the old Roman road at Cow Honeybourne, known now as Buckler Street in Gloucestershire and as the Rykniel Way in Worcestershire, crossing the Avon bridged at Bidford and then due north to the foot of the hill at Beoley. It was so frequently travelled that it was marked as 'the Rudg' Way' on the Worcestershire

² WaCRO CR 2632, f. 71, meat to carry with you, May 8; Sept 1588, f.212.

³ Jones also made trips without Ralph; CR 2632, 22-30 December 1586, f. 35; 22-31 March 1587, f. 52; on behalf of the earl of Kent, August 1587, f. 98; February 1-14 1588, ff. 154-8; July 25-1 August, ff.205-07; 22-27 September 1588, f. 218.

tapestry map. Another ancient trackway, the Salt Way running W-E across Worcester- and Warwickshire took him the twenty miles from Beoley to Worcester avoiding Feckenham Forest. Least useful was another Roman road, the Fosse Way, running NE-SW and crossing his lands. It might have been his return route from Leicestershire visits, but more locally its line passed south of Warwick. Like the easily reached Stratford upon Avon neither towns were often visited or utilized as shopping centres.

Although the account book information reveals his destinations clearly, it is less obvious from which of his own houses he set out or to which he returned. These have been determined on the basis of a logical line of travel or from a piece of information not given in the accounts, for example the receipt of a letter, a payment or receipt of money. Absence of tips paid has been interpreted to mean that Ralph was ‘at home’. A single, uncertain visit to Beoley is recorded; those to the house rented from the Duchy of Lancaster at Deddington were rather more frequent. Used as a place of relaxation where he even created his own bowling green, its importance as a farm centre and a base for his growing interests in north Oxfordshire becomes increasingly clear.⁴ Long periods of residence at Weston tended to coincide with the harvest or with the winter months, those in London with the law terms, the regular punctuation of his year <https://www.ralphsheldon1537-1613.info/pdf-pages/Deddington-payments.pdf>

Ralph might be absent for several consecutive days, in all weathers and seeming to ignore the constraints of short daylight, spending several hours on horseback over successive days, no mean feat around his fiftieth year. The length of time he spent in the saddle varied considerably, from the hour taken between Spetchley and Worcester to the six or seven from Shipston to Pershore or the four-five between Weston and Sudeley. The exhaustion, and indeed the tedium, of the ten-hour days en route to London would have been relieved by singing and hawking or sometimes by taking the easier option, the river route along the Thames. None of his journeys seems to be associated with the inspection of his estates; their management, like that of his households, was left to stewards. Four journeys were of exceptional length, in both distance and days; each had a very specific purpose.

Reasons

Many reasons could have prompted Ralph’s movements: administrative duties as a JP, visits to friends and family, transaction of legal, financial and administrative business such as the proving of a will, the renewal of a loan or the arrangement of a marriage. Ralph’s contacts were far-flung and he had obligations within an extensive kinship network extending over several counties; though some of his visits may have been dutiful most had some underlying purpose, clues to which are sometimes revealed in sources other than the accounts. Few journeys seem to have been only for pleasure; not many seem to have been on JP business other than attendance at the Assizes or Quarter Sessions usually in Worcester. He twice went to inspect his coal-digging interests in Leicestershire and on other occasions to engage with

⁴ The house can be identified on an 1808 map, Deddington, *VCH Oxfordshire*, 11, p. 82. no. 16.

matters connected with his ownership of salt bullaries in Droitwich. Sheep-shearing ventures in Leicestershire were left in the hands of bailiffs and, like his other estates, were rarely visited. Business reasons largely explain his London trips. Pursuit of law suits spills over from their conduct in London to engaging interest in the county and amongst his friends including those who acted as his lawyers. Thus when Ralph was in Worcestershire in October 1587, possibly attending the Quarter Sessions, he also visited his daughter at Kidderminster and called on Gilbert Lyttleton at Bell End in Belbroughton perhaps keeping contact because Lyttleton was involved in the separation proceedings for Ralph's daughter Elizabeth.⁵

From at least 1572 Ralph served as a JP; journeys to Worcester are likely to have been regular whether on the administrative business of his office or attendance at the Assize sessions or at the Quarter Sessions. Three attendances were noted between 1586 and 1588.⁶ One, at Bromsgrove, on his own business early in October 1586, was not;⁷ present also at the next, two other meetings were sidestepped. When late in 1587 he, like every other JP deemed to have a recusant wife, lost his position on the bench it almost looks as though he avoided the city.

