

SIR THOMAS MONTGOMERY, K.G.

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Sir Thomas Montgomery was perhaps the most notable of a small number of influential knights who managed to retain the favour of all the kings of England during the struggle between York and Lancaster.

His father, Sir John Montgomery, K.B., was the first of the family to settle in Essex¹ and it is reasonable to assume that he was a Scot, for his arms, *gules, a chevron ermine between three fleurs-de-lys or*, closely resemble those of the Montgomery earls of Eglinton. If so, this handicap did not prevent him from becoming a prominent member of the English court. In 1439 he obtained a licence to crenellate his half-timbered house at Faulkbourne, which he transformed into the exceptionally interesting brick mansion we see today. Certain French-looking features are to be seen, giving it an appearance reminiscent of Scotland and the Border country. Sir Thomas completed the work, probably by 1489, when Henry VII proposed to stop there during one of his progresses.

At some time before 1433 Sir John married a lady named Elizabeth Butler, relict first of Sir John Norbury, and secondly of Sir William Heron, commonly known as Lord Say. She was the second sister of Sir Ralph Butler of Sudeley, a rising man who was to become a Knight of the Garter in 1439, Baron Sudeley in 1441, and eventually, in 1444, Treasurer of England. By her he had two sons, John and Thomas, and at least one daughter, Alice. He died in 1449, his widow, Elizabeth, surviving until 1464.

Thomas, the younger son, has been identified with a person of that name who held the office of Marshal of the King's Hall at the court of Henry VI, and who, in a notice of July 18 1446, is described as having, at the king's special request, attended "upon divers persons to his great detriment and charge".² These persons were first the Duke of Norfolk, at Killingworth and at the Tower of London; secondly John Astley, the celebrated champion and authority on appeals to battle, and thirdly upon the Duchess of Gloucester, Eleanor Cobham, victim of the famous witchcraft case. Thomas had escorted her from Leeds Castle, Kent, where her trial for sorcery had been held five years before, to London. Lastly he attended upon John Davy, an appellant. He was, it seems, appointed to teach Davy points of arms. As Thomas of Faulkbourne was then no more than 13 years of age it seems unlikely that this notice can refer to him. It would not however have been impossible: at the age of 12, Harry Hotspur was winning more serious martial glory at the retaking of Berwick. This Marshal of the King's Hall assisted, with Astley, at other appeals in 1446 and 1453.³

In 1450 Thomas was protected in an Act for the Resumption of Crown Grants, being described in the Act as "Thomas Mongomry the younger esquire . . . a younger brother and hath no thing to live upon, saving only of our gift".⁴ There was then an older Thomas, probably his uncle of that name who would have been a less improbably precocious Marshal of the Hall than young Thomas of Faulkbourne. If so, it would be the older man who in the same year was appointed, and for 10 years remained, custodian of the Exchange and of the Mint at the Tower, and keeper of the dies. It was possibly the same man who was, by 1453, an Esquire of the Body.

It was certainly the younger Thomas who, in 1461, fought against Henry VI at Towton where, on 29th March, he was dubbed knight bachelor by the victorious Edward. In July of that year he was appointed, for life, steward of Havering-at-Bower and of Hadley Castle in Essex. Later in the year he was made one of the king's carvers and also "*livee armature*" (link armourer) at the Tower.⁵

Among those whose offices and grants were protected in Edward's first parliament were Sir Thomas Montgomery and his mother. In the Act she is described as "Elizabeth Lady Say, the king's Godmoder".⁶ By this we see that Edward had long been acquainted with one, at least, of the Butlers of Sudeley. Any regard the king may have felt for his godmother was not enough to save her eldest son, John, who was executed on Tower Hill in February 1462, as were John, Earl of Oxford, his eldest son Aubrey de Vere and Sir William Tyrell, after the failure of their plot to assassinate the king.

