

Research Notes and Queries

Lady Katherine Gordon and Margaret Kyme: A Clue to a Question of Identity

Lisa Hopkins writes:

The recent revival of interest in the story of Perkin Warbeck has, of course, centred largely about the enigma of his actual identity.¹ It is an argument with a long history, and there seems no reason to assume that it will easily be resolved. What is often overlooked, however, is that the apparently much less thorny question of the identity of Perkin Warbeck's wife, Lady Katherine Gordon, is also a potentially vexed one.

For many years, it was accepted that when King James IV of Scotland arranged for the marriage of Perkin Warbeck and Lady Katherine Gordon, his action had a marked political significance in that he was in fact bestowing on the young pretender the hand of his own cousin. Lady Katherine, it was assumed, was the daughter of George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, by his first or second wife, the Princess Annabella Stewart, daughter of King James I; and as such she was not only a member of the royal house of Scotland, but in fact the most senior member of it then available to James for use in diplomatic marriages. This assumption was made by the Tudor writers on the subject, by John Ford and Mary Shelley in their dramatic and fictional accounts of it, and by Victorian historians. The belief seems to have derived primarily from Bernard André's Latin life of Henry VII, where it is stated that Lady Katherine was 'a lady of illustrious parentage and near relationship to the King'.² More recently, however, this has been challenged by the argument that Lady Katherine's probably age at the time of her marriage – Annabella Stewart was divorced by her husband on 24 July 1471, so any daughter of hers must have been at least twenty-five when she married Perkin – makes it more likely that she was in fact the daughter of Huntly's third wife, and so not of royal blood at all.³ Other evidence cited for this has included the wording of a marriage contract between the Earl of Huntly and the Earl of Bothwell, and the presence of the arms of Hay, the family of Huntly's third wife, on the tomb built by Lady Katherine's third husband for himself and his wife,⁴ (though an alternative explanation has been suggested for the presence of these.⁵) If this were to be the case, it would dramatically diminish the significance of James' gesture by seriously reducing the status of his proffered bride, and thus of the level of his own support

of Perkin.

Although the available evidence does not perhaps allow of the question being decided either way, there is one potential clue to its resolution which seems so far to have been ignored. In her will, dated 1537, Lady Katherine left a bequest to a Mistress Margaret Kyme or Keymes, whom she terms 'my cousin'.⁶ This Margaret Kyme was the only daughter of Princess Cecily Plantagenet, second surviving daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, who had disgraced herself by her second marriage to a simple gentleman, Thomas Kyme, and lived out the remainder of her life in virtual exile on the Isle of Wight.⁷ For Lady Katherine to call Margaret Kyme cousin must, surely, imply one of two things. In the first place, she could be supplying evidence that her mother was indeed Princess Annabella Stewart by referring to a connection through her. This could work in two ways. Firstly, Princess Cecily had once been betrothed both to James IV and then, immediately afterwards to his brother Alexander, Duke of Albany, and had indeed been known as the Princess of Scots. Secondly, there was also a link through the English royal family, since Princess Annabella's mother, Joan Beaufort, descended from the third marriage of John of Gaunt, from the line which eventually produced Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII; and Margaret Kyme's mother, Princess Cecily, was descended from two of John of Gaunt's brothers. There is also, however, a third, and much more exciting possibility, which would draw on the presumption of a rather nearer relationship: if Katherine Gordon thought that her first husband had indeed been Richard Duke of York, then Princess Cecily would have been his sister, and Margaret Kyme would thus have been her own first cousin by marriage. Finally, it should be remembered that these two possibilities do not necessarily preclude each other, and that Lady Katherine could perhaps have had *both* relationships in mind when she referred to Margaret Kyme as her 'cousin'.

Lady Katherine Gordon's apparently casual reference may, then, provide an extremely useful clue. Either it suggests that she was indeed of royal blood herself, which provides support for the traditional picture of James IV of Scotland as totally convinced by Perkin's claims; or, even more interestingly, it argues that she herself, even thirty-eight years after his death, still believed in them; or, just possibly, it could be taken as evidence for both. In any of these events, it supplies material evidence for the way in which Perkin Warbeck's claims were viewed by some of those who knew him.

1. Diana Kleyn's book *Richard of England*, Oxford 1990, has of course done much to fuel this recent resurgence of interest.
2. BL, Cotton Ms. Dom. A xviii quoted in Michael Barrington, *A Mystery to this Day*, privately printed London 1949, p.145, n. 7, where the evidence for the identity of Lady Katherine's mother is rehearsed.
3. Colin Gibson, *The Selected Plays of John Ford*, Cambridge 1986, p.354, n. 3.
4. See for instance Emily Sarah Holt, in a historical note appended to her novel *A Tangled Web*, London n.d., pp.341-2.
5. J. Montgomery Traherne, *Historical Notices of Sir Matthew Cradock, Knt., of Swansea, in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII*, Llandovery 1840, p.10. Traherne also cites the fact that at the betrothal of Margaret Tudor to James IV, Lady Katherine took precedence over everybody but the royal family, which might also serve as evidence that she did in fact have royal connections.
6. Michael L. Nash, Quarr and the mystery of Princess Cecilia, *Hampshire County Magazine*, December 1974, pp.57-9.
7. *Ibid.*

Sir William Stanley of Holt: Who was the Mother of his Children?