A very typical sequence of visits looks like this :

Person	Place	Day	Date	miles
at Sir Henry Compton's	Compton Wynyates	Fri	7.4.87	
Shipston to Pershore	[Weston start included]	Sat	8.4.87	28.5
Mr Philip Sheldon	Spetchley	Sat	8.4.87	7.0
at Worcester, Assizes		Tues	11.4.87	3.3
at Mr Throckmorton's	? Coughton	Tues	11.4.87	18.0
at Sudeley		Wed	12.4.87	22.5
Return to Weston – unknown date after Easter				19

Such trips had been combined with visits to friends and family along his route; to his cousins William Sheldon at Abberton and Philip Sheldon at Spetchley making for an easy ride into Worcester; with both he already had legal arrangements or financial dealings. He stayed with friends: with John Alderford at Abbot's Salford; with the Catholic sympathizing Reynold Williams, the Throckmorton's bailiff confusingly living at Throckmorton; with the Foskewe family, suspected of maintaining a priest, at Cookhill in Inkberrow. To several of them he made regular visits, presumably based on a mixture of friendship and common interests combined with the convenience of stopping places on frequently travelled routes; via the Alderfords because of their proximity to the ferry crossing of the river Avon en route to either Worcester or Beoley; late in 1587 and through 1588 circumstances dictated that both Ralph and Mistress Sheldon visited Ralph's cousin Edward Greville of Milcote, son of the reckless and indebted Ludovic soon to be condemned to death for murder. The most frequent destination, some 19 miles from Weston, was Sudeley, home of Giles Brydges, lord Chandos. Another set of regular stop-offs marked the route to London.

⁵ CR 2632, f.120.

⁶ CR 2632, Assizes, f. 54-5 11 April, 13 September 1587 ff.96-7; Quarter Sessions 11 January 1587, f. 36. At Worcester Assizes in July 1586, KB 29/223,

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/Eliz/KB29no223/aKB29no223fronts/IMG_0115.htm

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT7/Eliz/KB29no223/aKB29no223fronts/IMG_0116.htm

⁷ TNA STAC 5/H31/35, sheet 6

Within a ride of perhaps 10-12 miles where return on the same day was possible trips may have been more frequent than is apparent. Unless there was some form of outgoing – the need for food or drink whether for men or horses, a game such as cards or bowls which involved placing bets, there was no reason for a record. Thus only a few are known: in October 1586 to Wellesbourne: in December to the Hall family at Idlicote perhaps linked to future duties as the executor of Anthony Gybbes:⁸ to Sir Harry Compton, Lord Compton, at Compton Wynyates in April 1587 though on this occasion the servants were tipped; twice to Chipping Norton when payment was made for the mending and repair of harness and coach wheels:⁹ and to Cornbury in September 1588 where payment of dues presumably for the land held within Wychwood Forest might have been combined with paying his last respects to the recently deceased earl of Leicester.¹⁰

Many of the longer rides, of 30 miles or more, were made only once. His presence in Abingdon in August 1587 with a posse of men from Deddington, suggests that Ralph's case against Deddington landowners was in front of the Assize judges or that he had some reason to attract their attention; the long loop he made early in January 1588 on his return from Sudeley via Moreton in Marsh to serve on a commission continued to two other destinations (in opposite directions) perhaps in order to avoid the awkwardness of being at home while depositions were taken from witnesses in the long-running Barcheston case; a visit to Somerton, Oxfordshire, was added to the end of a return journey from London.¹¹

Not all of the even more distant single occasion visits have an obvious explanation: an overnight stay at Great Faringdon: a hurried dash to Mr William Savage, possibly a distant relation, at Malvern in April 1588: to Sir John Tracy at Toddington in July 1588.¹² Based on the known sympathies of his host and the timing of his visits a few may have afforded the opportunity to hear Mass, for example at Sudeley where he is found regularly around the time of the great church festivals, and with the Foskewe and Throckmorton families both known to have sheltered priests.

Other places which one might have expected however, are not mentioned, for example his sister and cousins at Broadway, his in laws at Coughton and his daughters who, with the exception of Meriel at Kidderminster, it seems he rarely saw after their marriages.

Four Extraordinary Journeys

Four journeys with long, successive days in the saddle demanded extraordinary stamina. Each covered maximum miles in minimum time and demonstrates Sheldon's range of contacts. Two reveal the breadth of responsibilities he was prepared to shoulder on behalf of others. One, to the earl of Kent, is a very considerable puzzle.

⁸ CR 2632, f. 15, f.33.

⁹ CR 2632, ff.54; f. 57.

¹⁰ CR 2632, f. 216; Adams, *Household accounts of Robert Dudley*, p. 450.

¹¹ CR 2632, 21 August 1587 f. 92; Jan 1588, f. 153; f.85, Somerton.

