The Portcullis and the Owl

An account of the times of Hugh Oldham and his Patroness

by J.B.Pickerill

Contents

Acknowledgements

This history is derivative and the following publications have been particularly drawn upon:

Ackroyd, P.	The Life of Thomas More	Chatto & Windus 1998
Chrimes, S.B.	Henry VII	Berkeley 1972
Jacob, E.F.	The Fifteenth Century	Oxford U.P. 1961 (Oxford History of England)
Jones, M.K. and Underwood, M.G.	The King's Mother	Cambridge U.P.1992
Mumford, A.A.	Hugh Oldham	Faber & Faber 1936
de Roover, R.	The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank	Harvard 1963
Ross, C.	Richard III	London 1981

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J.B.Pickerill, Tonbridge, January 2001

INTRODUCTION

As a child in the 1930s I saw a modern world full of inventions. Everyday things like wireless, light switches, cars and aeroplanes did not exist in my grandparents' early lives, so the Victorians seemed to me to have led a primitive life. This was proved in 1939 when I lived as an evacuee with my grandmother and her sister in a cottage in remotest Cheshire. We had no electricity, gas, mains water or main drainage, and I learned this was substantially the way of life my guardians had led in a Lincolnshire village in the 1860s. Three months spent this way enabled me to appreciate the amenities of present-day living, but they also gave me a certain historical perception in that I knew two real Victorians, who were in fact perfectly normal people.

This encouraged me, much later, in "the search for coherence and unity"[1], which I believe is the basic appeal of history. I am not a historian, but a consumer of historical research by others, and I decided in retirement to concentrate on a very limited period - the years 1450 to 1520. There were three factors in this choice. First, about 1452 there was born one Hugh Oldham in the Manchester area.. I heard about him some sixty years ago, and I have thought off and on that it would be interesting to understand a little better how he came to found the school I attended. From very limited material, there have been attempts to describe his life, but I thought it might be helpful to explore what was happening throughout his life in terms of the development of this country and some of western Europe in his eventful epoch. By the time he became bishop of Exeter in 1504 he had lived through the Wars of the Roses, the coming and going of Lancastrian and Yorkist kings, the installation of the Tudors, the arrival of Caxton's press, the evolution of English into a form readily intelligible to modern readers, the discovery of America and the strengthening of a money economy as many features of feudalism faded. He lived into the reign of Britain's Renaissance prince and only just missed the cataclysm of the Reformation. What more remarkable period can there be to explore?

Secondly, my remotest ancestor to whom I can put a name, my great x thirteen maternal grandfather, was farming in 1469 on what is now the edge of Manchester. He may never have known the Oldham family, but he would certainly have been familiar with the name of Lord Stanley, the local magnate, who figures importantly in my account of the time. Thirdly, the fifteenth century provides, for a retired banker, some fascinating detail of a few practitioners who carried on the business then with a precocious sophistication..

I have revealed nothing new, but have tried to bring together various pieces of information, in particular from "The King's Mother"[2], to supplement and broaden the picture offered to us by Dr. Mumford, R.F.I. Bunn and James Bentley[3]. My hope is that Old Mancunians will enjoy having the main details put together, removing the occasional discrepancies of the accounts in the light of the most recent research.

[1] Berlin, Sir Isaiah Berlin "The Concept of Scientific History" in The Proper Study of Mankind (London 1997)
[2] Jones, M.K. and Underwood, M.G. "The King's Mother" (Cambridge 1992)
[3] Mumford, A.A. "Hugh Oldham" (Faber & Faber 1936), R.F.I. Bunn "The History of the School" in "The Manchester Grammar School" Eds. Graham and Phythian (Manchester 1965), Bentley, J. "Dare to be Wise" (London 1990)

Chapter One

"Go back to the source documents" say historians to those who want to research the facts. This may be good advice, but not for amateurs like me with no competence to follow it. There is no shortage of historical writing to digest in place of source documents; indeed the bibliographies look impossibly long. My own approach is to look around for tangible remaining evidence, and use this to narrow the focus of a reading list. The most obvious remains are buildings, and there are quite a lot which originated in the fifteenth century.

Two beautiful constructions with fan-vaulting are often quoted as examples of the best English Perpendicular style. They are St George's Chapel, Windsor, and King's College Chapel, Cambridge. I find them a wonderful way into their time.

The chapel at Windsor has the wider vaulting. One senses immediately that it celebrates a triumph, and this turns out to be the victory of the Yorkist King Edward IV over the Lancastrian Henry VI. Windsor castle was a favourite hunting lodge of Edward, who was crowned king at the age of nineteen after victory in the battle of Towton, near Leeds, in 1461. His hold on the monarchy was less than secure, and the story of the Wars of the Roses is one of amazing ebb and flow of fortune for both sides.[4] So it was not until 1471 that Edward felt his dynasty sufficiently established for him to conceive a grand commemorative chapel to be his burial place.

It is curious to find the tomb of the vanquished Henry in the same chapel. The reasons for this will emerge, but certainly it was not envisaged by King Edward. Henry VI is not a monarch whom most people readily identify,[5] but any understanding of the second half of the fifteenth century does require some knowledge of him. In this chapter I will endeavour to provide a brief backgound, moving in the final paragraph to a roughly chronological account from 1450, my intended starting date. Henry VI reigned from 1421 to 1461 and then enjoyed a brief re-instatement in 1470/71. He is recorded at length by Shakespeare, but it is his father, Henry V, who has entered the general memory through two very good Shakespearean films.

Henry V campaigned in France with great success, gaining the hand of the French king's daughter in confirmation of his right to succeed to the French throne when her father died. Henry VI was only eight months old when his conquering father died, and England and Wales had then to be administered for him by two regent uncles, the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester.

Henry VI had his moments of political greatness. He was crowned king of England in London at the age of eight and king of France in Paris at the age of ten - a distinction never again achieved by an English monarch. Partly due to the efforts of Joan of Arc, the French possessions were lost with remarkable speed. Only Calais remained under English control by 1453, the fateful year when Constantinople fell to the Saracens, ending the historical Byzantium.

The England and Wales ruled by Henry VI was still basically an agricultural country, economically undeveloped, with a total population of probably little more than two million. London was far and away its largest city, with perhaps 50,000 inhabitants, and Westminster had become the fixed base for monarch and government only in the previous century under Edward III. There were many small towns up and down the country, with functions geared to the agriculture of the immediate area. The largest towns rarely had more than 10,000 inhabitants and were market centres, like Norwich and Coventry, or ports, like Bristol and Southampton.

England and Wales were still feudal, although the strict early medieval system which that implies, of land being occupied and farmed or developed subject to providing services or goods to a superior lord, with the king being the ultimate authority, had been weakening for more than a century. The Black Death plague in the later part of the fourteenth century had reduced the population by anything from one third to more than one half in some locations, and the resulting shortage of labour gave impetus to the existing trend towards money wages. Many feudal responsibilities at all levels were being steadily converted to money payments, and a money economy was developing.

The religion professed in the Middle Ages across the greater part of Europe was Christianity, and

[4] see chart number 1 - The Battles of the Wars of the Roses

[5] see selective genealogical chart number 2

Roman Catholicism was the official religion of western Europe. Muslim kingdoms persisted in Spain until 1492, while Judaism was practised in a number of countries by small numbers who were intermittently persecuted, resulting in the largest number of Jews settling in Poland. The pope was head of the church across the many national boundaries and was recognised as such by sovereigns, with the qualification that monarchs had often succeeded over the centuries in rebutting papal claims to authority in temporal matters. The period in the early fourteenth century when there were two popes, mutually opposed, one in Rome and one in Avignon, weakened the overall papal authority. Monarchs had taken the opportunity to gain concessions from their particular pope in return for political and financial support.. So Henry VI was in the position of having the final say on episcopal appointments in his kingdom if he opposed a nomination from Rome. Many of the bishops were highly political appointments and carried no obligation to perform pastoral activities - in fact, a number of bishops never visited their see. Christian belief was expressed by everyone, as heresy could be punished by burning at the stake, but there was dissent in some quarters. Lollardry was a curiously persistent heretical doctrine in England which seemed to presage some of the thinking of the Reformation a century or more later.

The clergy were recognised as a separate estate, with their own courts. A privilege they enjoyed was that of being taxed by their own convocation. This body, however, knew that it had to keep on good terms with the monarch and a suitable contribution would eventually be agreed when the king was pressing for funds. Religion was all-pervasive. Life was governed by the seasons and by the church calendar of festivals and saints' days. It is impossible for us now to enter the fifteenth century mind, with its absence of so much scientific understanding which has become a part of our everyday perception. There seemed then to be a certainty of direct divine intervention, however unpredictable, in human affairs, and, more understandably, an awareness of how suddenly death might strike. Church monuments revelled in human mortality with the image of the decaying body or skeleton beneath the sculpted figure in robes of high estate. The cult of the Virgin and prayers to her and the saints to intercede in favour of those serving their time in purgatory grew strongly in the fifteenth century, which is a time when so many chantries were created. These were endowments, sometimes in perpetuity, to maintain a priest to sing prayers for the soul of the deceased donor. The grandest of these chantries included a special chapel for the performance of the daily prayers.

The British parliament took centuries to evolve. By the middle of the fifteenth century it consisted of Lords and Commons, but still remote from the form we know today. The Lords was the body which made recommendations to the king. Medieval kings selected and employed a number of senior helpers, usually aristocrats, to run their household administration - chamberlains, keepers of the wardrobe, constable etc., the titles varied from one reign to another - and others of the gentry, if not of the nobility, as executives in state affairs - lord chancellor, keeper of the great seal, privy seal, master of the rolls etc., with the titles again varying as changes in administrative systems developed. The monarchs would have liked total control, but the reality was that they had to take account of the individual and collective power of their nobles and other magnates. There was probably always a noble waiting in the wings, convinced that he would make a better king than the present incumbent.

The use of an advisory council of nobles had developed, but the arrival of a parliament representing all parts of the kingdom owed much to the problems of financing national action, such as raising armies for defence or to assert territorial claims abroad. It became necessary to gain the goodwill of all areas if tax for such purposes was to be efficiently levied, so the representative knights of the shires and the burgesses of the boroughs came to the Commons on the comparatively rare occasions that the king felt obliged to summon them to agree the sums to be raised. Parliament was constitutionally required to pass statute law, but still in Henry VI's time, it was convened only when the king decided to invite it.

Henry VI had been brought up accustomed to a council, which his uncles had been obliged to consult and persuade while they ruled as regents. After Henry's minority ended this council continued as a powerful advisory body. Henry was constrained by his creaking administrative system, his chronic shortage of finance and the enormous power of certain nobles who were critical of his indecisive leadership. His financial stringency was partly due to the impossibly expensive campaign to hold territory in France and to the inefficient way the crown estates were run. Theoretically the king's law ran through the whole country, but in reality there was no independent machinery for enforcement. The king looked to his magnates to supervise law and order in their particular areas; most preferred to run their territories primarily for their own purposes. "The king's law meant nothing, and prestige depended on the size and efficiency of a private army".[6] This does not mean that the king was badly served by his ministers. Individuals worked hard for

[6] Jacob, E.F. "The Fifteenth Century" - Oxford History of England series (Oxford 1961) p 488

him with great loyalty, but the few institutions of government, like the Exchequer, were traditional, slow and encumbered with difficulties such as keeping accounts in Roman numerals.

The fundamental direct tax on the populace was based on an assessment in each locality of the value of moveable property, made originally in 1334, and little changed through all the variations in population and trade occurring over the next two hundred years. The potential problems of such an out-of-date assessment are obvious, and when taking practical effect were among the factors in the rebellion of Jack Cade, who led the men of Kent to march on London in protest in 1450. Much of their grievance was the arbitrary and self-serving system of administration of the sheriff of Kent and of other magnates and officials. Sir Humphrey Stafford was killed leading government troops to fight the rebels at Sevenoaks. The rebels briefly held London, and their execution of the sheriff of Kent and of the treasurer of England, Lord Say and Sele, revealed the enfeebled rule of Henry.

Let us turn to another building of the period, King's College Chapel. If you enter by the north door, there is a vestibule giving a limited vista before the grandeur of the fan-vaulting comes into view. The initial impact is made by the massive carved devices which are clearly royal arms, those of Henry VII, the founder of the house of Tudor. The message seems to be that this is the king whom we should acknowledge for such a work of wonder. This is misleading, however, for the chapel was conceived well before his reign by King Henry VI. The foundation stone was laid in 1441 by Henry VI accompanied by William de la Pole, then earl of Suffolk. The earl was formally assisting the king whose favour he had been cultivating after seventeen years of army service in the English possessions in Normandy and the Cotentin. Henry had assumed authority to rule for himself in 1437 at the age of sixteen, but it seems he was temperamentally unsuited to governing. His real interest was religion, or religious observances, and, allied to this, the foundation of educational establishments. His first venture was that of Eton College in 1440, with which Suffolk was also involved. King's College was an associated foundation to which the scholars from Eton could progress.

William de la Pole was the great-grandson of a successful merchant in Hull. The progress of the family through wealth and service to the kings from Edward III on, to the earldom of Suffolk demonstrates that it was possible to rise from the gentry to the aristocracy. William became a leading Lancastrian after his marriage to the widowed duchess of Salisbury (née Chaucer), whose wonderful tomb is still to be admired in Ewelme church, Oxfordshire. He became Henry VI's most trusted adviser and representative in dealings over the problems of France, and believed that peace would be helped by the marriage of the king to Margaret of Anjou. This was arranged and William continued to rise in the king's favour, being promoted to duke of Suffolk in 1448. Among his faction's members was an ambitious Lancastrian, Sir Thomas Stanley, who had been made comptroller of the royal household in 1447 and whose name will recur. Suffolk's peak of power was to be short-lived, and we find him in the Tower of London in 1450, accused of treason. He had influential enemies, so when Henry sorrowfully banished him, he was intercepted at sea as he headed for exile and was executed either by a pirate or by those who thought banishment an inadequate punishment. Be that as it may, the fragility of the king's control was demonstrated, and the country would soon be riven by Henry's descent into mental incapacity and the onset of the Wars of the Roses.

Chapter Two

In addition to the tombs of Henry VI and Edward IV, St George's Chapel contains an interesting assembly of eight chantries for people of some status in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. All will be investigated, but I will concentrate first on the name of Beaufort, whose family badge, the portcullis, is ubiquitous in Westminster even now. The earl of Worcester, Charles Beaufort, commemorated at St George's, is in fact a re-creation of the aristocratic Beaufort line in 1513 in the person of a natural son of Henry, second duke of Somerset, after the legitimate line had died out in the Wars of the Roses.

Royal bastards were a frequent product of European medieval monarchies, and their existence was not concealed. The Beauforts had begun as an illegitimate family, fathered by John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III, with Katherine Swynford, sister-in-law of Geoffrey Chaucer.[7] John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, had a legitimate son, who became king Henry IV, and to whom the family estates were bequeathed, but John's regard for Katherine was such that he fathered four children with her and married her when his wife died in 1394. John then went to great lengths to obtain papal and royal legitimation of the Beaufort offsprings, although there was no suggestion that they should be rivals to the legitimate line - Henry IV made a note that the Beauforts had no right to claim the throne through their descent from a royal prince, but this was without statutory effect.

The Beauforts prospered as close and loyal servants to the crown. The eldest son was made earl of Somerset, where his rather modest lands were situated. His concern over the smallness of the estates was unexpectedly relieved when Margaret Holland, his wife, inherited part of the lands of the earldom of Kent, following the early deaths of her two brothers. In the next generation John, the earl, was promoted to duke of Somerset, but only after the worst possible luck of falling captive to the French in his first youthful campaign. He was held for seventeen years and the enormous liability of his ransom of £24,000 blighted his subsequent career. As duke, he made the mistake of appearing to misuse his military command for personal ends, and died, possibly by his own hand, in 1444, banished from court and under threat of treason charges by a furious Henry VI. His tomb with effigy can be seen in Wimborne Minster. The duke left only one child, Lady Margaret Beaufort, aged one year, whose story we shall follow closely, since it is her well-documented life which reveals, more than any other so far discovered, some elements of Hugh Oldham's career.

Leadership of the Beaufort clan moved to Edmund, John's younger brother, the new duke of Somerset. He had become a powerful military man in the wars in France, after surviving a youthful, scandalous affair with Katherine de Valois, the "young and lusty" widow of King Henry V and mother of Henry VI. It is said that her first child by her second husband, Owen Tudor, was named Edmund after the duke. This baby Edmund was made duke of Richmond by his half-brother, Henry VI.

The Beauforts were always conscious of their royal descent and determined to stay close to the monarch. With the dismissal of Suffolk in 1450, Somerset was made constable of England and then chamberlain of the household by Henry VI. He was the centre of the Lancastrian group of the nobility which was distinctly larger than the group led by the duke of York. The latter was a critic of the king and opponent of the Beauforts, and was soon pressing his claim to the throne of England in succession to Henry. Although the king's abilities were widely questioned, York failed to attract meaningful support among his peers. The two dukes epitomised the opposing sides of the Wars of the Roses, with their claims to monarchy based on descent for Somerset from Edward III's fourth son and for York from the fifth son.

The early 1450s were politically very uncertain, and England was consistently out-manoeuvred by the French in her hopeless efforts to retain control of her French territorial possessions. The international situation needs wider explanation, but the thoughts of the nobility here were concentrated on the monarchy with the two factions arming for conflict. The king was losing what grip he had, leaving his young and ambitious queen, Margaret, to select Somerset as her champion.

In August 1453 Henry VI became insane; Margaret and her advisers tried to conceal this, but matters had to come to a head when the queen produced a son, Edward, to be Prince of Wales and heir to the throne. The event seems to have been curiously unexpected by the king, as only in February he had annulled the marriage contracted by Suffolk for his infant son, John de la Pole, and the child Lady Margaret Beaufort.[8] The king transferred the wardship of the girl to Edmund and Jasper Tudor, with the clear intention

[7] see selective genealogical chart number 2

[8] Jones and Underwood "The King's Mother" pp 37-38

that she should marry Edmund, duke of Richmond, as soon as old enough. In doing this the king had appeared to be favouring his half-brother Richmond as his own successor, but this could not now happen.

The need for government while the king was incapacitated and his heir only a baby was met by convening a great council. Ultimately York was invited to be chief of the king's council and "protector and defender" (not regent) of the realm. York acted as one might expect - he made himself captain of Calais in place of Somerset and confirmed his existing office of governor of Ireland. His brother-in-law, Salisbury, was made chancellor. Then early in 1455 Henry VI returned to health. It was not long before the opposing camps[9] came to blows in the opening battle of the Wars of the Roses at St Albans. York was victorious and Somerset, Northumberland and Buckingham's eldest son all perished. It is at this battle that Richard Nevill, having gained the earldom of Warwick through marriage in 1449, comes to our notice. York took Somerset's title of constable of England, while Warwick, who was Salisbury's son, became captain of Calais.

It was in 1456 that Lady Margaret Beaufort, aged twelve, married Edmund, duke of Richmond, as King Henry intended. She settled with her husband at Lamphey in Pembrokeshire. It was customary to wait for a wife to reach the age of fourteen before pregnancy, but Edmund was anxious to secure a life interest in Margaret's estates, which he could do by producing an offspring. This desire apparently outweighed any regard for Margaret, who was to give birth to Henry Tudor in 1457 while she was still only thirteen. Ironically, Edmund had already died following imprisonment after the opening battle of the Wars of the Roses.

Widowed at this young age, Lady Margaret, who had nearly lost her life in giving birth, was unable to bear another child. Her immediate need was to improve on the shelter available to her and her baby son with her brother-in -law, Jasper Tudor, in Pembroke castle. Clearly she must marry again. She took an active part in pursuing arrangements for her future, and discussed with her relative, the duke of Buckingham, a leading magnate, a union with the duke's second son, Sir Henry Stafford. In return for her valuable estates and royal connections, he could offer senior status and the security of the famous Stafford family. The marriage suited them both and took place within a year of her son's birth. One must not be too cynical about the obvious material benefits of the match, as the evidence suggests it proved to be a loving and happy marriage of second cousins lasting fourteen years.

