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Mathias Bezill, the Unpopular Alien?

In his tweet of 17 May 2012, David Carpenter referred to Mathias Bezill as ‘Bezill a foreign servant of Henry III and here his barn at Sherston Wilts was broken into - showing his unpopularity.’ The evidence to support this is taken from the Curia Regis rolls of the Hilary term of 1254.¹ In this Fine of the Month, helped considerably by material from the fine rolls, we will take a fresh look at Bezill’s career, focusing in particular on the question of his alleged unpopularity as an alien in England.

There can be no doubt that Mathias was an alien. He was first noted in English governmental records in 1233 the timing of which is significant as it was during the time of the ascendancy of Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester and former tutor to Henry III, who, in 1232, had engineered the fall from power of Hubert de Burgh, the most powerful minister after the death of William Marshal in 1219. Roches was from Touraine, the province which is centred along the valley of the Loire, and showed no hesitation in promoting the career of his fellow Tourangeux either as new men at court or as old retainers who had suffered something of an eclipse after the reign of King John. Thus Engelard de Cigogné once one of John’s most prominent soldier courtiers, reemerged as a significant power. Amongst other men who did well were members of the Tourangeux families who had become so unpopular under John that a chapter (50) of Magna Carta had proscribed them and Engelard by name and had required the King to banish them. Typically John refused to do so but by 1232 they had died or become less important. It was on 3 January, whilst the court was at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, that Mathias was recorded as being granted land at Gomshall in Surrey to be held by service of a quarter of a knight’s fee.² That Mathias was part of the Chapter 50 Tourangeau clan is made clear by the fine of January 1239 when Aymer de Chanceaux,³ who belonged to one of the families named in the chapter, was pardoned a debt of seventeen pounds to the Exchequer at the instance of Mathias, his nephew.⁴ This is reinforced by the evidence from another fine, of 1250, when Mathias paid £100 for the lands and heirs of Guy de Chanceaux.⁵ A final proof of his Tourangeau origin can be found in a seal of Reynaud Besile .

¹ TNA:PRO KB 26/152 m3d. which can be seen at http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H3/KB26_152/0008d.htm

² *Calendar of the Charter Rolls 1225-1257*, p.174 (hereafter *CChR*); *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1231-34*, p.184 (hereafter *CR*).

³ From Chanceaux (Indre-et-Loire)

⁴ *CFR* 1238-9, no. 65 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_036.html).

⁵ *CFR* 1249-50, no. 470 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_047.html).

fl.1368-83, who came from Touraine and bore the same arms, argent, three torteaux.⁶ There is just one caveat. The family gave its name to Besselsleigh, about five miles south west of Oxford and in, around 1535, the antiquary, John Leland wrote ‘The Blessells hathe bene lords of it syns the time of Edwarde the First or afore’ and ‘The Blessells cam out of Province in France, and were men of activitye in feates of armes, as it apperithe in monuments in Leigh how he faught in listes with a strange knight that chalengyed him, at the whiche deade the Kynge and Quene at that tyme of England were present’.⁷ So could Mathias have come from another part of what is now France? The confusion is easily explained as Mathias was a prominent member of the circle of Eleanor of Provence serving the Queen as Marshal of her household and later as her Steward, and, as we have seen, he was in England by the beginning of 1233, well before the arrival of Eleanor.⁸ So there can be no doubt that Mathias was an alien, but was he unpopular?

Establishing a solid case for Mathias’s unpopularity hinges on five elements; his name, his difficulty in finding a woman to marry him, his relationships with his tenants and neighbours, his difficulties in Gloucestershire and finally, more broadly, as an alien at a time of rampant xenophobia.

