

## A Rebel of 1483: Sir Thomas de la Mare by Kenneth Hillier

During the Wars of the Roses, the town of Newbury, Berkshire, was the scene of several important transactions. It seems that the townspeople had originally shown a steady attachment to the House of York,<sup>1</sup> one indication being that a quarter of the body of Ramsey, a partisan of Jack Cade, was sent there, and exhibited in public. However, if the Lancastrian government had hoped to discourage the locals from further disaffection, the opposite seems to have occurred. In 1460, James Butler, Earl of Wiltshire and Lord Treasurer, and Robert, third Baron Hungerford, both staunch Lancastrians (they were to be beheaded by the Yorkists in 1461 and 1464 respectively), 'having the Kygnes commysyone went to the toune of Newbury, the whyche longed to the duk of York, and there made inquysycione of alle thayme that in any wyse had shewed any faouere or benyuolence or frendshyppe to the sayde duk, or to any of hys: whereof some were found gylyty, and were drawe, hanged, and quartered, and alle other inhabitantes of the forseide toune were spoyled of alle theyre goodes'.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-three years later it was a Yorkist King, Richard III, who faced revolt, and Newbury became a rallying point for those 'who have assembled the people by the comfort of the great rebel' the Duke of Buckingham; several important gentry from Berkshire and neighbouring counties met in the town on St Luke's Day, 18 October. I have already drawn attention to Sir William Norris of Yattendon (Berks.), Sir Roger Tocotes of Bromham (Wilts.), John Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt (Oxon.), and three residents of Southampton, Roger Kelsale, Sir William Overy, and Walter William, in previous articles. Kinship, fears for their 'livelihood', personal hostility to Gloucester's party, even commercial reasons, may have been responsible for their decision to revolt. Now, further study of another participant at Newbury reinforces my belief that the above factors were always more important than fears for the Princes' safety, or any desire to aid Henry Richmond.

Amongst the names of those attainted by the 1484 Parliament as 'false Traitors and Rebels' at Newbury was 'Thomas de la Mare, late of Aldermynston Knyght'.<sup>3</sup> The family of de la Mare appears to have been of Wiltshire origin, although the complexities of its early genealogy are frightening. There seem to have been at least two distinct branches by the end of the twelfth century, one based around Nunney de la Mare (Somerset), Fisherton de la Mare and Bishopstrowe (south-west Wiltshire), and the other at Steeple (now Market) Lavington (mid Wiltshire).

A Nicholas de la Mare was holding Bishopstrowe in 1195 and, through his wife, Grecia de Meusy, had inherited one of the two manors of Nunney (near Frome). Their son, Sir Elias de la Mare (died c. 1268/9), was also in possession of land in Street (Somerset) and Tarrant Gunville (Dorset). By the fourteenth century the family had consolidated their position on the Somerset-Wiltshire border, including probable branch interests at Leigh de la Mare, Huilavington, Langley Burrell and Tytherton in north-west Wiltshire,<sup>4</sup> and at Chute, Tidcombe and Winterbourne Gunner (named after the thirteenth century Gunnora de la Mare) in east Wiltshire. Sir John de la Mare (c. 1320-83) received royal permission to 'crenellate' his house and built the unusual but charming Nunney Castle. He was Sheriff of Wiltshire (1374) and Somerset (1377), served as Knight of the Shire for Wiltshire (1376) and Somerset (1373, 1377, 1382), and gained the rest of the manor of Fisherton (c. 1375) through his second marriage. His son, Sir Philip (died c. 1394), endowed a chantry at Nunney, and added land in Longbridge Deverell (Wilts) to the family property through his marriage to Matilda Hussey. His heir, Sir Elias de la Mare, after being given a safe conduct on 21 June 1415 to proceed to France in the retinue of his cousin Walter, Lord Hungerford, was last heard of at the battle of Agincourt. The manors of Nunney, Bishopstrowe, and Fisherton passed through his sister, Eleanor, to the Paulet family of Melcombe Paulet (by her marriage to William Paulet). It was the grandson of William's brother Thomas, Sir Amias Paulet (c. 1460-1537), who was to rebel at Newbury in 1483.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest reference to a de la Mare holding land in Steeple Lavington that I can find, is that concerning a Peter de la Mare who by 1166 probably only held half of the manor, for in 1194 it was divided between Peter's successor, Robert de la Mare, and William Rochelle.<sup>6</sup> By 1211 Robert's grandson, another Robert, had been succeeded by another Peter, a minor at the time. He was a rebel against King John, forfeiting his Lavington property as a result, but regained his estate in 1217. A new partition of the manor was drawn up between Peter and William Rochelle in 1225.<sup>7</sup> The family lands passed through Robert (c. 1214-c. 1272), Peter (c. 1248-c. 1292), and another Robert (c. 1274-c. 1308) to Sir Peter de la Mare (c. 1294-c. 1349) by 1308. This Peter founded a chantry in the local church in 1343/4, endowing it with houses, rents, and twenty-seven acres of land with pasture for fifty sheep;<sup>8</sup> to this Peter I shall refer again. His son, Sir Robert (c. 1314-1382), was from 1355 Steward of the lands of Henry of Grosmont, first Duke of Lancaster, and an executor of his will.<sup>9</sup> In 1361 he gained the manor of Berwick St James for life, and sat in seven Parliaments for Wiltshire, in 1376 being senior Knight of the Shire. He was a Justice of the Peace in the 1360s; a Commissioner of Array in 1367, 1370 and 1375; and a Justice of Gaol Delivery, while sitting on several other special commissions.<sup>10</sup>