¹² CR 2632, f.56, 19-20 April 1587; f.168, f.205.

Towards the end of August 1587 Ralph set out on a circuit of approximately 185 miles, possibly accompanied by his musicians.¹³ Riding from Deddington down to Abingdon to attend Oxfordshire Assizes concerned with Deddington affairs he then moved north through Salford, Abberton, Kidderminster to Dunton and Cole Orton before returning south via Leicester and Monks' Kirby and possibly to Beoley rather than Weston. He covered the distance in eleven or twelve days, (23 August to 1 or 2 September), in the knowledge that he had a deadline to meet – his presence was required at Worcester Assizes in the second week of September.



Time limits suggest he almost certainly rode direct from Abingdon to Abbot's Salford in Warwickshire where he dallied for two nights in two separate houses, first with Mr Williams, the Throckmorton family's loyal bailiff, a known recusant recently conformed, and then moving to a house still standing, belonging to his friends John and Mrs Alderford. He paid another visit to his cousin William at Abberton and then made his way to Kidderminster, presumably to stay with his third daughter, Meriel, and her husband Francis Clare, with whom relations seem to have been exceptionally cordial. The reason for his trip, however, was to continue north to confer with his cousin Raffe Rudgeley at Dunton about payment of an annuity to Thomas Bracebridge on behalf of their maternal cousin, Margaret Knollys. Margaret's mother was Sheldon's maternal aunt Margery Willington by her second husband, Sir Ambrose Cave.¹⁴

Bracebridge had sold his manor of Kingsbury to Cave, guaranteeing himself an annuity of £42 4s 3d.¹⁵ But in 1585 Bracebridge seems to have sold Kingsbury a second time, to Sir Francis Willoughby for £700, the same sum he had received from Cave.¹⁶ The money was passed to Sheldon in April 1587, probably the explanation of the sum of £775 16s 6d recorded in Sheldon's accounts received from Willoughby.¹⁷ It was to be laid out 'at the best profit' for the maintenance of Bracebridge's four younger sons and two daughters.

Letters preserved in the British Library dating from the 1580s hint first at Bracebridge's slippery character, and later reveal his continuous attempts to change the

¹³ CR 2632, ff. 92-94.

¹⁴ Privy councillor, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, *ODNB*.

¹⁵ By Cave's will, proved in March 1572, TNA PROB 11/54/122.

¹⁶ The arrangement may only have been some kind of trust, BLib., Add. Chart. 48266. Cf. Feet of F. Warw. Trin. 28 Eliz. Sir Francis seems to have been tenant of Kingsbury Hall for a short while about 1578: *Middleton MSS.* (Hist. MSS. Com.), p. 547, quoted from *VCH Warwickshire*, 4, pp.100-114.

¹⁷ CR 2632, f. 7, £775 16s 6d.

payment arrangements.¹⁸ Recently widowed, Margaret Knollys sought help from her relatives.¹⁹ Thomas Bracebridge was distantly related by marriage to Sheldon whose paternal aunt Joyce had married into the Rudgeleys of Dunton, the family of Bracebridge's wife.²⁰ Sheldon's distant relationships with both Margaret and Bracebridge would make an obligation of her request. <https://www.ralphsheldon1537-1613.info/pdf-pages/Knollys.pdf>

Still in need of money Bracebridge had borrowed £240 from a man called William Phipps in January 1587, repayable a year later.²¹ When it became obvious he would default it was discovered that he had already made over 'several portions and sums of money' to Ralph Sheldon in whom Bracebridge 'reposed special trust and confidence,' possibly the sum of £700 already mentioned. Sheldon settled the debts, but then sold the annuity to Phipps on terms which made it impossible for Bracebridge to redeem it.²² It may have been at this point that although Sheldon had begun by paying out the amounts himself,²³ he decided to appoint trustees; one was his cousin William Sheldon of Abberton,²⁴ Worcestershire, the other their cousin, Ralph Rudgeley. Rudgeley received £20 on 28 August, £6 of which, in gold, was immediately handed over to Bracebridge, possibly witnessed by Ralph Sheldon.²⁵ At the end of September Ralph informed Mrs Knollys of the arrangements agreed with Bracebridge, presumably made with Margaret's knowledge and consent.²⁶ Mrs Knollys wrote in January 1589 requesting Ralph pay a further £30; he replied that he had made the arrangements with Rudgeley, asking Margaret to reimburse him as she had promised.²⁷ Nevertheless, Ralph seems to have continued to make payments from his own resources, moved, he admitted, by pity for Bracebridge's children left destitute by an improvident father.²⁸ Nevertheless, Bracebridge remained beyond assistance and, much later, this link brought Sheldon to the law courts.²⁹ <https://www.ralphsheldon1537-1613.info/pdf-pages/Bracebridge-accounts.pdf>

Business complete, Ralph headed some 23 miles to Cole Orton, to offer the miners at his coal diggings there money for a dinner.³⁰ Obligations fulfilled he moved on; for once lacking friends he had to stay in an inn and supped alone at Leicester. Next day he dined with Mr Beaumont, almost certainly the Catholic Francis Beaumont the owner of the manor of Cole Orton,³¹ and Mr Markham, father of heir's bride, before covering the easy distance of 16

¹⁸ BLib Additional Ms 36901, esp. ff 15, 17, 18, 21, 22, 26, 35, 38.

