

ROGER WAKE OF BLISWORTH

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THE WAKES of Blisworth derive their descent from the last Lord Wake's great-uncle, Sir Hugh, lord of Blisworth, in Northamptonshire and Deeping in Lincolnshire, who in 1313 was pardoned for his share in the killing of Piers Gaveston.¹ Thomas Wake of Blisworth, Deeping, and Clevedon in Somerset, was appointed sheriff of Northampton in 1461 and 1463, and in 1469 entered the wider stage of his country's history.

When, in 1469, at Edgecot near Banbury, a force of rebellious northerners, under a leader usually identified as Sir John Conyers, defeated a force commanded for the King by the Earls of Pembroke and Devon, their own casualties included Sir Henry Neville, son and heir of Lord Latimer, his brother-in-law, Oliver Dudley, and the son and heir of Thomas Wake. George Neville, Lord Latimer, had, in his later years, become feeble-minded and Edward IV had committed the rule of his lands and lordships to his nephew Richard, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury. In December 1469 the broken-minded Lord Latimer died. His widow, the Lady Elizabeth Latimer, daughter of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, soon after became the second wife of Thomas Wake. Each had lost an eldest son, and Lady Elizabeth a son-in-law as well, in the cause of Warwick and Clarence against the Woodvilles.

Thomas Wake was bold enough during "the late trouble and riotous season" to cause Jacquetta of Luxembourg, Duchess of Bedford and the Queen's mother, to "be brought in a comune noyse and disclaundre of Wichcraft and Sorcerie" by producing before divers lords at Warwick, during the King's visit, an image of lead, broken in the middle and made fast with a wire, saying that it was made by the Duchess to use with the said "Wichcraft and Sorsory". He also claimed that two others existed, one for the King, the other for the Queen. Mortified, the Duchess accused Wake of spreading stories throughout the realm of her witchcraft and sorcery. Not surprisingly, after a hearing before the King and a group of lords, spiritual and temporal, the Duchess was cleared. Among the lords were George Neville, Archbishop of York, Robert Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells and Chancellor, Warwick, and Hastings. The hearing took place on 20th January, 1470.²

Thomas Wake died on 20th May, 1476. On 10th February, 1480, his widow, Elizabeth, set her seal to a release and quitclaim of all her rights in a long list of "honours, castles, demesnes and manors" in Yorkshire, including Middleham and Sheriff Hutton, to her nephew Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Sir John Huddleston, Sir James Tyrell, William Hopton, Thomas Middleton, William Tunstall, Richard Radclyf, Richard Middleton, Geoffrey Frank, and Robert Brakenbury, esquires, and Thomas Barrow, clerk.³ Lady Latimer died before 2nd October, 1480. In her will, dated 20th September, 1480, she bequeathed annuities to several of the Wake family. Her executors included Lord

WAKE OF BLISWORTH, 15th AND EARLY 16th CENTURIES

Agnes, d. 14th Oct., 1471, dau. and coheiress=Thomas Wake of Blisworth and Deeping, Sheriff of Northampton
of Thomas Lovel, of Clevedon, Somerset 1434-35-50; b. circa 1402, d. 10th Dec., 1458

(1) Margaret Johns (?)=Thomas Wake of Blisworth,=(2) Lady Elizabeth Beauchamp, d. before 10th Oct., 1480, Widow
of George Nevill, Lord Latimer, and third dau. (by his first wife)
of Northampton, 1461 and 1463; of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, K.G.
d. 30th May, 1476

Roger Wake of Blisworth, Deeping, and Clevedon, Sheriff of Northampton, 1483. At Bosworth for King Richard and attainted, 1485. Attainder reversed, 1487; d. 16th March, 1504. Will proved 13th May, 1504

=Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Catesby, and sister of King Richard's Councillor, William Catesby

(2) John Grey, third surviving son of Thomas, first Marquess of Dorset, K.G.

William . . .
Nicholas

1
Thomas Wake of Deeping, aged 25, 1504; d. before 1536

=Isabel, dau. of Thomas Sapcotes of Burley, Rutland

2
Richard Wake, of Clevedon, ancestor of today's Wakes

=Margaret Grey, sixth dau. of Thomas, Marquess of Dorset

3
William

4
John

5
3 other sons

1
Margaret
Richard

=John, son of John Barnard of Abyngdon, Northants. (who d. Oct., 1485) by Margaret, sister of John, Lord Scrope of Bolton

2
Elizabeth=Clement
Edward Villars

a third dau.

Hastings, William Catesby, Thomas Stafford, and John Wake.⁴ As she ordained, her body was interred in the Lady Chapel in the Church of St Mary, Warwick, near her father, son, son-in-law, and (although not mentioned) her husband. The wardship of her son Richard, Lord Latimer, was granted to Humphrey Stafford of Grafton, who married the boy to his daughter, Anne.