When Sir Robert died in 1382, however, his surviving heir was his daughter Willelma, who had married Sir John Roche of Bromham. The Steeple Lavington manor thus passed out of the de la Mare family, through the Roches, to the latter's daughter Elizabeth (died 1447), who in turn took it in marriage to Sir Walter Beauchamp, father of Richard, Bishop of Salisbury (died 1481), and Sir William (1410--1457) who was to be buried in the chantry of Steeple Lavington church. Not only was Sir William's son, Richard Beauchamp (1454-1508), a rebel at Newbury in 1483, but so was Sir Roger Tocotes, the second husband of his widow (Elizabeth Braybrooke).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, by the early fifteenth century, both the Nunney and the Steeple Lavington lines had ended, with the Paulet and Beauchamp families respectively inheriting the various manors. It is not until the late fourteenth century, however, that references concerning the Aldermaston de la Mares appear. Aldermaston itself lies a few miles to the east of Newbury,

on the Oxford-Basingstoke road; the manor belonged to King Harold before the Conquest, and formed part of the ancient demesne of the Crown under the early Normans. Henry I granted it to Robert Achard, who also held four other manors by the service due from one knight's fee. The manor was held in 1316 by a descendant, another Robert Achard; in 1342 a settlement was made by which the manor was to be held jointly by his two sons, Robert and Peter. Neither had surviving children, so the holding passed to Sir Peter de la Mare and his wife Joan for their lives, and then to their son Thomas in tail.<sup>12</sup>

Sir Peter was apparently dead by 1361, as a jury in that year found that the manors reverted to Thomas, as his parents were both dead.<sup>13</sup> He is the earliest de la Mare mentioned in Aldermaston documents, and thus it is likely that he came from another area. We know that the Steeple Lavington Peter was a knight, and that his life stretched from c. 1294 to c. 1349. 'Peter' was, moreover, a well-used family forename in Lavington, as was 'Robert' (used for the grandson of the Aldermaston 'Peter'). Another clue to his identity may lie in the *Abstracts of Feet of Fines relating to Wiltshire*, where in 1343 'Peter de la Mare, knight, and Joan his wife' were plaintiffs in a case involving land in 'Ferschesdon by Hyeworth' (Fresden Farm), Wiltshire (not that far from Sparsholt, Berkshire, an Achard manor), with the grant going to the plaintiffs during their life and 'remainder to Thomas, son of the same Peter'.<sup>14</sup> This could prove Peter's Wiltshire link; moreover, the original Achard settlement took place in 1342, seven years before the Lavington 'Peter' died. Although the onus of proof lies with the investigator, the similarities and coincidences are strong.

