The Conduct and Practice of Diplomacy during the Reign of Edward IV (1461-1483)

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The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how English diplomacy was conducted during the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483), by examining the personnel of Yorkist diplomacy (including ambassadors, agents, spies and messengers) and by studying the structure of the diplomatic polity. The practice of English diplomacy during the later Middle Ages has been much neglected by historians, whose work has mainly concentrated on the period after 1500. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, Henry VII became the first English king to employ resident ambassadors at foreign courts and it has been commonly suggested that efficient diplomatic contact with other states was a product of Henry VII's changes in diplomatic practice. Consequently, it has also been claimed that earlier diplomatic methods provided only clumsy and haphazard diplomatic contact with other powers, and limited opportunities for intelligence-gathering. However, it is the contention of this dissertation that prevailing notions of diplomacy during the later Middle Ages are in clear need of revision.

The first chapter of the dissertation is an assessment of the practical implications of the complicated legal principles and theory advocated by the authors of medieval tracts on diplomacy. The activities and responsibilities of Edward IV's diplomats (whether fully-empowered ambassadors or minor agents) are then discussed in chapters two and three. It will be argued that the common depiction of the temporary embassy as an inflexible means of diplomatic contact is inaccurate, since Edward IV's ambassadors had considerable freedom to act upon their own initiative and embarked upon informal negotiations without formal powers authorising them to do so. Moreover, diplomatic personnel of a lower status played a far more important role in late medieval diplomatic practice than most historians have allowed. Calais, England's last territorial possession in France, was a crucial (and neglected) part of the late medieval diplomatic polity. Hence, the king's governor of the town could exercise significant diplomatic influence. Indeed, during the 1460s the captaincy of Calais enabled the earl of Warwick to pursue a foreign policy almost independently of the king (the subject of chapter four). The general diplomatic duties of the king's officers at Calais, and the use of that town as a convenient site for diplomatic conferences and the logistical organisation of diplomacy, will be discussed in chapter five. The effectiveness of the late medieval information and intelligence-gathering network is assessed in chapter six of the dissertation.
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Edward L. Male
NOTE ON THE TEXT

Original spelling has been retained for all quotations from manuscripts, although capitalisation, punctuation and the use of 'u', 'v', 'i' and 'j' have been modernised. Where thorn is used in the original documents, it is transcribed as 'th'. In quotation from French manuscripts no accentuation has been added if none exists in the original document, although the accentuation used in later French printed sources is preserved. In quotation from both French and English manuscripts all common abbreviations have been silently expanded but other editorial insertions and comments are placed within square brackets. The place of publication of all printed sources cited in the footnotes and bibliography is London unless otherwise stated.
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INTRODUCTION

Garrett Mattingly’s celebrated Renaissance Diplomacy, published in 1955, is of fundamental significance to any discussion of the practice of diplomacy in Europe during the later Middle Ages and the early modern period. Renaissance Diplomacy is, essentially, the clearest possible exposition of the view that the changes in diplomatic practice which occurred in Italy during the fifteenth century were of crucial importance to the development of modern diplomacy and were indicative of the early and particular form of state formation which was taking place in Italy during the middle years of the fifteenth century. The change in diplomatic practice with which Mattingly was concerned was the increasing use of resident ambassadors. These officials, unlike earlier special (temporary or ad hoc) ambassadors, were expected to remain at their posts until recalled by their principals. The present historical definition of the resident requires that should such an ambassador be recalled, then that vacancy immediately ‘creates the necessity of nominating a successor’. Only in such a case can standing diplomacy be said to be in truly consistent operation. These men were not usually empowered to negotiate specific diplomatic matters (although they were on some occasions), instead they simply had a more ‘generalized’ diplomatic responsibility to uphold the international interests of their masters. This usually entailed informal discussions with their host government, and cultivating contacts ‘among those with authority in the host state’. Moreover, the crucial aspect of the residents’ remit was the fact that their primary responsibility was the collection and dissemination of diplomatic information. Mattingly suggested that ‘it was, apparently, as political intelligence officers that the residents demonstrated their usefulness’. As we will see in a later chapter, some residents were expected to write dispatches to their governments on a daily basis, (and regularly did so even in the early hours of the morning). It is not surprising then that they were initially regarded with some

4 For a summary of the typical duties of resident ambassadors see M. Mallett, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy in Renaissance Italy’, Diplomatic Studies Programme Discussion Papers, LVI (1999), 9.
5 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 104.
6 For example, Giovanni Pietro Panigarola wrote one letter to Galeazzo Maria Sforza at one o’clock in the morning on 20 March 1466 (Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in
suspicion. Louis XI of France (1461-83) clearly regarded them as little more than spies, and, just over a century later, Philip II of Spain was fearful that such men might be able to memorise and then report the contents of the papers lying on the king’s desk during the ambassador’s official audience.\(^7\)

So, Mattingly argued that the birth of modern diplomacy occurred in Italy, once the new practice of employing resident ambassadors had become commonplace in the peninsula during the fifteenth century.\(^8\) The special set of circumstances leading to this development in Italian diplomacy during the fifteenth century, Mattingly argued, were two-fold. Firstly, although, during the fifteenth century, the transalpine European powers ‘lacked the resources to organise stable states on the national scale’, in Italy ‘the smaller distances to be overcome brought the problems of transport and communication, and consequently the problems of collecting taxes and maintaining the central authority, within the range of practical solution’.\(^9\) It was Mattingly’s assertion that the expense of a network of resident embassies could only be met by a state ‘with ample funds and little need to account for them’.\(^10\) Secondly, Mattingly believed that the Italian ‘state-system’ foreshadowed the developments that would take place elsewhere in Europe in the following centuries, ‘Thus by the early 1440s Italy was dominated by five major states... no one of them strong enough to make head against the other four, no two...decisively stronger than any other two’.\(^11\) The development of five equally competitive and organised ‘proto-states’ in the relatively confined space of the Italian Peninsula, by the middle decades of the fifteenth century (Venice, Milan, Florence, Naples and the papacy) ‘made continuous vigilance in foreign affairs a prime necessity’.\(^12\) Consequently, the constant and ‘shifting pattern of opposing alliances...spread resident diplomatic agents throughout the peninsula’.\(^13\)

Then, after the peace of Lodi (signed between Venice and Milan in 1454), the powers of Italy agreed to a Most Holy League (signed by treaty at Venice on 30 August


1454). Whilst providing for a defensive alliance of twenty-five years, the League also required that its participants should immediately consult with each other, should a threat of war arise from within Italy. Thus, suggested Mattingly, the system of resident embassies developed before 1454 would be used thereafter to provide the means of consultation that the detailed conditions of the Most Holy League had necessitated.¹⁴

No reader of Renaissance Diplomacy can be left in any doubt of Mattingly’s belief that the development of the resident ambassador was of fundamental significance to the development of ‘Western diplomacy’, since he stated that they ‘differentiate our system strikingly from any other we know about elsewhere’.¹⁵ Moreover, Mattingly suggested that they brought along with them great improvements to late medieval and Renaissance diplomatic practice. By sending and receiving resident ambassadors, the Italian states were able to ensure that their chanceries were ‘the centre of a network of permanent embassies which provided a constant flow of information and channels of official intercourse with important neighbours’.¹⁶ Furthermore, we are told that to dispatch a resident ambassador was by far the most efficient means by which any power was able to ‘keep a restless ally in line, calm an unjust suspicion, or smooth over a threatened misunderstanding’.¹⁷ The resident ambassador provided a means of continuous diplomatic contact (at a relatively formal level) and a reliable and regular source of political intelligence.

Gradually, Mattingly argued, the other European powers saw the advantages of maintaining a network of resident embassies. Mattingly paid particular attention to the innovations of Ferdinand of Spain who, by 1495, had established resident embassies in the Netherlands (usually at Brussels), at the court of Henry VII of England and at the peripatetic court of Maximilian of Austria.¹⁸ Mattingly said, rather admiringly, of Henry VII, that he ‘seized power almost in the fashion of an Italian tyrant’, and his diplomacy is also depicted as Italianate, since Henry Tudor almost certainly seems to

¹⁴ Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 83. Tessa Beverley points out that the ‘forty years between 1454 and 1494 are characterised by minor conflicts between states which were often diplomatically diffused, damaging dynastic and territorial crises, and the construction of leagues and counter-leagues aimed at mediating increasingly tense and volatile inter-state relations’, eadem, ‘Diplomacy and elites: Venetian ambassadors, 1454-1494’, Diplomatic Studies Programme Discussion Papers, LI (1995), 3.
¹⁵ Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 60.
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 95.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 103 and see also Michael Mallett’s important article, idem, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy’, 9. Mallett’s views are substantially repeated, with minor amendments, in idem, ‘Italian Renaissance diplomacy’, Diplomacy and Statecraft, XII (2001), 61-70.
have been the first English king to adopt, in 1505, the Italian innovation of the resident ambassador.\textsuperscript{19}

So, by the early part of the sixteenth century, many of the major powers in Europe had come to adopt the relatively new invention of the resident ambassador. After the use of the resident had become standard practice in Italy from the middle of the fifteenth century, Mattingly claimed that they became thereafter ‘the most characteristic officers of Western diplomacy’.\textsuperscript{20} In contrast, the methods of diplomatic practice used before the adoption of resident ambassadors are depicted rather differently in \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}. If the diplomatic practice of those powers using resident ambassadors is portrayed as efficient, flexible and continuous, then the diplomatic practice of those powers using earlier methods is described by Mattingly as inefficient and dogged by delay, unnecessary bureaucracy and pompous formality. The earlier diplomatic methods are suggested to have been almost entirely reliant upon the missions of special (temporary or \textit{ad hoc}) ambassadors. And those missions, were, it is suggested, often delayed due to the ‘difficulty of meeting initial expenses’, then further delayed by a ‘solemn and public’ departure, and then even further hindered by a desire to travel ‘without undignified haste’.\textsuperscript{21} When the special ambassadors had finally reached their destination, the business of actual negotiation was postponed still further by the formal welcome of ‘persons of appropriate rank’ and then a ceremonial procession to the presence of the ruler to whom they had been sent, followed by a ceremonial audience with the ruler concerned.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, special embassies are depicted as ‘pompous’, by nature.\textsuperscript{23} Although Mattingly does admit that special ambassadors did not carry out every diplomatic mission (of any importance) during the Middle Ages, the activities of those other diplomatic agents more associated with earlier periods are peremptorily dismissed. Heralds, for example, were apparently only capable of a ‘dignified appearance at a public ceremony and firmness in making an unpleasant announcement’.\textsuperscript{24}

More recently, certain historians of Italian diplomacy have begun to modify certain aspects of Mattingly’s theories. Recently, research by Tessa Beverley has attempted to alter existing views concerning the use of temporary or \textit{ad hoc} embassies

\textsuperscript{19} A fuller discussion of the subject of England’s first use of the resident ambassador may be found in chap. 2, pp. 45-9; Mattingly, \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}, pp. 122 & 151-2.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
in the later part of the fifteenth century. Her research in Venetian archives has shown that instead of immediately supplanting the special ambassador as the preferred means of diplomatic contact, the resident ambassador was rather far from being the dominant form of diplomatic representative amongst Venetian diplomats, even by 1500. Beverley argues that during the second half of the fifteenth century ‘surprisingly few states were the recipient of systematic resident embassies from Venice’. Between 1454 and 1494 Florence in particular usually received the standard sort of special envoy from the Venetians. Only Rome and Milan received ‘resident Venetians for long periods’ in the later part of the fifteenth century. Michael Mallett accepted Mattingly’s dictum that the resident ambassador was the ‘main characteristic of a new diplomacy in the later fifteenth century’ but emphasised that this ‘is somewhat different to saying that there was already a comprehensive system of residency in Italy’. Mallett noted the continuing use of temporary ambassadors in the second half of the fifteenth century, to carry out ‘specific working missions, the negotiation of a treaty or the preparations for a royal marriage’. With reference to Tudor and Stuart diplomacy, Gary Bell stressed Henry VIII’s continuing use of special ambassadors and concluded that, in general, during Henry’s reign ‘the emphasis in diplomacy was on time-honoured techniques’. Charles Carter has also carefully suggested that the growing use of the resident ambassador throughout Europe in the sixteenth century was widespread, but certainly not comprehensive. Apparently, a web of permanent embassies did link most of the capitals of the ‘basic states’, that is Spain, England and France. But ‘a state such as Genoa, for example, with middling resources and not much involved in Europe-wide affairs, was apt to compromise, maintaining residents with some of its neighbours...but only one or two at any distance from home. Conversely, most principal powers did not consider very many states important enough...to warrant maintaining a permanent embassy there’.

Historians of Italian diplomacy (such as Beverley and Mallett) and the early modern period (such as Charles Carter and Gary Bell) have begun to develop and refine Mattingly’s views on the use of the resident ambassador both in Italy and throughout Europe from the middle of the fifteenth century. Yet, the general

26 Ibid., 25-6.
27 Mallett, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy’, 5 and also idem, ‘Italian Renaissance diplomacy’, 64-5.
prominence accorded by Mattingly and other historians (such as David Jayne Hill) to ‘innovative diplomatic practices in Italy’ during the middle and later years of the fifteenth century, has continued to discourage any detailed studies of diplomatic practice amongst the Northern powers during that period.\footnote{Mallet’s phrase: *idem*, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy’, 4; for David Jayne Hill’s discussion of the developments in Italian diplomatic practice see *idem*, *A History of Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe* (3 vols, 1905-14; repr., 1921-4), II, pp. 153-4; see also, H. Nicolson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (1954), pp. 33-4.} Charles Giry-Deloison noticed in 1987, for instance, that ‘the diplomats of the North of Europe at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century’ had not yet been made the ‘object of detailed research’.\footnote{C. Giry-Deloison, ‘Le personnel diplomatique au début du xvi\textsuperscript{e} siècle. L’exemple des relations Franco-Anglaises de l’avènement de Henry VII au Camp du Drap d’Or (1485-1520)’, *Journal des Savants* (1987), 205.} The study of English diplomatic practice (that is, the means by which English diplomacy was conducted) during the fifteenth century has been particularly poorly served by historians. The purpose of J.T. Ferguson’s monograph, *English Diplomacy 1422-1461*, although it contains an extremely detailed appendix of all the English envoys and messengers sent abroad during the reign of Henry VI, was, on the whole, a painstaking assessment of the successes and failures of English foreign policy. Ferguson scathingly concluded that English foreign policy during Henry VI’s reign was at worst ‘unoriginal’ and at best was only able to ‘achieve the negative success of mitigating adversity’.\footnote{J.T. Ferguson, *English Diplomacy 1422-1461* (Oxford, 1972), p. 177. Ferguson’s eighth chapter ‘Law and Practice in Fifteenth-century Diplomacy’ does briefly discuss the various documents which English diplomats might hold, and other pertinent subjects, such as the theory of diplomatic immunity and the use of heralds in diplomatic practice during the later Middle Ages.} Likewise, the recent research of J.W. Vincent and M.H.A. Ballard, concerning aspects of Edward IV’s diplomacy, has also tended to focus upon the changes in, and formation of, English policy towards her neighbours, rather than the means by which that policy was implemented on a practical level. But Ballard, rather more than Vincent, does discuss in detail some of the everyday practicalities of sending English embassies abroad in the later Middle Ages.\footnote{J.W. Vincent, ‘Money, war and diplomacy: the French policy of King Edward IV, 1461-1483’, unpublished PhD thesis, Duke University (1990); M.H.A. Ballard, ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations, 1464-1472’, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (1992), especially pp. 46-52 & 109-111.}

Where some studies have attempted to look in greater detail at English diplomatic practice and method in the later Middle Ages, this is usually with the single intention of finding the first example of the English resident ambassador. Two articles by Betty Behrens from the 1930s are entirely devoted to discussion of this subject. Behrens originally believed that the first English resident ambassador was
John Stile (whom she suggests was employed in Spain from 1505 to 1510 and from 1512 to 1517), but later seems to have altered her opinion and suggested, instead, that John Shirwood acted as Edward IV’s resident ambassador at Rome from 1478 onwards. So, later medieval English diplomatic practice has never really been regarded as a subject worthy of study in its own right. Hence, it is perhaps unsurprising that most historians have tended to compare earlier diplomatic methods extremely unfavourably with diplomatic practice after the adoption of the resident ambassador. Like Mattingly, Betty Behrens suggested that earlier practice was dominated almost solely by the use of the formal special ambassador, which was ‘an expensive and cumbersome machine’. Additionally, C.T. Allmand argued that, in comparison to residents, special ambassadors were rather limited in the kinds of tasks that they could be expected to carry out. If the practice of English diplomacy before the use of resident ambassadors is seen as dominated solely by cumbersome and bureaucratic special embassies of a limited duration, then it is not surprising that most historians have concurred with Mattingly in suggesting that diplomatic contact in earlier periods was marked by inflexibility, delay and discontinuity. For example, after Mattingly suggested that ‘constant...channels of official intercourse’ were only provided once resident ambassadors were consistently put to use, Charles Carter duly emphasised Mattingly’s obvious implication that diplomatic contact in earlier periods was, instead, more ‘occasional’. J.R. Hale also stated that, in early sixteenth century Europe ‘The old casual diplomacy, in fact, no longer sufficed...There had been little continuity in diplomatic relations’. Likewise, before the introduction of resident ambassadors, G.R. Berridge argued that diplomatic intercourse was an ‘episodic process’.

It is my intention in the following chapters to gauge the effectiveness, continuity and flexibility of English diplomatic practice and method during the reign

34 There does appear to be some doubt as to whether Stile was formally accredited as a resident ambassador in the early part of his career, B. Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador: its evolution as illustrated by the career of Sir Thomas Spinelly, 1509-22’, TRHS, 4th series, XV (1933), 166 & n. 3. Strangely, S.B. Chrimes does not discuss Henry’s use of Stile as a resident ambassador in any detail in his biography of Henry VII, although Henry’s general ‘foreign policies’ are described in great depth, (idem, Henry VII (1972), p. 293). An assessment of the case of John Shirwood as England’s first resident ambassador is to be found in chap. 2, pp. 46-8, but also see B. Behrens, ‘Origins of the office of English resident ambassador in Rome’, EHR, XLIX (1934), 640-56.
35 Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador’, 165.
of Edward IV, and thereby also come to a balanced assessment of the eventual impact of the introduction of the later system of resident ambassadors (which was first employed by Henry VII and then more comprehensively developed throughout the later Tudor period). In some ways, this question is rather similar to the more familiar and continuing discussion as to whether (and how far) fundamental change occurred in English domestic government, particularly under the Tudors, during the decades around 1500: the ‘New Monarchy’ debate. John Watts’ recent summary of the problem of change during this period is most instructive in this respect, ‘The existence of changes in the decades around 1500 is not in dispute...what matters - from the point of view of discussing the question of a watershed - is their weight, the extent to which they are concentrated and related, and the proportion of them which can be considered lasting’. That some sort of change occurred in the techniques of diplomatic practice in Northern Europe around 1500 cannot really be doubted. But the importance and impact of these changes can never be properly understood until the diplomatic practice of earlier periods has been the subject of much closer scrutiny than has been the case hitherto. In an attempt to provide an answer to this question, the first half of this thesis concerns the missions (and other activities) of Edward IV’s diplomats, as well as a discussion of both the terminology used to describe them, and the function and meaning of any formal documents that they held. The second half of the thesis considers three crucial aspects of the Yorkist diplomatic polity during Edward’s reign: namely, the role of the earl of Warwick in English diplomatic practice, from c. 1461 until 1471; the importance of Calais in the conduct of England’s relations with her close (and sometimes more distant) neighbours; and Edward IV’s varied sources of diplomatic information and intelligence.

Despite the fact that, as we have seen, the study of the mechanics of English diplomatic practice during the reign of Edward IV has been neglected by historians, the evidence available is extensive, although widely scattered. In terms of the breadth of sources used, no publication concerning England’s foreign relations in the later medieval period has probably ever surpassed Cora L. Scofield’s magisterial The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth, published in 1923, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that The Life and Reign has virtually become a standard work of

40 For which see Bell, ‘Tudor-Stuart diplomatic history’, 33-4.
reference for historians of the reign of Edward IV. 42 Scofield’s biography, described by Charles Ross as ‘elaborate if episodic’, was, in the most part, a narrative of Edward’s foreign policy, and was based on a detailed analysis of a wide variety of archival documents. For instance, Scofield made full use of the resources of the Public Record Office, the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. 43 Of those records of the English chancery (held at the Public Record Office), the treaty rolls (C 76) are by far the most important to any study of later medieval diplomatic practice, since they contain enrolled copies of the majority of safe-conducts, ambassadorial commissions and treaties produced during Edward’s reign. The chancery miscellanea files for Edward’s reign (C 47) also contain several, rather rare, sets of instructions given to Edward’s ambassadors. Most, but by no means all, of the diplomatic documents from C 76 have been printed in Thomas Rymer’s Foedera, published from 1704-35. 44 Although the Foedera remains one of the most extraordinary feats of English editorship of historical documents, it is not without errors and hence must be used carefully. For example, a commission granted on 30 November 1477 to John lord Howard (and several colleagues) to act as Edward’s ambassadors to France is misplaced in Foedera to 1467. 45 A letter written to Alexander Legh (Edward IV’s almoner) by James III of Scotland, and latterly dated to 1478, has been misdated by Rymer to 1503. 46

42 C.L. Scofield, The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth (2 vols, 1923). Charles Ross used Scofield’s work extensively in idem, Edward IV (1974; repr., 1975), passim; Ross paid tribute in his acknowledgements to ‘the remarkable pioneer work of Miss C.L. Scofield. Her two-volume study, published as long ago as 1923, was a piece of sustained and meticulous scholarship, which provided an exhaustive...but indispensable narrative of the reign which is unlikely ever to be superseded.’ ibid., p. xiii; J.W. Vincent’s thesis on Anglo-French relations relies heavily on Scofield’s research, idem, ‘Money, war and diplomacy’, passim.
43 Ross, Edward IV, pp. xi-xii.
44 Foedera, conventiones, literae et cujuscunque generis acta publica inter reges Angliae et alios quovis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes vel communitates, ed. T. Rymer (20 vols, 1704-35). For the purposes of this dissertation, however, it has been thought most useful to use the revised and expanded version of Foedera printed in 1745, and all references to Foedera refer to the later edition unless otherwise stated, Foedera, conventiones, literae...etc, ed. T. Rymer & rev. by G. Holmes (10 vols, The Hague, 1745; repr., Farnborough, 1967).
45 Foedera, V, pt II, p. 149 (PRO, C 76/161, m. 4).
46 In Rymer’s defence it should be noted that the date-clause of the letter lacks a year (the letter being dated 19 February alone). James announces to Legh that Snowdon Herald will inform him that the lord Hume will soon meet Legh and ensure that he would be ‘souerly convoyt to oure presens’, PRO, E 39/102/29. The letter must surely refer to one of Alexander Legh’s missions to Edinburgh every year from 1475-9 with the annual instalment of Cecily of York’s dowry (it had been agreed in 1474 that she would marry James III’s eldest son). The editor of the Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland dated the letter to 1478, but in the absence of other corroborative evidence, this should only really be regarded as a tentative date, Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed. J. Bain et al. (5 vols, Edinburgh, 1881-1987), IV, p. 295.
The records of chancery themselves (and in consequence, many of the
documents printed in Rymer) should be used with caution, for two reasons. Firstly,
although the treaty rolls are almost perfectly preserved, it is clear that not every
ambassadorial commission has been enrolled. Some copies of commissions survive in
other archives which do not appear in C 76, and other commissions do not seem to
have survived at all. Sir Thomas Montgomery’s ambassadorial powers to treat with
Louis XI of France in early 1476, concerning certain disputed matters (of commercial
interest) between England and France, seem to have been entirely lost. Likewise, C
contains by no means all the ambassadorial instructions that are known to have
existed (let alone all those instructions which one might suppose to have been issued).
For instance, we know from some instructions issued in 1473, that the late Richard
Cauntoun (archdeacon of Salisbury) and Henry Sharp (Edward’s prothonotary) had
been issued with some other ambassadorial instructions before 1473 (possibly in
connection with a mission to treat with the German Hanse in 1464). But Cauntoun and
Sharp’s instructions do not seem to have survived. Secondly (and as will be argued
in a later chapter), chancery records only provide evidence for the more high-status
diplomatic missions and do not help us to understand the wide variety of other
diplomatic contacts carried out less formally, by more minor diplomatic envoys,
agents, heralds, pursuivants and messengers. The sections of Charles Ross’ biography
of Edward IV that deal with Edward’s diplomatic activities seem to rely rather heavily
on the Foedera. As a result, Ross only helps to confirm Mattingly’s view that
diplomatic contacts in the era before resident ambassadors were wholly dominated by
special ambassadors. Furthermore, the formal documents relating to ambassadorial
missions do not themselves always give a clear picture of how ambassadors and other
empowered personnel actually acted whilst abroad. As we shall see in the first two
chapters of this dissertation, ambassadors could, on occasion, act beyond the specific
remits of their formal powers. In order to gain a clear impression of the way

47 See chap. 3, p. 96.
48 BL, Royal Ms. 13 BXI, fols 37v-42.
49 The instructions from 1473 are printed in P. Chaplais (ed.), English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I: documents and interpretation (2 vols, 1982), I, p. 198. The earlier instructions of Cauntoun and Sharp may have been connected to their proposed mission to Hamburg in 1464 to treat with the German Hanse and representatives of the kings of Denmark and Poland. According to Cora Scofield, the English embassy managed to travel only as far as Utrecht, and the Hamburg diet seems to have been abortive, Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 328, and also see Foedera, V, pt II, pp. 122-3. Cauntoun was, in any case, dead by June 1465 (A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 (3 vols, Oxford, 1957-9; repr., 1989), I, pp. 373-4).
50 Ross, Edward IV, pp. 206-11.
empowered personnel helped to carry out late medieval diplomacy, study of their formal documents must be supplemented by the minutes and other descriptions of ambassadorial meetings contained in the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Archives Départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (at Nantes).\textsuperscript{51}

Whilst certain classes of the exchequer records contain similar types of documents to those found in chancery, such as the many commissions, safe-conducts and treaties to be found in E 30 (Diplomatic Documents) and E 39 (Diplomatic Documents Relating to Scotland), other classes such as E 403, E 404 and E 405 (issue rolls, warrants for issue and tellers' rolls) give a far wider, although still incomplete, picture of the type of diplomatic personnel used during the later Middle Ages. As well as providing evidence for the payment of ambassadors, it is possible to find payments for the duties of other more minor envoys, for which there are few other surviving records in the English archives.\textsuperscript{52} As we shall see, the personal letters, letters of credence and instructions written by, or belonging to, more informal diplomatic representatives, have completely disappeared from the public records at Kew, but copies of some of them remain scattered throughout other archives of England and Northern Europe such as the British Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale.\textsuperscript{53} In fact, it should also be generally noted that the 'Manuscrits Français' of the Bibliothèque Nationale contain an unrivalled collection of diplomatic letters dating from the reigns of Edward IV and Louis XI.\textsuperscript{54} These letters are written by a most diverse group of people, including minor diplomats, influential courtiers, governmental officials and royalty from France, Burgundy, Brittany and England. For her narrative of English foreign policy, Cora Scofield examined these documents minutely, and printed a few

\textsuperscript{51} For instance, a meeting between some English and some Breton ambassadors in Bruges on 6 May 1467 is described in the preamble to some powers given to two of Francis II's ambassadors, then in England, on 21 May 1467, ADL-A, B 5, fol. 73v; B.-A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, François II duc de Bretagne et l'Angleterre (1458-1488) (Paris, 1929), p. 121. A document entitled 'C'est ce que les ambassadeurs d'Angleterre distrent au roy en effet au Plesseys du pare le xxvi° jour de decembre l'an mil CCCCxxvii°' is, in effect, the minutes of that meeting between Louis XI and several English ambassadors (including John lord Howard). The document is now BN, Ms. Fr. 4054, fol. 229 and is printed as Appendix XII in Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 480-1.

\textsuperscript{52} See chap. 3, p. 80 & 84-7.

\textsuperscript{53} A letter of Robert Neville (a minor envoy to France and Burgundy) written from Lille on 17 November 1464, is now BN, Ms. Fr. 5041, fols 73-4. Some instructions given in the early part of 1475 to Alexander Legh, envoy to Scotland, are now BL, Cott. Ms. Vespasian CXVI, fols 121-6.

\textsuperscript{54} The vast majority of Louis XI's own letters have been printed in Lettres de Louis XI, ed. E. Charavay \textit{et al.} (11 vols, Paris, 1883-1909). However many other contemporary letters remain unprinted. For example: Edward IV to Francis II of Brittany written on 15 March 1476 (BN, Ms. Fr. 6983, fol. 65); John lord Wenlock's letter addressed to 'mons' de Croy' on 3 October 1466 (BN, Ms. Nouv. Acq. Fr. 7634, fol. 69); and Richard Neville earl of Warwick to Louis XI on 31 July 1465 (BN, Ms. Fr. 4054, fol. 183).
of them as appendices to her second volume. Yet, for all Scofield’s painstaking research, even further detail concerning English diplomatic practice may now be provided by the vast and easily accessible resources of the Archives Départementales du Nord and the smaller (but crucial) holdings of the Huntington Library, in San Marino, California.

The Lille Archives form an extraordinary treasure-house for historians, not only of the Burgundian dominions, but also of the whole of Northern Europe during the later Middle Ages. Joseph Calmette and Georges Périnelle’s study, Louis XI et l’Angleterre (published in 1922) and Marie-Rose Thielemans’ Bourgogne et Angleterre (published in 1966) did make use of the Lille records to illustrate English relations with her closest neighbours (Burgundy and France). But, it is probably fair to say, that until recently, relatively few English historians have attempted to take advantage of these documentary resources. Printed publications in English concerning the latter part of the fifteenth century and using the Lille records, have been meagre. Articles by C.S.L. Davies and Mark Ballard, and Ian Arthurson’s The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499, remain the exceptions. However, Lesley Stark’s thesis, ‘Anglo-Burgundian diplomacy, 1467-1485’, submitted in 1977, did pave the way for the more detailed research of Mark Ballard, whose DPhil thesis, submitted in 1992, was entitled ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations, 1464-1472’. Ballard’s thesis used the Lille records for Edward’s reign far more comprehensively than any historian had

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55 Appendix III (a letter of Richard Whetehill to Louis XI, 19 February 1464) is printed from BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 388; see also Appendix IV, printed from BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 394 (Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 467-8).
56 Amongst the papers relating to the Hastings family, now housed in the Huntington Library, is to be found a most remarkable letterbook belonging to William lord Hastings (ex. 1483). Dating from 1477, the letterbook contains copies of many of the letters written and received by lord Hastings, in his capacity as Edward IV’s lieutenant of Calais: HL, Ms. HA 13879. The existence of this letterbook was noted in 1973 by D.A.L. Morgan, yet it has not yet received the attention from historians which it clearly deserves (idem, ‘The king’s affinity in the polity of Yorkist England’, TRHS, 5th series, XXIII (1973), 16-17; Michael K. Jones’ forthcoming article does, however, make use of this source, idem, ‘1477- the expedition that never was: chivalric expectation in late Yorkist England’, The Ricardian, XII (2001), 290, n. 14. I am extremely grateful to Dr Jones for allowing me to consult a copy of this article before publication, and to Ted Westervelt for allowing me to consult his photographic copies of the letterbook.
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The records of the *Recette Générale des Finances*, which include the accounts of the ducal receiver general, offer a wealth of interest to the historian of English diplomacy. They frequently provide for some of the necessary living expenses of English ambassadors in the Burgundian territories (often at the diplomatic centres of Bruges, Brussels, Antwerp and Lille itself); ducal expenses relating to gifts given to those same English ambassadors were also often accounted for by the receiver-general. From these sources, we are able to get a far more detailed picture of the activities of English ambassadors in Burgundy; the precise dates of their residence in particular towns are often given, so that we can state the length of particular missions with great accuracy. This can sometimes only be estimated from documents extant in the English archives since an ambassador’s date of departure may not always be judged from the date of his commission. Likewise, the warrants for issue (E 404) do not state, in every case, the beginning and end dates of ambassadorial missions. Also, since the accounts submitted by English ambassadors upon their return have largely disappeared for Edward IV’s reign, it is not always clear, using English evidence alone, when certain diplomats actually returned. The accounts of the ducal receivers also tell us where the ambassadors travelled within Burgundy, thus allowing us to see the itinerant nature of special embassies in close detail. These documents also provide a unique picture of the composition of an English embassy, since they often state the number of heralds, pursuivants, chaplains, secretaries and menial servants who were in attendance upon the embassy. On some occasions, even the number of horses is stated. The records of the English exchequer provide few glimpses of diplomatic practice to this degree of detail. More importantly, the ducal accounts also note the numerous missions of minor English envoys to Burgundy, such as agents and heralds, for which there is little or no evidence in the English records (the reasons for these gaps in the English evidence will be discussed in chapter three).

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general, survive for the period from 1 October 1460 to 30 September 1464.\textsuperscript{60} Then, three accounts of Guilbert de Ruple, ducal receiver-general, cover the period from 1 October 1464 until 15 June 1467.\textsuperscript{61} Slightly overlapping one of the accounts of Guilbert de Ruple (which covered the period from 1 October 1466 until 15 June 1467) is a further account of Berthelemy Trotin, Charles of Charolais' receiver-general ‘de toutes les finances’. Trotin’s account, which included many payments related to diplomatic affairs, began on 1 January 1467 and ended on 31 December of that year.\textsuperscript{62} Then, in 1468, the ducal accounting system was reorganised and for the rest of Charles’ rule, the ducal argentier seems to have taken sole responsibility for most of the disbursements connected to foreign affairs.\textsuperscript{63} Unfortunately, only one complete argentier account survives from 1468-77, that of Guilbert de Ruple (1 January 1468 to 31 December 1468).\textsuperscript{64} A few months after the death of Charles at Nancy on 5 January 1477, at the beginning of the rule of Maximilian and Mary, the Burgundian finances were again reorganised and the ducal receiver-general was once more responsible for ‘diplomatic’ payments. For the period from 1477 until 1483 we have five accounts: two account books of Nicolas le Prévost (the first from 1 September 1477 to 31 December 1477 and the second from 1 January 1479 until 31 December of that year) and three account books of Louis Quarre (1 January 1480 to 31 December 1480 and two similar books for 1481 and 1482).\textsuperscript{65}

If Cora Scofield’s \textit{The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth} provided the exemplar for future archival research into all aspects of the foreign relations of Edward IV, her work has also had a considerable influence over the opinion of later historians concerning the efficacy and validity of the foreign policy pursued by Edward (particularly in his second reign). By the winter of 1474-5 Edward had constructed a web of alliances to encircle France, most importantly with Burgundy. Charles the Bold, by a treaty of 25 July 1474, had recognised Edward as king of France and had agreed to provide military support for Edward’s invasion.\textsuperscript{66} Moreover, Edward IV had also come to terms with two powers who could threaten the security of England and its invasion force: the German Hanse and Scotland.\textsuperscript{67} However, by the

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\textsuperscript{60} \textit{ADN}, B 2040, B 2045, B 2048 & B 2051.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{ADN}, B 2054, B 2058 & B 2061.
\textsuperscript{64} \textit{ADN}, B 2068.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{ADN}, B 2115, B 2118, B 2121, B 2124 & B 2127.
\textsuperscript{66} Scofield, \textit{The Life and Reign}, II, pp. 94-6.
\textsuperscript{67} Ross, \textit{Edward IV}, pp. 210-14.
time Edward was ready to lead his army to Calais in the first week of July 1475, Scofield and other historians, such as Charles Ross and Christine Carpenter, have agreed that Edward was already having misgivings about the entire operation, mainly as a result of the diminishing interest which Charles the Bold seemed to be expressing in the enterprise. Edward’s was anxious that Charles’ determination to concentrate on his strategic decision to expand his own territories towards the east would compromise any Anglo-Burgundian operation against Louis, and his anxiety probably explains the rather hasty mission, in April 1475, of Anthony Woodville earl Rivers, to Charles’ camp at his siege of Neuss. And Edward’s fears must surely have increased still further when he and Charles finally met at Calais between 14 and 17 July; Charles, it seems, had brought with him little more than a personal bodyguard. Even if the two combatants, whilst at Calais, had reaffirmed their intentions to mount a joint invasion of France, Edward was increasingly keen to come to a speedy arrangement with Louis XI, alone if need be. After an ineffective tour through Artois and Picardy, Edward exchanged envoys with Louis, and finally on 29 August Louis and Edward met at Pecquigny. There, a seven-year truce was agreed, Louis promised to pay Edward an annual pension of 50,000 gold crowns and it was agreed that the dauphin Charles would marry Elizabeth of York ‘when they should reach the marriageable age’.

On the basis of the Treaty of Pecquigny, Edward has been judged quite harshly. According to Cora Scofield, when Edward returned to England in September it was clear to all that he ‘had sold himself to the king of France’. Charles Ross was marginally more favourable to the terms Edward had extracted, but stated that the Treaty of Pecquigny was a ‘satisfactory if somewhat inglorious conclusion [which] should not, however, be seen as any great tribute to Edward’s statesmanship’. If one considers that a rather similar treaty signed between Henry VII and Charles VIII in 1492 (the Treaty of Étaples, which also provided Henry with a pension) has been

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68 Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 123-30; Ross, Edward IV, pp. 224-6; C. Carpenter, The Wars of the Roses: politics and the constitution in England, c. 1437-1509 (Cambridge, 1997), p. 197. Carpenter states that ‘once he learned that his allies [Charles the Bold and Francis II] were unlikely to help him, Edward aimed at no more than a token invasion of France to appease the taxpayers’.
69 PRO, E 404/76/1/7 (warrant for issue of 15 April 1475 ordering the payment of £100 to Rivers and his colleague Richard Martyn, ‘one of the maisters of our chauncery’). The Englishmen arrived just two weeks later at Neuss on 29 April, H. Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Charles, duc de Bourgogne, Marguerite d’York et Marie de Bourgogne (1467-1477) (Brussels, 1936), p. 66.
72 Ibid., p. 155.
73 Ross, Edward IV, p. 238.
regarded as providing a ‘useful supplement’ to Henry’s income and allowing him a ‘quick accommodation’ with the French, it does seem as though Edward has been unfairly treated for salvaging at least some advantage from an increasingly desperate situation in 1475. But it is for Edward’s foreign policy from 1477 until his death in 1483, that historians have reserved their harshest judgements. By the early part of 1483, Scofield suggested that as Edward ‘stood viewing the ruins of his impossible foreign policy...he must have blushed with shame’.75 Charles Ross, in turn, suggested that ‘Edward does not emerge with any distinction in his direction of foreign affairs...A foreign policy based upon the continuing good faith of Louis XI was always likely to end disastrously’.76 Most recently Christine Carpenter has labelled Edward’s later policies as a scheme of ‘complex and ultimately failed diplomacy’.77

Charles Ross sums up the arguments neatly: ‘Edward’s desire to retain his French pension and the French marriage planned for his daughter severely limited his freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre after 1475. They purchased English acquiescence in the partial dismemberment of the Burgundian state by Louis of France’.78 The choices facing Edward became most acute after Charles the Bold’s death at Nancy in 1477. Throughout that year, Louis’ forces moved into parts of Artois and Picardy, and coastal towns such as Boulogne came under French control. Crucially, Louis’ forces also began to threaten the jointure and dowry lands of Margaret of York, dowager duchess of Burgundy. Edmund Bedingfield wrote from Calais on 17 August 1477 that Cassel, part of Margaret’s jointure, had been burned.79 From this point onwards Edward is portrayed as rather deaf towards pleas for military assistance coming from Burgundy; supposedly the lure of the French pension and marriage led him to abandon Burgundy, England’s most natural political and above all, commercial, ally. When Margaret of York appealed to Edward directly on 29 March 1478 and complained of Louis’ actions, Scofield stated that he did little more than send an envoy to Louis XI and was content to receive the next instalment of the pension whilst Louis prevaricated on the subject of the depredations carried out against

75 Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 357.
76 Ross, Edward IV, p. 294.
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Margaret’s property. Even in 1480, when Edward did publicly agree to provide archers for Maximilian’s armies, it is said that his Burgundian allies were forced into signing a treaty which was more ‘financially advantageous’ to Edward IV, than beneficial for the Burgundians. Charles Ross declared that the ‘Burgundian treaty of 1480 is a notable monument to the theme of avarice in the foreign policy of Edward’s later years’.

Throughout 1481 and early 1482 Maximilian’s representatives in England pressed Edward to agree to a joint military campaign against France, but Edward was distracted by entanglements in Scotland. The English invasion of Scotland was aborted in 1481, but the duke of Gloucester’s campaign in 1482 brought English troops to the gates of Edinburgh, along with the capture of Berwick-upon-Tweed on 25 August. Meanwhile, after the untimely death of Mary of Burgundy in March 1482, Maximilian had found himself subject to intense domestic pressure to come to terms with the French and eventually did so on 23 December 1482. As a part of the Treaty of Arras, Margaret of Austria would marry the dauphin, and Artois and the county of Burgundy were transferred to France as part of Margaret’s dowry; Edward had lost his pension, the French alliance and, of course, the projected marriage between Elizabeth of York and the dauphin Charles. The author of the continuation of the Crowland Chronicle felt that Edward was ‘deeply troubled and grieved’ by the actions of Louis XI of France, since Louis had not only withdrawn the ‘promised tribute [the pension granted in 1475]’, but had also been partially responsible for the ‘disturbance in the territory of the duke of Austria, the king’s friend’. After all, according to C.A.J. Armstrong, Louis had been in constant negotiation ‘regardless of Maximilian’ with the representatives of the estates (and particularly the Members of

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80 Margaret’s letter is to be found in U. Plancher, Histoire générale et particulière de Bourgogne (4 vols, Dijon, 1739-81; repr., Farnborough, 1968), IV, pp. 400-1; Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 231-5.
82 Ross, Edward IV, p. 284.
83 For Edward’s policies towards Scotland, see Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 314-23 & 334-49 and Ross, Edward IV, pp. 278-91. The most recent treatment of the subject has been provided by N. Macdougall, James III: a political study (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 145-72.
85 A copy of the treaty is to be found in P. de Commynes, Mémoires, ed. N. Lenglet du Fresnoy (4 vols, London & Paris, 1747), IV, pp. 95-125; ‘Pour plus grande seureté de ladite paix, traité & alliance de mariage est fait, promis, consenti & accordé entre mondit Seigneur le Dauphin, seul fils du Roy & héritier apparent de la Couronne, & madite Damoiselle Marguerite d’Autriche, seule fille de mondit Seigneur le Duc & de feu Madame Marie de Bourgogne, fille unique de feu Monseigneur le Duc Charles... & se parfera & solemnisera ledit mariage, ladite Damoiselle en âge requis de droit’.
Flanders: Ghent, Bruges and Ypres) for some months before the treaty of Arras was signed. The English king was said to be so angered and disillusioned by the treaty, that he died rather suddenly soon after, on 9 April 1483. Philippe de Commynes certainly suggested that as soon as Edward heard news of the treaty and the proposed marriage, the king 'fell ill and died shortly afterwards'.

The purpose of this dissertation is not to undertake a thorough reassessment of Edward’s later foreign policies but it is probably worth noting at this stage that the harsh criticisms levelled at Edward should be tempered in several important respects. Firstly, recent research based on documents held at the Archives Départementales du Nord has shown that large numbers of Englishmen served in Maximilian’s armies throughout 1477-9 (probably with the tacit approval of the English government). Furthermore, Edward’s attitude towards the provision of soldiers in 1480 seems to have been far more helpful and constructive than has been believed hitherto. He provided Margaret of York with a loan, shipping for the soldiers, and one of his heralds accompanied the contingents of soldiers to the Low Countries. Secondly, Edward cannot have been expected to foresee Mary of Burgundy’s unexpected death (leaving Maximilian in a precarious domestic situation). Moreover, had Edward lived ten years longer, as might have been expected, he would have lived to see both Margaret of Austria and part of her dower returned by the Peace of Senlis (23 May 1493).

Despite these mitigating factors, most historians have chosen instead to portray Edward’s diplomacy as misguided from 1475, and failed by the time of his death. So, on the whole, English foreign policy during the fifteenth century (until 1485) has been much criticised. The policies of Henry VI’s government have been seen as ‘unoriginal’, Edward IV’s policies are regarded as ‘failed’ and Richard III’s policy before 1484 is described by C.S.L. Davies as ‘aggressive, possibly even reckless’ and thereafter as ‘marked by extreme caution; hints, promises, anything but action’.

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ambassador. So, it is unsurprising that historians have not found the study of later medieval English diplomatic practice to be an attractive area of research. More surprisingly perhaps, rather less work has been done on the practice of early Tudor diplomacy than one might have imagined; as Gary M. Bell has suggested, ‘the history of early Tudor diplomacy remains a vague forest with relatively obscure trees. While we know much about the major occurrences in international relations, we know far less about the people, processes and peregrinations of diplomacy’.92 The same point could be made about the period from 1461-83. A fair and accurate assessment of both the formation, implementation and merit of English foreign policy during Edward’s reign can really only be definitively provided once the machinery of late medieval diplomatic practice is properly understood.

Chapter One

DIPLOMATIC THEORY AND STATUS DURING THE REIGN OF EDWARD IV (1461-83)

What were medieval diplomats called, how was their diplomatic status conferred, and what immunities and privileges did this status imply? These three questions have, perhaps unhelpfully, dominated all discussion of medieval diplomacy. Historians have tended to concentrate their efforts upon a lengthy and detailed analysis of the exact meaning of the terminology used to describe medieval diplomats. In formal diplomatic documents, a wide variety of terms was used to denote diplomatic personnel during the Middle Ages; a diplomat might be described as a nuncius, commissarius, procurator, legatus, orator, or by the fifteenth century, an ambassador. This variety of titles has led some historians to argue that a complex hierarchy of diplomatic personnel was commonly understood during the later medieval period. Two influential articles written in the 1930s by Betty Behrens provided the modern foundations for this complicated theory. Working from diplomatic manuals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and from the diary of Burchard, the papal master of ceremonies, Behrens suggested that the legatus was the most esteemed title which could be conferred upon a diplomat. Next comes the ambassador who was employed to express his master’s views and to ‘personify his dignity in the society of nations’. Further down the scale is the procurator who was ‘looked on as a diplomatic agent of an inferior order’, unable to represent ‘his employer in the comprehensive sense’. At the lowest point of the scale is placed the nuncius who could only do ‘anything the king could do by letter’.

However, in 1955, Garrett Mattingly suggested that legatus and ambassador were used to describe diplomats of the highest rank, while nuncius and procurator, were used for the ‘minor business of the great princes’. A recent proponent of a new and much simplified variant of this theory of diplomatic hierarchy has been Donald Queller, whose views may be summarised as follows. In general, Queller argued that

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2 B. Behrens, ‘The origins of the office of English resident ambassador in Rome’, *EHR*, XLIX (1934), 647.
the nuncio occupied the lowest rung on the diplomatic ladder, being simply a ‘living letter, who could either negotiate and report or conclude, but could not negotiate and conclude’." He then argues that an important line of division separated the nuncio from the procurator. The latter could ‘act and speak in his own person on behalf of his principal...he could negotiate and conclude without reference to the principal’. Finally, in the later Middle Ages, the ambassador appears, as a development from the office of the nuncio, but whose functions were quite varied, as the office had a ‘nontechnical’ significance. Despite some disagreements concerning the definition of exact offices, the exponents of this theory of diplomatic hierarchy imply, at least to some extent, that most different diplomatic titles were regarded in the medieval mind as conferring different technical duties upon the holder, and that each title endowed its holder with differing measure of prestige. A crucial break from this orthodoxy occurred in 1972 with the publication of John Ferguson’s *English Diplomacy 1422-1461*. Ferguson argued that the names given to English diplomats of the fifteenth century were not crucial to their function and powers. ‘In practice...there were only two types of envoy, whatever the names given to them in the documents’. Ferguson designated the first type of diplomatic envoy as the *nuncio simplex*, who was usually appointed by the issuing of letters of credence; these letters simply testified to the identity of the bearer and demanded that the envoy should be believed in what he had to say, on behalf of the king. By a letter of credence given by Edward IV to his almoner Thomas Danet, in 1478, the king asked Louis XI to give ‘firm trust and credence to what he [Danet] will say to you’. Essentially, the diplomatic envoy solely in possession of letters of credence had no formal powers to negotiate specific matters, or to bind the king to any formal contracts the envoy might see fit to agree to whilst he was abroad. At this point it is important to note that there has been considerable confusion concerning the precise definition of letters of credence. Henry S. Lucas, for example, confused letters of credence with formal powers which gave

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envoys the ability to negotiate and conclude ‘definitively’. Pierre Chaplais, on the other hand has provided the most precise assessment of letters of credence, when he suggested that their primary function was to provide an ‘assurance to the foreign ruler that the oral message which he was to hear could be trusted...as if he had received it from the king’s own mouth’. Further confusion has also been caused by the fact that the written aide mémoire which was given to envoys to enable them to present the king’s views correctly, was itself called a credence or credencia, (the credence being the oral message the envoy was to impart). For instance, at some point before 19 April 1477 William lord Hastings, lieutenant of Calais, met Olivier le Roux (an envoy of Louis XI) at Calais. It was stated in Hastings’ letter-book that Le Roux had declared his ‘credence’, or oral message, to Hastings and had also passed on a copy of it in writing.

Occasionally, during the later Middle Ages, the written version of the oral message or ‘credence’ could be also contained within a set of instructions (which listed other additional and complex diplomatic tasks that an envoy was expected to carry out). Dr Thomas Hutton, issued with formal powers to treat with the duke of Brittany on 13 July 1483, was also supplied with some ‘Instruccions...upon the lettre of credence which he shalle deliver to the duc of Britaine on the behalve of the kinges highnes’. Those instructions listed the oral messages that he was expected to deliver to Francis II on Richard III’s behalf. Firstly he was expected to make a suitably regretful comment about the ‘prinses and taking upon the See the oo [sic] partie ayenst the odere to the gret trouble and hinderaunce of thentercours & fete of merchandises’. To resolve those problems he was expected to say that both king and council would be ‘wele disposed’ to a speedy solution. Now the reason why this document was probably termed an instruction rather than a basic credence, was that he was then specifically instructed to ‘acorde upon a certain tyme and place When & where the commissaries and compleynautes of bothe parties may assemble’. Moreover, Hutton was also asked to ‘understande the mynde and disposicione of the duc anempst Sir Edward Wodevile and his Reteignue / practizing by alle meanes to

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13 Chaplais, ‘English diplomatic documents to the end of Edward III’s reign’, p. 35.
14 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 3.
him possible to ensereche & knowe if there be entended any enterprise out of [the duke's] land upon any part of this Realme. Richard, as duke of Gloucester, had already ordered the capture of Sir Edward Woodville on 14 May 1483, but Woodville subsequently escaped to Brittany. It appears that the original letters of credence which testifieth to the authenticity of Hutton's message have been lost, although B.-A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé mistakenly described Hutton's formal powers to treat with the Bretons as 'lettres de créance'.

Thomas Hutton clearly held letters of credence, but according to the bi-partite division of late medieval diplomatic personnel that Ferguson has suggested, he does in fact belong to the second group of diplomats that Ferguson devised; the members of this second group were characterised by their endowment with 'letters of proxy' or procurations. These powers were the crucial and defining difference between the two groups of envoys. Such letters allowed the bearer to enter into specific negotiations with representatives of foreign powers, and usually allowed the envoy to conclude a binding agreement as a result of those negotiations. The members of the second group were described using a large number of possible titles (in varying combinations and number in each power) such as procuratores, commissariti, legati, oratores or ambassatores, being supplanted especially in the vernacular by 'ambassador'. Ferguson suggested that the variety of titles given to empowered personnel was simply 'honorific' and was not representative of any differences in prestige or, indeed, in function. More recently, Charles Giry-Deloison has also agreed with Ferguson that the particular titles given to late medieval diplomats in their powers were indicative of little difference in function and status, and that the manner of naming diplomats was therefore marked by 'a sense of imprecision and of

18 Ferguson, English Diplomacy, p. 155.
19 One example from the reign of Edward IV suffices here. On January 1468, William Hactlyff (Edward IV's secretary) was provided with powers to negotiate and conclude a marriage treaty with representatives of Charles the Bold duke of Burgundy. Hactlyff was empowered as an ambassador, procurator, nuncius and a commissarius (Foedera, conventiones, litterae...etc, ed. T. Rymer & rev. by G. Holmes (10 vols, The Hague, 1745; repr., Farnborough, 1967), V, pt II, p. 153. And also Ferguson, English Diplomacy, pp. 157-9.
20 Ibid., p. 149.
hesitancy’. Ninety-five diplomatic powers dating from 1461-83 are now printed in Rymer’s *Foedera*. Following Charles Giry-Deloison’s method of analysing the frequency of diplomatic titles used, the results show that a wide variety of titles were consistently used in diplomatic powers issued during the reign of Edward IV: 55 powers confer the title ambassador (57.9%), *Commissarius* (83.2%),22 *Nuncio* (80%),23 *Procurator* (71.6%),24 *Deputatus* (47.4%),25 *Orator* (41.1%), *Legatus* (4.2%), *Negotium gestor* (3.2%). In general, the results do not seem markedly different to those achieved by Giry-Deloison in his study of Anglo-French relations from 1475-1520.26 The possible exception is that *Orator* is mentioned in 83.6% of commissions during the later period, in comparison to only 41.1% during the entire reign of Edward IV. This may be explained by the growing influence of humanist Italy (where *orator* was a fashionable term) on England during the last years of the fifteenth century. But it is to be noted that the term *orator* was rarely used in the context of Anglo-Scottish relations, especially when negotiations took place on or near the border. Since my sample includes a large number of powers relevant to these negotiations (and since Giry-Deloison’s sample only concerns Anglo-French relations), this may go some way to explaining the discrepancy in the figures.

Both Giry-Deloison and Ferguson argue that the various titles given to diplomats in the clauses of their powers were usually inserted as a result of tradition and custom, and that much could also depend on the personal whim of the clerks concerned. However, the views of Ferguson and Giry-Deloison need to be tempered in two important respects; for my own survey of all the powers given to Edward IV’s diplomats, subsequently printed in Rymer’s *Foedera*, has led to the conclusion that the titles assigned to English empowered diplomats were not dished out entirely randomly. Firstly, it appears that the context in which diplomatic negotiations were to be carried out played a considerable part in determining the titles by which every diplomat was described in his powers. We have already seen that the term *orator* was less frequently used in powers to treat with the Scots: only 5 out of 25 such powers (20%) endow the title *orator*, in comparison to 39 out of all 95 powers (41.1%). Also, the clerks made a clear distinction between those diplomats who were commissioned

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22 Including *commissarii* and *commissariis speciales*.
23 Including *nuncii*, *nuncii specialis* and *nuncii generales*.
24 That is, *procuratores* and *procuratores specialis*.
25 Including *deputatus* and ‘special deputies’.
to go abroad to treat with foreign powers, and those diplomats who were expected to conduct negotiations in England, with foreign envoys. There are sixty-two sets of diplomatic powers printed in the *Foederar* (for the reign of Edward IV), which can be definitely stated to have empowered the envoys concerned to treat abroad; 51 (or 82.3%) of those powers endowed the holders with the title of ambassador. On the other hand, there are thirty powers for diplomatic officials to treat in England with foreign representatives; only one such power includes the title ambassador. Instead, all of those officials were named as *commissarii*. The title of ambassador, therefore, was not randomly assigned; it was carefully used by the clerks only in the commissions of those diplomats who were empowered to treat abroad. *Legatus*, although used very rarely in diplomatic powers, was a title which was usually bestowed upon diplomats when they were travelling to Italy. On 15 August 1474, John Sant (abbot of Abingdon) and Sir Bartelot de Rivière were empowered to treat with Ferrante of Naples; and later John Sant was sent to Rome with three others to treat with the Pope concerning the problems arising from the delicate state of the Italian League.  