Jean M. Gidman writes:-

In my recent article concerning Sir William Stanley of Holt; his wives and his children, I speculated that, as the duration of his first marriage to Joan Lovel, widow of John, Lord Lovel, was relatively brief, there could have been only one child from the union if any children at all.¹ This is because the marriage is believed to have taken place after 12 November 1465 and Joan died on 5 August 1466.² I therefore assumed that Sir William Stanley's three children were born to his second wife Elizabeth Hopton, widow in turn of Sir Roger Corbet of Morton Corbet and John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester who was executed on 18 October 1470.³ Sir William Stanley's marriage to Elizabeth Hopton having taken place after this date. However, in a subsequent article by Barbara Coulton, it was stated that, as Joan Lovel had died on 24 August 1469, she was the mother of all three of Sir William Stanley's children.⁴ There seems, therefore, to be some confusion over the date of the death of Joan Lovel, and it is necessary to check the sources.

The date of 5 August 1466 appears in the *Complete Peerage* and this is confirmed by the entry in the *Calendar of Fine Rolls* as a writ of *diem clausit extremum* was issued on 24 September 1466 to the escheators of her estate following her death.⁵ The date of 24 August 1469, must therefore, be incorrect. The date of 24 August 1469 as the date of the death of Joan Lovel appears in a thesis on the Stanley Family by Joanna Williams, where she argues that, as Elizabeth Hopton did not leave any lands to William Stanley (son) she cannot have been his mother.⁶ Land, however, would go to her eldest son regardless of any other sons, unless it was entailed in some way, and as she had a son from each of her two previous marriages, William Stanley would inherit only if they died without heirs.⁷ Although Elizabeth Hopton's eldest son, Richard Corbet died before his mother, it was his son, Robert who inherited his grandmother's estate in 1498.⁸ This then invalidates Williams's argument.

Another problem in discussing the wives of Sir William Stanley is that there is little evidence that his marriage to Joan Lovel actually took place. There is a reference dated 12 November 1465 that they 'will shortly marry', but all other references to her omit any mention of Sir William Stanley.⁹ In the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* and in the *Calendar of Fine Rolls* she is referred to as the wife of 'John Lovel, knight'.¹⁰ This, however, was a convention of the time, in that a widow who held lands through marriage to her late husband is referred to as his wife even though she subsequently remarried.¹¹

Assuming that the marriage between Sir William Stanley and Joan Lovel took place, was she capable of bearing children? She had borne three children to John Lovel. Francis, her son, born in 1454, was eleven years old at the time of her second marriage.¹² Elizabeth Hopton, had borne one son, in 1448, to her first husband, Sir Roger Corbet, and another son, born on 14 July 1469, to her second husband, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, and was therefore, still capable of bearing children when she married Sir William before 7 December 1471.¹³

So which of his wives was the mother of Sir William Stanley's children? Joan Lovel died before she could have borne all three of his children although she could have died in childbirth with her child surviving. Elizabeth Hopton was most likely to have borne the children as she had recently given birth, although a look at her life would indicate that she was probably in her late thirties at the time of her

marriage to Sir William Stanley. Despite the lack of any definitive evidence in favour of either of his wives it is most probable that Elizabeth Hopton was the mother of Sir William Stanley's children.

1. Jean M. Gidman, The wives and children of Sir William Stanley of Holt, *Ricardian*, vol. 9, no. 116, March 1992, pp.206-210.
2. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 8, p.223, John, Lord Lovel.
3. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12, p.845, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.
4. Barbara Coulton, The wives of Sir William Stanley, *Ricardian*, vol. 9, no.118, September 1992, pp.315-318.
5. *Complete Peerage*, vol. 8, p.223; *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1461-1471*, p.177, 24 September 1466.
6. J. Williams, The Stanley Family of Lathom and Knowsley c.1450-1504, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Manchester University 1979, p.151.
7. I am grateful to Mary O'Regan for the information concerning this point.
8. *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1494-1509*, p.175
9. *CPR 1461-1467*, p.474, 12 November 1465.
10. *Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem sive Excaetarium*, 4 vols, Record Commissioners London, vol. 4, p.334; *CFR 1461-1471*, p.177, 24 September 1466.
11. A writ of *diem clausit extremum* was issued on 28 June 1498 for 'Elizabeth late Countess of Worcester', this being Elizabeth Hopton with no mention of her subsequent remarriage, *CFR 1485-1509*, p.259.
12. *Dictionary of National Biography*, under Francis Lovell, Viscount Lovell.
13. J.C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: biographies of members of the Commons House 1439-1509*, London, 1936, p.222, under Corbet; *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12, p.845, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.