This did not affect the career of Sir Thomas who, in the following years, served in many important diplomatic and political capacities. He helped arrange the marriage between the Count of Charolais and the King's sister, Margaret, and attended upon her journey in 1468. He was a close adviser to the King in the years leading up to the rebellion of the Earl of Warwick, and as such was imprisoned by the Lancastrians in the winter of 1470-71. By the spring he had recovered his liberty and with Sir Thomas Burgh, Sir William Stanley, Sir Thomas Parr,⁷ Sir James Harington and Sir William Norris, joined the King at Nottingham after his landing at Ravenspur. The six knights persuaded Edward to drop his pretence of returning to claim only his Duchy of York, and to issue a proclamation as king, telling him they would serve no man but a king.

We have no evidence that Sir Thomas helped Edward at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury, but he resumed his successful career as diplomat and adviser in the years after this. Among the notices referring to Sir Thomas in these years of peace which followed, is one of 26th June 1474,⁸ when he was made steward of the lands in Essex of Francis, son and heir of John Lord Lovell. Sir Thomas' uncle, Lord Sudeley, had died in May 1473 and his widow, Alice Deincourt, was the grandmother of Francis, Lord Lovell. On 3rd May, Sir Thomas was appointed Steward of the King's Forests in Essex for life.

In the expedition against France in the summer of 1475, Sir Thomas attended the King as a banneret. His retinue consisted of 10 men-at-arms and 100 archers. Now a man of considerable influence, he was a signatory to Edward's proposals of 13th August to the French King, having been one of those leaders who advised Edward to come to terms with Louis. The King of France offered Edward's chief councillors, including Sir Thomas, "*pensions*" as bribes, although they affected to regard them as tribute. Richard of Gloucester and Cardinal Bouchier declined the offer.⁹

Part of the Treaty concerned the surrender to Louis of Margaret of Anjou, and custody of the former Queen was entrusted to Montgomery, who handed her over at Rouen on 29th January 1476. Galliard de Durfort, Lord de Duras, resigned the Order of the Garter in disgust at Edward's inglorious behaviour in France, and his vacant stall was filled by the election of Sir Thomas on 4th November 1476.

In 1480 Sir Thomas was at Bruges as "*Conciliarius Regis*" when Maximilian and Mary of Austria and Burgundy swore to observe the marriage treaty

between Philip Count of Charolais and Edward's daughter, Anne.¹⁰ In the same year Anne, Duchess of Buckingham, appointed him one of the executors of her will, which was proved on 31st October. On 14th February 1481 he helped found another Guild, at Ulting, Essex. He was a witness to the confession at Westminster on 8th August 1482, of one John Edward, charged with calumny against Earl Rivers, Marquess Dorset, and Robert Ratcliffe.

Sir Thomas was one of the executors of King Edward's will, in which he received a bequest of £40, but is not among those notables named as being present at the King's funeral.

What part this experienced soldier and diplomat played in the events leading to Richard's acceptance of the crown is not recorded, but we may speculate on the fact that he was better placed than most to know the truth or otherwise of Bishop Robert Stillington's revelation of Edward's pre-contract with the Lady Eleanor Butler, who was his cousin. His mother had died in 1464, the year in which her niece's supplanter, Elizabeth Woodville, secretly married the King.

Sir Thomas attended Richard's coronation, and was one of those dignitaries awarded gifts of cloth-of-gold and silk for the ceremony. King Richard retained him as one of his Knights for the Body, and confirmed him in several grants, including some made to him by Clarence and Piers Courtenay, Bishop of Exeter. The bishop's grant came from a property over which the Lords Lovell and Morley were at variance.¹¹ Throughout this short reign he served on commissions of oyer and terminer, and of the peace, and was one of the Commissioners of Array for Essex in May and December of 1484,¹² and presumably in June 1485 also. He was with the King at Nottingham in the spring of 1484, and on 23rd March, with Sir James Tyrell and others, he witnessed grants made by the King to Sir Robert Percy and Joyce his wife, of lands in Norfolk and Essex late of Elizabeth, late Countess of Oxford, and, to Sir Robert alone, of more de Vere manors in Cambridgeshire. Percy also received; in reversion on the death of Lord Stanley, his ancestral manor of Scotton, and that of Brereton, both in Yorkshire.¹³