Thomas was probably the Sir Thomas de la Mare who appears, with representatives of the Beauchamp, Harcourt, Cheyne, Hungerford, Berkeley, and St Lo families in the retinue of John of Gaunt in the period 1372-1382.<sup>15</sup> He was Sheriff of Berkshire and Knight of the Shire; and died in 1404, seised of Aldermaston, Sparsholt, Colthorp and Finchampstead manors, being succeeded by his son, Sir Robert de la Mare.<sup>16</sup> When Sir Robert died in 1431, his son Richard was already dead, so his inheritance passed to his grandson, Thomas – the rebel of 1483.

The custody and marriage of Thomas and of his sisters, Isabel and Margaret (a third sister, Anne, was presumably dead), was granted to Richard Melbourne.<sup>17</sup> In 1449 the manor of Aldermaston was settled on Thomas (licence for five marks paid in the hanaper) on his marriage to Elizabeth. In 1450 Thomas was on a commission for a subsidy in Berkshire for the defence of the realm, and he served as Justice of the Peace for the county in 1454 and 1456.<sup>18</sup> In the following year he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, 'and to all repasts when Lord or Lady Buckingham, or the Earl of Stafford, or Henry Stafford should be in London or Westminster'.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, Thomas was already linked in some way to the Stafford house. Also in 1457 he served on the commission of array for Berkshire (and again in 1458), and answered at the Exchequer as Sheriff for Oxford and Berkshire in 1459. On 21 December 1459, another commission of array ordered Thomas with others 'to resist the rebellion of Richard, duke of York ... attainted of high treason'. In early 1460 he was to call together and lead 'all persons in the county of Berkshire able to labour' to resist Richard, Duke of York, *et al.* 'as soon as they hear that they enter the realm'.<sup>20</sup> By the end of June, with Edward of March and the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury marching on London, Thomas saw fit to take refuge in the Tower with Lord Scales and Lord Hungerford (who had earlier terrorised Newbury!).

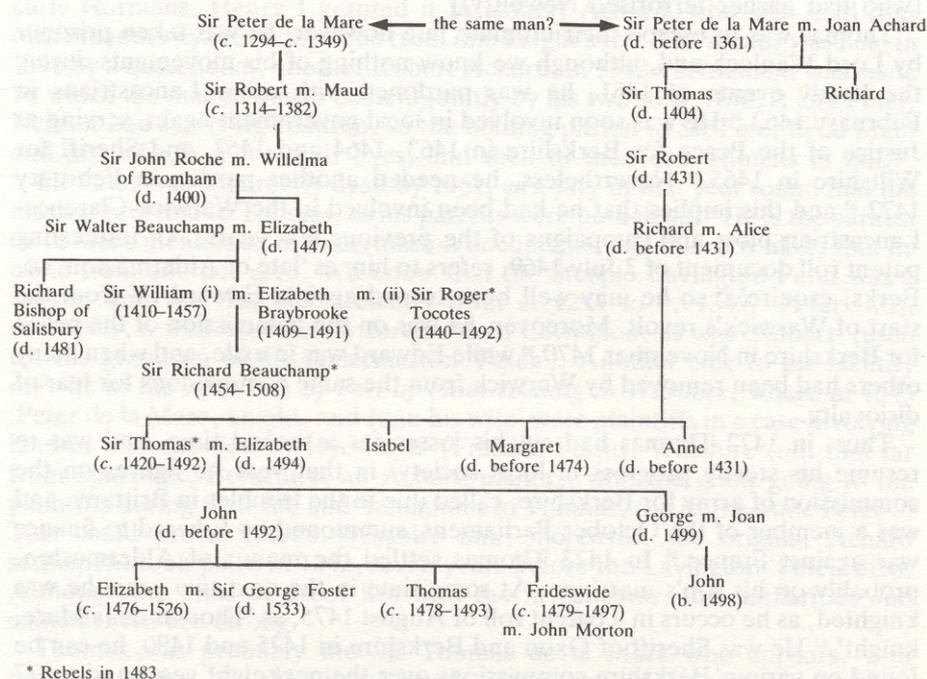
Thomas was to escape their ultimate fate however; he was taken prisoner by Lord Wenlock and, although we know nothing of his movements during the heady events of 1461, he was pardoned with other Lancastrians in February 1462.<sup>21</sup> He was soon involved in local government again, serving as Justice of the Peace for Berkshire in 1463, 1464 and 1467, and Sheriff for Wiltshire in 1465.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, he needed another pardon in February 1472,<sup>23</sup> and this implies that he had been involved in the Warwick-Clarence-Lancastrian plots and campaigns of the previous few years. An interesting patent roll document of 3 July 1469, refers to him as 'late of Aldermaston, co. Berks, esquire',<sup>24</sup> so he may well have turned against Edward IV from the start of Warwick's revolt. Moreover, he was on the commission of the peace for Berkshire in November 1470,<sup>25</sup> while Edward was in exile, and when many others had been removed by Warwick from the same commissions for fear of disloyalty.