On both of these occasions the diplomats were empowered as *legati*, and this, as we have seen, was an unusual occurrence. This is probably to be explained by the fact that *legatus* was a commonly used term in fifteenth-century Italy both for secular diplomats, and of course, for the diplomats of the papal court itself (ie *legatus a latere, legati missi, and legati nati*). So certain contexts could alter the way diplomats were described in their powers, although this did not necessarily represent any clearly perceived differences in status and prestige.

Secondly, certain titles such as *commissarius* and *procurator* were used carefully to describe those diplomats who were not only empowered to treat, but also to conclude agreements on the basis of their negotiations. So the choice of these terms did imply some differences in diplomatic function. On 1 September 1464, William Hatelyff (then described as ‘one of the king’s secretaries’) was sent to Brittany to treat with Francis II or his representatives; he was not however, empowered to conclude

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any further agreement with Francis. In Hactlyff’s powers he was described as an ambassador, orator and nuncio.  

30 Likewise, on 9 October of the same year Bernard de la Forrse was sent to Spain with a similar remit, and he was simply described as orator and nuncio specialis.  

31 It is significant in these cases that the terms commissarius and procurator are missing, both of these terms carry quite forcefully the emphasis that the envoy should negotiate and then have the power to conclude specific binding agreements. The vast majority of those envoys who were expected to conclude agreements were described as procuratores and commissarii, and if one of those terms were missing in their powers the other term would usually be found in its place. For example, on 23 July 1472 Anthony Woodville earl Rivers, was empowered with two others to negotiate an alliance with the duke of Brittany; he was named as an ambassiator, orator and commissarius specialis, and not as a procurator.  

32 Rivers did however negotiate and conclude the treaty of Châteaugiron, which was signed on 11 September 1472.  

Ferguson’s thesis was an important attempt to deconstruct the grand theory of a hierarchy of diplomatic offices, proposed by previous historians. In addition, the thesis also simplified the complicated and rather sterile debate which had attempted to detect differences in function between offices such as nuncio, ambassiator, orator and legatus. Generally, what mattered more than what envoys were called was whether those envoys were given plena potestas and mandatum speciale to negotiate and/or conclude, or whether those envoys were endowed with letters of credence alone. But although Ferguson’s simplifications largely hold good, in fact it is clear that the medieval clerks were careful to use certain titles to indicate different diplomatic contexts and also to indicate certain differences in diplomatic function. Likewise, one must not then suggest, as Giry-Deloison does, that the number of different titles used simply represented the hesitancy and confusion in the medieval mind about the precise method of naming diplomats.  

34 Actually, those closely involved in the diplomatic administration were not usually confused about the subject.
As we have seen, J.T. Ferguson was able to differentiate medieval diplomatic personnel into two main groups by the kinds of documents they held, either letters of credence or powers to treat or conclude. If one avoids the common neglect of lesser diplomatic documents other than procuratorial powers and treaties, it is possible to show that those involved with the administration of medieval diplomacy were able to signify this bi-partite division consistently in everyday diplomatic terminology.

Despite the large number of titles which could be used in their powers, most people with an interest in diplomacy were quite clear that, in everyday usage, empowered diplomatic personnel sent abroad should usually be termed ambassadors. This was the case even when the title of ambassador was not specifically mentioned in the formal documents of the diplomat concerned. For example, on 24 August 1480, Thomas Langton and John Weston (prior of St John’s of Jerusalem) were commissioned to go to France and treat with Louis XI about a variety of matters including the defence of Rhodes, the marriage agreed in 1475 and a possible truce between France and Burgundy. In their powers, both were described as procuratores, oratores, commissarii and nuncii speciales. However, Étienne Fryon (Edward IV’s French secretary, and therefore a man who would know more than anybody about the precise terminology of diplomatic documents), wrote a letter on 21 October that described Langton and Weston as ‘ambaxadeurs’.

About a month previously, Margaret of York had likewise written to Maximilian telling him that Edward IV had resolved to write to Thomas Langton ‘son Conseiller & Ambassadeur, estant à present devers ledit Roy Loys avec le grand Maistre de Saint Jehan’. A week after Margaret had written her letter to Maximilian, Edward IV wrote to him as well, telling him that he had indeed written letters concerning the proposed peace conference between England, France and Burgundy, to his ‘Ambassadeurs à present estans en France’. It seems that in the everyday diplomatic vernacular, high-level empowered diplomats were conveniently labelled as ambassadors, whatever the collection of titles that they were actually given in their powers. Likewise, these

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35 *Foedera*, V, pt III, p. 112. Langton was treasurer of Exeter cathedral by 18 February 1478 and was made bishop of St David’s by papal provision on 4 July 1483, A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* (3 vols, Oxford, 1957-9; repr., 1989), II, p. 1102.

36 ADN, B 18823, no. 23719 or P. de Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. N. Lenglet du Fresnoy (4 vols, London & Paris, 1747), IV, pp. 8-10; Fryon had been appointed as the king’s French secretary in September 1480 (for details of his career, see Otway-Ruthven, *The King’s Secretary*, pp. 104 & 156).


38 *Ibid.*, pp. 609-10
officials were described in the exchequer records as being sent ‘in our ambassade’ or were paid for going abroad ‘in embassy’. 39

It can normally be assumed that those empowered diplomats, known as ambassadors in the vernacular and in exchequer documents, usually held powers to treat and to conclude, for during Edward IV’s reign very few formal diplomatic powers remain which did not grant authority to the diplomats to treat and then conclude a binding agreement on the basis of their negotiations. However, two powers from 1464 do exist in which the recipients of powers to treat did not have consequent powers to bind Edward IV conclusively. William Hatyff and Bernard de la Forse were granted such simple powers to treat on 1 September and 9 October 1464 respectively. 40 They were basically expected to negotiate certain matters arising from previous negotiations, and then report back to England. However, full powers (to treat and conclude) were not always issued in the expectation that a treaty would immediately be signed at the end of the negotiations. Even if it was expected that months of negotiation and the sending of many embassies would be necessary before the signing of any agreement, full powers to conclude were still issued in most powers since the addition of a concludendi clause would bolster the authority of the English diplomats concerned and would express the king’s sincerity about the negotiations being undertaken. By giving a diplomat full powers to treat and conclude it was hoped to avoid any possibility of the opposing side complaining (upon inspection of the documents) that the powers were insufficient. Indeed, before any formal negotiations were undertaken, the sets of powers from each side were carefully inspected for insufficiencies or loopholes. On 15 July 1473, at the very beginning of the long negotiations of the diet of Utrecht, the English ambassadors and the representatives of the Hanseatic League met to exchange and then inspect the powers of the opposing party.41 Some instructions given to John lord Wenlock on 6 March 1462 began by stating that only when the king’s ambassadors had discovered whether the Burgundian representatives held ‘sufficient power’, should they outline their own

39 For example, Thomas Rotherham was empowered on 1 August 1468 to go on an embassy to France (he was named as an ambassador and orator in his powers, Foedera, V, pt II, p. 162). After his return, a warrant for payment was issued on 24 October describing him as ‘late sent in our ambassade into the parties of our reaume of Fraunce’ (PRO, E 404/74/1/98). In the issue rolls, Rotherham was paid £200 for being sent ‘in embassy’ to Louis XI (dated 29 March 1469, PRO, E 403/841, m. 14).
41 Hansisches Urkundenbuch, ed. K. Höhlbaum et al. (11 vols, Halle & Leipzig, 1876-1939), X, pp. 142-3. For a further discussion of the negotiations at the diet of Utrecht, see chap. 2, pp. 64-77.
demand for a further truce between England and Burgundy. In most cases however, the possibility of negotiations failing upon any technicality based on deficiencies in the powers of either side was avoided by issuing ambassadors with powers to bind conclusively. So, those diplomats consistently described as ambassadors or as ‘in our ambassade’ in the vernacular and in the exchequer evidence can not be assumed to have just been issued with simple powers, but often had powers to conclude as well.

On the other hand, for those diplomats who were presumably granted letters of credence alone, rather than powers to treat and conclude, there seems to have been no title used consistently to describe them in vernacular diplomatic parlance, or indeed in formal diplomatic documents. The lack of an obvious terminology must not lead us into thinking that they played a minor role in late medieval diplomacy. As we shall see in a later chapter, these letters of credence (and their accompanying instructions) permitted Edward’s unempowered diplomats to impart and written messages to foreign princes, issue demands, and open up avenues of negotiation, to be completed by those with full powers; in the credentials themselves, the diplomats were accorded no titles, and were simply described as being sent abroad ‘pour certaines matieres’.

In the exchequer records, their lesser status was signified by the fact that they were usually stated to have been sent abroad ‘in our message’. John Grauntford, one of Edward IV’s most frequently used low-level diplomats, was described in the *Brevia Baronibus* as being ‘in the parties beyonde the see in our message’, on 8 February 1481. In the exchequer rolls, it is also noted that such lesser-status diplomats were paid for going abroad ‘in certis negociis regis’ or perhaps ‘in certis nunciis’. In fact, from a study of the exchequer documents, it is possible to determine that the kind of bi-partite division in diplomatic personnel which Ferguson perceives does have some basis in fifteenth century reality. A diplomat paid for going ‘in embassy’ was usually undertaking a high-level mission and was usually provided with formal powers to treat and conclude. Any other diplomat sent abroad in the king’s message or the king’s matters, would probably belong to Ferguson’s first group, that is a lower-level diplomat simply holding letters of credence, rather than formal diplomatic powers.

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42 PRO, C 47/30/10/11; at the very beginning of Edward’s reign, on 1 May 1461, Wenlock had been granted the office of the king’s chief butler, *CPR 1461-67*, p. 8; he also became lord Wenlock ‘by writ of summons’ to Edward IV’s first parliament in 1461 (Scofield, *The Life and Reign*, I, p. 184).


44 PRO, E 208/17/pt II, (unnumbered); Grauntford was one of Edward’s yeomen of the crown by 1474, PRO, PSO 1/39/2035.

45 See for example, PRO, E 405/59, m. 3d and PRO, E 405/53, m. 5.
This division is seen clearly in a letter of credence issued by Edward IV to Thomas Danet on 5 April 1478. Edward wrote to Louis XI that 'after the departure of the lord Howard, and my other ambassadors to you, I send at this present time my well loved and faithful councillor and almoner, Master Thomas Danet'.\footnote{Plancher, {	extit{Histoire générale}}, IV, p. 401, 'depuis le partement du Sire de Havard & autres mes Ambassadeurs pardevers vous, j'envoye présentement mon bien amé & féal Conseiller & Ausmonier M' Thomas Danet'.} Howard had recently been given two sets of full ambassadorial powers to treat with France, hence his title, but Danet was not part of the full embassy and held a sole letter of credence. Consequently he is simply described as the king’s almoner.

Further evidence of the way that the medieval clerks were usually able to correctly depict, in everyday usage, whether certain diplomats were provided with ambassadorial or procuratorial powers, or were endowed with letters of credence alone, is also provided by the documents surrounding the mission of William Lacy (later, Richard III’s clerk of the council) to France in the early summer of 1480.\footnote{In 1480 Lacy was described as Edward’s councillor (\textit{Foedera}, V, pt III, p. 107) and was acting as one of the commissioners ‘in the office of constabship of England’ in November 1482 (\textit{CPR} 1476-85, p. 317); he was granted the office of clerk of the council on 8 April 1484, \textit{CPR} 1476-85, p. 430.} It is known from a letter of Louis XI to Edward IV (probably written before 12 May 1480) that Lacy had recently travelled to the French court on Edward IV’s behalf.\footnote{The letter is undated but it is suggested, persuasively, in the edition of Louis XI’s letters, that the letter should be dated to before the commission of John lord Howard and Thomas Langton, to treat with the French (issued on 12 May 1480); \textit{Foedera}, V, pt III, p. 104. See also \textit{Lettres de Louis XI}, ed. E. Charavay \textit{et al.} (11 vols, Paris, 1883-1909), VIII, p. 193 & BN, Ms. Fr. 18703, fol. 262.} Now, in his letter, Louis XI stated that he had ‘received the letters that you [Edward IV] have written to me, by the hands of William Lacy’. Moreover, the French king also confirmed that he had heard ‘that which he has told me on your behalf, which is, in effect the content of your said letters’. No powers seem to have granted to Lacy for this mission and he is never described as Edward’s ambassador in Louis’ letter which would probably have been the case if formal ambassadorial powers had definitely been granted to him.\footnote{For example, when Louis wrote to Edward on 23 May 1478, concerning the mission of John lord Howard to France, Howard and his colleagues (who did hold formal powers) were described by Louis as Edward’s ‘ambassadeurs’; Plancher, \textit{Histoire générale}, IV, p. 388.} Moreover, Louis XI’s description of Lacy’s mission seems to suggest that Lacy had delivered Edward’s letters (and a letter of credence) and had also delivered a fuller and more comprehensive oral message (Lacy’s credence). According to Louis, Lacy had informed him that Edward had listened to the statements of Louis’ ambassadors in London and also confirmed that Charles de Martigny, bishop of Elne, had declared certain of his instructions concerning
Edward’s desire to mediate between Maximilian of Austria and Louis XI. Edward, it seems, had been sent to France to press home Edward’s desire to mediate between the two princes and to suggest an abstinence of war between the two, so that any peace might be more speedily arrived at. Although no formal documentation given to Lacy has survived (either formal powers or a letter of credence) it is almost certain that his mission was carried out with letters of credence alone. Thus when he was described in a warrant for issue of 17 June 1480 as ‘late in our message’ to the king of France, it seems that the particular exchequer clerk concerned had accurately applied the precise terminology to describe Lacy and his mission; he was not, for example, described instead as ‘late in our ambassade’ as a fully empowered diplomat would have been.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to prove whether all the unempowered diplomats paid to go abroad simply in the king’s matters, or in the king’s message, would have been issued with letters of credence. It seems likely, but since letters of credence were issued under the signet, and the signet archive for the reign of Edward IV is almost completely lost, very few English letters of credence exist for the reign of Edward IV. Therefore, it is difficult to determine precisely who was issued with letters of credence and who was not. Simple letters of recommendation (informing the addressee that the bearer was about to ask certain things on behalf of the king) may also have been issued to the members of this second group of minor diplomats, but, again, very few survive. It has not been possible to find any letters of credence or recommendation which were definitely given to fully empowered diplomats, in the reign of Edward IV, so it could be tempting to conclude that those diplomats who were issued with letters of credence were usually carrying out low-level missions. However, because so few of these credences and recommendations survive for the reign, firm conclusions are unwise; the credences of empowered diplomats simply may not have survived. An examination of the remaining signet documents from the reign of Richard III shows clearly that such credences were issued to empowered diplomats. We have seen already that Dr Thomas Hutton received both letters of credence and formal powers to treat with Francis II of Brittany in July 1483. In the same year, Bernard de la Forsse was sent to Spain with full procuratorial powers, and also with letters of credence by which Ferdinand was asked to ‘give credence to what

50 Lettres de Louis XI, ed. Charavay et al., VIII, p. 194.
51 PRO, E 404/77/1/26.
he tells your serene highness in our name'. 53 This correlates with the view of Charles Giry-Deloison who suggests that credences fulfilled a vital triple function of presenting all diplomats (whether empowered or not) to foreign rulers, and informing them of the reasons for the mission and assuring them of the honesty and trustworthiness of their intent. 54 Thus, it seems more likely to be the case that letters of credence were not the fundamental and defining feature of a low-status diplomatic mission. Instead, those missions were defined by the fact that the envoys carrying them out held letters of credence, and no other diplomatic powers or credentials. 55

At this point it is important to note that the most minor type of diplomatic document, the credence, could be issued by almost anybody who had need to conduct personal diplomatic negotiations with a foreign ruler or government. So in the reign of Edward IV diplomatic credences were not just issued by the king. A few of his most important courtiers such as the earl of Warwick or William Lord Hastings issued credences to their servants to conduct their own personal negotiations and carry messages abroad; most of this personal diplomatic business of Warwick and Hastings emanated from their positions as captain and lieutenant of Calais respectively, but could also concern the minor diplomatic business of the king which he had delegated to them for the sake of convenience. For example, in the confused diplomatic situation before and after Edward IV seized the throne in 1461, the earl of Warwick was able to organise diplomatic negotiations in Italy with Pius II and Francesco Sforza duke of Milan, by means of issuing one of his agents with credences directly from himself. This agent, Antonio della Torre, was sent on missions to Italy on Warwick’s behalf throughout 1461 and 1462. 56 Lord Hastings also sent several of his servants to Louis XI in the summer of 1477 to carry out certain diplomatic dealings on his own behalf, explaining to the French king that he was not involved in a

55 For an alternative view see Cuttino, English Diplomatic Administration, pp. 156-7.
56 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan, ed. A.B. Hinds (1912), I, pp. 44-5; but see especially the letter of Francesco Coppini to Francesco Sforza which he wrote from Rome on 24 April 1462. ‘I have received letters credential from the Earl of Warwick in favour of Master Antonio della Torre. He expected to come, but, being delayed, he has sent me the letters of credence on behalf of the king and the said earl enclosed in his own.’ (ibid., p. 108). It is possible that this Della Torre may be identified with (or be a relative of), the Antonio della Torre who was active in varying capacities at Calais in the 1460s. For letters of protection granted in December 1461 to a certain ‘Anthonio de la Turre’ for the victualling of Calais under the supervision of the earl of Warwick, see PRO, C 81/1298/31 (and for later letters of protection, PRO, C 81/1307/1 & PRO, C 81/1309/19). ‘Anthony de la Tour’ is listed among the earl of Warwick’s retinue in the 1466 muster roll, BL, Add. Ms. 46455, fol. 59. One ‘Antony Delatour, lombard’ had also, apparently, occupied the office of Sandgill in the lordships of Mark and Oye at some point before July 1461 (CPR 1461-67, p. 130).
conspiracy with Margaret of Burgundy against France; all of these men would have travelled with letters of credence.\textsuperscript{57} Since, as we saw above, letters of credence were of fundamental importance in the formation of a diplomatic mission, it is clear that it was not only sovereign princes who could endow their servants with minor diplomatic status.

The debate as to whether full \textit{droit d'ambassade} was as common during the Middle Ages as the ability to issue credences and send minor diplomatic missions, has been long and very complex. It has been argued, for example, that at the papal court the rule was obeyed that only a prince with full sovereignty was able to send fully-accredited \textit{ambissiatores} to the pope.\textsuperscript{58} On this basis some historians have suggested that full \textit{droit d'ambassade} was meant to be limited only to those princes with full sovereignty. Occupying the centre ground, Garrett Mattingly suggested that as the Middle Ages went on the usage of the word ambassador came to be ‘increasingly restricted to the major diplomatic agents of the major powers’.\textsuperscript{59} On the other hand, Donald Queller proposed that during the Middle Ages and into the fifteenth-century almost any lay vassal, ecclesiastic, city, corporate entity, or private citizen was able to employ ambassadors, although even he admits that the modern notion of the sole right of sovereign powers to send ambassadors was ‘clearly growing’ in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{60} Ferguson too claims that in the late Middle Ages ‘little attention was paid to the lawyers’ dictum that only sovereign powers, independent communes, and perhaps great princes could employ ambassadors’.\textsuperscript{61} For example, virtually all of the dependent cities of Venice sent ambassadors to the city throughout the fifteenth century; likewise the three estates of the lands of Mary of Burgundy sent ambassadors to Louis XI on various occasions.\textsuperscript{62} Edward IV himself received ambassadors from the earl of Ross in early 1462 and also received the duke of Albany’s ambassadors from Scotland in 1483. Albany’s envoys present at the masses held on 2 February 1483, were specifically described as ambassadors, but this may have been an attempt to snub the authority of the Scottish king, with whom relations were frosty.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{57} HL, HA 13879, passim.
\textsuperscript{58} Queller, \textit{The Office of the Ambassador}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{59} Mattingly, \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{60} Queller, \textit{The Office of the Ambassador}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{61} Ferguson, \textit{English Diplomacy}, p. 154.
However, by the later part of the fifteenth century English practice was generally far stricter than continental and rebel Scottish usage when it came to the privilege of calling one's envoys ambassadors. Although the greater nobles of England (such as the earl of Warwick) did use letters of credence which gave diplomatic status to their own servants, they were not able to send fully accredited ambassadors abroad to treat with foreign princes. That was a right which was reserved alone for the king's empowered diplomats, as we saw above. In fact, no English document from the exchequer, chancery or elsewhere provides evidence that any other member of the royal family or the nobility in England sent envoys abroad called ambassadors throughout the whole of Edward IV's reign. Even the earl of Warwick, whose diplomatic ambitions are well-known, was never able to call any of his envoys an ambassador. On a few occasions, continental sources do describe the envoys of the earl of Warwick as ambassadors, and indeed this is significant insofar as it shows the diplomatic prestige which Warwick had accumulated by the 1460s. The papal legate, Francesco Coppini, wrote to the duke of Milan from St Omer on 6 May 1461 that 'since I received the first letters there was an ambassador here of the Earl of Warwick'64. This kind of lapse was probably a result of slightly less stringent continental diplomatic practice concerning who might be termed an ambassador. However, in most cases, even continental sources merely describe the envoys of the major English nobles as secretaries, heralds or messengers.

So, as Giry-Deloison suggests, in the late medieval period a formal diplomatic character was given to the mission of English envoys through two normal means, letters of credence (issued by the king or one of his courtiers) and formal diplomatic powers (issued by the king alone).65 It has been suggested that this kind of diplomatic status based on narrowly defined faculties in the wording of formal documents, did not allow the envoy a great deal of freedom of manoeuvre beyond the specific remit of the documentation which he held.66 For example, letters of credence enabled the envoy to pass on carefully prepared oral messages, and to initiate (on an informal basis) future areas of formal negotiation; to enable him to carry this out, the envoy was usually supplied with a detailed aide-mémoire specifically detailing the precise subjects to be broached and even the correct wording. We have seen that Dr Thomas Hutton's instructions 'upon the lettre of credence which he shalle deliver to the duc of

64 CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, p. 83 (letter no. 100, 6 May 1461).
65 Giry-Deloison, 'La naissance de la diplomatie moderne', 58.
66 Ferguson, English Diplomacy, pp. 159-61.
Britaine’ provided a clear list of those messages that he was expected to pass on to Francis II. Likewise, some instructions given to Alexander Legh in 1475 listed in precise detail all of the messages he was expected to pass on to James III of Scotland ‘by waye of credence’. He was, amongst other things, to tell James III or ‘such of his counseill as he wol depute to here his credence’ that Edward IV ‘hath wele in mynde’ the Scottish king’s complaints about infractions of the truce and the recent failure of certain diets agreed to be held between representatives of both kings.

Furthermore, although full powers gave ambassadors complete authority to conclude agreements with foreign powers on the king’s behalf (and promised the king’s ratification of those agreements), ‘the extent of the envoy’s discretion’ was more narrowly defined by the possession of instrucciones. Those instructions would outline exactly how the ambassador should deport himself during the negotiations, and detail exactly what concessions he was permitted to make and at what point in the negotiations those concessions were to be made. Any ambassador going beyond the remit of his powers or instructions was violating a personal ‘contract between him and the king’, and the agreements which they then arrived at could then be repudiated by their principal. Indeed, the dangers of an envoy overstepping his own authority is very clear from the example of a series of agreements signed by Charles de Martigny, bishop of Elné, with English representatives in the early part of 1479. Comprising three parts, the agreement which Martigny was unwillingly persuaded to sign provided for the extension of the Anglo-French truce and amity for one hundred years after the death of the king who died first. It was also agreed that the pension of fifty thousand crowns should be paid annually until the truce ended, for which Elné signed a bond witnessed by an Apostolic and imperial notary on 27 February. Louis XI had given Elné powers to extend the truce for one hundred years, and to alter the payment

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68 D. Dunlop, ‘The “Redresses and Reparacons of Attemptates”: Alexander Legh’s instructions from Edward IV, March-April 1475’, BHR, LXIII (1990), 351. It is to be noted that Dunlop has made a small error in transcribing Legh’s instructions: he has read ‘credence’ as ‘evedence’. This error makes it rather difficult to determine that the first part of the instructions are, effectively, a written version of Legh’s proposed credence or oral messages. The authenticity of those oral messages was to be confirmed by certain of the king’s ‘lettres credenciaull’ which Legh was to hand over either to James III or to his representatives.
69 Ferguson, English Diplomacy, p. 159.
70 See PRO, C 47/30/1/16 (also printed in P. Chaplais (ed.), English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I: documents and interpretation (2 vols, 1982), I, pp. 195-8). This set of instructions dates from May 1473 and the negotiations leading to the diet of Utrecht.
71 Ferguson, English Diplomacy, pp. 160-1.
72 See Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 246-7 & 263.
of the pension accordingly. Later, on the basis that Martigny had overstepped his powers in guaranteeing the pension payment by means of the bond signed on 27 February (and for other reasons), Louis XI was able to argue against the entire agreement, which never came into effect.

However, diplomatic status in the later Middle Ages implied rather more than the specific powers and faculties granted in the detailed clauses of the credences and procurations of late medieval diplomats. For instance, in the autumn of 1463, a large group of ambassadors from Edward IV (headed by George Neville, bishop of Exeter and Henry Bourchier earl of Essex) left England to participate at the conference of St Omer. Now, in a warrant for issue ordering their payment, Edward’s ambassadors were described precisely as being sent in the king’s ‘ambassade unto Scint Omers to mete with the commissaries and ambassatours of oure cousin the duc of Bourgoigne’. The powers of the English ambassadors (given on 6 August 1463) also state that they had been formally commissioned to negotiate a truce, or abstinence of war, and an intercourse of merchandise between Philip the Good of Burgundy and his subjects. It is, on the other hand, practically certain that the English also hoped to come to some arrangement with Louis XI of France through the mediation of the duke of Burgundy and his representatives. Relations between Edward and Louis had been hostile since the accessions of both kings in 1461, owing to French support for Lancastrian operations in the North of England (France had also offered a convenient place of refuge for Lancastrian exiles). After a few weeks of difficult negotiations at St Omer, the English embassy then moved to Hesdin (they arrived there on 30 September and stayed until 8 October). There, despite the fact that they probably held no formal powers to do so, the English ambassadors met the French king personally on 3 October, at the duke of Burgundy’s request, and entered into a lengthy conversation with him. Even though the English ambassadors were regarded strictly as ambassadors to Philip the Good of Burgundy, the French king had no qualms about treating with them directly. So, specific procurations with detailed clauses empowering the holder to treat with one foreign ruler could sometimes be interpreted quite generously, especially if those unexpected or unplanned meetings were

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73 Foedera, V, pt III, pp. 93-4 (these powers dated back to 13 July 1478).
74 Although meetings were also held at Hesdin.
76 ADN, B 575/16040.
78 ADN, B 2051, fol. 342; Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, pp. 304-5.
relatively informal. These powers conferred a more generalised diplomatic status upon the holder; as acknowledged representatives of Edward IV, they were entitled to converse informally with whoever they met in the course of their mission if they felt that this would further the international interests of their master.79

Moreover, as will be discussed in a later chapter, empowered diplomats could also undertake informal negotiations, with representatives of foreign rulers whom they happened to meet by chance, for which they had no specific powers. For example, two of Edward’s ambassadors working in Bruges (in May 1467) undertook negotiations with some Breton ambassadors, then also present in Burgundy. Despite the fact that neither the Bretons nor the English had specific powers to work with each other, a preliminary extension of the Anglo-Breton truce was agreed.80 So, far too much emphasis has been placed on how medieval diplomatic status was constantly hedged and restrained by the fact that medieval diplomats had to work within the exact wording of their powers. This has mainly been due to the fact that evidence survival has dictated that only the most formal kinds of diplomatic documents now exist. Minutes relating to informal meetings (such as the discussions at Bruges in May 1467) have not usually survived, even though those meetings frequently led to formal agreements without the need for further negotiations. Likewise, the surviving contemporary treatises on the theory of diplomatic law and privilege have greatly influenced historical opinion concerning the kind of privileges which diplomatic envoys could expect in practice during the Middle Ages. On the whole, the canonists and the legists were in agreement that ambassadors and other types of diplomatic envoys should be endowed with a particular immunity. D.E. Queller has summarised much of medieval thought on the subject in his The Office of the Ambassador in the Middle Ages; he relies heavily on the Ambaxiator brevilogus of Bernard du Rosier, which argues for an ‘extraordinary security of ambassadors’.81 This security supposedly included freedom from arrest, other molestation, protection of their goods and servants and even immunity from some types of judicial action for alleged offences committed before a mission commenced.82 These ideas were certainly current in the literature of late fifteenth-century England. In 1489/90 William Caxton

79 For a rather complicated definition of the sort of representation provided by procurated diplomatic personnel see Queller, The Office of the Ambassador, pp. 40-1.
80 See chap. 2, p. 60.
81 Queller, The Office of the Ambassador, pp. 176-80.
82 Ibid., pp. 178 & 180. Mattingly argued that for debts incurred before an embassy no action against an ambassador could be brought during his embassy, but for debts incurred during an embassy, the normal rules applied (idem, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 259).
translated and then printed an edition of Christine de Pisan’s *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye*; a substantial section of the book argues that no-one ‘more gretly is preuyleged than ambassatoure’.\(^8^3\) This privilege ensures that ‘al about where they goo that they and theyre thynges shal be sure and sauffe.[and that rulers should not]...lette nor trouble them’.\(^8^4\) Far from being an idealisation of the reality of diplomatic procedure, Queller argues that this special immunity of ambassadors and diplomatic envoys was obeyed in practice during the Middle Ages.

However, diplomatic status did not always imply safety, especially whilst travelling on the dangerous high seas. In 1474 Edward IV ordered that reparation be made to William Hatchlyff for certain goods taken from him ‘by Frenshmen’ whilst Hatchlyff was on a mission to Charles the Bold of Burgundy.\(^8^5\) Before 20 February 1473 Hatchlyff was also recompensed for the ransom of one of his servants taken by the French to Dieppe, whilst Hatchlyff was ‘doing our messaige toward our said brother [Charles the Bold]’.\(^8^6\) Diplomatic envoys could not rely on their personal safety, especially if the international diplomatic situation was fragile, or if there was a possibility of war with a foreign power. In the early 1470s relations between England and France were particularly frosty, hence it is unsurprising that the attacks on Hatchlyff and his goods and servants were carried out by the French. During such periods of tension it was even possible that medieval governments would sanction the arrest of diplomatic envoys. In the summer of 1471, Edward IV ordered that Thomas Wrangbroke be paid £6 13s 4d for the capture of a pursuivant sent by the king of France with letters to James III of Scotland. Evidently, Louis XI’s support for the earl of Warwick’s rebellion had stretched Anglo-French relations to breaking point; diplomatic niceties had to give way to pragmatic considerations of defence and security. Edward IV was presumably hoping that by arresting the French pursuivant, he would be forewarned of any possibility of an alliance between France and Scotland.\(^8^7\)

A foreign diplomatic agent might not be entirely sure of his safety whilst travelling in English territories, even when his country of origin was on relatively

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\(^8^5\) PRO, PSO 1/39/2026 (signet letter, of 12 June 1474, to the keeper of the privy seal). It is clear from the warrants for issue that Hatchlyff had been robbed at some point before 3 October 1472, PRO, E 404/75/2/2/41.

\(^8^6\) PRO, E 404/75/2/88 & PRO, PSO 1/39/2026.

\(^8^7\) PRO, E 405/53, m. 5.
good terms with Edward IV. A messenger of the duke of Burgundy was robbed in 1468, when Edward IV and Charles the Bold were on conspicuously good terms. But it was a measure of those good terms that Edward IV took prompt action and ensured that the offender was brought to justice. In 1472 a papal envoy (and Milanese agent), Pietro Aliprandi, complained that he had been unfairly arrested at Calais ‘as a messenger of the Pope’. He also claimed that the English ‘have also arrested at Calais that cavalier, ambassador of the King of Scotland... Thus they do not keep faith and are evil islanders, who are born with tails.’ Charles de Martigny, bishop of Elne, and ambassador of Louis XI to England in the late 1470s, also complained of English harassment directed at his servants and familiars, his ‘domestiques étaient à chaque instant insultés dans les rues, un d’entre eux avait été laissé pour mort et Édouard IV n’avait pas osé punir un archer de sa garde reconnu coupable de cet attentat’. In the first few months of Henry VII’s reign, several Burgundian ambassadors (who had originally travelled to England to visit the court of Richard III) were violently attacked at Canterbury whilst leaving the country. One of the servants of Pierre Puissant (one of the Burgundian ambassadors) complained that because he had ‘manly resisted the wronges that thei entended to have doon unto his maister’ he was left ‘sore hurte behinde theym in the seid citie of Canturbury’. Thus, diplomatic immunity, to envoys or more particularly to the members of their entourages, was never entirely guaranteed even during peaceful diplomatic relations, and even less so during periods of diplomatic crisis.

However, during the reign of Edward IV, English ambassadors travelling abroad did, mainly, find themselves free from blatant attacks upon their persons, goods or servants. Likewise, most foreign ambassadors working within England were able to carry out their missions relatively peacefully; only a few complained of mistreatment by the English. But, as J.T. Ferguson has suggested, diplomatic envoys can never have been fully sure of their own protection as demands for letters of safe-
conduct were constant and frequent. It was a commonplace in the late fifteenth century that diplomatic agents would request a safe-conduct from the country to which they were expected to travel. Often these requests were carried by heralds, pursuivants or kings of arms. In April 1464 Windsor Herald was sent to Bruges to procure a safe-conduct for the king’s ambassadors intending to travel to Utrecht to treat with the Hanse. Before large-scale important embassies, envoys of a higher status might be sent to obtain safe-conducts from relevant powers. In August 1463, John lord Wenlock (who was, by then, probably acting as Warwick’s lieutenant at Calais) travelled from Calais to Boulogne, in order to obtain promises of safe-conduct from Philip the Good of Burgundy for Wenlock’s fellow ambassadors, who were planning to travel to St Omer to attend a conference there. He seems to have been particularly interested in ensuring that the mission would not be in danger from the French king, with whom relations were still quite strained. So, any attacks carried out upon the diplomats, their servants or goods, were, in the first instance, regarded as infringements of safe-conducts rather than as violations of a general law of diplomatic immunity. But it is quite possible that infringements of diplomatic safe-conducts would have been viewed as a particularly grievous offence.

However, a close examination of the text of a rather unusual thirty-year treaty signed between Edward IV and Francis II in 1468 gives some indications that notions of diplomatic immunity were beginning to become formally established in late medieval diplomatic practice. On 2 May 1468 Francis II of Brittany signed a truce and intercourse of merchandise with Edward IV, to last for thirty years. Edward then

92. If the dignity of the office had included freedom from arrest, then acquisition of letters of safe-conduct would have been gratuitous’, Ferguson, English Diplomacy, p. 1644.
93. PRO, E 403/832, m. 2; the English ambassadors were commissioned on 23 April 1464. They were: Richard Caunton (archdeacon of Salisbury); Dr Henry Sharp; Henry Bernycham and Walter Cony. The commission may be found in Foederar, V, pt II, pp. 122-3.
94. He stayed at Boulogne from 23 to 24 August, ADN, B 2048, fol. 241. The lieutenancy of Calais from 1461-71 is an office surrounded by a great deal of ambiguity. However, it is likely that from Richard Neville’s appointment to the office of captain of Calais in 1455, his lieutenant in the town acted as his official deputy. William Neville lord Fauconberg was certainly lieutenant in January 1461 (CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, no. 61, p. 47). John lord Wenlock, may have occupied this office from later in 1461, but the first explicit reference to him acting in this capacity comes from a commission (now to be found in the memoranda rolls of the exchequer) of 20 August 1465, PRO, E 159/247, Adhue Records, Trinity Term 10 Edward IV and 49 Henry VI, fol. 1. Wenlock is similarly described in the earl of Warwick’s Calais muster roll of 1466 (BL, Add. Ms. 46455, fol. 58).
95. See a letter from Philip the Good to Louis XI, written on 24 August 1463, printed in Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pièce justificative, no. 20, pp. 293-5.
96. The commercial intercourse agreement was at first negotiated at Greenwich on 3 April 1468 (for which see especially ADL-A, E 122/10). Francis II’s copies of both parts of the treaty are to be found in PRO, E 30/523 & PRO, E 30/533; Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, 43rd Annual Report (1885), Appendix I (Diplomatic Documents), pp. 331-2.
signed the part of the agreement dealing with the abstinence of war on 9 June 1468 and ratified the intercourse of merchandise in the early days of July; the abstinence provided that 'all the embassies, messengers and envoys of one party to the other' can come and go between England and Brittany without any need of safe-conduct or surety. 97 This freedom of movement was based on the provision that such ambassadors, messengers and envoys should hold letters or messages of one party to the other party. 98 Of course, this provision of the treaty implies that a diplomatic envoy holding a collection of diplomatic letters prior to May 1468, would have been accorded no automatic immunity enshrined in a formal agreement, and implies that a safe-conduct was still generally necessary for safe travel. Since England had no similar treaty with Burgundy, France, Castille, Aragon or any of the Italian powers, it seems that safe-conducts were probably necessary for most English diplomats travelling abroad during the whole of Edward IV's reign. Although this treaty may be seen as a new attempt to formalise notions of diplomatic immunity, it also betrays the fact that such an immunity was, as yet, sometimes more evident in theory rather than practice.

It is true, however, that the king was keen to ensure that whilst they were abroad, his diplomats were free from damaging legal actions being brought against them during their absence. For instance, in the early summer of 1473, Henry Bourgchier earl of Essex (and temporary keeper of the great seal) received a petition from John Dort and William Horton. This petition revealed, amongst other things, that one John Colyns had brought an action of debt against Bernard de la Fosse for £55. But La Fosse was 'at that tyme and yet hederto beyng in Spaigne aboute the kyngez erandes and besynez'. As Edward's envoy was not expected to return to England until


98 'Item que toutz Ambaxdeurs, Messagiers & transmis de l'une partie en l'autre (cestassavoir) de nous ou de nos dits successours devers nostre dit Cousin... ou auxi de la partie de nostre dit Cousin ou de ses ditz Successours devers nous ou nos dits Successours... purent, durant lez dits Trues & Abstinens de Guerre, par Meer, par Terre, par Ripviers & Eaus douleuz, aler, venier, sojouner, & demourer ez pais & obeisaunz de chescune dez ditz parties comprinses ditz Abstinences de guerre, auxi qui il leur plaira, par bosoignier ez Ambassadors, messaigs, & commissions qui leur serront Commisses & Ordonnees par lez Princes d'une Partie ou de l'autre respectament & eulx en retourner en leur partie quant il leur plaira surement & saulvement sans ceo qu'il leur soit bosoigne d'avoir autrue Sauconduyt ne Suerte, d'une partie ne d'autre, mais seulement que ils monstrent porter lettres ou messagies des Princes de l'une Partie a l'autre', Foedera, V, pt III, p. 8 (my italics).
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the following Michaelmas, the king 'sent a lettre myssyve vnto the seid John Colyns to surceze of his suyte aynst the seid Barnard'. But it is noticeable that the sense that La Fosse was immune from such proceedings was not developed enough to ensure that John Colyns did not bring about the action in the first place, although the king did step in when necessary. So, if freedom from physical molestation was granted by diplomatic status, then letters of safe-conduct would have been unnecessary. Similarly, if freedom from law-suits was also implied by diplomatic status, then letters of protection with a clause *volumus* would also have been unnecessary. Many English diplomats still requested that specific letters of protection be granted to them, in order to ensure that while they were away they need not fear unfair attacks upon their lands, goods or servants, or be subject to legal action against which, owing to their absence, they could not defend themselves. In any case, this kind of protection could sometimes only postpone due legal process. Bartelot de Rivière had agreed to be surety for one Thomas, merchant of Bayonne, for the sum of £160. Owing to Thomas' default Bartelot was arrested by certain merchants of the city of London, at some point before July 1466, on the very day on which he returned from a diplomatic mission to the king of Naples.

The ambassadors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were certainly not entirely free from the danger of molestation, or even physical injury. Close to Pavia in 1541, Antonio Rincon (a French ambassador) and his companion were murdered by Imperial soldiers in cold blood, although it was later argued by the Spanish that in secretly stealing across the Emperor's territory the ambassadors were guilty of concealing their 'missions and their identities'. However, during the early modern period, it did become rather more widely accepted that an ambassador and his entourage should be customarily granted a wide variety of immunities and privileges ranging from freedom from actions of debt, to, occasionally, immunity from criminal jurisdiction if ambassadors were found to be guilty of espionage, sabotage, or of plotting violence. In these cases, Mattingly argues, it was felt that to send the ambassador home was the pragmatic course of action on the part of the host state. In addition, the residence of the ambassador came to be regarded as sacrosanct and,

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99 PRO, C 1/49/31.
100 See two letters of protection granted to Vincent Clement in 1467 and 1468 (PRO, C 81/815/2257 & PRO, C 81/816/2343).
101 PRO, PSO 1/27/143 (warrant under the signet, issued 7 July 1466).
102 Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, pp. 257-8; although Mattingly laconically stated that the 'circumstance scarcely justified assassination'.
before the Thirty Years War, 'the right of the ambassador's chaplain to conduct within the embassy divine service according to his country's use' was largely tolerated. According to Mattingly, this stemmed from the belief in the fiction of extra-territoriality (namely that whilst an ambassador was in residence at a foreign court, he was not deemed to have left his home soil).\textsuperscript{104} Despite the regulations concerning the status of particular diplomatic offices to be found in Annex XVII of the Acts of the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the Protocol of the Conference of Aix-la-Chapelle (November 1818), the regulation of diplomatic intercourse in terms of the privileges and immunities of ambassadors was not formally codified until the Vienna Convention in 1961, at which the fiction of extra-territoriality was abandoned.\textsuperscript{105} Until this point, as in the later medieval period, modern diplomatic immunities and privileges were dependent upon a body of by no means universally accepted customary law, and therefore, on occasion, formal bilateral agreements on the subject became necessary. In fact, the treaty of 1809, between Britain and Portugal guaranteeing reciprocal privileges and immunities of ambassadors does not seem so very different from the, albeit more modest, Anglo-Breton treaty of 1468, which (as we have seen), agreed that envoys of either side could come and go freely and without fear of molestation.\textsuperscript{106}

On the whole, late medieval diplomacy was far less legalistic and inflexible than has usually been supposed. As we have seen, historians have tended to suggest that the complicated legal principles and theory advocated by the authors of medieval tracts on diplomacy were consistently followed in medieval diplomatic practice. Firstly, the theory of a hierarchy of diplomatic offices was proposed 'from a reading of the canonists and civilians'.\textsuperscript{107} Secondly, it has been argued that the activities of diplomatic envoys were often inflexibly bound to the precise wording of the particular formal documents held by those envoys.\textsuperscript{108} Thirdly, on the evidence of treatises, by Bernard du Rosier, Durandus and Baldus, amongst others, it has been suggested that the theory of diplomatic immunity was formally accepted and widely implemented.\textsuperscript{109}


\textsuperscript{105} For which see P. Cahier, 'Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations', International Conciliation, DLXXI (1969), 1-76; Berridge, Diplomacy, p. 23; Sandström, 'Diplomatic intercourse and immunities', 160.

\textsuperscript{106} Sandström, 'Diplomatic intercourse and immunities', 134.

\textsuperscript{107} Ferguson, English Diplomacy, p. 149.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp. 160-4.

\textsuperscript{109} Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, pp. 42-8.
In fact, the complicated notion of a hierarchy of differing diplomatic titles did not apply in practice (although Ferguson’s revisionist theory needs some qualification). As far as England was concerned at any rate, envoys were mainly divided between those who held powers and those who held letters of credence alone. Likewise, the duties and tasks assigned by formal diplomatic documents did not entirely circumscribe the envoy’s freedom of manoeuvre; those documents certainly did not proscribe all other kinds of more informal diplomatic methods. Diplomatic status was flexible enough to allow an envoy a certain amount of room for manoeuvre in initiating serious, but informal, negotiations necessitated by unexpected events. Lastly, theories of diplomatic immunity and privilege were abided by far less rigidly than the arguments of Donald Queller would have us believe. Although the treaty of 1468 between England and Brittany may have attempted to formalise these notions, many ambassadors rightly felt that a variety of safe-conducts and letters of protection were also necessary before embarking upon their journeys.
Chapter Two

EMBASSIES AND ENGLISH DIPLOMACY, 1461-83

Since most historians of diplomacy are agreed that the emergence of standing diplomacy was a significant step towards the development of both modern diplomacy and the West European state, much discussion of diplomacy in the later Middle Ages has concentrated upon the origins of, and first precedents for, the resident ambassadors of the Renaissance. Historians have proposed many different candidates as Europe’s first resident diplomat. G.P. Cuttino suggested that English procurators at the Parlement of Paris in the 1300s ‘became the first permanent diplomatic representatives’.¹ Niccolà Niccolini speculated that owing to the constant diplomatic activities of the Venetian consul at the court of Naples during the middle of the fourteenth century, those consuls should rightly be regarded as the first resident ambassadors.² However, both Mattingly and Donald Queller have stressed that whilst the English procurators and Venetian consuls may have shouldered some important diplomatic responsibilities, these were usually incidental to their commercial or legal duties.³ Most historians have instead found the first examples of residents in Italy during the middle of the fifteenth century. David Jayne Hill, for example, put forward Nicodemus de’ Pontremoli as the most likely candidate (he acted as Francesco Sforza’s agent at the court of Cosimo de’ Medici in the late 1440s).⁴ Instead, Donald Queller cites the slightly earlier example of Geronimo Contareno, Venetian orator at Rome. Geronimo was commissioned on 25 September 1431 and, importantly, on 30 March 1432 ‘the Senate provided for the election of Contareno’s successor’, indicating that the Venetian orator at Rome was now a recognised resident ambassador, according to the accepted modern definition.⁵

During the reign of Edward IV, there was no consistent use of resident ambassadors by the Northern powers. Even the presence of a resident ambassador at the Northern European courts was still a relatively rare occurrence. Francesco Sforza

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3 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, pp. 62-4; Queller, The Office of the Ambassador, p. 82.
initiated the first series of Milanese residents at the French court from the early 1460s, although it is clear that initially they were regarded by Louis XI with a great deal of suspicion; he feared that they might well be acting as spies. When it was brought to Louis’ attention in 1464 that Francesco Sforza intended to establish a resident embassy in France, Louis replied that ‘the custom in France is not similar to that of Italy because to maintain a resident in these parts is a suspicious thing’. However, one historian, Betty Behrens, attempted to argue that Edward IV’s reign also saw a vital development in the evolution of England’s standing diplomacy. In an influential article written in 1934, Behrens suggested that John Shirwood (Edward IV’s proctor in Rome) acted as England’s first resident ambassador at the curia. Shirwood, a professor of theology, had been officially appointed as the king’s proctor in Rome on 12 December 1477, as a probable replacement for Edmund Conyngsburgh who had acted as the king’s proctor, since February 1474. It is known that on 17 April 1479 Shirwood was among those English ambassadors commissioned to mediate between the warring parties of Italy, in a complicated set of negotiations held at Rome. The Pazzi conspiracy in Florence (backed by the pope) and the subsequent murder of Giuliano de’ Medici had resulted in Italy being divided between two opposing parties (Florence, Milan and Venice on one side and the Papacy, Naples and Siena on the other). Edward IV felt it incumbent upon him to offer mediation, and Shirwood was duly provided with an ambassadorial commission along with John Sant (abbot of Abingdon) and John Doget. But Behrens argued that since Shirwood had already been described from 1478 as an orator (or ambassador according to papal usage) in

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9 Shirwood’s appointment is to be found in *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-85*, p. 60 and Conyngsburgh was appointed on 1 February 1474, *CPR 1467-77*, p. 415. Conyngsburgh was to be paid £120 per annum.
the records of the hospital of St Thomas in Rome, that Shirwood’s formal title of procurator (in the English records) disguised his growing diplomatic activities as a resident ambassador.\textsuperscript{12}

The English proctor at Rome, previously responsible mainly for ecclesiastical matters concerning England (such as procuring papal grants and appointments) had probably always undertaken supplementary diplomatic and political activities, but Behrens argues that during and after the career of John Shirwood in the later fifteenth century, the diplomatic function became primary; she states that ‘it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he was a resident ambassador and not a special ambassador’.\textsuperscript{13} After Edward IV’s death, Shirwood continued to be used by Richard III as his proctor at the curia and in 1484 was the recipient of further temporary diplomatic powers.\textsuperscript{14} At that point, Shirwood (as bishop elect of Durham) was sent to Rome with Thomas Langton (bishop of St David’s) and in their letters of recommendation were described as Richard III’s ‘true and undoubted spokesmen commissaries proctors legates and special messengers’.\textsuperscript{15} In the large amount of material relating to Langton and Shirwood’s mission to Rome of 1484 contained in Harleian 433, there is no unambiguous evidence to suggest that Shirwood was issued with formal letters enabling him to act as Richard III’s resident ambassador at Rome. As Behrens later admits, without evidence of Shirwood’s credentials the argument that he was expected to act consistently as a resident diplomatic representative ‘must remain a matter of inference’.\textsuperscript{16} But in fact, formal diplomatic credentials for early English resident ambassadors are relatively rare, even in the early sixteenth century. For example, although it is known from a series of diplomatic letters written in 1517 that Sir Thomas Spinelly was appointed as Henry VIII’s resident ambassador to the court of Charles of Spain in that year, his credentials do not survive.\textsuperscript{17} Thus

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} She also suggests that the papal master of the ceremonies described him (usually) as orator from 1483 onwards (Behrens, ‘Origins of the office of English resident ambassador’, 649).
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 649.
\item \textsuperscript{14} British Library, Harleian MS 433, ed. R. Horrox & P. Hammond (4 vols, 1979-83), III, pp. 63-74.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 64.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Behrens, ‘Origins of the office of English resident ambassador’, 649-50.
\item \textsuperscript{17} B. Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador: its evolution as illustrated by the career of Sir Thomas Spinelly, 1509-1522’, TRHS, 4th series, XV (1933), 184, n. 4. Cuthbert Tunstall and Spinelly wrote on 4 August 1517 that ‘Your Grace had deputed me, Thomas Spinell, to be your ambassauteur resident in his [Charles’] court and to go in his company into Spaine’. Spinelly seems to have served Henry VII in the Netherlands before 1509 and was later described by John Stile as a Florentine. Hence it is unlikely that he was a kinsman of the Spinellis active in England during the reign of Edward IV, since they originated from Genoa (ibid., 167, n. 2 & 186 and see also Spinelly’s letter to Henry VIII of 26 June 1509, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, vol. I, ed. J.S. Brewer & rev. by R.H. Brodie (3 parts, 2nd edn, 1920; repr., 1965), pt I, no. 83, p. 44).
\end{itemize}
Shirwood’s claim to be England’s first resident ambassador is not necessarily weakened by the lack of his formal diplomatic credentials.

Shirwood’s claim is clearly made problematic when one considers the fact that there is no substantial corroborative evidence which proves that in between temporary diplomatic commissions, Shirwood was consistently carrying out the diplomatic duties of a resident. Moreover, if he did write any diplomatic reports or dispatches (‘the real stuff of the new diplomacy’), none survive. In the English records, during the reign of Edward IV, Shirwood is always referred to as proctor rather than the king’s orator and all the duties he carried out (for which there is written evidence) seem to have been the promotion of particular ecclesiastical causes. For instance, on 21 June 1479 the treasurer was ordered to pay £18 to Shirwood’s servant, William Graystoke, for a bull which had been purchased from the pope. However, the role and function of the English proctor continued to become more and more related to diplomatic affairs throughout the reign of Henry VII, although it was only in 1509 after the appointment of Christopher Bainbridge as orator and proctor in Rome, that England can definitely be said to have been represented by a formal English representative in Rome whose duties were primarily diplomatic. But, even in Bainbridge’s case, his duties still included applying ‘himself to miscellaneous ecclesiastical causes’.

The clearest candidate for the first English resident ambassador at a secular court of the type that Mattingly outlines, is probably Mattingly’s own choice of John Stile, who was active in Spain from 1505-1510. However, for the early part of his career Stile’s formal credentials are missing and he may not even have been formally accredited as a resident ambassador in Spain, acting rather as a resident diplomatic agent. This distinction may not have made a great deal of difference in practice, since Stile was clearly carrying out the duties of a resident ambassador. Perhaps Stile’s lesser dignity indicated that he was not esteemed as highly in England as he might have been; Garrett Mattingly later wrote that he was ‘without wealth or breeding or

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19 PRO, PSO 1/47/2418C.
21 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 152 and also Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador’, 166. Before Behrens’ later conversion to the case of John Shirwood as England’s first resident ambassador she states that Thomas Spinelly and John Stile were the ‘first two English Resident Ambassadors’, ibid., 166.
courtly graces...[he]...seems to have been neither learned nor intelligent'. Likewise, throughout Thomas Spinelly’s career in the Netherlands from around 1509-1517 he also seems to have been regarded as a permanent diplomatic agent (carrying out the duties of a resident, but without the formal title). His duties do seem to have been identical to those of a formally accredited resident ambassador since he wrote copiously (over four hundred letters and news reports survive) and was ordered to undertake constant discussion with the advisors of Margaret of Austria, and the duchess herself, who had acted with the powers of a regent in the Netherlands on behalf of Archduke Charles since 1509. Nevertheless, he was not formally commissioned as a resident ambassador in the Netherlands, much to his disappointment, and he constantly hinted that the English government should raise him to that dignity. With characteristic subtlety, he wrote that ‘the servants been of othyr extemyd as much as their master wol hym self’.

This entire school of historical thought, which attaches great importance to the development of the resident ambassador, consequently suggests that effective and efficient diplomacy was dependent on the development of the resident. Of course, permanent agents by their very nature did provide some improvements in diplomatic continuity and the methodical provision of diplomatic intelligence from foreign courts. Moreover, it is also argued that they provided a flexible means by which informal diplomatic discussions (often arranged by the resident himself) could be maintained almost continuously with foreign powers. By contrast, the earlier means of diplomatic contact, the special embassy, is often characterised as being both intermittent and constrained by excessive formality. Apparently, a dependence upon bureaucratic procedure allowed the ambassadors very little freedom of manoeuvre, or opportunity to act upon their own personal initiative. Christopher Allmand observed that ‘the aim of the medieval envoy had been to arrive for negotiations, carry them out and then return home as soon as possible afterwards, the new Renaissance ambassador had more to do than that’. Some historians, such as Mattingly and Queller, do trace a gradual evolution between the earlier special embassies and the

22 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 152.
24 Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador’, 177.
later development of the resident ambassador; the standing diplomacy of the Renaissance evolved, it has been argued, from the lengthening duration of special embassies during the later Middle Ages. But even Mattingly then goes on to emphasise the elaborate, formal ceremonial of the special embassies used during earlier periods, rather than undertaking a detailed description of the duties which they might be expected to undertake whilst they were abroad.