On 28th April, still at Nottingham, the King granted his "Counsellor", Sir Thomas Montgomery, the de Vere castle and manor of Hedingham, with several adjoining properties in Essex, for life. The grant included the offices of Master of the Game in the King's forests, chaces, and parks, and Steward of all the King's lands, in the county of Essex.¹⁴ On 12th August of the same year Sir Thomas granted the office of Steward of the Forest of Essex to the King's Esquire of the Body, Robert Brakenbury, for life.¹⁵

His diplomatic career continued under Richard. Early in 1484, with Doctor Coke the Archdeacon of Lincoln, he was sent to Maximilian with Richard's acceptance of the Archduke's offer of mediation between the King and the Duke of Brittany, on the understanding that Duke Francis would keep Henry Tudor and his band of fugitives in strict custody. On 11th August 1484, again with Doctor Coke, and with two London merchants, he was sent to renew treaties with Austria and to discuss redress of past infractions.¹⁶

According to Barnard, who does not give his source, Sir Thomas was, on 14th August 1484, appointed Lieutenant of Guisnes, and empowered to repair its decayed defences, in which Sir Richard Tunstall, the Deputy of the Castle of

Calais, was to assist him.¹⁷ If this statement is correct it is strange that, on 13th January 1485, Sir James Tyrell was given the rule of the town and castle of Guisnes during the absence of Lord Mountjoy, who was not superseded but ill.¹⁸ Sir James replaced some of the garrison, appointing John Bonington constable of the castle. After Lord Mountjoy's death in October 1485, Sir Thomas married his widow, Lora.

There is evidence that Sir Thomas, who was a Commissioner of Array for Essex in May and December 1484, responded to Richard's summons to arms in August 1485. His name is included in the list of supporters in the Saville Manuscript who "came to Kynge Richard", and as one of the leaders who "swore Kynge Richard shuld were the crowne". If he did in fact take an active part in the battle of Bosworth he was able, either with his usual address, or with the help of friends in the opposing party, to escape the harsh punishment meted out by the new king to Richard's supporters.

With Sir Thomas Burgh, he held the Pall over Richmond during his coronation. He was secured in grants made to him by Edward IV. At the time of Lord Lovell's northern rising, in July 1486, he agreed to wait upon the Earl of Oxford with twelve men at the muster at Cambridge.²⁰ In April 1487 he was a Commissioner of Array for Essex to resist the Earl of Lincoln.²¹ Later in the year he attended the coronation of Elizabeth of York. In 1488 Sir Thomas was asked to raise archers in Essex for the relief of Brittany.²² In March of the following year, Henry VII arranged to stop at Faulkbourne during a progress, but later cancelled the visit. In the same year the King made him a gift of cloth for the surcoat and lining of his Garter robes.