¹⁹ Margaret had married Sir Henry Knollys, eldest son of Sir Francis, *ODNB*.

²⁰ Dugdale, *Antiquities*, vol. 2, p. 1060.

²¹ Information from TNA, STAC 8/10/6, gives details of a loan of £240 from William Phipps of Maxstoke, dated 18 January 1587; Sheldon repaid the capital, £200, in September 1587, f. 99, and had already paid £13 15s, presumably an interest payment on 19 July, f. 85.

²² 16 July 29 Eliz (1587), information from TNA STAC 8/10/6.

²³ CR 2632, irregular sums were paid to him directly, ff. 24, 33, 60, 73, 74, 85, 90, 141, 154, 158, 159, 165 and through others, ff. 120, 134, 186.

²⁴ Probably the reason for his visit there on 25-26 August, CR 2632, f. 93.

²⁵ CR 2632, ff. 93, 94.

²⁶ BLib Additional Ms 36901, f. 13, 28 Sept 1587.

²⁷ BLib Additional Ms 36901, f. 6 where the date is 1589, not as Enis, *Two Warwickshire Ladies*, p. 27.

²⁸ BLib Add Ms36901, f. 28, Dec 1589.

²⁹ Dugdale, *Antiquities* 1730, p.1060a, 'through his great improvidence he came to die miserably'. TNA STAC 8/146/59.

³⁰ Dates are confused here; Ralph's arrival, the dinner and his onward travel to Leicester appear to happen on the same day, 29 Aug, CR 2632, f. 94.

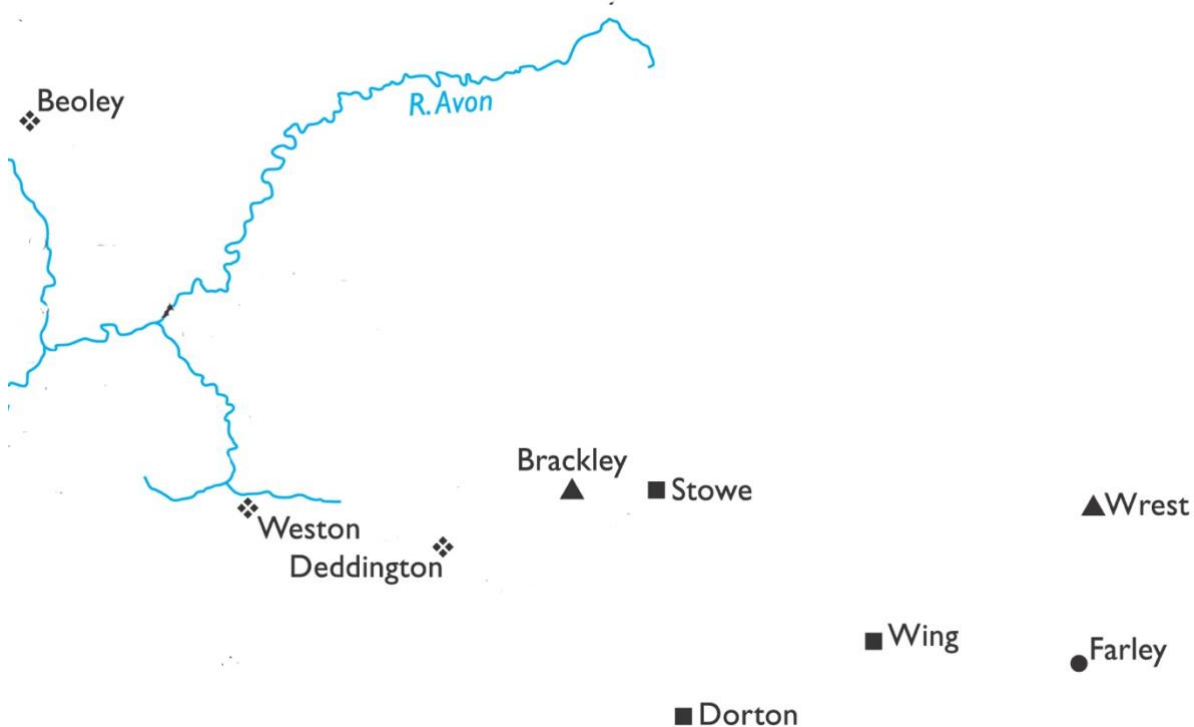
³¹ Smyth, *Sir Francis Willoughby*, p.16.