In fact, contrary to the historical orthodoxy of Mattingly and Queller, special embassies were far from being the only significant means of diplomatic contact before resident embassies. Generally, the undue emphasis placed on the formality of medieval diplomatic procedure has meant that many informal missions carried out by more minor diplomatic personnel (the subject of the following chapter) have been almost totally ignored in the period before the use of resident ambassadors. However, it is the contention of this chapter that far too much of the history of diplomacy during the fifteenth century has been devoted to finding the first examples, and extolling the virtues of, resident ambassadors, and far too little work has concentrated upon detailed consideration of the activities of special ambassadors, who were still, especially in Northern Europe, the dominant means of diplomatic contact between powers. It will also be argued that some of the activities attributed to resident ambassadors (such as conducting some informal negotiations and meetings) were already a part of the remit of the special ambassadors of the English kings, even during the reign of Edward IV, almost a generation before Henry VII would formally appoint England’s first resident ambassador to a secular court. Moreover, rather than being a bureaucratic and overly formal means of diplomatic contact, special embassies provided a greater degree of efficiency and flexibility to diplomacy than has hitherto been accepted by most historians.

In England, during the reign of Edward IV, temporary embassies, sent to the continent or to Scotland, remained the most common method of formal diplomatic intercourse during the later Middle Ages; but there was no inflexible dependence upon a particular or preferred format for the special or temporary embassy. They could vary widely in terms of length of mission, size, and general purpose. As we

27 ‘It is in the increasing frequency with which ad hoc ambassadors were sent and the increasing duration of their missions that the origin of the resident ambassador should be sought’, Queller, *The Office of the Ambassador*, p. 84; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, pp. 66-69.
30 Behrens, ‘The office of the English resident ambassador’, 166.
have already seen, the essential duty of a special ambassador was never (as it was for a resident) to dwell permanently at a foreign court until relieved. But this did not mean that such men did not sometimes spend long periods of time abroad; it was not unusual for special ambassadors to be away for periods of up to a year, or on rare occasions, even longer. For example, in the autumn of 1462, Peter Taster (dean of St Severin’s), Thomas Kent (secondary in the privy seal office) and Rougacroix Pursuivant left for Spain accompanied by William Tilghman (acting as the secretary to the embassy).\textsuperscript{31} They returned on 25 June 1463, some eight months later, arriving in a ship of Holland which they had previously hired in Spain.\textsuperscript{32} William Hatchlyff, king’s secretary and Edward IV’s premier diplomat until the mid-1470s, led Edward IV’s negotiations with Charles the Bold in the autumn and winter of 1467-8. He was clearly expected to spend a great deal of time pursuing those negotiations since it was stated in a warrant for his payment that he was commanded ‘to goo in our special ambassiade unto our derrest cousin the duk of Bourgoyne for certayne great matiers wher he must make long abiding for the expedicion of the same’.\textsuperscript{33} In the event, between March 1467 and March 1468, Hatchlyff spent at least eight months negotiating in Burgundy, accompanied for much of that time by two clerks who were assigned to him by order of the king.\textsuperscript{34}

On certain occasions during the later Middle Ages, the missions of special ambassadors to foreign courts were of an extraordinarily lengthy duration. Georges Baert, clerk of the Council of Flanders, spent 585 days on embassy in England from July 1477 until February 1479.\textsuperscript{35} He seems to have first travelled to England to join the embassy of Thomas de Plaine, maître des requêtes of Maximilian’s household, who had set out for England on 2 May 1477 (and continued in residence there until 22 April 1478).\textsuperscript{36} De Plaine’s mission had been to ensure the ‘continuance of the alliances and confederations which, since ancient times, have been made between the

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\textsuperscript{31} PRO, E 404/72/2/41, also printed in P. Chaplais (ed.), \textit{English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I: documents and interpretation} (2 vols, 1982), II, pp. 812-13. ‘Tilghman was required to ‘awayte upon them for wrytyng and engrossyng of certayne matiers and appoyntement’; Thomas Kent was appointed as secondary in the privy seal office on 23 July 1461, \textit{CPR 1461-67}, p. 126. On the same day he was granted the office of clerk of the king’s council (jointly with Richard Langport), \textit{ibid}; Kent had vacated the office of clerk of the council by 30 April 1466, \textit{ibid}, p. 520.

\textsuperscript{32} PRO, E 404/72/2/41 & PRO, E 404/72/3/58; On 6 July 1463 a warrant was issued for the sum of £200 which Edward’s ambassadors had expended for the hire of the ship.

\textsuperscript{33} PRO, E 404/73/3/74 (warrant issued on 13 December 1467).


\textsuperscript{35} ADN, B 2127, fol. 182.

\textsuperscript{36} ADN, B 2118, fol. 258v.
kingdom of England and the predecessors of duchess Mary'. However, although the ducal receivers adjudged that de Plaine had been on embassy for 358 days, he was also allowed further payments for having returned to Burgundy twice during his embassy 'a tresgrant dangier des ennemis'.

Baert also remained in England during and after the embassy of the Marquis de Bade in the winter of 1477-78 and after de Plaine finally returned home in April 1478 it was thought necessary that Baert should remain in England until de Plaine arrived once more in England in October 1478.

Since Baert was in residence 'par continuacion' for over a year and a half, he was clearly expected to shoulder the responsibility for continually representing Maximilian's general diplomatic interests at Edward's court during the gaps between larger embassies from Burgundy. In some ways, owing to the length of Baert's mission, it is relatively hard to distinguish his activities from those of later resident ambassadors. But, despite the length of Baert's stay, he should not really be confused with a resident ambassador, as it seems more likely that the prime object of Baert's mission was to continue the series of specific negotiations already started by previous Burgundian ambassadors to England; the added benefit of continual generalised diplomatic representation was presumably regarded as secondary. Furthermore, it does not appear that Baert's position was regarded as permanent by the Burgundian government since he was not immediately replaced when he returned to Burgundy, as might have been expected if resident diplomacy had been in consistent operation.

The example of Burgundian representation at the English court from 1477-1479 shows that it would be quite misleading to characterise late medieval diplomacy as being dominated solely by isolated temporary embassies of a short duration. Embassies were not always completely distinct from each other and separated by lengthy periods of time. This was because the missions of special ambassadors might not always occur in total isolation; they could follow closely upon each other since periods of frenetic diplomatic activity were relatively common, in the build-up, for example, to the signing of a marriage alliance or a formal treaty of friendship. Moreover, it was not unusual for certain special ambassadors, who were originally expected to remain abroad during the conclusion of a specific and limited set of negotiations, to have their missions continually prolonged whilst abroad or to be sent back to the continent almost immediately after their return to England, until both parties had come to a satisfactory agreement. This was most often due to the fact that

37 Ibid.
38 ADN, B 2115, fols 108v-109 & ADN, B 2118, fol. 133.
a full agreement had not been finalised during the first mission, or that further avenues of discussions had subsequently opened up as a result of the original negotiations.

The painfully slow negotiations undertaken by William Hatelyff and certain other of Edward IV’s ambassadors in Burgundy from 1467-8 are particularly instructive in this respect. Four sets of formal commissions now exist to illustrate their varied diplomatic activities; in April 1467, Richard Beauchamp, bishop of Salisbury, William Hatelyff and Thomas Vaughan (treasurer of the chamber) were commissioned to treat for a marriage between Margaret of York and Charles of Charolais. 39 On 20 September Richard Beauchamp, Anthony Woodville lord Scales, William lord Hastings, Sir John Scott, 40 William Hatelyff, Thomas Vaughan, Thomas Kent, Henry Sharp, 41 John Russell, 42 William Rosse, 43 Robert Redknap and John Pykeryng were all commissioned to treat for a peace treaty and a commercial agreement. 44 All except three (Rosse, Redknap and Pykeryng) were given further powers to conclude the marriage. On 13 December, the three most senior diplomats, Beauchamp, Hatelyff and Vaughan, were supplied with extensive powers allowing them to negotiate and conclude a variety of matters, from a perpetual peace to the

39 PRO, C 76/151, m. 18 and see also PRO, C 81/1498/44; unusually, this important commission (dated 14 April 1467) is not printed in Rymer’s Foedera. Vaughan was known as one of the king’s esquires by December 1461, but was certainly esquire of the body by September 1462, CPR 1461-67, p. 88 & PRO, E 404/72/2/58. Vaughan was appointed as treasurer of the king’s chamber and master of the king’s jewels on 29 June 1465 and was appointed as the controller and surveyor of the hanaper of chancery on 13 January 1469, CPR 1461-67, p. 459 & CPR 1467-77, pp. 124-5. He was a knight of the body by February 1477, CPR 1476-85, p. 9.

40 Scott is described as controller of the king’s household in this diplomatic commission; he had occupied that office since 1461; A.R. Myers suggests that he continued as controller until 1469, but C. Ross suggests 1470; A.R. Myers (ed.), The Household of Edward IV, the Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478 (Manchester, 1959), p. 289 & C. Ross, Edward IV (1974; repr., 1975), pp. 323-6. Scott later acted as marshal of Calais from 1471 until April 1479 (at which point Sir Richard Tunstall was granted that office), PRO, E 101/197/15, fol. 16 & PRO, E 101/199/12, fol. 13.

41 Sharp had been granted the office of prothonotary of chancery on 8 July 1461, CPR 1461-67, pp. 15, 130 & 219. Sharp was granted this office during the readeption (CPR 1467-77, p. 230) and his position was confirmed once again in October 1473, ‘notwithstanding that in the time of the king’s absence he occupied the office by letters patent of Henry VI’, CPR 1467-77, p. 397; Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, III, pp. 1678-80.

42 Later, on 21 March 1469, Russell was appointed as secondary in the privy seal office and was subsequently granted the office of keeper of the privy seal on 15 June 1474 (although he had, apparently, occupied that office since 28 May of the same year), CPR 1467-77, pp. 151 & 451. Russell became bishop of Rochester in 1476 and then bishop of Lincoln in 1480.

43 Rosse was deputy victualler of Calais from Michaelmas 1466 (PRO, E 101/196/17, fol. 1). The office of victualler of Calais was, at this point, held by the mayor of the town, but Rosse probably acted as de facto victualler (as suggested by Lesley Stark, edem, ‘Anglo-Burgundian Diplomacy, 1467-1485’, unpublished MPhil thesis, University of London (1977), p. 131). He became victualler in his own right from 6 April 1481, CPR 1476-85, p. 276.

44 PRO, C 76/151, m. 5 & PRO, C 81/1499/6-7.
marriage itself. Lastly, on 5 January 1468, a further commission was given to Beauchamp, Hatelyff and Vaughan to come to a final agreement concerning the marriage.

Strangely, it appears that, perhaps authorised by a now-lost commission, the leader of the embassy (Richard Beauchamp) and his eight colleagues were already negotiating with Charles of Charolais at Ghent in the early part of March 1467, nearly a full month before the date of the first extant commission relating to this set of negotiations. This goes to show that the actual dates of English embassies to the continent may not always be accurately determined from the dates of the ambassadorial commissions which do survive. From 15 March until 12 July the English embassy was resident at Bruges, but by this point it numbered over 60 people. In the middle of June, Beauchamp made a short sortie back to Ghent, possibly to inform Charles of his father’s growing illness. From 13 July Beauchamp removed to Brussels until 10 August at which point he again returned to Bruges, and, according to Mark Ballard, he was feasted there on 27 August. He then seems to have remained in Bruges throughout September where Martinet le Rewart delivered letters to him which had been sent to him by Charles the Bold from Brussels on 10 September. From 3 October he had once again returned to Brussels where he stayed until 3 December, thereafter the place of negotiation alternated between the two cities until the end of February 1468. It is, on the other hand, more difficult to place the precise whereabouts of the more junior members of the English embassy, although it is known that Hatelyff and Vaughan were allocated eighteen days’ expenses at Bruges (finishing on 8 May 1467). Vaughan also seems to have detached himself from the main English embassy and left Bruges on 18 September for Brussels where he stayed for seventeen days, but he may have then left Brussels soon after the rest of the English joined him in the town. However, it is made explicit in the accounts of the

45 PRO, C 76/151/ m.10 & PRO, C 81/1499/15.
47 ADN, B 2064, fol. 107, and for Charles’ presence at Ghent and Philip’s at Bruges see H. Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1419-1467) et de Charles, comte de Charolais (1433-1467) (Brussels, 1940), p. 505.
49 ADN, B 2064, fol. 266v and Ballard, ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations’, pp. 50-1.
50 ADN, B 2064, fols 276v & 436v-7; ADN, B 2068, fol. 43-v.
51 ADN, B 2064, fol. 154v.
ducal receivers that definitely accompanying Beauchamp in October and November in Brussels were Sir John Scott, Henry Sharp, John Russell, William Hatclyff 'et autres ambassadeurs du roy d’Engleterre pardevers mondit seigneur'. The total size of the English contingent had now increased to over 100 people including the ‘gens serviteurs’ of the ambassadors themselves.

Gradually, the negotiations led to the strengthening of the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, as on 15 July 1467 when Charles renewed the treaty of amity between England and Burgundy he also bound his heirs and successors to respect it. Edward did likewise on 14 August when a letter under the signet was sent to the keeper of the privy seal to renew the agreement. It was also requested that the resultant letters patent should be sent ‘vnto the Kinges Ambassadeurs being in Flaundres, thaye to deliure thaim vnto the Duc of Bourgoigne’. On 24 November a thirty years’ treaty of commercial intercourse was signed with Isabella of Portugal on Edward’s behalf by Beauchamp, Scott, Hatclyff, Sharp and Russell. Edward eventually ratified the agreement on 5 January 1468 and Charles did so on 20 February following. The crowning glory of the Anglo-Burgundian negotiations was surely the treaty of marriage and the thirty-year truce, signed at Brussels by Beauchamp, Hatclyff and Vaughan on 16 and 17 February respectively. However, it is clear that the special embassies from England in operation in Burgundy from 1467-1468 do not seem all that similar to the way late medieval embassies are described by many historians such as Garrett Mattingly. Instead of acting on the basis of each different commission, as entirely inflexible and unchanging units, it appears that diplomatic contact between the two powers (provided by special ambassadors) was far more fluid and adaptable than has normally been assumed. Despite the four separate sets of commissions to treat with Burgundy which now remain, it is not really possible to detect the existence of four clearly defined and separate embassies to the Burgundian court.

Perhaps owing to the close proximity of England and Burgundy it seems rather that the size of the English diplomatic contingent fluctuated and its membership altered continually throughout the entire period of negotiations from March 1467 to

53 ADN, B 2064, fol. 436v-7.
56 For both the ratifications see Foedera, V, pt II, pp. 152-8.
57 For the marriage treaty, see PRO, C 81/1380/11 and for the thirty-year truce, see P. Bonenfant (ed.), ‘Actes concernant les rapports entre les Pays-Bas et la Grande Bretagne de 1293 à 1468 conservés au château de Mariemont’, Bulletin de la Commission Royale d’Histoire, CIX (1944), 110-119.
March 1468. It was common, for example, for certain ambassadors to detach themselves from the mission and return to England, possibly carrying with them proposals for future negotiations or drafted agreements in need of ratification. After a meeting with some Breton ambassadors on 6 May 1467, Hatclyff quickly crossed back alone to England, leaving his colleagues in Bruges, carrying proposals for an extension of the truce with Brittany until 1 March 1468; the speed of Hatclyff’s mission may be judged from the fact that by 25 May Edward had already prolonged the abstinence of war and truce with Brittany.59 Hatclyff may also have left Burgundy soon after the signing of the commercial agreement on 24 November, in order to help prepare for Edward’s own ratification.60 In total, between March 1467 and March 1468, Hatclyff spent 235 days in Burgundy and crossed back and forth five times.61 Richard Beauchamp, on the other hand, unlike his colleague, seems to have remained permanently stationed in Burgundy from March 1467 until after the wedding of Charles the Bold and Margaret of York in the summer of 1468, at which he officiated.62 It was also the case that special ambassadors could always travel independently from their main group of colleagues in the country to which they had been sent. As we have seen already, in the middle of June 1467, Beauchamp left Hatclyff and Vaughan’s company in Bruges for a solitary visit to Ghent. Likewise Thomas Vaughan also seems to have acted independently from his colleagues when he arrived alone at Brussels on 18 September; he had to wait until 4 October to be rejoined by the remaining members of the English contingent.63

Consequently, during long periods of negotiation (such as the Anglo-Burgundian negotiations of 1467-8), special ambassadors could indeed provide almost continuous diplomatic contact with foreign courts; a fact made obvious by Richard Beauchamp’s year-long stay in Burgundy. Furthermore, the use of groups of special ambassadors empowered by specific negotiating commissions did not imply an inherent inflexibility and formality in the process of diplomatic procedure; although Garrett Mattingly emphasised strongly the lengthy ceremonial which accompanied the use of special ambassadors in the Middle Ages such as the ‘solemn entry’ to their host

59 ADL-A, B 5, fol. 73v (chancery register, 1467); see also ADL-A, E 122/18 (the Breton ambassadors were Guillaume Chauvin and Eustache d’Espinay).
60 Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 432. While he was in England, Hatclyff was paid 100s for the costs of his shipping and 100s for the costs of two clerks ‘whiche for th’expedition of our said matiers, we have assigned him to have with him’; PRO, E 404/73/3/74.
61 PRO, E 404/74/1/3.
63 ADN, B 2064, fol. 337v-8.
city, the ‘ceremonial public procession’, the ‘formal audience’ and the ambassador’s address. But even if such formality was totally observed in practice, it is clear that special embassies were always flexible enough to allow certain ambassadors to return home or travel elsewhere in the host country, quickly if necessary, and completely independently from the rest of their colleagues. So, it was not always the case that a special ambassador would arrive for negotiations, carry them out ‘and then return home as soon as possible afterwards’, as suggested by Christopher Allmand and Garrett Mattingly. If the ambassadors were posted to a country within a few days journey of England itself (such as France, Brittany or Burgundy), they could quite easily return home during their embassy and yet also return before the end of the negotiations, as William Hatchlyff did in May 1467.

However, formal diplomatic contact was not always as lengthy and as frequent as might be suggested by the missions of Richard Beauchamp and his colleagues. Depending, of course, on the ambassador’s destination, it was perhaps more common during the later Middle Ages for a diplomatic mission to be much shorter: between a month and four months. For example, Thomas Rotherham (bishop of Rochester and keeper of the privy seal) spent exactly two months at the court of Louis XI from 4 August 1468 until 4 October following. Likewise, John Morton, Edward IV’s master of the rolls, spent 126 days abroad at the court of Charles the Bold in the spring of 1474. Furthermore, diplomatic procedure could mean that special embassies from England did not replace each other as frequently as they did in Burgundy from 1467 to 1468. Since relations between Edward IV and Louis XI deteriorated markedly from the later 1460s, Thomas Rotherham’s mission to France in 1468 may not have been followed by another fully empowered English embassy until the peace negotiations before Pecquigny after Edward’s abortive invasion of France in 1475. However, as long as relations between England and a foreign power were not openly hostile, then formal diplomatic contact was frequently maintained through a process of sending reciprocal embassies.

This kind of diplomatic reciprocity is seen quite clearly in relations between Brittany and England in the mid-1470s. Two Breton ambassadors, the seigneur d’Urfé

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64 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, pp. 34-6.
66 PRO, E 404/74/1/98.
67 PRO, E 404/75/4/20. Morton had been master of the rolls since 16 March 1472 (CPR 1467-77, p. 334).
and Jacques de la Villéon, procurator of Rennes, had visited England in the spring of 1475 with the intention of signing an aggressive alliance against France. As a result of their negotiations with Henry Bourchier earl of Essex, lord Duras and John Russell, an agreement was signed on 16 May which finalised the military arrangements binding Francis II to assist Edward in his invasion of France. In order to confirm the agreement through the exchange of ratifications, and in order to negotiate the possibility of a further more extensive treaty of alliance, John lord Audley, lord Duras and Oliver King were sent to Brittany a few weeks later. Throughout Edward’s invasion of France, King and Duras remained at Nantes, but when they returned home in September, one of Francis’ secretaries, Morice Gourmel, was sent with them to explain that the duke desired nothing other than Edward’s ‘paix seure & prosperite, et que mon ferme propos est de loyaumment entretenir l’apointement des treves et entrecours de marchandise d’entre nous voz pais et subgetz et moy les miens’. Soon after Gourmel’s mission and around the turn of the year 1476, Oliver King was sent to Brittany yet again to request the ratification of the thirty-year treaty which had been signed in 1468 between England and Brittany and also to request repayment of some of the sums that Edward had expended in sending troops to the duke’s territories in the summer of 1475. After Francis had duly confirmed the renewal of the 1468 treaty on 22 January, Morice Gourmel again accompanied Oliver King back to England, and carried the duke’s own request for compensation due to breaches of the truce. Gourmel appears to have stayed in London until the middle of March, by which point Edward too, had confirmed the treaty.

This succession of reciprocal embassies meant that even if England did not have formal representation at the ducal court, there would, in most cases, be a Breton official operating at the court of Edward IV, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, even if there still remained gaps in diplomatic contact these could be filled by

68 Pro, C 76/159, m. 17 (the commission of the English ambassadors). Oliver King was one of the clerks of the signet by November 1473 and became the king’s French secretary on 18 March 1476, CPR 1467-77, pp. 401 & 582. On 23 June 1480 he was granted the custody of the signet whenever William Hatclyff was ‘absent from the king’s person’, CPR 1476-83, p. 196. Oliver King was then also named as the expected successor to William Hatclyff as king’s secretary. After Hatclyff’s death in the autumn of 1480, King succeeded him in that office (for King’s career, see J. Otway-Ruthven, The King’s Secretary and the Signet Office in the XV Century (Cambridge, 1939), pp. 102-4).

69 So Francis explained in his letter to Edward written at Nantes on 28 September 1475 (BL, Cott. Ms. Vespasian FII, fol. 59).


71 BN, Ms. Fr. 6983, fol. 65 (Edward’s letter to Francis of 15 March 1476). Another letter was written by Edward on 18 June 1476, which states that Jacques de la Villéon had been in England again, after the departure of Gourmel; he complained that certain English ambassadors in France had been making unkind remarks about Duke Francis (BN, Ms. Fr. 6983, fol. 147).
using a variety of minor, or informal, diplomatic personnel. Reciprocal embassies still meant, of course, that varying amounts of time would be spent travelling to the ambassador’s host court. Hence, some historians have suggested that late medieval diplomacy was rather clumsy since a special embassy ‘might spend weeks, even months, on the way’. Mattingly suggested that during the time spent travelling, the embassy was ‘on an easy and informal footing’. But this journey time did not always represent time wasted, since it was often the case that an English embassy would be travelling to and from England in the company of a group of foreign ambassadors with whom informal discussions on the way were probably taken for granted. As we have seen already, Oliver King spent many weeks travelling in the company of Morice Gourmel; discussions on an ‘informal footing’ during their journeys must have surely helped to pave the way for Francis and Edward’s confirmation of the thirty-year treaty between Brittany and England in the early months of 1476. Likewise, the journey of Thomas Vaughan and Robert Morton (master of the rolls) to Brittany in the company of Jean de Chalon, prince of Orange, in April 1481 must have included discussion of Francis’ confirmation of the Breton-Burgundian alliance that Edward IV had brokered, and which was signed on 16 April 1481 in London.

Previous historians such as Donald Queller and Garrett Mattingly have suggested that a generalised diplomatic responsibility to uphold the international interests of their masters was a ‘characteristic of the resident ambassador’. Michael Mallett also noted that resident ambassadors had general ‘scope for considerable personal initiative’ to initiate private audiences, and to conduct a variety of informal negotiations on behalf of their masters (sometimes secretly in the middle of the night). However, it is obvious that special ambassadors were also imbued with an extensive generalised diplomatic responsibility which enabled them to undertake serious yet informal negotiations once they had reached their destination. Special

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72 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 34.
73 The order to Thomas Grayson and Thomas Gale (customers of Dartmouth) to purvey shipping for the English and the Burgundian embassy to Brittany may be found in PRO, PSO 1/49/2534A; the agreement between Burgundy and Brittany is printed in P. de Commynes, Mémoires, ed. N. Lenglet du Fresnoy (4 vols, London and Paris, 1747), IV, pp. 35-7. It is also to be found in the Archives Départementales at Nantes (ADL-A, E 125/11). In May 1480, Robert Morton had been granted the office of master of the rolls ‘whenever the office...shall be void by the death, cession or surrender of Master John Morton’, CPR 1476-85, p. 71 & R. Horrox, Richard III: a study of service (Cambridge, 1989; repr., 1992), pp. 139 & 151.
ambassadors were quite capable (and entitled) to act informally upon their own initiative concerning a wide variety of matters. A neglected document in the chancery register of the duke of Brittany tells us that on 21 May 1467 a set of powers was issued to Jean de Rouville (Francis II’s vice-chancellor) and Olivier du Breil (sénéchal of Rennes) to ratify and sign on Francis’ behalf a proration of the Anglo-Breton truce until 1 March 1468. In the prologue of those powers it is stated that on 6 May 1467 two Breton ambassadors to the court of Burgundy, Guillaume Chauvin and Eustache d’Espinay, met two English ambassadors in Bruges (Richard Beauchamp, bishop of Salisbury, and William Hatclyff). It was decided between them that since the truce between England and Brittany was to expire on 10 July 1467, William Hatclyff and Jacques Raboceau (a Breton agent) should be sent to Edward IV to discover whether it would be to the ‘bon plaisir roy d’Angleterre’ to prolong the truce. If Edward agreed, Raboceau was to publish the truce in the ‘portz et havres d’Angleterre’ and having done so was to proceed to Brittany to ensure a similar proclamation in the duke’s lands. Meanwhile, the Breton ambassadors in Bruges agreed ‘on their honour and on their goods’ that Francis II would issue a similar prolongation ‘before the commencement of the truce’. To all intents and purposes, the extension of the truce was agreed; it just remained for the two principals (Edward IV and Francis II) to agree to the issue of formal documents ratifying the agreement. Thus, on 21 May Francis II issued the commission to de Rouville and du Breil to ratify the prolongation on his behalf; those two ambassadors, accompanied by Malo Roy d’armes, had already left Brittany by 2 May. In any case, Edward also readily agreed to the prolongation, as a signet warrant was promptly issued on 23 May for the drawing-up of the agreement under letters patent.

What is significant here is how those preliminary negotiations were conducted in Bruges. Richard Beauchamp and William Hatclyff were not in Bruges to

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60 ADL-A, B 5, fols 73v-4; this document is also printed as pièce justificative no. 26 in J. Calmette & G. Péринelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre (1461-1483), (Paris, 1930), pp. 299-301.
61 Ibid., p. 300.
62 Ibid., p. 301.
63 For more details on this informal set of negotiations see chap. 1, p. 37; ADL-A B 5, fol. 73v, Francis II’s ducal register gives details of ‘la remonstrance par eulx [the Breton ambassadors] faite a reverent pere en Dieu l’evesque de Salberi et maistre Guillaume Aigilff lors estans en la ville de Bruges ambasseurs de nostredit seigneur et cousin par devers nostre treschier et tresame cousin le conte de Charoloys que ladite treve seroit en si bref temps finye que bonnement avant la fin d’icelle ne pourrions envoyer noz [Francis II] ambasseurs en Angleterre devers iceluy seigneur, ainsi que le entendons faire’; Calmette & Péринelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pp. 299-302.
64 ADL-A, B 5, fol. 59.
65 PRO, C 81/1379/35.
negotiate with the Bretons; as we have seen, they were there to negotiate with Charles of Charolais and, hence, were described in the Breton chancery register as ‘ambassadeurs de nostredit seigneur et cousin par devers nostre treschier et tresamé cousin le conte de Charoloy’s’. They did not hold any specific powers to treat with Chauvin and D’Espinay, nor did they have specific powers to accept any obligations from them ‘sur leur honneur et sur leurs biens’ that Francis would in turn issue his own prolongation of the Anglo-Breton truce. So on what basis were the Bretons willing to treat with them, and why did the English ambassadors feel able to embark on these negotiations without specific powers? It must have been the case that the formal diplomatic powers granted to the English (to treat with Burgundy) and to the Bretons (also to treat with Burgundy) were seen as flexible enough to ensure that both sides were content to treat seriously with the other, although on a preliminary and informal basis. As happened in this case, negotiations could reach such an advanced stage that all that was necessary was for the principals to issue formal ratifications of what their ambassadors had informally agreed to. The amount of serious informal negotiation that an ambassador was permitted to undertake, in the absence of powers, would depend very much on his own personal relationship with the king and his judgement of the king’s opinion on the matter. Hactlyff and Beauchamp can have had no doubts that Edward IV was eager to renew his truce with Francis II, and hence felt able to carry out negotiations to a relatively advanced stage without formal powers. The versatility endowed by late medieval diplomatic powers is really rather more reminiscent of the flexibility granted to the resident ambassadors of the sixteenth-century than most historians have accepted. Those resident ambassadors usually had a generalised responsibility to carry out this kind of informal negotiation, but, like Beauchamp and Hactlyff in this case, would often have had no specific powers to negotiate and conclude. In order to finalise an agreement, the residents would have had to either send back to England (as Edward IV’s ambassadors did from Bruges), await full powers, or await the arrival of special envoys empowered to sign the agreement.

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82 PRO, C 76/151, m. 18 & PRO, C 81/1498/44; Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, p. 300.
The courts of late medieval Europe frequently played host to different sets of special ambassadors from different countries, who were visiting at the same time. In such circumstances, the kind of unplanned, informal and preliminary negotiations carried out by Hatelyff and Beauchamp with Guillaume Chauvin and Eustache d’Espinay must have been extremely common. For example, in 1479 some English ambassadors to France, among them John Doget, undertook preliminary negotiations with a Milanese ambassador to the court of Louis XI, concerning the possibility of a marriage between the Prince of Wales and Bona of Savoy’s daughter. Giovanni Andrea Cagnola wrote on 16 April 1479, that ‘I was in the company of these English ambassadors one day lately. They spoke of this marriage alliance, and asked me how you, most illustrious lady [Bona of Savoy], were disposed towards it’. Cagnola had to admit, as many resident ambassadors had to do, that he had no instructions about the matter and it is virtually certain that the English ambassadors had no formal powers to negotiate with him, but this did not prevent the informal broaching of the subject. The *Extrait d’une Ancienne Chronique* printed by N. Lenglet du Fresnoy in his edition of the *Mémoires* of Philippe de Commynes also gives an indication of the huge numbers of different diplomatic personnel with whom English ambassadors could come into informal contact whilst abroad. It is known from the *Extrait* that during the mission of Gaillard de Durefort Lord Duras and John Morton (master of the rolls) in April 1474 to the court of Charles the Bold, ambassadors from Hungary, Aragon, Brittany, Venice and Lorraine were also present. It seems that the opportunities for English ambassadors to meet their foreign counterparts in informal circumstances could be extremely varied. For example, in January 1481 the owner of a house ‘sur le marchie de Bruges’ was paid 7li 4s for the hire of one of his rooms from which certain English and Breton ambassadors were all able to get a good view of the jousts and the tournament happening below.

If the resident ambassador spent a great deal of his time ‘quietly cultivating contacts...among those with authority in the host state but also those temporarily on the sidelines’, then there was often no reason why the special ambassador could not

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85 A warrant for John Doget’s payment for his journey to France and then Rome was issued on 8 February 1479 (PRO, E 404/76/4/114).
88 ADN, B 2124, fol. 269; unfortunately there is no indication as to the identity of the ambassadors or the date of the tournament.
do the same, especially during a lengthy mission. It appears that during their many missions to Burgundy in 1467 and 1468 Edward’s ambassadors (including William Hatclyff and Sir John Scott) had built up a close relationship with Pierre de Goux (Charles the Bold’s chancellor). Pierre de Goux, in fact, had been directly involved in the negotiations with the English in Brussels during October and November 1467. Edward later wrote to Goux thanking him for ‘aydant à conduire à bonne fin et conclusion tout ce que nous avons eu à besoignier envers très-hault et puissant prince nostre très-chier et très-amé frère le duc de Bourgoigne… dont nous vous mercions très cordialement, et vous prions de toujours ainsi persévérer’. In fact, it would be quite surprising to find that special ambassadors did not cultivate contacts through informal discussions with those members of a foreign court who were perceived to wield influence in the formation of a ruler’s foreign policy. After Antoine de Branges, Philippe de Croy count of Chimay and Jean de Chalon prince of Orange arrived in England, as ambassadors from the court of Maximilian duke of Austria, in the middle of February 1481, it is clear that Branges spent much of his time in informal discussion with leading personalities in the conduct of English diplomacy with the surviving Burgundian territories. After de Branges had met the king at Greenwich (‘estant a quatre milles dudit Londres sur la riviere de la Thamise’) he travelled along the river to the residences of the chancellor (Thomas Rotherham, archbishop of York), the keeper of the privy seal (John Russell, bishop of Lincoln), Sir Thomas Montgomery, and ‘autres du conseil dudit roy ayans leur maison sur ladite riviere’. Branges also found time to visit Thomas Montgomery’s house along the Thames during another of his missions to England, from February 1482, ‘pour solliciter l’expedicion de ladite ambassade’; he was evidently drawing upon contacts made during Montgomery’s own frequent trips to Burgundy in 1468, spring 1479 and the winter of 1480.

89 Mallett, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy in Renaissance Italy’, 9.
91 ADN, B 330/22009; Ballard, ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations’, pp. 110-111. Edward’s signet letter was dated 29 March, but unfortunately lacks a year-date. Mark Ballard, however, dates the letter persuasively to 1468.
92 ADN, B 2127, fol. 181v.
93 ADN, B 2127, fol. 181; Antoine de Branges was paid 20li for expenses incurred while travelling on the Thames. For Montgomery’s trips to Burgundy, see ADN, B 2068, fol. 212v; ADN, B 2118, fols 295-6; ADN, B 2121, fols 83v, 439-r & ADN, B 2127, fol. 218. Sir Thomas Montgomery had been appointed as one of the king’s carvers on 22 July 1461 and was knight of the body by 1469, CPR 1461-67, p. 125 & CPR 1467-77, p. 173. In 1476, he was elected as a knight of the Garter in place of Lord Duras, J. Anstis, The Register of the Most Noble Order of the Garter (2 vols, 1724), II, pp. 196-9; D.A.L. Morgan, ‘The king’s affinity in the polity of Yorkist England’, TRHS, 5th series, XXIII (1973), 20.
Aside from their more informal and generalised diplomatic duties, the characteristic activity of a formally empowered ambassador was indeed to negotiate certain diplomatic proposals, with a view to eventually signing a binding agreement (providing those ambassadors were enabled and instructed to do so by specific powers and instructions). Surprisingly, little is actually known about the exact way such negotiations were conducted; formal documents like ambassadorial commissions (and the treaties themselves) give very little indication of how the detail of the agreement was eventually reached. The ambassadors’ instructions, themselves rare, simply outline how the English ambassadors should conduct themselves during the negotiations and were usually based on educated guesswork (and on the outcome of preliminary and informal negotiations) as to which matters would be raised or objected to by the opposing party. John Wenlock’s instructions of 6 March 1462 listed a number of proposals which the Burgundians might (in theory) propose to the English representatives: for example, if the Burgundians expressed a desire for a ‘particuler entrecours betwix the king [Edward IV] and the duc’ then Wenlock and his colleagues were asked to enquire whether the duke of Burgundy (as a nominal subject of the French king) had authority or ‘licence’ to sign and ratify such an agreement. However, much of the subsidiary documentation to the diplomatic agreements between England and foreign powers during the reign of Edward IV (such as minutes and outlines of the main subjects and contested matters which were still up for debate during the course of the negotiations) have not survived.

For the lengthy diet of Utrecht (held in the summer and autumn of 1473), the surviving documentation is remarkably copious. Both the powers and the instructions of the English ambassadors survive. And, most importantly, an extremely unusual journal of the particular subjects discussed, disputed and agreed on each day has also been preserved amongst a bundle of papers relating to the diet of Utrecht in British Library, Additional Ms. 48006. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine the authorship of the journal with any certainty. The two most likely candidates are probably William Hatclyff or John Russell (or their respective secretaries or clerks), who were both named as Edward’s ambassadors to the diet and seem to have been in attendance there at the very beginning of the negotiations. The journal is written in the first person plural (‘we had a meting with thaim [the Hanseatic ambassadors] in the

94 PRO, C 47/30/10/11.
95 The journal is printed in *Hansisches Urkundenbuch*, ed. K. Höhlbaum *et al.* (11 vols, Halle & Leipzig, 1876-1939), X, pp. 140-163.
refectory of the frere minours’) but whenever the specific activities of Hatclyff or Russell are mentioned they are described thus: ‘And in the meane tyme we sent master William Hattecllyfe to the duc [of Burgundy]’. Cora Scofield was careful not to assign authorship of the journal, but Lesley Stark, on the other hand, stated that Hatclyff was responsible for it. The basis upon which Stark reached her conclusion is, however, unclear.

The purpose of the diet was, essentially, to rectify the open hostility at sea between English and Hanseatic shipping which had been prevalent since 1468. In that year, seven English ships in the Sound had been seized on the orders of Christian I of Denmark. It had been agreed in an Anglo-Danish treaty of 1465 that English subjects were expressly forbidden from travelling to Iceland. Despite this, it seems that English ships had ignored the agreement; some Englishmen had also been responsible for the murder of the governor of Iceland in 1467. Hence Christian I ordered the seizure of the seven English ships in retaliation. It has been argued by T.H. Lloyd that since the number of Danish merchants travelling to England was relatively few, the Hansards provided the most convenient scapegoat and convenient means to recover the lost ships and goods. Especially since certain ships of Danzig were then in the service of Christian I and were almost certainly involved in the attack against the English ships. Therefore, in July 1468, Edward IV ordered that the Steelyard should be closed and all the Hanseatic merchants arrested, upon payment of a £20,000 fine. On 20 November it was ordered that those Englishmen who had incurred losses owing to the seizure of their ships and goods should be awarded recompense from the confiscated goods of the Hanseatic merchants, but since the Hansards were unwilling and unable to pay the fine, many remained in prison until the early part of 1469. An English embassy did head to Bruges in May 1469 to attempt to resolve the worsening state of Anglo-Hanseatic relations but the negotiations ended in failure. Worse still, English ships became the subjects of piratical attacks by Hanseatic shipping; Edward IV himself, whilst escaping from England in early October 1470, was pursued by the

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100 Thomas Rotherham led the embassy and was away from 19 May 1469 until 19 August, PRO, E 404/74/2/91.
Hansards along the coast of Holland until he found safety at Alkmaar.\(^{101}\) By 1472, the activities of Hanseatic privateers were escalating, and Edward was beginning to realise that a settlement with the Hanse must be an important prerequisite for his planned invasion of France.\(^{102}\) Eventually, by the early part of 1473, relations had begun to improve and in January a diet was provisionally arranged to be held at Utrecht on 1 July.\(^{103}\)

Hence, on 20 May 1473 William Hactlyff, Sir John Scott, John Russell, Henry Sharp, Sir John Crosby,\(^{104}\) William Rosse, William Bracebridge and Hugh Bryce were empowered to negotiate and conclude with representatives of the German Hanse at the diet.\(^{105}\) At around the same time it was ordered that the instructions given to those ambassadors going to the diet of Utrecht should have the great seal, the privy seal and signet appended to them; the instructions bear no date, but clearly refer to the commission to treat with the Hanse of 20 May.\(^{106}\) Two other commissions were also issued for the same eight men (along with William lord Hastings and John lord Howard) to treat at Bruges with the Burgundians 'upon certain pactions and covenantes to be throroughly accorded and passed betwix thaim for and upon thair comon entreprenise to Fraunce...[and] upon certain differences in fact\(^{107}\) of merchaundise'.\(^{108}\) Both William Hactlyff and John Russell were named in the quorum of each of the three commissions and according to the Utrecht journal, the fact that they had been commanded to 'algates appier at either of the places for the 2 dietes appointed required in all 3 matiers' meant that they quickly 'arredied thaim self


\(^{102}\) For the activities of Hanseatic privateers from 1469-72 see Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse*, pp. 206-9.


\(^{104}\) Crosby, a grocer, had been knighted in 1471 for his involvement in the defence of London against the bastard of Fauconberg; he died at some point before 27 December 1476, *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 153-4 & *CPR 1476-85*, p. 7; *Ross, Edward IV*, pp. 174-5.

\(^{105}\) BL, Add. Ms. 48006, fols 80v-81. Another copy of the powers is to be found in BL, Royal Ms. 13 BXI, fols 107v-109. Hactlyff had already arranged a preliminary truce with the Hanse at Bruges on 12 April 1473 which was agreed to last from 25 June until 1 October (*Foedera*, V, pt III, pp. 30-31); on February 1466, Bryce (a goldsmith), had been granted the office of clerk of the king’s mint and exchanges within the Tower and city of London, *CPR 1461-67*, pp. 475 & 517. He was also the deputy of William lord Hastings in the office of master of the king’s mint, *CPR 1467-77*, pp. 149-50.

\(^{106}\) The instructions are printed in Chaplais (ed.), *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I*, I, pp. 195-8.

\(^{107}\) This should probably read ‘fait’.

\(^{108}\) *HU*, ed. Höhlbaum et al., X, p. 140. The two powers to treat with Burgundy may be found in PRO, C 76/157, mm. 24 & 29; *Foedera*, V, pt III, p. 30.
toward the said places’. They left Westminster on 28 May.\textsuperscript{109} As we have already seen, the entire number of commissioned ambassadors in an English embassy did not always act and travel together as a distinct and consistent unit. It had been arranged that at least two members of the expected English delegation to the diets of Bruges and Utrecht would travel independently of Russell and Hatchyff. On 31 May, whilst Russell and Hatchyff were at Calais, they had apparently spoken to both John lord Howard and William Rosse. Rosse promised that ‘in all wise he shuld come unto us and entend the 2 dietes’, and Howard had apparently given an indication that he would also attend the diet of Bruges in Whitsun week.\textsuperscript{110}

As it turned out, Russell and Hatchyff’s belief that they would be joined by further English delegates at Bruges was soon dispelled. Despite the fact that Georges Baert (and four other delegates of the duke) arrived at Bruges on 10 June, nothing could successfully be negotiated concerning the commercial matters in dispute since each side’s powers required the attendance of four ambassadors from each party; the writer of the journal ruefully noted that ‘we wer but 2’.\textsuperscript{111} Whilst still waiting for other Burgundian representatives at Bruges (Louis de Gruthuyse and Jean Gros), William Rosse met Hatchyff and Russell, and again promised to ‘kepe us the diete of Utreght’.\textsuperscript{112} Travelling via Ghent and Antwerp, the English ambassadors finally arrived at Utrecht on 30 June. On 14 July (after waiting for two weeks for the arrival of the Hanseatic ambassadors), the two parties had their first meeting in the ‘refectory of the frere minours’. The next day, in accordance with normal practice, the ‘commissions of bothe partyes wer seen and radde’. At four o’clock it was agreed that the ambassadors should reconvene to make any objections to the power of either side. The English objected that the Hanseatic orators seemed only able formally to represent the city of Lübeck, since their commissions were issued under the seal of that city. Moreover it was objected that the Hanseatic commission was due to expire on the Feast of the Assumption (15 August). The representatives of the Hanse, in turn, complained that there was ‘no expresse mencion made of auctorite to repaire and make restitucions’. Apparently it was feared by the Hanseatic orators that the general powers of the English to ‘appese and sette utterly a side all maner of differences by

\textsuperscript{109} HU, ed. Höhlbaum et al., X, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 141. Howard’s presence in Calais is to be explained by the fact that he was then lieutenant of the castle of Calais (in effect, Howard acted as Hastings’ personal deputy in the town). He occupied this post from 1471 until c. April 1474 when Sir John Donne replaced him, PRO, E 101/197/15, fol. 37 & PRO, E 101/198/9, fol. 5v. For Rosse’s movements in 1473 see, PRO, E 208/17/pt I (unnumbered).
\textsuperscript{111} HU, ed. Höhlbaum et al., X, p. 141; for the number of representatives needed see \textit{ibid.}, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 141.
soch meanes as us shuld seme’, might not include specific redress for the grievances which the Hanse came to express (namely the ‘unrightwisnesse’ of the ‘sentence’ carried out against the Hanseatic merchants in England in the summer of 1468).\textsuperscript{113}

It has been common for historians of medieval diplomacy to stress that even the slightest flaw found during the routine inspection of powers could lead to bitter dispute and argument, which could delay the onset of immediate negotiation. J.T. Ferguson noted that at the Congress of Arras in 1435 both the English and the French delegations made complaints about certain aspects of each others’ powers, which incurred a small ‘period of delay’.\textsuperscript{114} Likewise, J.G. Russell (née Dickinson) suggested that, at another Anglo-French meeting at Gravelines in 1439, ‘criticism of procurations on both sides was even more severe than at Arras’.\textsuperscript{115} Nevertheless, the fact that each party made complaints about the commissions of either side at the beginning of the diet of Utrecht did not seem to hinder the immediate onset of the formal negotiations. The English ambassadors were willing to ignore the perceived faults in the commissions of the Hanseatic orators, as the representatives of the Hanse made a promise that ‘in caas we shuld accorde, that shuld be suffisauntly purveyed of power and auctorite with protestacion’. The English would still be allowed to object to these deficiencies at a future date, but in the meantime were more than happy ‘to procede forth in the tretye’.\textsuperscript{116} The ambassadors of the Hanse seemed satisfied that the powers of the English did indeed encompass the specific redress of damage alleged to have been done to the Hanseatic merchants in England and elsewhere on account of the sentence of 1468. So, it was not necessarily the case that deficiencies in powers and commissions would delay formal negotiations. Such deficiencies would not even immediately necessitate the issue of new powers (although this did happen at Arras in 1435 and new documents from either side were issued within a week).\textsuperscript{117} It seems rather, for the sake of pragmatic necessity, that the English were willing to be flexible enough to set aside any complaints they had, in the hope of immediately embarking upon substantive negotiation. If, during the later Middle Ages, potential negotiations were ever seriously hampered by squabbling over the minor detail of powers, this did not imply a procedural flaw in late medieval diplomatic practice, but rather an excuse

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 143.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{HU}, ed. Höhbaum \textit{et al.}, X, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{117} Dickinson, \textit{The Congress of Arras}, pp. 134-5.
used to disguise the general reluctance of either side to treat with the other at that particular time.\textsuperscript{118}

As the business of serious negotiation develops throughout the journal, it is possible to determine exactly how the formal documentation carried by the English ambassadors related to the actual business of negotiation. Furthermore, the relationship between formal powers and ambassadorial instructions in late medieval diplomatic practice may also be clearly observed. As the instructions of the English ambassadors had predicted, on the first day of detailed negotiation (16 July), the orators of the Hanse began by outlining the innumerable ‘hurtes’ done to the ‘merchauntie of the Hansse’ by the sentence of 1468.\textsuperscript{119} They demanded that restitution be made and the sentence immediately revoked. In fact, on the first day of complex diplomatic negotiation, open hostility was expressed on both sides. The English responded to the Hanseatic complaints about the sentence, by claiming that since 1468 ‘they had generally arreised against all English men unrightwisly and without cause’.\textsuperscript{120} Again, as the English instructions had predicted (‘they woll objecte ayenst and diffame the forsaid jugement and execucion’), the Hansards were not content to leave discussion of the sentence there.\textsuperscript{121} According to the journal, they argued against the sentence according to various ‘resons’: namely, many of the condemned Hanseatic merchants had not been ‘cited ne called’; advocates and learned counsel had been denied to them; ‘soch as were actours and parties agains thaim, wer also jugges in the sentence’; any wrongs done to the English were ‘not doon by thaim but by the king of Denmark’; at a recent diet at Bruges certain English ambassadors had unjustly ‘despided’ the Hansards and had refused to treat with them’.\textsuperscript{122} The instructions then asked the English ambassadors to ‘defende and justifie the same processe [the sentence]...as by thaire lernyng, reasons and discreetion it shalbe thought necessarie and convenient according to the cas of the attemptat by thaym committed’.\textsuperscript{123}

It is important to note at this point, that the English instructions themselves gave no detailed indication of precisely how the ambassadors were expected to defend the sentence of 1468; ambassadors, of course, were not always expected to repeat

\textsuperscript{118} As suggested by Dickinson, ‘Blanks and Blank Charters’, 382.
\textsuperscript{119} PRO, C 47/30/10/16 and Chaplais (ed.), English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I, I, p. 196, ‘And in cas the other partie woll not faile to communicacion onlesse the injuries whiche they pretende have be doone unto thaym be furste discussed’; HU, ed. Höhlbaum et al., X, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibíd., p. 143.
\textsuperscript{121} PRO, C 47/30/10/16.
\textsuperscript{122} HU, ed. Höhlbaum et al., X, pp. 143-4.
\textsuperscript{123} PRO, C 47/30/10/16.
verbatim arguments prepared in advance and contained within written instructions. Rather, in terms of the construction of argument and counter-argument they were left considerable discretion. So, ‘After a little deliberacion’ Hatchyff and Russell declared that all those condemned by reason of the sentence were indeed called and heard and ‘doubtlesse they had suffisaunce of advocates’. As to the membership of the king’s council which passed the sentence, they replied that it included ‘men of honneur, good fame and conscience...both spirituall and temporels’. Moreover, they argued that the sentence was ‘yeven by maner of a reprisaile by occasion of justice denied upon reparacion of the wronges and harmes doon to Enlisch men by thaim of the Hansze’; rather than levying a general war against all Englishmen in response, the Hansards should have sought a ‘like remedie agains the sentence by a countremarke or a countrereprisaile’. It seems that tempers had got so heated that it was eventually agreed by both parties that, rather than discussing the grievances of either side, that they should instead ‘bring forth and offre soch thinges...which best might towards the peas’. At four o’clock (on 16 July), in exact accordance with their instructions, the English ambassadors offered the king’s ‘benevolence that he bereth to this peple of the Hanse’ and suggested that if a ‘good peas’ was concluded then the king would ‘opne unto thaim his realme of England and all his havenes, that thay may frely doo and exercise, that thair predecessours have doon at eny tyme beforne’.

Whilst the Hansards politely thanked Edward’s ambassadors for such an offer, they rehearsed their complaints about past English actions (such as ‘therle of Warwikes dedes’) and asked Hatchyff and Russell to ‘make soch offres as might contente thaim, that wer hurted’. On the following day, 17 July, there followed a lengthy discussion as to the merits of the privileges which Edward was prepared to return to the Hanse should a peace be signed; essentially it was argued by the Hansards that the privileges benefited England more than it did the German Hanse. Taking Sunday 18 July to deliberate on these matters, the English eventually replied

126 *Ibid.*, p. 145; The English ambassadors’ instructions stated that ‘as touching thaire anciant privelegis the kinges ambassatores shall alwey put thaym in trust and certaigne hope that in cas of a good pease they shall’ not be interrupted in thaim but enjoye thaym universally as aforo...so that they woll likewyse approve, kepe and observe suche appointementes as were ratified by the body of the Hanze in the citie of Lubik the yere of Our Lord m' iiiij and xxxv the xx daye of Auguste as it appereth by a transumpte, the copye wherof the kinges said ambassatores have with thaim’, Chaplais (ed.), *English Medieval Diplomatic Practice. part I*, I, p. 197 & PRO, C 47/30/10/16.
on 19 July that no grant made to the Hanse ever mentioned the ‘wele and profite’ of England as being a reason for the grant itself. In fact, it is at this point that we can see the large amount of paperwork that would have to be taken along by English ambassadors when travelling in embassy. In order to prove that the grants did not specifically mention the ‘wele’ of England, the ambassadors had pored over copies of privileges granted to the Hanse by Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, Edward III, Richard II and Edward IV. However, the English were willing to listen to any specific proposals for restitution (of damages resulting from the sentence of 1468) that the Hansards might suggest. In fact, the Hanseatic orators stated quite clearly that ‘without restitucion to thaim aggreed thay might in no wise consent to ey peas’. Moreover they also refused to concede to the English demand that the word restitution be substituted for ‘recompence’. Seeing that the Hansards were obstinate, the English ambassadors (according to their instructions) offered them ‘a certayne tyme they might content thaim self...upon thair own customes due to the king for soch merchandise, as they shuld bring into England’.

This stage of the negotiations provides a very clear indication of how the ability of an ambassador to sign binding agreements on behalf of his principal was shaped by both formal powers and diplomatic instructions. The Hansards had demanded (in response to the preliminary English offer of recompense) that the sum of £25,000 be set as minimum amount of recompense that they would accept. Furthermore, they had also requested that the Steelyard in London, and houses in Boston and King’s Lynn be delivered to them ‘of fre yifte’. Now, although the English had been given clear powers which enabled them to conclude with the Hanse on the matter of recompense (‘by a generall clause yeving us power to appese and sette utterly a side all maner of differences’), their instructions restrained their discretion by commanding them only to agree recompense in terms of a ‘season be it oo yere more or lesse’ and not in terms of a specific sum or, indeed, in terms of the free gift of the Steelyard and other properties. Concerning the Hansard’s specific demands, Hatchlyff and Russell claimed that they ‘neither be auctorised ne

instructed...in no wise’, although the opposing party complained that if they had known that the English ambassadors’ powers and authority were so limited, that they would have ‘byden at home’. On 21 July, the English clearly admitted that ‘we came not instructed as of the excessive somme and of the howses’ hence they suggested that ‘thay [the Hansards] shuld send for mor plener instruccion or ellis, if thay had and wold not draw nerer to our entent it was algates nedefull that we shuld send, to thentent, we might come nerer unto thaim’. This example clearly goes to show, just as J.T. Ferguson and Pierre Chaplais have suggested, that whereas ‘the littere procuracionis delegated authority to act [to negotiate and conclude]’ it was the ‘the instrucciones or credencie that defined the extent of the envoy’s discretion’.

So, if English ambassadors had rather general powers to treat and conclude (such as Hatyff and Russell in 1473), their ability to sign binding agreements on behalf of their principal was limited to agreements based on offers and proposals which were specifically authorised by their instructions. Nevertheless, it is very important to stress that negotiatory authority (as opposed to an ability to conclude agreements) was not entirely compromised by ambassadorial instructions. Even though Edward’s instructions to both Hatclyff and Russell made no mention of a specific sum to be agreed for any restitution to be awarded to the Hansards, this did not stop his ambassadors from rather sensibly trying to bargain over the exact sum involved. Sensing, realistically, that the Hansards ‘wold no nerer come in thees matiers’ the English ambassadors asked ‘what porcion of the somme thay wold abate’. It was eventually proposed by the Hansards that if the king granted them the houses they had asked for in London, King’s Lynn and Boston, then they would accept £20,000 in restitution rather than their original offer of £25,000. To this, Hatclyff and Russell laconically suggested that ‘if thay had deducted 20 000 and lafte 5000 it had been inogh’. In addition, the Hansards had also demanded that the merchants of Cologne be excepted from any proposed treaty (since they had accepted the terms of the sentence of 1468 and had been later expelled from the German Hanse). On these three ‘difficultees’ (the monetary recompense, the gift of houses and the exception of the Cologne merchants from any agreement), the English

133 Ibid., p. 150.
134 Ibid., p. 151.
136 HU, ed. Höhbaum et al., X, p. 151.
ambassadors had no specific instructions whatsoever; hence they could not, of course, bind the king to these proposals without his direct assent. It is at this point that we can see quite clearly how the lack of sufficient instruction was coped with in late medieval diplomatic practice.