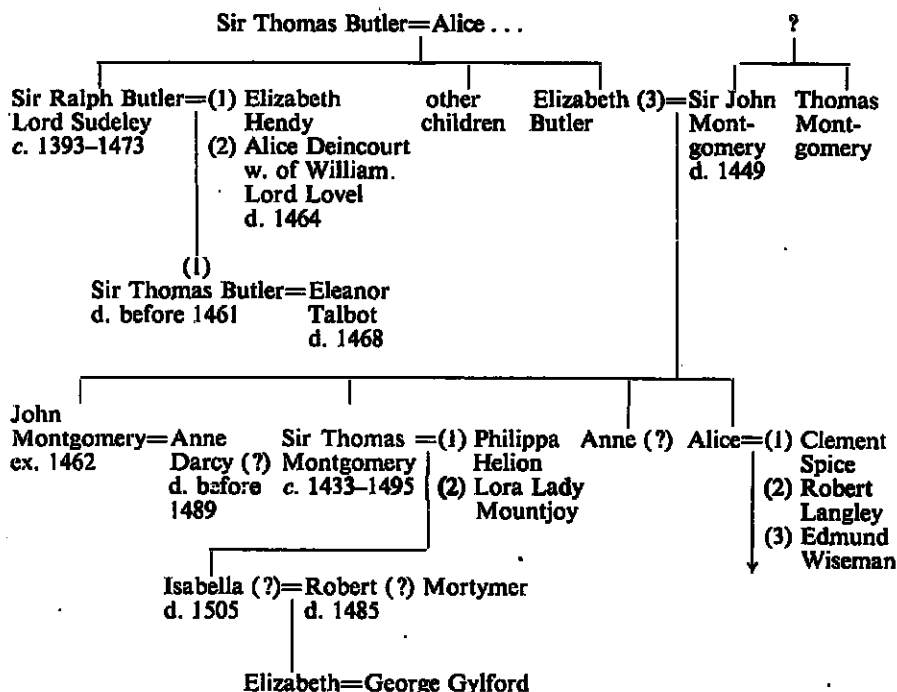
Montgomery was among the "estates, lords, bannerets, and knights", present at the three-day tournament held at Westminster in November 1494, when the future Henry VIII was created a Knight of the Bath. Also present were Sir James Tyrell and Sir John Cheyney.²³

On 11th January 1495, in his 67th year, Sir Thomas died. In his will, dated 28th July 1489, possibly made with the Breton expedition in mind, he directs that he "be buried in the Abbey of Tower Hill in the Chapel of Our Lady which I have lately made there".²⁴ This was the Cistercian house of St. Mary of Grace near the Tower of London. He asked that his first wife's body be removed from Faulkbourne and laid by him. One of his executors was Sir Thomas Tyrell, with Sir Thomas Burgh as a Supervisor of his will. Sir Thomas Montgomery is represented in glass, wearing a tabard of his arms, together with his mother who wears an heraldic mantle, in the church at Long Melford, Suffolk.

His first wife was Philippa, daughter and heiress of John Helion, of Helion Bumpsted, Essex. In 1450, the probable date of their marriage, she was aged 14 and Sir Thomas 18. His second wife was Lora, relict of Richard's ailing Lieutenant of Guisnes, John Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who died on 12th October 1485. She was the daughter of Sir Edward Berkeley of Beverston, and so, probably, the sister of Sir William Berkeley, knighted and afterwards attainted, by Richard III. He is said to have left no issue by either wife.

We are, however, informed otherwise in a list of "Some Resting places of Medieval Personages" from a Visitation of London, 1530.²⁵ No. 21 in the list, and first under "St. Mary Abbay on Toure Hyll", is Sir Thomas Montgomery.

MONTGOMERY OF FAULKBOUNE



His entry reads: "Sir Thomas Mongombrey, Dame Lora Countess of Ormonde his wife and over his cote of Armes, i.e. Gules a chevron armes between 3 flore de lysys gold. upon his helm on a wreithe sylver and gules a flur de lys gold, manteled gules, dobled armes (also his other wife)." The Lady Chapel built by Sir Thomas was "in the north of the church". In the same chapel were interred the following:

"No. 23. also a tombe one of the daughters of the sayd Montgomery, whyche was married to one of ye Mortymers.

"Also beside Sir Thomas, Alice Spice suster and Eire to the said Sir Thomas whyche had two husbandys 1st to Clement Spice of Blake Notley in Essex."

Also interred, but in St. Anne's Chapel on the south side of the church, No. 35, Sir John Montgomery elder brother to Sir Thomas.