Whilst Mathias Bezills’ descendants used the particular ‘de’,⁹ when he first appeared in England there was no suggestion that his surname was a toponym.¹⁰ There is a Bézelle in the commune of Lesaire in the département of Tarn¹¹ but it has been assumed that Bezill was derived from the verb ‘*besilier*’ meaning ‘to snatch or steal’,¹² hence Vincent’s description of Mathias as ‘The Plunderer’.¹³ In a 1309 document, ‘*besiller*’ was used to describe the mutilation of a document.¹⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the origin of ‘embezzle’ as French, meaning maltreat, ravage and fraudulently destroy and stated that it was used in a pejorative sense in late Latin.¹⁵ It might seem strange that a man was prepared to accept an epithet of little credit and pass it down to his family but this practice was not unknown. For instance, in Yorkshire, thrusting families gloried in

⁶ G. Demay, *Inventaire de Sceaux de la Collection Clairambault*, nos. 968-9.

⁷ *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543*, v, ed. L. Toulmin Smith (1910), 72-3. But nothing has been discovered about the tournament referred to.

⁸ *CR*, 1237-42, p.342.; *CR* 1253-4, p.218 and *Rôles Gascon*, i, 3020.

⁹ But John Bezill in his letter to the Queen in about 1280 does not use the particular, TNA: PRO SC1 29/190.

¹⁰ The case for a toponym origin is further undermined by Renaud Besille found over a century later in Touraine who did not use the particular, G. Demay, *Inventaire de Sceaux de la Collection Clairambault*, nos. 968-9. If he had been a descendant of the later English Bezills he might have used their ‘de’.

¹¹ E. Negré, *Toponymie de la France*, ((Geneva, 1991), no 14423.

¹² *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, eds. H. W. Rothwell, L. W. Stone and T. B. W. Reid (1992), p.67.

¹³ N. Vincent, *Peter des Roches; An alien in English Politics 1205-1238* (Cambridge, 1996), p.330.

¹⁴ *Calendar of Chancery Warrants 1244-1326* (1927), p.303.

¹⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, v, 162.

the names of Malebisse and Mauleverer meaning ‘evil beast’ and ‘evil hound’ respectively.¹⁶ Uncomplimentary English names such as ‘Halknaked’ were preserved elsewhere.¹⁷

Nicholas Vincent has argued that Mathias had difficulty in persuading an English heiress to marry him.¹⁸ He was granted the marriages of Reginald Basset’s daughter,¹⁹ Roger de Notton’s heirs,²⁰ Constance de Ponte Arche²¹ and Margery de Rivers.²² In 1246, Beatrice, widow of John de Bassingham, was excused her oath not to marry without the King’s consent providing she took Mathias as her husband.²³ She seems to have married Robert of Lowick (Northants) instead,²⁴ but, if so, she must have been quickly widowed for by 1249 she is found married to Mathias.²⁵ The case for reluctant brides might not be as persuasive as Vincent suggested and the marriage grants might have been ways of giving Mathias financial benefits. Of the potential brides he mentioned, it is not certain that there was a Notton heiress; neither Constance nor Margery are known to have paid not to marry Mathias. Only Beatrice, who presumably did pay for a free marriage if she married Lowick first, ended up marrying Mathias. But, if Mathias had been looking for a bride since 1233, Vincent’s overall conclusion is sound. Beatrice brought him some landed interests but these seem to have come from her dower rather from any inheritance, and as such could only be held by Mathias for her lifetime. Still the property seems quite substantial. Through her Mathias had lands at Bassingham (Lincolnshire),²⁶ Brogborough and Odell (Bedfordshire),²⁷ and lands in Buckinghamshire.²⁸ The presentation in 1261 by Mathias of his nephew, John Luvel, to the living of Minsterworth (Gloucestershire)²⁹ raises the possibility that Beatrice was born a Luvel.

As shown by an entry in the fine rolls, Mathias’s close connections with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire began in 1233 when, following the rebellion of Richard Marshal against the regime of Peter des Roches, lands were taken from those who had joined the rebellion at Wycombe with horses and arms. They were distributed to men who could be trusted by Bishop Peter and his

¹⁶ H. M. Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders and Thugs* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp.62-3.

¹⁷ TNA:PRO KB 27/213 m.xiii.

¹⁸ Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, p.414.