Two options presented themselves to the English ambassadors. Firstly, Hatclyff and Russell could conclude with the Hansards ‘upon thies same difficultees throughly and upon all other thinges by articles’. This would mean that both parties would agree to a series of articles, initially confirmed by letters ‘elseyd by bothe parties’, with the proviso that a letter would be sent to Edward concerning the three main points of contention so that ‘if the king plesid not to signifie his assent at a certain tyme and plese upon all and every of thatarticles and also upon the said three difficultees, nothing shuld be had for concluded by the first letters [the sealed letters of the draft proposed treaty]’. One the other hand, ‘if he signified his assent, then all thing to stand in virtue and strength’. The second option was to send a copy of the Hansards’ demands directly to the king and await both Edward’s response to the proposals, and then the delivery of any further instructions and powers to the English ambassadors as might be necessary. The next day, 22 July, the writer of the journal stated that the Hansards ‘remembred our last departing touching thair difficultees and of sending a message to the king for mor power or ellis to conclude all thing with a lettre reservatory’. The Hansards clearly preferred to wait for Edward’s response to the message (which would contain the draft proposals for agreement); they also demanded that Edward’s response should be received within a month from the dispatch of the message. It seems that this was probably also the preferred course of action as far as the English ambassadors were concerned since a delay in negotiations would enable the king to ‘have knowleage, as in caas he shuld not be plesid with thair chargeable peticions’. The writer of the journal candidly suggested that during such a delay, the king would have the ‘leyser to advise for peas or prepare for werre’; the English ambassadors hoped to leave the Hansards on such good terms that during the hiatus in negotiations the Hanse would be ‘nothing preparing the werre’. As it turned out, the Hansards spent 23, 24 and 25 July preparing ‘thair book’ of demands and proposals for peace which was to be sent to Edward IV. Meanwhile (as we have seen was common with embassies during the Middle Ages), William Hatclyff was detached from the rest of the embassy at Utrecht and was sent to meet

137 Ibid, p. 152.
Charles the Bold, then besieging Nijmegen in Guelders. Hatelyff was sent to ask that the duke should only come to terms with ‘th’Esterlinges’ if the English did, that he would offer himself, if required, as mediator, between the two parties, and that he should write to the Hansards in an attempt to persuade them of the need for a new truce and diet between themselves and the English. On 29 July the English delegation finally received the ‘book’, announced their departure and left Utrecht for Dordrecht. The next day Bluemantle Pursuivant (who had been accompanying the ambassadors) was sent to England with the proposals for agreement. From 4 to 26 August the English ambassadors moved to Bruges ‘in tretty with the dukes commisses upon the kinges grete matiers [the proposed invasion of France]’ where they came to an agreement ‘upon the formes and noumber of all the minutes of paccions etc’. On 24 August, Bluemantle returned from England with a response to the proposals discussed at the diet of Utrecht, although first he was sent to the duke of Burgundy with some other letters addressed to the duke from Edward IV. When the English ambassadors arrived at Utrecht on 1 September they found Windsor Herald waiting for them, but, it seems, he had been dispatched before ‘the king might be acertained plenerly by our last message’. Finally, on the night of 3 September Bluemantle returned from his visit to the duke of Burgundy and negotiations recommenced with the Hansards on the next day. However, the English ambassadors made no mention of Bluemantle’s visit to the duke and pretended that they had not already met him in Bruges; wherein, said the writer of the journal ‘we dissimuled’.

Edward’s response to the outcome of the previous discussions at Utrecht was not what the Hansards had been hoping, as far as the three ‘difficulties’ were concerned, the king ‘rejectid hem not’ but claimed that the month’s time-limit that the Hansards had set for consideration of their proposals was too short. Instead, the king suggested that from the beginning of October, fuller consideration could be given to them when they could be discussed in the forthcoming parliament. After a short break in the talks, the Hanseatic orators complained that Bluemantle had not brought

141 Ibid., p. 154.
142 Probably the articles concerning the precise arrangements for Edward and Charles’ joint war against Louis XI which was eventually to take place in 1475; ibid., p. 154.
143 Ibid., pp. 154-5.
144 Ibid., p. 155.
145 Ibid., p. 155.
‘full instruccion in all our matiers... We se now, that for lake of instruccion nothing may now be concluded’.

They also refused the holding of another diet to discuss the matter at greater length and asked that they be ‘excused’ entirely from the diet.

Two days later, on 6 September, the English expressed great surprise that the Hansards expected a direct response from Edward on the matter of the £20,000 despite the fact that ‘We wer not informed, what citees ne what persones wer hurted’.

Over the next few days, the wrangling continued and in between their meetings with the Hanseatic representatives, the English ambassadors had secret talks with the Cologne merchants who visited the English on the evening of the 6 September ‘late, for that thay wold not other shuld have seen thaim’.

Those same merchants also met Edward’s ambassadors secretly on the night of 15 September asking that Edward refuse the Hansard’s request that the merchants of Cologne be excepted from the treaty and expelled from England.

Eventually, it was decided that in order to allow Edward to inspect the Hanseatic proposals in more detail, the diet would reconvene on 15 January 1474 and that in order to facilitate this, the abstinence of war should be extended until 1 March 1474. Moreover a book of articles ‘from which thay wold in no wise departe’ was given by the Hansards to the English delegation on the morning of 19 September.

The first part of the diet of Utrecht was over. The most important demands that the Hansards made of the king was that he should provide £15,000 in the form of customs rebates as restitution for the damage done by the sentence of 1468; the Hanseatic liberties in England should be confirmed; the Steelyard in London and Boston and another house in Lynn should be granted to them; Edward should also repay the loan of £484 which certain imprisoned Hanseatic merchants had once made to him. Some new instructions of 20 December 1473 given to his ambassadors travelling to the reconvened diet of Utrecht show that Russell, Hatelyff and Rosse were instructed to ‘gete the beste for him [Edward IV] and his lande and by suche reasons, as thay shal mowe make, to remove the oratours of that other syde fro thaire wilfull oppynyons’.

But it seems that Edward had largely accepted the finality of the terms that were outlined in the book handed over by the Hansards at the end of the first part.

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146 Ibid., p. 155.
147 Ibid., p. 155.
148 Ibid., p. 157.
149 Ibid., pp. 158 & 161.
150 Neatly summarised by Cora Scofield in eadem, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 77-8.
of the diet on 19 September. The king instructed his ambassadors that ‘rather than so to breke [they] shal finally under as covert terme as they can shewe theym condesscendable and condesceded to that in the said poynstis, withouthe whiche the other partie can not or wol not be enduced agre’. In other words, as both Cora Scofield and T.H. Lloyd have suggested, Edward IV was prepared, if need be, ‘to let the Hansards have practically everything they had demanded’.\footnote{Scofield, \textit{The Life and Reign, II}, p. 79 and Lloyd, \textit{England and the German Hanse}, p. 214.}

Yet Edward’s instructions did ask his ambassadors to attempt, as far as was possible, to induce the Hansards to agree to some improvements of the preliminary draft of the treaty. For instance, whilst the king was reluctantly content to pay the £15,000 he did ask his ambassadors to ‘agree to a lesse somme and that to as litel somme as they can.’\footnote{\textit{Hanserecesse}, ed. von der Ropp, VII, p. 215. For a detailed description of the last part of the negotiations, see Lloyd, \textit{England and the German Hanse}, pp. 213-16.} In this, Edward’s diplomats were partially successful, by the end of the negotiations, the Hansards had reduced their claim for monetary compensation to £10,000. They were not able, however, to persuade the Hansards to drop their claim of a further £484 which, they said, was owed on account of the forced loan extracted from certain merchants of the Hanse after the sentence of 1468.\footnote{\textit{Hanserecesse}, ed. von der Ropp, VII, p. 216 & Lloyd, \textit{England and the German Hanse}, p. 216.} If his ambassadors were unable to prevent the merchants of Cologne from being deliberately excluded from the treaty, then they were to ensure that this was done in such a way that it would not be so ‘greate agaynst the kingis honnour so to passe therin’. It was to be stated in the treaty ‘in a generaltie’ that whichever towns and cities had been ‘dismembred’ from the German Hanse, would not enjoy those privileges in England which the Hanse were allowed. Whilst the Hanse would not back down in the matter of the Cologne merchants (they were excepted from the treaty), the English were successful in their attempt to defend the king’s honour by arranging that there would be no specific mention of the expulsion of the Cologne merchants in the treaty itself. Rather more importantly, as T.H. Lloyd has pointed out, the English also managed to confirm that the English ‘ought to enjoy any rights which had ever been exercised by them in the Hanse towns or Prussia’ and that they would be immune from any new taxation in those lands; however, it was not clear how enforceable those rights would be. At last, after much last-minute haggling, the treaty was eventually signed on 28 February 1474 (on Edward IV’s behalf by Russell,
After a considerable delay, corrected copies of the treaty were only exchanged on 4 September 1475.\textsuperscript{157}

The remarkable set of documentation which has survived for the diet of Utrecht of 1473-1474 provides an almost uniquely detailed glimpse (at least for the reign of Edward IV) of the lengthy negotiations which were necessary before any formal diplomatic agreement was signed during the later Middle Ages. Moreover, they give a good indication of the kind of sharp practice, dissimulation, secret meetings and laconic humour which must have been found during most diplomatic conferences and diets. Most importantly, the journal of the diet shows that even if ambassadors were reliant on full instructions to define the extent of their powers before they could sign binding agreements, their procurations, of course, still enabled them to formulate the preliminary articles of diplomatic agreements, even if those articles were not specifically provided for in their written instructions. Those proposals would then, however, have to be put to the king for a decision on the matter. On the basis of that decision, new ambassadorial instructions or powers would be drawn up. But the special ambassador had rather more responsibilities than the preparation of and specific negotiation for, formal diplomatic agreements.

Ambassadors in receipt of specific negotiating commissions could also undertake informal negotiations on a variety of different subjects (not mentioned in their powers). This could either be with representatives of their host country or other foreign ambassadors with whom they came into contact (at diplomatic entrepôts such as Bruges, Brussels, St Omer or Lille). It is usually resident ambassadors who are lauded for their generalised diplomatic remit, their ability to negotiate informally and to cultivate diplomatic contacts, it is obvious that whilst special ambassadors were away on embassy they too must have been equally capable of acting in such a manner.\textsuperscript{158}

The use of special ambassadors (rather than residents) did not necessarily mean that late medieval English diplomacy was inflexible. On frequent occasions certain ambassadors could be detached from a temporary embassy and sent elsewhere in matters connected with that embassy (William Hatzlyff’s visit to Guelders in July 1473 is a case in point) or for a completely unrelated reason. So special embassies were not totally inflexible units that carried out specific negotiations and waited until

\textsuperscript{156} Foedera, V, pt III, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{157} Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{158} Mallett, ‘The emergence of permanent diplomacy in Renaissance Italy’, 8-9; idem, review of Russell, Diplomats at Work, 718-9.
the conclusion of those negotiations for any members of the embassy to return home. Instead the membership of special embassies was both fluid and variable. A few ambassadors might remain at their original destination whilst some of their colleagues were expected to travel elsewhere in the host country or travel back to England (to inform the king of matters arising during the negotiations). Neither did the use of special ambassadors imply that diplomatic contact was always patchy or discontinuous. Certain ambassadors could find that their missions were prolonged by a series of separate commissions which, in effect, ensured that an English embassy could be present at a foreign court for an extremely long time, even though its membership might often fluctuate. Moreover, if an English embassy entirely removed itself from a foreign court, diplomatic contact would sometimes be maintained by a process of diplomatic reciprocity. An embassy from a host country might then travel to England in the company of the returning English ambassadors. It seems, therefore, that the sort of diplomatic contact provided by special ambassadors in the late medieval period, was neither as inflexible nor always as discontinuous as has often been suggested.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{159} Mattingly, \textit{Renaissance Diplomacy}, pp. 32-41.
Chapter Three

THE USE OF MINOR DIPLOMATIC ENVOYS AND AGENTS IN ENGLISH DIPLOMACY, 1461-83

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Garrett Mattingly and some other historians have tended to characterise the corps of late medieval diplomatic personnel as being almost entirely dominated by temporary or special ambassadors. Charles Giry-Deloison later developed this view by suggesting that until around 1500 English diplomatic personnel were instead divided into two main groups: special ambassadors, and then another group of unempowered diplomatic envoys. According to Giry-Deloison, the members of this second group tended to be 'simple carrier[s] of letters and messages'. We have also seen that this bi-partite division in diplomatic personnel was usually signified by the fact that members of the first group (of ambassadors) almost invariably held formal procuratorial powers to treat and sometimes conclude agreements. Members of the second group of non-procurated diplomatic envoys instead usually held letters of credence which testified to the identity of the bearer and the veracity of any messages which they were entrusted to impart either by letter or through an oral deposition (although some couriers may have been sent abroad solely in the possession of the letters which they were to deliver). In general, the activities of these minor diplomatic agents and envoys in the Middle Ages have either been neglected by historians such as Garrett Mattingly and Christopher Allmand, or have been underestimated by other historians such as Giry-Deloison who suggest that unless provided with procuratorial powers, all diplomatic envoys were relegated to the ranks of lowly porters, whose sole duty was to dutifully impart oral and written messages. However, it is the contention of this chapter that even in the absence of formal ambassadorial powers, more minor diplomatic envoys could still be responsible for undertaking a variety of important tasks that were crucial to the

smooth operation of late medieval diplomacy. The large group of diplomatic envoys used by Edward IV who were not empowered with ambassadorial commissions did indeed encompass those who acted merely as couriers, but other envoys could be entrusted with tasks for which considerable diplomatic skill and delicacy was needed, such as the opening-up of informal avenues of negotiation, the formulation of preliminary agreements and the sounding of foreign opinion on diplomatic matters.

In fact, the general neglect of the activities of non-procurated diplomatic envoys during the later Middle Ages is probably to be explained by the fact that far fewer documents exist in English archives to illustrate their activities in comparison to the more well documented records of English ambassadorial missions to Scotland and to the Continent. Whilst the records of chancery provide numerous examples of ambassadorial powers and instructions for the reign of Edward IV it is extremely rare for letters of credence and instructions (sometimes, confusingly, known as credences) given to minor diplomatic envoys to survive in English archives.\(^4\) Furthermore the letters written by Edward IV to foreign rulers and sent abroad in the possession of minor diplomatic envoys (or indeed amongst the diplomatic papers in the possession of ambassadors) have not survived in any great number. The gaps in documentary evidence in the English archives were caused, in part, by the destruction of much of the privy seal and signet archives in the Whitehall fire of 1698. However, both English letters of credence and royal letters do tend to survive rather more frequently in the *Bibliotheque Nationale* and the *Archives Départementales* at Lille. As far as English archives are concerned, the most useful sources to illustrate the activities of minor diplomatic envoys are the documents of the exchequer at the Public Record Office which record a large number of payments made to non-ambassadorial diplomatic personnel.

So who made up this group of diplomatic envoys and what kind of duties did they undertake? The king’s officers of arms (his kings of arms, heralds and pursuivants) formed by far the largest part of this particular section of royal diplomatic personnel.\(^5\) These officers were sometimes empowered as formally accredited ambassadors, but those occasions were relatively rare in comparison to their frequent use as minor diplomatic envoys. But it is probably an exaggeration to

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suggest, as Garrett Mattingly does, that 'in general heralds lacked the training, the experience, the social position and character to make successful ambassadors.' Certain of Edward's own officers of arms, such as Thomas Holme, Clarenceux King of Arms, did find themselves employed as ambassadors. Holme was appointed as Edward's ambassador to Denmark on 5 July 1480 (along with John Doget and William Lacy). Likewise, Walter Bellengier, Ireland King of Arms, was commissioned on 24 August 1473 as one of the king's ambassadors to treat with the Scots at Alnwick. In fact there has been a tendency amongst historians to downplay the extent of heralds' ambassadorial responsibilities, even if the evidence suggests otherwise. For example, even though Francis II of Brittany appointed Jean de Rouville and Olivier du Breil and Malo King of Arms as his ambassadors to England and elsewhere on 2 May 1467, it was later stated by B.-A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé that Malo was simply responsible for escorting the other two ambassadors to England. Actually, the commission made no distinction between any of the three members of the embassy, all three were empowered to negotiate treaties of amity between Francis and a variety of other princes.

On the other hand, it was not unusual for heralds and pursuivants to be sent abroad in the company of empowered ambassadors, whilst the heralds themselves were excluded from the ambassadorial commission. This was often because, on these occasions, the heralds were expected to carry out more menial or ceremonial functions. When William Hatclyff crossed the channel in the autumn of 1472 in order to treat with Charles the Bold, he was accompanied by Lancaster Herald and Bluemantle Pursuivant. Bluemantle's 'Record' notes that the 'right worshipfull'

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7 *Foedera, conventions, literae... etc*, ed. T. Rymer & rev. by G. Holmes (10 vols, The Hague 1745; repr., Farnborough, 1967), V, pt III, p. 107. Thomas Holme was appointed as Clarenceux on 1 August 1476 after the death of William Hawkeslowe, who had been drowned in the Spanish seas (*Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-85*, pp. 297, 389 & 422). Holme had previously occupied several other heraldic offices; two references from June 1461 have him as Rougcroix Pursuivant and Windsor Herald respectively (R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* (2 vols, London, 1953-70), I, p. 610 and PRO, E 403/822, m. 1). It is likely, therefore, that he was promoted to Windsor Herald at some point during 1461. Thereafter he became Norroy King of Arms from Easter 1464 until August 1476 (PRO, E 159/253, Brevia Directa, Trinity Term, m. 7d).
8 *Foedera*, V, pt III, p. 33. Bellengier had been appointed as Ireland King of Arms on 9 June 1467, PRO, E 404/742/29.
9 B.-A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, *François II duc de Bretagne et l'Angleterre (1458-1488)* (Paris, 1929), p. 120.
10 The commission may be found in ADL-A, B 5, fols 59-60.
11 C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *The record of Bluemantle Pursuivant 1471-1472*, in *idem, English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 379-88. It is not known who held the offices of Lancaster Herald and Bluemantle Pursuivant in 1472, although Christopher Carlisle did hold the post of Bluemantle Pursuivant in 1481-2, PRO, E 405/566 (unfoliated).
Hatclyff had been sent by the king in ‘embassat’ and was assigned a herald and pursuivant to ‘wayte vpon hym’. Landing at Étaples on 29 August, the party travelled on to Abbeville where they remained for a few days whilst the duke’s whereabouts were determined. Once Hatclyff had had word that ‘the Duc forward was to yen in Normandy’ Bluemantle was immediately dispatched in order ‘for to let hym have knolege of his commynge’.12 Aside from being responsible for the more ceremonial aspects of some ambassadorial missions (such as the official announcement of the arrival of an embassy) heralds and pursuivants undertook some rather more menial tasks. In advance of the arrival of the main party of an English envoy, they were often required to search for suitable lodgings at the host court or in the host city. The diplomatic diary recording the negotiations between England and the Hanseatic League during the summer of 1473 reveals that on 23 June, John Russell and William Hatclyff, Edward IV’s ambassadors to the diet of Utrecht, arrived at Antwerp. Immediately they sent Bluemantle Pursuivant ahead of them to Utrecht ‘to purvey us at Utreght of logging and 2 saufconduites’.13

As we shall see in a subsequent chapter, heralds and pursuivants travelling in the company of ambassadors were entrusted with delivering the ambassadors’ letters within a host country but also found themselves employed to ensure that a line of communication remained open between the king and ambassadors during negotiations on the Continent.14 When John Coke left for Burgundy in early 1478 he was accompanied by a pursuivant ‘to come to and from us into that contree and retourne with such writinges and message as shalbe necessarie and requisite concernyng the said ambassade’.15 However, without other sources such as the Utrecht Diary or the Record of Bluemantle Pursuivant it is often hard to determine the exact duties undertaken by heralds whilst accompanying ambassadors since the only evidence for their missions is derived from the rather sparse references to their payments in the exchequer records. For example, in 1462 before a mission to Spain with two English ambassadors, Rougecroix Pursuivant was paid £13 6s 8d, ‘ad attendendum super ambassatores predictos pro specialibus causis et materiis dictum dominum regem et

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14 See below, chap. 6, pp. 169-70.
consilium suum moventibus'. However, it was not always the case that heralds acted as companions to travelling ambassadors, rather more frequently they travelled alone to the courts of foreign rulers. The most common diplomatic responsibility entrusted to the care of the king's heralds was to deliver written material or oral messages from the king to foreign rulers, to their officials, or to other representatives.

It is well known, for example, that heralds carried out such duties in periods of war when they could be responsible for delivering a formal challenge to battle, in effect, a declaration of war. Just before Edward crossed over to Calais in the summer of 1475, John Smert, Garter King of Arms was sent to the French king in order to deliver a letter of defiance which required Louis ‘to deliver the realm of France to him [Edward IV], to whom it belonged so that he could restore the Church, the nobles and the people to their ancient liberties’. On occasion, in more peaceful periods of diplomatic relations it is clear that heralds could deliver messages and letters with direct relevance to their chivalrous profession, such as summonses to joust at tournaments. Letters such as these were delivered to the bastard of Burgundy in 1465 by Chester Herald and Nucelles Pursuivant. Herald were also required to deliver those letters which publicly announced an addition to the royal family, where an additional element of prestige and ceremony would be expected. Chester Herald, for example, was sent to Arlon in the first few days of September 1473 in order to convey the king’s letters to Charles the Bold ‘par lesquelles II [Edward] signifia a icellui seigneur de ses nouvelles et mesmement la nativité de son second filz’.

But on the whole, the burden of delivering more ordinary diplomatic messages (either orally or by letter) was also almost entirely shouldered by the king’s numerous

17 M. Keen, The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages (1965), pp. 194-7.
19 For which see Ferguson, English Diplomacy, p. 166.
20 W.H. Godfrey suggests that the office of Chester Herald was held by John Water in 1465, although
the evidence is unclear, idem, The College of Arms (1963), pp. 121-2. In a pardon granted to Water in July 1471 he is described as sometime Chester Herald and Warwick Herald, CPR 1467-1477, p. 261.
21 Thomas Whiting’s quittance for 70li was issued on 3 September 1473 and is printed L.E. Tanner & W. Wright, ‘Recent investigations regarding the fate of the Prince of the Tower’, Archaeologia, LXXXIV, 2nd series, XXXIV (1934), plate 1 (opposite p. 13).
kings of arms, heralds and pursuivants. Occasionally, it is specifically stated in the issue rolls or the tellers’ rolls that the herald’s mission was primarily concerned with the delivery of written letters or other documents. For example, on 25 June 1468 Windsor Herald was paid £10 for the delivery of the king’s letters to Brittany and Burgundy. Moreover, on 3 November 1468 Windsor Herald was paid another £6 for the delivery of further letters sent from Edward IV to Charles the Bold. At the beginning of Edward’s second reign, Windsor resumed similar duties and was immediately dispatched in July 1471, to deliver letters to James III of Scotland.

Despite the lack of letters of credence given to heralds, we know from other sources such as the dispatches of the Milanese ambassadors at the court of Louis XI, that heralds often delivered messages orally. Cristoforo da Bollate wrote on 18 August 1474 that an unnamed herald from Edward IV had visited Louis XI bringing letters from Edward which contained ‘a clause about giving credence to the person of this herald’.

Evidence for many of these missions, either to escort ambassadors or to carry out other diplomatic tasks on their own (such as the delivery of letters and messages), has not remained in the records of the exchequer. But an examination of the accounts of the Burgundian dukes enables us to determine that, for example, York Herald had escorted John lord Wenlock to Valenciennes in October 1461, and that Windsor Herald accompanied Edward IV’s delegation to the conference of St Omer and Hesdin in September and October 1463. It is possible that the English ambassadors may have issued payments to such heralds directly, thus leaving no evidence of the heralds’ duties in the exchequer rolls, only an indication of the sum of money granted to the ambassadors themselves for their costs and expenses. Furthermore, since the full number of issue rolls, tellers’ rolls and warrants for issue have not survived for the reign of Edward IV it is obvious that they can never give a complete indication of the number of errands on which heralds were sent (on their own) to deliver letters and

22 'But undoubtedly messenger service was the herald’s most common duty', Ferguson, English Diplomacy, pp. 160-1
23 PRO, E 403/840, m. 7; John More may have occupied this office from 1468?-1478, that is, until he was appointed as Norroy King of Arms, Godfrey, The College of Arms, pp. 105-6.
24 PRO, E 403/841, m. 4.
26 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan, ed. A.B. Hinds (1912), no. 267, p. 182.
27 ADN, B 2045, fol. 255, York was given a gift of 49li 10s; for Windsor Herald’s mission, see ADN, B2051, fol. 292-v.
other messages. For example, Rose Blanche Pursuivant delivered Edward’s *lettres closes* to Maximilian in January 1482, yet the lack of exchequer rolls for Michaelmas Term 1481 means that no clear evidence exists in the English archives for the mission of that herald; in this case we are entirely dependent upon the use of the extensive Burgundian ducal accounts.\(^\text{28}\)

However, some missions carried out by heralds are also missing from the exchequer rolls and the surviving warrants for issue despite the fact that issue rolls and tellers’ rolls are still extant for the periods in which one would normally have expected the payments for those missions to have been issued. For example, in January 1462, Rougecroix Pursuivant delivered some *lettres closes* from Edward IV to Philip the Good of Burgundy ‘by which he made known to the duke of Burgundy certain secret matters’; in reward the pursuivant was given a gift of 7li 4s. Yet evidence for this mission is not to be found in the issue rolls for Michaelmas 1461 or Easter 1462.\(^\text{29}\) Likewise, evidence for Richmond Herald’s trip to Burgundy to deliver certain letters of safe-conduct to the bastard of Burgundy in 1466 is lacking, despite the existence of issue rolls and tellers’ rolls for Easter and Michaelmas 1466.\(^\text{30}\) The journeys of March King of Arms and Lancaster Herald to Burgundy in 1467 and 1474 respectively are also invisible in the English records.\(^\text{31}\) When Leicester Herald left England for Burgundy in the company of 1500 English archers led by Sir Thomas Everingham, Sir John Ditchfield and Sir John Middleton in September 1480, he had been specifically instructed to carry messages between both Maximilian duke of Austria and the companies of English archers, and between Maximilian and Edward IV.\(^\text{32}\) Evidence for a payment to Leicester Herald is also missing from the extant tellers’ rolls for either Easter 1480 or Michaelmas of the same year.

\(^28\) ADN, B 2127, fol. 90v & 200v.
\(^29\) ADN, B 2045, fols 257v-8; the issue rolls are PRO, E 403/824 and 825.
\(^30\) PRO, E 403/835, 836 & 837; PRO, E 405/44 & 45 (tellers’ rolls) make no mention of Richmond Herald’s mission that year, and nor do any of the rolls in subsequent years (ADN, B2058, fol. 175v). Helpfully the ducal account notes that the office of Richmond was held at that time by one ‘Guillaume Breton’. This is probably the William Brereton who was granted the stewardship of Congleton Manor in the duchy of Lancaster by Edward IV on 11 July 1461, for services to Edward and previously to the duke of York (PRO, DL 37/30/178, Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, I, p. 513). Brereton might have been the Richmond Herald appointed as Guyenne Herald in 1472, Godfrey, *College of Arms*, p. 143.
\(^31\) For March King of Arms, see ADN, B 2064, fol. 199 and for Lancaster Herald, see ADN, B 2100, fol. 19v.
Two explanations present themselves for these curious deficiencies in the evidence. Firstly, it is possible that the missions were accounted for in the exchequer at some later date for which issue rolls and tellers’ rolls or warrants for issue have not survived. Secondly, some miscellaneous diplomatic expenses may have been paid from chamber funds which could have been rather more readily and quickly at hand than if the payment had been made through the exchequer. Through the fortunate survival of several of Henry VII’s chamber payment books it is possible to determine that Henry VII made a variety of payments (many relating to diplomacy) to his kings of arms, heralds and pursuivants through chamber funds. Payments in the form of money distributed amongst the king’s heralds as largesse were also paid out from the chamber at the beginning of every New Year. On occasion, no reason is given for a payment (such as for the £6 13s 4d given to Norroy King of Arms in November 1499), but the majority of money issued was to recompense the king’s heralds for varied diplomatic duties. This could include payments for escorting foreign ambassadors within England (Norroy King of Arms accompanied certain ambassadors from Flanders to Dover in October 1495). On the other hand, Berwick Pursuivant was paid 53s 4d for accompanying some English ambassadors to Flanders in September 1499. The chamber also issued payments to those heralds travelling alone as diplomatic envoys to the continent. Richmond Herald was paid £13 6s 8d for travelling to France in October 1497 and Berwick Pursuivant was later paid 66s 8d for ‘riding into Fraunce’ in January 1499. It is likely that the chamber assumed similar responsibilities during Edward IV’s reign, but since the chamber payment books do not survive for that period, any conclusions must remain tentative.

Whatever the reason for the gaps in the exchequer evidence, it should be concluded, if one takes into consideration the payments that are missing from the exchequer records, that the total number of missions undertaken by heralds, to escort ambassadors, to deliver messages or written documents and to undertake other diplomatic tasks, must have been rather large. Some sense of the scale of the number of missions undertaken by the king’s heralds is indicated by a warrant for issue,

33 J.M. Currin has already noted that Richard III may have financed the entire costs of his diplomacy through the chamber, which received a variety of large payments from the exchequer throughout the reign (for example: PRO, E 405/72, 73 & 74), J.M. Currin, ‘Pro Expensis Ambassatorum’: diplomacy and financial administration in the reign of Henry VII, EHR, CVIII (1993), 593-4.
34 ‘Item to therraldes at armes for their largesse’, PRO, E 101/414/6, fol. 14v (January 1496).
35 PRO, E 101/414/16, fol. 53 (November 1499).
36 PRO, E 101/414/16, fol. 3.
37 PRO, E 101/414/16, fol. 75.
38 PRO, E 101/414/16, fols 2 & 61.
dating from 15 March 1469. Attached to the warrant is a schedule of diplomatic missions which Thomas Holme, Norroy King of Arms, had carried out since 1464. Norroy had visited Philip the Good on at least six occasions between 1464 and 1466, and then once in 1467. In the meantime he also travelled to Brittany twice in 1466, meaning that the total number of trips abroad made by Norroy during 1466 was four; he had visited Burgundy in January and April 1466 and then travelled to Brittany in August and December. He was later present at the court of Charles the Bold in 1467 and made four separate journeys there in 1468. Despite the fact that Norroy was not formally accredited as an ambassador to Burgundy in 1467-8, the schedule states that he was sent to Charles ‘in our ambassades’; he presumably was responsible for ceremonial functions connected to the embassy and may also have acted as a means of communication between Edward and Charles. The unusual survival of this kind of schedule helps to make sense of the rather sparing way in which the payment was entered onto the Easter 9 Edward IV tellers’ roll. There, Holme was simply stated to have received £40 13s 8d for expenses incurred whilst outside the kingdom of England.39

In fact, this example should warn us that the rather generalised way in which the vast majority of heralds’ missions are described in the exchequer records should not automatically imply that heralds’ diplomatic duties were always quite menial. Sometimes, as we have seen, heralds were specifically paid for travelling abroad to deliver letters, to accompany ambassadors or to collect or deliver safe-conducts. But more often they were simply paid to carry out ‘certain matters’. Whilst, of course, this does not rule out any of the tasks described above, this kind of cryptic statement could sometimes disguise the fact that during their missions heralds might be expected to undertake tasks of some complexity and importance, which necessitated considerable diplomatic skill.40 So, to suggest that (in diplomacy) a herald usually acted as a menial escort or as a ‘simple porteur de lettres ou de messages’, would be most misleading. The ability to deliver written messages, safe-conducts or ratifications of treaties safely and the ability to recite an oral message parrot-fashion or to exhibit ‘firmness’ in

39 PRO, E 405/50, m. 4d; the warrant is PRO, E 404/74/2/1A and the schedule is PRO, E404/74/2/1B.
40 In his study of Breton heralds, Michael Jones has emphasised that heralds or pursuivants could be expected to undertake a variety of tasks other than their predictable duties of organising tournaments, accompanying ambassadors and carrying messages. For instance, around 1487-8, Guingamp Pursuivant embarked upon a series of ‘négociations délicates’ between the townspeople of Guingamp and the competing factions of the court of Francis II, for which see idem, ‘Les signes du pouvoir: l’Ordre de l’Hermine, les devises et les héraut des ducs de Bretagne au XVème siècle’, Mémoires de la Société d’Histoire et d’Archéologie de Bretagne, LXVIII (1991), 160.
making an unpleasant announcement was not the most that could be expected of heralds.\textsuperscript{41} Heralds were used to negotiate day-to-day matters of mutual concern between England and foreign powers that were vital to the smooth operation of diplomacy but for which a fully empowered embassy was probably unnecessary. Moreover, their missions often resembled the preparatory, informal negotiations which usually took place before substantive talks, rather than the simple delivery of a letter or a parrot-like recital of an oral message for which little personal initiative or diplomatic skill was needed.

Some instructions given to Northumberland Herald on 13 April 1484 help to indicate the wide diplomatic duties entrusted to heralds.\textsuperscript{42} Northumberland Herald was ordered by Richard III to travel to Berwick and wait until a response had been received from certain Scottish ambassadors concerning points which were still at issue between Richard III and James III. If it was made clear to Northumberland that ‘theire prince is aggreed and concluded to have an Abstynence of Werre bothe by See and land to endure to Cristemasse or Alhalowentyde at the lest’, then he should ‘common and cause a certein day to be appointed’ for the proclamation of that abstinence on the borders of England and Scotland. Northumberland was to insist that in the Abstinence ‘no grownde on the west bordures called Batabelle grounde be othewise occupyed than hit is at this day by any partie etc.’\textsuperscript{43} Since the issue rolls from the reign of Richard III do not survive, and since the warrants for issue for the same period are exceptionally sparse, it is impossible to tell when and on what basis Northumberland Herald was paid for this mission. However, since no ambassadorial commission granted to Northumberland Herald has survived in either the treaty rolls (where the majority of ambassadorial powers were enrolled) or Harleian 433 itself, it seems likely that Northumberland did not act as a formally accredited and empowered ambassador.\textsuperscript{44} In an everyday diplomatic setting to hold full ambassadorial powers was not always vital. It seems that heralds such as Northumberland could act quite effectively armed with explicit instructions (which he would probably show to the


\textsuperscript{42} Northumberland Herald, along with Esperance Pursuivant, was one of the officers of the earl of Northumberland, Godfrey, \textit{The College of Arms}, pp. 252 & 288. For a discussion of ‘private’ heralds, see below, pp. 90-5.


\textsuperscript{44} The treaty roll for the first year of Richard III’s reign is PRO, C 76/168.
opposing side) and a letter of credence in addition. Thus Northumberland would be able to ‘common’ with the Scots to arrange a day of proclamation for an abstinence of war, but only if certain conditions were met. To persuade the Scots to agree that certain parts of disputed areas such as the ‘Batable grounde’ should not seized by either side during the abstinence, may have required more than a little diplomatic skill.

Rose Blanche Pursuivant, sent to Burgundy in January 1482, was required to persuade the Burgundians to return certain English ships and goods taken into Burgundian hands. His mission was evidently successful given that Maximilian duke of Austria immediately ordered the deliverance of those ships and goods to the herald. Whilst carrying out such ordinary (if not menial) diplomatic tasks, such as the organisation of a proclamation of a diplomatic agreement or demanding the restitution of goods, heralds also took part in informal diplomatic meetings with the courtiers and officials of foreign princes (and occasionally with foreign princes themselves). It is clear, from instructions to other diplomatic envoys in Harleian 433 and elsewhere, that after the delivery of a prepared oral or written message a herald might have been expected to sound out opinion on a variety of topics specified in a set of instructions or aide-mémoire. Depending upon the response received, the herald would then either present the unofficial opinion of the English government on the matter, or would return home to report his findings. During his sojourn in Burgundy in 1482, Rose Blanche Pursuivant, for instance, seems to have conversed informally with the duke of Austria’s chancellor. However, it was noted in the ducal accounts that the pursuivant was said to have used ‘paroles injurieuses’, although it is not quite clear to whom he directed them. Likewise, whilst visiting the court of Louis XI in spring 1462, Warwick Herald conducted lengthy conversations with Charles de Melun concerning the state of Anglo-Burgundian relations. In fact, Warwick Herald talked at such great length that Melun could not find enough space to recount the full conversation in his letter to the Charles of Charolais written on 14 April 1462. Warwick’s purpose seems to have been to gauge Charolais’ opinion on the possibility of an ‘amytié’ between England and France.

45 Northumberland’s instructions assume that both sides agreed, in principle, with the idea of an abstinence of war between England and Scotland.
46 ADN, D 2127, fol. 90v.
47 Ibid.
On other occasions it seems that heralds were expected to present specific diplomatic proposals on an informal basis, which allowed each side to make known their intentions and any areas where fruitful compromise or formal negotiation could later take place. It is unlikely that the herald simply delivered his proposals and dutifully recorded the response. In fact, based on the response received from his hosts, the herald may have been instructed to elaborate or to develop certain areas of the proposed agreement (in accordance with his instructions). In practice, a great deal must have been left to the initiative and skill of the herald concerned. For example, on 18 August 1474, Cristoforo da Bollate (Milanese ambassador to the court of Louis XI) wrote that an English herald (probably Falcon) had arrived from England with written letters which contained a clause ‘about giving credence to the person of the herald’. Apparently on the basis of that clause the herald had taken part in ‘very intimate discussions with his Majesty, at which no one else was present but my lord of Concessault [William Monypenny].

Since the mission of Falcon Herald to the court of Louis XI entailed discussions with the king and his closest advisors which lasted for at least three weeks it is obvious that the object of his mission was rather more complex than simply to record the French responses to specific English proposals. It is more likely that Falcon was required to negotiate informally on a variety of matters including a marriage alliance between Elizabeth of York and the dauphin Charles, the return of Guienne or Normandy, an offensive alliance against the duke of Burgundy and the English request that English merchants should be allowed to trade peacefully in France during the present truce. Whilst these meetings could never be described as formal negotiations, they were nevertheless essential preparation for more formal ambassadorial talks which could take place thereafter.

So far, this discussion has concentrated almost exclusively upon the diplomatic activities of the king’s heralds and pursuivants, yet the heralds of the nobility were also closely involved in the practice of English diplomacy during the later Middle Ages (as the example of Northumberland Herald has already shown). However, the precise role that these so-called ‘private’ heralds played in diplomacy is often quite hard to determine. On occasion, it is clear that the heralds of the nobility

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50 PRO, E 405/58, m. 1d.
51 Prof. Peter Spufford’s advice and suggestions on this topic have been invaluable. A list of these ‘private’ heralds may be found in ‘Herald’s of the Nobility’ or Appendix C to The Complete Peerage, ed. G.E. Cokayne & rev. by V. Gibbs et al. (14 vols, 1910-59), XI, Appendix C, pp. 39-104; Wagner, Heralds of England, p. 48, n. 1.
were responsible for carrying out diplomatic tasks concerning the purely private business of their masters (although that business might have more far-reaching diplomatic implications). This is particularly seen to be the case from evidence contained in the Hastings Letterbook of 1477. William lord Hastings (Edward IV’s lieutenant of Calais) was at the epicentre of a whirlwind of gossip and intrigue in that year. The French king, Louis XI, had personally accused Hastings in the presence of his entire court of conspiring against him with Margaret, dowager duchess of Burgundy; he was personally accused of amassing a large amount of ‘gens de guerre’ at Calais, ready to make war on the French, in support of the Burgundians.\(^5^2\) One of Hastings’ pursuivants, Tiger, had met Louis at Thérouanne on 15 August and had then returned to Calais and submitted a ‘rapport’ directly to Hastings, imparting the obvious information that Hastings was causing Louis a great deal of displeasure.\(^5^3\)

Likewise, as we shall see in the next chapter, Warwick Herald was frequently used by Richard earl of Warwick to deliver his personal letters to the continent throughout the 1460s. It was stated by a Milanese ambassador in France in 1464 that Louis XI had recently received Warwick’s ‘molto bona littera’ by the hands of Warwick Herald.\(^5^4\) In fact, the use of such heralds could sporadically be a source of considerable diplomatic opposition to the conduct of the king’s own diplomacy. This is most obviously the case in the later 1460s when Edward and the earl of Warwick were at loggerheads over the direction which England’s foreign policy should take. Edward preferred a Burgundian alliance, but Warwick (in spite of the king’s obvious opposition) was pushing for a French alliance throughout 1467 and 1468.\(^5^5\) Warwick Herald was used by the earl at this time to conduct diplomatic business which certainly cannot be described as sanctioned by the king. In one case, the information which Warwick Herald brought back from the continent during this period was so sensitive that it was meant solely for the ears of the earl of Warwick.


\(^{55}\) See chap. 4, pp. 132-6.
In October 1468, a certain John Boon was paid for a secret mission to Jean V, count of Armagnac, to attempt to induce the count to support Edward IV against Louis XI; apparently, Boon was to deliver letters by which Edward ‘demandoit à avoir alliance avecques ledit seigneur d’Armagnac’. According to the story that Boon told at Craon in 1485, whilst being detained by the French, the earl of Warwick had persuaded Boon to delay his voyage until a herald of the earl’s had returned from France (‘jusques à ce qu’il eust oy nouvelles d’un herault qu’il avoit envoyé en France devers le roy’). After about a month of waiting at Exeter, Boon was told by Warwick that after delivering Edward’s letters to the count of Armagnac, he should then return via the court of Louis XI, where he should disclose to the French king all that had passed between Boon and the count. Departing from Fowey at some point after Christmas, Boon travelled to San Sebastian and thence to Lectoure, where the count was staying. Boon subsequently gave two accounts of the count’s response to Edward’s letters. The first, in 1469, stated that the count was willing to support an English invasion of Guienne with around 15,000 of his own men. On the other hand, Boon’s second account given in 1485 suggested, instead, that the count had in fact refused to read Edward’s letters and that the count’s promise of military support for the English had been fabricated afterwards by Louis XI. Although it is not possible to be entirely sure what transpired between Boon and Jean V, it is clear that after meeting the count, Boon travelled to Amboise to meet Louis XI, ‘ainsi qu’il avoit promis audit comte de Varouye’. It is in the account of the meeting with Louis XI that Boon reveals that Warwick’s Herald’s mission to France in the autumn of 1468 had been to warn Louis XI of Boon’s activities and thereby disclose the whole affair to the French king. It is apparent that the ‘nouvelles’ which the earl of Warwick received from his herald in 1468, were meant for him alone. The secret activities of Warwick’s diplomatic agents (and especially Warwick Herald) were beginning to pose a threat to Edward’s own diplomacy.

Since there has not been, as yet, any full-length study of the heralds and pursuivants of the nobility during the fifteenth century, it is less than clear why and

56 PRO, E 403/841, m. 3; L. Arthurson, ‘Espionage and intelligence from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation’, Nottingham Medieval Studies, XXXV (1991), 154.
57 C. Samarán, La maison d’Armagnac au xve siècle et les dernières luttes de la féodalité dans le midi de la France (Paris, 1907), pièce justificative no. 37, p. 413 (this document is printed from Archives Départementales des Basses-Pyrénées, E 246).
58 Ibid., p. 413.
59 C.L. Scofield, The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth (2 vols, 1923), 1, pp. 466-7; Samarán, La Maison d’Armagnac, pp. 168-9 & 418.
60 Ibid., p. 414.
how particular nobles and gentlemen were allowed the use of such officers of arms. Some light can be shed on this problem through a study of two treatises on the office of arms written in the first part of the fifteenth century by Sicily Herald (of Alphonso V, king of Aragon) and Anjou King of Arms. Sicily (writing in 1435) stated, on the authority of the ‘old histories’, that ‘no prince ought to create a herald, unless he be a king, duke or count or a baron of such antiquity that the origin of his nobility is scarcely remembered, and then it must be done with the consent of his sovereign.

However, it was claimed by Anjou King of Arms that in recent years the number of heralds and pursuivants of the nobility had expanded so rapidly that ‘there is no captain of a fortress or gentleman so petty but he has his pursuivant’.

So, it could be argued that it had become customary that the right to use a ‘private’ herald or pursuivant was usually only sanctioned when the particular noble or gentleman concerned was granted a military post, or some other public office. As far as the reign of Edward IV is concerned, the majority of references to ‘private’ heralds do indeed only occur in connection with men who held offices such as the wardships of the marches towards Scotland and the captaincy, lieutenancy and treasurership of Calais.

For example, clear mention of the pursuivant of Sir Walter Blount (Bleue Tour or Chateaubleu Pursuivant) is only found once Blount had been granted the office of treasurer of Calais in 1461. It is possible that Chateaubleu had been active before 1461 but that references to this pursuivant are missing in the records of chancery and the exchequer until Blount began to use that herald for government business (at Calais) after 1460-1. However, it does seem quite likely that the right to use such a herald could have been a perquisite of military or public office (for instance, references, in any source, to the heralds and pursuivants of William lord Hastings, are only to be found after he occupied the post of lieutenant of Calais in 1471). Such a right would have also been, as Anjou suggested, a welcome sign of increased status for the gentleman or nobleman concerned.

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61 I intend to deal with this subject in another place, though A.R. Wagner does discuss the subject briefly in *idem, Heralds of England*, pp. 45-6. For the personal heralds and pursuivants of members of the Breton nobility see Jones, ‘Les signes du pouvoir’, 159, n. 80.


64 For this pursuivant, see ADN, B 2048, fol. 228-v and *The Complete Peerage*, ed. Cokayne & rev. by Gibbs et al., XI, Appendix C, p. 61. Hereafter, for the sake of consistency, the name of this pursuivant’s office will be spelt Chateaubleu (following A.R. Wagner, for which see ibid., pp. 61-2.

65 A warrant was issued for Blount’s appointment to the treasurership on 31 August 1460, Scofield, *The Life and Reign*, p. 112, n. 1.

66 See the following paragraph.
Therefore, it is vital that the purely private business carried out by the heralds of the nobility should not be overstated. The activities of Warwick Herald in 1468 should be seen as the exception, not the rule, since most of the men with officers of arms used these heralds and pursuivants to help them carry out the numerous diplomatic and administrative tasks (delegated to them by the king) which were made necessary by the occupation of their military or public offices. Personal heralds provided an important day-to-day means of communication between the officers of the English king and foreign rulers and important office holders on the continent or in Scotland. For instance, the king’s captain or lieutenant of Calais needed to be in constant contact with the admiral of France concerning matters of mutual interest such as the organisation of embassies, the keeping of the seas, ship-wrecks and also the issuing and honouring of safe-conducts for trading vessels and their merchants. In 1477, for example William lord Hastings and the admiral of France, Louis bastard of Bourbon, embarked upon a lengthy correspondence concerning a ship taken at Dieppe by certain English men.\(^\text{67}\) This type of correspondence could have been dealt with by Hastings Pursuivant or possibly by two other pursuivants. Edmund Bedyngefeld’s letter written from Calais in 1477 states that Tiger Pursuivant of lord Hastings had recently visited Louis XI.\(^\text{68}\) However, the Burgundian ducal accounts and the records of the English exchequer also make mention of another pursuivant, ‘Blanc Lyon’.\(^\text{69}\) But since the reference to a ‘Tygyr’ Pursuivant only occurs in Bedyngefeld’s letter it is possible that Bedyngefeld was in error and was referring instead to Blanc Lyon. Henry Percy earl of Northumberland, also seems to have used his own herald (Northumberland) and his pursuivant (Esperance) to undertake missions connected to Percy’s own office of Warden of the East and Middle Marches towards Scotland (such as the organisation of ‘Border Days’ and other diets to arrange the redress of grievances by both sides). For instance, Esperance pursuivant, probably visited the court of James III twice in 1474, in both April and June.\(^\text{70}\)

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that those same heralds of the nobility were also frequently dispatched by Edward IV, to carry out diplomatic

\(^{67}\) Hastings defended their actions on the grounds that ‘les trois parties dudit navire et toute la marchandise estant dedans appartient aux subgetz du roy mon souverain seigneur demourans en ceste ville et a nul autres’, HL, Ms. HA 13879, fols 7v-8v (letters of late August and September).

\(^{68}\) Paston Letters and Papers, ed. Davis, II, pp. 419-20, no. 777.

\(^{69}\) ADN, B 2118, fol. 269 (the name of Blanc Lyon was Nicholas Henry) and see also PRO, E 405/70, mm. 1 & 5 for two references to this pursuivant from Easter Term 1482.

missions at the direct behest of the king himself. It is possible that the heralds of the nobility were used if the king’s own kings of arms, heralds and pursuivants were otherwise occupied. The exchequer records tell us that Hastings Pursuivant, in particular, was used by the king to carry out those diplomatic tasks which might also have been given to the king’s own personal heralds. In 1468 Nucelles Pursuivant (of Anthony Woodville earl Rivers) seems to have visited France, Burgundy and Brittany, most likely in order to deliver letters and supplementary oral messages on Edward’s behalf.\textsuperscript{71} Likewise, at some point before October 1479 Hastings Pursuivant accompanied Edward’s envoys, William Slefeld and Pierre Courtois, to Burgundy, where they met Maximilian of Austria at Aire.\textsuperscript{72} In the summer of 1480, the same pursuivant was provided with two payments for journeys to France; the reference to the second payment explicitly stated that he had been sent to Louis XI ‘in the king’s matters’.\textsuperscript{73} We have seen already that Northumberland Herald (of the earl of Northumberland) was instructed by Richard III to carry out a variety of diplomatic tasks in Northern England and Scotland in 1484.\textsuperscript{74} In fact, the extent to which such personal heralds acted in essentially public capacities on behalf of the king is suggested by the particular way they are described in the Burgundian accounts of the ducal receiver general. It is noted incorrectly in the account-book for 1479 that Hastings Pursuivant was a herald [sic] ‘du roy d’Engleterre’.\textsuperscript{75} Likewise, in 1463 when Chateaubleu Pursuivant was busy ferrying messages and information between Walter Blount (treasurer of Calais) and Philip the Good, he too was described by the receiver-general as ‘poursuivant d’armes du Roy Eduart’.\textsuperscript{76} Aside from their activities in the diplomatic service of their masters, it is clear that those diplomatic tasks which the heralds of the nobility carried out, both on the direct behalf of the king, and in connection to their masters’ public or military offices, were fundamental to their existence by the later Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{71} PRO, E 405/48, m. 2 & PRO, E 403/840, m. 4.
\textsuperscript{72} See ADN, B 2118, fol. 283v and PRO, E 405/67, m. 2 (Edward IV paid Hastings Pursuivant £4 for this mission). William Slefeld is mentioned as one of the king’s secretaries in 1472 and is noted to be one of Edward’s secretaries in the ducal accounts for 1479, \textit{Foedera}, V, pt III, p. 23 & ADN, B 2118, fol. 283v. J. Otway-Ruthven’s suggestion that he was promoted to secretary for the occasion of a visit to Brittany in 1474 is incorrect (\textit{eadem}, \textit{The King’s Secretary and the Signet Office in the XV Century}, (Cambridge, 1939), p. 136). For Courtois, see L. Visser-Fuchs (ed.), “Edward IV’s “memoir on paper” to Charles, duke of Burgundy: the so-called “Short Version of the Arrival””, \textit{Nottingham Medieval Studies}, XXXVI (1992), p. 171, n. 23.
\textsuperscript{73} PRO, E 405/68, mm. 1d & 4d.
\textsuperscript{74} See above, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{75} ADN, B 2118, fol. 283v.
\textsuperscript{76} ADN, B 2048, fol. 228-v.
Other day-to-day and more informal diplomatic activities were also undertaken by diplomatic envoys who were not drawn from the ranks of heralds and pursuivants either of the king or of the nobility. For example, Alexander Legh (Edward IV’s almoner), was to a large extent responsible for providing English representation at the Scottish court from 1474-80, yet he never seems to have been granted full ambassadorial (or procuratorial) powers to treat with the Scots.  Neither the treaty rolls nor the Scottish rolls contain any formal commissions empowering him to negotiate or conclude any agreements with James III. The collections of the British Library and E 30 (Diplomatic Documents) and E 39 (Diplomatic Documents concerning Scotland) series at the Public Record Office also lack such formal commissions. It must be stated that English archives do not provide an entirely accurate picture of the total number of ambassadorial commissions which were issued in the later Middle Ages (although the number of missing commissions is probably quite small). So in some cases we are reliant upon chance survivals in foreign collections. George Neville (the chancellor) and eleven colleagues held full ambassadorial powers to treat on Edward IV’s behalf at the conference of St Omer in Autumn 1463 but, strangely, this important commission only survives in the Archives Départementales at Lille.  However, in respect of Alexander Legh’s career, a substantial amount of other evidence now exists for Legh’s activities, yet Legh is never once described as an ambassador and is never stated to have held formal procuratorial powers, either to treat generally with the Scots or to conclude any formal appointment with them.

Lengthy instructions to Legh survive for 1475, but Legh is not named in that document as a commissioner or an ambassador. Other ambassadorial instructions

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77 Alexander Legh is known to have been the king’s under-almoner on 17 October 1469, PRO, PSO 1/33/1706. Legh was certainly the king’s almoner by 1475, Foedera, V, pt III, p. 58 (James III’s quittance for 2000 marks of princess Cecily’s dowry). Legh may also have distinguished himself by providing intelligence to Edward IV before the king’s enforced flight to the Low Countries in early October 1470, Plumpton Correspondence: a series of letters, chiefly domestick, written in the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII and Henry VIII, ed. T. Stapleton, Camden Society, original series, IV (1839), p. 105; for other biographical information on Legh see Dunlop, ‘Alexander Legh’s instructions’, 351-3.

78 ADN, B 575/16040.

79 Legh’s instructions from 1475 are to be found in BL, Cott. Ms. Vespasian CXVI, fols 121-6 and have been printed in Dunlop, ‘Alexander Legh’s instructions’, 351-3. A second set of instructions given to Alexander Legh, John Widdrington and Ralph Hothom or Hothum have been dated by Cora Scofield to a period from 23 November 1479 to 12 May 1480, Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 277, n. 1 (they are printed in Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed. Bain et al., IV (Appendix), pp. 413-4). In the Calendar the instructions are, however, dated to before February 1476; for Widdrington, see M.A. Hicks, ‘Dynastic change and Northern society: the fourth earl of...
from the period usually seem to describe the recipients as ambassadors or commissioners if indeed they were empowered as such. Some instructions of May 1473 to the king’s ambassadors to the diet of Utrecht with the Hanseatic League frequently mention that those diplomats to whom the instructions were issued were acting as the king’s ‘ambassatores’. Likewise, a set of instructions issued to John lord Wenlock in March 1462 frequently described the members of the proposed mission to Burgundy as ‘ambassatours’. Occasionally, other instructions to formally empowered and commissioned diplomats (even if they did not describe the recipients as ambassadors) would state the purpose and scope of the diplomats’ formal powers if any were held. Some instructions were granted to Bernard de la Fosse in the summer of 1483 for a proposed mission to Spain; although these instructions do not describe him as an ambassador, they do, however, make it clear that La Fosse had received formal ‘auctorite and powere’ to ‘agree...to a new day of meeting for reformacion of the attemptates’ against the truce between England and Spain. It was stated at the beginning of some further instructions of 19 January 1473 given to William lord Hastings (amongst others), that the king’s ambassadors were sent ‘with power sufficient by the kynges lettres patentes for theexecution and speede of the matiers that folowyn’. The first article of a set of instructions issued to Thomas Grafton and William Laverok (sent to treat at Boulogne with the representatives of Philip de Crèvecœur, seigneur d’Esquerdes, in 1483) also indicated quite clearly that the envoys were expected to treat and conclude ‘by vertue of the kinges Commissione to them delivered’.