As you would expect, Margaret and her husband were instinctive upholders of the Lancastrian cause. The lines of support for the sides in what was an aristocratic power struggle, rather than a civil war involving the whole populace, were not always firm. There was a tendency for the magnates to be anything but dependable, as they changed their view of the ultimate potential gain. The battles were bloody enough for the soldiery, who were mainly the retainers of the magnates and of their knights and supporting gentry. It was the great aristocratic families such as Beaufort, Nevill and Stafford, in addition to the royal families of York and Lancaster, who made great sacrifice of their menfolk.

The driving force on the Lancastrian side was queen Margaret who was prepared to stake all on guiding her son, the prince of Wales, to the throne. The battle of Northampton in July 1460 was a harsh setback, as the defeated Henry VI had to concede that the duke of York should succeed him at the end of his reign. Prior to the battle, the city of London had been faced with a difficult decision as the rebel forces of York advanced on the gates. Caroline Barron[10] explains that out of practical experience the City governors generally steered clear of politics, because of the hazards. It had been with great reluctance that they had allowed in the earls of March, Warwick and Salisbury with their forces, but once they were installed London had inadvertently aided the Yorkist success. To avoid Lancastrian vengeance, London was now almost irrevocably committed.

The duke of York, however, was killed in the next encounter; but then his son Edward, the earl of March, won the field at Mortimers Cross in June 1461 and promptly took the crown by acclamation of the people of London. Sir Henry Stafford took a sensible view, made peace with the new king, Edward IV, and gained a general pardon, which saved his and his wife's estates from depredation. But there had to be a downside - one of the spoils of war awarded to William Herbert, later Yorkist earl of Pembroke, was the custody of the minor, Henry Tudor. So Lady Margaret had to give up her son to be brought up in Raglan castle by the Herbert family, who saw him as a valuable potential husband for their daughter, Maud. In fact the treatment Henry received from the Herberts was kindly. Thirty years later another daughter, Lady Anne Powis, who shared her childhood with Henry at Raglan would be a close friend of Lady Margaret.

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[9] see selective genealogical chart number 2

[10] Barron, Caroline "Later Middle Ages" in British Atlas of Historic Towns vol. III The City of London (Oxford U.P. 1989)

During the six years of strife, ordinary people and those in commerce were no doubt trying to live as normally as possible, unconvinced perhaps that a change in the ruling dynasty would have any real significance for them. Individuals would have all manner of personal reasons for supporting the royal family of Henry VI, but the latter's reign had proved weak in its financial and administrative control. Support for Edward was strongest in the city of London, the country's commercial centre, indicating readiness there for the change to Yorkist government.

England's wealth was based very largely on its ability to produce high quality wool. There were other natural resources to be exploited, like tin deposits and hardwood forests, but there was strong international demand for wool as the basic textile in use particularly in northern Europe. England's own textile industry was in its infancy. There was some linen production and some broadcloth weaving, but our growing involvement with wool was due not to home demand but to that of the industrialised civilisations on the continent. The development of towns and their governance in the Middle Ages is a study in itself, and there are differing theories about their causal forces. It is clear, however, that city-dwelling encourages the division of labour, specialisation in individual crafts and the creation of surplus products for sale - the basis of markets. This in turn encourages the rise of a bourgeois class, successful merchants, artists and master-craftsmen and professional people, especially those engaged in the law, which is so integral a part of land-owning (the occupation of the medieval aristocracy), and of enforceable contracts, an essential tool of trade. The communities of the Low Countries and of northern Italy were city-based and had developed an advanced financial and commercial understanding. We shall look more closely at them in Chapter IV.

Chapter Three

A second important name among the chantries of St George's Chapel is that of William, Lord Hastings. An unflinching Yorkist, Hastings came from a family of long-standing gentry. Sons from such families had two main routes to social advancement: marriages with ladies from wealthier families or gaining the patronage of an influential peer or his lady. Hastings used both routes.

The family lands were in the north midlands. On the death of his father, a retainer of the duke of York, William was made sheriff of Leicestershire and Warwickshire. He became an aide to, and a close friend of, the duke's son, the earl of March. They fought together and, after the victory of Mortimer's Cross bringing Edward IV to the throne, the king immediately awarded a baronetcy to William, followed soon afterwards by the offices of master of the mint and grand chamberlain of the royal household.

The new baron later reinforced his status with marriage to Katherine Nevill, a daughter of the earl of Salisbury, thus becoming a brother-in-law of the earl of Warwick, whose aid had carried Edward to the monarchy, giving a start to the events gaining him the by-name "the Kingmaker". The decade of the 1460s brought much fighting, in which Hastings acquitted himself well. He also revealed considerable diplomatic skill with involvement in many missions on Edward's behalf.

The new king's first need was to consolidate his domestic position while another crowned king of England remained at large. He quickly appointed his cousin to be treasurer, Warwick's brother George Nevill to be chancellor and Warwick himself to be captain of Calais. Then Edward marched northwards with Warwick's forces to try to finish the Lancastrian threat. The victory at Towton in March 1461 was important, but Queen Margaret and family with Exeter and Somerset fled to Scotland, where in accord with previous intrigue the young prince of Wales joined the Scottish royal household to be betrothed to James III's young sister. Berwick was handed in the name of Henry VI to king James. All this opened the way for Charles VII of France to provide assistance to Margaret and the Lancastrian cause.

Edward IV returned to London for his coronation in June 1461, leaving Warwick and his brother John Nevill, made Lord Montagu, to continue skirmishing in the north. The king pursued a policy of conciliation, and was generous with pardons, trusting certain nobles to forswear their opposition. The Beaufort duke of Somerset, Lady Margaret's cousin, Henry, was a particular beneficiary of this policy. Experienced officials and administrators were in short supply, so indiscretion such as having worked for the Lancastrians was often overlooked to keep operations running.

Sometimes the ambiguous attitude of an individual paid off, and there is no better example than that of Thomas, second baron Stanley. His father, as we have noted, was comptroller of Henry VI's household and had been ennobled in 1456. The baronetcy passed to Thomas in 1459 and, like Hastings, he had previously made an advantageous match by marrying Eleanor Nevill, making the earl of Warwick a brother-in-law. The Stanley family was based in Lancashire and Cheshire with several residences including a house in Manchester. Thomas and his younger brother Sir William Stanley were leading magnates capable of raising a force of a few thousand men. Sir William had declared himself a Yorkist supporter at the beginning of the conflicts, so he had suffered attainder (sequestration of all property) after the battle of Ludford Bridge, a Lancastrian victory in 1459. Lord Stanley, in contrast, was adept at avoiding involvement whenever possible, but had the knack of appearing supportive of anyone in power. With the coming of Edward IV, Lord Stanley has a growing part to play in the historical action.

It is appropriate here to make mention of Hugh Oldham, born in 1452 in the Manchester area and thus in the sphere of influence of Lord Stanley. We have been following the turbulent events which were the background to Oldham's childhood, but we know nothing of how he spent these years. Dr. Mumford spent much effort in the 1920s and 1930s trying to discover information about Oldham's life, which he published as a monograph in 1936.[11] It is to his research that we owe the scant details that Hugh was at the younger end of a family of six brothers and perhaps three sisters, with a father who was concerned with estate management - the only record of him is as agent in certain local property transfers. In this yeoman family education for the boys would be usual. The eldest son, James, was to leave Manchester in 1467 as keeper for the episcopal park-lands at Wolsingham, belonging to the bishop of Durham, Lawrence Booth, who was himself from the Manchester region. It appears that Hugh followed his brother James to Durham and was settled there by 1475 when, in a transfer of property rights in Manchester from James to Hugh, he is described as "clerk of Durham". Perhaps Hugh Oldham's administrative career began through a connection

[11] Mumford, A.A. "Hugh Oldham" (1936)

with the bishop. We can now return to the national events during which Oldham grew up and reached employment.

Following hard on the immediate domestic difficulties, Edward IV faced some interesting international problems and seemed content to let Warwick drive the national policy. The York family had for some time had links with the ruler of Burgundy, Philip the Good, and had attempted to arrange a marriage with a daughter of this branch of the Valois.[12] When things were looking bad for York early in 1461, Edward's mother had sent her two younger sons, George and Richard, later to become dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, to Bruges for safety with the ruling family. The boys were aged only ten and eight, so we do not know how impressed they were with the ducal palace in Bruges, but certainly they were exposed to the ostentatious wealth and love of pageantry and chivalry of the Burgundian court. If they did not bring back lasting memories, there is little doubt that the culture of the cities of the Low Countries had a significant influence on England throughout the fifteenth century. With their eldest brother's elevation to the throne, the boys returned to London in July 1461. Edward IV had a high regard for Burgundy, but would discover eventually that his most powerful noble, Warwick, was bent on alliance with France.

On the 22nd July, 1461, Charles VII of France died. He had quarrelled with his son, Louis, the dauphin, who had then found refuge in Burgundy. Returning to France, the new king, Louis XI, was determined to build on his father's success in the Hundred Years' War with England, and to make France a secure and powerful country. He inherited a monarchy in which tax and financial affairs had benefited from organisation by the famous argentier (finance minister), Jacques Coeur, whose fine palace in Bourges provides an impressive visit today. The new king had a political cunning and a distrust of war to help in his aims, where his immediate concern was to contain the duke of Burgundy. A part of his strategy was to ensure that England would not be in a position to side with the enemy against France, so Louis was happy to support Henry VI and queen Margaret in order to keep their country divided.

The next two years were packed with intrigue and action. Margaret of Anjou left Scotland and plotted with Duke Francis II of Brittany and her cousin Louis XI. She made an offer which Louis could not resist - in return for an immediate loan of 20,000 livres, Henry VI would undertake to give Calais to Louis within twelve months on payment of 40,000 crowns, or the loan would be repaid. Louis was very keen to gain Calais, and was hoping that he might be able to launch a direct attack, knowing that the garrison was deeply in arrears of pay and might defect. This latter plan was foiled, however, by Edward IV who persuaded the merchants of the staple to advance £41,000 for wages. He then raised a fleet of seventy ships to raid the shipping and coasts of France and Brittany, which so occupied these two countries they were unable to give further assistance to the Lancastrians. Margaret had unwisely gone ahead with an invasion of England with far too little support. She landed near Bamburgh but soon had to withdraw, and Warwick took the castle by surrender.

Edward IV was now hoping to reach a settlement with France; Louis in turn was feeling the pressures of disagreements elsewhere, particularly with Aragon, and the climate allowed a meeting at St Omer in June 1463 of representatives of France, Burgundy and England. A truce was agreed and a valuable commercial treaty between England and Burgundy, regulating their vital trade, was continued into the following year. Discussions began about possible marriage for the highly eligible king of England, now 20 years old, six feet four inches tall, handsome and creating a sufficiently stable country for him to feel he could restore to the Duke of Somerset lands which had been forfeited after Towton. The English negotiators, at Warwick's suggestion, asked for the hand of Louis XI's daughter, but he countered with the offer of one of his wife's sisters, a daughter of the duke of Savoy. This potential closeness of England to France was not welcome to the Duke of Burgundy, who decided to offer one of his nieces for Edward's consideration.

Lord Hastings now appears in his diplomatic role, treating early in 1464 with king James III of Scotland, whose wife was a niece of the duke of Burgundy, for a fifteen-year peace and an undertaking by the Scots to give no further shelter to the Lancastrians. All seemed to be taking shape when the kingdom of Castile entered the marriage auction with the offer of the hand of Isabella, the king's sister, to Edward. He appeared to be enjoying playing a waiting game, but then he took a most extraordinary decision, which, it could be argued, would be the main cause of the eventual fall of the Yorkist dynasty. In complete secrecy he married an attractive young widow, Elizabeth Woodville, daughter of Richard, Earl Rivers, who until now had been a Lancastrian supporter.

[12] see selective genealogical chart number 3 - Valois and Habsburg

During the spring and summer there was trouble again with Lancastrian sympathisers. Warwick and Montagu had to deal with uprisings in the north, leading to the battle of Hexham on the 15th May, 1464. The Yorkists won the day and decided to rid themselves of the rebel leaders: Henry, Duke of Somerset, Lord Roos and Lord Hungerford were beheaded. So Lady Margaret Beaufort was indeed fortunate to have joined the Stafford family, who were now committed to the Yorkist cause, or she would inescapably have suffered from the personal feud between Edward IV and the Beauforts. The final siege of Bamburgh castle put paid to any Lancastrian hopes in the north.

On the international front, Warwick continued to work for a French alliance. It was only on the 14th September that Edward IV revealed to his council that he had married. This caused "great displeasure to many lords"[13] and particularly to Warwick, who had put so much reliance on a royal marriage with France. He was soon writing privately to Louis as if he could control English policy. Louis let the Milanese ambassador know, clearly assuming that Warwick had designs on the English throne, that he would support Warwick and would be helped by the two surviving Beaufort lords, Edmund, duke of Somerset, and John, Marquis of Dorset, now taking refuge under Burgundy's protection in Bruges. Edward promoted Warwick's brother, George, to be archbishop of York, but this sweetener failed completely to repair Warwick's displeasure. His alienation from the king grew with each passing year as the grasping Woodville family took all the marriage partners and high offices which Warwick would have wished for his own family. Edward's mother was equally displeased by his choice of partner and chided him for not having found a foreign princess with suitable political rewards, but Edward's reply, as reported by Sir Thomas More,[14] is neat, if disingenuous, "albeit mariage being a spiritual thing, ought rather to be made for the respecte of God where his grace enclineth the parties to loue together, as he trusted it was in his, then for the regard of any temporal advauntage".

[13] Jacob, E.F. "The Fifteenth Century" (Oxford 1961) p. 536
[14] More, Thomas "History of King Richard III" (Cambridge U.P. 1924)

Chapter Four

The city of Bruges in Flanders is now a tourist venue for its medieval centre. It is indeed an attractive old town, but in 1464 it was as large as London and commercially much more important, being the financial centre for northern Europe. The ruling dukes of Burgundy were a branch of the royal family of France, the Valois, and had pursued an independent policy of self-aggrandisement, often in conflict with the French monarch. They had acquired the lordship of Flanders, with its weaving cities, in 1384, and the wealth generated by Bruges, Ghent, Ypres and other industrial towns was a vital factor in the development of Burgundy as an opulent power. Duke Philip the Good [the by-names of monarchs were allocated after their deaths in a sort of distillation of their attributes] had incorporated with the nucleus of Burgundy and Franche-Comte most of the area which we call Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. This anomalous area we can call a state for convenience, but it was without a true capital and its government and court were itinerant. For all that it was a thriving collection of provinces which encouraged indigenous talent and enterprise. The fine arts paralleled the activities in Italy, with the invention of oil painting apparently occurring in the workshops of Robert Campin in Tournai and of Jan van Eyck in Bruges.

It was the high quality of English wool which made it so essential a supply for the Flemish weavers and an attractive import also for the industrial towns of northern Italy. Venice was the long-standing commercial link with christian Byzantium and muslim Asia-Minor, while the Italian trading cities such as Genoa, Milan and Florence had produced a bourgeois class in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who took an adventurous approach to buying and selling. Their merchants came to northern Europe as traders, money-changers and bankers with a technical expertise, including accounting, well in advance of any competitors'. Italian bankers had learned hard lessons in England under Edward III who reneged on loans in the 1340s and destroyed their business, but they had steadily moved into the Low Countries in the fifteenth century as trade opportunities emerged.

It was Edward III, looking for alternative sources of finance, who had turned to the London Company of the Merchants of the staple and granted them virtually monopoly rights on the export of wool. All such exports, to ensure they were accurately registered for customs dues, had to be directed through staples, that is designated warehouses or towns where the warehousing facilities were centred. Once Calais had become a secure English possession - the siege of 1347 is commemorated by Rodin's famous sculptured group in the Victoria Tower Gardens - the staple was located there with the protection of the largest standing garrison of the English crown. The importance of the royal appointment of lieutenant or captain of Calais lay in the control of the garrison, the potential to monitor international shipping in the Channel and the special relationship with the powerful merchants of the staple.

If you stand in the Markt in Bruges beneath the ancient bell-tower, you see Vlamingstraat in the north-east corner leading to the medieval financial area. There were thriving Flemish money-changing businesses and colonies of foreign merchants and bankers. In Naa'ldenstraat you can still see the massive exterior of the Hotel Bladelin, which became the Bruges office of the Florentine Medici Bank, opened elsewhere in the city in 1439.[15] The Bruges manager became responsible for a new sub-office in London about 1444. Many of the bank's records survive and provide some interesting comments. For example, there is a letter dated 14th May 1464 from Tommaso di Folco Portinari, the acting manager in Bruges, to the head of the bank in Florence. It encloses the accounts for the last trading period. "Our profits, as you will see, are very low this year, and expenditures have been high", but there are good hopes for a more profitable future. There is mention of "hopeless debtors" and of others whose money will take a long time to collect, including, one would guess, Lady Hungerford. The Medici had been unlucky to lend the family the money to pay Lord Hungerford's ransom when he was held prisoner by the French. "About this we must have patience; may God get us out of it soon without loss". It had seemed a good idea at the time, but Hungerford was on the wrong side in the battle of Hexham, and Portinari did not know that the lord would be executed within a day or two of his letter.

Portinari succeeded Angelo Tani as Medici manager in Bruges in 1465. Both typified a class of wealthy merchants who had the money to follow the lead of the Burgundian courtiers in buying illuminated books, fine clothes and works of art. At the end of his residence in Bruges, Tani commissioned an altar triptych in the Low Countries' style so highly rated not only in Flanders but equally in Italy. We have to be grateful to Tani for having selected a newcomer to the Bruges painters, by the name of Hans Memling, recently trained in the Brussels workshop of Rogier van der Weyden. The resulting picture, the Last Judgment, shows Angelo and his wife Catarina as donors in the wings of the triptych. It is the first

[15] de Roover, R. "Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank" (Harvard 1963)

documented commission to be won by this painter, who went on to become one of the most prized artists of his generation. The picture is still to be seen in the Muzeum Naradowe, Gdansk, but how it arrived there via North Sea pirates is another story. Another Italian merchant to whom we must be grateful was Giovanni Arnolfini, who operated in Bruges as supplier of Lucchese silks to the court of Burgundy In 1434 he had commissioned van Eyck to paint for his betrothal the famous portrait of himself and Giovanna Cenomani which we admire still in the National Gallery.[16] Arnolfini moved to the court of Louis XI about 1464 where his Italian father-in-law had an established merchanting reputation.

The next four years 1465-68 brought great responsibilities for Lord Hastings. The three powers were consumed with suspicion of one another, jockeying continually for political position but regularly driven also to negotiate over economic arrangements. We have seen the dependency of the Low Countries on English wool, so there was always pressure from the merchants on both sides of the North Sea on their respective sovereigns for facilitation of trade. Hastings, sometimes with Warwick or other representatives, was frequently involved in trade treaty negotiations with Burgundy. It was in April 1466 that the Count of Charolais, the son of the duke of Burgundy[17] suggested that, having recently lost his first wife, Isabella of Bourbon, he might marry Edward IV's sister, Margaret, and that he might offer his daughter to marry the duke of Clarence, thus firmly linking the interests of England and Burgundy. Warwick was hostile to this idea, particularly as he wanted Clarence as a husband for his own daughter. He soon entered an agreement with Louis XI for a truce for two years during which Louis would give no aid to the Lancastrians and Edward IV none to either Charolais or Brittany. Louis was prepared to pay Edward 40,000 gold crowns every year their agreement lasted, and would find a prince to marry Margaret. Edward ratified this agreement - the gold crowns were worth having until he changed his mind - and was happy to let France and Burgundy compete in wooing him.

In fact, Edward was keen on his sister's proposed marriage to Charolais and perhaps he knew Warwick was treating privately with Louis, who was suggesting to Warwick that the restoration of Henry VI would be an answer to this undesirable link to the Burgundian camp. Hastings had been in discussion with Burgundy over the marriage when, in June 1467, Philip the Good died and Charolais became duke of Burgundy (to be known later as Charles the Bold or the Rash). The marriage would be now even more important, and Edward's policy become clearly anti-French. George Nevill was sacked as chancellor, a rebuke to Warwick, and relations between the latter and the king were openly deteriorating.