miles probably down the Fosse Way, to his maternal relatives at Monks' Kirby; his cousin William Fielding was the son of Sheldon's aunt Godith (née Willington) and Basil Fielding. Following the recent death of the latter and the marriage of his sister, it may have seemed a tactful time for Ralph to renew acquaintance.³²

It was Ralph's last call on this trip; whether he went to Beoley (30 miles) or returned to Weston (some 38 miles) is unknown. The quickest, easiest route to the latter would have been down the Fosse Way, the Roman road from Lincoln to Exeter which passed across his own lands at Ditchford.

He made virtually the same journey in March the next year when again Ralph provided the miners with a dinner. This time however he extended his journey to Wollaton on the outskirts of Nottingham, the home of Sir Francis Willoughby, married to the daughter of Sir John Lyttleton on whom Ralph had called on his way north. Ralph returned, crossing the river Trent at Sawley Ferry heading for Kirby Bellars where he stayed with Mr Markham, returning home via Leicester.³³ It was roughly 50 miles further than the previous year's trip, a circuit of 235 miles

Ralph's second long journey in the summer of 1587 was made almost immediately after the close of the Assizes which had convicted him as a recusant; it was described in the accounts in the words 'when you went to the earl of Kent'.³⁴ Its known stopping points took him 147 miles in eight days, 18-25 September.³⁵ Its starting point is unclear; it may have been Beoley and an overnight stop at Deddington since the first expenses, a refreshment stop, came



³² Godith died in 1580, uncle Basil in 1585; TNA C 142 /211/194.

³³ CR 2632, ff.165-66.

³⁴ CR 2632, f.98.

³⁵ CR 2632, f.98.

at Brackley; he rode on to Stowe staying with the Temple family, sheep owners with whom he had already had dealings and would do so again.³⁶ The next entry records expenditure 'at the earl of Kent's, presumably the house at Wrest belonging to Henry Grey, the 6th earl (1541-1615), an otherwise unknown, and very surprising, contact. Grey had been one of those present at the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in February 1587. Although there was a family connection,³⁷ running through the Hussey family, Anne Sheldon's step-mother, it may not have been strong enough to permit Ralph to call in; it seems more probable that he had been summoned, in the same way that Walsingham had commanded Ralph's presence in London only a few months previously. The earl no doubt expressed his strong opinions about the potential dangers of men with recusant wives;³⁸ the point of the visit was that Ralph should hear them. But despite the earl's firm Protestantism Ralph appears to have been his guest for three days, in weather fine enough to play bowls, tactfully (and probably actually) losing bets with his host. Ralph further ingratiated himself by sending his own servant Robert Jones on an errand to London on the earl's behalf and paying the expenses.

There had been another reason also for this trip; family matters called. A further ten miles brought Ralph to Farley, the home of Mr George Rotheram, husband of Ralph's niece Anne.³⁹ Daughter of his aunt Alice Sheldon and William Gower of Redmarley,⁴⁰ Anne was Rotheram's second wife. Like so many other women she became the step-mother of children from a previous marriage as well as four children of her own and was probably already aware of potential legal problems ahead. By the next summer her husband was clearly ailing and considering arrangements for the division of his estates after his death between his first family and the second; Ralph and William Childe acted as Anne's trustees as they had been of the marriage settlement. When the provisions were challenged by the stepson after Rotheram's death in 1591/92 Ralph took the case to court on Anne's behalf.⁴¹

Ralph returned through Buckinghamshire calling on one, perhaps both, Dormer brothers, Robert at Wing near Aylesbury or John at Dorton on the Buckinghamshire-Oxfordshire border. Both were already Ralph's longstanding associates, as their father had been of William Willington.⁴² Next year the brothers would put their names to the sixth of the eight recognizances agreed with his creditor, the money-lender Thomas Horde.⁴³ A visit might be as much a matter of tact as of convenience. From either property it was an easy ride via Deddington to Weston where his presence was necessary for the annual Michaelmas audit.

³⁶ John Temple paid Ralph £400, CR 2632, f. 4, whether as a loan or for sheep purchased is not clear; for the family see Gay, 'The Rise of an English Country Family: Peter and John Temple, to 1603', pp. 367-390.

³⁷ See Chapter 11.