Alexander Legh’s instructions, on the other hand, began by stating that Legh should declare them ‘by way of credence on the kinges behalfe to the saide king of Scottes or to his counseill particulery the matiers that folowen and to practize, agre and conclude upon the same according to such advertisements as heraftir ensueth’. It was further stated that Legh was instructed to ‘comen trete and appointe in the same


80 P. Chaplais (ed.), English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I: documents and interpretation (2 vols, 1982), I, pp. 195-8; the original is PRO, C 47/30/10/16 (with two autograph signs manual, as was common with most sets of diplomatic instructions).

81 PRO, C 47/30/10/11.

82 British Library, Harleian MS 433, ed. Horrox & Hammond, III, p. 35.

83 Printed in State Papers King Henry VIII (11 vols, 1830-52), VI, pt V, pp. 1-8). The original is to be found in PRO, C 81/1505/26.

84 British Library, Harleian MS 433, ed. Horrox & Hammond, III, p. 32.
way as may be for the good publik of bothe parties'. Later on in the document, Legh was also commanded to meet Richard duke of Gloucester and Henry Percy earl of Northumberland in order to discuss certain matters pertaining to the rule of the Marches, the main reason for Legh’s journey to Scotland. On the basis of those discussions Gloucester and Northumberland were asked to draw up certain further instructions ‘subscribed and signed with thair handes’ and ‘according to the same’ Legh was expected to ‘practize and appoincte in Scotland with the kinges counseill ther’. This does not necessarily rule out the possibility that Legh may have held formal powers in addition to his written instructions. But it may well also have been the case that the set of instructions with which Legh was endowed could have acted as an informal version of a full ambassadorial commission, enabling him to negotiate and to ‘appoincte’ with the Scots on the basis of that document alone.

It appears that Legh was mainly expected to present the English position on various matters of diplomatic concern between Edward IV and James III ‘touching certain redresses and reparacoons of attemptates aswele by lande as by see, concernyng also the complainyt of non observacion of dayes of metyng appoincted in the bordeurs and failled by the wardeins and thair deputyes...the variaunce also of the fisshgaert uppon the Ryver of Esk’. Concerning the diet ‘for the fisshgaert’ which had recently failed, seemingly due to the non-appearance of the English commissioners, Legh was instructed to say that ‘grete matiers...than treted in his parliament’ meant that the attendance of the English representatives was impossible (those ‘matiers’ must surely have concerned the financial preparations for Edward’s invasion of France planned for the summer of 1475). In reply to James III’s letters delivered by Diligence Pursuivant complaining about the actions of an English ship named the ‘Mary floure’ against one of James III’s own vessels, Legh was to say that the lack of ‘prouff’ for those attacks meant that Edward IV could not yet make speedy redress. If it was then alleged by James III’s councillors that the Scots could not provide the proofs concerned on account of the failure of the March diets or days, Legh was to furnish excuses for the failures of those diets which would have been given to him in advance by Gloucester and Percy. In order to keep Gloucester and Percy fully informed of the Scottish complaints Legh had also been expected to show them the instructions of Diligence Pursuivant concerning all the disputed matters. Legh was also to offer

86 Ibid., 353.
87 Ibid., 351.
88 Ibid., 352.
Edward’s apologies for the failures of the Border meetings and then extend the king’s promise that he ‘hath geven the saide lorde [Gloucester and Percy] straitly in charge that they see such othr’ dyettes and dayes to be hasteley appoincted and set bitwixt thaym and the admiral and wardeins of Scotland’. 89

So, Legh’s instructions were not concerned with the exact way he should conduct himself in the negotiation of the detail of a formally proposed diplomatic treaty (or set of agreements), as was the case with most of the other instructions still extant from the reign of Edward IV. 90 Instead, the majority of Legh’s duties seem to have been to offer a rather general and conciliatory response to complaints made about English conduct by the Scottish king. In the case of Legh’s mission, it might have been assumed that formal diplomatic powers to treat and conclude with the Scots were unnecessary. However, it does appear from his instructions that Legh was also expected to ‘appoincte’ with the Scots concerning certain aspects of the matters in dispute between England and Scotland. It was probably hoped that Legh would finalise the logistical arrangements for the proposed meeting at Alnwick (on 8 May) at which the ‘deputies of my lord of Gloucestr for the admirallite’ would receive the bills of complaint from the English concerning Scottish attacks against English shipping, and would, in turn, receive and redress Scottish complaints concerning the conduct of the English. Similar arrangements would also have been made concerning the East, West and Middle Marches for ‘the certayn dayes and places of metying bitwene the lieutenauntes of the wardeins of eithr’ partye’. 91 So some of the more day-to-day aspects of the conduct of Anglo-Scottish relations were organised on an informal level by Alexander Legh, without the need for specific powers. Hence, the question as to whether or not Legh did in fact hold procuratorial or ambassadorial powers becomes rather more than a pedantic point of debate. If, as seems likely, Legh worked on the basis of his instructions and letters of credence alone, it becomes clear that envoys working without formal powers in the later Middle Ages could carry out rather varied and important day-to-day diplomatic tasks in the conduct of English diplomacy.

89 Ibid.
90 For example, the instructions given to Sir John Scott, William Hatclyff, John Russell, Henry Sharp, Sir John Crosby, William Rosse, William Bracebrigge and Hugh Bryce describe in great detail the specific responses which should be given to a number of different diplomatic proposals which were expected to be made by the ambassadors of the Hanseatic League (PRO, C 47/30/10/16).
Moreover, that a diplomatic envoy like Legh was not supplied with a formal diplomatic procuration should not immediately imply that his mission required little diplomatic skill, or that he was expected to exhibit little personal initiative or discretion. Legh’s mission, for instance, took place during a most delicate period of Anglo-Scottish relations, since it was obviously vital for the border to be secure before Edward embarked upon his projected invasion of France later in the summer.  

Therefore, Edward IV must surely have been in no doubt that his almoner possessed considerable diplomatic skill.  

Although his instructions provided Legh with a number of prepared answers to many of the questions that the Scots were expected to ask, he was also left some personal discretion in responding to them. To the Scottish complaints that the ‘fisshgaert’ diet had failed, his instructions stated that ‘Master Lye shall in as goodly maner as he can shewe reasons and causes gret and urgent for the whiche the saide diet couth not be kepte of the king our souverain lordes partie.’  

After his successful mission of 1475, Alexander Legh is to be found at the Scottish court in most years until around 1480. He was, for example, single-handedly responsible for the delivery of the dowry payments due to James III from Edward IV as stipulated in the Anglo-Scottish marriage treaty, agreed by proxies on 26 October 1474.  

By the terms of the agreement Edward was bound to pay 20,000 English marks to the Scottish king: 2,000 marks every year on 3 February at the church of St Giles in Edinburgh for three years following the agreement and 1,000 marks every 3 February thereafter until the 20,000 marks had been paid in full.  

Just as Legh seems to have often worked on a reasonably informal basis at the Scottish court, the formal documentation concerning James’ receipt of the dowry payments may in fact mask the quite flexible and relaxed nature of the way the payments were organised between the two kings. Four quittances now exist for receipt of dowry payments delivered through the agency of Alexander Legh. Following the terms of the agreement of 1474, the first three quittances acknowledge payments of 2,000 marks and the fourth acknowledges a single payment of 1,000 marks. Each of the quittances is dated 3 February and date from 1475, 1476, 1477 and 1478 respectively. However, on 28 April 1477 James III wrote to Edward IV accepting ‘the

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92 Ibid., 343.
93 ‘It is evident...that Legh had the full confidence of his royal master’, ibid., 341.
94 Ibid., 351.
95 Rymer prints James III’s ratification of the agreement of 3 November 1474, Foedera, V, pt III, p. 51.
96 The quittances are PRO, E 39/96/21, PRO, E 39/55, PRO, E 39/56 and PRO, E 39/60. The quittances are also calendared in Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed. Bain et al., IV, nos 1425, 1437, 1446 & 1450, pp. 290, 292 & 294-5.
tary of payment of the moneyle quhilk sulde have been pait till ws in the moneth of
February last past because of the infrmite of yhoure said clerk ande counsaloure
and...for the distemperance of the wedir that was richt hevy for the tyme'.

James went on further to state that he had now received the three separate payments of 2,000
marks that were due to him. Even though the third instalment of the dowry payments
was delayed by the inclement weather and Legh’s own illness, the quittance is still
dated 3 February 1477. Likewise, in the following year, James sent another signet
letter (written on 31 March) to Alexander Legh informing him that the Abbot of
Kelso, Walter Ker (the abbot’s brother) and Patrick of Craunstoune would meet him
at ‘the watir of Twede’ to convey him and Edward’s money safely to James’
presence. Once again, James seemed unconcerned about the fact that Legh was only
just setting out with Edward’s money as the letter was being written; Legh had
apparently already informed James III’s servant, Lyon King of Arms, of the delayed
date at which he would reach the appointed meeting place on the river Tweed. Once
again though, the quittance for the 1,000 marks received in 1478 is dated 3 February
over two months before James can possibly have received the money (according, that
is, to James’ letter of 31 March). In other words, the quittances were either prepared
in advance or were dated 3 February merely to ensure that the exact terms of the
agreement were officially adhered to, despite some slippage in the dates on which the
payments were actually received. So, the formal documentation of late medieval
diplomacy may not give a true impression of the rather flexible and relaxed way in
which diplomatic relations were sometimes conducted during the later Middle Ages.

Without the survival of several of James III’s signet letters it would have been
natural to assume (since the quittances were dated 3 February 1477 and 1478) that the
payments were indeed made punctually. As has already been suggested by David
Dunlop, those same signet letters also inform us that aside from delivering the dowry
payments to James III, Legh was continually responsible for the delivery of messages
(both written and oral) between James and Edward. James’ letter of 28 April 1477
states that ‘we resavit yhoure honorabel letters gevin and present vnto ws be yhoure
traist clerk ande consaloure’ and in turn asks Edward to give ‘ferme credence’ to what
Legh was to tell the English king about James’ ideas for a new Anglo-Scottish

97 James III’s signet letter to Edward IV (dated 28 April [1477]) is now PRO, E 39/102/28. Legh had
also, apparently, suffered some sort of paralytic illness by 1499 (A.B. Emden, A Biographical Register
of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (Cambridge, 1963), p. 360).
98 PRO, E 39/102/30; the letter was calendared in Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed.
Bain et al., IV, no. 1452, p. 295, but is unprinted in full.
marriage alliance (between Margaret of York and the duke of Albany and between the duke of Clarence and James' sister). Soon after though, Legh was sent back to Scotland with instructions to tell James that Edward could not yet 'conveniently speak in this matter' since Margaret had only recently been widowed and any discussion of a new marriage would be unseemly. James' signet letter to Edward IV dated 4 March (it unfortunately lacks a year) also acknowledged the 'lettrez present and gevin untill ws be yhoure traiast ande weil belovit clerk...and [we] understandin sic thingis as he has schewin untill ws on yhoure behalve'. The delivery of messages containing requests, demands and responses from one diplomatic principal to another were the backbone of late medieval diplomacy and between 1476 and 1479, as far as the English government was concerned, Legh seems to have been almost solely responsible for day-to-day diplomatic intercourse between England and Scotland whether resident at the Scottish court or travelling between London and Edinburgh.

This brief summary of Alexander Legh's career tells us that informal English representation at a foreign court, or even preliminary negotiations towards an Anglo-Scottish marriage alliance did not require formal ambassadorial or procuratorial accreditation. But, even if Legh never held formal ambassadorial powers, this did not mean that James regarded him as a menial diplomatic envoy and nothing seems to have prevented Legh from gaining the complete confidence of the Scottish king. James frequently described Legh as Edward's 'traist clerk and counsaloure' and in 1477 James praised Legh's 'grete prudence, lawte and diligence that he schewis and dois in al materis committit to him be youre serenite'. Unfortunately, it seems that none of Legh's letters of credence, or the letters from Edward IV which he was expected to deliver, have survived. In fact, it is mostly through the survival of a few of James' own letters that Legh's duties from 1476-80 (other than the delivery of the dowry payments) are known at all. As is the case with evidence for missions of

99 Edward's letter to Legh is not strictly a letter of credence but probably acted as an informal aide-mémoire; it is undated and is printed in J.O. Halliwell (ed.), Letters of the Kings of England (2 vols, 1846), I, pp. 147-8.

100 PRO, E 39/102/31 & Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed. Bain et al., IV, Appendix, no. 30, pp. 414-5; this letter has been dated to 1479 by Cora Scoffield (eadem, The Life and Reign, II, p. 251) and Dunlop, 'Alexander Legh's instructions', 341, n. 11. Since we know that the payments to James were delayed beyond 4 March in both 1477 and 1478, the letter cannot date from those years. But the letter's internal evidence does not suggest that the year-date of 1479 is any more likely than the two other possibilities of 1475 or 1476. In fact, since James states that he has received money owed to him according to 'sic appointmentes of befors takin betwix ws', might this not refer to the two payments which Legh made in February 1475 relating to both the dowry and the plunder by the English of the "Salvator"? ibid., 341, n. 7.

101 Both commendations of Legh are to be found in James III's letter of 28 April 1477 printed in: Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland, ed. Bain et al., IV, Appendix, no. 29, p. 414.
officers of arms, the records of the exchequer for Legh’s missions are unhelpful. Admittedly, the tellers’ rolls and issue rolls for the 1470s are largely incomplete, yet even those rolls which do exist for the years and terms in which Legh is known to have been in Scotland make no mention whatsoever of his activities. The tellers’ rolls for Michaelmas 1475, 1476 and Easter and Michaelmas 1477 contain no payments to Legh and neither do the issue rolls for Easter and Michaelmas 1478. So, in some cases, our knowledge of the more informal or day-to-day missions carried out by envoys such as Legh is almost entirely dependent on the rare survival of either Scottish or English signet letters and letters of credence (issued under the signet); in general, evidence for such missions is poorly served by the records of British archives.

The extent to which Legh had gained the confidence of the Scottish king was remarkable, but neither his extensive responsibilities nor the frequency with which he carried them out should be regarded as particularly unusual. In fact, Legh’s mission is representative of the kind of diplomacy often carried out throughout the later Middle Ages with other powers with whom sustained diplomatic contact was most frequent, such as Burgundy, Brittany, France, Castille and Aragon. John Grauntford (yeoman of the crown) became one of Edward’s trusted envoys and was sent on a variety of sensitive diplomatic missions to France in the late 1470s and early 1480s, yet he never received full ambassadorial accreditation. Rather like Legh, Grauntford’s frequent diplomatic missions seem to have first revolved around the arrangements concerning the conveyance of sums of money. In June 1478, John Grauntford brought 15,000 crowns from Louis XI to Edward (this sum being part of the Easter instalment of Edward’s French pension agreed by the Treaty of Pecquigny in 1475). Later, in the summer of the same year, Grauntford was arranging the shipping costs of some French ambassadors travelling back to France. On 15 June 1479, Grauntford was paid twenty pounds for a further mission to France ‘in certain secret matters’, presumably in an attempt to persuade Louis XI to ratify the agreements signed in London by his ambassador, the bishop of Elne, in February. Amongst other things, the bishop had agreed that the truce between England and France should last for 100

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102 Grauntford was certainly a yeoman of the crown by 18 June 1474 (CPR 1467-77, p. 448). John Grauntford and his father Babilo Grauntford had been jointly granted the office of bailiff of Rye on 12 July 1466, PRO, PSO 1/39/2035. It is to be noted that John Sylton, yeoman of the crown, was made Bailiff of Rye in April 1481 ‘by the dicesse of John Grauntford’, PRO, PSO 1/49/2539.

103 Foedera, V, pt III, p. 85.

104 PRO, E 403/845, m. 10 & PRO, E 404/76/4/136.
years after the death of the king that died first. Grauntford was in France again during the summer of 1480 and on 8 February 1481 it was noted (in the Brevia Baronibus of the English exchequer) that he ‘hath ben & yet is in the parties beyonde the see in our message’. The non-commissioned diplomatic envoy exemplified by Alexander Legh or John Grauntford, could prove extremely useful when used in conjunction with a formally accredited English embassy, especially when some sort of local or specialised knowledge was required which the formal ambassadors could not provide. In July 1462 Bernard de la Forse (born in Gascony) and Louis de Bretailles (noted to have been born in Guyenne in a writ of privy seal of September 1461) were sent with the king’s letters to Spain, probably directed to Henry IV of Castille. Edward’s agents had probably been ordered to ensure that Edward remained informed throughout the summer of the increasingly troubled affairs of the Iberian peninsula. By the Treaty of Bayonne (9 May 1462), Louis XI had agreed to furnish John II of Aragon with a military force which would help put down the revolt against John’s rule in Catalonia. In return, Louis was promised the royal revenues of Roussillon and Cerdagne; the castles of Perpignan and Collioure were also to be ‘tenus en son [Louis’] nom’. Later in August 1462, in response to the Franco-Aragonese threat, the Catalanians proclaimed Henry IV as lord of Catalonia and by the beginning of September news had arrived that Henry had accepted the offer, although it was not until October that formal Castillian emissaries arrived in Barcelona. Meanwhile, by the Treaty of Olite (12 April 1462) it had been agreed that John II would remain king of Navarre until his death, after which the title would pass to Gaston IV (count of Foix) and his wife Eleanor of Aragon; accordingly, the other claimant to the throne of Navarre, Blanche, had passed her rights over Navarre to Henry IV of Castille.

So, when Edward’s formal embassy arrived in Spain to treat for an alliance between England and Castille in the early winter of 1462-3, they found themselves in

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106 PRO, E 208/17/pt II (unnumbered).
107 PRO, E 403/825, m. 10 & PRO, E 405/40, m. 3d; for Louis de Bretailles, see PRO, C 81/786/417 and for Bernard de la Forse see Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 260, n. 3 & PRO, E 403/825, m. 10; D.A.L. Morgan, ‘The king’s affinity in the polity of Yorkist England’, TRHS, 5th series, XXIII (1973), 16.
108Calmette, Louis XI, Jean II et la révolution catalane, 1461-1473 (Toulouse, 1903), pp. 79-92, see also Appendix I, pp. 385-401.
109 Ibid., pp. 172-4.
110Ibid., pp. 170-2.
an extremely delicate diplomatic situation. La Fosse and Bretailles, who were still in Spain, seem to have liaised with the English ambassadors throughout the negotiations, and offered a valuable source of local knowledge, although they were not added to Edward’s formal ambassadorial commission. Despite the fact that the English ambassadors were able to draw upon the considerable experience of La Fosse and Bretailles in the complicated affairs of southern France, Navarre and the Northern Iberian peninsula, the English ambassadors’ attempt to prevent a rapprochement between Louis XI and Henry IV was ultimately unsuccessful. In fact, this informal mission to Spain marked the start of La Fosse’s long diplomatic service on Edward’s behalf in the Iberian peninsula. On 9 October 1464, La Fosse was provided with a commission empowering him as Edward’s orator and nuncio, to treat with the king of Castille or his representatives concerning certain matters which had already been discussed between certain English commissioners and some Castillian ambassadors who had visited England during the summer of 1464. When those ambassadors returned home, Bernard de la Fosse went with them and stayed in Spain for a considerable length of time; he was later rewarded with shipping safe-conducts for his service in the king’s ‘ambassiate by the space of a yere and an half in the parties of Spaigne’.

La Fosse later acted as Edward’s fully accredited ambassador or orator in Spain on many occasions; after being commissioned on 6 August 1466, he accompanied John Gunthorpe to Castille in order to persuade Henry IV to sign a treaty of alliance with Edward, which the English king had signed and ratified in advance (on the day that La Fosse’s commission was issued). In fact La Fosse also acted as a procurated ambassador, orator or commissioner to treat with the Spanish in 1470, 1474, 1475, 1479, 1481 & 1482. Bernard de la Fosse may also have acted, on

113 PRO, C 81/798/1407; for an account of La Fosse’s journey in a ship owned by one Richard Asshe with the Spanish ambassadors which took place around 31 October 1464 see PRO, C 81/803/1656.
115 La Fosse and John Alcock (master of the rolls) were commissioned on 14 March 1470 to treat with Henry IV of Castille: Foedera, V, pt II, p. 173; PRO, C 76/154, m. 10; PRO, C 81/1501/38 (a payment to La Fosse may be found in PRO, E 404/74/3/5). William Pykenham (archdeacon of Suffolk) and Bernard de la Fosse were given their commission on 26 February 1474 to treat with Castillian representatives concerning the reparations for certain recent breaches of the truce between England and Castille (PRO, C 76/157, m. 2, their payment is PRO, E 405/57, m. 7). On 15 May 1475, La Fosse was commissioned to deliver Edward’s confirmation of the Anglo-Castilian treaty and to receive Ferdinand’s own ratified copy of the treaty (Foedera, V, pt III, pp. 60-1). Dr John Coke and La Fosse were given a commission to treat for a marriage between Katharine of York and Ferdinand and
occasion, as a rather more informal diplomatic envoy. Two separate warrants for issue (dated 28 July 1465 ordering payments to La Forsse and John Gunthorp) suggest that both La Forsse and Gunthorp were ordered by the king to ‘go unto oure cousin the king of Castelle’ in the summer of 1465.\footnote{La Forsse and Gunthorp were also commissioned to travel in embassy to Castille in August 1466; for their missions of both 1465 and 1466, see Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, pp. 369, 386-7 & 408.} Formal procurations for them do not exist for 1465 and the warrants do not state that they were sent in the king’s ‘ambassiadé’. Rather they were simply sent on an informal basis ‘for suche matiers as concerne us and hym [Henry IV of Castille]’.\footnote{ADN, B 575/16033 & 16040. Overy did not receive a payment for the embassy in advance as the other ambassadors did on 4 July 1463 (PRO, E 404/72/3/48); M.-R. Thielmans, Bourgogne et Angleterre: relations politiques et économiques entre les Pays-Bas Bourguignons et l’Angleterre 1435-1467 (Brussels, 1966), p. 493.}

Louis de Bretailles and Bernard de la Forsse acted on an informal basis in conjunction with an English embassy to Spain from 1462 to early 1463 to provide a degree of local knowledge for the other English ambassadors. But non-commissioned envoys might also be attached to an embassy to provide specialist technical knowledge during, say, the complicated drafting process of a commercial treaty. William Overy (governor of the English merchant adventurers in Bruges in 1462) seems to have acted as a part of the English delegation to the conference of St Omer (held at St Omer and Hesdin in September and October 1463). He was not formally named in the English commission to treat for a truce, abstinence of war and a commercial intercourse between England and Burgundy and he was not among the list of English signatories to the agreement of 8 October.\footnote{For Wynterbourne’s career, see Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, III, pp. 2060-1.} However, he does seem to have played an important part in the negotiations, since the accounts of the ducal receiver-general describe him as one of the formally accredited ambassadors; George Neville, Henry Bourghcher earl of Essex, John lord Wenlock, Sir Walter Blount, Peter Taster, Thomas Kent, Henry Sharp, Louis Galet, Thomas Wynterbourne,\footnote{Isabella’s son on 29 August 1479 (Foedera, V, pt III, pp. 102-3). Bernard de la Forsse and Arnold Trussell of Bayonne were commissioned as ambassadors to Guipuscoa on 6 June 1481 (PRO, C 76/165, m. 15). Trussell, La Forsse and Henry Aynesworth left for Spain in March 1482, empowered to treat for the marriage between Katharine and John, son of Ferdinand and Isabella, taking with them £1000 to be used according to the king’s commandment (Foedera, V, pt III, p.117; Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 329, n. 3).} Thomas Vaughan, Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guines) and William Overy are carefully
described as ‘tous ambassadeurs’. So, it was perfectly possible that non-commissioned envoys could join embassies, work alongside them and even participate in the negotiation of significant diplomatic treaties, as William Overy did in 1463.

If an English embassy was already operating at a foreign court, it was sometimes deemed necessary to send another envoy to work in conjunction with the original ambassadors; this was often due to the fact that new diplomatic information or counter-offers and requests had been received from other foreign rulers after the original embassy had left England. This could mean that the English king wished to alter the way the original ambassadors were expected to negotiate, or it could mean that the direction and topic of the formal or informal negotiations that were in progress might be altered or changed entirely. The mission of Thomas Danet (Edward’s almoner) to France in the spring of 1478, illustrates the way in which unempowered diplomatic envoys could be speedily sent to a foreign court to join ambassadors already working there, offering an extra degree of flexibility and responsiveness to late medieval diplomacy. From November 1477 until around February or March 1478, John lord Howard, Sir Richard Tunstall and Thomas Langton spent several months in France having been commissioned by Edward to respond formally to Louis’ suggestion that Edward might participate in an aggressive war against Burgundy. According to a transcript of what was said by the English ambassadors at Pléssis-les-Tours on 26 December, Edward IV had found that the ‘seigneurs et autres de son pays’ had raised numerous objections to the plan (although the king himself was undoubtedly against the idea). The objections included the ‘justice de la querelle’, the great expense which England could ill afford, the close commercial links between those lands held by the duke of Austria and his wife and the fact that the amity between Edward and Louis was not of sufficient duration to guarantee England’s security during such a war. Langton was certainly back in London in mid-February when he wrote to the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury that

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120 ADN, B 2051, fol. 79v.
121 In 1465, Tunstall was described as one of the king’s rebels, but was eventually captured after the surrender of the castle of Harlech in August 1468, CPR 1461-67, p. 461 & Scofield, The Life and Reign, 1, pp. 458-9. However, in October of that year, he received a general pardon for all offences, CPR 1467-77, p. 97 & Morgan, ‘The king’s affinity’, 7. Tunstall served the king as marshal of Calais from 6 April 1479 until 6 April 1480, PRO, E 101/199/12, fol. 13.
122 Their general negotiating commission of 30 November 1477 is printed in Foedera, V, pt III, p. 79.
123 BN, Ms. Fr. 4054, fol. 229. The mission of this English embassy is also discussed in Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pp. 229-30.
he had been asked to ‘comyn with thambassadors of Spayn in such matiers as thai be com’. 124

Then, on 13 March, Howard, Tunstall and Langton were again provided with a commission to treat with the French in order to extend the period of arbitration during which the quarrels between England and France would be decided. 125 Subsequently, on 7 April at Hesdin, Edward’s ambassadors signed an agreement with the French which extended the arbitration period until 29 August 1481, and changed some of the appointed arbitrators. The original arbitrators had been appointed as part of the agreement at Pecquigny in 1475, but the execution of one of them (George duke of Clarence) early in 1478, meant that an obvious need for another English representative had arisen. 126 Louis then wrote to Edward, on 11 April, thanking him for his letters and assuring Edward that he desired above all things ‘the prosperity and success of you and your affairs’. 127 However, whilst the three ambassadors were away, certain other matters had occurred that Edward IV wished to bring to the attention of Louis XI: Margaret of York had written to Edward on 29 March from Malines ‘en ma plus grande necessité’ complaining that Louis XI had recently robbed and damaged much of the property given to her by her late husband, Charles the Bold. So urgent was her need, that she immediately requested 1,500 English archers to help defend herself. 128 In response, Thomas Danet was packed off to France at great speed carrying of a letter of credence and a set of lengthy instructions in the hope that Danet would arrive before the English embassy had departed. If Howard and his colleagues had not yet left, he was ordered to join the embassy in a temporary capacity and cooperate with them in an attempt to make Louis aware of ‘certain things especially

124 The letter was written to the prior of Christ Church on a Saturday, and Langton stated that Parliament was to dissolve on the day the letter was written, although Parliament was in fact dissolved on Thursday 26 February, E.B. Fryde et al. (eds), Handbook of British Chronology (3rd edn, 1986; rev. edn, Cambridge, 1997), p. 571. This points to the letter having been written on either Saturday 21 February or Saturday 28 February, Christ Church Letters, ed. J.B. Sheppard, Camden Society, new series, XIX (1877), pp. 36-7. In fact, 21 February seems a more likely date for this letter since Langton wrote a second letter to the prior on Friday 27 February with similar contents, but which stated definitely that Parliament had been dissolved (Literae Cantuarienses, ed. J.B. Sheppard (3 vols, 1887-9), III, pp. 299-300). Therefore, Scofield’s statement that ‘Howard, Tunstall and Langton certainly did not return home before April’ is incorrect. For the details of Spanish embassies in England in the early part of 1478, see Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 223, n. 2.
125 Foederæ, V, pt III, pp. 79-80.
126 Ibid., p. 84.
127 BN, Ms. Fr. 5044, fol. 48; it seems that Sir Thomas Howard (John lord Howard’s brother) was also present in France at this time. Louis describes him as one of Edward’s ‘ambaxadeurs’ but since he was not included in the commission it is likely that he was attached to the embassy in an informal capacity.
concerning my well beloved sister the duchess of Burgundy’. If the ambassadors had already left, Louis XI was still asked to give ‘ferme foy & credence’ to what Danet, alone, would say on Edward’s behalf.\(^\text{129}\)

As far as Danet’s mission was concerned, speed was of the essence, so that he might arrive at the French court before the departure of the English ambassadors. Since Margaret’s own letter was only written on 29 March and Danet’s letter of credence was issued just a week later, on 5 April, it is clear that Danet must have been sent almost immediately after the delivery of Margaret’s letter. Moreover, that Danet’s mission did take place in response to the receipt of Margaret of York’s letter of 29 March is proved by some instructions given to Yves de la Tillaye in June 1478.\(^\text{130}\) In those instructions, Louis stated that Danet, by his letters of credence, declared that Margaret of York had recently written a letter of complaint to her brother, making mention of the depredations carried out by Louis’ forces against the lands and towns held by Margaret as her dowry lands granted to her by Charles the Bold.\(^\text{131}\) It seems that in order to ensure that Danet was on his way as quickly as possible, he was not issued with a full ambassadorial commission, which would have taken longer to arrange and may have had to spend two or three days passing through both the privy seal office and chancery. Instead, his letters of credence and instructions were almost certainly prepared in great haste by one of the clerks of the signet. But there is, in fact, some evidence to suggest that his instructions (or list of topics to discuss with Louis) were quite lengthy. Danet started off by expressing some surprise that Margaret had felt obliged to complain to Edward, since John Morton (Edward’s ambassador to France in 1477) had already received an assurance from Louis that Margaret would be treated with ‘grande faveur & douceur’.\(^\text{132}\)

Fortunately, the specific complaints then made by Danet on Edward and Margaret’s behalf were recorded and have survived as the ‘Remonstrances faittes au Roy Louis XI par Thomas d’Aunet envoyé de par le Roy d’Angleterre devers lui’ .\(^\text{133}\)

\(^\text{129}\) For Danet’s letter of credence see ibid., p. 401.

\(^\text{130}\) On 24 June Yves de la Tillaye (described by Louis as ‘Avocat en nostre Chastelet de Paris’) was ordered by the French king to travel as quickly as possible to England to join Charles de Martigny, bishop of Elné, in an attempt to assure Edward that Margaret had nothing to fear from Louis. Louis’ letters to Yves de la Tillaye, Charles de Martigny and Edward IV (of 24 June) are printed in ibid., pp. 389-90. De la Tillaye’s instructions are also provided by ibid., pp. 390-2.

\(^\text{131}\) ibid., p. 390.

\(^\text{132}\) Ibid. during a later embassy to France, in August and September 1478, Sir Richard Tunstall and Thomas Langton again brought up the subject of Louis’ treatment of Margaret of York (Foedera, V, pt III, pp. 94-5 and Plancher, Histoire générale, IV, pp. 395-7).

\(^\text{133}\) Ibid., pp. 403-4.
Danet declared that Cassel and many other towns and villages in the area of Oudenaarde and Le Quesnoy (which were part of her dower-lands) had been burned and plundered by Louis’ forces. Le Quesnoy itself had been captured and was still held by Louis’ troops; Chaussin and La Perrière in the duchy of Burgundy were also in Louis’ hands. Danet stated that, in total, lands with yearly rents amounting to 3,500 marks had been unjustly taken by Louis and the general damage committed by Louis’ forces amounted to 400,000 crowns. Thus, Danet was required to demand that the towns of Le Quesnoy, and those towns seized in the duchy of Burgundy should be returned forthwith, that Margaret should be compensated for the lost rents and damages and that Louis should undertake not to carry out such acts in the future.

Edward’s almoner also stressed that such acts by the French king (against any English subject) were expressly forbidden by virtue of the amity agreed between Edward IV and Louis XI. For over a month and a half, Danet resided at the French court in discussion with both Louis XI, and, as the French king later wrote, ‘aucuns des principauxx de mon conseil’.

Danet’s mission to dissuade Louis from his aggressive course of action was both incredibly sensitive and vitally important to the conduct of Edward’s foreign policy in 1478. Edward could not publicly provide a large amount of military support to defend Margaret and the surviving Burgundian territories without jeopardising the French alliance (which involved a marriage between the Dauphin Charles and Elizabeth of York and a healthy annual pension paid by Louis to Edward). The king had two options: the application of diplomatic pressure and persuasion through agency of men such as Danet, or covert military support of Mary and Maximilian. In the event, it seems that Edward chose both courses of action. In the spring and summer of 1478, Danet and then Sir Richard Tunstall and Thomas Langton were promptly dispatched to the French court to complain about Louis’ conduct. And during 1479, the English government may have provided tacit encouragement to the large and growing number of Englishmen who wished to serve in Maximilian’s armies. Sir Thomas Everingham led 500 foot-archers at the head of Maximilian’s

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137 See n. 132 above.
army during the battle of Guinegatte (Saturday 7 August 1479) and John Halis or Haelles ‘escuier Angloix’ may also have led another 200 archers.138

So, Danet’s activities in France in 1478 give a very good indication of the sensitive and important diplomatic responsibilities which could be entrusted to diplomatic envoys who worked without full ambassadorial or procuratorial powers. Danet was no ‘simple porter of letters of messages’.139 He was provided with a detailed list of complaints to present to Louis, but it was also his own duty to attempt to actively persuade Louis to desist from his aggressive actions. This must explain the length of Danet’s stay in France and the fact that Louis (and members of his council) had discussed the matter with Danet ‘plusieurs foiz’.140 The use of such envoys could often improve the immediacy of diplomatic contact during the later Middle Ages, despite the fact that they needed to be issued with letters of credence and sometimes lengthy instructions for complicated missions. Danet, for example, was dispatched at very short notice indeed. Moreover, unempowered envoys were extremely flexible diplomatic tools. If Howard, Tunstall and Langton had still been resident at the French court when Danet arrived, it is clear from his letter of credence that he was expected to attach himself to the embassy and cooperate with the formal ambassadors in presenting Margaret of York’s complaints. As far as Louis’ representatives were concerned, during the discussions concerning Margaret of York, there would have been little discernable difference between Danet and the rest of the embassy. But, if the ambassadors had already left, then Danet was perfectly entitled to discuss the subject with Louis on his own.141

It was the informal nature of unempowered diplomatic personnel which could make them the most attractive diplomatic envoy on certain occasions. We have seen in the previous chapter that periods of diplomatic tension between England and a foreign power could mean that the reciprocal process of sending formally empowered ambassadors could be interrupted for certain periods of time. For example, from Edward’s accession in 1461 until July 1464 no formally empowered ambassador set foot on French soil with the intention of treating either with Louis XI or any of his representatives.142 John lord Wenlock and Richard Whetehill spent over a week at the

139 See n. 2 above.
140 Lettres de Louis XI, ed. Charavay et al., VII, p. 66.
141 However, in this instance we do know that Edward’s ambassadors (John lord Howard and his colleagues) had left the French court before Danet arrived, see Plancher, Histoire générale, IV, p. 388.
142 Although Edward’s ambassadors did meet the French king and his representatives in the autumn of 1463, they only did so in the more neutral setting of St Omer and then Hesdin. The powers of the
court of Philip the Good at Hesdin in July 1464 and at some point during their stay they made an excursion to Louis’ castle of Dompierre, the first time any of Edward IV’s ambassadors had treated with Louis in an exclusively French setting. Since 1461, relations between Edward and Louis had been frosty and sometimes openly hostile, mainly due to Louis’ own dealings with, and tentative support for, the activities of exiled Lancastrians. The duke of Somerset, lord Hungerford and Sir Robert Whittingham, amongst others, found refuge in France from August 1461; later, by the terms of the Treaty of Chinon (June 1462), Margaret of Anjou had procured a loan of 20,000li from Louis providing that Calais would be returned to the French king if the loan was not repaid after Henry VI regained the throne. Amidst this political tension, diplomatic contacts were not entirely severed, for Edward had ordered Louis Galet to travel to the French court from 16 October 1461. Galet eventually spent 105 days there ‘for such matiers [as] we charged him with’. Galet received no formal powers and may well have been issued solely with letters of credence; he was able to provide vitally important English representation at the French court when Louis was under constant pressure from the Lancastrian exiles to provide them with military and financial support. In periods of such tension, when the exchange of formally empowered ambassadors was a political impossibility, the informal activities of minor diplomatic envoys sometimes proved more appropriate.

Much of the evidence (particularly in British archives) which remains to illustrate how diplomacy was carried out in the later Middle Ages, tends to give the impression that virtually all serious and significant diplomatic contact was carried out by formally empowered ambassadors. The diplomatic records of chancery are relatively copious and contain most of the diplomatic commissions issued to Edward IV’s ambassadors and the formal agreements and treaties which they signed. So, it is to be regretted that the valuable signet archive for Edward’s reign has been lost. Most of the diplomatic documentation issued under that seal clearly concerned the more minor envoys, whose activities this chapter has argued were so vital to the practice of Edward IV’s diplomacy. Despite the absence of such evidence, it is clear from stray survivals in the archives of Lille and Paris, and from a detailed study of the records of the English exchequer, that unempowered diplomatic envoys played a crucial role in

English ambassadors to treat with Louis XI in 1463 have not survived (if they existed at all). In fact, it is possible that they were expected to treat with the French solely on an informal basis.

143 ADN, B 2051, fol. 353-v. It is not clear on which day between 5 and 14 July that the English ambassadors actually visited Louis at Dompierre.

144 PRO, E 404/72/1/104.
the practice of Edward IV’s diplomacy. Although Charles Giry-Deloison was correct in drawing an important distinction between those who held diplomatic powers and those who did not, it is misleading to then suggest that unempowered diplomatic personnel simply acted as ‘porters of letters or messages’.¹⁴⁵ Many unempowered envoys did indeed deliver such messages (either orally or by letter) but their duties did not always end there. Such envoys (whether heralds or members of the king’s household like Legh and Danet) could negotiate informally and open up avenues of discussion which could then be continued through the dispatch of formal ambassadors. The missions of Thomas Danet (in 1478) and Northumberland Herald (in 1484) show that these envoys were expected to use their own diplomatic skill in actively persuading the representatives of other princes that the course of action suggested by the English king was most appropriate. They could participate in formal negotiations in conjunction with empowered diplomats and, on occasion, may have been responsible for informal understandings concerning the day-to-day conduct of diplomatic relations between England and other powers. The use of such agents helped to ensure that English diplomatic practice in the later Middle Ages was both flexible, immediate and effective.

Chapter Four

THE ROLE OF THE EARL OF WARWICK IN THE CONDUCT OF ENGLISH DIPLOMACY, c. 1461-71

For many continental observers in 1461 there was no doubt that Edward IV had won the crown as a result of the support of Richard Neville, earl of Warwick. And it was generally believed that the subsequent Yorkist administration would be, at least to some extent, subject to the earl’s guidance. On 31 July Giovanni Pietro Cagnola wrote to the duke of Milan from London that ‘every day favours the Earl of Warwick, who seems to me to be everything in this kingdom, and as if anything lacked, he has made a brother of his, the archbishop, Lord Chancellor of England’.

Throughout Edward’s first reign, similar opinions of Warwick’s influence were expressed by a variety of other foreign diplomatic agents working in England or with the English at Calais. In 1464, on the basis of some gossip collected at Calais, the writer of the Abbeville letter joked that at that time in England there were ‘two chiefs, of which the earl of Warwick is one, but I have forgotten the name of the other’. It was believed that Warwick’s influence on the regime stemmed from his great popularity amongst the people of England; for example, in 1468, a French agent in England, William Monypenny, sent back a report to Louis XI claiming that the earl had never been so popular in England and while passing through town and countryside ‘it seemed to the people that God had descended from the skies’.

In the diplomatic reports and dispatches of the early 1460s the impression is given that it was often Warwick to whom letters were addressed from abroad, it was Warwick’s opinion that was sought after, and it was Warwick’s presence on English embassies that was eagerly anticipated in France and Burgundy. However, Warwick’s diplomatic credibility on the European stage was gravely affected by his inability in 1467 to persuade Edward IV of the need for an alliance with France. Contemporaries believed that it was this disagreement over the direction of foreign policy that eventually sounded the death knell for the relationship between the king.

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1 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan, ed. A.B. Hinds (1912), I, p. 100. George Neville, Warwick’s brother referred to by Cagnola, was not made archbishop of York until 1465 and at this point (in 1461) was still bishop of Exeter.


3 Monypenny’s letter is printed in H. Morice, Mémoires pour servir de preuves à l’histoire ecclesiastique et civile de Bretagne (3 vols, Paris, 1742-6; repr., Farnborough, 1968), III, cols 159-60.
and earl, and later ushered in a further period of political instability from 1469-71. But even in the early part of Edward’s first reign, just how important was the earl of Warwick’s role in the conduct of English diplomacy? And after the disagreement with Edward over the French alliance, how did this split manifest itself in the diplomatic polity?

Warwick had first come to international attention following his appointment to the captaincy of Calais in 1455, a post which required diplomatic contact with the two neighbouring powers of France and Burgundy. Most of this contact was necessitated by a need for the resolution of disputes concerning attacks against shipping or persons travelling in the Calais area. These disputes were often the subjects of the diets or journées which were commonly held at Calais or nearby. In 1457 Alard de Rabodenghes (one of Duke Philip of Burgundy’s councillors) attended a diet with the English at Ardres; further diets seem to have been planned at Gravelines and Bruges but do not seem to have taken place. In July of the same year Warwick hosted a further meeting to discuss attacks carried out by the garrison at Calais on Burgundian subjects ‘since the earl of Warwick has had charge [of Calais].’ The meeting included a personal interview between Warwick and John of Burgundy, count of Étampes, acting as Duke Philip’s representative. However, it seems that the English did not give much consideration to Burgundian grievances and that further discussion was postponed until the autumn. The meetings later in the year enabled English representatives to press the count of Étampes and Alard de Rabodenghes for the release of certain English prisoners held in Burgundy. Warwick also took part in a much larger conference held at Calais in May and June 1458 designed to discuss ‘l’entretienement des abstinences prises pour la fait de la marchandise’. Apparently, in the few months since the ‘Loveday’ of March 1458, the duke of York and earl of Warwick had been able to ‘direct the government’s

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5 For the dates of Warwick’s appointment and indenture as captain, see *ibid.*, p. 141.
6 ADN, B 2026, fols 187-v, 228v & 195-v.
8 ADN, B 2026, fols 296v-297.
9 ADN, B 2026, fol. 176v.
foreign policy'. Both the English and Burgundian delegations were considerably larger (and more prestigious) than had been the case in previous diets, including on the English side: Richard Beauchamp, bishop of Salisbury; Henry viscount Bourchier and two of Warwick’s brothers. Consequently, Cora Scofield has suggested that the prestige and the strongly Yorkist composition of the English embassy indicates that Warwick was attempting to arrange some sort of secret understanding between Duke Philip and the Yorkists; a plausible suggestion for which there is unfortunately no hard evidence.\(^{11}\)

After the rout at Ludford on 13 October 1459 and the subsequent flight of the Yorkist lords, Warwick found himself at Calais again. On this occasion Warwick was definitely personally responsible for procuring Burgundian support for the Yorkists, and met the marshall of Burgundy (Thibaut de Neufchâtel) and Jean de Lannoy in October and November in a series of conferences at Gravelines and Calais itself.\(^{12}\) At some point during this enforced stay at Calais, Warwick also managed to arrange another diplomatic coup. The gradual move of the papal envoy, Francesco Coppini, towards the side of the Yorkists ensured that events in England began to be rather more keenly studied by Coppini’s patrons, Pius II and Francesco Sforza duke of Milan. Although the exact chronology of Coppini’s activities in the spring of 1460 is confused, it is clear that by June he had been contacted by the Yorkists at Calais who appealed to him ‘to interpose to bring about peace and remove civil discords [in England]’.\(^{13}\) Coppini travelled to Calais where he met Warwick and the other Yorkist lords and he then crossed the Channel in their company during the successful invasion of England in the latter part of June.\(^{14}\) So, as far as continental observers were concerned, by the middle of 1460, as a result of the duke of York’s absence in Ireland and Warwick’s convenient position in Calais,

\(^{11}\) ‘and later events go to prove that in the course of the negotiations Warwick succeeded in establishing a secret understanding between Philip and the Yorkist leaders’, C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward the Fourth* (2 vols, 1923), I, p. 28; Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker*, pp. 150-1.  
\(^{12}\) ADN, B 2045, fols 133v & 154; Jean de Lannoy was paid for a ‘certaine voyage qu’il a nagueres fais...avec et en la compagnie de monseigneur le mareschal de Bourgogne a Gravelinges et autreurs es marches illec a l’environ pour besongner avec celue dela partie d’Angleterre...pour les affaires de mondit seigneur’.  
\(^{13}\) CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, no. 37, pp. 23-4 (Coppini to Henry VI of England, July 4 1460).  
Warwick had become the public face of the Yorkist cause in Europe. Thereafter, until Edward IV became king, continental powers interested in pursuing friendly relations with the Yorkists would deal with them almost exclusively by means of Warwick himself. In the autumn and early winter of 1460, whilst the Yorkists were assuming dominance in England, Warwick was the recipient of numerous gifts from the duke of Burgundy and was regarded as responsible for the organisation of diplomatic relations between England and the Burgundians. In December 1460 Georges de Poucques, Flanders King of Arms, was sent to Warwick ‘estant a Londres’ with letters from Duke Philip. Philip had written to request safe-conducts for Thibaut de Neufchâtel and Jean de Lannoy who were to be the members of an (ultimately abortive) Burgundian embassy to England. In some instructions of 24 December 1460 issued to Prospero Camuglio (the duke of Milan’s ambassador to the Dauphin), it was suggested that Prospero might cross over to England, but only if the Dauphin thought it wise. It was Warwick to whom Camuglio was instructed to reveal the details of the Treaty of Genappe signed in the previous autumn between the duke of Milan and the Dauphin Louis. Furthermore, it is noticeable that, despite the disastrous defeat of the Yorkists at Wakefield on 30 December, Philip the Good remained in frequent contact with Warwick during the early months of 1461. Jean Quarré, one of the duke’s chevaucheurs, left for England on 19 January in order to deliver some of Philip’s letters to Warwick, replying to earlier letters sent, in turn, by the earl (presumably concerning the battle of Wakefield itself).

So, Warwick had, by this time, become practised in the basic arts of late medieval diplomacy and he had also built up a group of personal servants and agents upon whom he could call to act as his own diplomatic representatives at foreign courts. Naturally, this had first become necessary as soon as Warwick had taken up his post as captain of Calais. For example, on 15 January 1457 Artois King of Arms of the duke of Burgundy had visited the earl of Warwick at Calais and in response the earl sent his own herald, Warwick, directly to Brussels a few weeks later. In the turbulent few months between Wakefield and the Yorkist victory at

15 ADN, B 2040, fols 140 & 263v.
16 ADN, B 2040, fol. 175-v.
17 All of the documents concerning the Treaty of Genappe are to be found in Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in France and Burgundy, 1450-1483, ed. P.M. Kendall & V. Ilardi (3 vols, Ohio, 1970-81), II, pp. 455-74 (Appendices I-IV); ibid., p. 54 and also see CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, p. 37.
18 ADN, B 2040, fol. 169.
19 ADN, B 2026, fol. 208v.
Towton on Palm Sunday 1461, Warwick’s capacity for independent diplomatic action, developed in those early years at Calais, became crucial in enabling the Yorkists to seek foreign support. As we have seen, in January 1461 Warwick had sent letters abroad to the duke of Burgundy, but had also sent other letters to the dauphin Louis, the duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza, and the pope, Pius II. An agent of Italian origin working on Warwick’s behalf, Antonio della Torre, was entrusted with the delivery of the letters being sent to Italy along with certain other oral messages on behalf of the earl. The earl attempted to play down the defeat at Wakefield and still claimed that ‘all will end well’. Warwick also attempted to persuade the duke and the pope that Coppini’s promotion to cardinal was crucial to the furtherance of the Yorkist cause for it would symbolise papal support for the Yorkists. He then asked that Coppini might at least be allowed to ‘bear the cross without envy and opposition on the part of our two archbishops and primates’, evidently referring to the controversy caused when Coppini’s legatine cross was borne before the Yorkist forces as they marched on Northampton in July 1460. It was argued by those opposed to the duke of York, and later by the judges in Rome, that in so doing Coppini had exceeded his authority.

Owing to Warwick’s previous diplomatic experience and his ability to contact foreign powers directly, it comes as no surprise to find that from the day that Edward IV had claimed the throne until just after the comprehensive defeat of the Lancastrian forces at Towton, it was the earl of Warwick and his diplomatic agents and servants who shouldered much of the responsibility for delivering the first official news of the Yorkist successes to the continent. For instance, Warwick Herald had visited Philip the Good in the towns of Ghent and Bruges during the early part of April 1461, although probably too early to deliver news of the battle at Towton; he instead delivered news concerning the ‘good estate and disposition’ of the earl of Warwick and various other news. However, for twelve days during the

20 Dispatches with Related Documents, ed. Kendall & Ilardi, II, p. 76 (letter of Francesco Sforza to Coppini written on 15 February 1461); CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, pp. 51 & 57; on 11 March 1461, Prospero Camuglio (Milanese ambassador in France) wrote that ‘Among the messengers has come one of the closest familiars of the Duke of Burgundy, whom he sent several days ago to the Earl of Warwick. He brought letters from the Earl of Warwick to the Dauphin, which I have seen, and they are very respectful and friendly etc.’
21 Ibid., pp. 43-4.
23 Ibid., pp. 197-8.
24 ADN, B 2040, fol. 237; Warwick Herald spent fourteen days in Burgundy from 2 or 3 April, at first finding the duke at Ghent and then travelling with him to Bruges (ADN, B 2040, fol. 267-v). In the ducal accounts, Warwick Herald is sometimes to be found wrongly described as ‘Warwyc
middle of May Warwick Herald was in Burgundy again, this time in St Omer accompanied by Otwel Worseley, and they both delivered ‘certain news of the battle [of Towton] recently fought in England between the duke of Somerset on one side and the earl of Warwick on the other’. From the description of the mission in the ducal accounts, it seems that during his visit Worseley depicted the battle largely as Warwick’s personal victory. Worseley had carried the earl’s standard at the battle and by 1466 was acting as Warwick’s lieutenant of Calais Castle. Just before the arrival of Worseley and Warwick Herald, one John Water ‘messenger of the king of England’ had also arrived in St Omer carrying with him certain items of news from England. Even this messenger might have been sent (on the king’s behalf) by the earl of Warwick, if Water may be identified with the John Water who had seen service with the earl of Warwick as Calais Pursuivant before Edward seized the throne.26

It has recently been suggested by Michael Hicks that in the very early years of Edward IV’s reign, the earl of Warwick’s participation in diplomacy was limited by the fact that he was responsible for the campaign in the North against the Lancastrian forces of Margaret of Anjou.27 Indeed, although Warwick’s personal participation at diplomatic conferences on the continent was expected on several occasions, it was not until 1465 that the earl finally crossed the Channel to treat with the French and the Burgundians. On 8 February 1462, Tommaso da Rieti wrote to the duke of Milan that Warwick was expected to arrive in order to treat with the

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25 ADN, B 2040, fol. 268. It should be noted that Thielemans has incorrectly dated this second mission of Warwick Herald to the beginning of April owing to a confusion with that herald’s previous mission (Thielemans, Bourgogne et Angleterre, p. 379, n. 85); Philip’s itinerary shows that the duke did not, in fact, arrive at St Omer until 26 April, H. Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1491-1467) et de Charles, comte de Charolais (1433-1467) (Brussels, 1940), p. 427.

26 A John Water, ‘Calais Pursuivant’, is mentioned in a list of creditors of the town and garrison of Calais for the period up to and including 3 March 1461, PRO, C 47/2/50, m. 14d. It is likely that he was also the John Water, alias Walter, who had acted as both Warwick Herald and Chester Herald at some point before 1 July 1461 when he was then granted a general pardon (Calendar of Patent Rolls 1465-77, p. 261).

27 Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 261.
duke of Burgundy by the middle of the month, depending on the health of the duke which had been rapidly deteriorating.\textsuperscript{28} In the event, the meeting did not take place. Moreover, in 1463 during the build up of the tri-partite conference between England, France and Burgundy it became clear that the conference (originally planned to be held at St Omer on St John’s Day, 24 June) would have to be delayed. The renewed Lancastrian campaign in the North, and specifically the loss of Alnwick through the treachery of Sir Ralph Grey, meant that on 3 June, Warwick, who was expected to attend the conference, had to set off speedily from London for the North ‘with a great abundance of men’.\textsuperscript{29} It was still believed by Antoine de Croy and Alard de Rabodenghes that the English ambassadors would be at St Omer at the appointed time, and that Warwick would be among their number.\textsuperscript{30} This proved a forlorn hope, for after weeks of delay Warwick finally wrote to Philip in the middle of August explaining that he would not be able to cross the Channel for another six or eight weeks.\textsuperscript{31} As it turned out, the English embassy did not set sail for Calais until 21 August, and, as many had feared, the earl of Warwick was not able to go with them. Likewise, in 1464 Warwick was expected to attend the conference to be held at St Omer on 21 April, but even though this was postponed until 1 July, Warwick’s supervision of the reduction of Bamborough meant that the negotiations with Louis XI were carried on without him.\textsuperscript{32} Finally, although on 21 September Alberico Maletta (the Milanese ambassador) definitely expected Warwick to be able to attend the St Omer conference which had been again postponed until 1 October, the diplomatic confusion caused by the announcement of Edward’s secret marriage removed any possibility of Warwick crossing the sea for another year.\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{29} So a Burgundian pursuivant reported on 19 June to Alard de Rabodenghes, Wavrin, Anchiennes croniques d’Engleterre, ed. Dupont, III, pp. 159-60 (letter of Rabodenghes to Antoine de Croy written at St Omer on 19 June 1463).

\textsuperscript{30} BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 137-v (letter of Antoine de Croy to Louis XI written from Porcien on 20 June 1463).

\textsuperscript{31} BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 365; Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 299.

\textsuperscript{32} A clear summary of the postponements of the conference of 1464 may be found in the text of an Anglo-Breton treaty signed in London on 12 August 1464 (ADL-A, E 122/23); Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, pp. 246-7.