The decision in 1468 for Edward's sister to marry Charles the Bold brought forth a rush of diplomatic activity and trade negotiation. Edward made alliances and trade treaties with Brittany and Burgundy, and the forthcoming marriage at Damme, just outside Bruges, was a tremendous stimulus to trade. The Medici branch in London lent £1,000 to Edward for silks for Margaret's trousseau. Laurenzo Barducci, one of the senior staff, took part in the negotiations over Margaret's dowry, so the Medici were in good standing with the monarch. Writing from London, Tani's exasperation is clear in his letter of 23rd May 1468 about how powerful the lawyers' lobby was in London, "What we need is help and not advice; we can get advice here, since lawyers form one fourth of the population of this realm."[18]

The royal wedding, on Sunday, 3rd July 1468, was an affair of ostentatious luxury and pageantry. Earl Rivers had the important duty of escorting Margaret and her immediate entourage to Bruges, where she was greeted by the governor in Bruges and Utrecht of the Merchant Adventurers, none other than William Caxton. In a great procession through the town the various Italian cities' communities put on resplendent outfits, Venetian, Genoese, Florentine and Lucchese, every one trying to outdo the others.

Warwick was naturally furious to see his plans so firmly thwarted, and the rift between Edward and Warwick was rapidly worsening. 1469 brought the spread of rumours that Edward was a bastard offspring and that George, the duke of Clarence, was the rightful heir of the old duke of York. Warwick and Clarence were conspiring together, and Warwick was being urged by Louis XI to remove Edward and win a principality in the Low Countries as a reward for supporting France in war against Burgundy. On the 7th June the archbishop of York married Warwick's daughter Isobel to the duke of Clarence in Calais, where Warwick was gathering a large force of men with whom he returned to England to march on London on 20th July 1469.

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[16] We have no absolute certainty that the Arnolfini in the portrait is correctly identified, but a conclusive case for me is made by Edwin Hall in "The Arnolfini Betrothal" (Berkeley 1994) that the picture marks a betrothal and not a wedding.

[17] see selective genealogical Chart number 3

[18] de Roover, R. "Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank" (Harvard 1963)

Edward found himself facing a crisis as Warwick's rebellion made rapid progress, including the defeat of the earls of Pembroke and Devon as they advanced to support the king. Herbert of Pembroke was executed with his brother after the battle. The Woodville trio accompanying the king quickly deserted, and Edward found himself alone with his loyal aide, Lord Hastings, and his younger brother, Richard of Gloucester., to be taken into custody at Middleham castle, the Nevill stronghold in Yorkshire. Earl Rivers and his son, Sir John Woodville, were captured by the Nevill faction and promptly executed.[19]

The political moves of the next eighteen months affecting England, Burgundy, France and the German emperor defy brief summary. Oversimplifying, it may be said Warwick failed to impose his authority on the country generally, and Edward IV managed to rally enough supporters to proclaim Warwick and Clarence to be "great rebels". Warwick in April 1470 called on his brother-in-law, Lord Stanley, at his Manchester home and was refused aid, perhaps because Richard of Gloucester with his forces was not far away. In any event Warwick had to retreat to Calais, and from there engage in plotting with Louis XI. The French king required a commitment from Warwick to join in open war to acquire all the Burgundian lands if Louis was to give him the means to restore Henry VI.

In the summer of 1470 Warwick's expedition with French backing landed in Devon; Edward was in Yorkshire. Warwick was joined by Clarence, Jasper Tudor, the earls of Oxford and Shrewsbury and Lord Stanley who must have judged Edward to be weak this time, as he had been forsaken by his old ally marquis Montagu. Edward and Hastings were lucky to escape from King's Lynn to shelter with the duke of Burgundy. Warwick and company entered London on 6th October 1470, released Henry VI from six years' imprisonment in the Tower and placed him once more on the throne. The pregnant queen Elizabeth Woodville took sanctuary in Westminster Abbey. Sir Richard Tunstall quickly replaced Lord Hastings as master of the mint.

For the Beaufort story we need simply note that the restoration of Henry VI allowed Lady Margaret to be re-united with her son, whom she then placed for safety with his uncle Jasper, newly recovering his earldom of Pembroke.

Warwick ran into difficulties over delivering on his undertakings to Louis XI, who renounced his treaty obligations with Burgundy and sent French forces to invade the duchy. The English merchants were none too ready to support a war against Burgundy, so the alliance with France which was eventually approved by parliament did not declare war but undertook to assemble an army - some limited hostilities were begun near Calais. Meanwhile, Edward IV had not been idle. Ironically it was with the aid of Hansa merchants to provide the shipping that Edward was able to invade with a force of 2,000 men and was welcomed in York as he said he was claiming his dukedom. Marquis Montagu temporarily changed sides and did not attack Edward's small force. Warwick's summons for aid from the earls of Shrewsbury and Pembroke and to Lord Stanley was declined, as Margaret of Anjou had still not set foot again in England with the expected troops financed by France. Edward pressed on to London and took control of the person of Henry VI. London's welcome for Edward was perhaps coloured by the debt of £12,000 which he had owing to the merchants and which they were keen to see repaid. Louis promptly signed a peace treaty with Burgundy, knowing that Warwick had failed him.

At the battle of Barnet, Edward IV, with Hastings on his left and Gloucester on his right, defeated Warwick and his supporters. Warwick and Montagu were killed. The same day queen Margaret, prince Edward and his new wife, Anne Nevill, Warwick's daughter, landed at Weymouth. The final battle on behalf of Henry VI took place at Tewkesbury. The male Beaufort line consisted only of the two brothers, Edmund, duke of Somerset, and John. In their late attempt to raise support against Edward IV they had called on Stafford and Lady Margaret at their Woking home. Stafford prevaricated and declined to help. In the event he and his retainers joined battle at Barnet on Edward's side. Stafford was badly wounded and returned home a slowly dying man, but his personal sacrifice protected Lady Margaret when the restored Edward IV took bloody vengeance on those who had opposed him. Prince Edward and John Beaufort died at Tewkesbury, but the duke of Somerset and many Lancastrian knights were executed soon afterwards. As Edward took London once more on 21st May 1471, he ordered the death of Henry VI in the Tower of London. The body was sent for burial at the abbey of Chertsey. A happier action by Edward was to greet his queen and their newly-born son, prince Edward, released from sanctuary.

What of Henry Tudor? His mother wisely sent instructions for him to flee from Pembroke and warned him not to be deceived if offered any promise of safe-conduct by King Edward, who had already

[19] see selective genealogical chart number 4 - Woodvilles

shown a willingness to execute an opponent mistakenly taking him on trust. Henry and his uncle Jasper slipped away from Tenby and their ship was blown by the winds to Brittany, where they settled in exile.

Chapter Five

As you enter St George's chapel by the south door you find on your right a large chantry for Sir Reginald Bray. Little known to us now, Bray was born around 1440, and his father may have practised medicine in Worcester. Some suggest that the doctor actually attended Henry VI, but this is not certain. We find the son pursuing an administrative career as receiver-general to Sir Henry Stafford, who married Lady Margaret Beaufort, as we have seen, in 1458. It was about 1467 that Bray took on the responsibility of receiver-general of her extensive estates. He must have displayed a trustworthiness and competence which made him a valued officer to Lady Margaret, and the range of problems which arose in such an important post must have gained him a wide knowledge of legal, financial and architectural/building matters. The relationship was close enough for her to wish to retain his services whatever happened after Stafford's death in 1471.

Lady Margaret did not delay the search for a new protector, and one can readily understand her desire not to be alone when Edward IV was showing a vindictive attitude to Lancastrians. It was Bray who saw to the arrangements for Stafford's burial and perhaps he won Lady Margaret's particular gratitude for his solid support at this difficult time. Thomas, Lord Stanley, had lost his wife, Eleanor Nevill, a year earlier. We do not know who approached whom, but there is evidence that Edward IV promoted the match. The king was close to Stanley who, in spite of his uncertain record of political allegiance, was active at court and gained the important post of steward of the royal household in August 1471. This gave him supervision of the "below stairs" departments of the household, and involved financial accounting in conjunction with the Treasurer. The whole royal establishment was, of course, under the ultimate supervision of the lord chamberlain, Lord Hastings, who had been given in July 1471 the captaincy of Calais. This appointment showed how highly Hastings was valued by Edward IV, but it put him at odds with queen Elizabeth Woodville who had expected the post to be awarded to one of her family.

Negotiations for Lady Margaret's marriage with Stanley were quickly under way and the ceremony took place at one of the Stanley homes in Lancashire in June 1472. It was a marriage of convenience. As the Beaufort family heiress, Lady Margaret was a valuable acquisition, giving Stanley influence in southern areas of England. She gained security and an entree to the Yorkist court which might otherwise have regarded her as a Lancastrian enemy. She was able to develop relations with the Woodvilles and may have carried in her mind from quite an early date that a marriage of her son to Edward's eldest daughter, Elizabeth of York, would be a means to unite the opposing houses. Certainly she was looking for ways to rehabilitate her son as an aristocrat in England, but the approach had to be circumspect.

The Stanley couple travelled surprisingly often between north and south; distance seemed no deterrent, and of course for temporary stays there were friends' residences or houses of their own on their extensive lands spread widely across the country. They set up a home in a new building at Woking which allowed easy access to London via the Thames. Stanley already had a town house conveniently near Baynard's castle, the residence of Edward IV, as he needed to be at hand for the king. The site would later become that of Derby House, and is now the home of the Royal College of Arms which is not far from the site of the Great Wardrobe, the large building which stood behind St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe until it was destroyed in the Great Fire.

1472 saw the consolidation of Edward's rule. He realised that the power coveted by a medieval king could only be exercised if he knew how to finance it. His Black Book was probably compiled that year. It contained a survey of all the members of the king's household with terms of service and expenses of all officials from the queen and princes down to the barbers and minstrels of the court. It is a marvelous piece of administrative work and shows the move from a somewhat chaotic medieval court with countless hangers-on to a meticulously controlled organisation. No more meals for anyone who happened to be in the royal kitchen - every benefit had to be authorised. "The king will have his goods dispended but not wasted", was a later announcement, but the new thinking was already clear.

Landed aristocracy from Roman times has despised trade; Edward IV was a monarch taking a more favourable view. Financial profit appealed to him so he undertook a certain amount of personal trading through agents. He clearly understood the importance of the merchant class in London as lenders in time of need, and one of the most urgent actions Edward had to take, once he was securely in control again, was to reward those who had helped him to power. This meant removal of restraints on the Hansa merchants and the grant, with great pomp in September 1473, of the earldom of Winchester to Louis de la Gruthuyse, who had supplied generous hospitality to Edward as a refugee. The Gruthuyse palace, where Edward was housed near the centre of Bruges, is now a public museum.

Edward was sensitive to his public image and back in 1467 had assured parliament that he could "live of his own", meaning he would not require subsidy from tax for his household. The Black Book shows annual expenditure on the latter had been reduced to £13,000. Thomas More in his History of King Richard III puts his finger on Edward's ability to cultivate popularity, "He hadde left all gatherynge of money (which is the onelye thyng that withdraweth the hearts of Englishmenne fro the Prynce)".

Now Edward was able to give some attention to buildings. In February 1473 the king instructed the bishop of Salisbury to gather workmen and order materials for his project of a new chapel at St George's, Windsor. There was much planning and organising to be done, and it would be June 1475 before clearance of the ground marked the start of work on the chapel. Edward spent some £7,000 on the project over the next eight years.[20]

There was still no complete security for Edward, however, as Louis XI persuaded John de Vere, earl of Oxford, an inveterate Lancastrian, to believe that he would support his actions to dethrone Edward IV. The worrying aspect for Edward was that he could not be sure whether or not his brother Clarence was also acting treasonably in the hope of winning the crown. In May 1473 Oxford landed at St Osith's but soon had to withdraw to continue cruising about the south western coasts posing a constant threat. Clarence was showing intense jealousy of his brother Gloucester, who was reaping large rewards for his solid support of the king. In October, Oxford landed with a small force and occupied St Michael's Mount.. He was quickly dealt with by Sir John Fortescue with a royal force.

Internationally the decade was to be of inconclusive political plotting. Edward fancied a united front with Charles the Bold of Burgundy against France. Charles on the other hand seemed set on achieving the title of king, and the easiest way was to gain favour with the German emperor, who could influence the granting of the title of King of the Romans. So Charles talked of marriage for his daughter, Mary, to the emperor's son, Maximilian. Edward's overtures were met by Charles's extension of his truce with Louis to May 1475.

Edward's determination grew to seek a restoration of his title to kingship in France, or perhaps he saw armed confrontation with Louis as the best way to break the tension of the three countries' triangle. This would require substantial finance, which he persuaded parliament to provide by way of a levy of fifteenths and tenths (boroughs as distinct from towns paid the larger fraction on their standard assessment). Parliament was not exactly enthusiastic and required Edward to have his ships and men ready to go to France before the funds were actually handed over to him. One can understand why the king was always prepared to borrow money, and it is possible to identify in the Exchequer records a wide range of lenders. The Italian bankers are noticeable, including the Grimaldi of Genoa and the Prioli of Venice in addition to the Medici. Individual city merchants were lenders also, and in July 1472 is the record of £147 lent by William Shore.[21] It must have been shortly after this that Edward, who was excessively attracted to the opposite sex, decided to borrow not only money but also his wife from Shore. The loan proved to be permanent and Jane Shore - so she was always known although some historians reveal she was correctly named Elizabeth Shore (nee Lambert) - became Edward's favourite mistress. She occupied an apartment in the Great Wardrobe. This building was well known to Pepys before the Great Fire, and it is remarkable that Jane, who has passing mention in Shakespeare, had entered folk memory to such an extent that Pepys writing nearly two hundred years after her heyday, reports singing with friends in "Jane Shore's tower" in the Wardrobe and compares her with Charles II's Lady Castlemaine.[22]

Edward wanted to attract a high quality staff and was not averse to recruiting former officials of the Lancastrian regime. On the legal front he appointed Thomas Rotherham in 1474 to be lord chancellor. He had followed a career in the church and in law but had the good fortune to be taken into the service of Elizabeth Woodville (then Grey) before her marriage to the king. At that time she was a lady-in-waiting to queen Margaret, and it was no doubt her influence which obtained the posts of keeper of the privy seal for Rotherham in 1467 and bishop of Rochester soon after. His reputation as an equity lawyer and his acceptability to Edward gained him the chancellorship. An outstanding man of the century was John Morton. Born in Dorset and educated at Balliol, he pursued a legal career, practising in the court of arches, the ecclesiastical court located in the crypt of St Mary-le-Bow. The archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas

[20] Begent, P.J. "The Romance of St. George's Chapel" (Windsor 1992)
[21] Steel, A.B. "Receipt of the Exchequer - 1377-1485" (1954)
[22] Pepys, Samuel "Diary" (Eds. Lathom, R. and Matthews, W.) Vol. II 9th June 1661 and Vol. III 21st April 1662 (London 1970)

Bourchier, was impressed by him and soon he was keeper of the privy seal and chancellor of the duchy of Cornwall. He became a committed Lancastrian through the Wars of the Roses, was taken prisoner after Towton, but escaped to support Margaret of Anjou in exile. He negotiated for her over the readeption of 1470 and suffered in the defeat of Tewkesbury. His assets were confiscated by attainder, but he came to an agreement with Edward in 1473 and was appointed master of the rolls. Morton was to reach the highest church posts in the land, so it needs to be explained that senior churchmen were frequently holders of political and administrative offices. Professor Jacob describes the personnel of the episcopate as falling generally into four categories:- nobility; royal clerks and civil servants due for reward; academics who had rendered service to the crown; the religious. He adds "in the later middle ages the benefice, higher or lower, became the normal reward of the clerks in the royal service and the source of income for secular churchmen of every description."[23] It was not essential for a rector to enter his parish, as a vicar might be appointed to carry out the duties at a salary allowing the holder of the benefice a profit from the tithe.

The day after the truce expired between France and Burgundy. Louis attacked Burgundy. This stimulated a treaty between England and Burgundy, published in 1475. Edward undertook to equip a force of 10,000 men and Charles would support in person and with an army until Edward gained title to the realm and crown of France. One feels that genuine commitment was missing from these negotiations, as Edward was immediately pursuing talks with Brittany, Naples and Urbino against Louis, while there is some evidence of his sounding out of Louis on the possibility of an English princess marrying the Dauphin and a switch in policy for both countries to ally against Charles. However, events moved on quickly with Charles supplying only ships to help England. It took three weeks to move the English force across the Channel.

Once the decision was definite to go to war, the nobility responded with enthusiasm. After years of internecine struggle it was probably a great attraction to have a common enemy to unite the English. "Almost half the English aristocracy"[24] joined the cause, and the sight of her husband with his colourful standards and hundreds of men assembling with many others in London, preparing for the march to the coast, was one which Lady Margaret Beaufort must have remembered for years. Once regrouped in Calais, the army advanced quickly into French territory, until they met worrying resistance in the absence of help from Charles.

Louis XI was a subtle statesman. This is revealed to us at length by Philippe de Commynes, a chamberlain to Charles the Bold and writer of the most important political memoirs of the time, who switched to serving the French king in 1472. Commynes was present at, or involved in, many top-level negotiations between the countries of the triangle. He lost sympathy with Charles's brutal campaigning and, observing that war seldom achieves the political purposes of the participants, he was attracted to the skill with which Louis played off against one another the members of any alliance against him.[25] Louis viewed this latest situation characteristically and sensed that Edward IV could be bought off his adventure. The English force reached Amiens and Louis offered peace negotiations. Edward was indeed ready to be bought off, much to the disgust of his brother Richard and a minority of nobles who believed the campaign was to assert rights to the French throne. The king's main negotiator was Lord Hastings, and the technical experts were chancellor Rotherham and bishop Morton. Rotherham had been temporarily replaced as chancellor by John Alcock, bishop of Rochester, to allow him to spend time in France. A main negotiator for Louis was Commynes.

Formal signature to the peace treaty took place at Picquigny, a village about ten miles from Amiens on the steep southern bank of the Somme, meandering in the marshy valley. The impressive walls of the now ruined castle still tower over the village and their shelter would have made a very safe residence for Louis. The signatories with their supporting teams and attendant courtiers met on a specially constructed bridge over the Somme. The resulting treaty of Picquigny secured the withdrawal of English forces for an immediate payment by Louis of 75,000 gold crowns and a "pension" to Edward of 25,000 crowns twice a year indefinitely. Even the king of France could not put his hands on so much ready money, so Edward was given 55,000 crowns with the balance to follow. The pension payments were effected over the next three years by a merchant of Rouen. Particularly interesting is that the treaty's financial promises had to be secured either by a bond from the Medici or a bull apostolic; it is astonishing to find the Medici Bank already in the business of giving international performance bonds.

There were other expenses for Louis to get rid of the English invaders. Pensions were payable to the negotiating officials, from 2,000 crowns per annum for Hastings down to 600 for Morton. Hastings, we

[23] Jacob, E.F. "The Fifteenth Century" (O.U.P. 1961) p 271
[24] Jones and Underwood "The King's Mother" p. 59
[25] Jones, Michael “Philippe de Commynes - a Courtly Middle-Man” (History Today, March 1989)

learn, was already earning 1,000 crowns annually from Charles the Bold, so he was taking full private advantage of his public offices, as was normal and acceptable then. All in all Louis was pleased with avoiding battle at this cost He had Edward's treaty undertaking not to aid Charles in future against France and there were important benefits to both sides in the freeing of Anglo-French trade. An incidental advantage for Louis was the unmasking of the constable of France as a traitor who had been working for Charles and Edward. Finally Louis knew the opportunity would come to discontinue payment of the treaty pensions, which ceased in fact in 1482.