³⁸ Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', pp. 23-36 at p. 30.

³⁹ Younger brother of Sir George Rotheram, sons of Sir John, *Vis 'n Bedfordshire 1566, 1582, 1634*, p. 50. He and both wives were commemorated in a brass in Luton church.

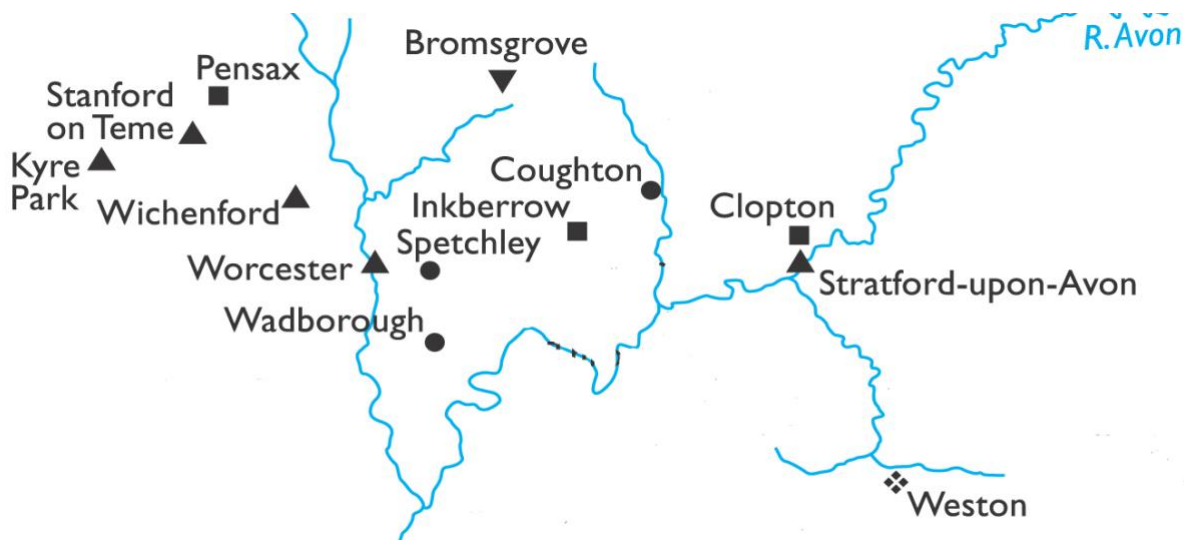
⁴⁰ Shrawley, VCH *Worcestershire*, 4, 337-341. In 1573 William Gower settled the manor of Shrawley, bought in 1558 from William Sheldon who reserved an annual rent of £9 to himself and his heirs, jointly on his two elder daughters, TNA C 142/247/102.

⁴¹ TNA C 78/91/7, mm. 25-27, available on AALT.

⁴² TNA C 146/9441, C 146/9447, C 146/9450, C 146/9453, C 146/9406; C 78/58/3.

⁴³ 22 November 1588, TNA E 124/3, p.120.

Next year, late in August, less than a month after the dispersal of the Armada, Ralph embarked on an intriguing round trip, rather over 160 miles in 11 days, into west Worcestershire.⁴⁴ From Stratford upon Avon, where he and Mrs Sheldon dined then stayed with old friends, the Clopton family, Ralph called first on cousin William at Abberton before going on to more distant relatives, the Washbourne family at Wichenford.⁴⁵ From there he went to his lawyer Arthur Salwey at Stanford on Teme,⁴⁶ and to Edward Pytte at Kyre Park, once a legal clerk in London, now a fellow JP to whom Ralph had lent and been repaid £40.⁴⁷ The visit perhaps had an ulterior motive; next year 2000 ‘bordes’ from Pytte’s demolition work at his newly acquired property were received at Weston.⁴⁸



From Pensax, home of his long-serving lawyer William Childe, Ralph seems to have headed for Coughton.⁴⁹ He would have picked up the most direct route taking him across the

⁴⁴ CR 2632, ff. 210-12.

⁴⁵ John’s father William married Ann daughter of Baldwin Sheldon and John himself married Mary, daughter of Anne Sheldon by her first husband Savage, c. 1574, BAH Barnard Miscellany, folder no.74. John enrolled at the Inner Temple in November 1571, Cooke, *Members*, p.68; as JP listed mid-1582, BLib Lansdowne 35, f. 137-38 and, same year as former sheriff 1582; served again in 1600. Collector of subsidy, E 115/338/37, 20 Nov 28 Eliz [1585]; E 115/340/146, 28 April 29 Eliz [1587]; E 115/340/141, 1 June 30 Eliz [1588]; E 115/346/116, 15th day [month lost] 4 James [1606-07]; E 115/338/49, 23 June 1604; E 115/338/51, 17 Nov 1604; E 115/380/37, undated.