Thus, in 1472 Thomas had cut his losses for a second time, and was to resume his steady progress in local society: in that year he figures on the commission of array for Berkshire, called due to the troubles in Brittany, and was a member of the October Parliament, summoned by Edward to finance war against France.<sup>26</sup> In 1473 Thomas settled the manor of Aldermaston, probably on his son's marriage. At some time in the next two years he was knighted, as he occurs in a patent roll of August 1475, as 'Thomas de la Mare, knight'.<sup>27</sup> He was Sheriff of Oxon and Berkshire in 1475 and 1480, he can be found on various Berkshire commissions over the next eight years and on 27 April 1483, he was 'to assess certain subsidies granted to the late king by the commons of the realm' in Berkshire. As late as August he was 'to assess certain subsidies and appoint collectors of the same' for the new king, Richard III.<sup>28</sup>

In many of these appointments he is linked with members of the Norris family, especially with Sir William Norris of Yattendon (1433-1507), whose grandfather had married an Anne de la Mare. Both rebelled in the October and were attainted in the following year. Whereas parcels of Norris's lands were granted to Richard III's supporters, I can find no trace of a similar transfer involving Sir Thomas, so he may well have been the recipient of Yorkist goodwill yet again. In fact, he was pardoned in April 1484, although possibly under some form of constraint, as in February 1485 his friends were allowed to aid him with food without fear of incurring royal displeasure. He survived the turmoil of 1485, and was soon appearing on a commission to deal with outlaws and felons in January 1486.<sup>29</sup> By now he was certainly in his mid sixties, however, an august age for the fifteenth century, and he died on 2 September 1493, leaving the manors of Aldermaston (worth £40), Sparsholt (£20), and Chalowe (8 marks), held immediately, and the manors of Finchampstead (£20) and Colthorp (100s.), held mediately, of the King in chief by service of one knight's fee.<sup>30</sup>

Sir Thomas' son, John, was already dead, so the manors passed to his grandson Thomas, aged 'fourteen years and more',<sup>31</sup> Thomas did not survive his grandfather long, for he died on 21 April 1493. His sisters, Elizabeth, wife

THE DE LA MARES OF STEEPLE LAVINGTON, WILTSHIRE,  
AND ALDERMASTON, BERKSHIRE



of George Foster, 'aged seventeen and more', and Frideswide de la Mare, 'aged fourteen and more', were his coheirs.<sup>32</sup> Frideswide had married John Morton esquire by 1496, but she died on 5 April 1497 and the various manors passed to Elizabeth Foster. There was to be a conflict, however, over the properties: Sir Thomas' second son, George, died in 1499, leaving an infant son, John, heir to his manor of Chalowe.<sup>33</sup> In 1505 the same John (now aged about six) was accused of intruding on the manors of Aldermaston and Sparsholt 'without the king's licence'.<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth eventually became the sole heir of her grandfather's estates, and her descendants held Aldermaston till the eighteenth century.

It was perhaps inevitable that Thomas would rebel in 1483; his personal history had been markedly Lancastrian in tone and Stafford in loyalty. When Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, rebelled, this latter link may have secured Thomas' allegiance. Probably, however, de la Mare's own kinship with men like Norris, and (possibly) Beauchamp, Tocotes and Paulet, however tenuous, with their joint fears for their property and local position once Richard III's mainly northern adherents gained control of central government, proved to be the deciding influence. Certainly, Richard III should not have been too surprised to hear of Sir Thomas de la Mare amongst the 'false Traitors and Rebels' in that autumn of discontent.