Edward returned home to a great welcome in London and to a more comfortable financial situation. He was able to make the remarkable gesture of refunding some of the tax he had been voted for the French expedition. Commynes' verdict on Hastings was "a man of singular wisdom and virtue", while on Edward IV that he had no thought in his head but for women. Unfortunately Edward does seem from this time on less active except in "debauchery and sensuality". There were national problems, especially the disaffection of the duke of Clarence and trouble with the Scots, and international pressures, particularly in the form of dissatisfaction by Charles the Bold over the French expedition. Edward's international policy appeared to be one of inaction, except eventual attack on the Scots using Richard of Gloucester to do the work. As long as the French pension was coming in regularly Edward was content for negotiations to be instituted, but he was not going to help Burgundy by action against France, unless Charles would undertake to pay him the equivalent of the French award. So there was no real progress, but Charles's daughter Mary was betrothed to Maximilian in 1476.[26]

Meanwhile Lady Margaret had turned herself assiduously to the management of her estates and of various aspects of her husband's. In visits to the north she would have met members of the Stanley household and must have been favourably impressed with their calibre, as over the next few years some of them joined her household or included elements of her estate work with that which they undertook for Lord Stanley. Manchester was only a town although it had some attributes of a borough, such as burgage tenements. It had a weekly market and an annnual fair and stocks on the market place. The collegiate church, founded only in 1422, of which the Stanley family were parishioners, owed much to Stanley generosity and effort. At the church was a young chaplain, Christopher Urswick, a Cambridge graduate who had been born in Furness, Lancashire; Lady Margaret chose him to be her confessor, no doubt highly recommended by her husband. The names of several other officers of the household indicate their origin in the Manchester region - for example, Roger Ormeston (or Urmston), Hugh Ashton, Miles Worsley - so they reached Lady Margaret's employ via the Stanley family. Christopher Urswick had other important duties to fulfil as we shall see, and he is buried in the Urswick chantry at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

Another chantry for mention here is that of Oliver King. A Londoner educated at Eton in the 1440s and a Fellow of King's, Cambridge, Oliver King was a scholar who gained the appointment of secretary to the prince of Wales, Henry VI's son. He later found favour with the house of York and was appointed chief secretary in French for life by Edward IV in 1476. He progressed rapidly to Canon of Windsor where he was registrar of the Order of the Garter. His career faded with a spell in the Tower as an opponent of Richard III but blossomed again in Henry VII's time. His lasting memorial is the west front of Bath Abbey, which he found ruined when he became bishop of Bath and Wells in 1495, but which he rebuilt following an inspiring dream showing him the ladder to heaven featured in the facade's design.

1475 was the year in which we previously located Hugh Oldham in Durham. Ten years later we shall find him in London in Lady Margaret's service, but we have no definite evidence of how this came about. There are several possible routes. His family in Manchester might have been known personally to the bishop of Durham, Lawrence Booth, who employed Hugh's eldest brother, James. In his biography of Thomas More,[27] Peter Ackroyd comments how influence between families had profound effects for individual careers and fortunes. "The lineaments of family connection or affinity....are almost always present beneath the surface of any important medieval transaction." Lawrence Booth's family was wealthy, connected by marriage with the Stanley family and the Savage family, headed by a Cheshire knight; his brother was archbishop of York up to 1464. Booth might easily have introduced Hugh to Stanley's employment. On the other hand it may not have been necessary for the bishop to be involved, as Hugh Oldham's cousin, Roger Ormeston, may already have been in the Stanley household.[28] Yet another possibility is that Hugh may have had kinsmen settled in London - there was a Robert Oldham, described as "gentleman" of Westminster, who was appointed by Edward IV in 1462 to inspect breweries. However it may be, Hugh was in the Stanley

[26] see selective genealogical Chart number 3
[27] Ackroyd, P. "The Life of Thomas More" (Chatto & Windus 1998)
[28] Jones and Underwood. "The King's Mother" p 280

employ in London in the early 1480s, giving him the opportunity to make a good impression on Lady Margaret.

There was no reason for the Stanleys to see any likely end to the Yorkist monarchy. Edward IV had two sons and a very capable younger brother, Richard of Gloucester, whom Edward envisaged as guardian of his sons in case of need. Trade and commerce were thriving; the king had some understanding of public relations and we find him entertaining the mayor and aldermen of London with hunting at Windsor or Waltham and sending venison "frelye into the city". By such means he won "heartie fauoure amonge the common people, which often tymes more esteme and take for greater kindenesse a lyttle courtesye than a great benefyte."[29] So Lady Margaret worked hard to build relations with the Woodvilles, who now had an important link with Lord Stanley through the marriage of his son and heir to a niece of the queen. Lady Margaret attended the queen and her daughters on a number of occasions, and steadily advanced the idea that her son Henry Tudor might be restored to the earldom of Richmond and return from exile. By 1482 the king would be prepared to give his seal to an agreement in principle on these lines. Throughout these years Lady Margaret kept in touch with her son by messages probably carried by a personal servant.

Edward's troubles with Clarence reached a climax when the king imprisoned his brother for "unnatural and loathly treason" in the Tower in 1478.[30] Clarence was pronounced guilty, but Edward was slow to order his death. Eventually it took place, probably by drowning rather than by dagger, but when the chronicle records that it was in a barrel of malmsey it may have meant in a malmsey barrel. The absorption of the duke's estates into the crown's considerably improved the king's financial resources.

The international picture was changed by the death of Charles the Bold in battle with the Swiss in 1477. Mary, the daughter and heir of Charles, married Maximilian, introducing the Habsburgs to control of the Low Countries.[31] Mary produced a son and a daughter before suffering a tragic death in a riding accident in1483. The magnificent gilt effigies of Mary and her father are to be seen in Bruges in the church of Notre Dame. So ended the brilliant epoch of Valois Burgundy.

[29] More, Thomas "History of King Richard III"
[30] Jacob, E.F. "The Fifteenth Century" p 580
[31] see selective genealogical chart number 3

Chapter Six

On the 30th September 1476 a lease at an annual rent of ten shillings was signed on a shop constructed between the Chapter house buttresses on the south side of Westminster Abbey.[32] William Caxton was the lessee and he later rented some premises which would have been somewhere about the end of the present Victoria Street - still within the abbey precincts. Caxton had turned to literary pursuits on his retirement from business at the beginning of the decade and, possibly influenced by Margaret, duchess of Burgundy, he translated works from the French. He also spent some eighteen months in Cologne, studying the technology of the new business of printing. Returning to Bruges he partnered Colard Mansion, a scrivener and bookseller, to produce in 1474/5 the first books to be printed in English, "Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye" and "The Game and Playe of the Chesse". Caxton brought with him from Cologne to Westminster a German or Flemish technician, Wynkyn de Worde, as assistant in the new venture.

It is interesting to consider why Caxton chose to locate his business in Westminster with the protection of the abbey premises. The city of London was the commercial centre, with its tight administrative structure of Lord Mayor, aldermen and Court of Common Council, all members of particular guilds. These have a complex history, but by the late fifteenth century it was an aldermanic oligarchy of wealthy merchants and senior magistrates who ran the city's affairs. In origin the Lord Mayor's appointment was as a chief magistrate, so there was always a close link between the senior officials and the legal system. Common law was not taught at Oxford or Cambridge and training therefore developed in the Inns of Court and of Chancery. As Peter Ackroyd explains, London society in this period was pervaded by strict concepts of hierarchy, responsibility and ritual. City leaders could not progress beyond baronial level but accepted the superior position held by the old nobility, content in the knowledge of their own influence and their special importance in financial dealings with the king. Caxton was a member of the Mercers, not a craft guild like the Scriveners or Stationers, and perhaps he would have encountered resistance or, at best, restrictions from vested interests if he had attempted to build his business in the city.

Having spent his working life in the Low Countries, Caxton was struck by changes in England on his return, "certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that whiche was vsed and spoken when I was borne....And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from another".[33] Printing would of course make an enormous contribution to the progress towards uniformity. Caxton makes a stranger comment on the England he left in the 1440s as "much more wealthy and prosperous than it is today", but explains that the "cause is that there is almost none known that intendeth to the commonweal but only everyman for his singular profit". I am inclined to think that his analysis reflects the rather special situation he enjoyed when apprenticed in 1435 to Richard Large, one of the four wardens of the Mercers Company, and Lord Mayor in 1439. Large died in 1441 leaving a sizeable legacy of £13 to Caxton who promptly set off for Bruges; it looks as though Large was a very good employer. For his comparison Caxton was recalling the early years of the young Henry VI's personal rule. It may be that the exceptional piety, for which the king strove, set a fashion for, or at least influenced, the public behaviour of the leading London citizenry. So the royal interest in educational establishments seemed to find an echo in, for example, the foundation of the City of London School from the town clerk's bequest in 1442. I find it hard to believe, however, there was any difference between 1440 and 1476 in the general pursuit of personal gain on the part of London's population.

The new business was off to a speedy start. The first book printed in England in English came off the press in 1477. It was no doubt astute on Caxton's part to look for an author of contemporary renown - Anthony, earl Rivers, the queen's eldest brother. The earl was a fighting man of great experience and a famous tournament jouster. In the more settled conditions of the 1470s "this accomplished knight" turned to literary and religious affairs,[34] being appointed guardian of the prince of Wales and taking responsibility for his education at the family castle of Ludlow. In 1475 Rivers had been on a pilgrimage to Rome and southern Italy, which encouraged in him an interest in translating philosophical works. This brought him into contact with Caxton, with whom he became good friends. As their first print the choice of the *Dictes and Sayengs of the Philosophres* pleased them both as, in the earl's words, "a glorious fair myrrour to all good Christen peple to behold and understonde". There is in a manuscript a unique illustration of earl Rivers accompanied by Caxton presenting a copy of his book and kneeling before Edward IV, the queen and the prince of Wales. More translations from the French by the earl were printed by Caxton in the following two years.

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[32] "London Encyclopaedia" (Eds. Weinreb and Hibbert) under "Westminster" (Macmillan 1983)

[33] from Caxton's Prologue to Eneydos quoted in Trevelyan, G.M. "Illustrated Social History of England" Vol. I (1945)

[34] D.N.B., Woodville, Antony, 2nd earl Rivers

Rivers's journey to Italy was a pilgrimage, an expression of piety such as few English aristocrats were then in the habit of undertaking. However, he also had literary interests which may have alerted him to the new learning of the Italian Renaissance, which was beginning to draw the scholarly, particularly the more wealthy among them. In the next decade there would be a steady flow of English intelligentsia attending the academies and universities of Italy, but already we can find an interest on the part of a very few in seeing the educational efforts first-hand in Italy or in learning Greek to be able to study the new manuscripts becoming available, switching academic research away from Aristotle to Plato and the sciences. Sometimes it is suggested that the impetus for the study of Greek came from the refugees from Byzantium when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. This may have added to the movement, but it certainly had a much earlier beginning.

A key figure was the philosopher and humanist known as George gemistus Plethon. He is described as a scholar of broad study displaying the humanist emphasis on the place and point of view of man, departing from the exclusively theological approach. Born in Constantinople in 1355 he was already in the 1430s an old man of high reputation in the Eastern Empire as a lay theologian. His special study was the differences between Aristotle and Plato, which would become a fundamental issue in the Renaissance studies. With the growing threat of destruction of the Eastern Empire by the Ottoman Turks, the emperor sought resolution of the schism between the eastern (orthodox) and the western (Roman catholic) churches as a means of encouraging military support of Byzantium by christian countries in the west.[35] To this end the Council of Ferrara began in 1438 to seek union of the two churches. The penultimate eastern emperor, John Paleologus VIII, arrived with his entourage, including Plethon, in Ferrara and met pope Eugenius IV and his delegation. Plague struck the city, and papal funding was short, so the offer by Cosimo de' Medici to finance the stay of the delegations in Florence was accepted gratefully and readily - economic power once more affected history, but it must be added that Cosimo was attracted by a genuine philosophical interest as well as the prestige he could win with the pope. The great delegation from Byzantium rode on horseback over the Appennines to Florence and the meeting there became the Council of Florence 1439. Agreement to unite was in fact reached by the negotiators, although to no lasting effect, as the patriarchs of the orthodox church rejected the proposals once they read the details in Constantinople.

In the course of the council, Plethon delivered his treatise on his special subject, and so impressed Cosimo that the latter resolved to found a Platonic academy in Florence to continue to study and debate the issues. The new thinking of the Renaissance had already stimulated concern with education, and Greek was being taught in Florence as early as 1396. Historians point out that it was the growth of cities, the development of commerce and expansion of wealth and power on the part of city elites, as distinct from the aristocracy and the church, which built up the pressure for revised educational systems to meet the needs of this changed population. Understandably it was the larger cities where new humanist schools came into being. Padua was in the van of teaching developments, with a humanist boarding school opened before 1420 by Vittorino Rambaldoni da Feltre to prepare boys for their studies at universities. Guarino Veronese opened a similar school at Verona and then at Ferrara at the instigation of the ruler, Nicolo d'Este. Knowledge in England of these developments was limited, but we find scholars and ecclesiastics gradually finding their way to Italy in search of the "fount and source of good learning "as Peter Ackroyd describes it.

One of the earliest visitors was Robert Flemming, dean of Lincoln, who went to Ferrara in 1451 to study under Battista Guarino, the son of Guarino Veronese. At much the same time another English humanist was John Shirwood, who went to Rome to perfect his Greek. He became chancellor of Exeter in 1460, but it was his outstanding reputation as a lawyer that occasioned his appointment by Edward IV as the king's advocate at Rome. John Gunthorpe followed his Balliol degree with a period in Italy, travelling with John Free to study under Guarino Veronese in 1455 in Ferrara. He became dean of Wells in 1472 and later took on a number of ambassadorial missions. John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1457 and then stayed two years in Italy in Padua and Ferrara, again under Guarino, gaining a reputation as an outstanding Latin scholar. The learning of Greek was more a humanist concern, displayed by William de Selling, who paid at least two visits to Italy in the 1460s. He returned as Master of Canterbury College, Oxford, to influence a renowned humanist, Thomas Linacre, who may have learned Greek from him privately while at the college in the early 1480s.

The many facets of the Italian Renaissance are nowhere better illustrated than in Florence. Cosimo de' Medici was in the ascendant when he hosted the Council of Florence. As the family grew in importance, Cosimo decided they should have a new palazzo as their town house. This is the massive building of

[35] this account is drawn from an article by Malcolm Oxley in "History Today" (December 1994)

classical detail and contrasting surface textures on the Via Cavour which can be visited today. It was constructed in 1444, one of the projects which Cosimo financed about that time, including the refoundation of San Marco as a Dominican institution where Fra Angelico was resident painter. It was an assistant of the latter, Benozzo Gozzoli, whom Cosimo's son, Piero, commissioned to decorate in fresco the walls of the private chapel in the Medici town house in 1459. The cycle of fresco, the Procession of the Magi, is a breath-taking representation of both the cavalcade of the Byzantine visitors of 1439 and of an imagined visitation of extra-ordinary and exotic splendour by the Magi and their entourages, using the Medici family, servants and political allies as the models.[36]

The Medici interest in the arts was wide-ranging. The Platonic academy developed as a group of scholars and friends, one of whom, Marsilio Ficino, was to be associated with the Medici throughout his career. Cosimo was sixty years old when his first grandson was born in 1449. With his son Piero he wanted the best tutors for the family, and Ficino and Gentile Becchi were chosen to look after the education of the young boy, Lorenzo, and his brother Giuliano, who was born four years later. Lorenzo was a quick-learning pupil and was "well-on with Ovid" at age ten. Both boys appear as striking personnages in the Gozzoli fresco of the same year, when pope Pius II was given a triumphal entry for a stay in Florence.

Ficino would become famous for his translation of the entire works of Plato into Latin, and was appointed president of the Platonic academy in 1463. The Medici household took on an in-house painter in 1466, a young man named Sandro Botticelli, trained in the school of Fra Lippo Lippi. A young poet, Angelo Poliziano (anglicized as Politian) joined in 1468. So the household developed, deeply involved in politics, business and the arts. Lorenzo, aged twenty, and Giuliano became, in effect, joint rulers of Florence on the death of their father Piero in 1469, but continued his wide patronage to include at one time or another, Verrocchio, Leonardo (briefly) and Michelangelo. They carried the support of the Florentine public, so the conspiracy in 1478 by the Pazzi, a competing banking family, to murder the Medici brothers came as a shock. The action, supported by the pope, Sixtus IV and archbishop Salviati of Pisa, who wanted to correct their lack of influence in Florence, resulted in the assassination of Giuliano in the cathedral at mass on Sunday, 26th April. Lorenzo was wounded in the neck as he side-stepped a knife thrust from a priest; he was saved by Poliziano pushing him quickly to the safety of the sacristy. The populace was incensed, attacked the local conspirators and hanged the archbishop in his full robes from a high window in the Palazzo Vecchio. Lorenzo was then the secure leader of Florence till his death in 1492.[37]

The Medici bank was not a close interest of Lorenzo's. He had a superb political nose and was very highly rated as a poet, advancing the use of the vernacular rather than Latin - a developing cause for humanism. As family and bank head Lorenzo had, of course, to make some critical decisions, but he left his general manager, Sassetti, to run the business, which suffered a number of weaknesses in its control. Things had gone badly in London, and a similar situation was brewing in Bruges, where Tommaso Portinari was discovered, after the death of Charles the Bold, to have lent injudiciously.[38] After investigation, Lorenzo wrote of Portinari that "in order to court the Duke's favour and make himself important [he] did not care whether it was at our expense". Matters came to a head and Lorenzo forced a settlement with Portinari, ending Medici involvement in both London and Bruges but accepting an enormous total loss of some 70,000 ducats which put the bank in serious decline. Portinari continued financial operations with the court of Burgundy and showed his resilience by later achieving some of the diplomatic responsibilities he had been seeking. We all have to be grateful to him, however, for the wonderful paintings he commissioned - one wonders whether the painters were always paid in full? On his marriage in 1470 to Maria Baroncelli, Tommaso had a devotional triptych painted to mark the occasion and chose Hans Memling as the artist. Unfortunately the central panel, probably of the Virgin and Child, is lost but the folding doors can still be admired in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Tommaso himself is shown as a handsome, clean-shaven man of thirty-eight while his fourteen-year old wife is a highly attractive young Florentine, confidently facing her new life in an expatriate community in the severity of an expensive black dress and hennin (a Burgundian style truncated cone of headdress) relieved with white trimming and belt. She wears a superb collar of twisted gold and jewelled enamel roses. Some eight or nine years later, in spite of all the business difficulties, Portinari commissioned from Hugo van der Goes his masterpiece, now known as the Portinari Altarpiece in the Uffizi gallery in Florence. The wings of the triptych show the small figures of a more mature Maria and Tommaso as the donors with three children admiring the central picture of the nativity. The work

[36] account and explanation of the fresco cycle with colour reproductions by Malcolm Oxley in "History Today" (December 1994)
[37] information from Williamson, Hugh Ross "Lorenzo the Magnificent" (London 1974) and Lucas, E.V. "Wandering in Florence" (London 1912)
[38] from de Roover, R. "Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank" (Harvard 1963)

reached Florence in 1483 and there influenced, inter-alia, Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi and Botticelli. Maria wears the same jewelled collar.[39] It is a great pity that in England we had no painters of comparable quality to leave us any such life-like impressions even of our kings of the time. Fortunately there was one courtier, Sir John Donne with his wife Elizabeth who was the sister of Lord Hastings, who took advantage of the skill available in the Low Countries. They commissioned Memling to paint a triptych, which includes themselves as kneeling donors, and the magnificent altarpiece is to be viewed in the National Gallery.

Wherever there was wealth there was interest in building, and although the Italian Renaissance architecture would still be a long time coming to England, there was considerable building activity here.[40] In the city of London a wealthy merchant, Sir John Crosby, had a magnificent house built on Bishopsgate which he called Crosby Place. Particularly fine was the hammerbeam roof for the great hall which is reminiscent of Eltham palace. Indeed it is thought Crosby employed the king's architect in 1468 for the structure. The wonderful hall still exists, transported much later to Chelsea. Buildings were my starting point in this history and we have seen how some very special chapels rose under royal enthusiasm in the final stage of development of English church gothic. An important alternative purpose of building was sheer display - a palace was a tangible demonstration of wealth and power, and was as much desired by magnates and senior ecclesiastics as by royalty. As the Picquigny pension continued to flow in, Edward was able to think of refurbishing some existing structures or build anew, tuned to changed needs as the arrival of effective artillery rendered the defensive, medieval castle obsolete.

The technique of building in brick had been transmitted from the Low Countries to England in the fourteenth century but little use was made of it until after Agincourt. One of the earliest major efforts was the castle of Hurstmonceux, Sussex, built by Lord Fiennes, following the example set by Henry V at Sheen (to be renamed Richmond, Surrey, in the late fifteenth century), while others were brick structures of Ralph Cromwell at Tattershall, Lincs., and of John Fastolf at Caister, Norfolk. In the mid-fifteenth century Henry VI used brick at Eton, and Bishop Waynflete of Winchester erected in Surrey the surviving tower at Farnham (1470-75) and gatehouse at Esher(1475-80).