Roger Wake's name does not appear in any of these documents. He was the oldest surviving son of Thomas Wake by a wife whose name is not recorded. It is just possible that a monumental brass may provide the answer to the problem of her identity. At Ingrave, in Essex, may be seen the brass to Margaret, daughter of Sir Lewes John by Anne, daughter of John Montacute, Earl of Salisbury. She married twice. Her first husband was Sir William Lucy, her second husband was a Wake. His Christian name has not survived. The inscription is mutilated.⁵

In the period immediately following the death of his father he served on several commissions. One of these, in 1477,⁶ enquired into the possessions of the attainted Sir Thomas Tresham of Sywell, Northamptonshire. Another, in 1478,⁷ enquired into those of George, late Duke of Clarence.

By 1479 he had married Elizabeth, sister of William Catesby of Ashby St Ledgers, Northamptonshire, Esquire, thus allying himself with a man soon to be closely identified with the cause of Richard, Duke of Gloucester. On 27th April, 1483, he was commissioned with Lord Hastings, William Catesby, Richard Empson, and others in Northamptonshire, to assess a subsidy from aliens granted to Edward IV by the Commons in the late King's last Parliament.⁸ He was similarly commissioned to assess subsidies on 1st August, 1483,⁹ not long after the accession of Richard III.

On 1st October, 1483, Roger Wake granted to Edward Stafford, Earl of Wiltshire, William Catesby, Esquire for the Body, and others, the manors of Clyvedon and Milton by Bruton, Co. Somerset, to fulfil his last Will.¹⁰

On 10th December, 1483, he was, as Sheriff, one of the Commissioners in Northamptonshire to enquire into revels, their lands, and their goods, and to take them into the King's hands.¹¹ John Wake was also a Commissioner for the shire and, as Sheriff, for the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon as well, Roger's name appears in all of the Commissions of the Peace for Northamptonshire from 1478 until the end of Richard's reign except the last, that of 5th December, 1483.¹² He had been appointed Sheriff of Northampton in 1483,¹³ and was a Commissioner of Array for the county in May, 1484.¹⁴ In the Commission of Array of the following December¹⁵ he was replaced by his brother, William. Roger was one of those loyal supporters of the King who were rewarded by Richard with substantial grants of lands forfeited by rebels. He was granted, for life, Anthony Woodville's rents, lands and tenements in Hertwell and Rode, in Northamptonshire, to the value of £30.17.9d., yearly.¹⁶ In the second year of Richard's reign Roger Wake founded a free-school at Blisworth.¹⁷

On 21st June, 1485, King Richard sent instructions to his Commissioners of Array in the shires,¹⁸ commanding them to exhort the people to continue as they had done the year before in the defence of his person and the realm. They were to review the levies, and make known to all "Lords, Noblemen, captains, and other", the King's pleasure and commandment that they put



ROGER WAKE

Photo: Andrew Priddy



ELIZABETH WAKE

aside all quarrels and grudges, and assist each other in the King's quarrels and cause. No complete list of the names of these commissioners has survived, but it is probable that they were substantially the same as in 1484, in which case Roger, William and John would have played their part in carrying out these measures of defence.

Roger himself certainly answered Richard's call to arms and fought for the King at Bosworth. He survived the battle, as did his brother-in-law, and its aftermath, which the unfortunate Catesby did not. Together with a selection of Richard's supporters, he was attainted by the Parliament summoned by the new King for 7th November, 1485, and his lands were forfeited to the Crown.

During Henry's second Parliament, summoned for 9th November, 1487, Roger petitioned for the reversal of his attainder "in humble wise" as that

King's "true and feithfull subgette, Roger Wake". Henry's grants of the Wake lands to his own partisans were to stand as lawful, but as and when such grants were voided, Roger, or his heirs, were to be allowed to re-enter the premises specified.

John, Viscount Welles, had been given East Deeping. One half of Clevedon had been granted to Sir Humphrey Stanley and John Waller the younger, and the other half had gone to Sir James Parker and John Crokker. Middleton (Milton) and Collingtree, near Blisworth, had been awarded to Sir Charles Somerset, bastard son of Henry, second Duke of Somerset. Blisworth was given to Richard's disloyal Lieutenant of Hammes, Sir James Blount.¹⁹

Roger's request was granted and his attainder was reversed. He was eventually able to recover most of his lands. The public records contain little information about Roger Wake after 1487. On 12th February, 1501, with Thomas Kebell and William Ashby, he was licensed to grant in mortmain lands in Kirkby upon Wrethek in Leicestershire, to the Prior and Convent of the Carthusian Monastery of the Visitation of the Virgin in the Isle of Axholme.²⁰ In the Act of Attainder against King Richard and his supporters, it was stated that the said Act was not to be prejudicial to Sir John Catesby, Thomas Kennell (probably Kebell), and William Ashby, Esquires, in the aforesaid manor of Kirkby.