**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. W. Money, *The History of the ancient town and borough of Newbury*, (1887), pp~ 172-188. Upon the death of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, Newbury manor devolved on his nephew, Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. When Edward, Earl of March, became King in 1461, Newbury became a royal manor. Edward granted the manor and lordship of Newbury to his mother, Cecily, for term of her life.
2. Quoted by W. Money (*ibid.*) from *An English Chronicle from 1377 to 1461*, Camden Society, (London 1856), p. 90.
3. *RP*, Vol. VI, p. 246a.
4. In Domesday a William de Mara held Beversbrook (in Hilmarton) of William of Eu; in 1242-3 the Earl Marshal's tenant in Beversbrook was surnamed 'de la Mare', evidently a kinsman or descendant of de Mara. In 1249 Adam de la Mare was involved in land issues at Warminster (suggesting links with the Bishopstrowe family?) and Hullavington, whilst Amicia de la Mare presented the advowson of Offley church (Herts) to the Prior of Bradenstoke in the twelfth century. Beversbrook, Hullavington, Bradenstoke, Leigh Delamare, Tytherton and Langley Burrell, are all within a few miles of each other, whilst the de la Mares of Steeple Lavington are known as 'of Offley' too. All this suggests links between the various branches, possibly stemming from William de Mara.
5. This paragraph owes a great deal to the researches of Commander S.N. Smith, set out in a pamphlet *The Manor of Nunney = Delamare, Somerset* (read in Bristol Public Library, Reference section). Much of Nunney Castle still stands, and is now in the care of the Department of the Environment.
6. *VCH Wiltshire*, Vol. X, p. 87, (quoting *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, Rolls Series, Vol. I pp. 246-89).
7. *Ibid.*, (quoting *Curia Regis Rolls*, Vol. IX, p. 65').
8. *Ibid.*, p. 93 and p. 102.
9. *VCH Wiltshire*, Vol. V, p. 76, (quoting 'R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, Vol. I, p. 360).
10. *Ibid.*, (quoting patent rolls of the period).
11. See Family Tree.

12. *VCH Berkshire*, Vol. III, pp. 386-9 for a fuller account of both the manor of Aldermaston and the Achard family. Joan was probably Robert Achard's sister or daughter.
13. W. Money (ed.), *Transactions of the Newbury District Field Club*, Vol. IV, (1886-95), p. 126.
14. C.R. Elrington (ed.), *Abstracts of Feet of Fines Relating to Wiltshire for the Reign of Edward III*, Wiltshire Record Society, (1974), p. 70, No.272.
15. All these family names are prominent in the 1483 rebellion.
16. W. Money (ed.), *Trans. of the Newbury Dis. Field Club*, Vol. IV, p. 126.
17. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament*, Vol. 1, p. 572.
18. *CFR 1445-52*, p. 172; *CPR 1452-61*, p. 660.
19. Wedgwood, *op. cit.*, p. 573.
20. *CPR 1452-1461*, pp. 403, 490, 557, 603; *CFR 1452-1461*, p. 252.
21. Wedgwood, *op. cit.*, p. 573.
22. *CPR 1461-1467*, p. 559; *CFR 1461-1471*, p. 168.
23. Wedgwood, *op. cit.*, p. 573.
24. *CPR 1467-1477*, p. 178.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 608.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 349; Wedgwood, *op.cit.*, p. 573.
27. *CPR 1467-1477*, p. 558.
28. *CFR 1471-1485*, pp. 103, 207; *CPR 1476-1485*, pp. 353, 395.
29. *CPR 1485-1494*, p. 71.
30. *CIPM Henry VII*, Vol. III, no.1053, pp. 534-5.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *CIPM Henry VII*, Vol. I, no.763, p. 325.
33. *CIPM Henry VII*, Vol. II, no.312, p. 203.
34. *CIPM Henry VII*, Vol. III, no.36, p. 27.

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