Quite a number of royal palaces began their history as ecclesiastical lodgings. Provincial bishops needed accommodation for themselves and their entourages when making visits to the capital city. Anthony Bek, bishop of Durham in the late thirteenth century, was responsible for the initial development of Eltham palace, for example, while Knole in Kent was one of the archbishop Bourchier's properties, which he gave to the Canterbury see. Edward IV spent money on Greenwich, which had become a royal property after the death of duke Humphrey of Gloucester, and with Picquigny funds he built afresh at Eltham, only a few miles south of Greenwich. Work was probably still continuing there when the palace was used for the celebration of the birth of Edward IV's seventh and last child, Bridget, in November 1480. Lady Margaret Beaufort showed her closeness to the queen by being allowed the distinction of carrying the baby in procession. The centre-piece at Eltham, which is a structure of ashlar and squared ragstone but basically of brick, is the great hall which can still be visited today. It has a fine hammerbeam roof above Perpendicular windows and is said to have been deliberately designed to match or outclass the Lancastrian palace of Sheen. The work was complete in time for Edward to display it in an ostentatious Christmas celebration for 2,000 people. The hall is impressive enough now, but it must have been an awe-inspiring sight decorated according to Edward's wish with hanging tapestries to give it a warmth missing from bare or painted walls. A present-day visit shows the hall in curious contrast to the 1930s mansion which abuts it. Both Greenwich and Eltham palaces Edward presented as gifts to his queen, who was at Greenwich when the king died in April, 1483.

The Picquigny pensions allowed not only king Edward to pursue building, but also all the other officials rewarded by Louis XI. Lord Hastings added to and improved the castles or fortified homes at Ashby de la Zouch, Kirby Muxloe and Bagworth. Bishop Rotherham added a brick tower to Buckden, Hunts., while bishop Morton would be able in the next decade to build the brick palace of Hatfield and the distinctive gatehouse at Lambeth Palace. But that is leaping ahead by more than one reign.

[39] Ainsworth, M.W. and Christiansen, K. (Eds.) "From Van Eyck to Bruegel" Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1998)
[40] James, T.B. "The Palaces of Medieval England" (1990)

Chapter Seven

On the face of it, the death of Edward IV in 1483 was no cause for national crisis. His ten-year old son, Edward, would succeed to the throne while uncle Richard of Gloucester would be his guardian and regent for the few years needed before he exercised regal authority. Edward IV's closest friend and noble supporter, Lord Hastings, should have remained a wise and experienced adviser to the boy-king with Lord Stanley, Rotherham and Morton in support. This might have been so if the queen and the Woodville family on the one hand and Hastings and much old nobility on the other had not been so mutually antagonistic. Another problem in the offing was that Richard, although he had a natural son and daughter, disapproved deeply of his brother's debauchery and regarded Hastings as an encourager of it.

Richard was in his beloved Yorkshire; prince Edward was in Ludlow. The queen wanted her son in London as soon as possible, backed by a large body of fighting men for a coronation in May. Hastings was apparently not alone in his horror at the prospect of the country run by Woodvilles with unrestricted power, which they would have once Edward V was crowned. Countless books have been written about the motivation of Richard of Gloucester, and at what stage he decided the crown must be his. Charles Ross concluded in his "Richard III" that the lure of the throne developed in the course of the next few weeks of May and June,[41] but there can never be any certainty. Perhaps he had a burning desire, long before, to succeed his brother; in any event there can be no doubt he wished to reduce, or destroy, Woodville family influence.

There was an almost incredible sequence of events in 1483 which are some of the least documented of our period. Not only were official records lost and chronicle writers reticent, but disaffected plotters consulted one another in unwritten secrecy, leaving those who wish to do so to speculate infinitely on what took place. Acting on the precedent of 1422, the nobles, assembled for the funeral of Edward IV, formed a royal council to take on temporarily the running of the country and its defence. Although the Woodville faction, speaking for the queen, persuaded the council to set a coronation date of 4th May, the nobles restricted the size of prince Edward's armed escort, which placated Hastings. Richard of Gloucester, travelling with a body of retainers, met up with the duke of Buckingham and his force at Northampton. They had already suggested to earl Rivers, bringing the new king from Ludlow, that they should help to escort the party to London. Edward V had camped at Stony Stratford on the 29th April, and Rivers accepted an invitation to dine with the dukes at Northampton. This took place with great cordiality, but the following morning Rivers was arrested as were his nephew, Richard Grey, and others soon afterwards in Stony Stratford. Gloucester then took over personal control of prince Edward, sending the arrested party to imprisonment in Pontefract and the disarmed Woodville retainers back to Ludlow. The justification offered to the young prince's protests was that his governor and advisers were responsible for his father's death by encouraging his debauchery and were guilty of plotting Gloucester's assassination to deprive him of the regency which Edward IV had willed for him.

News of this dramatic action reached London that night and caused consternation. Queen Elizabeth sensed the danger immediately and went into sanctuary in Westminster abbey with her son, Richard of York, and her five daughters. Gloucester's motives were obviously suspected by the queen, as by many others. Hastings, however, was not unhappy at the Woodvilles' discomfiture and was seemingly satisfied that there was no intention to deprive the prince of his succession to the throne. The Woodvilles quickly took what action they could - Sir Edward, head of the fleet, took a part of Edward IV's treasure and set sail, the queen's son Thomas Grey, marquis of Dorset, took another part and escaped to develop an opposition to Gloucester.

Prince Edward entered London under the tight control of Gloucester and Buckingham on May 4th., and Richard took the opportunity to develop his propaganda by displaying four cart-loads of Woodville weaponry to prove they had been intended to kill him on the way to London. But Richard declared his good intentions and took accommodation in Crosby Place, Bishopsgate, from where, according to Shakespeare, he had organised the murder of Clarence in 1478. He gained the council's approval to his title of Protector on the 10th May, but found firm resistance to his demand for earl Rivers and associates to be declared traitors. Distrust of his motives was clearly in the air, but the coronation date was fixed for 22nd June. The position of Protector gave Richard the authority to make appointments in the name of the crown, so archbishop Rotherham, a declared supporter of the queen, was relieved of his post as chancellor, and changes followed in many great offices of state. Rewards for the duke of Buckingham were unprecedented, giving him in effect the powers of a viceroy in Wales, the promise of senior posts along the Welsh march as

[41] Ross, C. "Richard III" (London 1981)p 79

they fell vacant and the supervision of Shropshire, Hereford, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. Ominously there was nothing for Lord Hastings, except a belated confirmation that he remained master of the mint and captain of Calais.

By 9th June, the Protector had been unable to persuade the queen to emerge or give up her younger son from sanctuary. He argued that it was impossible to have a coronation for Edward V while his brother, mother and sisters were held from public view, but the queen held out. The Protector's patience was limited and there can be little doubt that the lure of the throne for himself was now irresistible. His decisive action came on the 10th and 11th June, judging by two surviving letters of those dates, which he sent by the hand of Sir Richard Ratcliffe to northern supporters. He summons them to come armed "to aid and assist us against the queen, her blood adherents and affinity, which have intended and daily doeth intend, to murder and utterly destroy us and our cousin, the duke of Buckingham, and the old royal blood of this realm." While these letters were en route, a council meeting took place in the Tower on Friday, 13th June. The members were bishop Morton, archbishop Rotherham, Lord Stanley and Lord Hastings. The Protector had organised the meeting of this select group at the same time as a meeting of the remainder of the council at Westminster to discuss coronation arrangements. In an adjoining room in the White Tower, Richard had secreted Thomas Howard and two northern countrymen with a body of armed guards.

I like Thomas More's account of the fateful council meeting,[42] as did Shakespeare (with his own variations); whether it is true nobody knows, but More most likely heard the reminiscences straight from archbishop Morton himself when he was a protégé in his household. According to More, the Protector opened the meeting with a request to Morton for strawberries from his extensive episcopal garden in Ely Place (the church there still has a strawberry fair). This seems so irrelevant it could be true. Morton left the room and instructed a servant to deal with the request On his return to the meeting, the Protector spoke of plots and sorcery by queen Elizabeth in league with Jane Shore. He then accused Hastings of involvement and denounced him as a traitor. Immediately the armed group poured in from the adjoining room to seize Hastings for summary execution and to arrest the others for imprisonment. It may be that Lord Stanley carried a sword and instinctively reached for it, but whatever the reason, one guard aimed a halberd blow at him which caught him slightly as he ducked. More describes it "And another let flee at the Lorde standley which shronke at the stroke and fel under the table, or els his hed had ben cleft to the tethe: for as shortely as he shranke, yet ranne the blood about hys eares". So within minutes the prelates Richard distrusted and the northern lord he was unsure about were safely in custody in the Tower, while the noble was beheaded who would have done anything to ensure Edward V was crowned.

Londoners and councillors were appalled and dismayed but with the rumour that thousands of Richard's northern supporters were on their way to London, it seems all were paralysed with fear and took no action in retaliation. Resistance in the council had thus been crushed, so Richard had their formal agreement on 16th June to send Cardinal Bourchier of Canterbury to persuade the queen to release her son, Richard of York, to the care of the Protector. He succeeded by promising that the boy would be back in her care after the coronation, but no doubt the queen's agonised decision was influenced by the ring of armed men surrounding the sanctuary and the knowledge that her own husband had not hesitated to violate sanctuary, for example, at Tewkesbury Abbey when he wanted to seize the refugee Lancastrians for summary execution.

With both the princes in his power, Richard moved immediately to cancel the parliament which had been summoned for 25th June. Orders were sent to Pontefract for the execution of earl Rivers and his associates. On 22nd June a public sermon was preached from St Paul's Cross, alongside the cathedral. This location meant the message carried official approval, and the preacher set out Richard of Gloucester's claim to the throne. A main plank of this was the accusation that Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville in 1464 was invalid in canon law as he was already betrothed to Lady Eleanor Butler (who died in 1468). As a consequence, king Edward's sons were illegitimate and could not inherit the crown; only Richard of Gloucester was in a position and entitled to succeed to the throne. A similar speech was given by the duke of Buckingham to the mayor and aldermen of London in the Guildhall on 24th June and repeated to the lords and gentry the next day. Finally, on 26th June the lords and gentry, having drawn up a petition to Richard to take the crown, proceeded with the London citizens to Baynards Castle, where Richard was waiting. He was quickly persuaded to act on the petition, going straight to Westminster Hall to sit on the throne as the formal act of assumption. It was about this time that Oliver King was sent to the Tower - presumably he had expressed concern over Edward V, so was replaced by Richard's new secretary, John Kendall. The coronation would be on 6th July.

[42] More, Thomas "History of King Richard III" (Cambridge 1924)

To be living in London in an aristocratic household during the three months before the coronation must have been an experience of great emotion and tension. Even more so must it have been, where the household was that of one of the main council members, Lord Stanley, and where such figures as Hastings, Morton, Rotherham and Buckingham were regular visitors. Hugh Oldham we presume to have been in this position (Dr. Mumford believed him to be in London by 1483), and one wonders whether he was present, for example, at St Paul's Cross to hear that unique sermon. We have no firm evidence of who plotted with whom, but we do know there were servants trusted by Lady Margaret to move between important individuals with written, or more likely, unwritten messages. Hugh Oldham may have been in this category; he would at least have witnessed certain comings and goings and have guessed at their significance. Lady Margaret's nerve was tested to the limit and perhaps she felt real concern for the royal family living in the insecurity of sanctuary. However, her prime concern was not to lose the momentum which her efforts had achieved towards the rehabilitation of her son.[43] With royal approval and the agreement of her husband, Lord Stanley, she had gained in the summer of 1482 parliamentary assent to her plan to set aside west country estates for the benefit of Henry Tudor, if he returned to England "to be in the grace and favour of the king's highness". So now she must establish good relations with the Protector.

One would have thought that her husband was in a position, at least before June 13th, to negotiate for her, but Lady Margaret had wisely gone to the top and used her kinsman, Buckingham, as her intermediary to deal with Richard of Gloucester, mentioning at this stage the old possibility of a Woodville-Tudor marriage. She also wanted royal support over a ransom debt she was trying to have paid by the Orleans family. Lord Stanley's imprisonment must have been brief, and one is left to guess that although Richard may have had suspicions about his reliability, he also had to consider that Stanley was a powerful magnate in the north-west, and his son, married to the queen's niece, was able to raise forces there if his father were ill-treated. Probably Buckingham also had spoken in favour of Stanley, so a meeting for which Lady Margaret had pressed took place on July 5th; it allowed her, accompanied by Stanley, to pursue the Orleans matter with Richard III and chief justice William Hussey. The face-to-face meeting must have been one of careful evasion of what most troubled Lady Margaret, bearing in mind that Richard had just declared princess Elizabeth, Henry Tudor's desired bride, to be illegitimate. Perhaps it was at this very meeting, apparently satisfactory to Lady Margaret as far as the formal agenda was concerned, that she made a firm assessment of Richard himself. Sir William Hussey had long been known to Lady Margaret, and she must have been reassured to find him at the meeting with the Protector.

Richard had demonstrated his vindictiveness against Hastings and a similar malevolence was turned on "the unshameful and mischievous woman called Shore's wife", who had become mistress of Hastings and of Thomas Grey since the king's death. He sent Thomas Howard, one of his special henchmen and son of John Howard, shortly to become duke of Norfolk, to evict Jane from her comfortable residence - Edward IV had left her well provided for - to appropriate all her jewellery and belongings and throw her into Ludgate prison. There she was accused of bewitching the Protector and plotting with Hastings to destroy him. This she denied and there was no real evidence to support the charges, so then Richard resorted to the accusation of her adultery which (quoting More) "herself could not deny, that al the world wist was true, and that natheless every man laughed at to here it then so sodainly highly taken." The Protector wanted her humiliated in public. Accordingly the bishop of London brought her out of prison "to put her to open penance going before the cross in procession upon a Sunday [29th June ?] with a taper in her hand. In which she went in countenance and pace demure so womanly, and be it she were out of all array save her kirtle only: yet went she so fair and lovely that her great shame won her much praise." Perhaps Hugh Oldham was a witness of the procession. Jane Shore was sent back to prison.

With much ceremony Richard III was crowned by Cardinal Bourchier on July 6th. and great feasting followed. Claiming responsibility by virtue of being the prime aristocrat, the duke of Buckingham organised the ceremony and celebrations, ironically placing Lady Margaret in a prime position, bearing the train of queen Anne in procession and serving at the banquet with the duchess of Norfolk. The duchess of Buckingham, Katherine Woodville, was absent. Soon afterwards, king Richard started a coronation progress through his realm, requiring Stanley to be in his entourage where he could be watched. Lady Margaret, however, stayed in London.

Here the record is pathetically thin. Only some historians cite the occurrence of an armed attempt to rescue the princes in the Tower at the end of July. 1483. No doubt the queen in sanctuary was begging for some such action, and, for whatever reasons, Lady Margaret had suddenly thrown in her lot against Richard

[43] Jones and Underwood, "The King's Mother" p 62

and was implicated in the abortive rising. It was a decision made in her husband's absence, but we know she was in touch with the queen in sanctuary through the person of the two ladies' physician (or astrologer), Lewis Caerleon. Lady Margaret had apparently talked of an invading force led by Henry Tudor and his uncle Jasper to support a newly-restored Edward V as monarch. She must have been led to expect Woodville forces, led by the marquis of Dorset and the bishop of Salisbury, and she must have herself felt that opposition to Richard was strong enough to carry the day. Lady Margaret was in regular contact with her son and brother-in-law in Brittany through her servant, Hugh Conway, who no doubt found it relatively easy to find a friendly ship somewhere on the extensive coast from Dorset to Pembroke. To complete the picture of intrigue, we must remember that Lady Margaret had potential contact with a large number of kinsmen and servants in the west country and a close relationship with the duke of Buckingham. In negotiations with the latter she may have reminded him that his mother was her cousin, Margaret Beaufort, and his father was her brother-in-law from her Stafford marriage. Consideration of his old Lancastrian background may have been returning frequently to his mind as he sojourned in the summer at his castle in Brecon, the bishop of Ely safely in his custody, whom Richard III wished to be kept under restrictive control.

The rebel attack on the Tower failed - apparently far too small a force was used, and some fifty conspirators were arrested. It was perhaps the manifestation of a desperate wish on the part of certain loyal members of king Edward IV's household to do something to counter the critical situation of the boy princes. The unfortunate result, however, was the withdrawal of the princes to inner chambers in the Tower and they were never seen by the public again. But the conspirators continued to talk, given new urgency by the general belief by September 1483 that the princes were dead. One imponderable is what drove the duke of Buckingham to decide on rebellion - one possibility is that the prisoner, John Morton, discussed the state of things persuasively with the duke, his jailor, and, reinforced by Lady Margaret's encouragement, invited him to consider deposing Richard to take the throne for himself - he had, of course, suitable royal descent from Edward III to justify a claim. It is suggested in "The King's Mother" that Lady Margaret may well have taken the line that Buckingham should consider the throne - she is believed to have used Reginald Bray as her go-between with Morton and Buckingham in Brecon at this time. Lady Margaret's line seems to be in the class of "all's fair in war", but fits the evidence of Buckingham's letter to Henry Tudor on 24th September which informed him of his rebellion and invited him to join it, without mention of Henry's claim to the throne.

The rebellion was a debacle. It was poorly co-ordinated, consisting really of separate risings in Kent, central southern England and Buckingham himself coming from Wales into Shropshire - diverted from direct entry to the west country by bad weather. The rebellions should have been synchronised, but were not, and so were picked off individually. Buckingham had grossly over-estimated the support he could raise. He was caught and beheaded soon afterwards in Salisbury. Henry Tudor's invasion fleet was late and turned back without landing in England - a sorry excursion. Apart from Buckingham the magnates were missing from Tudor's side, and Ross details how large a proportion of the rebels were inter-related gentry with connections either with Edward IV's household, the Woodvilles or the Beaufort family. At least Henry was joined in Brittany by a useful group of refugees - Edward Woodville whose fleet had diminished to two vessels, Thomas Grey and Peter Courtenay (bishop of Exeter) and Sir John Cheney and Sir Giles Daubeny among the west country rebels from Edward IV's household. John Morton escaped to Flanders to remain in contact with Tudor and Lady Margaret. Henry showed great resilience by taking an oath in Rennes on Christmas Day 1483 that he would marry Elizabeth of York as soon as he became king.

Richard III returned triumphant to London after the crushing of the rebels in the west country. He had many attainders to deal with, handing out forfeited lands lavishly to supporters or adding them to the royal estates. Lady Margaret was clearly guilty of treason, but she owed her life to the non-participation of her husband in her course of action against Richard. The king needed to reward Stanley and now decided to trust him fully. A convenient part of the reward was the transfer of all Lady Margaret's lands to Stanley, which otherwise would have been forfeited to the king. Stanley was ordered to confine his wife in some secret place, deprived of her household servants. Wherever the secret place was, we know Stanley allowed his wife access to her messengers and her plotting continued, which left Stanley in the position once more of keeping options open with both camps. My guess is that Hugh Oldham would make his mark with his ability, trustworthiness and discretion in rendering service to Lady Margaret, perhaps also aiding Reginald Bray, during the next two years of her quasi-imprisonment.

Chapter Eight

Another chantry in St George's Chapel, Windsor, is known as the Rutland chantry, as its earliest memorials relate to the ancestors of the first duke of Rutland, who belongs to the sixteenth century. Sir Thomas St Leger had married Anne, duchess of Exeter and a sister of Edward IV, in 1472 after her divorce from Henry Holland, last duke of Exeter, who had been attainted for his Lancastrian affinity. Sir Thomas had tied his fortunes to the Woodville family, so he was understandably a rebel supporting Buckingham in 1483. Richard III captured him and executed him. Although Anne St Leger had died in 1476 there was a daughter from the marriage, also named Anne, who later married George Manners, Lord Roos. The chantry commemorates all these names.