¹⁹ *CFR 1233-4*, no.289 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_033.html).

²⁰ *CR, 1237-42*, p.258.

²¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls 1232-47*, p.475 (hereafter *CPR*); *CFR 1240-1*, no.349 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_037.html).

²² *CPR, 1232-47*, p.375.; *CFR 1233-4*, no.368 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_033.html).

²³ *CPR, 1232-47*, p.478.

²⁴ W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights Fees*, i-iii (1923-5), ii, 410; *Final Concords of the County of Lincoln from the Feet of Fines 1244-1272*, ii, ed. C. W. Foster, Lincoln Record Society, xvii (1920), 38.

²⁵ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1245-51*, 265. The proof of her identity can be found at TNA:PRO C66/57 m.5.

²⁶ TNA: PRO KB 26/185, m.24d.

²⁷ *CR, 1261-4*, p.244. Odell (Wahull), *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1247-51*, 267.

²⁸ *CR, 1261-4*, p.242.

²⁹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p.141.

closest colleagues. Mathias gained the Gloucestershire holdings of Robert Musard as well as those of Ralph Bloet in Wiltshire and Hampshire.³⁰ But these gains were only temporary as was the grant of Hubert de Burgh's manor of Westhall in Suffolk in the following year. In compensation for the loss of Westhall, which was restored to Hubert, came the life grant of Sherston (Wiltshire) in 1240, with Mathias paying £15 annually for it.³¹ Sherston was also *Terra Normanorum*³² but its status whilst held by Mathias is confused. The initial grant in December 1240 was for life.³³ When Mathias was respited the scutage due for Sherston in 1241, he was said to hold it in chief and there was no reference to a life grant.³⁴ A market and fair at Sherston were granted in 1241, the grant noted that Mathias held the lands for life but the market and fair were for the benefit of future holders of the manor.³⁵ This suggests that Mathias was consciously trying to convert Sherston into a hereditary holding. Then, in 1247, Mathias and his heirs were granted free warren in his demesne lands at Sherston,³⁶ a sign that the lands were expected to be held in perpetuity. During 1248 Mathias was recorded as holding it of the king's gift, when the manor was valued at £36 p.a.³⁷ In 1253 a further grant was made which reads like a hereditary grant, it being held as a quarter of a fee.³⁸ He does not seem to have answered for any of the £15 farm at the exchequer.³⁹ However, there is no trace of Sherston in Mathias' *inquisition post mortem*.⁴⁰ The Hundred Rolls do not contain any more evidence⁴¹ and in 1270/1 his son, John, was not paying a farm for it.⁴² But, in March 1280, John was confirmed as a life tenant⁴³ and, in 1281, when he was challenged by the King to prove his right to the assize of bread and ale as well as a gallows at Sherston, the jury stated that he only held the manor for life.⁴⁴

It was at Sherston that Mathias had his barns broken into by Ralph de Hoville of Winterborne and Robert le Munt who stole his corn. In Sherston a local jury found for his opponent when Mathias

³⁰ *CFR 1232-3*, no.297 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_032.html). The Close Rolls show that he also gained Bloet lands in Dorset and Somerset, *Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 1231-34*, 273.

³¹ *CChR, 1225-57*, p. 255; *CR, 1237-42*, p.254.

³² See also F. M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy 1189-1204: Studies in the History of the Angevin Empire* (Manchester, second edition, 1960), pp.342-3.

³³ *CPR, 1237-42*, p.239.

³⁴ TNA: PRO C 60/39A m2.

³⁵ *CChR, 1225-57*, p.260.

³⁶ *CChR, 1225-1257*, p.328.

³⁷ *Book of Fees*, 1421. *Crown Pleas of the Wiltshire Eyre 1249*, ed. C. A. F. Meekings, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Records Branch, xvi (1960), no.217.

³⁸ It is partly damaged and does not mention whether the grant was for in perpetuity, for life or at the king's pleasure, *CChR, 1226-57*, p.436.