Roger Wake died on 16th March, 1504. In his will he directed his feoffees and executors to found, with the King's licence, a perpetual Chantry of one Chaplain to celebrate divine service in the Chapel of St Mary the Virgin, in the parish Church of St John the Baptist, Blisworth. He appointed as his executors his wife, Thomas Parmenter, Master of the Hospital of St John the Baptist at Northampton, John Barnard, Esquire, his son-in-law, and William Wake the elder.²¹ Elizabeth Wake was granted the King's licence to found a chantry, to be called Roger Wake's Chantry, on 12th November, 1505.²²

The tomb of Roger and Elizabeth Wake remains today, in the south aisle of Blisworth church. The tomb chest is now placed against the wall. The foot of the chest has been repaired and a shield, on which is carved a lion rampant to the sinister, has been replaced upside down. At the head of the chest are two shields bearing Wake impaling Catesby, and Wake impaling a blank. Along the side are three shields of arms. These are, from left to right, Wake, Wake impaling Catesby, and Wake impaling three chevrons. Between each shield is carved the Wake knot.

On the lid of the chest are the well-preserved brasses of Roger and Elizabeth. Roger is depicted in armour which, if lacking the gothic grace of the Germanic style of armour fashionable throughout the Yorkist period, does not give the effect of heaviness generally to be found in military brasses of the early Tudor period. Elizabeth wears the pedimental head-dress introduced shortly after the accession of the first of the Tudors. The figures are quite firmly drawn and deeply incised, and of good quality for a period in which there is a marked deterioration in workmanship. The facial type given to Roger is one of considerable character and not merely a conventional type of the period. In contrast to her grim-looking spouse, Elizabeth is a rather appealing figure.

Beneath them are the figures of their seven sons and three daughters. The composition is completed by four shields of arms and a mutilated marginal

inscription. The shields of arms at the head of the slab are of Wake, *gules two bars and in chief three roundels argent* (or plates), and Wake impaling Catesby, *argent two lions passant sable, crowned or*. They are repeated, in reverse order, at the foot. Less than a dozen miles away, Roger's unfortunate brother-in-law is also commemorated by a brass which is oddly striking, in spite of its large and awkwardly drawn male figure, and appropriated canopy.

Elizabeth married again, her second husband being a man who must have been considerably her junior. He was John Grey, younger son of Thomas, Marquess of Dorset. His father was born in 1451 and would therefore have been fifty years of age at his death in 1501. According to Dugdale, Dorset's daughter Margaret married Richard Wake, of Blisworth, Elizabeth Wake's second son, from whom today's Wakes descend.²³

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage*, from which much of the foregoing information is obtained.
2. *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, Vol. VI, 9 Ed. IV. Exemplification for Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford. In the recapitulation of Richard's title to the throne (*Rot. Parl.* Vol. VI, p. 240) the charge of sorcery was repeated in the following passage: "the said pretended marriage betwixt the above-named King Edward and Elizabeth Grey, was made of grete presumption, without the knowing or assent of the lords of this land, and alsoe by sorcerie and wichecrafte, committed by the said Elizabeth and her moder, Jaquett Dichess of Bedford". The Act goes on to declare that this "if and as the case shall require, shall bee proved sufficiently in tyme and place convenient".
3. *Calendar of the Close Rolls, 1476-85*, No. 650.
4. *Ibid*, No. 750.
5. Margaret died 1466. Like Thomas Wake, Sir Lewis John was a supporter of the Earl of Warwick. He was slain, fighting for the Earl, at Barnet.
6. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 230.
7. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 109.
8. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 354.
9. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 376.
10. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1485-1509*, Vol. II, p. 574.
11. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 371.
12. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 567.
13. *Harleian, MS. 433*, f. 30 (dors).
14. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 400.
15. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-85*, p. 492.
16. *Harl. MS. 433*, f. 32, and, with William Wake, p. 287.
17. Sir N. Harris Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, 1826, p. 462.
18. *Harl. MS. 433*, f. 220.
19. *Rot. Parl.* Vol. VI.
20. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1485-1509*, Vol. II, p. 246.
21. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem, 1485-1509*, Vol. II, No. 847.
22. *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1485-1509*, Vol. II, p. 461.
23. William Dugdale, *Baronage of England* (1675), sub. Grey of Ruthin.