Richard III's reign was brief. 1483 was so full of domestic action one almost forgets the international scene, but there were important events elsewhere. In August, Louis XI of France died, having recovered substantial lands from archduke Maximilian who had been acting as regent of the Netherlands for his infant son, Philip, since the death of his wife in 1482. Louis was succeeded by his sickly son, Charles VIII, aged thirteen. The boy was betrothed to Maximilian's three-year old daughter, Margaret of Austria, and the contract was intended in due course to transfer Franche-Comte from Burgundy to become a French province. France for the time being was under the regent, Anne of Beaujeu, who was in conflict with the duke of Orleans. These two parties looked to Brittany for support in the regency council. Brittany's duke Francis II was old and in poor health, and his only legitimate offspring was his daughter Anne, who looked a likely spouse eventually for Charles VIII, whose regents would certainly not be prepared to see Brittany taken by a foreign country by marrying Anne. Power in Brittany was held by its treasurer, Pierre Landais, who decided to open negotiations with England for military support. For years before this, Edward IV had tried to persuade Brittany to stop giving refuge to Henry Tudor and his entourage, and naturally this was Richard III's wish also. Negotiations slowly reached agreement by June 1484. In return for providing English archers to Landais, Richard was looking for control over Tudor; knowledge that Landais would move against the English exiles leaked out, probably from Stanley to Lady Margaret, who immediately sent Christopher Urswick, her confessor and now special agent, to bishop Morton in Flanders, from whom he passed on to Henry Tudor to warn him, only a matter of hours before his arrest, to escape to France. Henry's supporters were not so lucky and were detained.

It is ironical that Richard's success at last in almost having Tudor's freedom ended, had the perverse result of placing the exile under the protection of France, which was much more antagonistic to England and much better able to help him in his pursuit of the English throne. Duke Francis of Brittany then released the other English exiles, numbering at least three hundred, who were able to present themselves at the court of Charles VIII in the Loire valley in mid-October 1484. Henry Tudor persuaded the French of the validity of his claim; they were prepared to finance his expedition the following year and provide substantial military support, vital to the success of the venture. Henry's great ally in the French court was the Marshal of France, Philippe de Crevecoeur, known to the English as Lord Cordes. It is another irony that he was no lover of England and desperately desired to see the English expelled from Calais. His motivation is unclear, but a possible influence on him was the strong rumour in France at the beginning of 1484 that the English were planning an invasion - perhaps Cordes had been impressed by Commynes at the Estates General meeting in Tours in January 1484, where Commynes might well have recalled how belligerent Richard of Gloucester had been towards France when Edward IV resolved to accept the peace at Picquigny nine years earlier. Another influence might have been the statement made to the Tours meeting by the Chancellor of France in which he specifically accused Richard III of responsibility for the princes' deaths in the Tower of London.

To return to English domestic matters, Richard III summoned a parliament in January 1484 which gave a docile confirmation of the correctness of his claim to the throne, approved the many attainders of the 1483 rebels and sanctioned a variety of punitive measures like the dispossession of queen Elizabeth of the lands the king had conveyed to her. However, Richard saw the need for better relations with the queen as she held control of her eldest daughter, who was the key to a York-Lancaster rapprochement through marriage to Henry Tudor - a liaison Richard was anxious to prevent, so depriving Tudor of Woodville support. Richard was able to persuade the queen out of sanctuary at last on 1st March 1484, but he had to make very public commitments to her well-being. Personal tragedy struck Richard and his queen in April, when their only child and heir, Edward, prince of Wales, died aged ten. Their intense grief coloured the remainder of the reign. It was in August 1484 that the body of Henry VI was moved on Richard's orders from the abbey at Chertsey and re-interred in St George's Chapel.

Her private grief may well have been an important cause of queen Anne's illness early in 1485 and

her death in March of that year. Before that, rumours were circulating that Richard had plans to marry his niece, Elizabeth, in the hope of producing a new heir. There are indications that Richard did, indeed, sound out one or two colleagues with this idea, and was warned against it as unacceptable even if papal dispensation were to be granted for such consanguinity. Richard eventually went so far as to announce to a specially summoned council soon after his wife's death that the idea of marrying his niece had never entered his mind. There remained a public belief that he may not have been innocent of his wife's death.

On a less serious note, one cannot but be interested in the next stage of Jane Shore's unusual life. Languishing in Ludgate gaol, she became the subject of intense fascination for Richard III's solicitor, Thomas Lynom. To the king's exasperated displeasure, Lynom expressed the wish to marry the prisoner. Richard wrote to his chancellor, bishop Russell, about "our servant and solicitor, Thomas Lynom, marvellously blinded" with Jane and ordered him to dissuade the love-struck man. Apparently the marriage did take place, which meant Jane was at last released from prison.

Caxton's publishing continued through Richard's reign and, in sensible commercial fashion, the printer dedicated one book to the sovereign, his own translation from the French, Order of Chivalry. This subject was of particular interest to Richard and it was he who chartered the Royal College of Arms, granting the staff occupation of Coldharbour House. It is interesting to note that Richard was the first monarch to adopt printing of his laws and proclamations, a remarkable step forward in providing speedy distribution and uniformity of the information. Commerce continued as well as the merchants could conduct it with the disturbances of rebellion, and the reign seems generally to have maintained the sort of effective control of finances which Richard had inherited, except that there were criticisms of his slowness to reach an accommodation with Scotland, causing an unnecessary outflow of funds on expensive campaigning by land and sea. Certainly Richard was anxious about his finances and was running short by the beginning of 1485. He had resort then to "voluntary" loans with an element of compulsion. By this time he was having to be constantly vigilant for the invasion by Henry Tudor which he knew would strike at a time and place of which he could not be sure to have forewarning. Much of his reign he spent in progress about his realm, but based himself usually on Nottingham castle, presumably as a good central point from which he could take his forces wherever required.

Henry Tudor's invasion force landed near Milford Haven on 7th August, 1485. Among his supporters was an experienced young soldier who had been brought up in the Low Countries with the Lancastrian exiles and entered the service of archduke Maximilian before rallying to Henry Tudor. His name was Charles Beaufort, natural son of Henry Beaufort, duke of Somerset. Henry Tudor, anticipating his kingship, knighted Charles at Milford Haven as Sir Charles Somerset, so he was already concerned to keep the Beaufort name for his own ancestry without competition. The earldom of Worcester with the name of Beaufort would have to wait for Charles until 1513, after the death of Henry VII and his mother, and his memory would then be recalled in the Beaufort chantry in St George's Chapel.

Tudor proceeded slowly, perhaps not finding new adherents as easily as he had hoped, until Rhys ap Thomas with substantial forces met him at Newtown about August 12th. Individuals such as John Morgan and John Savage, and then Gilbert Talbot with some five hundred men joined him as he passed through Shrewsbury and Staffordshire, eventually assembling near Market Bosworth. What we call the battle of Bosworth Field, known as Redmoor to participants, was an engagement of two sizeable armies.[44] We have no reliable account of numbers or the exact pattern of the engagement, but it does seem that Richard's main problem was his uncertainty whether large portions of his force, under the command of their own magnates, such as Lord Stanley and the duke of Northumberland, would actually fight in battle on his side. Henry was also affected similarly in relation to his father-in-law, Lord Stanley, whom he hoped would be active on his side. In the event, Stanley preferred to abstain, unlike his brother, Sir William, who belatedly but decisively fought for Henry. Perhaps the reluctance of Northumberland was the critical factor, but for one reason or another Richard appeared to decide that his command was being ignored and so he sallied forth with his immediate body of knights and directly attacked the group of Henry Tudor with his standard bearer and surrounding attendants. It is agreed that there was a brief, furious encounter in which Richard III probably killed Sir William Brandon, Henry's standard bearer, and unhorsed the heavy knight, Sir John Cheney, before losing his horse from under him and being himself cut down. With the death of Richard the short battle was over.

Reginald Bray had been active early in 1485 in drumming-up financial contributions and organising cash to be available to buy support or mercenaries once Tudor's landing took place. But he was also a

[44] see Richmond, Colin "Battle of Bosworth" (History Today, August 1985)

fighting man - he is pictured in fine armour in a window of Great Malvern Priory church - and was in Henry's battle entourage at Bosworth. Some say it was he who found Richard's coronet in a bush on the battle field, and handed it to Sir William Stanley for his brother to place on Henry's head. As they began to comprehend the responsibilities of victory, their thoughts turned quickly to pillage of the enemy's effects and seizure of important adversaries. Richard's closest helpers, the duke of Norfolk, Robert Brackenbury and Richard Ratcliffe were dead, but Catesby was captured to be executed and Northumberland and Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, taken to the Tower. Tradition has it that the rich hangings and trappings of Richard's tent were spoils awarded to the Stanley family, and these items could be seen at Knowsley for years afterwards. Whether anything of that still exists, I do not know, but a very rare survival on permanent display is the helmet, with its curious saracen's head crest, worn in the battle by Lord Ferrers, in the church owned by the National Trust at Staunton Harold in Leicestershire. The National Trust property of Coughton Court, Warwickshire, contains another curio - a heavy chair in the dining room said to be made from the wood of the bed in which Richard III slept fitfully the night before Bosworth.

King Henry VII had the long march ahead to London. He was now in a position to decide who should be his advisers and ministers. At the age of twenty-eight, he had been a fugitive and an exile for much of his life, which naturally affected his outlook. His insecurity was deeply fixed and he would not be remembered by his councillors for close friendship. Delegation would not be his first thought, but as a totally inexperienced administrator he had to depend for the future on many helpers. Fortunately, he had had the time and opportunity in Brittany and France to assess the Lancastrians, disaffected Yorkists and fugitive rebels who had rallied to him in exile, and several men who were to become his closest companions were now selected - Giles Daubeney, Thomas Lovell, bishop John Morton and Reginald Bray. The latter was known for his long-standing services under Lady Margaret's direction, while Richard Fox had joined him in 1484 from his post-graduate studies at university in Paris. These names recur as members of the small group with whom Henry VII was most at ease, and Bray in particular might later be termed an intimate friend.

On the journey to London, Henry would have been giving thought to identifying the people he wanted to reward and, although he would emphasise reconciliation through his marriage to Elizabeth of York, there would be a few old enemies to deal with and much land to be re-allocated from new attainders or reversing those of his Yorkist predecessors.

It was the 7th September before Tudor and his victorious army reached London, and traditionally for history students the Middle Ages ended. Henry VII moved into the Yorkists' usual royal residence, Baynard's Castle, for a short stay to put administrative arrangements in place. Many appointments had to be made; some were immediate, but Henry was sorting out rewards for months. By the end of the year, Reginald Bray was knighted and was chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, Sir Thomas Lovell was chancellor of the exchequer, Richard Fox was the king's secretary, Christopher Urswick was dean of York, Thomas Stanley became earl of Derby and remained constable of England, while a number of others, such as Sir Giles Daubeney, now master of the mint, and Sir Richard Guildford joined the king's council. Henry's uncle Jasper, to whose efforts so much was owed, was made duke of Bedford and given Katherine Woodville in marriage - she was the widowed duchess of Buckingham and sister to ex-queen Elizabeth. Strangely there were useful, but not outstanding rewards for Sir William Stanley. Bishop Morton was made chancellor early in 1486 and would succeed to the post of archbishop of Canterbury on Bourchier's death that year. Bearing in mind that there was a coronation to plan for October 1485 and a parliament to summon for November, it was surprising that Henry was able after only two weeks to travel with his entourage to Guildford, from where he could easily spend time with his mother at her Woking home.[45]

They must have had some lengthy discussions, as apart, no doubt, from recalling to each other the extra-ordinary ebb and flow of fortune of the past decades, Henry needed Lady Margaret's advice on so many aspects of courtly life of which he had been denied experience. It must have been in these eager conversations that Henry decided he wished to be strongly identified with his Beaufort ancestry stretching back to the royal prince, John of Gaunt. Henry's first parliament in November re-enacted the statute of 1397 declaring the Beaufort family legitimate, but without the clause barring them from claim to the throne. So it was that the Beaufort badge of the portcullis was chosen as an emblem of the Tudor dynasty and would occur so frequently in proximity to the red rose, associating the new dynasty with a line of monarchs from Henry IV.

The decision was quickly made that the fine house Coldharbour (just to the east of the present Cannon street station), with its vineyard overlooking the Thames, should be refurbished and gifted to Lady

[45] Jones and Underwood, "The King's Mother" p 66

Margaret. The original property had been built by a London goldsmith, but it had belonged to royalty most of the fifteenth century. Henry's decision required the unfortunate heralds and other officers of the Royal College of Arms to vacate the property, and it would be some seventy years before they received Derby House as a permanent home. In Coldharbour as her London residence Lady Margaret would look after Elizabeth of York in preparation for her wedding with Henry, and would also accommodate two young wards, Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, and Edward Plantagenet, earl of Warwick, the ten-year old son of the late duke of Clarence. Both these boys had potential claims to the throne and so needed secure surveillance.

The Stanley household was, of course, suddenly and joyfully faced with a completely changed set of circumstances. From being shut away in some secret place, Lady Margaret was now a major power in the land. No time was lost in granting rewards and using the authority now available to her and her husband to see posts filled by their nominees. A highly marked man was William Smyth (1460?-1514), born in the parish of Prescott, Lancs., which included the Stanley home of Knowsley.[46] Smyth is thought to have been educated there before studying law at Lincoln College, Oxford. Lady Margaret may have known him at Knowsley, but certainly he was well acquainted with the Stanleys. One can only suppose it was their influence that on 20th September 1485 secured for him the appointment of keeper of the hanaper of chancery for life and on 2nd October that of a canon of St Stephens, Westminster. He must already have had involvement with Stanley household affairs and it seems Hugh Oldham was assisting him. They would have closely linked careers, as on many occasions Oldham would move into clerical posts vacated on Smyth's promotion. Oldham had clearly rendered services to merit a reward, but this time Smyth had not vacated any appointment. The post which conveniently became available did so in rather tragic circumstances. The rectory of St Mildred's, Bread Street, adjoining the church, had caught fire and the rector died in the blaze. Dr. Mumford tells us that the living would be in the gift of the prior and convent of St Mary Overie (meaning over the water), now Southwark Cathedral, where Lady Margaret was influential and may have secured the post for Hugh Oldham. Additionally, looking at a map of the city, one wonders whether the proximity of the church to the Stanley residence meant that reference would necessarily be made to the new earl of Derby about the incumbent of St Mildred's.

One of the disappointments of trying to envisage fifteenth century London while walking the actual sites is how irreversibly changed certain areas are - at the same time it is perhaps amazing that the general pattern of thoroughfares from the Tower to the Strand is so unaltered. The region between St Paul's and the river has unfortunately suffered not only from the Great Fire and the London blitz, but also the demands of traffic in Victorian and more recent times. Bread Street, south of Cheapside, now peters out into a mass of modern roads with Queen Victoria Street substantially altering the landscape. Plaques identify sites such as Baynard's castle and the Great Wardrobe, but the best way to gain an impression of the 1480's appearance is, I believe, to visit the Guildhall Library and consult its collection of maps. There are no contemporary street maps for 1485, but there are marvellously detailed reconstructions of such a thing for circa 1520.[47] There we see how Derby house, as the Stanley residence came to be called in the 1490s, St Mildred's, Bread Street, the Wardrobe, Baynard's castle and even Coldharbour were only minutes' walk - and less on horseback - from one another. Whatever the possibility of Stanley influence for Hugh Oldham's appointment, we should remember that the Stanley interest in Manchester continued at this time. It was in 1485 that Lord Stanley's brother James died after years as warden of the collegiate church there; he was replaced by another James Stanley, sixth son of the new earl. During his time in Manchester this younger James would encourage the benefactions of the Beswick family, and a part of these would provide a valuable base for Hugh Oldham to develop. The latter's sister, Joan, was married to the merchant Robert Beswick and was the mother of Hugh Beswick, a chaplain to the Manchester collegiate church.

Henry VII's coronation took place on the 30th October, and he married Elizabeth of York in January 1486. Suddenly rebellion flared. The outbreak in April was small, stirred by Viscount Lovel, who had been Richard III's chamberlain of the household, and Humphrey and Thomas Stafford of Grafton, all of whom had found sanctuary in Colchester after fighting for Richard at Bosworth. The rebels were quickly dealt with and the affair seemed to show that pro-Yorkist sentiment was not to be seriously roused in the absence of a figure-head leader from the Plantagenet family. This was a comfort to the new dynasty, upon which fortune now was smiling with the birth of an heir, prince Arthur, in September 1486. In contrast, the same facts sent the different message to those not wishing the Tudors well that a Yorkist figure-head might prove a valuable weapon. The possibilities were not lost on foreign powers, in relation to which the newcomer Henry was in a weak position. Brittany and France were in contention and each side was seeking support. Henry owed his

[46] D.N.B. William Smith (Smyth)
[47] see British Atlas of Historic Towns, Vol. III "The City of London" (Oxford 1989)

personal survival over many years in exile to the goodwill of the duke of Brittany; he owed his success in gaining the English throne to the king of France. In this invidious situation he naturally tried to avoid involvement in their struggle. In the Low Countries, Edward IV's sister, Margaret of Burgundy, remained a determined opponent of the Tudors and had some political influence with the archduke Maximilian, who was still regent of Burgundy for his infant son, duke Philip.

Viscount Lovel, after the failure of his plot, had managed to flee to Flanders and had a sympathetic reception by the dowager duchess Margaret. She was already supporting a remarkable imposter, one Lambert Simnel, who claimed to be Edward Plantagenet, earl of Warwick. Professor Chrimes explains that everybody of consequence knew that the real young earl, the son of the executed duke of Clarence, was in the custody of Henry VII in the Tower of London, but those who saw the opportunity to make trouble for the Tudors put aside their disbelief and backed Simnel's claim to the English throne. There were particular reasons going back over forty years which had enabled the duke of York, appointed king's lieutenant in Ireland in 1447, to gain great popularity and influence with the Irish lords. The duke's son, the duke of Clarence, had been born in Dublin in 1449, and now it was expedient for the Irish lords to acclaim the imposter as the latest representative of a true Yorkist royalty, dismissing the prisoner in the Tower as an imposter! Viscount Lovel was sent on to Dublin by Margaret to support the crowning there of Lambert Simnel as Edward VI in May 1487. She also financed the traitorous earl of Lincoln, John de la Pole, a nephew of Edward IV, and two thousand German mercenaries, to join the acclaim in Dublin. This sizeable force with Irish adherents landed at Furness, Lancashire, in June, aiming to reverse the defeat of Bosworth. In the event, the battle of Stoke near Newark on 16th June resulted in total defeat for the insurgents. Lambert Simnel, a butcher's son, was put to work in the royal kitchens, but his tutor, a priest named Richard Simons, was imprisoned for life. Simnel rose eventually to be king's falconer.

Chapter Nine

With her son on the throne, Lady Margaret's overriding purpose had been achieved. Her time for plotting was past and, in her semi-regal status, she now turned to family and financial matters. She had suffered all manner of vicissitudes and this seemed to make her all the more determined to correct what she perceived to be wrongs to her and her kinsfolk during the years of attainder. Henry's first parliament returned to Lady Margaret all the property which Richard III had transferred to Lord Stanley. Moreover, she was declared a femme sole which meant she could hold property absolutely and independently of her husband. This allowed the king to grant more estates to her which would revert to the crown and not to the earl of Derby. Her status, quite distinct from and in some ways superior to, that of her husband, was made clear, and her private household was already in 1485 becoming distinct from that of the Stanley household.

Lady Margaret had spent many childhood years in Dorset, and Corfe castle had been the Beaufort family's main residence. Some of the first properties to be restored to her were the estates at Canford, Poole and Corfe, while Wimborne remained a special place for her as the minster contained the tomb of her parents, which is still to be seen there. So her decision early in 1487 was understandable to undertake substantial rebuilding at Corfe. At the same time Reginald Bray, for whom Lady Margaret as a favour had pressured the dowager duchess of Norfolk to sell him the highly desirable lordship of Chelsea, was sent to organise refurbishment of the minster. Lady Margaret herself moved temporarily to Sampford Peverell in Devon to be close enough to keep an eye on developments in her various estates. With all this activity in the south-west, William Smyth was appointed dean of Wimborne, while "our well-beloved" Hugh Oldham was deputed by the king to supervise the repair of the royal water mills at the same town. Water power was an important resource, not only for turning the grinding wheels of corn mills and fulling mills but, surprisingly at Wimborne, for the string and stocking-thread-making small industries. Hugh Oldham was following the example of Bray in his involvement with estate buildings in addition to his more regular duties of accounting and legal analysis. Lady Margaret herself also demonstrated a very practical concern with estate works while in Devon, supervising a major scheme to divert a watercourse to serve a water mill within her manor. It was in 1487 that the king rewarded his secretary, Richard Fox, with the bishopric of Exeter, but as keeper of the privy seal and a negotiator for the king he never had time to visit his see.