⁴⁶ Salwey, born around 1550, died in 1616, leaving an uninformative will, TNA PROB 11/127/283. Involved in county administration at least from 1576 when he was escheator (*CPR 1575-78*, no. 242) together with the Lyttletons and, apparently, John Talbot of Grafton; he would later be amongst the collectors of the subsidy several times, [E 115/351/50, 5 April 43 Eliz [1601]; E 115/337/16, 5 February 44 Eliz [1602]; E 115/363/99 for 2nd May 1607.] Between 1581-83 he acted as Ralph’s attorney on matter of intrusion into Q’s lands at Brailes, BAH MS 3061/1/807 (former 168208), a matter as yet unresolved; it may have been in this connection that he was paid for making copies of legal material in 5 May 1588, CR 2632, f. 172. A petition to Cecil Lord Burghley dated July 1588 requested he be joined to a commission investigating loss of goods of one Richard Dawkes in suspicious circumstances, TNA SP 46/35 f.93.

⁴⁷ Visit CR 2632, f. 211; repayment CR 2632, f. 3; As JP, first noted mid-1582, Lansdowne 35, f. 137-38; sheriff 1611. Chylde, ed., *Kyre Park Charters*, no. 103 10 November 1586. Pytte’s clerkship to the Westminster courts was served in the Phillisars’ Office in Falcon Court near St Dunstan’s in the West, Fleet Street, *Charters*, nos 116,120..

⁴⁸ Chylde, ‘The Building of Kyre Park’, pp. 202-05, 261-64; vol.xxii, pp. 24-26, 50-53, esp. p.25, p.204.

⁴⁹ CR 2632, f. 212; the entry appears to read ‘Sir’ Thomas Throckmorton’.

Severn north of Worcester by ‘the ferry at Upton’ presumably that between Holt (W) and Uphampton in Ombersley (E) towards Droitwich.⁵⁰ Two days later he rode to Wadborough, one of the few occasions when someone thought to pack food for him. He stayed only overnight, possibly to check on affairs there including the building of a barn by Philip Smyth,⁵¹ since, following his brother’s untimely death, the property was now his. Ralph’s last visit was to Mrs Foskewe at Inkberrow who recommended a plasterer, engaged almost immediately after Ralph’s return to Weston.⁵²

For various reasons the visit to Wadborough had been essential. Well regarded in the county, William’s demise in September 1587 had been sudden and unexpected. Only his second wife, Jane Hodge, survived the cluster of deaths in the village over a few days. She had proved William’s brief will, written on September 30, the previous October.⁵³ William’s inquisition post mortem, now lost, was taken the following May by William Childe and others.⁵⁴ With almost indecent haste after his brother’s demise Ralph sold a farm and woodland in Wadborough to his cousin, William of Abberton.⁵⁵ The estate at Frampton, Gloucestershire, was sold in 1590.⁵⁶

The Sheldons’ acquisition of the park at Wadborough is an illuminating story.⁵⁷ As tenants of Sir Richard Neville the property had been occupied first by William (d. 1517) and then by Henry Sheldon,⁵⁸ possibly his brother. The park and fields were accepted as security for repayment of a loan of 1000 marks made to Neville’s heir, John, third Baron Latimer, by Ralph Sheldon and William his son in 1531. John’s failure to repay and new legislation introduced a more formal element into arrangements when in 1541 a recognizance was sworn by Neville to the Sheldons. By 1561 the fourth baron, another John, had still failed to repay and William Sheldon demanded that the lands be extended to him so that he could claim the revenues directly; he set a false valuation, so low that it was virtually impossible that Neville could regain the property. Face was saved, and perhaps some sort of compromise reached, when in his will of 1570 William Sheldon gave occupation to his second son William, under supervision of his older brother Ralph, with the obligation to pay an annual sum to John’s daughter Lucy now Lady Cornwallis. Her father seems to have made one final effort to

⁵⁰ The reference is unlikely to be to the crossing at Upton downstream from Worcester which would have been a long and unnecessary detour, no easier since the bridge there had long been ruinous.

⁵¹ CR 2632, ff. 200, 208.

⁵² CR 2632, f. 212, 216.