³⁹ 1245/6 and 1255/6, TNA: PRO E 372/ 90 ms.5 and 5d. and E 372/100 ms.11 and 11d.

⁴⁰ *Calendar of the Inquisitions Post Mortem*, i, no.718.

⁴¹ The Hundred Rolls are silent on Sherston.

⁴² TNA: PRO E372/115 m.12.

⁴³ *CPR, 1272-81*, p.366.

⁴⁴ TNA: PRO JUST 1/1000, m.48.

had contested his right to common pasture⁴⁵ but in a dispute with the abbot of Pershore over the impact that the abbot's market at Hawkesbury had on Mathias' market at Sherston, the local men supported Mathias.⁴⁶ However, this might have been because they benefitted from the market.

Following the Provisions of Oxford, Hugh Bigod, the new justiciar appointed at the Barons' insistence, began a special eyre to investigate nationwide grievances. On 30 September 1258 Mathias was before Bigod at Clarendon. As shown by a fine of May that year,⁴⁷ he had been accused of dispossessing one Clement of Sherston of two virgates at Sherston and the jury had found against him. Mathias accused the jury of swearing a false oath and claimed that John was his villein but the jury had said he was a free tenant. A new jury confirmed the verdict of the earlier jury and Mathias was to be committed to prison.⁴⁸ It is not clear whether he was jailed but he presumably paid a fine for his release. No sign appears in the Pipe Rolls of unpaid amercements for the case.⁴⁹ Paul Brand believed that the committal to prison was standard practice⁵⁰ but it is tempting to see the outcome as evidence of anti-alien feeling at that time. Would a man as well connected as Mathias have been sued, lost such a case or been imprisoned before 1258? One of the complaints of the Barons was that certain men close to the King were not touched by the ordinary procedures of justice. Thus Mathias' potential imprisonment at this time was an indication of the ebbing of the power of alien courtiers around the king.

During 1258 Mathias brought the case that ended before Bigod.⁵¹ If nothing else, this case shows Mathias' persistence and, at its worst, that he was a ruthless landlord. In Sherston, he brought an action against William le Gras and twelve others for taking goods worth 50 marks in 1268.⁵² Cases recorded in the last years of Mathias's life indicate local difficulties elsewhere and in particular with the lands his wife held in dower. He sued Walter de Wahull (Odell) over the theft of goods at Odell by Herbert de Wahull, and Geoffrey de Stanton for the taking of goods and chattels worth £100 from Bassingham in Lincolnshire.⁵³ Roger de Warbelon and six others stood accused of causing enormous damage at Paycote in Huntingdonshire.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, i, (1916), i, no.24.

⁴⁶ *The Roll of the Shropshire Eyre of 1256*, ed. A. Harding, Selden Society, xcvi (1981), 162.

⁴⁷ *CFR 1258-9*, no.250 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_056.html).

⁴⁸ A. Hershey, 'An Introduction to and Edition of the Hugh Bigod Eyre Rolls June 1258-February 1259' TNA: PRO JUST 1/1187 and JUST 1/873, Unpublished PhD thesis London University (1991), A 339, pp.394-5; D. A. Carpenter, 'King Henry III's Statute against the Aliens', in idem, *Reign of Henry III*, (1996), at p.269.

⁴⁹ TNA: PRO E 372/103 m.8/8d and 372/104 m.19.

⁵⁰ Personal discussion.

⁵¹ TNA: PRO KB 26/158 42 HIII Hilary term, *Coram Rege* plea roll m3d.

⁵² TNA: PRO KB 26/185 m.24.

⁵³ TNA: PRO KB 26/185 m.24d.; KB 26/184A m.2d.

⁵⁴ TNA: PRO KB 26/186 m.1d.