The living of St Mildred's was resigned by Hugh Oldham in 1488 as he was presented to the richer appointment of Lanivet in Cornwall. This was probably connected with his assumption of a trusteeship with others including John Arundel, dean of Exeter, of certain manors of the Bodrugan estate - Sir Henry Bodrugan had been a prime supporter of the earl of Lincoln in the Lambert Simnel rebellion and his large west country and other estates had been forfeited as a result. So it is from this time that Hugh has a growing involvement with the south-west It is tempting to suppose that his acquaintance with Sir Giles Daubeney, who had been a sheriff of Somerset and Dorset in 1480 before joining Buckingham's rebellion, had some connection during his time in that region with the marriage of his sister, Elizabeth Oldham, to Giles Daubeney, the nephew of the master of the mint. It was now with increasing responsibility that Hugh Oldham was allowed, or actively encouraged, by Lady Margaret, to take up studies at Durham College, Oxford. Enrolment at university did not preclude the holding of ecclesiastical posts. For three years his studies, with Lady Margaret's estate responsibilities in some reduced form, must have occupied him very fully, but he transferred to Cambridge and gained his degree in civil and canon law from the latter institution in 1492.

Hugh Oldham's time at Oxbridge would have been too early for a strong humanist influence, but there were stirrings. William Grocyn, a scholar who had become a fellow of New College, Oxford, twenty years earlier, resigned his post of reader in divinity in 1488 to study in Italy. He travelled widely, visiting academies, libraries and printers and spent some time at the Florentine academy studying under Politian. He learned Greek and, returning to Exeter College in 1491, he was the first to teach and lecture publicly in Greek studies. He would later become an important member of the humanist group in London, where his previous acquaintance with William Warham, bishop of London whom he had tutored at Oxford, would be relevant. Grocyn is a link with others of the humanist group who were studying similarly in Italy in the late 1480s, notably Thomas Linacre, an outstanding classical scholar, and William Latimer; all three often met together during their Italian tours. Grocyn's godson, William Lily, was another student travelling in the Holy Land and Italy who learned Greek, which he later taught in London to important pupils such as Thomas More. All these scholars we meet again later in London with John Colet, who was a particularly influential man of the new learning. In the meantime there are some political events to recount.

Professor Chrimes explains that Henry's prime concern almost throughout his reign was security, for his own person, for his dynasty and for his kingdom. This was exemplified at the start by the creation of the

yeomen of the guard to watch over his personal security. Subsequently it showed in his caution, his extra-ordinary devotion to close financial control and the restriction of his trust to those who had proved their loyalty during his exile. He faced a difficult task while foreign powers might eagerly support Yorkist or other plots. Essentially practical and free from grandiose purposes, Henry concentrated on stability, acting firmly when required, as over Lambert Simnel, and over a period of years his tactics paid off. Population and trade increased, new coins from Sir Giles (soon to be Baron) Daubeney's mint, some bearing for the first time a true portrait of the monarch, encouraged the impression of a well-controlled state. The reluctance of city merchants to lend Henry a substantial loan in September 1485 for defence against a possible Scottish incursion, which fortunately did not occur, was soon replaced by confidence as Henry showed himself meticulous in repaying short term debt and earned a good credit standing.

On the international front Henry was basically reactive rather than pro-active. He wanted peace with Scotland, but king James III proved incapable of controlling the factions in his own country and was murdered in June 1488. His fifteen-year old son, James IV, inherited the same difficulties and Henry could achieve no more than a three-year truce with him. Elsewhere Henry had to deal with France, Brittany, Burgundy and Aragon and Castile; it was the death of duke Francis II of Brittany in September 1488 which precipitated a crisis. The heiress, Anne, was only twelve years old and was faced with the intention of Charles VIII to annexe her duchy. Henry felt obliged to offer her support and signed the treaty of Redon, undertaking to give military aid - the cost to be met by Brittany. He looked for assistance from Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and from Maximilian and Philip of Burgundy. Negotiations with Spain soon led to the treaty of Medina del Campo which embodied the idea of a marriage of a Spanish princess to the heir to the English throne, and gained Ferdinand's undertaking not to help any rebels against Henry. Mutual support between Maximilian and Henry was confirmed, but Maximilian was in fact experiencing considerable difficulty with some of his independently-minded provinces and was imprisoned for nearly three months by the citizens of Bruges, so he was no great help to Henry's efforts to bring the powers together to contain France. Six thousand men under Lord Daubeney went to the assistance of Brittany in April 1489 in accordance with the treaty of Redon. Charles VIII however was able to buy off Maximilian, and then in December 1491 he married duchess Anne, uniting Brittany with France.

1491 had brought the birth of prince Henry and his baptism by bishop Richard Fox. It also saw the beginning of a plot to oppose Henry by another Yorkist pretender, Perkin Warbeck; this was to be a much longer-running threat than that of Lambert Simnel. Once again it was foreign powers who backed the imposter. Charles VIII, having seen Henry supporting a Brittany hoping to retain its independence, was strongly inclined to do down this ungrateful king. Margaret of Burgundy was, of course, already of the same mind. There was also secret support for the plot from Yorkist and disaffected people in England, which Henry's agents did their best to identify. Warbeck appeared in public in Cork in the autumn of 1491. The Irish lords were not this time enthusiastic about a supposed Richard of York, but Charles VIII then received him in France as a royal prince. Henry now showed his shrewd understanding of international power-play. All Europe knew he had promised to support Brittany, whose cause now seemed lost But Henry was determined to demonstrate he was a force to be acknowledged. He made elaborate preparations for war, talked of claims to the French throne and took a substantial army to Calais. From there he laid siege to Boulogne where an unfortunate casualty was the death of Sir John Savage, who with Reginald Bray and Thomas Lovell is commemorated in the Great Malvern priory church window. He was in fact a nephew of Thomas Stanley, which may help to explain his desertion of Richard III to join Henry Tudor in Wales. Henry's stategy was nicely calculated. Charles VIII had great ambitions in Italy and wanted urgently to be rid of this problem in the north. The result was the treaty of Etaples in November 1492, at which Richard Fox was the chief negotiator. By this treaty, Henry gained some status. Charles VIII agreed to deny help to Henry's rebels, which meant Perkin Warbeck had to retreat to Margaret of Burgundy; he also agreed to resume payments to the English crown under the 1475 treaty of Picquigny and to indemnify Henry for the costs of intervention for Brittany.

We now find an interesting benefit for Hugh Oldham from the Perkin Warbeck plot. In 1492 one of the responsibilities which Hugh Oldham had gained was that of deputy to one John Hayes, receiver for Lady Margaret's west country estates. Professor Chrimes records that John Hayes had been originally in the service of the duke of Clarence, and apparently he still retained some Yorkist sympathies. He was in touch with an exiled Yorkist and active plotter, John Taylor, who wrote to him in September 1491 from Rouen. This letter was damning evidence of Hayes's collusion in the Warbeck plot and it detailed Charles VIII's and his council's resolve to aid "Clarence's son" in correction of the wrong they had done in making Henry VII king of England! John Hayes was attainted and Hugh Oldham moved up a notch to be Lady Margaret's receiver for her west country estates; this would put him in regular contact with Sir Reginald Bray who remained her receiver-general for some years more. King Henry knew that the exposure of John Hayes was

likely to be only the tip of the iceberg, so his agents continued to search for other rebellious subjects. It would be nearly two years before the most senior plotter was revealed to be none other than Sir William Stanley, chamberlain of the royal household. He duly paid the price of execution for treason in 1495.

Meanwhile within the Beaufort and royal households appointments were coming thick and fast for William Smyth and Hugh Oldham. The former was made dean of the Royal Free Collegiate chapel of St Stephen's, Westminster, and the latter a canon. Smyth clearly had the personal approbation of the king for his appointment in 1493 to be bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, a see which in those days included Manchester. While these important officials must have been very much caught up with their individual responsibilities and prospects, one wonders how much they knew and thought about events further afield. All manner of things were happening in Europe, and in the case of Columbus's 1492 discoveries, in the New World too. (It was March 1493 before Europe heard the news.) Columbus had been sponsored by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, although it would be more correct to speak of Aragon and Castile, roughly the eastern and western halves of the more modern country. Ferdinand and Isabella, second cousins, had married in 1469, with Ferdinand becoming king of Aragon in 1479 on his father's death. Isabella was the sister of the king of Castile, who died in 1474, but the nobility refused to recognise the king's daughter, Juana, as legitimate. So Isabella was invited to take the throne of Castile, which she achieved in 1479 after success in civil war against Juana. 1493 was the year Maximilian succeeded his father as Holy Roman Emperor after a major victory against the Turks who had advanced into Austria. Maximilian's son Philip assumed full powers in the Low Countries as ruler of Burgundy.

In France the young king Charles VIII had his mind set recklessly on taking the kingdom of Naples, basing his title on inheritance from the old Angevin dynasty. In 1494 he was able to lead a substantial army from France across northern Italy down to Naples where he was crowned king in May 1495. Then he was confronted by a Holy League of the pope, Maximilian, Ferdinand of Aragon, Venice and Milan and was forced to return to France, soon losing all the territory he had gained. On the way home, his occupation of Florence, where Lorenzo the Magnificent had died two years earlier, encouraged the expulsion of the Medici in favour of a democratic government inspired by the remarkable dominican friar Savonarola. The powerful preaching of the cleric calling for reform in the church was a facet of a critical movement arising across Europe. It was in the new government in 1498 that Nicolo Machiavelli gained the appointment of Florentine secretary.

Things were far from static in domestic affairs. In the manner of medieval kings, Henry VII travelled frequently about his kingdom. In the early years the royal progress included a great retinue, of whom his mother was a conspicuous member. Lady Margaret retained Lord Stanley's properties at Lathom and Knowsley as her main provincial residences, where Henry was splendidly entertained on his visit in the summer of 1495. The following year the royal visitation was to Lady Margaret's Dorset estates, where Corfe castle had been given new residential quarters and enlarged windows in readiness. Hugh Oldham was no doubt in attendance with his responsibilities for the west country estates and fresh duties in those counties as a commissioner of the peace. A major purpose of a royal progress was to impress the people with the power and stability of the monarchy. The latter quality was still a problem for Henry. Dr. David Starkey explains[48] how the exposure of Sir William Stanley as a traitor caused Henry to alter his recruitment of senior personnel in the royal household from the aristocratic to the more humble (i.e. the gentry), who would be less likely to harbour political ambitions. So the privy chamber grew in importance, staffed by carefully chosen men, gradually taking much financial responsibility from the Exchequer. Daubeney, Bray and Lovell increased their standing, while Lovell's assistant, John Heron, promoted to Treasurer in 1492, was to hold this important post for thirty years. In spite of the execution or attainder of the Yorkist plotters, Perkin Warbeck actually tried an invasion of England, landing in Kent in the summer of 1495. This was a complete debacle, but Warbeck found refuge with the king of Scotland, to remain a threat to Henry for another two years.

Much as he appreciated the support of the merchant community by way of loans, Henry VII subordinated commercial interests to political purposes. He was generally sympathetic to requests and pleas put forward by the merchant bodies, such as those which led to the "navigation acts" requiring the use of English, Irish or Welsh ships whenever possible for the import of wine and certain other goods into this country. On the other hand he did not hesitate to ignore their interests when he prohibited commercial intercourse with the Low Countries in 1493 to punish the Burgundians for supporting Perkin Warbeck. This must have seriously burdened the cloth trade, with the only outlet being through the staplers at Calais, but a new agreement to much freer trade, known as the Intercursus Magnus, was negotiated under the

[48] Starkey, D. "The reign of Henry VIII: personalities and politics" (1985)

supervision of Richard Fox and signed as a treaty in 1496. Professor Chrimes believed the motives for Philip and Maximilian to drop Warbeck were political in that they wished to have English support against France. Certainly, the treaty did not work smoothly in practice and had to be confirmed by a revised treaty in 1499. However, over this period trade did steadily increase. The main gainers were the Merchant Adventurers, as the cloth industry boomed while the raw wool trade of the staplers declined.

Perhaps influenced by two visits to Bristol, where he saw evidence of its thriving commerce, Henry was interested by the enterprise of Bristol merchants who were voyaging westward to discover new lands - there were no flat-earthers here, and probably never had been. They had already opened up fishing grounds in the far west by the time a proposal came forward in 1496 for royal sponsorship of voyages of exploration by John Cabot and his three sons. Cabot won Henry's backing for his expedition to explore freely, provided he avoided the lands occupied by the Spanish. Newfoundland was reached and possibly the American mainland in 1497 and again in 1498, but it was realised that the land was not the intended target of Asia. Although exploration and trade routes to the west interested Henry, he had no great concern for the royal navy, which dwindled in his time to five ships. He was persuaded, however, to fund the construction of the first European dry dock, which was a personal interest of the all-rounder, Sir Reginald Bray. The result of his work can still be visited at the naval docks at Portsmouth.

September 1496 brought an invasion of England by Scotland in support of Perkin Warbeck. The incursion was brief and completely inglorious for the pretender, who aroused no support of any consequence in England. He retreated rapidly over the border to reconsider his position. The temporary alarm proved useful for Henry VII who was able to raise finance easily to equip his forces. Quite unexpectedly, Henry found himself fortunate to have these forces readily available when there was a sudden insurrection in Cornwall. The rebels were marching against the taxes imposed by parliament in January 1497 rather than against the king, but with official attention directed northwards the rebels were able to reach Kent before Lord Daubeney and baron Herbert confronted them at Blackheath. The government forces were quickly successful and the insurrection was terminated there and then.

This brief diversion reinforced Henry's desire to put an end to the Scottish threat. He sent his negotiators, Fox and Daubeney, to arrange a treaty by which king James IV would drop Warbeck, would agree to marry princess Margaret Tudor and would consent to a lasting peace. Warbeck sailed away and the treaty was concluded in September, 1497. To finish the Warbeck story, he tried unsuccessfully to find support in Ireland, then in Cornwall. Exeter and Taunton refused him as he advanced, and Henry's forces soon captured him. Treated leniently, Warbeck apparently continued to plot and was hanged in November,1499, closely followed by the execution of Edward, earl of Warwick, who had been languishing in the Tower.

Henry VII was enjoying his most successful years towards the end of the century. Peace had been achieved both internally and externally, the dynasty seemed secure and international marriages had been contracted to boost England's status and security. The death of Charles VIII of France in 1498 brought no new threat with the accession of Louis XII, except for renewed French designs on Italy, including a claim to Milan. Henry was content to see consolidation of his position, but the absence of continental ambition was noted by the main European rulers. France was the leading country, with a population much larger than the others and a taxation system which successfully delivered a strong flow of income to the monarch. A new contender was Spain, with its joint monarchy, an established wool and cloth industry and wealth beginning to arrive from America. King Ferdinand was suspicious of France over their border areas, such as Navarre and northern Catalonia; his response was to seek alliances against this potential enemy by marrying his offsprings to the royalty of Portugal, England and Burgundy and joining the Holy League of powers against French incursions into Italy. The continental rulers saw Henry VII as a marginal player, and he was invited to join the Holy League rather as an afterthought when Ferdinand's troops had already put Charles VIII's Italian invasion into reverse. Ferdinand was to repeat this effort in 1503 when Louis XII pursued the same policy as his predecessor, but this time Ferdinand took the kingship of Naples for Aragon.

Henry VII, again with suspicion of French aims, decided to strengthen links with Ferdinand and Isabella and with the Habsburgs, Maximilian and Philip. So the marriage by proxy in 1499 of prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon was a major success, supplemented in 1501 by their marriage in person. They were sumptuously entertained in the again-refurbished mansion of Coldharbour. The turn of the century, however, was to bring personal tragedy to the royal family. The successive deaths of prince Edmund (Henry's third surviving son) in 1500, of prince Arthur in 1502 and of queen Elizabeth in 1503, bring home the uncertainty of life in those days in even the best-served households.

Chapter Ten

Before reading Nicholas Orme[49] I imagined medieval education to have started with small groups of boys being taught to read by monks in abbeys and monasteries, with a very few reaching the level where they might proceed to advanced studies in theology and philosophy at Oxford or Cambridge. Orme dismisses this, "Ever since the twelfth century the principal source of English education has been provided by secular schools open to the public." These schools were operated on the basis that anyone could attend who was acceptable to the schoolmaster and who could pay his fees. Of course, there always was private tuition in great households, and small numbers of boys under private instruction in some of the great monasteries, but the teachers were not monks, rather clerics or laymen. The picture of a monk instructing a few boys is correct only for the "cloister schools" of religious orders which served the order concerned, training perhaps as far as advanced theology.

A development in the late fourteenth century was the endowment of schools by wealthy benefactors, so the master might run his school without charging fees. Often the establishment was run by the master alone, but in a larger one he might be assisted by a helper known as the usher. Medieval education was based entirely on the study of Latin, beginning with learning the alphabet, then Latin words and pronunciation. The latter accomplishment was bolstered by chanting liturgical texts as plainsong. Pupils would have generally started at the age of seven or eight and would progress to elementary grammar after a year or two. The grammar course was probably started at the ages of ten to twelve and could take five or six years, so boys might well have been in their late teens before completing school or continuing with advanced studies. Education in medieval times was about increasing knowledge and understanding of christianity, and, in more advanced stages, about reconciling philosophy and christian belief. This pious purpose was no doubt the inspiration for benefactors to encourage such learning among the young whether or not they had the means to pay the fees. It was perhaps a natural development in the fifteenth century, when the creation of a chantry became a popular bequest, for the chantry priest to be financed also to teach during the day when he was not involved in saying or singing obits for the benefactor.

Concern for education had grown in the comparatively settled reign of Henry VII. An element in this was likely to have been the growing demand for educated people not only in the church but in the running of government, the legal system and administration of estates. William Smyth, for example, shortly after his appointment as bishop, refounded the hospital of St John, Lichfield, endowing it himself, and turned it in part into a free grammar school. Orme explains that we do not know when elementary schools began. Probably the basic knowledge of reading and song (plainsong) with elementary grammar was taught originally in the single school which most towns had, and which might have been called a grammar school. The statutes of Eton and of the earlier foundation of Winchester require scholars to have already received that basic instruction, which, as Orme suggests, appears to assume the existence of primary schools before the middle of the fifteenth century. In passing it is worth noting how widespread some musical teaching was. Music tends to receive the least mention of all the arts in standard histories, but there is ample evidence that music was an important element in church and court life and ceremonial throughout the fifteenth century, especially at the Burgundian court. Complexity of composition, choral singing and the quality of instruments were all undergoing continuing development.

As a great householder, Lady Margaret in 1494 hired Maurice Westbury, a scholar from Oxford, to teach young gentlemen in her employ. In this year Hugh Oldham, whom Smyth had appointed to be dean of St John's hospital, Chester, bought the lease of the fulling mills at Walkers Croft, Manchester, with the intention of adding it to the funding of a Beswick chantry which included in the priest's duties that of teaching in a free school - this would be much developed later by Hugh and his family, who clearly were close to the Beswicks in discussion of their charitable endowments. Lady Margaret's thoughts had turned to arranging similarly for a Latin teacher at Wimborne; no doubt after conversations with Hugh Oldham, she was thinking along the lines of Eton and Winchester where the free schools were to teach all comers. The formal establishment of the Minster College would in fact take until 1511 to materialise, but it still exists in altered form as Wimborne Grammar School.

Smyth's elevation to Lichfield left the post of dean of Wimborne vacant to be filled by Thomas Barowe. The new appointee was by repute a most able lawyer, but his misfortune had been to be appointed master of the rolls by Richard III on the sacking of bishop Morton's relative, Robert. Henry VII had reversed the appointments, disabling Barowe from high office, but Lady Margaret was happy to make use of his abilities in his declining years. Barowe seems to have appreciated this, and his legacy to Great St Mary's

[49] much information in this section drawn from Orme, N. "English Schools in the Middle Ages" (London 1973)

church in Cambridge included a chantry in which the names of Lady Margaret, Henry VII and Richard III are linked - a parting gesture of reconciliation between the Roses.