⁵³ TNA PROB 11/71/283, proved to his second wife Jane (Hodges). William’s first marriage took place in 1562 at Beoley [Beoley Par Reg, 8 Oct 1562, Worcester, Hive, BA 5686, b 850 1a vol 1 1538-1652] to Elizabeth daughter of Sir Richard Leveson of Lilleshall, Shropshire, [*CPR 1560-63*, p. 596 27 Feb 1563]. His second may be marked by a conveyance of lands in Broadway co. Worcs, [Bradwey] by Ralph Sheldon and William Childe to Baldwin Hodges in 1577, BAH MS 3061/1/262 (former 167662). His bequests went to his nephews Walter and William Savage; his executors were to be his brother Ralph and his cousin Walter Savage. An as yet unidentified Edward Sheldon of Warwick was mentioned. William never left England.

⁵⁴ *CPR 1587-88*, L&I, vol 297, no. 180, original no longer extant.

⁵⁵ Close Roll 30 Eliz, part 3, 27 Nov 30 Eliz [1587, cited from Lane & Willington Families, Savage Collection SCLA ER 82/6/100; Dr Coventre was paid for the deal on 28 November 1587, CR 2632, f.140.

⁵⁶ *CPR 1589-90*, L & I vol. 301, no. 688; the first mention in connection with William’s father is *L&P Henry VIII*, 1546, no.1245, p. 616. How it was acquired is unknown.

⁵⁷ TNA C 2/Eliz/L5/37.

⁵⁸ The Inq p.m. of his son John in 1559, TNA WARD 7/102/65, states that Henry was dead.

resolve the dispute, taking the case to Chancery in 1575; Ralph agreed to let matters remain as they had been set out in his father's will. John's death without heirs in 1577 and Lucy's in 1583 effectively extinguished the obligations and gave ownership to the Sheldon family.

Ralph's journeys were punishing. At an average speed of four miles per hour any journey longer than twelve miles would take three hours; on some days he seems to cover 40 miles. Although in Worcestershire he had friends and could at least rest, both himself and the horses, he does not seem to have balked at riding stretches of 30 miles regularly. Some were longer; on one occasion he appears to have ridden 61 miles from Oxford to Uxbridge and his return from Leicester to Weston in March 1588 would have been a distance of 54 miles.⁵⁹ They were, however, part of the pattern of Ralph's life, one to which he had been accustomed since childhood, traceable before the information of the account book. Thus in April 1576 he had been at John Talbot's house in Bromsgrove; in April 1584 he told an unwelcome caller that the next week he intended to ride from Beoley via Abberton to Wadborough where he would stay with his brother. Next day both would attend the quarter sessions and the day after Ralph would leave for London. In July 1586 he was present at the Assizes in Worcester and in October at the quarter sessions.⁶⁰ A similar pattern can be seen later in journeys to Suffolk in 1592 and 1597.⁶¹ Not until 1603 is there a glimpse of a man beginning to feel his age.⁶²

Travelling was very noticeably a male pursuit. Although Mrs Sheldon made journeys at regular intervals, few were more than a day's ride. In addition to moving between the family's properties (Beoley, Skilts, Deddington) she visited friends at Somerton, Oxfordshire, and occasionally accompanied Ralph to Sudeley Castle, the home of Giles Brydges, Lord Chandos, her distant kinsman; once she went alone. She may not always have ridden. Only one brief reference, payment of 17s. for a pair of coach wheels in June 1587 *en route* to her brother's house at Coughton,⁶³ indicates both that it was theoretically possible that both she and their four unmarried daughters participated in at least some of his trips and that the family was keeping up with new-fangled fashions in transport. The coach, an expensive item, was first seen in any numbers in London streets in the mid-1560s and quickly became a mark of status.⁶⁴ Ralph would have been able to call on the expert advice of Richard Hyckes who, employed in the Wardrobe of the royal household but sometimes resident at Barcheston as manager of a planned weaving enterprise there, had assisted in the making of the royal coaches.⁶⁵

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⁵⁹ CR 2632, ff. 17, 166.

⁶⁰ TNA LR 14/816; STAC 5/ R41/32; STAC 5/H31/35, sheet 6 Bromsgrove October 1586; at Worcester Assizes in July 1586 see TNA KB 29/223, [AALT Page \(uh.edu\)](#) ; [AALT Page \(uh.edu\)](#)

⁶¹ See Chapters 13, 15.

⁶² TNA SP 14/3, f.4 1 August 1603.

⁶³ CR 2632, f. 72; the saddler of Chipping Norton was paid 10s 5d 'for furniture for the coche hours' 28 June 1588, f. 201.

⁶⁴ Edwards, 'Elizabethan London Tradesmen', p.85; Petre's coach cost £30 7s 1d.

⁶⁵ Munby, 'Queen Elizabeth's Coaches', pp. 311-67 where Hyckes was read as Kirke; Scott-Warren, 'News, sociability, and bookbuying in early modern England: the letters of Sir Thomas Cornwallis', pp. 380-402, at p. 398.