Wider hostility was shown to Mathias in Gloucestershire. By 1251, he was constable of Gloucester.⁵⁵ 1261 saw Henry III overthrowing the Provisions of Oxford and recovering royal power. He replaced sheriffs with those he could trust and Mathias Bezill added the shrievalty of Gloucestershire to his castellany of Gloucester castle.⁵⁶ There was a spectacular and violent reaction to Bezill's appointment. The county gentry of Gloucestershire gathered together and elected one of their own men, William de Tracy, as sheriff. With a strong force, Bezill seized Tracy at a meeting of the county court and had him beaten and then dragged through the mire and imprisoned in Gloucester castle.⁵⁷ Although Robert of Gloucester referred to a popular election, David Carpenter has suggested that Tracy was, in fact, a member of the entourage of the earl of Gloucester.⁵⁸ The evidence that Carpenter relied on dates from 1267 but it refers back to 1265 and is about Earl Richard's son, Gilbert. However, it does carry some weight as a 1259 patent roll entry refers to Oliver de Tracy, who was possibly William's brother, as the nephew of the Earl Richard in 1259.⁵⁹ Revenge came when violence broke out nationally in 1263. In June, the Savoyard, Bishop of Hereford, Peter d' Aigueblanche, was attacked and imprisoned and Mathias was forced to endure a savage siege of Gloucester castle. Although he was forced to surrender, the Pershore chronicler noted that he was 'a foreigner, but a bold and brave knight' and included an elegant tribute stating that 'neither fear of death nor the threats of his enemies made him wish to voluntarily surrender and this was noted by his enemies as being worthy of praise'.⁶⁰ But this did not stop his Wiltshire lands at Sherston being ravaged. In Robert of Gloucester's words, 'they took Sir Maci and into the March led him, and Sir John Giffard took all his live stock to himself, and all that he found of his, and namely at Sherston'.⁶¹ Mathias was imprisoned at Eardisley castle (Herefordshire) alongside Aigueblanche. However, by the end of the year, Mathias and the Bishop were released from captivity.⁶²

⁵⁵ For a summary of his career see M. Ray "Three Alien Royal Stewards in Thirteenth-Century England; The Careers and Legacy of Mathias Bezill, Imbert Pugeys and Peter de Champvent", *Thirteenth Century England X, The Proceedings of the Durham Conference 2003*, eds., M Prestwich, R Britnell and R Frame (Woodbridge, 2005), 51-67.

⁵⁶ *CPR, 1258-66*, p.162.

⁵⁷ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, Roll Series, lxxxvi (1887), 736. Tracy had served the year before as justice of gaol delivery in Gloucester, *CPR, 1258-66*, p.119.

⁵⁸ D. A. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p. 374 relying on *CPR, 1266-72*, p.240.

⁵⁹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p.10.

⁶⁰ *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, Roll Series, 95 (1890), ii, 480. That the *Flores* at this time was written at Pershore abbey is argued by David Carpenter in a forthcoming article in *English Historical Review*.

⁶¹ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W.A.Wright, Roll Series, lxxxvi (1887),738; *Flores Historiarum AD 1067-1264*, ed. H. R. Luard, Roll Series, xcv (1890), ii, 480.

⁶² *Flores Historiarum AD 1067-1264*, ed. H. R. Luard, Roll Series, xcv (1890), ii, 484.

These events show that Bezill was still perceived nationally and locally as a foreigner; Robert of Gloucester drew particular attention to the French origins of Bezill⁶³ and the Pershore chronicler also referred to Bezill's' alien origin.⁶⁴ This perception counted even though Mathias had been in England for thirty years, had been associated with Gloucester castle for twelve years, had been accepted as constable by the Barons in 1258, had held lands in Gloucestershire, was married to an Englishwoman and had children born in England.

An item in a wardrobe account of the mid 1250s may throw a new light on these events.⁶⁵ One reading of this entry is that Bezill paid ten marks to have the sheriff of Gloucester removed. If so, why? Bezill had been constable of Gloucester since 1251. William of Lasborough, who was sheriff in April 1255,⁶⁶ was replaced in 1257 by Henry de Penbroke.⁶⁷ However, the *List of Sheriffs* also recorded Bezill as sheriff, on 10 January 1256⁶⁸ but there is no supporting evidence.