The entry referring to the daughter of Sir Thomas who married "one of ye Mortymers", tempts one to speculate as to whether or not she might be Isabel, wife of Robert Mortimer, particularly as he died on 22nd August 1485,²⁶ seized of the manor of Landymer Hall in Essex, which he held of William Worsley the Dean of St. Paul's, a Yorkist who later was to suffer for his support of the Earl of Lincoln in 1487. Robert Mortimer's heir was his 10-year-old daughter Elizabeth. On 31st December 1486 her wardship and marriage was

granted to Sir Richard Guildford "the King's Councillor". She was later married to one George Gylford. Her mother died on 7th July 1505.²⁷ At Great Ormesby, Norfolk, is a brass inscription to Robert Mortymer esquire, dated *circa* 1480 in Mill Stephenson's list,²⁸ which may mark the burial place of our man.

Dugdale, however, records that Isabel, second daughter of John Howard first Duke of Norfolk, was married to Sir Robert Mortimer of . . . , Essex. As many a plain esquire has been knighted by one genealogist or another, the Inquisition may refer to this man, in all probability slain with his father-in-law at Bosworth.

As we have seen, Sir Thomas' two wives were Philippa Helion and Lora, Lady Mountjoy (afterwards wife of Thomas Butler, 7th Earl of Ormond). The identification of the Anne Montgomery buried in the Minories near the Tower of London as his wife thus will not do.²⁹ In his will Sir Thomas refers to Anne as his sister. It is possible that he is referring to his sister-in-law, who would be the widow of his unfortunate brother John, and that she was the daughter of Robert Darcy, of Chiche, Essex, one of whose daughters married a Montgomery.³⁰ The Sir William Tyrell executed with John Montgomery in 1462 was thus his brother-in-law. Anne Montgomery had died by 1489 since prayers for her soul are requested in Sir Thomas' will.

It is possible that the body of Sir Thomas' second wife, Lora, was not allowed to rest beside that of her husband for very long. Dugdale records³¹ that, in his testament of 1534, William Blount Lord Mountjoy willed that if he should die in London he should be buried in the Grey Friars where many of his family, including his father, were interred, and asked for a tomb of alabaster for his father, and one for his mother who "lyeth interred with Sir Thomas Montgomery her late husband at the new Abbey". Possibly a memorial only was intended.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Barnard, p. 50.
3. Barnard, p. 50.
4. *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Vol. V, p. 193.
5. Barnard, p. 51.
6. *Rot. Parl.* V, pp. 462-3.
7. Sir William Parr, according to Barnard, p. 53.
8. Barnard, p. 54.
9. Bouchier is thus named by A. O. Legge, *The Unpopular King*, Vol. I (1885), p. 185.
10. Oath of December 10th 1-80; *Rapin, Acta Regia*, Vol. II (1727), p. 413.
11. *British Museum Harleian MSS.* 433, f. 130b.
12. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 1476-85*, pp. 399 and 488.
13. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1476-85*, pp. 434-5.
14. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1476-85*, p. 430.
15. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1476-85*, p. 542.
16. James Gairdner, *The Life and Reign of Richard III* (1898), p. 222.
17. Barnard, p. 58.
18. *Harl. MSS.* 433, f. 201.
19. William Hutton, *Battle of Bosworth Field* (1813), pp. 202 and 211.
20. Barnard, p. 59.
21. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1483-94*, p. 179.
22. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1483-94*, p. 278.
23. *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, edited by James Gairdner, (1861-3), Vol. I, p. 394.
24. Sir Harris Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, Vol. II (1826), p. 396.
25. Printed in A. R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (1956), pp. 139-146; see p. 143.
26. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem 1485-1509*, Vol. I, No. 100.
27. *Cal. I.P.M.* Vol. III, No. 207.
28. Mill Stephenson, *A List of Monumental Brasses in the British Isles* (1964), p. 359.
29. Pamela Tudor-Craig, *Richard III: Catalogue of the National Portrait Gallery Exhibition* (1973), p. 53.
30. Bernard Burke, *Dormant and Extinct Peerages* (1883), pp. 156-157.
31. William Dugdale, *The Baronage of England* (1675), Vol. I, p. 521.