\textsuperscript{33} BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 323; Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais, ed. de Mandrot, II, p. 261 (Maletta to the duke of Milan written from Abbeville on 21 September 1464). Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 261.
But Warwick's commitments in the North did not necessarily mean that he was unable to play any diplomatic role. His frequent location in the Marches meant that he was often ideally suited to carry out personal negotiations with the Scots. In April 1462 he met the Scottish queen mother at Dumfries and may have discussed a marriage alliance between England and Scotland, although nothing definite was agreed. On 26 May 1464 the earl was also commissioned to treat with some Scottish ambassadors at York and six days later was one of the signatories to a truce with Scotland to last for fifteen years. A few weeks before those negotiations in York had taken place, whilst he was in London, Warwick had also personally negotiated those matters still pending from the St Omer conference in the previous year. As expected, Warwick signed a naval truce between England and France with the Franco-Burgundian envoy, Jean de Lannoy; the truce was to last from 20 May until 1 October. However, the role that the earl of Warwick played in English diplomatic practice should not simply be judged by the number of formal negotiations with foreign powers which the earl undertook in person. In fact, during the early part of Edward's first reign the earl had a large degree of responsibility for organising the more basic aspects of Edward IV's diplomacy.

Edward IV often permitted the earl of Warwick to be responsible for the most fundamental means of English diplomatic communication with foreign powers, the letter. In fact, it was common for Edward IV and Warwick to send letters in tandem (with similar contents), to foreign powers, indicating the close cooperation and agreement that then existed between Warwick and Edward IV concerning the conduct of foreign policy. In June 1461, Warwick's agent, Antonio della Torre, had carried a double set of letters from Edward and Warwick to the duke of Milan, along with further messages from the earl to be delivered orally to Sforza. In turn, Della Torre was sent back by the duke with replies to both king and earl. Likewise, in the spring of 1462 Louis XI received a similar double set of letters and upon their receipt told Gaston IV, count of Foix, that the letters of Edward IV and Warwick promised an English embassy to France soon. Furthermore the French king believed that since the letters were addressed so humbly to him, if

34 BN, Ms. Fr. 6969, fol. 59-v, (Seigneur de Lille-Adam to Louis XI? written from Boulogne on 11 August 1462).
36 Ibid., V, pt II, p. 119; for the role of Warwick and lord Wenlock in negotiations leading to the naval truce agreement of 12 April 1464, see ADL-A, E 122/23.
the count of Foix showed them to the king of Aragon, that king would soon realise that he could not rely on any certain help from England.\textsuperscript{38} Louis received a further double set of letters from Edward and Warwick in July 1464 asking him to postpone the proposed conference between England, France and Burgundy until around the middle of August.\textsuperscript{39} And as Michael Hicks suggests, Edward was also content to allow Warwick to act as an independent intermediary between England and foreign powers, with whom Warwick sometimes maintained completely separate written communication.\textsuperscript{40} For example, during the preparations for the conference to be held in 1464, Warwick had written personally to Louis XI on several occasions to suggest the possibility of a long truce between England and France, and also to explain the reasons for his continued absences from the expected English delegations to the conferences.\textsuperscript{41}

The earl of Warwick was permitted to make written responses (presumably after discussion with Edward IV) to informal diplomatic proposals sent to England by the representatives of foreign powers. On 19 February 1464, Richard Whetehill, lieutenant of Guînes, wrote to Louis XI informing him that a response had been received to the 'last message delivered to me in your name by the seigneur de la Barde [Jean d'Estuer]'\textsuperscript{42} That message (probably concerning the drafts of the proposed naval truce between England and France) had been addressed to Edward IV, his chancellor and the earl of Warwick. But it was from Warwick that a written response to the proposals was received.\textsuperscript{43} Ten days later Louis' diplomatic agent, Jean le Begue, wrote that Whetehill had asked him to return to Calais immediately, for Whetehill was expecting further news from the earl of Warwick concerning the 'articles' which had been sent to England by the seigneur de la Barde.\textsuperscript{44} Moreover, Warwick was also responsible for providing official written information from England concerning the definite results of diplomatic negotiations taking place in England. After the preliminary proposals sent to Whetehill at Calais for a naval truce between England and France, formal talks between Warwick and lord

\textsuperscript{39} BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 323.
\textsuperscript{40} Hicks, \textit{Warwick the Kingmaker}, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{D\textsuperscript{é}p\textsuperscript{é}ches des ambassadeurs milanais}, ed. de Mandrot, II, pp. 75 & 126-7 (two letters of Alberico Maletta to the duke of Milan, written from Chartres on 18 April and 10 May 1464).
\textsuperscript{42} BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 388.
\textsuperscript{44} BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53.
Wenlock on behalf of Edward IV and Jean de Lannoy (on behalf of Louis XI), were held in London during April 1464. According to Alberico Maletta (Milanese ambassador to the court of Louis XI), Warwick had written before 18 April ‘una molto bona littera’ officially informing the French king of the truce by sea from 12 April.45

The king’s willingness, in the early years of his reign, to delegate much of the responsibility for written communication to foreign powers to the earl of Warwick may have been in part determined by the earl’s previous experience of such communication in the years preceding Edward’s victory at Towton. But Warwick’s capacity for written diplomatic communication was particularly effective since the officers serving under Warwick’s command at Calais could act, at times, as the earl’s personal foreign secretariat, administering the receipt and dispatch of a vast amount of diplomatic correspondence concerning the earl. This secretariat was directly overseen by the earl and responsible to him. Various letters from the early part of 1464 suggests that it was Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guînes) who shouldered the main part of this heavy responsibility on behalf of Warwick. Whetehill’s own letter of 19 February 1464 tells us that he had sent on some previous messages from Louis both to the earl and to the king. Whetehill further promised that Louis’ new messages, brought to Calais by Louis’ secretary Jean le Begue, would be sent to the earl ‘in all diligence’ by one of the captain’s other officers and servants in the town; he also graciously thanked the French king for the contents of those letters.46 The lieutenant also reported to Louis that Warwick’s response to the articles sent by the seigneur de la Barde had been received at Calais, ‘both by writing and by credence’. Whetehill quickly enclosed copies of Warwick’s response with his own letter, explaining that had Le Begue not arrived at Calais, Whetehill would have sent them by means of ‘un propre message par devers vostre hautesse’. Le Begue later stated that Whetehill had testified to the authenticity of the letters by reading to him, word for word, both the original and the copies of Warwick’s letter. Le Begue also confirmed that Whetehill had indeed sent on Louis XI’s letters to Warwick ‘a toute diligence’.47 The unknown writer of the Abbeville letter even tells us that Whetehill sometimes translated Warwick’s letters from English into French, in order that they might be sent more conveniently

45 Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais, ed. de Mandrot, II, p. 75.
47 BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53.
to the French king. Since Warwick could rely on his officers at Calais to carry out
such considerable personal secretarial functions on his own behalf, it is hardly
surprising that Edward IV found it convenient for Warwick to organise much of the
written communication between England and foreign powers.

It is also clear that Warwick’s role in the conduct of English diplomacy at
this point was not just confined to literary correspondence. It seems that Warwick
also exercised some influence over the choice of English diplomatic personnel.
Many minor diplomatic missions from England were undertaken by the personal
servants of the earl of Warwick. We have seen already that Warwick Herald had
been sent to the duke of Burgundy at least twice in 1461 to announce news of the
Yorkist success, and he was sent abroad again, this time to France, in 1462.
According to a letter of Charles de Melun written on 14 April of that year, Louis XI
had recently sent him the double set of letters which Edward IV and the earl of
Warwick had sent to the French king. Melun’s letter reveals that those letters had
been sent from England by Warwick Herald. Whilst the herald was in Paris, he had
apparently entered into an informal conversation with Melun concerning the state of
relations between England and Charles of Charolais. Melun concluded that the
herald was not as ‘discreet, nor as sober in his language’ as he might have been, for
he let slip that the English feared the death of Philip the Good, for as far as the
English were concerned, Charles of Charolais’ Lancastrian sympathies might sour
Anglo-Burgundian relations. In April 1464 Warwick Herald was also responsible
for carrying the earl of Warwick’s letters to France announcing the signing of the
naval truce. After Warwick Herald had met Louis XI, he quickly left for Burgundy
bringing news from Jean de Lannoy in England also concerning the negotiations
leading to the naval truce between England and France. Evidence for payments to
Warwick Herald for many of his missions abroad from 1461-4 to both France and
Burgundy does not remain in the exchequer records at the Public Record Office.
Consequently, it seems most likely that the earl of Warwick paid his herald directly,
outside the remit of the exchequer. However, this leaves open the possibility that

48 Wavrin, Anchiennes cronicques d’Engleterre, ed. Duport, III, p. 182
49 P. de Commynes, Mémoires, ed. L.M.E. Dupont (3 vols, Paris, 1840-7), III, pp. 201-2. The letter is
ascribed by Dupont to 1463, but has subsequently been dated by Scofield and Calmette to the more
likely date of 1462 (Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 241, n. 1 and also Calmette & Périnelle, Louis
XI et l’Angleterre, pp. 16-18).
50 Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais, ed. de Mandrot, II, p. 75: ‘El Re [Louis XI] me disse che
era venuto da luy uno araldo et ch’el conte de Verych gli haveva scritto una molto bona littera’.
51 ADN, B 2051, fol. 296.
English central government records probably give a very poor indication of the total number of diplomatic missions organised and sent directly by the earl of Warwick. Instead we are reliant almost entirely upon chance survivals of private diplomatic letters and occasional references in the Burgundian ducal accounts.

Even if all the low-level diplomats used in the early part of Edward's reign may not actually be accurately described as the personal servants of the earl, many of them had close connections to Warwick or experience of working with him for many years. It may have been partially Warwick’s choice, for example, that Louis Galet should have undertaken an informal mission to France from mid-October 1461 until February 1462. Galet had plenty of diplomatic experience (he had for example taken part in the conference held at Calais in May and June of 1458 with the earl of Warwick) and had been a resident of Calais for many years where he owned some property. And it was probably whilst resident in Calais that Galet came to the attention of the earl of Warwick. Galet’s sons, Edmund and William, were also used on occasional diplomatic missions, and one of them accompanied Warwick Herald to Paris in April 1462. The choice of Calais Pursuivant to carry out several minor message-bearing errands to Burgundy may also have been influenced by the earl (as captain of Calais), since the holder of that office might have expected to receive preferment from Warwick. John Water, sometime Calais Pursuivant, later became the earl’s own personal herald. In any case, Calais Pursuivant undertook at least three missions to Burgundy in 1462 and 1463 (usually connected to the delivery of letters sent from England).

It also appears that Warwick exerted further influence in determining the composition of many of the early formal English embassies to the continent. This is seen most clearly in the membership of the English delegation to the conference with France and Burgundy held at St Omer and Hesdin in September and October 1463. As we have seen, Warwick was expected to attend the conference himself, but although he could not eventually attend, his brother, the lord chancellor, George Neville, was a convenient replacement as head of the embassy. The delegation also included John lord Wenlock (by now, probably, Warwick’s lieutenant of Calais and

52 PRO, E 404/72/1/104.
53 Thielemans, Bourgogne et Angleterre, pp. 369-71; Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 177, n. 40; CPR 1452-61, p. 585; Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, pp. 64-5. It is noticeable that Galet was also among those notorious Yorkists at Calais to whom the duke of Somerset was not allowed to grant a pardon in 1460.
54 PRO, E 403/827A, m. 16.
55 PRO, E 403/825, m. 10 (100s: 21 July 1462); E 403/827A, mm. 4 & 17.
later described as one of Warwick’s councillors), Richard Whetehill and Louis Galet from Calais, and Thomas Kent (also Warwick’s councillor). In fact, the total size of the English embassy approached two hundred people, including heralds, pursuivants, menial servants and assorted hangers-on. The composition of this diverse group has not previously been known, but a reference in the Burgundian ducal accounts tells us that Warwick Herald also accompanied the English ambassadors to the conference. Additionally, amongst the secondary members of the embassy, Richard Welles lord Willoughby was in attendance with his pursuivant, Noir Lyon. Welles was a kinsman of the earl of Warwick, through Elizabeth Lady Willoughby, Warwick’s great-aunt. John Stafford, son of the late duke of Buckingham was also present, and he and Welles were later holders of the prestigious positions of cup-bearer and carver respectively at George Neville’s enthronement feast as archbishop of York in September 1465. Therefore, in all respects the composition of the English embassy to St Omer and Hesdin seems to bear distinct marks of Warwick’s influence. If Warwick was indeed responsible for the presence of Welles and Stafford, as seems likely, it was certainly a shrewd move. Willoughby’s father, lord Welles, had been attainted in 1461 and Stafford’s father had died fighting against Warwick at the battle of Northampton in 1460. These reconciled sons of Lancastrian fathers may have been sent with the embassy to persuade Louis that further hope of Lancastrian resistance was diminishing and that he should accede to the English demand of abandoning further support of Margaret of Anjou. In this demand the English were successful, since at Hesdin Louis XI finally promised not to make war against Edward and promised not to give ‘Ayd or Favour to Henry late calling himselfe Kyng of England, Margarete his Wyff, nor her Sonne’.

At this point, there is no evidence to suggest that Edward IV was anything other than willing to delegate such considerable powers over the conduct of English diplomacy to the earl of Warwick. If the king permitted Warwick such influence over written communications with foreign powers and over the choice of envoys, it

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56 Wavrin, Anchiennes croniques d’Engleterre, ed. Dupont, III, pp. 189-190; ADN, B 575/16040.
57 ADN, B 2051, fol. 292-v; Windsor Herald and Calais Pursuivant had also come ‘en la compaignie des ambassadeurs que le roy dudit Angleterre a dernièrement envoyez par devers mondit seigneur pour le fait & conclusion des treves et abstinences de guerre priznes entre le roy nostre seigneur et mondit seigneur le duc d’une part et ledit roy d’Angleterre d’autre’.
58 However, it is known that Willoughby was at Dover on 21 August 1463, at the ceremony whereby the chancellor relinquished the great seal to the hands of a deputy (Foedera, V, pt II, pp. 116-117).
59 ADN, B 2051, fol. 79v; Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, pp. 229-31.
was because Warwick’s experience of such matters meant that it was convenient for the king to do so. This arrangement, of course, was dependent on complete agreement between Edward and Warwick over the direction of foreign policy. In the early years of the reign there was no real possibility of disagreement since the obvious choice of policy was to maintain good relations with Burgundy and thereby arrive at an accommodation with the French through the mediating efforts of Philip the Good. On this king and earl were agreed. If the Lancastrians were to be prevented from gaining aid and refuge from France this course of action was vital, eventually culminating in the agreements at Hesdin in October 1463 and the truce at sea, agreed with France in April 1464. But the first real test of the arrangement between Edward and Warwick came later in that year over the vexed question of Edward’s marriage. Apparently, during Warwick Herald’s visit to France in April 1464 the French king had first brought up the proposition that Edward might marry one of his sisters-in-law, another being offered to the duke of Milan’s son, Galeazzo-Maria. According to the Milanese ambassador present, Louis even offered to pay the dowry.¹

In early July two of Warwick’s closest associates John lord Wenlock and Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guînes) travelled to Hesdin in order to meet Louis XI and Philip the Good in order to prolong the truce between England and France and to again postpone the formal conference between England, France and Burgundy which had previously been postponed until 1 July.⁶² Wenlock, with eighteen people in his company, stayed at Hesdin for nine days from his arrival on 5 July until 14th of the month.⁶³ Philip provided magnificent hospitality and on at least one occasion (on Sunday 8 July) the English ambassadors were lavishly feasted ‘aux fontaines du parc’.⁶⁴ The mediating influence of Philip the Good again proved valuable, as the truce between England and France, by land and sea, was continued from 1 October 1464 until 1 October of the following year.⁶⁵ During Wenlock’s agreeable sojourn at Hesdin, he along with Whetehill made an excursion lasting one day to meet Louis at the castle of Dompierre; an important occasion

¹ Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais, ed. de Mandrot, II, pp. 75-81 and Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 326.
² Foederæ, V, pt II, p. 124 (for Wenlock and Whetehill’s commission to treat with Louis, issued on 8 June 1464). Philip was at Hesdin from 23 June until 7 September, Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, pp. 469-73.
³ ADN, B 2051, fol. 353-v. The ducal receiver laid out 124li xvs vid for Wenlock’s living expenses.
⁴ ADN, B 2051, fol. 127v-8.
⁵ BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 323.
since this was the first time in Edward’s reign that fully empowered English ambassadors had chosen to treat with the French in French territory (rather than in the more neutral settings of St Omer and Hesdin in the territories of the duke). It was at Dompierre that the English ambassadors were introduced to the two sisters of the queen of France, and again Louis brought up the question of Edward’s marriage with Bona of Savoy, and undertook informal negotiations with Wenlock as to the possibility of such a match. Wenlock of course had no powers to agree to the marriage, but, at least according to Georges de Chastellain, he seems to have given Louis the impression that he would argue for the Savoy marriage in England.

Warwick was also quite enthusiastic to pursue the marriage and it was widely believed on the continent that Warwick himself would cross the Channel to supervise its negotiation. On 21 September 1464, Alberico Maletta wrote that Duke Philip and the French king were still waiting for Warwick to cross the sea ‘per tractare la pace et lo parentato’. All the tentative discussions concerning the Savoy marriage which had been carried out by Warwick Herald, Wenlock and Whetehill during the spring and summer of 1464 were thrown into disarray when Edward dramatically revealed at the Reading council meeting in September that he had already been secretly married on 1 May, to Elizabeth Woodville. Although rumours of Edward’s marriage had been circulating at the French court for weeks, by 10 October the marriage was publicly and officially accepted as a fact. It has recently been pointed out that this development did far less to sour relations between king and kingmaker than is normally assumed; in fact, Warwick was hardly committed to the French marriage and certainly not to an entirely pro-French foreign policy. However, it must at least have been extremely galling for him to find out that Edward’s marriage with Bona of Savoy had in fact been out of the question for months, despite the fact that men closely connected to him, such as Wenlock, Whetehill and Warwick Herald, had already carried out informal negotiations for the marriage, and that Warwick himself had been expected to personally arrange the formalities of the marriage with the French king.

66 ADN, B 2051, fol. 353-v. It is not actually clear on which day between 5 and 14 July that the English ambassadors actually visited Louis at Dompierre.
68 Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais, ed. de Mandrot, II, p. 276.
69 Ibid., pp. 260-1.
70 Ibid., pp. 276 & 292, ‘Aviso la V. Sra che de qua publicamente fu dicto e certificato ch’el re de Inghiltera ha tolto per mogliere una dona de Inghiltera, e fu dicto per amore’.
71 Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, pp. 260-1.
When Louis XI told the Milanese ambassador of a rumour he had heard that there was ‘discord between king Edward and Warwick’, this was probably an exaggeration of the real state of affairs based on inaccurate information. For when a resigned John Wenlock wrote to Jean de Lannoy on 3 October that news of the marriage had caused the ‘great displeasure of many of the great lords, and equally to the most part of the whole of the king’s council’, he also went on to say that the matter had ‘proceeded so far’ that the marriage should simply be regarded as a *fait accompli* and that one should remain patient. Wenlock further explained that since the announcement had taken place just a few days before the proposed date of the conference to be held on 1 October it was decided that the earl of Warwick should delay his voyage across the channel until the king had made his wishes known concerning the matters to be discussed at the proposed conference, namely the truce and a possible peace-treaty with France. Warwick had, in the meantime, sent one of his servants to both Louis XI and the duke of Burgundy with letters explaining the reasons for his continued presence in England and further announcing that within a few days the earl would send his secretary to Louis with a pleasing message. Warwick’s secretary, Robert Neville, arrived at Rouen on 23 October and brought news that relations between Warwick and Edward were not entirely smoothed-over, but that the king was willing to consider a peace treaty with France. In fact, Wenlock’s letter gives a very good confirmation of how diplomacy was run during the early years of Edward’s reign. The king was quite willing for the earl of Warwick to send his agents abroad to conduct Edward’s diplomatic affairs, and it is significant that it was Warwick’s agent, Robert Neville, who was sent to France and Burgundy in order to explain the aftermath of the Reading announcement. But it would not really have been an option for Warwick and his agents to pursue policies in opposition to the king. Instead king and earl had to be in agreement over the course of foreign policy. This explains why it was felt necessary that Warwick should not leave for the continent until the king had made known ‘the truth of his wishes and pleasure in the matter’.

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72 Wenlock’s letter is to be found in BN, Ms. Nouv. Acq. Fr. 7634, fol. 69.
73 *Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais*, ed. de Mandrot, II, p. 323, ‘Heri giunse qua quello secretario del conte de Veroih, del quale el Re me disse questi di passati, et anchora se continua che el dicto conte è in division cum el re Odoardo. Alcuni dicono però questo secretario essere venuto per dire a questo re che se luy vole attendere a la pace, che el re Odoardo he contento de mandare perbenché luy habia tolto quella mogliere de Ingleterra e non la cognata de questo re’.
74 BN, Ms. Nouv. Acq. Fr. 7634, fol. 69.
With hindsight it appears that the whole episode indicates a growing self-assertiveness on the part of the king (particularly in terms of diplomatic affairs) that Warwick, in the end, was probably unable to accept. But in the short term, from the autumn of 1464, it appears that diplomacy was conducted as it had been before. Reasonable relations were to be kept up with both France and Burgundy, and if Warwick was slightly keener than Edward on a long-term treaty with France, he may have felt that the king would eventually be persuaded to his point of view. As usual, one of Warwick’s agents, this time Robert Neville, delivered a double set of the king and earl’s letters sent together both to Louis XI and to Philip.\(^{75}\) Despite the failure of the French marriage with which Warwick had been publicly associated, it seems that foreign powers were still keen to do business with England by means of Warwick. Neville stated in his letter of 17 November that ‘the duke spoke little to me about the king [of England], but largely about my master [the earl of Warwick].’\(^{76}\) Likewise, there was no change in the personnel whom the king chose to administer the basic aspects of English diplomacy. A warrant under the signet of 19 October 1464 states that the king had recently written to ‘the lord Wenlok and M. Thomas Kent’ concerning the growing necessity for a prolongation of the intercourse of merchandise between England and Burgundy.\(^{77}\) Wenlock and Kent, both linked to Warwick and both specialists in diplomatic affairs, were required by the king ‘to devise a gentil lettre in Frenshe to our cousin the Frenshe king for prorogacion of the same’. It had apparently been stipulated in the Treaty of Arras (signed in 1435), that as the duke of Burgundy’s nominal sovereign overlord, the French king should be informed of such agreements between Burgundy and foreign powers.\(^{78}\)

The earl of Warwick continued to act as Edward’s chief representative during negotiations held in England, such as the talks held in early 1465 with Jacques de Luxembourg who had travelled to England on behalf of the count of Charolais in order to request that Edward might join the growing league against the king of France.\(^{79}\) Finally, in May, June and July of 1465 Warwick was at last able to visit the Continent in person, as he had been expected to do each year since 1462.


\(^{76}\) Ibid., p. 212.

\(^{77}\) PRO, C 81/1378/28.


\(^{79}\) Jacques de Luxembourg (seigneur de Richebourg) was the uncle of Elizabeth Woodville.
He was now the head of an imposing embassy to Calais, sent with full powers to treat with the king of France, the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany and the count of Charolais.\textsuperscript{80} The membership of these diplomatic commissions cannot have displeased Warwick, for they included men with whom he was extremely close, John Wenlock was present along with Richard Whetehill and Thomas Kent. Thomas Colt now also found his place in the diplomatic sun; Colt had been a Neville retainer of many years’ standing.\textsuperscript{81} After a few weeks of preparations at Calais, a large Burgundian embassy arrived comprising amongst others, Louis de Gruthuuse (lieutenant-général of Holland), Simon du Chasteller, André Colin and Louis Duchesne.\textsuperscript{82} Negotiations took place throughout June and July, although when the Burgundians left Calais around 21 July nothing had been achieved other than the organisation of another meeting to be held on 1 October 1465. Georges Havard seigneur de la Rosièrè was also sent to Calais to represent Louis XI at the negotiations with powers to prolong the abstinence of war for a further year.\textsuperscript{83} It seems however, that again nothing was definitely agreed with the French. Clearly, the War of the League of Public Weal which took place during the negotiations was proving a considerable distraction to substantive diplomatic progress.

By early 1466 it is clear that Warwick’s growing desires for an Anglo-French rapprochement were being translated into diplomatic action. It is noticeable that it was his agent, Robert Neville, who undertook all of the informal diplomatic missions from England to France at this point. In a schedule of payments listing various sums expended by the treasurer, Walter Blount (lord Mountjoy), between 24 November 1464 and 1 March 1466, it is evident that during that period at least four payments were made to Robert Neville for missions to France.\textsuperscript{84} Significantly, similar missions to Burgundy were carried out by a different type of diplomatic envoy. In September and October of 1465, Thomas Wilde (usher of the Queen’s chamber and described variously in the Burgundian records as Edward IV’s usher-

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Foedera}, V, pt. II p. 130 (8 May 1465). William lord Hastings, the king’s chamberlain, was also sent to Calais and was later paid for seventy three days attendance there, from 11 May when he left London until 22 July when he returned, PRO, E 404/73/1/69; Warwick also received at least £40 in expenses for which a warrant was issued on 1 March 1466, PRO, E 404/73/1/124A (treasurer’s account).
\textsuperscript{81} For Colt see Hicks, \textit{Warwick the Kingmaker}, pp. 20, 30 & 39.
\textsuperscript{82} I have not found evidence to suggest that Antoine, bastard of Burgundy, attended the negotiations as suggested by Thielemans (\textit{eadem, Bourgogne et Angleterre}, p. 416); for payments to the other Burgundian ambassadors see ADN, B 2054, fol. 26, 140, 141, 145v-6 and B 2058, fol. 167.
\textsuperscript{83} A summary of Havard’s powers is to be found in \textit{Lettres de Louis XI}, ed. Charavay, II, pp. 309-10.
\textsuperscript{84} PRO, E 404/73/1/124B.
at-arms and usher of the chamber) travelled to Brussels where he met several ducal councillors. So if these differences in the choice of diplomatic personnel may be taken as indicative of differences in the developing inclinations of Warwick towards an alliance with France and of Edward towards an alliance with Burgundy, then the public disagreement which occurred in 1467 over the course of foreign policy was already possible to foresee by early 1466. But in the interim, the status quo was maintained, Warwick (accompanied by Wenlock, Whetehill and Kent) was again sent to the continent at the head of another embassy with powers to treat with Louis XI, Philip the Good, Francis II and Charles of Charolais. From 15 April 1466, the earl of Warwick, with three hundred people in his company, met Charles of Charolais at Boulogne. Many historians have subsequently suggested that it was at this meeting that the earl conceived ‘a violent and lasting dislike of the count’ and contemporaries too were sure that the earl from then on bore Charles ‘a bitter hatred’. During May and June, negotiations were held with a Burgundian delegation at St Omer (including Antoine bastard of Burgundy, Louis de Gruthuuse, André Colin and Francesco d’Este), although the negotiators did not come to any agreements. Negotiations with the French delegation to the conference took place at Calais, and it may be indicative of Warwick’s true ambitions that all that was agreed during the summer’s negotiations was a twenty-two-month truce with France.

During the same negotiations of 1466, Edward had also charged Warwick to negotiate the marriage of his sister, Margaret, with Charles of Charolais, whose

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85 For Wilde’s mission see PRO, E 404/73/1/124B and ADN, B 2054, fols 167v, 171 & 185v. The office of usher-at-arms did not exist in England during this period (despite the references in the Burgundian records); gentleman usher of the chamber is probably meant. For Wilde’s later position of Edward’s esquire of the hall or chamber, see PRO, E101/412/2, fol. 36v.
86 Foedera, V, pt II, pp. 138-9, commissions issued on 22 March 1466.
87 ‘Mardy 15 Avril, Mr de Warwic vint trouver le Comte de Charolais à Bouglou [sic], où il sejouma jusques au 18 qu’il en parti, & pendant ce sejour il fut entierement deffrayé par ce Comte, avec toute sa suite, qui était d’environ trois cents personnes’, P. de Commynes, Mémoires, ed. N. Lenglet du Fresnoy (4 vols, London and Paris, 1747), II, p. 187. Charles was indeed at Boulogne at that point in April (Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, p. 494). Calmette & Périnelle mistakenly ascribe this meeting to 1465, Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, p. 66. Hicks has also misdated the meeting, ibid, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 262. See also Thielemans, Bourgogne et Angleterre, p. 419, n. 290, who dates the meeting correctly.
89 ADN, B 2058, fols 143 & 164v; ADN, B 2061, fol.119v. For Francesco d’Este, son of the Marquis of Ferrara, see R. Vaughan, Charles the Bold: the last Valois duke of Burgundy (1973), pp. 165 & 236. Regnauldin Bosquin, a Burgundian messenger, was paid for travelling between St Omer and Brussels on several occasions keeping Philip in touch with the negotiations, ADN, B 2058, fols 135 & 143.
90 Signed on 24 May, to last until 1 March 1468, Lettres de Louis XI, ed. Charavay et al., III, pp. 87-89;
previous wife had died in September 1465; a marriage alliance for which Guillaume de Clugny had been sent to England at some point before 1 March 1466. After the failure of any substantial progress towards the marriage during the summer negotiations of 1466, Edward was to embark upon a course of action that would split the diplomatic polity and threaten the influence of the earl of Warwick over the conduct of English diplomacy that he had been permitted to have in the early years of Edward’s reign. During the winter of 1466-7 a constant stream of embassies travelled between England and Burgundy; Alard de Rabodenghes and Josse de Halewijn (souverain-bailli of Flanders) spent seven months in England from 15 December 1466 until 23 July 1467. Likewise, in March, April and May 1467 an English embassy comprising Richard Beauchamp (bishop of Salisbury), Thomas Vaughan (esquire of the body) and William Hatclyff (king’s secretary) spent time in Bruges, Brussels and Ghent undertaking preliminary talks for the Burgundian marriage. It is noticeable that many of those diplomatic envoys who had been associated in the past with Warwick, or with his embassies to the continent, were conspicuously absent from Edward’s commissions for negotiations with Burgundy for the marriage. John Wenlock, Richard Whetehill, Thomas Kent and Thomas Colt, from playing an influential role in English diplomatic practice, now found themselves deliberately sidelined from the negotiations most favoured by the king.

In the spring and summer of 1467 a diplomatic battle was being waged in London. The Burgundian embassy of Rabodenghes and Halewijn had been supplemented temporarily by the presence of Olivier de la Marche and Antoine Lameth. Their mission seems to have been to negotiate a defensive treaty with Burgundy in preparation for the marriage alliance, and to respond to English complaints about Philip’s embargo on English cloth. Moreover, a French delegation, which included the French admiral, Louis bastard of Bourbon, had also arrived in the city. From Louis’ statement to the Milanese ambassador, Emanuele de Iacopo before 1467, it seems that the French embassy had come to make a

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91 PRO, E 404/73/1/124B, Clugny was given a gift of 100 marks; Vaughan, Charles the Bold, p. 45.
92 ADN, B 2061, fol. 122v; M.H.A. Ballard, ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations, 1464-1472’, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (1992), pp. 42-9; this embassy was given £100 in reward by Edward ‘Item paied to the soverayne of Flaundres and othir ambassadoures of Burgoine the xixth day of March Anno vii’, PRO, E 404/73/3/73B.
93 ADN, B 2064, fols 107, 143v-4, 154v, 176v-7 & 209-v.
95 ADN, B2064, fol. 138.
counter-offer: an offensive alliance against Burgundy. Richard of Gloucester would marry Louis’ second daughter, whose dowry would comprise part of the Burgundian territories, and an alternative match would be found for Edward’s sister.97 Throughout this diplomatic fencing-match, Warwick attempted to persuade the king to accept the French offer, for at that time Louis was letting it be known that Warwick ‘had always been a friend to his crown’ and the French king believed that through Warwick he had already arrived at a secret agreement with Edward. It just remained for Warwick to travel to France ‘to conclude everything’.98 Despite the fact that Louis had clearly misjudged the ease with which Warwick could alter Edward’s growing preference for an alliance with Burgundy, Edward was indeed willing to allow Warwick to head another English embassy to France, after all no definite conclusions with the Burgundians had yet been reached and the negotiations with them had dragged on at great length; Edward may simply have been attempting to force Charles and Philip into a deal.

When Warwick arrived at Canterbury with the returning French ambassadors on 27 May 1467, he was accompanied by all of his colleagues who had found themselves surplus to the king’s requirements for his negotiations with Charles and Philip. John Wenlock, Thomas Colt and Thomas Kent, after a gap of over a year, again found themselves acting as Edward’s ambassadors to Louis XI.99 Setting sail for Honfleur on 28 May, Warwick and the other ambassadors (including an ambassador from the king of Scotland, the bishop of Aberdeen) along with the earl’s numerous esquires, ushers, pages, archers, heralds and trumpets, arrived at La Bouille near Rouen on 6 or 7 June. Several of Warwick’s servants and his maître d’hôtel, Robert Boukeland, had already been at Rouen until 29 May arranging the provisions ‘pour la venue d’icelui conte de Warwyk son maistre’.100 Then, after spending six days with Louis XI in Rouen until 16 June, Warwick’s party departed for Honfleur via La Bouille, Caudebec and Quillebeuf, eventually putting to sea on 23 June and arriving at Canterbury six days later.101 Louis XI’s hospitality had been immense. Even the most menial of Warwick’s many servants were handsomely

97 CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, p. 119.
98 Ibid., p. 119.
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rewarded, twelve silver cups were given to Jacques de Haye, another *maître d’hôtel* of the earl. Warwick Herald received 126li 6s, and the earl’s archers and trumpets received a further 234li 7s 6d to share between them.\(^{102}\)

Louis had hoped that the earl would sign a peace treaty between England and France in Rouen, for the French king was particularly afraid that a marriage between Charles of Charolais and Margaret of York would, ‘par moien dudit mariage’, lead on to further alliances between England and Burgundy instead.\(^{103}\) However, news of the illness of Philip the Good may have cut short the negotiations.\(^{104}\) So, Louis ensured that Warwick was accompanied home by another French delegation consisting of the archbishop of Narbonne (Antoine du Bec-Crespin), the bastard of Bourbon, William Monypenny (seigneur de Concessault), Jean de Popincourt, Olivier le Roux and Alexandre Sextre.\(^{105}\) But if Edward was willing to let Warwick and his colleagues travel to France to discuss such a peace treaty he was certainly not willing to submit to the proposals which were made to him by the French delegation. This was despite the fact that Louis may even have offered Edward, in return for an offensive alliance against Burgundy, the tempting possibility of papal arbitration concerning Edward’s claim over Aquitaine and Normandy.\(^{106}\) Although the French ambassadors followed the king from London to Windsor (where they spent many weeks), it was clear that they were chasing a lost cause.\(^{107}\) As the French ambassadors were just about to leave, on 14 August, Edward ordered the confirmation of a treaty of amity and mutual defence with Charles the Bold, which bound Edward, his heirs and successors to protect the estate and person of Charles ‘contre tous’.\(^{108}\) So when Warwick accompanied the French ambassadors to Canterbury for the last time, he can have been in no doubt that, for the moment, Edward was unlikely to be persuaded to adopt the earl’s plan for an alliance between England and France.\(^{109}\)


\(^{104}\) As suggested by Scofield, *The Life and Reign*, I, p. 425.


\(^{107}\) PRO, E 403/838, m. 6 and PRO, E 405/46, m. 2d.

\(^{108}\) Edward’s order of 14 August to the keeper of the privy seal ordering Rotherham to issue letters to the chancellor for confirmation of the treaty under letters patent is printed in *Le Cotton Manuscrit Galba B.I.*, ed. L. Gilliodts-van Severen & E. Scott (Brussels, 1896), no. 187, pp. 461-2; the letters patent were issued by the chancellor on the following day, P. Bonenfant (ed.) ‘Actes concernant les rapports entre les Pays-Bas et la Grande-Bretagne de 1293 à 1468 conservés au château de Mariemont’, *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d’Histoire*, CIX (1944), 106-7. Charles had previously signed the treaty on 15 July (*Foedera*, V, pt II, p. 145 and PRO, E 30/527).

The common belief that the earl of Warwick possessed considerable influence over the direction of Edward’s foreign policy and over the conduct of his diplomacy began to alter overnight. Warwick’s views on a long-term alliance with France had clearly been ignored and those diplomats most closely connected with the earl (and hence a pro-French policy) were carefully omitted from the king’s ongoing negotiations with Burgundy. A new group of favoured diplomats had emerged and a pattern for the future had been set. The diplomatic careers of William Hatchlyff and John Russell (Edward’s future keeper of the privy seal) were launched by their participation in English negotiations with Burgundy in 1467. After Hatchlyff and Russell had negotiated and then signed the conclusion of the intercourse of merchandise between England and Burgundy (signed on 24 November 1467), they continued to act as Edward’s most trusted diplomats for the next decade. Meanwhile, Warwick’s reputation had been badly damaged. Just after the arrival of Louis’ returning embassy in August 1467, the French king told an ambassador of the duke of Milan that ‘as a fact he has had nothing but words from the earl of Warwick’ and a few weeks later again complained ‘that the Earl of Warwick has made so many promises without fulfilling anything’.

Even if the earl did retire to his estates in the winter of 1467 (often being in residence at his castle of Warwick), his independent capacity for diplomatic contact with Louis XI remained undiminished. Robert Neville, the earl’s secretary, had been sent by the earl to Louis in the last few months of 1467 and arrived back at Sandwich accompanied by William Monypenny on 24 December, although it was only as a result of contrary winds that they were forced to land in Kent. They had planned to travel directly to Warwick himself, then based in the North. When Monypenny arrived in London and found ‘le conseil de mondit seigneur de Varvic’, lord Wenlock and Thomas Kent immediately questioned Louis’ agent as to whether it was true that the duke of Burgundy had recently sent an embassy to the French king. When Monypenny replied that he had seen Olivier de la Marche at Honfleur, Kent and Wenlock stated that this ‘was the best news that they could have to the benefit of my lord, the earl of Warwick’. Warwick and those surrounding him were clearly hoping that any evidence of double-dealing on the part of the duke of

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111 CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, p. 121.
112 For this paragraph, see Monypenny’s letter of 16 January 1468, printed in Wavrin, Anchiennes chroniques, ed. Dupont, III, pp. 186-96.
Burgundy would lead Edward to set aside his preferred option of an alliance with Charles. Furthermore, if, as Monypenny advised, Louis was able to prevent the dispensation for the marriage between Charles and Margaret, Charles would be blamed for the failure; those who had favoured the duke in England, he argued, would find their policies ruined. The earl would send Robert Neville to France again, once Warwick had conferred with his brother, the earl of Northumberland, who was at that moment on the borders of Scotland. In the meantime Warwick sent yet another messenger to France.

When Monypenny met the king personally at Coventry (while pretending to be travelling towards Scotland) Edward gave him the impression that he was not entirely sure of Charles’ promises and that the king would soon send a formal English embassy to France, ‘by the advice and counsel of the earl of Warwick’. So even now, the earl and his associates could still hope that they might be able to shape events, or bring damaging information to the king’s ears that would encourage him to desert Charles and Francis II of Brittany. At the famous meeting in late January 1468 held between Edward and Warwick at Coventry, king and earl attempted to persuade each other to change their preferred foreign policy. Edward offered Warwick the chance to become a guarantor for Margaret of York’s dowry and forcefully asked him to provide some of the 4,000 archers which Francis II of Brittany had requested from England. According to Monypenny, the earl ignored the king’s blandishments and refused to provide ‘a single man’. Rather, Monypenny instead told Louis that Warwick attempted to finally persuade Edward that ‘the fine promises and offers that the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany were making to him, were only through fear of you’. Despite the fact that Edward agreed to discuss the matters further at another council meeting to be held on 27 February, it was obvious that in matters of foreign policy the gap between the men was becoming unbridgeable. The earl may still have dispatched Robert Neville to Louis; Neville was also sent with the authority to make certain ransom payments on the earl’s behalf to the seigneur de Bueil. Likewise, Edward showed no signs of wavering from his chosen course. Letters ratifying the marriage agreement between Charles and Margaret (signed on 16 February 1468) were sent to the chancellor on 14 March

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113 The following paragraph is based on another letter written by Monypenny on 22 March 1468, printed in Morice, Mémoires pour servir de preuves, III, cols 159-60.

114 Ibid., col. 160; these ransom payments were made in order to procure the release of a certain George Neville, who had been a prisoner in France for eighteen years; they are discussed in Calmette & Férinelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, p. 86; see also BL, Add. Ch. 12453.
and four days later a warrant under the signet was sent to the chancellor to draw up a treaty of amity and mutual aid with Francis II of Brittany.115

Although Warwick's policy had been rejected and his close associates removed from most ambassadorial commissions, Edward still envisaged a role for Warwick and Wenlock in English diplomatic practice. They were named in their capacities of captain and lieutenant of Calais as conservators of the thirty-year abstinence of war signed with Burgundy on 17 February 1468.116 And throughout the year, Warwick does seem to have grudgingly accepted the king's prerogative to follow his own policy of anti-French alliances; he even accompanied Margaret of York to Margate on her journey towards the Low Countries.117 But if Edward did intend to invade France (as he told parliament in May 1468), as the year drew on, his allies of Burgundy and Brittany clearly preferred to come to separate arrangements with Louis XI. Charles the Bold signed the Treaty of Péronne with Louis on 14 October after Francis had also come to terms on 10 September by means of the treaty of Ancenis. Even in August 1468, however, Edward did not take the opportunity to sever relations with Louis. Thomas Rotherham, keeper of the privy seal, had been sent to France with powers to treat for peace, and stayed there for three months until 4 October. In early 1469, there were signs, according to Michael Hicks, of 'renewed favour towards the Nevilles'.118 This favour also manifested itself in the diplomatic sphere, for once again, Warwick's agent Robert Neville was sent on an official mission to France on the king's behalf and was paid directly by the exchequer.119 After an interval of some three years Edward was now again willing to use Warwick's agent as a means of informal contact with the French court, although since Neville departed for France without specific powers he could not bind the king to anything with which he disagreed. In May 1469, strikingly, John lord Wenlock was also included in several diplomatic commissions, he was to treat at the commercial diet at Bruges to be held first on 12 May, and then postponed until 1 June.120

Warwick continued to maintain independent diplomatic contacts with foreign powers and it was presumably as a result of his efforts that, at Rome, James

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115 PRO, C 81/1380/11 & PRO, C 81/1381/17; Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, p. 448.
116 Bonenfant (ed.), 'Actes concernant les rapports', p. 117.
117 Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 266; Carpenter, The Wars of the Roses, pp. 172-3.
118 Hicks, Warwick the Kingmaker, p. 266.
119 PRO, E 403/841, m. 12.
120 See various commissions (owing to numerous postponements of the diet), in PRO, E 30/1073/9 & 10 and PRO, E 30/1608/4.
Goldwell secured the marriage dispensation for Clarence and Isabel Neville (it was issued on 14 March 1469). Intriguingly, whilst visiting Calais in April 1469, Warwick also found time to meet Charles the Bold personally at Ardres or Boulogne on 21 April. Five days later Warwick returned to St Omer from Guînes en grande compagnie, where he met Charles and the duke’s guest, Sigismund duke of Austria. On 30 April Warwick met Margaret of York at Aire and then spent the next eleven days back at St Omer with Duke Charles. Evidence for the topics of discussion during Warwick’s visit to the Burgundian court is very scanty indeed, but according to Philippe de Commynes, as far as Charles and Warwick were concerned, ‘neither were friends thereafter’. Jean de Wavrin’s Cronicques also give very little indication of the reasons for Warwick’s visit, but it is possible that since Edward and Warwick were then at least publicly reconciled, Warwick was at last attempting to associate himself outwardly with the king’s pro-Burgundian foreign policy. By 1469 it must have been a source of considerable frustration for Warwick that he had not been able to achieve his ambition of dominating the conduct and direction of England’s foreign policy. But even during the period of two years of crisis which followed the battle of Edgecote in July 1469, when Warwick might have assumed that the opportunity was open at last to seize control of English diplomacy and foreign policy, his efforts were continually frustrated.

Whilst Edward was in Warwick’s power during the autumn of 1469, the earl seized the opportunity to send ‘his ambassador to the Most Christian king [Louis XI] to make an understanding with his Majesty’, but in October Edward had to be released from Middleham castle in order to quell growing civil disorder, and would surely not agree to Warwick’s plans discussed with Louis. The moment had passed. Likewise, after Warwick had fled to exile in France in the summer of 1470 he could hardly negotiate with Louis and with Margaret of Anjou from a position of strength. The queen merely agreed that after a successful invasion of England the earl would be treated ‘as a true and faithful subject ought to be treated’. Even in the strange circumstances of early 1471, when Edward IV was in exile and Margaret

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121 M. Hicks, False, Fleeting, Perjur’d Clarence (Gloucester, 1980; rev. edn, Trowbridge, 1992), p. 32.
122 A short itinerary of Warwick’s movements in April and May 1469 may be found in H. Vander Linden, Itinéraires de Charles, duc de Bourgogne, Marguerite d’York et Marie de Bourgogne (1467-1477) (Brussels, 1936), p. 16; see also Ballard ‘Anglo-Burgundian relations’, p. 197.
124 CSPM, ed. Hinds, I, p. 132 (Sforza de Bettini to the duke of Milan, 8 September 1469).
125 Scofield, The Life and Reign, I, pp. 529-33.
of Anjou was yet to return to England, the earl could not really totally control the direction of England’s foreign policy. In London, Warwick was indeed entirely responsible for treating with a delegation of Louis XI’s ambassadors and presumably was pleased to sign a long-term truce and intercourse of merchandise with France on 16 February.\textsuperscript{126} Warwick’s guarantee that the treaty would be upheld was deemed fundamental by the French delegation.\textsuperscript{127} If Warwick now had the authority he wanted to authorise such important diplomatic agreements, the price of Louis’ protection and support of Warwick in the summer of 1471 still had to be paid. Now, Warwick was clearly expected to provide English support for Louis XI’s campaign against Charles the Bold. On 12 February 1471 Warwick felt duty-bound to quickly write to Louis explaining that he had already sent orders to Calais for the commencement of hostilities against Burgundy.\textsuperscript{128} But in early 1471 the circumstances for English involvement in a continental war were hardly convenient since Edward IV was expected to invade England at any moment.

Just as Warwick had no firm guarantee that any influence he had on the conduct of English diplomacy in early 1471 would continue during a new Lancastrian government, he had also struggled against Edward IV’s final right to direct policy and to choose his own diplomatic personnel. During Edward’s second reign this royal right was never seriously questioned, and no courtier was ever permitted to have the influence over English diplomatic practice that the earl of Warwick had obtained in the early part of Edward’s reign. The earl maintained independent written communications with foreign powers on the king’s behalf, and the earl’s agents and associates (based around a secretariat at Calais) conducted a great deal of Edward’s continental diplomacy. Perhaps aware of continental taunts as to his reliance on the earl of Warwick, Edward then chose a foreign policy independently of Warwick’s advice and interests. Furthermore Edward began to

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 563. See also Calmette & Périnelle, \textit{Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pièce justificative} no. 42, pp. 323-5: this document is a letter from the bishop of Bayeux to Louis XI (written on 6 February 1471). On 21 February 1471, a warrant was issued for the payment of 10 marks to Thomas Smyth, clerk in the privy seal office, for the ‘writying of the trewe and entrecours of marchaundises and other appoyntementes late taken’ betwixt us and oure cousin Lowys of France’, PRO, E 404/71/6/43; see also P. Chaplais (ed.), \textit{English Medieval Diplomatic Practice, part I: documents and interpretation} (2 vols, 1982), II, pp. 717-18.

\textsuperscript{127} The bishop of Bayeux enclosed with his letter a copy of Warwick’s guarantee of the agreement. All the French ambassadors had deemed Warwick’s original letter of guarantee so important that they decided to retain the original rather than sending it to Louis XI, for fear of it being lost ‘en chemin’, Calmette & Périnelle, \textit{Louis XI et l’Angleterre}, pp. 324-5.

\textsuperscript{128} BL, Add. Mss. 48988, fol. 40; Warwick’s letter informs the French king that hostilities had commenced at Calais (apparently members of the Calais garrison had already killed two members of the duke of Burgundy’s garrison at Gravelines).
develop his own corps of trusted diplomats which he used to further the Anglo-
Burgundian alliance. At this point two facts became evident: Warwick was still
subject to Edward’s final right to choose his own ambassadors, only the king
possessed *droit d’ambassade*; and the king alone was able to completely determine
the final choice of policy. The conduct of diplomacy, and certainly the direction of
foreign policy, was really a matter for kings. This was a lesson which Warwick may
have finally learnt as the last frustrated chapter in his career came to a bloody end at
the battle of Barnet on Easter Sunday 1471.
Chapter Five

THE TOWN OF CALAIS AND THE LATE MEDIEVAL DIPLOMATIC POLITY, 1461-83

The conduct of diplomacy during the Middle Ages is commonly suggested to have been ‘centrally organized’. Great emphasis is laid on the fact that diplomacy was *negocium regis*. In his study of English diplomacy during the reign of Henry VI, J.T. Ferguson stated that ‘In diplomacy, France and England between 1422 and 1461 are merely their kings writ large’. Hence it is largely the case that late medieval diplomacy has been seen as almost wholly controlled through the organs of central government. The only substantial study of the English diplomatic administration of the Middle Ages, by G.P. Cuttino, suggests that the conduct of English diplomacy was indeed entirely administered through the chancery, exchequer and privy seal office. Ferguson’s study also ignores the fact that at the strategic location of Calais (or neighbouring territory under English control, including Guines), it was always necessary that a certain amount of the day-to-day organisation of diplomacy should be delegated to the king’s officers and representatives resident there. Consequently, these representatives were able to receive envoys from foreign powers and could send their own envoys in order to conduct diplomatic matters arising at Calais or to deal with more general diplomatic matters on the king’s behalf. The characterisation of late medieval English diplomacy as being centrally controlled can contribute to a belief that it was rather inflexible and inefficient, dogged by delay and bureaucratic procedure. Whereas, in fact, the possession of Calais allowed the English to participate in an efficient framework of established diplomatic contacts based around the Calais area, which could improve the swiftness of contact with foreign powers (especially France and Burgundy) and could also hasten the logistical arrangements for diplomatic conferences held in the region.

Control of the area in which Calais lay was much contested between Louis XI and the dukes of Burgundy. The closest major town to Calais, Boulogne, was part of the territories of Burgundy during the 1460s and early 1470s. But in 1477 that town was captured by Louis XI, who seized the opportune moment of the death of Charles

the Bold at Nancy (on 5 January) to move his forces into the areas close to Calais. Boulogne was captured in April 1477, and nearby Cassel was sacked by French troops in the following August.\(^5\) And it was no secret that Calais itself was coveted by the French king who signed the treaty of Chinon with the Lancastrian party in 1462, which provided for the hand-over of the town to the French, in return for Louis’ financial support of the Lancastrian rebellion in the North of England.\(^6\) One of Louis XI’s diplomatic agents, Jean le Begue, writing from Rochester on 19 March 1464 described the ‘great murmur’ running at Calais concerning a possible French siege of the town.\(^7\) It was also feared in 1477 that Louis XI’s military operations close to Calais would eventually lead to the capture of England’s last foothold on the continent. On the other hand, the Burgundians were keen to ensure that Calais remained in hands of their traditional allies, the kings of England. Charles the Bold was fearful of the consequences of a French take-over of the town. Some Burgundian diplomatic instructions dating from the 1470s commented that should Calais (‘qui est voisine aux pays de mondit Seigneur le Duc’), fall to Louis XI, this would cause ‘great damage’ to the dukes of Burgundy.\(^8\) But the English could not even be totally sure that Calais was safe from interference from the Burgundian side; for there were rumours in April 1462 that certain officers, soldiers and subjects of the dukes of Burgundy living near the lordships of Mark and Oye had ‘purchased means with certain adversaries of King Edward of England to menace the subjects of the said king [at Calais]’.\(^9\) Jean du Bois, maître des requêtes of Philip the Good, was sent to Dunquerque and Gravelines to investigate and thereafter nothing is heard of the matter.

Conversely, the neighbouring powers were well aware that the English themselves could pose a strategic and military threat from Calais. Margaret of Anjou’s visit to Philip the Good’s territories in 1463 led the duke to send one of his pursuivants to several of his subjects living ‘on the frontier in the county of

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\(^6\) On 23 June 1462, an agreement was signed between Margaret of Anjou and Louis XI at Chinon that in return for a loan of 20,000li it was agreed that once Calais had returned to the hands of the Lancastrians it should then be returned to Louis, if the loan had not been paid back within a year, (the agreement is printed in J. de Wavrin, *Anchiennes chroniques d’Engleterre*, ed. L.M.E. Dupont (3 vols, Paris, 1858-63), III, pp. 176-7).

\(^7\) BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 394, ‘il y a...grant murmure du siege que le Roy y vouloit mettre [at Calais]’.


\(^9\) ADN, B 2048, fol. 154v-5.
Boulogne’. All the ‘noble men’ of the county were required to ensure that all the routes through the county were well-guarded for it was feared that ‘the English of the garrisons of Calais and Guînes’ might enter Burgundian territory in order to inflict damage on Margaret and her party. Later, in October 1470, Charles the Bold wrote a letter to the ‘Magistrats et Bourgeois de Calais’ expressing his fear concerning the rumours that ‘a great number of men of war’ were to be sent to the town. The duke hoped, however, that they would not undertake anything ‘against us, our lands and subjects, contrary to the truce, intercourse and intelligence [between England and Burgundy]’. But he was still concerned that should such a large number of men arrive at Calais then it would be difficult for the officers there to be ‘masters of them’. In order to ensure that Calais might be friendly to Burgundy, Philippe de Commines was quickly dispatched to Warwick’s lieutenant at Calais, John lord Wenlock. Charles the Bold was certainly right to be concerned by the possibility of an English invasion from Calais, as is clearly demonstrated by the earl of Warwick’s letter to Louis XI written on 12 February 1471, in which Warwick states that ‘With regard to starting the war [against Burgundy] at Calais, I have sent there to commence it, and I have today heard certain news that those of Calais have already started hostilities’.

In 1477, it was the turn of the French king to be threatened by the possibility of English military activities at Calais. On 6 March, Louis XI wrote to Jean Bourré, amongst others, complaining that 1200 men had been sent to Calais, he had no doubt that the men were sent to support ‘Madamyselle de Bourgongne’ against whom Louis XI had been at war since the death of Charles the Bold in January of the same year. The actual number of men added to the Calais garrison was, in fact, rather smaller than Louis feared, and they were probably sent to provide extra defence against a possible French attack. John Paston had written to his brother in February that one of the matters being discussed in the Great Council was the ‘kepyng off Caleys’, as a result, he expected that Hastings would be sent over in ‘greet
company’; it was this company to which Louis referred in his letter of 6 March. However, some new evidence uncovered in the papers of Jean Bourré gives an indication that Hastings might have considered using Calais as a base from which to offer covert help to the Burgundians against the French. According to a French commission of inquiry, certain men of Calais (under Hastings’ orders) had arrived at Boulogne offering them some military aid from Calais to protect them against the imminent arrival of the French army. In this case it seems that the offer of help came too late to prevent the capture of Boulogne by the French; the town capitulated on 19 April after a six-day siege. Therefore, the important strategic position of Calais between the rival territories of France and Burgundy endowed the duties of the king’s officers of the town with an important diplomatic aspect. Unsurprisingly, their actions were constantly and closely scrutinised at the courts of Northern Europe.

