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# THE ADLINGTON ROLL, A WINDOW INTO THE ENGLISH PEERAGE DURING THE REFORMATION

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*Figure 1:* left, arms of the Duke of Norfolk with Plantagenet (Brotherton) in the second quarter; right: arms of the Duke of Suffolk with the 'L plate' arms of Widville in the sixth quarter. Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.

## Introduction

The Adlington Roll is one section of a bound volume of manuscripts in Chetham's Library, Manchester, known collectively as the Adlington Manuscript.<sup>1</sup> This was deposited at Chetham's Library by Mr Edward Lloyd of Adlington Hall, Cheshire, in 1846. The material bound up in the volume includes medieval forestry accounts, a copy of the will of Henry VIII, accounts of the funerals of two Earls of Derby, and a record of the heraldic decoration on the chimney breast at Adlington Hall. There is a total of 177 folios in the work, of which folios 21 to 38 form the heraldic roll. The Adlington Roll is painted on paper, its dimensions being 40 cm by 27.5 cm (16 inches by 11 inches). The folios display sixteen shields arranged in a four-by-four matrix.

Heraldically the Roll divides into four sections: Kings, English nobility, Cheshire gentry and Lancashire gentry. The shield shapes on folios 21 to 34 are the same, while folios 35 to 38 have a slightly more ornate design, coincident with the section of Lancashire gentry. All the sections have points of interest, but the Peerage section is the one which is pertinent to this paper. There are a total of 60 heraldic peerage shields,

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arranged in order of rank, proceeding from duke to marquis, earl, viscount, and lastly baron. Within each rank there is an order of precedence, which is the order by which they would have processed into parliament. The family's order of precedence was a matter of great family pride and importance.

### The Dukes

There are only two dukes in the roll, the Duke of Norfolk (Howard) and the Duke of Suffolk (Grey). (**Figure 1**) This makes dating the roll (at least the peerage part) very simple. During the rule of the Houses of Lancaster and York there were very few people granted the title of duke who were not Plantagenet princes. The latter bore the titles of Cornwall, Lancaster, Clarence, Somerset, Gloucester and York.

Here is a summary of those with the rank of duke, who were not male members of the Plantagenet family, during the reign of the first Tudor monarchs.<sup>2</sup>

- Buckingham created 1485 attainder 1521

The Duke of Buckingham was too closely connected to the old Plantagenet kings and some might argue that, as the legitimate heir of Thomas, Duke of Buckingham, youngest son of Edward III, he had a better claim genealogically to the throne than Henry VII. He fell out with Cardinal Wolsey, was executed, and the title forfeited.

- Norfolk restored 1514 attainted 1547 restored 1553

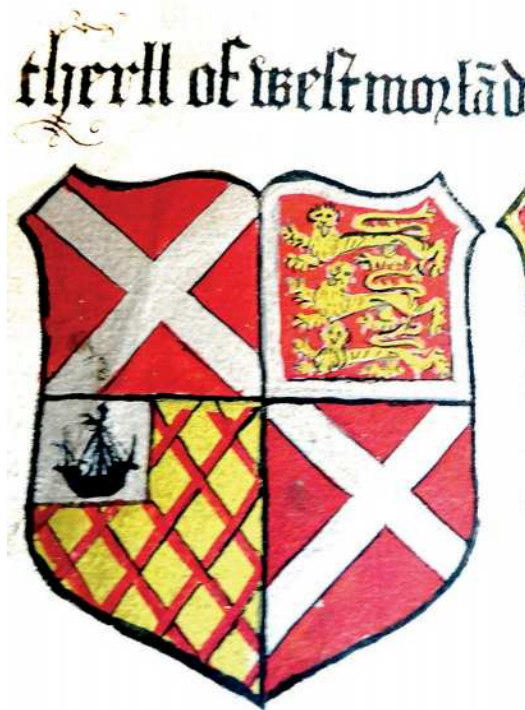
The Howard family are still Dukes of Norfolk today. The first Howard duke lost his life and titles at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. His family was eventually restored in 1514 and that duke's son, Thomas, succeeded his father. However, he too fell out with Henry VIII, who suspected the Howard family of having aspirations to the crown. Thomas's son and heir Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, was beheaded for using the arms of Edward the Confessor, and Thomas was also sentenced to death. He was saved from execution by the death of Henry the night before he was due to be executed. He remained imprisoned in the Tower until the accession of Queen Mary to the throne in 1553 when his lands and titles were restored to him. This was 3 August 1553. on the day of her entry into London.