Lasborough is in the parish of Westonbirt. Bezill held lands at Sherston, about two miles away, from 1240⁶⁹ and at Didmarton (Gloucestershire), also about two miles way, from before 1260.⁷⁰ Perhaps Bezill was objecting to Lasborough as either a hindrance to his position as constable or it was a neighbour dispute or both. But if he did pay to have Lasborough removed, why was he only prepared, or expected, to pay a mere ten marks? So if Bezill had had a brush with a locally based sheriff in the 1250s, this might be a further reason for local hostility to him in the 1260s.

There must have been better relationships with some Gloucestershire men. During 1256, Mathias helped Robert de Meysey to obtain quittance of attendance at assizes, a charter of free warren and respite for five years from knighthood for his son.⁷¹ Even in Gloucester itself relations had not always been bad. When the Savoyard Peter de Champvent became constable, the burgesses alleged that he had kept them from using the common pasture in the Southmead as had Roger de Clifford during the time of war, but Mathias had permitted them.⁷² And Mathias must have retained some affection for the city as he funded an obit in the abbey.⁷³

⁶³ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, Roll Series, lxxxvi (1887), 736.

⁶⁴ *Flores Historiarum AD 1067-1264*, ed. H. R. Luard, Roll Series, xcv (1890), ii, 480.

⁶⁵ TNA: PRO E 372/99 m.15d. Account of Artaud of Saint Roman, keeper of the Wardrobe from 1254 until Mich 1257 'et de x m. receptis de Matheo Bezill' pro vic Glouernie amovendo'. (I would like to thank Dr Ben Wild for drawing this to my attention.)

⁶⁶ *The List of Sheriffs for England and Wales from the Earliest Times to AD 1831 (1892-1936)*, p.49. This is confirmed by CPR, 1247-58, p.407

⁶⁷ CPR, 1247-56, p.556.

⁶⁸ *List of Sheriffs*, p.49.

⁶⁹ CChR, 1225-57, p.255.

⁷⁰ CPR, 1258-66, p.101; CR, 1259-61, p.393.

⁷¹ CFR 1255-6, no.798 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_053.html).

⁷² *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, i, (1916), i, 378.

⁷³ *Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae*, ed. W. H. Hart, Roll Series, xxxiii, i (1867), 37.

At a national level, Mathias was not always unpopular. When the storm broke around the king's head in 1258, the Barons in their petition of that May asked that all royal castles including those adjoining harbours from which ships sail, should be committed to the custody of men born in England and that no women shall be disparaged by being married to 'men who are not true-born Englishmen'.⁷⁴ Whilst the Poitevin, Elias Rabayn and the Savoyard, Imbert Pugeys were replaced at Corfe castle and the Tower of London, Mathias Bezill was retained as constable of Gloucester.⁷⁵

It is not certain whether Mathias was at the Battle of Lewes in May 1264 but it is unlikely, as he seems instead to have been part of the royal garrison at Windsor castle. When, presumably under Montfort's instructions, the captive king ordered him and others there to come to court, they prevaricated for two months despite a series of offers of safe conduct and escort.⁷⁶ The stand-off persisted until at least July.⁷⁷ Although stalwart in his support for Henry III in the Barons' War, Mathias's rapprochement with the Montfortians was indicated when, before the battle of Evesham, he was granted at the king's pleasure the houses at Woodhill (Wiltshire), the former property of William de Englescheville.⁷⁸

When the Barons' War came to an end, opportunities for the acquisition of lands owned by real or suspected Montfortians were open to those with royalist credentials. It appears that Mathias took advantage of the post war disorder to enrich himself and this too cannot have made him popular. Some lands might have been in his hands by royal gift. He had been given the Huntingdonshire lands of Robert de Hardreull who had been killed at Evesham. The king 'out of humanity and grace' allowed Robert's widow some of the lands for her support.⁷⁹ Nicholas de Dene, who was said to have fought against the king at Northampton, went to court to reclaim his lands. When a jury of twelve knights said that he had not been a rebel, Mathias lost.⁸⁰ Others were obtained without due process. Seven years after Mathias's death, it was disclosed that Ralph Perot, who was

⁷⁴ *Documents of the Baronial Movement of Reform and Rebellion 1258-1267*, eds. R. F. Treharne and I. J. Sanders (Oxford, 1973), no.3, p.81.