In addition to the normal duties of the king’s officers at Calais, of governing and defending the town, the possession of Calais itself obviously necessitated day-by-day diplomatic contact with the officers of foreign powers whose lands lay close to the Calais Pale. The admiral of France (Jean, seigneur de Montauban and afterwards Louis bastard of Bourbon) was the main point of contact with the French side. As far as communication with the Burgundians was concerned, the king’s officers naturally tended to deal with the more important local officers of the Burgundian territories nearby, such as Alard de Rabodenghes (bailli of St Omer), Jacques de Villers, seigneur de Lille-Adam (sénéchal of the Boulenois), or Lille-Adam’s lieutenant, Philippe de Loan. In fact those officers spent much of their time investigating the occasionally aggressive actions of the English in the area; after an interrogation of a prisoner at the castle of Boulogne, Philippe de Loan uncovered rumours of a projected ‘entreprinze’ of members of the Calais garrison against the nearby town of Montreuil. Those foreign officials would then follow a routine procedure of sending to the king’s officers in Calais for reparation. Thus, much of the diplomatic contact for which the king’s officers at Calais were responsible was

17 Jones, ‘1477- The expedition that never was’, passim.
18 The bastard of Bourbon (d.1486) was an illegitimate son of Charles duke of Bourbon; he married a bastard daughter of Louis XI in 1465 and was made admiral of France in the following year, Dictionnaire de la Noblesse, ed. A. de la Chesnaye-Desbois et al. (19 vols, Paris, 1863-76), III, pp. 745-9.
19 Biographical details for all of these men may be found in M.-R. Thielemans, Bourgogne et Angleterre: relations politiques et économiques entre les Pays-Bas Bourguignons et l’Angleterre, 1435-1467 (Brussels, 1966), pp. 367-405.
20 ADN, B 2051, fol. 233-v.
concerned with problems arising from the English possession of Calais and also the various aspects of the trade between England and the continent via Calais. Many of these problems concerned the numerous occasions during which ships sailing to and from Calais would find themselves involved in skirmishes with either their Burgundian or French counterparts. In June 1463, Philip the Good sent letters directly to the lieutenant of Calais (probably lord Wenlock) ‘and other officers of the king of England at Calais’; he accused certain men-of-war of Calais of having committed some offence close to the town of Boulogne. The sénéchal of the Boulenois was closely connected with the resolution of the dispute as at the same time he was also in receipt of similar letters from the duke. In some cases the local Burgundian officers would themselves travel to Calais in order to speak to the English officials there about naval disputes. For example, in November 1463 Philippe de Loan and Alard de Rabodenghes spent a couple of weeks at Calais attempting to procure the release of ‘certain ships...of the town of Abbeville detained there’.

Similar diplomatic contact at Calais was also frequently necessary to resolve disputes concerning physical molestation of people travelling in the Calais area (most commonly concerning the release of prisoners detained in the town). Philippe de Loan visited Calais in the middle of October 1463 ‘for the matter of the release of a certain Henry Bacleroy, Englishman, held prisoner there’. In some cases (as we have seen above), the officers at Calais would be sent letters directly by the duke of Burgundy, without the need for communication with de Loan or de Rabodenghes; in May 1461 Philip complained personally to the treasurer of Calais and captain of Hammes that a Spaniard (normally resident at Bruges) had been taken prisoner by certain men of Hammes, and was still imprisoned at Hammes at the date of Philip’s letter. On many occasions the Calais officials responded to such complaints with a diplomatic denial, often claiming that the foreign complainants were misinformed. In the precarious diplomatic circumstances of April 1477, the admiral of France had written to Hastings on 23 April from Hesdin, insinuating that some Englishmen from Calais had been behind a recent attack on some servants of the bastard of Burgundy (then in the service of Louis XI). Hastings replied speedily from Calais, two days later, claiming

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21 ADN, B 2048, fols 203v-4.
22 ADN, B 2051, fol. 210-v.
24 ADN, B 2040, fol. 182.
that he ‘had no knowledge [of the matter] as this messenger will clearly inform you’.  

Of course, the English officials would not just be expected to deal with and respond to complaints made about the conduct of the English by the rulers of Burgundy and France, or their local representatives; they were also usually expected to demand restitution and recompense should any injuries be inflicted on English subjects travelling or trading in the Calais area. For example, around the middle of May 1477 William lord Hastings, lieutenant of Calais, complained directly to Louis XI of the hostile manner in which French ships were treating English vessels. Apparently, the preceding Friday ‘a ship of Dover travelling to this town of Calais’, was subjected to such hostility. Hastings naturally suggested that according to his knowledge this was ‘to the prejudice of the good appointments between...my sovereign lord and you’; he quietly asked that such actions might cease. Hastings was also writing to Louis again with another complaint on Wednesday 23 July of the same year. On the previous Friday a ship charged with merchandise belonging to certain merchants of the Staple left the ‘hable’ of the town on its way to Flanders whereupon it was attacked by a ship-of-war of Boulogne and as a result was then wrecked nearby. At this point the French ‘gens de guerre’ stole the cables and anchors of the unfortunate ship and would have made off with all the merchandise if the owners of the ship had not quickly arrived on the scene. Hastings argued that this was directly contrary to the appointments between England and France which made clear that such attacks were not to be made within the ‘limites’ of the territories under the obeisance of the English king. The clauses concerning the precise definition of those ‘limites’ had been drawn up in a series of agreements which were subsidiary to the treaty of Pequigny (29 August 1475) and were signed in the early part of 1476. The ‘haable, radde and stremes’ of the town of Calais, Hastings argued, were included by name in those subsidiary appointments and hence the actions of the ship from Boulogne were unlawful.

Aside from being responsible for directing English complaints to the relevant authorities in Burgundy and France and responding to complaints from abroad

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25 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 3v.
26 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 4.
27 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 5.
28 BL, Royal Ms. 13 BXI, fol. 37v-8. After some negotiations with Sir Thomas Montgomery and Thomas Gale of Dartmouth in the early part of 1476, Louis XI issued a proclamation in which it was especially forbidden for breaches of the truce to be committed in a number of English franchises, expressly including Calais and its environs.
concerning breaches of the truce, the captain or lieutenant of the town would have considerable personal power to organise the smooth operation or ‘entretenement’ of the truces themselves. Considerable authority seems to have been delegated to the governor of Calais to treat with foreign representatives and arrange minor adjustments to the truces, or to prevent possible sources of conflict from becoming larger, more significant international disputes. Owing to the tense international situation after the death of Charles the Bold (on 5 January 1477) and the open warfare being carried out in the vicinity of Calais between the French and the Burgundians, the role of the lieutenant of Calais became more onerous. The lieutenant was almost constantly responsible for ensuring that the conflict did not unduly affect English commercial or military interests in Calais and undertook negotiations with the seigneur de Rochechouart (acting as Louis XI’s representative in the matter) concerning the safeguarding of the truce. Hastings asked Rochechouart to ask Louis XI whether he might ensure that there would always be an official of the French king at Boulogne or ‘elsewhere near to the marches of Calais’, so that if there were any attempts ‘to the prejudice of the amities’ then that official (having been previously provided with enough powers) would be able to ensure ‘reparation and reformation’ of the breaches. Hastings likewise promised that he or his deputies would put in place similar arrangements at Calais. Given that Boulogne had been captured recently by the French, it was obviously necessary for Hastings to make sure that any conflicts arising from the new situation of expanding French control of the Boulenois would be adequately prepared for. Hastings further asked Rochechouart to inform Louis that the fleet of English ships being sent to Calais was only intended to supply the town with provisions for new building works there. All those ships travelling under the seal of Edward IV or Hastings, laden with stone, wood and other building materials, should be allowed by the French to ‘pass and repass surely and safely’. Therefore, the king’s officers at Calais operated within an established system of day-to-day diplomatic contact with foreign rulers and officials that was made necessary by a need to resolve disputes and make minor alterations to pre-existing truces so as to ensure harmonious relations in the area between England, France and Burgundy. In some cases such men would be specifically authorised by the king to treat with, say, the Burgundians, concerning purely Calais-related matters. For example, in June 1472 Hastings (lieutenant), John lord Howard (lieutenant of Calais

29 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 4v.
30 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 4v.
castle) and Sir John Scott (marshall of Calais) were named in the king’s commission to treat with the Burgundians about the borders of the Calais Pale near Picardy. But as we have seen, members of the Calais administration had considerable diplomatic authority to act in this sphere without needing the specific and direct say-so of the central diplomatic administration. In fact, the officers at Calais were well aware of their own personal authority to resolve Calais-related matters themselves. In 1464, one of Louis XI’s diplomatic envoys, based at Abbeville, wrote a letter which sheds an intriguing light upon the independent nature of this authority given to the officials at Calais. The French envoy, who remains anonymous, had recently spoken to Richard Whetehill, lieutenant of Guînes, concerning the detention of a prisoner named ‘master Stephen’. The prisoner had written to Louis XI, apparently requesting the king to procure his release, and had also sent to the French king certain ‘charges’ against Whetehill who had personally interrogated the prisoner at Guînes. When told of those charges by Louis XI’s envoy, Whetehill affected great surprise and informed the envoy in no uncertain terms that there was no need to write to the king of England concerning the matter; Whetehill’s authority was clear. He further responded that those charges were entirely without foundation, and, accordingly, master Stephen deserved ‘grant pugnition’.

In order to operate successfully in such a system it was obvious that all the king’s officers at Calais should be able to call upon a pool of agents, messengers, pursuivants and heralds to provide communication with the relevant authorities in France and Burgundy. Hastings, for instance, could call upon the services of Hastings Pursuivant, Blanc Lyon Pursuivant and other agents such as William Laverok and Robert Nyter, along with other menial servants to carry out missions to Burgundy and France concerning Calais-related matters. Walter Blount, treasurer of Calais, could also rely on his pursuivant, Chateaubleu, for similar missions relating to the possession of Calais. Most often these simply entailed the delivery of oral or written messages to the French admiral or the bailli of St Omer. Even if, for whatever reason, one particular messenger might encounter some impediment during his journey which prevented the fulfilment of his mission, another could easily be sent so as to ensure


\[33\] Ibid.
that the matter was dealt with quickly. Hastings' wrote a letter to the French admiral on 2 May 1477 explaining that he feared that one of his previous messages, sent to the French admiral in the care of one of his pursuivants, had been delayed owing to some sort of 'empehement'. When Hastings heard no news of the progress of the mission of that pursuivant, he quickly sent another 'porteur' to deliver a copy of the missing message.\(^3^4\) It seems likely that communications difficulties were an obvious result of the hostilities between Burgundy and France during the early part of 1477, but owing to the considerable resources in personnel at the lieutenant’s disposal these could be overcome relatively easily. It is noticeable that the wages of those heralds, pursuivants and other agents sent to France and Burgundy for Calais-related matters by the king’s officers, do not appear to have been paid through the exchequer. If, as seems likely, they were paid instead by their masters at Calais, this gives a further indication of the authority of the officers at Calais to deal with those matters independently from the diplomatic administration on the mainland. After beginning their diplomatic careers at Calais, it was then not uncommon for the minor diplomatic envoys of the Calais officers to become a part of the king’s own group of diplomatic personnel. After seeing service with Hastings in 1477, Robert Nyter, for example, was sent to France by the king directly in late 1480.\(^3^5\)

Even when matters concerning the English possession of Calais posed a dangerous threat to England’s relations with her neighbouring powers, the officials at Calais still had considerable authority to attempt to resolve those problems personally, owing to the fact that in most cases those officials would be defending their own actions. The breakdown in relations in the spring and summer of 1477 between William lord Hastings and Louis XI is a case in point. As we have seen, the troubled

\(^3^4\) HL, Ms. HA 13789, fols 3v-4.
\(^3^5\) For which he was paid £13 6s 8d, PRO, E 405/69, m. 5d; likewise, William Laverok (who had been named amongst the ‘Lancers apee’ in the Calais muster roll of the earl of Warwick in 1466, BL, Add. Ms. 46455, fol. 59) also began, after 1477, to serve the king in a more direct diplomatic capacity. In May 1482 he was sent on an ultimately successful mission to Louis XI, to demand the outstanding payments of Edward’s French pension (for Easter Term 1482), BN, Ms. Fr. 4054, fol. 204 & Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 336, n. 3. Edward’s letter of 17 May 1482 to Louis XI tells us that Laverok was already in France and that Edward had sent him ‘charge’ to solicit the outstanding payment; the letter is printed in J. Calmette & G. Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre (1461-1483) (Paris, 1930), pièce justificative no. 81, p. 393. Laverok may have been in France since January purveying wines for Edward IV’s consumption (on 27 January 1481 Louis had permitted Laverok to obtain, on Edward’s behalf, up to 50 tonnes of wine at Rouen ‘de telle contree qu’il vouldra’, BN, Ms. Fr. 6989, fol. 3). He then seems to have stayed in France until 21 August of 1482 at which point he then returned to England from Dieppe in order to accompany Pierre le Roy (‘maître des monnaies de Rouen’) who had been ordered by Louis to pay the delayed instalment of the pension. See Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pièces justificatives, nos 80, 81 & 82, pp. 392-5.
international situation of early 1477 led to a decision by Edward IV to add an extra sixteen men-at-arms and 514 archers to the English retinue at Calais. Louis XI immediately feared that those soldiers would be used to aid Mary of Burgundy and her step-mother against French forces.\textsuperscript{36} After the French capture of Boulogne, an inquiry was ordered by the French king on 3 May 1477 which seemed to confirm Louis XI’s fears that the English had offered to provide the Burgundians with surreptitious military support via Calais. Jean Marchant, Jean Fleury and Huchon de Beaumont all stated that it was well-known that ‘an Englishman named Reginald Clifton’ had visited Boulogne on several occasions in the days leading up to the French siege of the town.\textsuperscript{37} Marchant suggested that Clifton came to offer help from the ‘seigneurs de Calays’; he also claimed that on 12 April two other Englishmen visited the town demanding to speak to Charles de Saveuses, captain of the town. The rumour ran that the English had come to bolster Boulogne’s defences against the French with 200 English soldiers. Lord Hastings seems to have kept a discreet distance from the conspiracy as Marchant, Fleury and de Beaumont all claimed to have no knowledge of any offers coming from the lieutenant of Calais directly ‘ne de bouche ne de escript’. The testimony of Robert Legaignour however, did seem to indicate Hastings’ personal involvement, as he stated that Clifton had claimed to have been given ‘charge from the lord Hastings, his master, to communicate with the officers of Boulogne in order to find out whether if it might be their pleasure to send some ships from Boulogne to summon some men-at-arms from England’.\textsuperscript{38}

Thereafter, on the basis of the findings of this inquiry, the conduct of Hastings was the subject of a stream of complaints made by Louis XI’s ambassadors in England, in Louis XI’s letters to Edward IV, and letters sent directly to Hastings himself. Some diplomatic instructions issued to Olivier le Roux in June 1477 required Le Roux to inform Edward IV that Louis was accusing Hastings and ‘madame de Bourgogne [in this case probably Margaret of York]’ of openly acting against Louis’ interests and organising an Anglo-Burgundian ‘appoignement’.\textsuperscript{39} By 22 August 1477 Hastings was well aware of the complaints which the French ambassadors were making about him in England to his master, the king of England. One of Hastings’

\textsuperscript{36} See above p. 144 & Jones, ‘1477- the expedition that never was’, passim, 277.
\textsuperscript{37} BN, Ms. Fr. 20494, fols 97-8.
\textsuperscript{38} For a detailed discussion of this inquiry (and detailed transcripts of relevant documents) see Jones, ‘1477- the expedition that never was’, passim.
\textsuperscript{39} Olivier le Roux’s instructions are printed in Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, pp. 478-9 (Appendix XI: from BN, Ms. Fr. 10187, fols 123-4).
pursuivants had also recently visited Louis XI at Thérouanne and had brought back letters of complaint from Louis; the same pursuivant had also delivered a disturbing oral report to Hastings on the same subject. The mission of this pursuivant may have been the one described in a letter of Edmund Bedingfield to John Paston II, written on 17 August 1477 in which it is stated that the French king had ‘rayled gretely of my lord to Tygyr pursuivant opynly by-fore ij hundred of his folkys’. Another of Hastings’ diplomatic agents, Robert Nyter, had also brought back similar news before 22 August. In response to Louis XI’s accusations, Hastings dispatched a raft of his own diplomatic agents to persuade the French king that their master was not conspiring against him. Hastings’ letter to Louis XI of 22 August also acted as a letter of credence for William Laverok who was to deliver an oral message from the lieutenant to Louis explaining that Hastings would never do anything to incur the king’s displeasure, despite the information that the king had been given to the contrary.

Of course, Louis’ accusations and his belief that Hastings was providing covert military help to the Burgundians from the town of Calais, were likely to have had a damaging effect on the preservation of the Anglo-French truce, since any military aid given to Burgundy was obviously in direct contravention of the treaty signed in 1475. Therefore it was quite clear that the king could not leave the resolution of that diplomatic dispute entirely in the hands of the lieutenant and his diplomatic agents. Hastings had provided a detailed reply (or advertisement) to all of Louis’s complaints and it probably formed part of the mission of William Laverok to deliver the document either in writing or by word of mouth. It is clear from a postscript at the end of that document, that Hastings was specifically ordered by Edward IV to send this reply ‘pour son excuse’. The document itself provides the most detailed description of the accusations made by Louis XI’s ambassadors in England, those accusations made in Louis’ own letters of 28 July written from Arras, and those contained in the reports made by Robert Nyter and one of lord Hastings’ pursuivants. Hastings denied that his men had been sent ‘continuellement’ to support Louis XI’s ‘rebels and disobedient subjects’; likewise he denied that he had offered to

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40 HL, Ms. HA 13789, fol. 5v.  
42 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 6.  
43 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 5v.  
44 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fols 6-7.  
45 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 7.
place 500 or 600 men from Calais in Boulogne to defend the town from the French.\footnote{HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 6.} He also denied that he had ever sent ‘a single man in his charge’ to pillage the town of Marquise in the Boulenois, and further stated that the so-called English soldiers encountered by the French in the region of the mill at Fiennes were not sent there under his orders.\footnote{HL, Ms. HA 13879, fol. 6v.} The general theme of the \textit{advertissement} was that since Hastings from his youth ‘had been continually in the service of the king [Edward IV] his master’ he had absolutely no wish to displease him and do anything to bring the truce between England and France into jeopardy. Edward IV’s close supervision of the drafting of this document is suggested by a passage in which Hastings states that his master personally implored Louis XI not to give credence to the negative reports of Hastings’ actions from Calais. The English king also asked that if Louis had any further complaints then he should let Edward know by means of one of his servants. Evidently, the independence afforded to the Calais officers in their supervision of local diplomacy (concerning Calais-related matters), was qualified by the fact that such diplomacy could also be closely supervised by the king, especially if there were important ramifications for England’s general relations with her neighbours.

However, the diplomatic remit of the English officials at Calais did not simply pertain to matters arising from the English possession of Calais. In fact, those officials were also usually responsible for much of the organisation of the most important diplomatic meetings and conferences between England, France and Burgundy, since those meetings were commonly held in the area surrounding Calais, at towns such as Arras, Boulogne, Hesdin, St Omer and Valenciennes, and even occasionally at Calais itself. In 1463, a conference was held between English, Burgundian and French diplomats at St Omer throughout the whole of September and thereafter the site of the meetings moved to Hesdin where Louis XI and Philip the Good met all the diplomats involved.\footnote{The most detailed description of the 1463 conference is to be found in Thielemans, \textit{Bourgogne et Angleterre}, pp. 398-404; but see also Scofield, \textit{The Life and Reign}, I, pp. 299-307.} English and Burgundian officials (along with one French representative) also convened for a lengthy series of negotiations at Calais during June and July of 1465.\footnote{ADN, B 2054, fols 158v, 159 & 161-v.} In May and June of the following year, after a meeting between the earl of Warwick and the count of Charolais at Boulogne in April, another major conference between England and Burgundy was held at St Omer; at around the same time,
negotiations were held with the French at Calais.\textsuperscript{50} Being such an important part of a complicated network of diplomatic meeting-places, it was quite natural therefore, that the king’s officers at Calais should organise the logistical arrangements for those meetings. This is seen quite clearly in the preparations for the St Omer conference of September 1463. At some point before 19 June, the pursuivant of John lord Wenlock had travelled to Burgundy in order to request a safe-conduct for the main part of the English embassy (which was to eventually disembark at Calais on 21 August).\textsuperscript{51} On that day, Chateaubleu Pursuivant (of Sir Walter Blount, treasurer of Calais) met Philip the Good in Boulogne, presumably in order to discuss the late arrival of the embassy which had been expected many weeks earlier. Blount had previously been in contact with Antoine de Croy informing him by letter that the English embassy was ‘tout prest pour passer’.\textsuperscript{52} Finally, John lord Wenlock travelled in person from Calais to Boulogne to meet with Philip the Good at Boulogne from 23 August 1463.\textsuperscript{53} Most of the discussions between Wenlock and Philip concerned the fears of the English ambassadors for their personal safety during the proposed trip to St Omer. In the end Wenlock’s doubts were appeased as Philip promised that a retinue of his closest councillors would accompany them from Guînes to the site of the conference.\textsuperscript{54}

Moreover, the Burgundian officials with whom the English officers at Calais were in constant contact, concerning the resolution of the various local disputes described above, also happened to govern those very places in which major diplomatic meetings took place; such as the bailli of St Omer and the lieutenant of the sénéchal of the Boulenois (at Boulogne). Hence, this established network of local contacts was frequently utilised in order to put in place the arrangements for diplomatic conferences, especially with Burgundy. For example, on 15 July 1463 Philippe de Loan wrote from Bolougne (his normal place of residence) to Antoine de

\textsuperscript{50} For the meeting between Warwick and Charolais: H. Vander Linden, \textit{Itinéraires de Philippe le Bon, duc de Bourgogne (1419-1467) et de Charles, comte de Charolais (1433-1467)} (Brussels, 1940), p. 494 and also the ‘Extrait d’une Ancienne Chronique’ printed in Commynes, \textit{Mémoires}, ed. Lenglet du Fresnoy, II, p. 187. The earl stayed at Boulogne for four days commencing 15 April. It is important to note that owing to the use of faulty information from William of Worcester, Calmette & Périnelle misdate the meeting of Charolais and Warwick to May 1465, Calmette & Périnelle, \textit{Louis XI et l’Angleterre}, p. 66, n. 3. For the French negotiations of 1466 at Calais see \textit{ibid.}, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{51} The letter of Alard de Rabodenghes to Antoine de Croy written from St Omer on 19 June 1463, printed in Wavrin, \textit{Anchiennes chroniques d’Angleterre}, III, pp. 159-61 (\textit{pièce justificative} no. 2); Thielmanms, \textit{Bourgogne et Angleterre}, p. 399.

\textsuperscript{52} BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 365: letter of Antoine de Croy written on 13 August to the bishop of Bayeux.

\textsuperscript{53} ADN, B 2048, fols 228-v & 241 (a payment of 17 li 18s for the expenses of John Wenlock and thirty six people in his company at Boulogne).

\textsuperscript{54} For which, see Philip the Good’s letter to Louis XI written from Boulogne on 24 August 1463, Calmette & Périnelle, \textit{Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pièce justificative} no. 20, pp. 293-5.
Croy explaining that a clerk of Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guînes) had recently arrived in the ‘halle de ceste ville [Boulogne]’. The clerk, one Colin Herevé, had arrived there with news from Whetehill to de Loan, informing him that Whetehill and Walter Blount expected to be at Calais the following Monday in order to ‘prepare everything before the embassy which is coming [from England]’.

That same Monday the embassy was also expected to leave London for Sandwich, where it would embark for Calais. The same information was passed by Antoine de Croy to the main representative on the French side, with whom the English officers at Calais were most frequently in contact, the French admiral. On 19 July Croy wrote from St Omer to Louis d’Harcourt, bishop of Bayeux, explaining that everything told to de Loan by Herevé had been passed on to the admiral.

Around the 27 August 1463, in preparation for the conference, John Wenlock was also in further contact with Philippe de Loan at Boulogne by means of various lettres closes; afterwards de Loan was also responsible for ensuring that the contents were delivered to the duke; the duke subsequently received Wenlock’s letters from the hands of one of de Loan’s servants, at St-Josse-sur-mer.

Thus, through either direct or indirect communication with their colleagues in Burgundy or France, the king’s officers at Calais formed an integral part of the system by which major diplomatic meetings were organised in the territories close to Calais.

It is not altogether surprising then to find that the English officials at Calais also formed a large proportion of the ambassadors formally empowered to treat at the conferences which they had shouldered much of the responsibility of organising.

Their personal knowledge of operating in the North European diplomatic system, and

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55 The letter is printed as pièce justificative, no. 3 in Wavrin, Anchiennes chroniques d’Engleterre, III, pp. 162-4. It is to be noted however, that Dupont inaccurately ascribes the letter to the hand of Philippe de Cran, instead of Philippe de Loan.

56 Ibid., p. 162. Blount was clearly returning from England to prepare for the embassy, but the king’s officers at Calais could also be expected to travel on the continent (usually in pursuit of diplomatic business or matters connected to the government of Calais); Walter Blount, for example, is known to have visited Bruges in the middle of February or March 1464. Louis XI apparently was making strenuous efforts at the same time to arrange a meeting between himself and Blount as Antoine de Croy states in a letter written to Louis XI on 19 March 1464, Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, p. 47, n. 1. Cora Scofield seems to have consulted Legrand’s copy of this letter which is simply dated 16 of an unknown month (Scofield suggested February, eadem, The Life and Reign, 1, p. 322, n. 1). Legrand’s copy is now BN, Ms. Fr. 6970, fol. 146.

57 Philippe de Loaen, lieutenant du Seneschal de Boullenois, me rescrivpi hier que le lieutenant de Guînes, sire Wactier Blont et Ourselfay seront demain a Calais pour preparer a l’encontre de l’ambassade d’Engleterre, que aussi le jour demain se partira de Londres...je le rescris semblablement au Roy et a Mons l’admiral’, Croy’s letter of 19 July 1463 is printed as pièce justificative no. 18 in Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pp. 291-2.

58 ADN, B 2048, fol. 195; St-Josse-sur-mer is situated to the south-east of Étaples.
their previous experience of dealing with their colleagues in France and Burgundy made them exceptionally suitable delegates to such conferences. In 1463, John lord Wenlock (probably lieutenant of Calais) was formally commissioned as an ambassador to the conference of St Omer; his duties were evidently not confined to preliminary visits to Philip the Good in order to arrange the safe-conducts for the mission. He was accompanied by two other colleagues from Calais: Sir Walter Blount (treasurer of Calais) and Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guînes), who were also among the total of twelve diplomats named as Edward IV’s ambassadors to the conference.\(^59\) Wenlock and Whetehill resumed their partnership as English ambassadors when they met Philip the Good and Louis XI at Hesdin in 1464.\(^60\) They also participated in the major conferences of 1465 and 1466, and during the latter they were joined by their superior at Calais, Richard Neville.\(^61\) The Englishmen from Calais usually found themselves treating at the most formal diplomatic events with representatives from Burgundy and France with whom they had already had experience of working. For example, at St Omer in 1463, the three men met Alard de Rabodenghes and Philip de Loan, who were both part of the Burgundian negotiating team.\(^62\) De Rabodenghes had also been commissioned by Duke Philip to accompany the English embassy, ensuring its safety whilst it travelled from Guînes to St Omer.\(^63\) The French admiral, Jean de Montauplan also made up part of the French delegation in 1463, alongside Antoine de Croy, Louis d’Harcourt and Georges Havard.\(^64\) The admiral of France again represented France at the negotiations with England at Calais, leading to the signing of a new truce on 24 May 1466; the post had recently been conferred on Louis bastard of Bourbon, and he was to hold the position throughout the rest of Edward IV’s reign.\(^65\) Therefore, the day-to-day system of diplomatic contacts between the Calais officers, local Burgundian officials and the French admiral became useful not only in the process of organising formal diplomatic

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59 The others were George Neville (bishop of Exeter), Henry Bourghier earl of Essex, Sir Robert Danvers, Peter Taster, Thomas Wysterbourne, Thomas Kent, Henry Sharp, Louis Galet and Thomas Vaughan (Edward’s esquire of the body), ADN, B 575/16040 (The commission was issued on 6 August 1463 and is not printed in Rymer’s *Foedera*, nor, so far as I can tell, is it printed anywhere else).


61 Ibid., pt II, pp. 130 & 138-44.


63 Ibid., p. 294.

64 For which see Thielemans, *Bourgogne et Angleterre*, pp. 399-400.

meetings in the region around Calais, but also in the provision of well-qualified ambassadors to treat at those meetings.

Burgundian officers with experience of regular diplomatic contact with the English at Calais, such as Alard de Rabodenghes and Philippe de Loan, were also to be found as frequent members of Burgundian missions to England itself during the 1460s. De Loan had spent five months in England even before Edward IV seized the throne; his mission lasted from 5 August 1460 until 1 January 1461; he also had the honour of being one of the first Burgundian diplomats sent to England after Edward IV’s accession, for he was again present in England from June until December 1461 (except for a brief visit to the Anglo-Burgundian meeting at Valenciennes in November), and was in frequent contact with Philip the Good by means of his servant, Malvinet Galvert. Philippe de Loan then accompanied the French envoy, Jean d’Estuer, seigneur de la Barde to England for a short period from 5 April 1462 until 10 June. In the spring preceding the St Omer conference of 1463 de Loan found himself in England again, from January until May. This time however, he was accompanied by another ambassador who would have been equally familiar to the English, Alard de Rabodenghes. The bailli of St Omer specialised in negotiations with England, almost as much as de Loan did, and visited England once more with Josse de Halewijn from 15 December 1466 until the following July. The French admiral also acted as Louis XI’s ambassador in England during the summer of 1467. This choice of French, and especially Burgundian, diplomatic personnel must surely have been formed on the basis of the great experience of de Loan, de Rabodenghes and the bastard of Bourbon in operating within the established framework of diplomatic contacts with England at Calais.

Aside from organising and attending the formal diplomatic conferences held in the region of Calais, the English officers of the town supervised many of the formalities and other logistical arrangements for English and foreign embassies using Calais as the most convenient point of transit between England and the continent. During the Middle Ages, most diplomats, travelling between England and Burgundy, France or Germany, would travel via Calais. It is noticeable however, that after the French take-over of the town of Boulogne in 1477, the commonly used route between

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66 ADN, B 2040, fols 144, 156, 185-v, 226, 235v & 253v.
67 ADN, B 2045, fol. 165.
68 ADN, B 2051, fol. 197v.
69 ADN, B 2064, fols 197-v.
England and France began to change to the route between Dover and Boulogne.  

Generally, it was the responsibility of the king’s officers at Calais to procure shipping for foreign embassies travelling to England. On 26 February 1464 a servant of the duke of Burgundy, Jean de Bellastre, was sent to ask the treasurer of Calais to purchase a boat in which Jean de Lannoy could travel to England, for his diplomatic mission on behalf of Louis XI and Philip the Good. Once at Calais, foreign embassies would receive an official welcome from the officers of the town. To mark the visit of Louis de Gruthuise to Calais on his way to England, Thomas Thwaytes (bailiff of the county of Guînes) was ordered to meet him just outside the town. Feasts were held at Calais for three or four days which many of the officers attended. John lord Howard (lieutenant of Calais castle and deputy of lord Hastings) and Sir John Scott (marshal of Calais) were both present. William Pecche, bailiff of Mark and Oye then accompanied Gruthuise across the channel to Dover. In fact, the festivities which Calais could provide are well known; in 1482, after news had reached Calais of the English victory over the Scots, bonfires were lit and the ‘gynnes yn the bollewarkys and abowte the wallys were schett ffor joye’. And should an envoy feel that due welcome had not been provided, it was a matter of some remark, as Louis XI’s envoy, Jean le Begue, stated in 1464 when he felt that he not been treated as courteously at Calais as normal.

Most importantly, the Calais officers also carried out a variety of informal diplomatic duties on behalf of their king, but these duties have been almost totally ignored by diplomatic historians. A series of five letters relating to the early months of 1464 now exist to show that Richard Whetehill (lieutenant of Guînes) undertook numerous informal diplomatic discussions at Guînes with representatives of Louis XI. He was also responsible for the dissemination of messages between England and France, often providing a preliminary English response to the proposals and points of

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71 Thomas Langton, Edward’s ambassador to France, travelled from Dover to Boulogne in February 1482 and in March of the same year the French envoy, Pierre le Roy (maître des monnaies of Rouen) also returned home via the port of Boulogne; PRO, E 405/70, m. 4d and also R. Horrox (ed.), ‘Financial memoranda of the reign of Edward V: Longleat miscellaneous manuscript book II’, Camden Miscellany XXIX, Camden Society, 4th series, XXXIV (1987), p. 239. For Le Roy’s outward voyage see Calmette & Périnelle, Louis XI et l’Angleterre, pièce justificative no. 80, p. 392 (he seems to have left Dieppe on 10 March 1482 and Edward issued a quittance on 16 March for the instalment of his pension which Le Roy was carrying; Le Roy then returned to France before the end of the month, Foederar, V, pt III, p. 119).

72 ADN, B 2051, fol. 243v.


74 Le Begue wrote that ‘je n’ay pas esté si bien receu comme j’ay accoustumé jusques cy’, BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 394.
debate raised in the letters sent to England via Calais by the French king.\textsuperscript{75} At some point before 19 February Whetehill had met one of Louis’ secretaries, Jean de Tenremonde (dit Le Begue) at Guînes and exchanged a large number of letters and messages. Whetehill received a letter and an oral message ('par relacion de vostredit secretaire') from Louis XI along with further letters from Louis to the earl of Warwick which he promised to send to England by means of one of the earl’s servants. An earlier message had been sent from Louis XI to Whetehill by the seigneur de la Barde and he was pleased to announce to the French king that a response had been received from England, a copy of which Whetehill intended to forward to Louis.\textsuperscript{76} A few days later, Le Begue testified that the copy was accurate, for Whetehill had shown him both the copy and the original, and had read one after the other, ‘mot apres autre’.\textsuperscript{77} Whetehill also had a duty to respond positively to letters sent through him to England even before the contents of those letters had reached their destination. To Louis’ letter announcing the imminent departure of Jean de Lannoy (a Franco-Burgundian envoy) to England, Whetehill responded courteously by stating that he was sure that the earl of Warwick would be especially pleased to hear of the eventual dispatch of Lannoy’s mission to England.\textsuperscript{78}

Once formal letters and messages had been exchanged, Whetehill and Louis’ envoys could then discuss the latest news (of diplomatic relevance) in their respective countries. Whetehill and the writer of the Abbeville letter met at Guînes before 31 March 1464 and discussed at great length topics such as the return to England of the embassy of Henry IV of Castille. Whetehill also seems to have complained to Louis’ envoy about the actions of a French subject, one ‘Pierre Cousinot’ who had apparently been involved in the Lancastrian campaign in the North based around the border castle of Bamborough; evidently Guillaume Cousinot was meant in this case, for he was certainly present at Bamborough on 22 February, when some diplomatic

\textsuperscript{75} The series of letters of 1464 is as follows: Whetehill to Louis XI, from Guînes 19 February 1464 (Appendix III in Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 467); Jean le Begue to Louis XI, from Lille 29 February 1464 (BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53); Jean le Begue to Louis XI, from Rochester 19 March 1464 (Appendix IV in Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 468); Jean le Begue to Louis XI, from Paris 25 April 1464 (BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 63. This letter has no year, but le Begue’s description of his visits to Calais and Guînes must surely date the letter to 1464. Le Begue and this letter are also discussed in A. Lapeyre & R. Scheurer, Les notaires et secrétaires du Roi: sous les règnes de Louis XI, Charles VIII et Louis XII (1461-1515) (2 vols, Paris, 1978), II, p. 303); Anonymous letter to Louis XI written from Abbeville on 31 March 1464 (Wawrin, Anchiennes chronicques d’Engleterre, III, pp. 182-6).
\textsuperscript{76} Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 467.
\textsuperscript{77} BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53.
\textsuperscript{78} Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 467.
instructions were issued to him in the name of Henry VI. The English embassy to the proposed conference of 1464 at St Omer ‘for the appeasement of differences’ was also discussed and Whetehill informed Louis’ envoy that the chancellor of England (George Neville, bishop of Exeter) would attend, but Whetehill hoped that the mission of de Lannoy in England would be so successful that there would ‘be no need to hold the said diet’. Jean le Begue’s letter of 25 April 1464 gives a further indication of the type of general and informal diplomatic discussions in which Whetehill was involved at Guînes, as Le Begue wrote in the letter that he hoped to discuss ‘the alliances of England and Spain’ with the lieutenant of Guînes. Whetehill’s informal duties, that is the courteous exchange of messages, general discussion of diplomatic news and raising points of minor irritation (such Guillaume Cousinot), acted as the foundations of late medieval diplomacy. It was upon these foundations that the more formal methods of diplomatic contact, such as fully commissioned embassies and diplomatic diets, were based.

Whilst Whetehill was staying at Guînes or Calais he could act as England’s resident diplomatic representative in the complex system of informal diplomatic contacts that operated between England, France and Burgundy in the area surrounding Calais, between the major towns such as Abbeville, Arras, Lille and St Omer. Jean le Begue’s itinerary in the first few months of 1464 shows how this system could work in practice. From Guînes, where le Begue had met Whetehill, he travelled to Lille on 29 February, where he met the French and Burgundian envoy, Jean de Lannoy and possibly the duke of Burgundy who was present in Lille at the time. After exchanging letters and messages with Lannoy (including the letters he had just been given by Whetehill), Le Begue received word that Whetehill wished to speak to him concerning the previous message sent to England through the agency of the seigneur de la Barde. Louis’ envoy immediately set off for England, probably via Guînes as Whetehill had requested, and had arrived at Rochester by 19 March where he was sure that Edward IV himself wished to meet him. In April le Begue found himself in Paris, but intended to travel back to Guînes as he had recently been contacted by one of Whetehill’s servants through whom he found out that the lieutenant wished to

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80 Ibid.
81 BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 63.
82 Vander Linden, Itineraires de Philippe le Bon, p. 466 (BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53).
speak to him concerning certain matters contained in Whetehill’s letters; Le Begue then duly sent ‘a copy of his said letter’ to the French king, though he did not send the original because he needed it ‘for his safe-conduct’. So, from Guînes Whetehill was able to frequently request informal meetings to discuss the diplomatic state of affairs and to exchange messages with Louis XI’s envoys wherever they might be in the region.

In many respects, Whetehill’s duties at Calais seem similar to those undertaken in the sixteenth century at foreign courts by English resident ambassadors. Receiving or exchanging messages on behalf of their king, acting as a clearinghouse for the diplomatic news and undertaking informal discussions upon matters of common interest all formed part of the remit of the resident. Of course, Whetehill was never permanently stationed at a foreign court and was simply resident at Calais for long periods of time, but, as we have seen, from Calais he could easily make contact with the French king and the duke of Burgundy by letter, or request personal meetings with their representatives. Historians have usually been quick to compare late medieval diplomacy unfavourably with the diplomacy of the sixteenth-century. It is argued that before the adoption of resident ambassadors diplomacy was rather cumbersome and disjointed, owing to its supposed reliance on embassies which were empowered only for temporary and specific negotiations and which had no permanent mandate to reside at a foreign court. But to some extent, the resident English officials at Calais could help to improve the continuity of English diplomatic relations with foreign states even before the adoption of the resident. In the early part of 1464 until the mission of Jean de Lannoy to England in early April, Edward IV and Louis XI had no formally empowered ambassadors at each other’s courts and this gap could be used to further the argument that diplomatic relations in this period were rather disjointed. But during this period, Richard Whetehill could tap into a complex network of informal contacts around Calais and also meet two of Louis’ envoys informally at least five times at Calais from February to April 1464. The continuous nature of such informal contact at Calais is also suggested in Le Begue’s letter of 25 April in which he states that during the last few months ‘I have continually been at Calais and at Guînes for the said causes’.

84 BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 63
86 For example, ibid., pp. 32-41.
87 BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 63.
Aside from improving diplomatic continuity (especially with France and Burgundy), the English possession of Calais could speed up some elements of diplomacy as well. The officers at Calais would sometimes be in receipt of specific proposals from foreign powers, and although it was not within their powers to accept them formally on behalf of the king, it was necessary for courtesy’s sake that they give a preliminary response to the proposals even before they could be referred to the English king or his commissioners in England. For example, in April 1477 William lord Hastings was visited by a French envoy, Olivier le Roux, who carried with him a number of messages from Louis XI whereby the French king informed him that Louis strongly desired that the marriage between the dauphin and Edward’s daughter Elizabeth should take place, that the king was content to allow the truce between England and France to be prolonged and that he strongly intended to send his armies against Mary of Burgundy in order to recover certain lands which he claimed as his own. Le Roux also made the crucial hint that England and France might collaborate militarily in order to reconquer all the Burgundian territories except Holland, Zeeland and Brabant. Louis was clearly hoping that a reasonably positive response from Hastings might indicate that Edward IV would seriously consider the proposals, for it was stipulated in Le Roux’s instructions that a full French embassy would only be sent to England once Edward IV had been informed (presumably by Hastings) of the contents of Le Roux’s instructions. In other words, as far as foreign powers were concerned, the king’s officials at Calais could act as a valuable sounding-board for English opinion. A preliminary response to the proposals for an agreement would be received much more quickly from Calais than if a preparatory mission had been sent directly to England in the first place.

For the most part, the place of Calais in the late medieval diplomatic polity has been neglected by studies of English diplomacy. But as we have seen, Calais played a varied role in English diplomatic practice. The town could be used as convenient point from which to organise the logistical arrangements of embassies travelling between England and the continent, and the king’s officers there were often directly responsible for organising English attendance at diplomatic conferences in the busy diplomatic area surrounding Calais (at which they sometimes participated personally). English possession of Calais necessitated that the king’s officers should have personal

88 HL, Ms. HA 13879, fols 2v-3.
authority to maintain a network of diplomatic contacts with the relevant officers of either the Burgundian or French governments. These contacts were maintained (often without referring the matters concerned to England) on an almost a daily basis through their own heralds, pursuivants or menial messengers. But most importantly, the possession of Calais brought England into a complex network of informal contacts that operated between Calais and the large number of other centres of diplomatic activity, that is Abbeville, Arras, Boulogne, Bruges, Hesdin, St Omer, Valenciennes and Paris. French and Burgundian envoys travelling in the area often found it convenient to visit the officers at Calais and exchange messages, discuss the latest diplomatic events, and receive preliminary responses to tentative proposals for formal negotiations in England or elsewhere. The king’s officers there acted virtually continually as England’s diplomatic representatives on the continent, foreshadowing the developments of the early sixteenth century by which time most European powers had adopted the innovation of the resident ambassador. Without Calais, the efficiency and continuity of late medieval diplomacy would have been greatly diminished.
Chapter Six

THE COLLECTION AND COMMUNICATION OF DIPLOMATIC INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE DURING THE REIGN OF EDWARD IV (1461-83)

Accurate and reliable information concerning international affairs was, of course, a vital foundation for the practice of successful diplomacy during the later Middle Ages. However, the development of efficient and well-organised systems for the gathering of information and intelligence is most often thought to be a product of the development of standing diplomacy and the consequent expansion of dedicated and regular courier routes used to connect resident ambassadors with their masters. Garrett Mattingly and others have suggested that the most significant duty carried out by the resident ambassadors was the transmission of a massive amount of political news, often accompanied by hearsay, gossip and rumours of all kinds. In fact, resident ambassadors could spend so much of their time providing regular dispatches to their home governments that it might seem that they could have time for very little else. Michael Mallett has called these dispatches ‘the real stuff of the new diplomacy’. During his first mission to Rome, Niccolò Machiavelli sent forty-nine dispatches back to Florence, in only fifty days. Hence, it is unsurprising to find, as G.R. Berridge has suggested, that when Machiavelli wrote his ‘Advice to Raphaelo Girolami when he went as Ambassador to the Emperor’, he stressed very clearly the resident ambassador’s responsibility for information-gathering. For historians such as Mattingly, these activities of the resident ambassador were sometimes close to outright espionage. But even if residents themselves were not usually out-and-out spies, it has also been argued, by Ian Arthurson, that alongside the expansion of the art of resident diplomacy came the growth of ‘organized espionage...coterminous with the development of regular diplomatic institutions as a part of the state’. In purely

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English terms, these developments in diplomatic practice (based on regular information dispatches and organised espionage) are most often associated with the monarchy of Henry VII.7

We have already seen that Henry VII was indeed the first English king to employ the new invention of the resident ambassador. Arthurson has stated that from 1505, John Stile, who was probably Henry’s first resident ambassador, sometimes sent up to four dispatches a week back to England from his post in Spain.8 From Valladolid on 26 April 1509, at the end of one of his dispatches to Henry VII, Stile promised that ‘al other thynynge schal hereafter make the certefycathe unto yowr hyghnys wythe the.greteyst delygyencys to my power’.9 Through these dispatches Stile ensured that both Henry VII and his son were informed of the general state of relations between the major powers of Europe as it appeared at the court of King Ferdinand of Aragon; for example, from Valladolid on 9 September 1509, Stile wrote that ‘the sayeynge of the Kyn of Arragon your good fader ys, that he ys yn verry good amyte wythe the sayd kyng [Charles VIII], and yowr sayd good fader ys joyus and glad that themperowr and the Freynsch kynge assambelyd not or spake not togethers yn Ytaly, as that hyt was bytwyxt them apoynteyd’.10 Henry’s use of standing diplomacy was also supplemented by his use of a considerable number of spies. Francis Bacon grandly claimed that ‘he was careful and liberal to obtain good intelligence from all parts abroad’ and he employed ‘secret spials...both at home and abroad, by them to discover what practices and conspiracies were against him’.11 On the whole, Henry is more praised than any other late medieval English king for ensuring that he was well informed about developments in the diplomatic situation. Contemporaries such as Raimondo de Soncino, the Milanese ambassador in England, were greatly impressed by Henry; Soncino famously stated that ‘In many things I know this sovereign to be admirably well informed’. Soncino attributed this success

7 K.B. McFarlane suggested that the use of espionage in England during the later Middle Ages (and particularly from 1422-85) ‘has been little explored’, idem, England in the Fifteenth Century, ed. G.L. Harris (1981), p. 259, n. 101. The publication of Ian Arthurson’s article in 1991 remains the only significant contribution to the subject (see n. 6 above).
to information gained from Florentine merchants and from ‘notable’ men in Rome such as Adriano Castellesi; as a result, Henry received ‘especial information of every event’. Henry’s courtiers were also praised by Soncino for having a ‘great knowledge’ of Italian affairs. Many later historians have followed the judgements of Soncino and Bacon in commending Henry VII’s unrivalled access to diplomatic information and intelligence.  

Most scholars have usually compared those princes operating before the introduction of resident ambassadors unfavourably with kings such as Henry VII, whose use of residents and ‘organised’ espionage is suggested to have provided a far superior system of collection and communication of diplomatic information and intelligence. The special or temporary ambassadors used by Edward IV and his contemporaries in Northern Europe are depicted as being far less useful in furnishing a regular and accurate supply of diplomatic information. And furthermore, Mattingly implied that since temporary ambassadors did not have regular, dedicated teams of couriers connecting them with their principals, they could neither send back regular dispatches, nor receive regular instructions from home; they might, instead, be isolated and ‘practically on their own’. Similarly, the use of espionage by princes dependent on older methods is suggested to have been irregular and unorganised. During the period in which Edward IV was operating, espionage was supposedly only an ad hoc response to ‘military or diplomatic crises’. The backwardness of Edward IV’s information network, in particular, has also been highlighted due to the infamous espionage activities of one of Edward’s immediate diplomatic opponents, Louis XI. C.L. Scofield wrote that ‘Louis had so many spies here, there and everywhere that it was next to impossible to conceal from him anything he had a wish to know.’  

Emphasis on the successes of Louis XI and the information-gathering systems put into practice during the reign of Henry VII, has meant that much less is known

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12 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice and in other Libraries of Northern Italy, ed. R. Brown et al. (38 vols, 1864-1947), I, no. 751, pp. 260-1: letter written from London on September 8th 1497; for Castellesi, see M. Underwood, ‘The Pope, the Queen and the King’s Mother: or the rise and fall of Adriano Castellesi’, in B. Thompson (ed.), The Reign of Henry VII (Stamford, 1995), pp. 66-7.


15 Ibid., 142.

about the means by which Edward IV gathered information about international affairs. However, it is the contention of this chapter that Edward IV too was at the head of an effective and well-organised information network, and that there was far more continuity between Edward’s information network and the systems developed during the sixteenth century than most historians have allowed.\(^{17}\) Thus, at this point it is also opportune to note that, especially in the early sixteenth century, the appointment of a resident ambassador did not immediately bring with it all those changes to intelligence-gathering that most historians have consistently suggested, such as intensive dispatch writing and dedicated courier routes. Although, on occasion, John Stile may have sent up to four dispatches in one week, the normal number of dispatches received by the English government (even allowing for the loss of a good proportion of the letters), was probably somewhat fewer. For example, Stile wrote to Henry VIII on 23 January 1510 that ‘by my other letters wretyn yn the town of Mansylya [Mansilla?], on the thyrd day of December, as also by my letters wretyn in the town of Valadalyd on the fowrythe and on the elevynth day of thys monythe of Jeniver, y certefyed unto yowr hyzghnys of the nwys at that tyme yn thys partys accruant’.\(^{18}\) Since any of Stile’s letters would have usually contained such news, it is likely that this summary of his letters previously sent back to England in December 1509 and January 1510, is comprehensive. Moreover, Stile himself was not yet able to rely on a regular system of couriers maintained by the English government; at the end of his letter of 9 September 1509, Stile confirmed that he had sent the letter by a courier, hired in Spain, to Flanders where one ‘Jeram Frescobald’ would then ensure its delivery to the king.\(^{19}\) Likewise, although Niccolò Machiavelli’s writings stressed the need for messengers and couriers in the employ of the home government, he complained that during one of his own embassies he had had to rely on sending letters back to Florence in the care of merchants or other diplomatic envoys.\(^{20}\)

As we have seen already, there have been some attempts to prove that Edward IV was the first English king to use resident ambassadors, but these attempts have generally been unsatisfactory, based on a confusion between Edward’s resident proctors in Rome and the genuine English residents at secular courts of the early


\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 88.

\(^{20}\) Berridge, ‘Machiavelli on Diplomacy’, 19.
sixteenth century. Even though Edward IV did not adopt the system of residents, this does not mean that he was entirely denied the most famous benefit of the new standing diplomacy, the political dispatch, filled with all kinds of diplomatic information and political intelligence. Edward did receive such dispatches from temporary agents sent abroad for specific purposes. During the troubled early years of his reign, Edward’s government received diplomatic reports from Antonio della Torre, the earl of Warwick’s agent and messenger in Italy. Della Torre was a considerable letter writer and wrote many to the papal envoy Francesco Coppini; in fact, in late March 1462 he wrote letters to Coppini first from London, then again from Bruges a few days later. Clearly, the English government was also in receipt of a large number of dispatches written by Della Torre, such as those received by Edward’s chancellor in April 1461. Later in the reign, another temporary Yorkist agent, Robert Neville, also wrote lengthy reports on the diplomatic situation, akin to the dispatches of resident ambassadors. From Lille on 17 November 1464 Neville wrote a long description of all the negotiations he had carried out with Louis XI and with Philip the Good, including all the diplomatic news which he had been able to unearth. He gave information, for example, about all the embassies coming and going between France and Burgundy, including the exact membership of some of the missions. It is to be noted that no diplomatic dispatches like those described above now survive in the English archives, but it is likely that many more must have once done so. So, diplomatic reports and dispatches in themselves did not always occur in conjunction with the use of resident ambassadors; Edward IV’s temporary agents did send them, if more irregularly.

Confirmation that these ad hoc diplomats could also have considerable information-gathering duties comes from Philippe de Commynes who was surely meaning special ambassadors as well as residents, when he wrote that one of the best ways of procuring diplomatic information was to send ambassadors ‘for no better or safer way is known of sending a spy who has the opportunity to observe and find

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22 See above n. 2.
23 Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan, ed. A.B. Hinds (1912), no.125, pp. 106-8 (intelligence dispatch from Della Torre to Coppini, 25 March 1462, written from Bruges).
24 Ibid., no. 95, p. 80.
things out'; thus enabling a king to better know the plans of his enemies. Commynes also advised that an extremely close watch be kept on the lodgings of foreign ambassadors, so as to 'find out who goes to see them and to prevent malcontents taking them news'. Edward IV's special ambassadors were indeed responsible for the collection of diplomatic information and its dissemination to England. There can be no doubt that Edward IV's special ambassadors must have been responsible for sending back to England numerous letters and reports which contained news of all the important diplomatic developments which had come to the attention of those ambassadors during their missions. We have evidence from the reign of Richard III that Thomas Hutton, English ambassador to Brittany in 1483, was expected to write such reports. Within his instructions (preserved in the material relating to Richard III's signet in British Library Ms. Harleian 433) it was specifically stated that Hutton should certify the king 'with alle diligence alle the newes & disposicion there from tyme to tyme'. Of course, at the end of their missions they could also bring back letters from the kings or princes to whom they were accredited, all of which ensured that Edward IV was formally informed of both the official state of relations between England and those countries, and any other information which those rulers chose to impart.

The most important kind of information which the king needed to receive from his ambassadors whilst they were abroad was a full account of the state of negotiations and any points of disagreement which had arisen between the two negotiating parties. On the basis of this information the king might then order his ambassadors to conduct the remaining negotiations according to new instructions. Some instructions of 1483 given to Thomas Grafton and William Laverok, sent to treat with Philippe de Crévecoeur seigneur d'Esquerdes concerning the restitution of some of d'Esquerdes' ships, show that diplomats were obliged to regularly inform the king of the state of negotiations. The instructions state that Grafton and Laverok should certify 'from tyme to tyme with alle diligence the kinges Counsaille of suche difficultes and novelties as they shalle happe to finde in any of the premisses'. However, owing to the lack of English chains of post on the continent during Edward IV's reign, and in order to keep in contact with the king during diplomatic meetings,

27 Ibid., p. 198.
29 Ibid., pp. 33-4.
English embassies were usually accompanied by heralds and pursuivants. Large embassies would be accompanied by up to four or five of these officers of arms who would then be expected to travel back and forth between the embassy and England ferreting information concerning the state of the negotiations to the king.\textsuperscript{30} The diary of the diplomatic negotiations carried out between England and the German Hanse at Utrecht in the summer of 1473 provides ample evidence for officers of arms being used in this way. The writer of the diary stated that the English ambassadors had sent Bluemantle Pursuivant from Dordrecht on 30 July 1473, with ‘our lettres and their booke’.\textsuperscript{31} The ‘booke’ was a statement by the Hansards on the state of negotiations, and a list of their demands and counter-offers. On the 24 August Bluemantle arrived back in Bruges with the king’s carefully formulated response to the ambassadors’ letters and the Hanseatic ‘booke’. In the same month, Windsor ‘the herault’ had been sent back to England with further letters from the ambassadors requesting that the king write to the duke of Burgundy asking him to involve himself in the tortuous negotiations.\textsuperscript{32} So the use of these officers of arms provided a vital information-link between Edward and his ambassadors, allowing the king to become more directly involved in distant diplomatic conferences and diets.