- Suffolk (Brandon) created 1514 extinct 1551

Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk of that creation, married Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII. After his death he was succeeded in turn by his two sons. On the death of the younger in 1551 the title became extinct.

- Somerset created 1547 executed 1551 and
- Northumberland created 1551 executed Aug 1553.

The Duke of Somerset, (Protector Somerset), uncle to Edward VI and John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland were both executed following of power struggles for influence over the royal succession following the death of Edward VI. John Dudley was the father-in-law of Lady Jane Grey and failed in his attempt to have her crowned as successor of Edward VI.



*Figure 2:* the Earl of Westmorland's arms with Plantagenet (Earls of Kent) in the second quarter. Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.

- Suffolk (Grey) created 1551 executed Feb 1554.

Following the death of the 3rd Brandon Duke of Suffolk, Henry Grey, who had married his half-sister, was created Duke of Suffolk in 1551. His wife was the daughter of Princess Mary, while he himself was the father of Lady Jane Grey, but managed to survive the failed uprising to put his daughter on the throne. However Queen Mary had him (and Lady Jane) beheaded on 23 February 1554. He had been convicted of high treason for his part in Sir Thomas Wyatt's attempt to overthrow Mary after she announced her intention to marry King Philip II of Spain. This was the end of the Grey line as Dukes of Suffolk.

Henry Grey is the Duke of Suffolk in the Adlington Manuscript. His elevation to the peerage and his subsequent disgrace and execution provide start and end dates to the production of the Adlington roll. This period can be further refined by taking into account the date of the restoration of the Duke of Norfolk to his lands and titles (3 August 1553). Thus the roll must date between 3 August 1553, the Duke of Norfolk's restoration, and 23 February 1554, the execution of the Duke of Suffolk, a period of only seven months.

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### The accession and early reign of Queen Mary

Let us examine some of the key events which took place around this time frame, which coincided with the early part of the reign of Queen Mary I:

- 6 July 1553, Edward VI died.
- 10 July 1553, Lady Jane was proclaimed Queen
- 19 July 1553, Queen Jane was deposed
- 3 August 1553, Mary rode in triumphant into London.
- 1 Oct 1553, Queen Mary crowned
- 5 Oct 1553, Parliament meets
- Feb 1554, Wyatt rebellion.

The existence of only two ducal titles at this time is a reflection of the fate of other ducal titles in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, and illustrates how precarious was the ducal rank in the first half of the Tudor period.



*Figure 3:* left, 3a: arms of the earl of Wiltshire (Stafford family) with Plantagenet (Woodstock) in the first quarter and the paternal Stafford arms in the third; right, 3b: William Somerset, earl of Worcester with Plantagenet (Beaufort) on a fess in the first and fourth quarters, and Widville in the third. Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.

## The Lesser Peerage

There is further evidence in the Adlington Roll that membership of the Peerage at this time was fluid and people were struggling to anticipate what would happen next. Adlington includes the arms of the Marquis of Exeter and the Earl of Northumberland. During the seven-month period identified above there was no one with either of these titles. The background to these two titles at the time of Mary's accession could suggest that the restoration of these titles was anticipated but did not actually happen.

