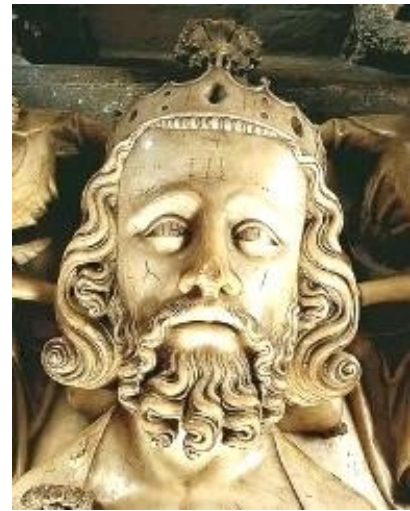


Examples of pardons granted by Edward II

On 23 January 1325 Edward II (his effigy in Gloucester Cathedral is shown right) ordered three senior officials, Sir William Bereford, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, Sir Walter de Norwich, Chief Baron of the Exchequer and Sir Geoffrey le Scrope, Chief Justice of the King's Bench to take mainprises (a type of bail) from those seeking a royal pardon in return for which they were required to serve in Gascony with wages paid by the King. Those indicted were required to come to Westminster or to send friends as representatives. On return from Gascony they were to answer to the King's Court if anyone wished to speak against them for their crimes. A month earlier an order had been sent to the sheriff of Yorkshire and other sheriffs to proclaim that anyone who had been outlawed and wished to go to Gascony with the King would be pardoned if they could find sufficient security. The reason was because the King of France had assembled a large army with the intention of disinheriting Edward II of his Duchy of Gascony and he wished to take as large a force to Gascony as he could. Three criminals granted pardons had connections with this area:



- On 20 February 1325 at Westminster, Edward II pardoned Ingram Follenfant of Adwick on Dearne for the death of William Bereford (possibly a kinsman of the Chief Justice) before Christmas and for his breaking out of Tickhill prison (at the Castle) in which he had been detained for the death and for other homicides, felonies and outlawry, as he had found his mainprise before Geoffrey le Scrope....His mainpernors (people willing to provide sureties) were John Bernard of Kent, William de Coventry of Warwickshire, Thomas de Gladebrok of Kent and Geoffrey de Hurst of Yorkshire who mainprised that Ingram would go into the King's service.
- On 8 March 1325 at the Tower of London, Edward II pardoned John, son of Henry Cartwright of Wadworth, indicted for the death of Roger de Emeldon before Christmas and for his outlawry as he has found mainprise before Geoffrey le Scrope...His mainpernors were William de Anne and William Hercy of Yorkshire who mainprised that John would go into the King's service.
- On 12 March 1325 at York, Edward II pardoned Robert de Tickhill, clerk, for homicides, robberies, felonies and outlawry as he had found mainprise before Walter de Norwich....His mainpernors were Hugh de Shirley of Yorkshire, John Bush of Lancashire, William de Barnby and John de Burgh who mainprised that Robert would go into the King's service.

Ingram, John and Robert were expected to go on the King's next crossing to Gascony to aid that English duchy, defend the King's right and stay in the King's service. At first Edward II ordered those pardoned to be at Portsmouth by 17 March; this was subsequently changed to 17 May, only for the King to announce that following a truce with the King of France, his brother-in-law, he would not leave for Gascony until 2 August. None of the three left England, nor did approximately 200 other criminals who had been pardoned by the King between January and May on the condition that they joined his service in Gascony. In June 1325 the King ordered sheriffs to look for all these men and imprison them.

The wide scale pardoning of men who had committed a range of serious crimes, in particular homicide, trespass and outlawry (but not treason or rebellion) in order to increase the numbers travelling to Gascony in the King's service, raises a question. Given the nature of their crimes, how disciplined and reliable would these men be even if they had received some military training? In the end their services were not needed. Other questions relate to Ingram Follenfant. How was he able to break out of custody at Tickhill Castle? He must have had assistance and an available horse. Did William de Anne, Constable of Tickhill Castle, turn a blind eye in the expectation that Ingram would seek mainprise and be pardoned?

Details about the three criminals' pardons and mainprises can be found in a collection of manuscripts known as the Gascon Rolls which cover the period 1317-1468 and relate mainly to the administration of Aquitaine/Gascony, under English rule until 1453. Only in the reign of Edward II were there so many references to pardons in the Rolls - 270 references in all from 1320. This compares with 73 references in the whole of the following century. The Rolls, held in The National Archives at Kew, are being translated and can be accessed via website <<http://www.gasconrolls.org/en/>>. The references for sections dealing with Ingram are C61/37/28 and C61/ 37/267.1, with John are C61/37/139 and C61/37/267.2 and with Robert are C61/37/166 and C61/37/267.2. The reference for the initial order to the three senior officials is C61/36/187. References for orders to the sheriff of Yorkshire are C61/36:172, C61/36:216, C61/36:264, and C61/36:456