Messengers of a lower rank than heralds and pursuivants were also used for the same purpose; in the autumn of 1461 John lord Wenlock was accompanied to Burgundy by one ‘John’, messenger of the king.\textsuperscript{33} But it was often the case that household servants of English ambassadors or other minor members of their entourage would travel back to England with a variety of letters and other information connected to their embassies. In July and August 1467 Richard Beauchamp, bishop of Salisbury, and Edward IV’s ambassador to Burgundy, sent one of his own chaplains back to England to keep Edward IV in touch with the lengthy marriage negotiations being carried out between England and Charles the Bold.\textsuperscript{34} Likewise, in 1473, an English ambassador to the diet of Utrecht, John Russell, sent one John Canyng from the diet back to Edward IV. Canyng was Russell’s personal chaplain and the ‘grete and chargeable matiers’ he was sent with, were to inform the king of the negotiations.

\textsuperscript{30} The English embassy to St Omer and Hesdin in October 1463 was accompanied by Windsor and Warwick heralds and the pursuivants Calais and Noir Lyon: ADN, B 2051, fol. 79v.
\textsuperscript{31} Hansisches Urkundenbuch, ed. K. Höhbaum et al. (11 vols, Halle & Leipzig, 1876-1939), X, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{33} PRO, E 403/822, m. 8; it is unclear as to who this John actually was; John Mody and John Lawrence were both messengers of the Exchequer at this time (see Calendar of Patent Rolls 1461-1467, pp. 10 & 24).
\textsuperscript{34} ADN, B 2064, fol. 243-v.
and to ask the king’s advice on certain points of detail. After waiting for a few days Canyng then returned to the diet with the king’s ‘aunswer’; then the ambassadors presumably acted according to the king’s wishes. The minor servants of ship-owners could also be used by Edward’s ambassadors to send letters and information back to the king; in late 1464, Bernard de la Forse had travelled to Spain as Edward IV’s ambassador, travelling on a ship owned by Richard Asshe. At some point during his mission La Forse required that Asshe should send one of his servants to England ‘with divers lettres’ connected to his embassy. Although Edward’s special ambassadors were less frequently in direct contact with England than residents were to be in the sixteenth century, it is important not to overstress the communication difficulties between Edward IV and his diplomats. All English temporary embassies were equipped with a wide variety of messengers, heralds and household servants to ensure that a communications link was maintained at most times.

When English ambassadors finally returned home from their missions they would carry with them a great deal of written diplomatic material which would then be passed on to the king. Apart from copies of treaties and other agreements brought home for ratification, the ambassadors would bring quantities of personal letters to the king from the ruler to whose court they had been sent. For example, one of Edward’s ambassadors to Brittany returned home in the spring of 1476 carrying a number of letters from Francis II. Edward wrote immediately to the duke thanking him for the letters of ‘great love and affection’ which the duke had sent to England via Edward’s ambassador. John lord Howard and Sir Richard Tunstall also brought Louis XI’s letters to Edward when they returned home in April 1478. Ambassadors might also be entrusted directly with a verbal message to Edward IV from a foreign ruler; two English ambassadors returning from Brittany in 1475 were asked to deliver a verbal message to Edward IV on behalf of the duke. Francis supplied them with letters of credence, so as to ensure that the message would be believed. But, at the end of their missions it was also expected that ambassadors would submit their own verbal report

35 PRO, E 404/75/4/1; Canyng travelled from Utrecht to Lichfield where he met the king and waited ‘by the space of xxi dayes’.
36 PRO, C 81/803/1656 & PRO, C 76/149, m. 6. Richard Asshe is mentioned as one of the collectors of customs and subsidies in the port of Southampton (21 July 1467).
37 BN, Ms. Fr. 6983, fol. 65.
38 BN, Ms. Fr. 5044, fol. 48; this letter is dated 11 April and was written from Arras. The only occasion at which Louis XI was at Arras on 11 April was in 1478 (see Lettres de Louis XI, ed. E. Charavay et al. (11 vols, Paris, 1883-1909), XI (itinerary), p. 181.
39 BL, Cott. Ms. Vespasian III, fol. 59, ‘vous priant sur ce et autres choses donner foy et creance en ce que de ma part par eulx vous sera remonstre’.
to the king, ensuring that the king would be informed of all the actions that they had carried out on his behalf while they were away. It was sometimes ordered specifically in an ambassadorial commission that a report be submitted upon the return of the ambassador. On 1 September 1464 William Hatelyff had been commissioned to treat with Francis II of Brittany; he was explicitly ordered to inform the king, on his return, of the negotiations which he had carried out and the general diplomatic situation between England and Brittany.\footnote{\textit{Foedera, conventiones, literae...}, etc, ed. T. Rymer & rev. by G. Holmes (10 vols, The Hague, 1745; repr., Farnborough, 1967), V, pt II, p. 126.}

The diary of the diet of Utrecht in 1473 was probably written in the expectation that a comprehensive record of all the negotiations would be expected from the ambassadors once they had returned to England. The diary consists of a day-by-day account of all the negotiations undertaken between the English ambassadors and the Hanseatic League from 28 May 1473 until the 18 September of the same year.\footnote{BL, Add. Ms. 48006, fols 82-103v.} It is clear from the diary that a thorough explanation of all their activities during the embassy was expected, for the writer was keen to justify even the smallest gaps in the conduct of the negotiations. Whilst waiting at Utrecht for the orators of the Hanseatic League, the English ambassadors went on pilgrimage to ‘Ambreforde’ in order to ‘avoide idlenesse’\footnote{BL, Add. Ms. 48006, fol. 83; the ambassadors left Utrecht on 30 June and returned three days later.}. Although diaries such as this are extremely rare, it is apparent from other evidence that all English embassies ended with an extensive report of their activities to the king. On the 27 July 1480 during her visit to England, Margaret of York, dowager duchess of Burgundy, wrote to Maximilian duke of Austria, giving him an account of some recent news brought to her personally by Edward IV. Edward had learned from the ‘rapport’ of one of his ambassadors returning from France, that Louis XI’s intention was ‘by force of money and by all other means possible to him, to ensure that the king of England should be content to treat with him [Louis XI] and abandon you [Maximilian] and the duke of Brittany as well.’\footnote{P. de Commines, \textit{Mémoires}, ed. N. Lenglet du Fresnoy (4 vols, London & Paris, 1747), II, pp. 576-7; ‘ledit Sieur de Hawart a rapporté que l’intention du Roy Loys est de par force d’argent & par tous autres moyens à luy possibles, procurer que le Roy d’Angleterre soit content de avec luy besognier en vous abandonnant & ledit Duc de Bretagne aussi’; the English ambassador was John lord Howard.}

Obviously it was necessary that Edward IV’s diplomats should be able to inform him about the results and news arising from all kinds of negotiations and meetings undertaken by them during the course of an embassy. But it is widely
believed that, unlike residents, special ambassadors were not often able to impart much diplomatic information on subjects other than the conduct of their own embassies or the state of England’s own relations with the country to which they had been sent. Donald Queller suggested that the time-consuming conduct of specific negotiations meant that special ambassadors usually had ‘rather limited opportunities’ for the gathering of extra information and intelligence.\textsuperscript{44} However, the activities of English special ambassadors abroad never occurred in a diplomatic vacuum. Often they did indeed bring home diplomatic news of a more general nature. For example, Charles the Bold gave William Hatchlyff in March 1473 a great deal of extra information concerning the state of Aragonese-Burgundian relations.\textsuperscript{45} As we have seen, ambassadors could often find themselves at a foreign court in the company of several different groups of ambassadors from a variety of different European powers, from whom they could glean a great deal of information, often completely incidental to the missions they were undertaking. A letter of Charles the Bold written on 22 September 1473 tells us that Bernard de la Forsse had been in the Iberian Peninsula again. While there, certain things were ‘ouvert et communiqué à Bernard de la Forsse’, by some visiting Burgundian ambassadors. La Forsse had later reported this conversation to Edward IV so that he would know that ‘the interests of the house of Aragon were also his own’.\textsuperscript{46} According to an extract from an ‘Ancienne Chronique’ published in 1747, it was said that in April 1475 at the siege of Neuss, Charles the Bold entertained ambassadors from Naples, Milan, Venice, Hungary, Brittany and Aragon. Into this cauldron of diplomatic activity arrived another ambassador from England, Anthony Woodville earl Rivers.\textsuperscript{47} Woodville must have been able to send home a great deal of information quite supplementary to the specific mission for which he was sent to Charles the Bold.

So, ambassadors were responsible for the accumulation and communication of a great deal of legitimately collected diplomatic information; that is, information freely offered and available to them at the court they were visiting. But when Philippe de Commynes famously described ambassadors as spies he alluded to the fact that they were frequently responsible for the collection of more confidential diplomatic

\textsuperscript{44} D.E. Queller, \textit{The Office of the Ambassador in the Middle Ages} (Princeton, 1967), p. 88.
\textsuperscript{45} ADN, B 18823/23655.
\textsuperscript{46} ADN, B 18823/23655 [formerly in B339]; ‘ensuivant ce que par mesdits...ambassadeurs fut par de la ouvert et communiqué à Bernard de la Forsse vostre serviteur vous savez assiij que le bien de la maison d’Aragon est le vostre et le mien’.
information, often by quite dubious means. Historians such as Donald Queller and Garrett Mattingly have suggested that resident ambassadors were particularly likely to indulge in activities bordering on espionage. But it is obvious that special or temporary ambassadors were also expected to gather sensitive information. In July 1463, three English ambassadors who had spent the previous winter in Spain returned home to England; they were then paid twenty pounds which they had themselves paid to two English agents in Spain ‘pro certis secretis materiis’. Whilst in Spain they had clearly paid the agents to collect confidential information which would then be sent back to England. Edward IV’s ambassadors were often provided with large amounts of money, or expensive cloths, which they were expected to distribute amongst the courtiers of foreign powers; in return it was probably expected that the courtiers should pass on more sensitive diplomatic information that was not circulating freely in the country concerned. In August 1479 Dr John Coke and Bernard de la Fosse were supplied with a quantity of cloth, which was to be distributed amongst the magnates of Spain for this exact purpose. In March 1482 Edward IV’s ambassadors set out for Spain and took with them the large sum of £1000 to be ‘employed withinne the royaume of Spayn according to our commandment’. It is to be expected that some of the money at least was to be used by the ambassadors to buy private information on behalf of the English king.

It was not always the case that ambassadors would have to be abroad before they could collect diplomatic information. Whilst ambassadorial commissions were being prepared, and their documents organised, some of Edward’s ambassadors would ask their own personal acquaintances to seek out up-to-date information on the latest events taking place on the continent. Just before his ambassadorial mission to France, John Weston, prior of St John’s of Jerusalem in England, took advantage of his friendship with the Cely family to provide himself with a thorough knowledge of recent diplomatic events. The Celys were a mercantile family, travelling frequently between London, Calais, Bruges and Antwerp, hence they were able to bring back the latest diplomatic news from the major commercial centres on the continent. In June

49 Queller, The Office of the Ambassador, p. 91 (‘As the frequency and duration of missions increased and the office of the resident ambassador evolved, the danger of spying became more and more apparent’; see also Arthursom, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 135 and Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, pp. 102-6.
50 PRO, E 403/831, m. 10.
51 PRO, E 403/850, m. 8.
52 PRO, E 404/773/89 (10 March 1482).
1480, before Weston’s mission, he had written to Richard Cely almost ‘every weke...for to haue syche tyng as ye here in thys partyys [Calais]’.\(^{53}\) In January 1481 Weston was again asking George Cely (at Bruges) that he should ‘enquer of the Whensyans and Florantynys of tydyingys of the Rodys [Rhodes]’\(^{54}\) Clearly, much of the information passed to Weston by the Celys would have been of great use to the king. So, Edward IV’s ambassadors were responsible for collecting and then communicating much of the information which reached the king’s attention, either at home or whilst they were abroad. The previous concentration upon the revolutionary advancements in information-gathering techniques provided by resident ambassadors has meant that the intelligence duties shouldered by special ambassadors have been greatly underestimated.

Whatever information-gathering activities were undertaken by the Edward IV’s ambassadors, this ambassadorial responsibility was usually secondary to the conduct of negotiations with foreign rulers and their representatives. However, the king used a wide variety of other diplomatic personnel in order to bring back information, news and messages from the continent. It was most often the case that the king used heralds and pursuivants for such tasks; they would deliver the king’s messages abroad and then return to England with news and letters from the continent. Indeed those tasks were so central to the existence of officers of arms in the later Middle Ages that John Blount described pursuivants and heralds simply as ‘messangers’ and ‘gretter messangers’ respectively.\(^{55}\) In fact, the strict hierarchy of heralds and pursuivants dictated that the latter would often accompany heralds abroad acting as servants in their entourages.\(^{56}\) Just as ambassadors did, officers of arms would bring home written messages from foreign rulers or other influential members of continental society. For example, in October 1462 Calais Pursuivant was paid for bringing letters back from Philip the Good of Burgundy.\(^{57}\) Norroy King of Arms also brought back a direct message from Louis XI to Edward IV in 1477.\(^{58}\) However, it

\(^{53}\) The Cely Letters 1472-1488, ed. A. Hanham, EETS, original series, CCLXXIII (1975), no. 90, p. 79. Weston’s commission to treat with France may be found in Foedera, V, pt III, p. 112.

\(^{54}\) The Cely Letters, ed. Hanham, no. 114, p. 103.


\(^{56}\) PRO, PSO 1/47/2420 (under the signet, 24 June 1479); Clarenceux King of Arms was allowed the expenses of a pursuivant to accompany him to Burgundy to carry out the most minor message-bearing activities below the dignity of a king of arms; the pursuivant was Comfort (PRO, E 403/850, m. 6).

\(^{57}\) PRO, E 403/827A, mm. 2 & 3.

was rare for a herald to be paid solely for carrying letters and messages back to England, for the English exchequer evidence tells us that they were usually simply paid for taking the English king's letters abroad. When ready to leave a foreign court the herald or pursuivant would then receive a gift of money, usually in the expectation that the herald should then return to England and deliver the ruler's letters or verbal messages to Edward IV; March King of Arms was paid in this way by Charles the Bold in 1474. So, it is likely that most of these missions ended with the herald bringing back a direct written or verbal message to Edward IV, even if this is not made explicit by exchequer evidence.

However, if the diplomatic role of kings of arms, heralds and pursuivants is solely portrayed as the bearing of verbal and written messages from foreign rulers, their true importance to late medieval diplomacy may be unduly neglected. It is indicative of the poor light in which medieval information-gathering techniques are viewed that many historians have indeed attempted to devalue the usefulness of this type of diplomatic envoy. Both Garrett Mattingly and Donald Queller have also proposed that the activities of heralds were rather passive and simplistic. In fact officers of arms had a more active role to play in the Yorkist information-gathering system. Just like ambassadors, the more trusted and capable heralds would be expected to submit a report to the king outlining the details of their mission, and imparting the more important diplomatic news. Composing such a report necessitated observantly recording all events during their missions, and also at least a degree of political knowledge and understanding when choosing which facts were worthy to impart to the king. The letter of Étienne Fryon (Edward IV's French secretary from 1480) to John Gros, treasurer of the Order of the Golden Fleece, provides an almost uniquely detailed description of the kind of information which heralds could bring back to England. Chester Herald returned from France on 19 October 1480 with a detailed report on Louis XI's opinions and attitudes towards the English, which he compiled after several meetings with the French king. In the summer of 1480, 1,500

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59 PRO, E 403/840, m. 4 (for Nucelles Pursuivant taking Edward IV's letters to Charles the Bold of Burgundy in May 1468).
60 ADN, B 2064, fol. 199.
archers had been sent to Burgundy from England in order to support Maximilian of Austria, and as a result Louis XI was 'marvellously malcontent'. Chester also reported Louis' opinion that Margaret of York, dowager duchess of Burgundy, would not listen to Louis' compromise proposals because she had held him in great personal contempt and hatred. In fact it was Chester's opinion that Louis was so disappointed with the English that he was probably going to cease the pension payments agreed at the Treaty of Pecquigny in 1475.

Some contemporaries certainly felt that during the fifteenth century it had become more common for heralds and pursuivants to embark upon activities which bordered upon espionage, despite the fact that, strictly, their oaths of office precluded such activities. On the whole, it is agreed that heralds enjoyed a special immunity from war, since they belonged to an international order, rather like the clergy. Famously, the English and French heralds in attendance at the battle of Agincourt were said to have stood together, but apart from the main fighting; both groups then proceeded to count the casualties from either side. Two contemporary writers on the subject of heralds (Sicily Herald and Anjou King of Arms) argued that with such rights and privileges came great responsibilities. Anjou, writing around 1400, clearly stated that it was strictly prohibited for heralds and pursuivants to 'abuse their diplomatic immunity by spying out military plans for their masters when they were sent on embassies to the enemy'. Moreover, the herald was also expected to swear 'to be true to his lord and to report any treason he might hear spoken against him: to be serviceable and obedient to all lords and ladies, gentlemen and gentlewomen, and to keep their secrets except for treason'. How far heralds ever observed such niceties in practice, even in the youth of Sicily Herald and Anjou King of Arms, is far from clear. But both writers were certain that, by the fifteenth century, the expanding numbers of heralds and pursuivants had led to the decreasing quality of officers of arms which in turn meant that some had become guilty of espionage and the spying out of military information; Sicily, writing in 1435 and quoting a certain Jean Herard,

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63 'ledit Roy Loys est merveilleusement mal content de noz gens de guerre qui sont allez pardela', ibid., 258.
64 'Dit aussi le dit Chestre que nous sommes bien taiiliez de non avoir plus d'argent dudit Roy Loys', ibid., 258.
65 M. Keen, The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages (1965), p. 194.
67 Ibid., p. 43 & Keen, The Laws of War, p. 196, n. 4.
baldly stated that many of the ‘noble office d’armes’ should now simply be called ‘espies’.69

Indeed, in 1480 there is also good evidence that Chester Herald was making active and possibly secretive efforts to discover information other than that which was imparted to him during personal meetings with the French king. In fact, Chester had spent a great deal of time trawling the French court for news. For example, he stated that ‘he had understood in the court of the said king Louis, whatever it should cost him, that he will have an appointment with monseigneur of Austria...[and]...that he has a great understanding with the duke and his most principal councillors’.70 Chester also passed on the valuable information that ‘the country of Normandy is greatly full of Zuysches [Swiss], and that the king has sent there for at least eight or ten thousand’. It is not clear whether Chester was merely being observant or whether he had indulged in some sort of espionage to procure such sensitive military information. In any case, it seems that the complaint of Anjou King of Arms that heralds and pursuivants were sometimes guilty of revealing the military secrets of foreign rulers and princes, was, on occasion, quite justified.71 Rather more rarely, it can be definitely stated that certain heralds did take a direct part in obvious espionage and the gathering of secret intelligence information. Either during his mission to Scotland (in 1472), or just after he had returned to England, Thomas Holme, Norroy King of Arms, paid a ‘secret man’ to travel back to Scotland for secret purposes according to ‘the order of the king’.72 It is clear from these examples that the king’s officers of arms had a far more dynamic part to play in late medieval information-gathering than most historians have been prepared to allow. In some cases they even actively sought out information that was not readily available to them, or paid others to do so; this information could be of a particularly sensitive and valuable nature.

The king’s officers at Calais were frequently in receipt of a great deal of other diplomatic messages, information and news, often brought to them by means other than their own private heralds. In March 1462 Jean Guarre, a servant of the duke of Burgundy, brought letters to the lieutenant of Calais (probably John lord Wenlock),

70 ‘il dit qu’il a entendu en la cour dudit Roy Loys que quelque chose qu’il doye couster audit Roy Loys, qu’il aura apointment avec Monseigneur d’Osteriche, et qu’il soit vray qu’il a grant entendement avec ledit duc et aucuns de ses plus principaulx’, Davies & Ballard, ‘Etienne Fryon’, 258.
72 PRO, E 405/55, m. 4d & PRO, E 405/55, m. 4 (for Norroy’s trip to Scotland).
and the treasurer (Walter Blount) from Philip the Good. 73 In 1464 Richard Whethill, Edward’s lieutenant of Guînes, received other letters from Philip via another of his servants, Willequin Colx. 74 Of course, it is unsurprising that the earl of Warwick, as captain of Calais, received far more messages and letters than any other of the officers in the town; he did so according to the Burgundian accounts in 1463, 1464, 1465 and 1466. 75 Many of the messages and much of the information sent from foreign courts to these officers did simply concern parochial matters touching the governance of Calais and the Pale, Whethill’s letters in 1464 were sent to him ‘a cause d’aucuns chevaux empeschez par ledit Wittel’. 76 But it is possible that such letters also contained supplementary diplomatic information and messages secondary to the real purpose of the letter. Some letters touched directly upon diplomatic matters, Philip’s letters to Warwick in 1464 concerned ‘l’ambassade que ledit roy d’Angleterre doit brief envoyer devers lui [Philip] a cause du fait des treves d’entre les royaumes de France et d’Angleterre’. This was also the case during lord Hastings’ governorship of Calais in September 1477 when he received information from Margaret of York concerning ‘the affairs of madame the duchess of Austria [Mary of Burgundy]’. 77

The king’s officers at Calais would also receive a great many letters and messages, sent from abroad to the king or to influential courtiers, such as the earl of Warwick; hence the town acted as a busy clearinghouse for the diplomatic post. A large amount of evidence exists to show that, as lieutenant of Guînes, this was one of Richard Whetehill’s most time-consuming activities. He was extremely busy in 1464 forwarding the letters of Louis XI to Edward IV, the earl of Warwick and George Neville (Edward’s chancellor); according to Whetehill’s letter to Louis of the 19 February the letters ‘me fut donné en vostre nom par Mr. de la Barde’. 78 Later in the same month he received further letters from Louis, both addressed to himself and the earl of Warwick. Louis’ messenger, Jean le Begue, stated that Whetehill had sent Louis’ letters addressed to Warwick ‘a toute diligence’ to England. 79 Most diplomatic messages and information which the officers at Calais did receive, even if it was sent to the officers personally, would usually be passed on to the king or his close

73 ADN, B 2045, fol. 191-v.
74 ADN, B 2051, fol. 257v.
75 ADN, B 2051, fols 232v & 254v; ADN, B 2054, fol. 162-v; ADN, B 2058, fol. 138v.
76 ADN, B 2051, fol. 257v.
77 ADN, B 2115, fol. 54, the letters were brought to Hastings at Calais by Jean Hanwe ‘dit Cottry’; he had visited England previously in 1467 delivering messages from the duke of Burgundy to his ambassador, George Baert (ADN, B 2064, fol. 194).
78 Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, Appendix III, p. 467 (from BN, Ms. Fr. 6971, fol. 388).
79 BN, Ms. Fr. 2811, fol. 53.
advisors. In order to send such information to the king, royal officials would have been able to use a long established system of messengers in continual operation maintaining administrative contact between Calais and London. The account-books of the treasurers of Calais contain many hundreds of references to messengers travelling between Calais and the capital; between 24 November 1465 and 13 December 1466, for example, Thomas Blount (treasurer of Calais) paid John Newbolt and John Wilson to take a variety of letters concerning matters arising in Calais to the king, the chancellor and the treasurer of England.\(^{80}\) The town accounts of Dover also bear witness to the numbers of messengers passing through that town, whilst travelling between Calais and London.\(^{81}\) This system must surely have been used to ferry diplomatic messages and information as well.

Rumours and definite news of diplomatic events could come to the ears of the king’s officers in Calais quite frequently; and in a more informal manner than by means of personal letters addressed either to the king or his officers and courtiers. Passing ambassadors between England, France and Burgundy would usually travel between Calais and Dover; in the course of their journey they would naturally meet the king’s officers in the town and impart the latest diplomatic news. Olivier le Roux, Louis XI’s ambassador, certainly met lord Hastings at the town in late April 1477.\(^{82}\) In fact, there is good evidence that many Burgundian ambassadors used the opportunities afforded by Calais to inform themselves of diplomatic developments in France and England. On 13 February 1482, whilst he was at Calais, Philippe de Croy, count of Chimay, sent a messenger to Maximilian of Austria. The count and Maximilian’s other ambassadors in the town sent letters ‘by which they informed Maximilian of certain news from the quarter of France’\(^{83}\). However, the vast majority of the ‘tydyngs’ arrived at Calais through word of mouth along the major travel-routes from Calais to St Omer, Bruges and Brussels, and arrived with a startling frequency. The mercantile community of Calais, in particular, played a vital role in transmitting news of the major diplomatic events, information which they were keenly interested in, and which they gleaned from their various trading contacts throughout the Anglo-

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\(^{80}\) PRO, E 101/196/16, m. 3; for other examples see PRO, E 101/198/1, fol. 33-v

\(^{81}\) In the accounting year from 8 September 1472 to 8 September 1473, a messenger of the king received four pence in wine (BL, Add. Ms. 29616, fol. 100v; Dover Corporation Account Book, 1462-84). For similar references see ibid., fols 37v (for September 1468-September 1469; two payments), 52v (for September 1469-September 1470; two payments) & 84v (September 1471-September 1472; one payment).

\(^{82}\) HL, HA 13879, fols 2v-3v.

\(^{83}\) ADN, B 2127, fol. 94v.
Burgundian trading area. As we have seen, the Cely family were at the heart of this community and John Weston, prior of St John of Jerusalem, was keen for George Cely to bring back diplomatic information from Bruges. Richard Cely, the elder, was also keen for George to send him any 'tydyngs' that came his way; on 16 November 1480 George wrote to his father that 'myn howlde Lady [Margaret of York] ys comyng ffrom Bynus to Sent Tomers...some of the Dvkys Covnssl whold hawe whar and som pesse'. This kind of information was extremely likely to come to the attention of the king's officers at Calais at some point, for the Celys numbered among their personal acquaintances many of those same officers; in 1478 Robert Radclyf, porter of Calais, had arranged to buy a variety of goods through George Cely such as 'vj sugurre loves'.

An excellent example of the way that news came to the notice of the king's officers in Calais is provided by a letter printed from the muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. Sir John Scott (marshall of Calais until April 1479) wrote a letter from Calais on 9 August 1479 in which he stated that on 8 August he had 'worde that the Duke was overthrown and had loste the felde'. Scott was referring to the battle at Guinegatte between the French and the Burgundians, eventually marginally won by the forces of Maximilian of Austria. The first report of the battle which Scott probably received by word-of-mouth, was obviously incorrect; but he had not placed much faith in the report himself as he stated that 'this day [9 August] we have more sarteyn worde that the Duke hath the felde and hath al the Frensh mennys ordynaunce'. Scott believed the later tidings of the duke's victory to be more accurate as 'of this we have letters'. In fact, this example probably illustrates how most news came to the attention of the king's officers at Calais; preliminary reports via word-of-mouth (or rumour) would arrive via the main trading routes to Calais, followed soon after by written news letters or reports, which were probably more accurate.

Consequently, Calais occupied a vital place in the Yorkist diplomatic polity, especially in the era before the use of resident ambassadors. When permanent

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84 The Cely Letters, ed. Hanham, no. 114, p. 103.
85 Ibid., no. 110, pp. 97-8.
86 Ibid., no. 42, pp. 40-1.
87 Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections, vol. I (1901), p. 232. In C.L. Kingsford, English Historical Literature (Oxford, 1913), p. 393, it is stated that the letter belongs to the period ante 1476. However it must be that the battle referred to is Guinegatte, for in the letter Scott states it to have been fought on 'Saturday' (Guinegatte was indeed fought on Saturday 7 August 1479). For Scott as marshall of Calais from at least April 1471 until c. April 1479, see PRO, E 101/198/1, fol. 12v & PRO, E 101/199/8, fol. 13v; Sir Richard Tunstall held this position by 6 April 1479 (PRO, E 101/199/12, fol. 13).
embassies with dedicated chains of post and couriers on the continent could not be relied upon to ensure a *continuous* organisation and communication of diplomatic post and intelligence, Calais provided an effective and permanent substitute. All the wide variety of letters, messages and rumours and other information coming to the attention of the king’s officers there would have been sent back to England quickly using the constant stream of messengers in operation from the town.

Further diplomatic information was gathered by the king’s officers of Calais through the dubious means of espionage. The lieutenant or captain of the town of Calais and the lieutenant of Guînes were allocated considerable sums each year to allow them to send agents to the area surrounding Calais in order to uncover sensitive diplomatic and military material which did not arrive at Calais by the normal routes. Every year the captain was allowed £104 4s 8d to spend on spies and the lieutenant of Guînes was allowed to spend a further £33 6s 8d. In the account-book for 1471-2 of John Thirsk (mayor and treasurer of Calais) it was stated that the lieutenant of Guînes was allowed the sum of £33 6s 8d ‘super exploracionibus rumorum’; some supplementary documents to the same account state slightly more explicitly that the money was to be ‘expended and applied vpon the serche of tithings and errandes purposed of the parties of oure adversaries’. Lord Hastings, the lieutenant of Calais was allowed his normal sum simply for the purposes of ‘exploracione’. In years of diplomatic instability further monies were granted for the purposes of espionage. Richard Whetehill’s Calais account-book of 1461-2 includes an extra payment for certain spies sent to France and Normandy from Calais ‘to espy the intention and disposition of the rebels and adversaries of the king’. Likewise, during the turbulent year of 1477 William lord Hastings had obviously found it necessary to employ a larger number of spies than usual as he was allocated an extra £40 in order to send spies ‘into the partyes beyonde the see to bryng us knowlege of certaine matiers suche as they were sente thither for’. The information uncovered by such men would have been quickly reported, either by the king’s officers at Calais or the spies themselves, directly to the king. For Edward stated in 1478 that Hastings’ spies had brought him

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88 See for example: PRO, E 101/197/4, fols 25 & 33v-4; PRO, E 101/197/15, fols 27v & 37v; PRO, E 101/197/1, fols 24 & 33; PRO, E 101/198/8, fols 27 & 35, & also PRO, E 101/199/15, fols 37 & 47.
89 PRO, E 101/197/15, fol. 37v & PRO, E 101/197/17, m. 5.
90 PRO, E 101/196/2, fol. 34v.
91 PRO, E 404/76/4/21 (for espionage expenses until 5 July 1478).
the 'perfitenesse' of the matters for which they were sent, and this was to the king’s
'grete pleasur'.' 92

Henry VII among late medieval kings has usually been seen as the greatest
exponent of the art of espionage; Bacon wrote that in order to counteract the threat
from Perkin Warbeck, Henry sent ‘into Flanders, diverse secret and nimble scouts and
spies...to learn, search, and discover all...circumstances and particulars’. 93 Edward
also clearly recognised the benefits of espionage, for he had considerable numbers in
his employ. Unfortunately, in many cases the cryptic nature of the exchequer evidence
means that the names and missions of most spies sent from England are highly
obscure. At some point before January 1468 a ‘secrete persone’ was sent abroad ‘for a
grete cause whom we wol not bee named’. 94 We are frequently given only a cryptic
indication of the spy’s mission and no indication of the spy’s identity. For example, in
1462 a ‘certain spy’ was paid to journey abroad in the ‘king’s matters’. 95 Likewise in
early 1465 a ‘certain spy’ was again rewarded with 5 marks, for coming from foreign
parts with information of use to the king. 96 Later on in 1465 another spy was granted a
total of £30 6s 8d for being sent beyond the sea in the king’s service. 97 In some cases
the name of the spy is noted, but absolutely no indication of the spy’s mission is given
in the records. John Burton, Davy Cholmeley, 98 George Prout, John Russell (possibly
working in Burgundy), 99 Christopher Walker and Edmund Walsh are all paid sums of
money by the exchequer from 1464-5 and each is simply described as ‘explorator
regis’ in the exchequer records. 100 Where the exchequer records merely state that a
certain person carried out secret matters on behalf of the king, one can suggest that
those missions entailed espionage and intelligence-gathering but it is virtually
impossible to prove this conclusively. For example, in the summer of 1468 John
Druet was paid 5 marks for his labour in ‘certain secret matters’ in France. 101 On or

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92 PRO, E 404/76/4/21.
93 Bacon, The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh, ed. Weinberger, pp. 120-1.
94 PRO, E 404/73/3/92 (ante 20 January 1468).
95 PRO, E 403/825, m. 9, this spy was paid 13s 4d.
96 PRO, E 405/41, m. 1d.
97 PRO, E 405/42, m. 1.
98 Cholmeley must have carried out his duties successfully, for soon after we find him as yeoman of the
king’s chamber (PRO, E 405/44, m. 1; Easter Term 1466).
99 Possibly John Russell, Edward’s future bishop of Rochester and Lincoln, as well as keeper of the
privy seal.
100 PRO, E 405/41, m. 1d and PRO, E 405/42, passim.
101 PRO, E 405/48, m. 2d.
after 20 February 1468, John Wilson was also paid for certain ‘secret matters’ that he had carried out in foreign parts on behalf of the king.  

In a few fortunate instances we are provided with the spy’s name and a small indication of their mission or their destination; in the summer of 1465 Geoffrey Hamyll was sent abroad ‘in certain secret matters’ and before March 1466 Edward Walsh was sent abroad for the same reason. In 1465 Edmund de la Cage was sent abroad ‘to hear and learn the intentions and propositions of the king’s enemies...and thereafter inform the king and council’. In the fewer number of cases when the personal names of spies are revealed it is clear that Edward employed a number of foreigners in his intelligence services. In late 1462, in preparation for an English embassy to Spain, John Pygge ‘Spaynard’ and ‘esspye’ was sent (probably to the Iberian Peninsula) to spy on behalf of Edward IV. Similarly, around 1482 Leonard Currour (a Frenchman) was paid 40s for coming to the king from France with certain secret rumours. Obviously, a Spaniard and a Frenchman would be able to carry out Edward’s espionage relatively easily in their countries of origin. Edward’s secret agents also conducted their activities in spy-rings; for, in 1465 an unnamed spy was sent abroad, probably in the company of one Christopher Green, who paid out several amounts of money for the other spy’s expenses. So, it is certainly safe to say that during the reign of Edward IV, a great many spies were sent beyond the seas directly from England, rather than simply through the agency of the king’s officers at Calais.

Edward’s espionage activities were certainly not confined to France, Burgundy and Spain, for considerable numbers of his agents were also active in Scotland throughout the reign. Just as the king delegated certain intelligence-gathering activities to his officers at the strategic vantage point of Calais, it is also clear that the king’s officers and servants in the north of England were also responsible for a great deal of English espionage within Scotland. In the latter part of 1462 Robert lord Ogle was paid £13 6s 8d and 66s 8d in return for the wages of certain spies, whose missions Ogle had overseen. The object of Ogle’s espionage was probably to uncover the secrets of the French, Scottish and Lancastrian parties harbouring in the north at that time. One Scot, William Alanson, was also used by
Edward IV’s government throughout the 1460s to carry out espionage within Scotland; in 1462 he was paid 66s 8d and is described in the tellers’ rolls as an ‘espye’. He probably acted in a spy-ring with three other spies, Richard William, John Wate and Richard Lane, who were paid for spying in Scotland at exactly the same time. Alanson was still carrying out the same kinds of tasks in 1465 for he was then paid for going to Scotland in order to ‘hear and learn the intentions and propositions of the king’s rebels and adversaries in the same, and thereafter inform the king and council’. Alanson may have travelled under the guise of a Scottish merchant (or may also have been a merchant) for on 15 June of the same year a warrant was issued for a safe-conduct to be given to him for a ship of 80 tonnes to trade in England for a year, ‘in consideration of the good service of the king’ servant William Alanson’. The secret matters ‘laboured upon oure [Edward IV’s] bihalve’ by a certain Simon Logan, Scot, before 20 January 1468 may also have involved espionage.

In periods of diplomatic tension, even more agents could be sent by Edward into Scotland, this was most obviously the case after 1480 in preparation for Edward’s war with Scots. By the end of 1480 relations across the border had deteriorated markedly. Apparently, the earl of Angus had launched a daring attack on Bamborough, and in response, the duke of Gloucester had also led raiding parties into Scotland. Edward seems to have prepared for an invasion during the summer of 1481, but all that was achieved in that year was a naval raid which was launched on the east coast of Scotland under the command of John lord Howard. However, in the middle of July 1482 a full-scale invasion of Scotland was led by the duke of Gloucester and James III’s disaffected brother, the duke of Albany. Meanwhile James III’s regime was in disarray; the king had been captured at Lauder on 22 July 1482 and was quickly transferred to Edinburgh castle. Meanwhile Gloucester’s army faced little resistance and had control over Edinburgh by the end of July. Throughout the abortive preparations for invasion of 1481 and the eventual campaign in 1482,
Edward seems to have sent agents secretly into Scotland either to foment rebellion amongst the Scottish lords or to report on any defensive measures that James III was taking. From the Michaelmas Term of 1480 Patrick Haliburton was carrying out secret business in Scotland on Edward’s behalf and continued to do so until the English invasion of Scotland in 1482. In 1463, Haliburton had been described as a chaplain to the earl of Douglas (who had by that time taken up residence in England in the service of Edward IV); Haliburton himself had been given permission to reside in England since January 1467. Moreover, on 22 June 1481 Haliburton was formally commissioned as the king’s orator to treat with the earl of Ross (lord of the Isles) in order that James might be distracted by untimely internal dissension during the planned English invasion of Scotland. Haliburton’s activities must have caused James III some considerable annoyance, since between November and June 1483 the deputy-customer of ‘Are’ laid out £42 15s 6d for the expenses of a ship, sent to the lord of the Isles for the capture of ‘Patrick Haliburton, traitor’. In the early part of 1481 two other agents were sent to Scotland together, John Frysley and Richard Holland, and later in 1482 Frysley was sent again ‘versus partes Scotie’, to carry out certain secret business there. Likewise, at some point during the summer of 1482 a certain Richard Barowe of Holy Island was paid £10 for certain causes touching the king’s war against the Scots; owing to the cryptic nature of the payment it is not possible to determine Barowe’s duties exactly, although espionage seems likely.

It is clear that espionage payments largely disappear from the warrants for issue, issue rolls and tellers’ rolls rather abruptly around 1466, but that from 1481 some references to spies may again be found in the exchequer evidence in connection with Edward’s planned invasion of Scotland in that year and the eventual campaign led by the duke of Gloucester in 1482. So, if extra funds needed to be allocated beyond normal expenditure on espionage, at Calais for example, those payments were sometimes issued through the exchequer. The extra payment of £40 granted to

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116 PRO, E 405/69, m. 1 & PRO, E 405/70, m. 6; see also PRO, E 28/92/26, for a payment of 50 marks being issued to him on 19 February 1481.
117 CPR 1461-67, p. 542.
118 Foedera, V, pt III, p. 114; Haliburton also seems to have visited the duke of Albany at Dunbar around January 1483, although the warrant for issue which provides evidence for this mission has been mislaid since Cora Scofield inspected the warrants for that year (Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 358); The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, ed. J. Stuart et al. (23 vols, Edinburgh, 1878-1908), IX, p. 211.
119 PRO, E 405/69, m. 3 (Richard Holland received £5 on 2 March 1481, Frysley received 5 marks; see also PRO, E 405/566, unfoliated) & PRO, E 405/70, m. 6; see C.L. Scofield, The Life and Reign, II, p. 316, n. 4.
120 PRO, E 405/70, m. 1.
William lord Hastings in July 1478 clearly illustrates this process. However, from the middle of Edward’s first reign, regular everyday payments to the king’s spies working in France, Spain or elsewhere are not to be found as frequently as in the period from 1461-5. It is possible that the responsibility for the everyday payments to such spies was removed from the exchequer and transferred to the chamber; we know for example, that Henry’s chamber records contain many references to espionage payments. For example, several payments dating from Christmas 1491 were made to Henry’s spies: 20s was granted to ‘a fello with a berde a spye’; John Camell ‘a Scot, a spye’ was given 66s 8d and two ‘monkes...spyes’ were allowed 40s in reward. Importantly, these payments to Henry VII’s spies occur well before Henry’s decision to entirely transfer the responsibility for the disbursement of most diplomatic expenses from the exchequer to the chamber in 1494-5. Perhaps then, these payments from 1491 might reveal that espionage payments from the chamber were a continuance of Yorkist administrative practice. The possibility that Edward’s chamber began to make payments to spies might also be suggested by the fact that in Michaelmas term of 1468 Edward IV received a payment in chamber, directly from the exchequer, for the mission of ‘a certain person sent to foreign parts in the secret matters of the king’. Unfortunately since the chamber accounts of Edward IV do not seem to have survived, it remains impossible to prove conclusively that the chamber did begin to assume this responsibility from around 1466.

The collection of sensitive diplomatic information by covert means was a natural function of late medieval English diplomacy. Henry VII, in particular, as exponent of both ‘New Monarchy’ and the use of resident ambassadors, has been congratulated for his use of espionage mainly because, as we have seen, historians are blessed with a great many chamber records for his reign which provide good evidence for his use of spies and secret agents. But Henry’s reign was not particularly

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121 See n. 91 above.
123 BL, Add. Ms 7099, pp. 1-2; this manuscript contains Craven Ord’s transcripts of a now lost Chamber expenses book (the first section appears to date from 22 August 1491 until 21 August 1492, 7 Henry VII). For a detailed summary of all the extant chamber expense books, see D. Grummitt, ‘Henry VII, chamber finance and the ‘New Monarchy’; some new evidence’, Historical Research, LXXII (1999), 230, n. 5. Ian Arthurson has also used this manuscript to outline Henry VII’s efforts at counter espionage: idem, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 140, n. 29.
124 Currin, “Pro Expensis Ambassatorum”, p. 608.
unusual. Edward IV also greatly appreciated the value of espionage; there is much
evidence to suggest that he too was a notable and diligent spymaster, as all kings had
to be in the labyrinthine world of late medieval diplomacy. After all, on more than
one occasion Edward had good reason to be grateful for the timely receipt of
important political intelligence. According to the writer of the Croyland Chronicle,
before Edward fled England in early October 1470 he had heard, ‘Thanks to the
diligence of a spy’, of the treachery of John Neville marquis Montagu.127

Furthermore, some commonly-expressed assumptions concerning the use of
espionage during the later Middle Ages are in need of urgent alteration. J.R. Alban
and C.T. Allmand suggested that the use of espionage in the fourteenth century was
usually linked with the operation of military campaigns and the prosecution of
successful warfare.128 As a development of this view, Ian Arthurson proposed that
‘organized’ espionage was wholly a product of the new standing diplomacy and that
espionage in earlier periods was simply an ad hoc response to ‘military or diplomatic
crises’.129 Although, as we have seen, Edward IV’s espionage payments did increase
in times of international tension and warfare, this is not really all that significant or
surprising. Enough evidence of regular espionage payments exist, throughout
Edward’s reign, to prove that it was becoming a permanent and regular item of
government expenditure. The developing use of particular long-term spies in specific
countries (ie the king’s French spy130) was not just a product of the diplomatic
developments of the early sixteenth-century. Even if William Alanson was not
expressly stated to be the king’s Scottish spy, he certainly acted in that capacity for a
number of years.131 Moreover Edward’s spies were not simply sent abroad in an ad
hoc manner to work alone, for there are numerous examples of his spies, acting in
pairs or acting in concert with others in organised spy-rings. The organised and
regular use of espionage should not simply be associated with the era of standing
diplomacy, Edward IV also depended on an espionage network of considerable
organisation and complexity.

been stated elsewhere that this spy was probably one of the king’s minstrels, for which see Scofield,
The Life and Reign, I, p. 539; Arthurson, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 138 and Plumptson
Correspondence: a series of letters, chiefly domestick, written in the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III,
Henry VII and Henry VIII, ed. T. Stapleton, Camden Society, original series, IV (1839), p. 105. For
Edward’s use of spies in April 1471 see McFarlane, England in the Fifteenth Century, p. 259, n. 101.
128 Alban & Allmand ‘Spies and spying in the fourteenth century’, pp. 100-1.
129 Arthurson, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 142, and see nn. 14 & 15 above.
130 Ibid.
131 See above, but also Rotuli Scotiae, ed. Macpherson et al., pp. 402-3, 408-9 & 418.
Edward’s government also appreciated the value of counter-espionage; for there are examples from the reign of Edward IV to show that foreign agents and Lancastrian sympathisers could find themselves subject to effective action to suppress both spying and conspiracy. In May 1463 a commission was issued to Thomas Rede and Richard Higham ordering them to examine all ‘suspected persons, foreign or denizen’ coming to the town of Hastings. According to their commission the king had had knowledge that ‘certain persons, both Englishmen and French, Scots and other foreigners, come to divers parts of the county of Sussex doing no work or traffic but spying the rule and governance of the county and spreading rumours’. Although there is no further evidence of the success or failure of this initiative in Sussex, it is clear that at around the same time, probably before April 1463, a spy was captured in the vicinity of Sandwich where he was promptly imprisoned. Later on in the summer, the expenses of a horse and a guard were provided to take the same spy to be interrogated by the king, then residing at Canterbury. At some point before 12 July 1471 John Boon (the double agent whose activities have been described in a previous chapter) was captured. John White of Dartmouth, merchant, had somehow captured Boon, and notwithstanding the large bribe that Boon offered, White carefully ensured that he was also taken directly to Edward IV, to the kings ‘grettest’ pleasure. During the 1460s several Lancastrian agents guilty of conspiracy and, in some cases, outright espionage were also captured. For instance, one Cornelius, servant of the Lancastrian exile, Sir Robert Whittingham, was captured at Queenborough in June 1468 and was found to possess several incriminating letters regarding other Lancastrian sympathisers in England. Under torture, Cornelius apparently revealed the names of several other Englishmen in treasonable contact with the Lancastrian party, even including a servant of John lord Wenlock.

So, the effectiveness and complexity of information-gathering systems before the advent of standing diplomacy has been underestimated by most historians. Even if Yorkist diplomatic agents, ambassadors and officers of arms were undertaking

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132 For counter espionage measures taken by the English government during the fourteenth century see Alban and Allmand, ‘Spies and spying in the fourteenth century’, pp. 89-99.
133 CPR 1461-1467, p. 280.
134 BL, Add. Ms. 33,511, fols 7 & 9.
135 PRO, PSO 1/35/1818; for the personal interrogation of spies and other secret agents by both Edward IV and Henry VII, see Arthurson, ‘Espionage and intelligence’, 141, n. 34.
temporary missions, they still had considerable responsibilities for the collection and communication of diplomatic news and information. Sometimes, these activities could border on espionage, for the gathering of sensitive intelligence was not just the preserve of resident ambassadors. Furthermore, whilst Edward’s diplomats were abroad, even though they did not have permanent systems of dedicated couriers and posts to keep them in touch with the English government, they were instead able to depend upon a wide variety of heralds, messengers and menial servants to carry out that duty. In the early sixteenth century, standing diplomacy and regular courier routes did begin (after a slow start) to provide an improved regularity to information-gathering, but, on the other hand, during the reign of Edward IV, Calais helped to provide a large degree of organisation and continuity to the late medieval information network. Messages from Edward IV’s diplomats operating in the thriving diplomatic centres of Bruges, Brussels, Utrecht, Arras and St Omer, and other letters and news coming from different sources on the Continent, would be sent to Calais and quickly communicated to the king using an established and permanent system of messengers travelling between Calais and London. And the development of espionage in the sixteenth century drew on important precedents from the period before the adoption of resident ambassadors, such as the comprehensive espionage network operated by Edward IV. More regular and highly-organised information networks did develop as an adjunct of permanent diplomacy, but they, in turn, developed from previous systems which were far more effective than is usually suggested.
CONCLUSION

The historiography of the development of diplomacy during the fifteenth century has been almost entirely founded upon discussion of the Italian origins and employment of resident ambassadors. Moreover, the recent publication of a large amount of documentary sources relating to Italian diplomacy has served to intensify the emphasis on Italian practice.¹ Some of the new studies of Italian diplomacy have, in fact, modified earlier views by suggesting that a ‘comprehensive system of residency’ had not yet developed (even in Italy) by the second half of the fifteenth century.² The same studies have also tended to downplay views expressed by historians such as Garrett Mattingly, that the duties of resident ambassadors revolved almost entirely around espionage and intelligence-gathering.³ If the study of fifteenth-century Italian diplomacy has become more popular than ever, the same certainly cannot be said of the diplomatic practice of the Northern European powers.

The mechanics of English diplomacy during the later Middle Ages have been largely ignored by historians, who, when they concern themselves with English diplomacy in the fifteenth century, usually observe and discuss the origins of England’s first resident ambassador.⁴ On the whole, the practice of late medieval English diplomacy seems to have been deemed unworthy of study in its own right.⁵

In the absence of concentrated attention from the historical profession, our perception of fifteenth-century diplomatic practice in England (and, to a certain extent, in the rest of Northern Europe) remains decidedly distorted. English diplomacy before the introduction of the resident ambassador, is depicted as rather

‘top-heavy’, inflexible and inefficient. Generally, English historians have tended to confine their research to the most easily accessible classes of evidence, that is treaties, formal diplomatic commissions and instructions (the majority of which are printed in the various editions of Rymer’s *Foedera*). Hence, it is unsurprising to find that diplomacy during the later Middle Ages is seen to be dominated by the most formal (and supposedly inflexible) means of diplomatic contact, the special ambassador. Yet, when combined with an analysis of the English exchequer records, even the most cursory of searches through the extensive collections of, say, the *Archives Départementales* at Lille or the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris, reveals that English diplomacy in the later Middle Ages was about far more than special ambassadorial contacts alone. The missions of special ambassadors took place on the surface of a complicated world of less formal diplomatic contacts, a world inhabited by a variety of unempowered diplomatic agents, kings of arms, heralds, pursuivants, messengers and spies, many of whom might undertake missions necessitating particular delicacy or skill.

If late medieval diplomacy was not ‘top-heavy’, then neither was it necessarily inefficient. Efficient diplomacy is most normally associated with the technique of using resident ambassadors; apparently ‘the institutionalisation of the resident ambassador also signalled an increasing awareness that diplomacy itself worked most efficiently when it was a continuous, rather than episodic process’.

6 So, it has often been argued that resident ambassadors alone were able to provide the continuity necessary for efficient diplomacy. But, even if the consistent appointment of successive resident ambassadors did eventually provide a new regularity to English diplomacy during the sixteenth century, it must not as a consequence be argued that diplomatic contact in earlier periods was, by definition, patchy and discontinuous. Special ambassadors could, on occasion, be present at foreign courts undertaking missions of an extremely lengthy duration. Diplomatic reciprocity would mean that as soon as an English special ambassador finally left a host court, he could be accompanied back to England by a representative of the court that he had just visited. When special ambassadors from England were not present at the courts of Northern Europe, unempowered envoys could be sent instead, perhaps to undertake informal negotiations (although for the formal conclusion of particular agreements, the dispatch of formal ambassadors would later be required). The sort of informal

diplomatic contact provided by such envoys was often deemed suitable, for example, during periods of tension between England and France, when to send a special embassy was politically impossible. Further opportunities for informal diplomatic contact presented themselves as a result of the English possession of Calais, the king’s officers there were in frequent (almost routine) discussion with envoys of the king of France or the dukes of Burgundy, and it was not uncommon for envoys from more distant powers to be present at Calais as well.

Late medieval diplomacy was not, by nature, discontinuous. Nor was it inflexible or unresponsive. Special embassies did not act as completely separate and independent units, especially if they were sent to the same court in quick succession. Both the personnel and the purpose of the embassy would often overlap, meaning that it is impossible to tell where one ‘embassy’ began and another ended (especially in periods of particularly frenetic activity such as the Anglo-Burgundian marriage negotiations from 1466-8). Whilst special ambassadors were not expected to exceed the limits of their powers or instructions when it came to signing a formal diplomatic agreement, it was common for them to embark upon unplanned informal negotiations for which they had no powers or instructions whatsoever. Despite the fact that medieval diplomacy has been portrayed by historians as rather cumbersome and bureaucratic in comparison to the resident diplomacy of the Renaissance, it seems that when necessary, the wheels of the later medieval diplomatic machine turned at great speed. Thomas Danet hurried to France on Edward IV’s behalf (complete with lengthy instructions, a letter of credence and a raft of other documentation) in the first week of April 1478, just a couple of days after Edward had received the letter from Margaret of York which necessitated the mission. Envoys could also be sent at similar speed from Calais to maintain England’s diplomatic interests at the courts of France and Burgundy, especially in periods of international tension (as was certainly the case in 1477). In this respect, the place of Calais in the Yorkist diplomatic polity was undoubtedly vital.

Historians have frequently stated that the adoption of resident ambassadors signalled a fundamental advance in the development of information and intelligence-gathering. Garrett Mattingly, for instance, stated that ‘it was, apparently, as political intelligence officers that the residents demonstrated their usefulness more decisively’. Gradually (more slowly, in fact, than is usually assumed), residents

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7 See chap. 3, p. 111.
8 Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, p. 104.
began to be able to rely on more regular, dedicated courier routes by which they were able to send their dispatches and receive information from their home governments. Yet, the means by which diplomatic information was transmitted and received within the late medieval diplomatic polity were rather more effective than has been believed hitherto. Yorkist envoys were expected to send reports back to England during their missions (although few have survived); such reports and other letters, messages and news would be transported back to England via Calais, the hub of the late medieval information network. Furthermore, that Henry VII’s suspicious nature is so well-known, should not blind us to the fact that spies, double agents and counter-espionage were significant parts of the English diplomatic polity long before 1485.

The idea that the English adoption of resident ambassadors was part of a more general process of change in English government under the Tudors seems to have been outlined for the first time by Samuel Daniel in his *The First Part of the Historie of England* (published in 1613). Daniel thought that the Tudor period was a ‘time not of that virilite as the former, but more subtile, and let out into wider notions, and bolder discoveries of what lay hidden before’. Among the celebrated innovations of the Tudors, Daniel named ‘Leidger [resident] Ambassadors first imployed abroad for intelligences’. It has now become common for historians to question how far, in fact, the system of English government did undergo a dramatic and fundamental change in the decades around the turn of the sixteenth century; recently, according to John Watts, ‘Administrative development under the Tudors has been presented as a slow and incremental process, in which neither the 1530s nor the reign of Henry VII was especially distinctive’; moreover an ‘emphasis on continuity between the world of fifteenth-century government and that of Henry VII and Wolsey has found wide acceptance’. But, as Steve Gunn has suggested, a bland statement of continuity between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries does little to clarify the ‘earthquake zone’ between 1471 and 1509 (least of all in determining any changes that took place in diplomatic practice). For it is difficult to deny that in the sixteenth century, the use of resident ambassadors, regular courier routes, ciphers and an almost obsessive

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concern with secrecy, were predominant and rather novel features of what we might (for want of a better term) call Renaissance diplomacy.

However, in the historiography of the subject, this idea of Renaissance diplomacy rests on an unfair and unwarranted denigration of diplomatic practice in earlier periods. In the first place, there were, after all, some noticeable continuities: for example, the ‘generalised’ diplomatic remit for which the resident ambassador has been so constantly lauded, was also possessed by the special ambassadors and other trusted envoys used throughout the later Middle Ages. The widespread and regular use of spies was not a sixteenth century invention either. The history of diplomatic practice before the adoption of resident ambassadors should not be regarded merely as the pre-history of Renaissance diplomacy. This thesis has sought to demonstrate that, when studied on its own terms, diplomacy during the later Middle Ages appears to be marked by a far greater degree of efficiency, flexibility, responsiveness and diplomatic continuity than most historians (especially of the diplomacy of later periods) have ever admitted.
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