The arms of the Marquis of Exeter, as illustrated in the Adlington Roll, had belonged to Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, who bore in the first quarter, *Quarterly France and England with a bordure quarterly of England and France*. Henry was son of Sir William Courtenay and Princess Catharine, youngest daughter of Edward IV, and hence the use of the augmentation of the bordure. He was the first cousin of Henry VIII. Clearly, he was promoting his royal family connections as much as possible. As had happened with others who might have aspirations to the crown, (e.g. the abovementioned Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Surrey), the Marquis fell foul of King Henry VIII and was condemned and beheaded on Tower Hill on 9 December 1538. His titles were forfeited and his wife and son, Edward, were imprisoned. The king subsequently pardoned the marchioness, who was a close friend to Princess Mary. On Mary's accession to the throne she became a lady in waiting and her attainder was reversed. She took part in Mary's coronation and all court ceremonies and was styled Marchioness. Her son Edward was released from the Tower and Mary created him Earl of Devon on 3 September 1553. Edward was acknowledged as the proper heir to the lands and titles of his father, but apparently was not allowed to succeed him as Marquess of Exeter. Confusion as to whether he was restored to the title or not persisted for some time until J. H. Round produced an article arguing that Edward had not been restored to his father's higher rank<sup>3</sup>.

It is a similar story with the Earl of Northumberland, whose arms appear in the roll with the precedence of the original creation of 1377. The Northumberland estates were surrendered to the crown in 1537, on the execution of the tenth Earl. His male heir was restored to his estates, but not his titles, in 1549. It was not until 1557 that the title of Earl of Northumberland was restored with the precedence of his ancestors. The artist of the Adlington Roll may have been producing a Parliamentary roll for the Parliament of October 1553. Possibly he wrongly anticipated that the restoration of the titles of Marquis of Exeter and Earl of Northumberland, with its earlier precedence, would be early acts of the new Queen.

Consideration of the background of the two dukes that are present in the Adlington roll, noting the reason for the absence of other ducal titles, and events in the lives of the Courtenay and Percy families, show how uncertain matters were for members of the peerage at the transition from Protestant King Edward VI to Catholic Queen Mary. This class of the English ruling elite held a rather precarious existence as they approached the start of Queen Mary's reign.

By the time of Mary's accession the peerage had two elements:

- a. Members from families of long standing
- b. More recent creations whose careers were administrative rather than military.

The old guard can be seen to use heraldry and quarterings to display one or more of three features in their family background.

- Survival of, or connections with, a prominent family

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- Desire to show Royal descent
- Desire to show royal connections

A prime example of a family surviving through several branches is the Neville family. This is thanks to Ralph Neville, 1st Earl of Westmorland (d.1425), who had 11 sons by two wives. In the Adlington Roll there are three Neville families, the Earl of Westmoreland, the Lords Bergavenny, and the Lords Latimer. The Neville arms also appear as quarterings of Lord Conyers and of the Earl of Shrewsbury, whose ancestors had married Neville heiresses.

Some peers vaunted their Plantagenet descents. The Duke of Norfolk (Figure 1) and the Lord Berkeley both quarter *Gules three lions passant guardant a label of three points argent*. This shows their descent from Thomas of Brotherton, Earl of Norfolk, a younger son of Edward I. Descent from Edmund, Earl of Kent, the youngest son of Edward I, who bore *Gules three lions passant guardant a bordure argent*, is represented by a quartering in the arms of the Earl of Westmoreland (Figure 2) and the Earl of Rutland. These Plantagenet descents were from before the claim to the throne of France by Edward III, which introduced the quartering of the arms of France into the English royal arms.

The following families in the roll showed descent from Edward III and include arms based on *Quarterly France modern and England*: the Earl of Worcester, with his illegitimate descent from the Beauforts (themselves illegitimate, but legitimated descendants of John of Gaunt) used the arms, *Or on a fess quarterly France and England within a bordure compony argent and azure* (Figure 3b); the Earl of Wiltshire, descended from Thomas of Gloucester, youngest son of Edward III, placed *Quarterly France and England a bordure argent* in the first quarter of his arms (Figure 3a). His paternal Stafford arms were relegated to the third quarter. The arms of the Marquis of Exeter, as discussed above, also relegated the paternal Courtenay arms to be after the differenced Royal Arms.