⁷⁵ *Documents of the Baronial Movement*, no.5, pp. 101, 105, 113. *CPR, 1247-58*, pp.638-9.

⁷⁶ *CPR, 1258-66*, pp.322, 324, 325, 329-330.

⁷⁷ *CPR, 1258-66*, pp.329-30, 359.

⁷⁸ *CR 1264-8*, pp.11, 52. The grant was authorised by both the king and the justiciar. The timing of William's death is unknown; he was not a Montfortian who lost his lands after the Barons' War, *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, i, (1916), i. Theobald de Englescheville was a Queen's household knight who had lands in the same Devon lordship as Bezill: H.Ridgeway, 'The Politics of the English Royal Court 1247-65 with special reference to the role of the Aliens', Unpublished D.Phil thesis, Oxford University (1983), 412; *Book of Fees*, 1386.

⁷⁹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p.550.

⁸⁰ *Rotuli Selecti ad res Anglicas et Hibernas specantes in Domo Capit. West. Monaster. deprompti*, ed. J. Hunter (1834), pp.171, 200.

an enemy of the king on the side of the earl of Leicester, had had his lands seized by Mathias acting as constable of Dover.⁸¹

There is one circle in which Mathias was popular and always retained his good name. This was in the royal court. Serving as her marshal and steward, he was particularly close to Queen Eleanor.⁸² Indeed, this may well explain his survival in 1258 when the queen and her party of Savoyards at the very least consented to the revolution in order to be rid of their Lusignan rivals.⁸³ It was not till 1263 that the queen was marked down and Bezill and the Savoyard Bishop Aigueblanche with her.⁸⁴ Bezill also received a continuous stream of favours from the king. From the close and patent rolls starting in 1238 until his death in 1268,⁸⁵ he received a valuable wardship, twenty three tuns of wine, one hundred and twenty seven deer and sixty four trees, a sparrow hawk, two sows and six bream. In addition his wife was given three tuns of wine, fifteen deer and six oaks. The fine rolls disclose other gifts and concessions such as a gift of 30 marks and remittance of moneys owed for the holding of Gloucester castle and crops growing on assarts in Essex and a tun of wine.⁸⁶

In the last years of his life and in the aftermath of the Barons' War, Mathias was so respected that he was entrusted with the control of the gateway to England, Dover castle, as well as the keeping of its port and Sandwich by the Lord Edward.⁸⁷

One is drawn to the conclusion that Mathias Bezill was sometimes, but not always, unpopular. He behaved with courage and tenacity at times and with tact on others but he went too far in degrading the locally elected sheriff of Gloucestershire and seems to have been an oppressive landlord. His alien provenance gave an added dimension when people were impacted on, or upset, by his actions but, on an objective judgement, was he worse than many other men of similar rank and of English birth?

⁸¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, i, (1916), 1024.

⁸² See M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 128, 159, 183, 189, 164, 193.

⁸³ See H.W. Ridgeway, 'The lord Edward and the Provisions of Oxford (1258): a study in faction', *Thirteenth Century England I* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp.89-99. Although the Savoyard, Imbert Pugeys lost the Tower of London in 1258, he continued as the king's steward.

⁸⁴ Carpenter, 'King Henry III's 'statute' against aliens'.

⁸⁵ *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls 1226-40*, p.311.

⁸⁶ *CFR 1242-3*, no., 451(http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_040.html); 1257-8, no.60 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_055.html); 1260-61, no.425 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_058.html); 1250-51, no.1088 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_048.html); 1251-2, no.628 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_049.html).

⁸⁷ *CPR, 1258-66*, p.512.