If a peer could not show royal blood then, where possible, he vaunted his connection with other houses which had close family connections with the royal family. Edward IV married Elizabeth Widville who, together with her sisters, became heraldic heiresses to their brother Richard Widville, 3rd Earl Rivers. The Widville arms are the distinctive 'L plate' arms, *Argent a fess and a canton gules*. These are quartered by the Earls of Worcester (Figure 3), of Arundel, of Essex, and of Derby, and by the Duke of Suffolk (Figure 1).

The Suffolk arms on the roll are quarterly of eight and included Valence, which represents descent from William de Valence, the half-brother of King Henry III, a royal connection going back 350 years, almost to the start of heraldry. The arms of three of the peers on the roll are quite ancient, being noted in the poem about the Siege of Caerlaverock, in 1300. They are Percy (Earl of Northumberland), Courtenay (Marquis of Exeter), and Grey, (Duke of Suffolk). They provide examples of early peerage creations with ancestors who rose up in the military sphere.

The most recent peerage creations on the roll, namely the the last two earls on the list, and the only Viscount, had ancestors of a different stamp. The Russell (Earl of Bedford) family origins were those of courtiers. William Herbert (Earl of Pembroke) was an illegitimate descendant of the line of the Herbert, Earls of Pembroke, and was belted as in earl in 1551. He had military connections, but had been more involved in the administration of armed forces rather than leading men into battle. The same is true



for Viscount Hereford. Although he was descended from the Ferrers family of Chartley castle, whose arms he quartered, he was more of an administrator than a hardened battle veteran.

### The Baronage

As well as these recently created Earls and Viscount one can see a similar theme with the background and the arms of some more recent creations in the lowest rank of the peerage, the Baronage. Three examples will be considered:

Henry Lord Cromwell was the grandson of the attainted Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, Henry VIII's advisor (d.1540). The grandfather had risen to prominence in the King's court and was the son of a butcher. He had no military background, and neither did Henry's father Gregory who before the downfall of Thomas had in 1539 been created Baron Cromwell in his own right, with his own grant of arms, *Quarterly per fess indented azure and or four lions passant counterchanged*. These arms, which represent his son in the roll, were much simpler than those of the erstwhile Chancellor Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, which had been *Azure on a fess between three lions rampant or, a rose gules, between two Cornish choughs proper*.

Lord Pagett.



to. Lord Ryche.



Left, *Figure 4*: arms of William Lord Paget; right, *Figure 5*: Richard Lord Rich. Both barons have relatively simple coats and display no quarterings. Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.

William Lord Paget (1550) was the son of William Paget, a sergeant at mace of the city of London. He rose in government administration and was for a short period secretary to Queen Jane Seymour and to Queen Anne of Cleves. He served as Ambassador to France

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and Clerk of Parliament. His arms were *Sable on a cross engrailed argent five lions passant sable between four eagles displayed argent* (**Figure 4**).

Richard Lord Rich (1547) was a man of uncertain antecedents, who embarked on a legal career and rose high in the administrations of Henry VIII and Edward VI. His arms were *Quarterly or and azure a chevron between three roundels each charged with a lion rampant all counterchanged* (**Figure 5**).

These three lords were new men and administrators who could not muster multiple quarterings. By the start of Queen Mary's reign recruitment to the peerage was changing from the knightly and military class, as had happened in the fourteenth century, to minor gentry or the families of wealthy tradespeople.

### Conclusion

The Adlington roll, dating to the early months of the reign of Queen Mary, is an interesting window on the Peerage at a time when that body was facing the difficulty of a transition from the Protestant King Edward VI to the Catholic Queen Mary I. It was very easy to be imprisoned or executed if one supported the wrong faction at the wrong time.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chetham's Library, Mun. E.8.22.

<sup>2</sup> Details of the lives of the Peers referred to in this article are taken from the appropriate volume of G E Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Genealogist*, new series, vol iv, pp. 125–6.

<sup>4</sup> The author wishes to thank Chetham's Library, Manchester, for the use of the images from the Adlington Manuscript.