There were two other vacancies arising from Smyth's promotion - the livings of Cheshunt and Swineshead. Lady Margaret presented Hugh Oldham to these livings, but was met by an unexpected challenge from the dean of Windsor, John Morgan, who had been rewarded with this post for his help to Henry Tudor in 1485. Morgan claimed for his chapter the right to choose the successors to the said livings. The case was technical and was heard in the court of arches by clerics nominated by John Morton, who had been made cardinal in 1493. Oldham argued the case for Lady Margaret and was declared successful on 24th July 1494. John Morgan was quickly promoted to be bishop of St David's and the safe pair of hands found for dean of Windsor was the establishment's old supporter, Christopher Urswick. By this time Hugh Oldham had been made archdeacon of Exeter with Lady Margaret's recommendation. His duties included the responsibility for appointing the schoolmaster to the "high school" or grammar school of Exeter. A fresh promotion for William Smyth came in January 1496 as he was translated to the see of Lincoln. He was entrusted with helping the education of prince Arthur.

It was in 1498 that the Spanish envoy reported that Lady Margaret Beaufort was among the most influential individuals in England, along with the expected loyal servants Morton, Bray, Lovell, Fox, Daubeney and, less usually, Thomas Savage, then bishop of London, the brother of the Sir John, who had died at Boulogne. Lady Margaret took an "unprecedented" step early in 1499 in the form of a vow of chastity, and set up her own independent establishment at Collyweston, near Stamford. This was done with the formal agreement of her husband, but it seems certain that the move was inspired by Henry, who planned to delegate more political power to his mother and wished her to distance herself from the extensive Stanley family. Lord Stanley himself had rooms reserved at Collyweston and was a regular visitor. Other regulars favoured with reserved rooms were Cecily, the queen's sister, and Lady Catherine Bray, wife of Sir Reginald. Lady Margaret also made increased use of Coldharbour, her London house, but never again stayed at the Stanley properties in the north-west Dr. Mumford tells us that many deeds indicate that Hugh Oldham was often in London on Lady Margaret's business. Presumably he consulted her at Coldharbour.

In the summer of 1499, William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who had been studying Latin and Greek in Paris, entertained one of his tutors with a stay at his country estate in Greenwich. The visitor, paying his first visit to England, was Desiderius Erasmus, a scholar and priest from the Low Countries, who was already a passionate teacher and writer on the new learning and religious reform. Erasmus himself recorded the occasion during his Greenwich stay when Thomas More and Edward Arnold, a friend from Lincoln's Inn, called on Lord Mountjoy, with whom they were clearly good friends. So Erasmus met More. Accompanied by Arnold these two walked to the neighbouring village of Eltham, where they entered the royal palace to meet the nine-year-old prince Henry Tudor and present him with some verses. It seems that Mountjoy, the same age as More, was already a chosen companion for the young prince to help with his studies. One can only be amazed at the familiarity of More with a member of the royal family, but it reveals how influential a circle he moved in, and recalls his period of education in Cardinal Morton's Lambeth palace where his contemporary pupils would have been in London society's high ranks.

Erasmus spent some time that autumn in Oxford where he befriended John Colet. This famous priest came from a wealthy London family and had attended the same city school as More. After completing his education at Oxford and Cambridge he had spent two years, 1493-95, on pilgrimage in Italy. He visited Florence and may have met Politian and Marsilio Ficino, who were still alive if not still teaching. Certainly Colet returned home familiar with the works of Ficino, with whom he then had some correspondence, and Pico della Mirandola and much impressed by the views of Savonarola. He took holy orders and taught at Oxford as a professor revelling in the new learning's re-examination of the biblical writings in the less corrupt texts now available to scholars. This draws attention to the remarkably rapid growth of printing and production, in particular, of theological texts. Caxton had died in 1491 but left his business to Wynkyn de Worde, who later moved it to premises near St Bride's, beginning the location of Fleet Street for the presses. Richard Pynson published his first book in London in 1497 and was the first to use Roman type in England in 1509.

Completing his stay in London, Erasmus made the acquaintance of William Grocyn, recently made rector of St Lawrence Jewry in London, and William Warham. The latter had followed in Grocyn's footsteps from Winchester to be his pupil at New College, Oxford. He first made a career in the law, practising at the court of arches, and gaining a reputation for commercial negotiations. He was ordained in 1493 by William Smyth at Lichfield, and was soon master of the rolls and elected bishop of London in 1501. His progress in the next three years to become lord chancellor and archbishop of Canterbury was astonishingly rapid.

Erasmus remarked on the strength of support in England from all these people for the new learning and was impressed by the quality of their scholarship - exchanges among such people from different lands were, of course, readily expressed in Latin.

The death of cardinal Morton in September 1500, led to a train of episcopal appointments, with the archbishopric being filled by Henry Deane from Salisbury. Richard Redman moved from Exeter to Bath and Wells in 1501 and for an extended time the Exeter post remained vacant. In this interregnum, the king appointed two commissioners to supervise the see; these were Hugh Oldham and Richard More. Oldham's competence in the estimation of the king is evident. The sudden death of prince Arthur in April 1502, was a tragic blow for Henry and said to be the greatest disappointment in her life for Lady Margaret. The prince was buried at Worcester cathedral, and William Smyth officiated at the funeral. Life has to go on, and there was a project which had been on Henry's mind for many years - that of selecting the site for a memorial chapel for Elizabeth and himself as founders of the Tudor dynasty. As early as 1494, Henry had obtained permission from the pope to move the body of Henry VI from Windsor, where many pilgrims visited it, to Westminster where grouping of the tombs of Edward the Confessor, Henry VI and Henry VII looked an attractive possibility. Papal agreement to the canonization of Henry VI was not forthcoming, however, so we still see his tomb in St George's Chapel.

The Tudor tomb would be at Westminster, Henry decided, and a new chapel to the abbey was planned, with Sir Reginald Bray closely involved. The foundation stone was laid on 23rd January, 1503, with Bray, Oldham and Smyth in attendance. An outstanding monument of its time, Henry VII's chapel at Westminster Abbey is an essential place to visit to feel the spirit of the period. Maurice Howard in History Today[50] tells us that the ground was cleared by the demolition of the old Lady Chapel and St Erasmus's chapel in 1502. The building is perhaps the nearest structure we now have to reveal the appearance of the vanished palace of Richmond, a demonstration of Tudor luxury built between 1497 and 1501 in time for the marriage celebrations of prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon. The chantry chapel at Westminster has the polygonal turrets and "continual wall of glass" which illustrations show were a feature of Richmond. The building was completed about 1512 after Henry's death, while the magnificent recumbent figures of Henry, Elizabeth of York and Lady Margaret Beaufort by the Florentine sculptor, Pietro Torrigiano, were added later. Torrigiano was a contemporary of Michelangelo, and back in their apprentice days under Lorenzo the Magnificent, he had broken Michelangelo's nose in a dispute.[51]

In February 1503 queen Elizabeth died as a result of childbirth, leaving Henry in deep grief. Thomas More composed "a powerful memorial elegy on the death of Elizabeth whom he had known well."[52] In due course the possibility opened up of a remarriage for the king and much diplomatic time went into tentative negotiations. A new betrothal for Catherine of Aragon and the young prince Henry was agreed in 1503, but the realisation of the marriage was to be on and off for years, not unusual for international betrothals. A diplomatic marriage was achieved in 1503 for princess Margaret and James IV of Scotland. The princess had been named after Lady Margaret and proved to be her favourite grandchild. The princess's final celebration and send-off from England took place in July at Collyweston with Lady Margaret as host The marriage was in August in Scotland - the new queen would become the grandmother of Mary queen of Scots.

Against royal deaths and marriages, the passing away of Sir Reginald Bray in 1503 draws less attention, but it must have been a blow to Henry VII to lose this trusted old friend. Bray died a wealthy man - it was accepted that highly-placed officials made personal use of their influence - and one of his most important bequests was the instruction to his executors to complete the building of St George's Chapel.[53] Not much work had been done on the construction since the completion of the choir in 1495, and most of the nave was little above ground level. So it is to Bray we owe a great deal that we admire today in the chapel at Windsor. That is his tangible legacy, but with Thomas Lovell he should have the credit for providing Henry VII with the effective, reasonably honest and reliable system of gathering royal dues and overseeing expenditure which allowed him to create the stability on which his country then flourished. Hugh Oldham was one of Bray's executors, and it may be from this time that he acquired some Chelsea properties later referred to in his own will as "all suche houses Landes and tenements Rentes revercions with all other appurtynunces lying in Chelsey, which I bought of Renold Braye."[54]

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[50] Howard, Maurice "Henry VII's Chapel" (History Today, February 1986)
[51] reported by Giorgio Vasari
[52] Ackroyd, P. "Life of Thomas More" p 105
[53] Begent, P.J. "The Romance of St George's Chapel" (Windsor 1992)
[54] Mumford, A.A. "Hugh Oldham" p 152

John Arundel, bishop of Lichfield, was translated to Exeter in 1502. His tenure there, however, was short. He died in London in March 1504 at the bishop's residence across the Strand to the south of St Clement Danes, at which church he was buried. With strong pressure from Lady Margaret, Hugh Oldham was appointed to the see. Ten years or so previously, archbishop Morton had called for a report on the state of affairs in the diocese. This confirmed that it had suffered from absentee officials, not only bishops who never visited but also the dean, then John Arundel, was often "with the king". Richard Redman as bishop had given the post the attention it deserved, but it had suffered again subsequently. One can imagine that Hugh Oldham tackled this new challenge with vigour, as Dr. Mumford asserts. After all, he had been trained by the outstandingly organised and methodical Reginald Bray, and it would have been almost instinctive to start with an inventory of all church vessels, ornaments, vestments, library books and missals. Then he recorded his rules for priests and laity in his diocese and his rulings on meaning and general conduct of services, followed by an ordinance checking extravagant expenditure by cathedral clergy. This strikes me as a natural move by an orderly mind to clarify where everyone stood, and is no reflection on Oldham's piety.

On the political front, resentment was growing over Henry's taxation policies. Perhaps the misfortunes of recent years had turned him to the consolation of improving his revenues, but about 1500 he had formed a group known as the Council Learned in the Law, which appeared to function as a royal debt-collection agency. Its constitution is now vague but two of its members, at least from 1504, have entered history - Empson and Dudley, men with a legal background who came to epitomise the ruthless and forceful extraction of money from the populace for the king. Their operations continued over the next few years to contribute materially to the reputation of the king for avarice.

The international situation was altered by the death of queen Isabella of Castile in November, 1504. Succession to her throne was seen in the country to fall not to her husband, Ferdinand, but to their offspring. The son and eldest daughter, however, had both died before 1500, so the next in line was the daughter, Joanna (Juana), married to archduke Philip of Burgundy. The fourth child was Catherine of Aragon, betrothed but neglected in England. Joanna and Philip decided to claim the throne of Castile and after many months of government negotiation by the Low Countries, backed by emperor Maximilian, Castile and Ferdinand accepted the claim. Thus the seemingly odd combination of the Netherlands and Spain under Habsburg rule was to come about.[55]

Henry's freedom to remarry was matched by Ferdinand's, and the pretence of mutual helpfulness was maintained for a time. Ferdinand's niece, queen of Naples, was a widow and Henry had his officials investigate the possibilities of his marrying her. Secretly Ferdinand, after defeating him in Italy had been making overtures to the common enemy, Louis XII of France, and reached an accommodation with him in the treaty of Blois, October 1505, which included the agreement to marriage between Ferdinand and Louis' niece, Germaine de Foix, realised in March 1506 With this shift in the balance of the powers, Henry was concerned to strengthen ties with Maximilian and Philip, although he too was being invited by Louis to marry another of his nieces. The potential spouse Henry now focused on was Margaret, the twice married and widowed daughter of Maximilian who was standing in as regent for the Low Countries as Philip and Joanna set sail for Spain to occupy the throne of Castile as king and queen. They left their son, the archduke Charles, to be brought up by his aunt and regent, Margaret. By a strange chance, the royal couple of Castile were obliged to seek refuge from the Channel storms near Weymouth. They disembarked to recover and were soon invited to be entertained under the supervision of Lady Margaret at the archbishop of Canterbury's palace in Croydon, borrowed from archbishop Warham. (The remains of this fine palace are now incorporated in a school). Princess Mary Tudor was introduced to the visitors in the knowledge that she was a potential spouse for their son, Charles, who unexpectedly had a claim to be king of Castile when his father died in Spain in September 1506 This event left Joanna of Castile a widow and another potential wife for Henry, but in effect Ferdinand kept her imprisoned and took the throne himself for the remaining ten years of his life. None of the wedding hopes was to come to fruition, although princess Mary was betrothed to archduke Charles in 1507. Henry's health deteriorated rapidly over the next few years. There is in the National Portrait Gallery a portrait by Sittow, a probable apprentice of Memling, of Henry painted in 1505 which shows a man with a burden but before he went into serious decline.

The first decade of the sixteenth century sees what might later be called the London humanist group in development. Richard III did not win much credit, but he had favoured scholarly men often with foreign university experience for promotion in the church, such as Gunthorpe, Shirwood and Dogget. Henry VII with many of his formative years spent on the continent was similarly pleased to employ scholarly men, not

[55] see selective genealogical Chart number 3

necessarily English, and not necessarily in the church. The Spanish envoy reported in 1498 that Henry's appreciation of foreigners was not liked by the English and prevented him from making certain appointments, "...the envy of the English is diabolical, and I think without equal." Henry's outlook at least encouraged scholarly travels to the continent and John Morton as archbishop looked favourably on the new learning. We have seen how a flow of outstanding students at English universities continued their studies abroad, especially in the great Italian cities.

The new learning met general academic interest in the quality of Latin in a wider range of classical authors, but a particular attraction for English scholars was its critical study of original Greek and Hebrew texts. The churchmen, Warham, Fox, Fisher, Urswick and Colet and equally Thomas More, hoped a return to original christian texts would rediscover piety, bypassing the accumulated gloss and interpretation of centuries of scholastic theology. Reform of the church and ending of abuses was foremost in their minds. It may have been Colet who introduced the works of Pico della Mirandola to More, but certainly More was so impressed by a recent biography of Pico that he translated it as a gift for a friend about 1504. Professor N. Davies[56] describes Pico's treatise "On the Dignity of Man" as the manifesto of humanism, the intellectual movement which developed out of the new learning. Pico's work emphasises the individual human personality, marking the shift from the God-centred view of the Middle Ages to the man-centred view of the Renaissance - a shift of fundamental importance to the much later development of the Enlightenment and modern systems of thought, which confine the church's power to matters of religion.

In 1505 More married for the first time and Erasmus paid another visit to England, meeting Warham at Lambeth palace, renewing acquaintance with prince Henry, Lord Mountjoy, More, Grocyn, Linacre and Colet and staying with John Fisher, bishop of Rochester. John Colet had been made dean of St Paul's in May that year, so the group was firmly centred in London and in regular communication. The death of Colet's father left him with substantial wealth and by 1506 he had conceived the idea of using much of this to found a school in the precincts of St Paul's. The concept, which owed something to the academies of Vittorino in Padua and Mantua, would bring together in the venture several of the group, while they must all have provided some input to the discussions. Concern with education was not limited to the would-be reformers; it was very much in the spirit of the time.

The early sixteenth century was to be the final decade for Lady Margaret Beaufort and for her son. Much of her work in this period was related to educational establishments. She had made a number of donations to both Oxford and Cambridge universities in the 1490s, but in case we should think such benevolence demonstrated unalloyed altruism, Messrs. Jones and Underwood point out that "Lady Margaret's beneficence nearly always demanded a specific personal return." Prayers for the patron and family were a general requirement, so that the founding of a college might well be termed an academic chantry.

The beginning of the foundation of Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1487 was on the initiative of bishop Alcock, who had succeeded Morton as bishop of Ely in 1486. Alcock was well connected and involved Henry VII in the required royal licence. After Henry and his mother visited Cambridge in 1498, royal disbursements were made and Sir Reginald Bray supervised some of the building work. Various courtiers became benefactors, and Lady Bray helped to endow a grammar school attached to the college. Lady Margaret's special interest in Cambridge was connected with her confessor, John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, who became chancellor of the university. After Jesus College, Lady Margaret was attracted to Queens', where she arranged for Fisher to be elected president in 1505. Her persuasiveness soon ensured suitable endowments for the college to replace those of Richard III which Henry VII had cancelled. Her next design in Cambridge was the creation and endowment of Christ's College from the earlier God's House, whose originator wanted a college where grammar masters could be trained to staff schools. Building went on from 1505, with Lady Margaret sometimes in residence, until her death in 1509. Her executors, led by bishops Fox and Fisher, had only the chapel to complete among the buildings of consequence. Cambridge received particular royal attention in this time, and it was Henry VII who donated substantial funds as late as 1509 for the completion of King's College Chapel.

Although Hugh Oldham was now the lord bishop of Exeter, and had his personal contacts at the royal family level, he was clearly not in the social circle of the London humanist group. The latter's privileges were exceptional as they had access to the most powerful and wealthy of the court, the senior judiciary and the London merchant guilds. Some of the group were, of course, known personally to Hugh Oldham, especially bishops Fox and Fisher, but he would pursue plans for educational establishments in consultation

[56] Davies, N. "Europe" (Oxford 1997)

first with his lifelong friend William Smyth, bishop of Lincoln. Smyth may well have been an influence in Oldham's thoughts of school endowment in the 1490s, as he had the experience of the Lichfield foundation. He would go on to found grammar schools in Banbury and Farnworth, Lancashire. The arrangements at Banbury have special interest and the establishment rose in 1501 from the decayed hospital of St John. Bishop Smyth of Lincoln had an episcopal palace in Banbury and seemed to take especial care to ensure the quality of the new institution. To be master of the grammar school he selected the most renowned grammarian at Oxford, John Stanbridge, who was the author of several books on Latin verbs, syntax etc. He was the first English grammarian to achieve wide circulation of his work through the use of the printing press.[57]

In 1507 Smyth involved himself with Richard Sutton, a London lawyer whose family was in the north-west, in plans to establish Brasenose College, Oxford. It was at this time that Oldham had apparently had thoughts about an endowment of Exeter College, Oxford. Something occurred in the negotiations which decided him not to pursue the idea, and then he enquired about joining Smyth and Sutton in the Brasenose project. Nothing came of this - probably because they were already well advanced and were ready to lay the foundation stone of the college in 1509. As things worked out, Hugh Oldham was a considerable benefactor of the new college; as executor of Smyth's will he personally defrayed the outstanding costs of completing the college library in 1514. But we must go back to the upheavals of 1509.

[57] D.N.B. Stanbridge, J.

Chapter Eleven

It was archbishop Morton who had taken a strong line over the powers of his senior post in the church and obtained the pope's approval to carrying out visitations of abbeys and monasteries. There was clearly concern on Morton's part that the observance of the strict rules of conduct within some of these institutions had grown lax, and the time had come to end the claim that they were answerable only to the pope. Hugh Oldham followed Morton's example and pursued an energetic programme around his diocese - travel was, of course, on horseback, be it local or up to London. In 1506 he had inspected the abbey of Tavistock and found something to criticise. It did not precipitate immediate action, but abbot Bonham declined to respond to a summons from the bishop to attend a later enquiry and said he would appeal to the court of Rome. Affronted by this denial of his authority, Oldham excommunicated the abbot on 10th January 1509, reporting the case to the pope. It is interesting to note the ease of communication with the head of the Roman catholic church. Both Richard III and Henry VII had made a point of developing good relations with the pope, and, perhaps as a result, episcopal appointments and proposed solutions to routine problems were readily agreed by the Holy See. So much so, it is suggested, that the English clergy came to regard the pope's endorsement as a matter of rubber-stamping, which may some years later have been a factor in the acceptance by a majority of them of a substitute English head of the church.

Lady Margaret Beaufort had one final educational project in mind at this late stage of her life - the founding of another Oxford college. In 1508 she had reached agreement with her stepson, James Stanley, recently appointed bishop of Ely, for the conversion of St John's hospital, of which he was patron, into a college. Early in 1509 she fell ill and quickly delegated some responsibilities to three of her executors, led by John Fisher. On the 10th March, a formal agreement was made, in which the executors were involved, for the conversion, with certain rights reserved to the see of Ely. Lady Margaret's solicitor then had to prepare an application for the necessary royal licence. As her health recovered, so that of the king was deteriorating. She moved in April to Richmond palace, where Henry lay dying. They were joined there by prince Henry who was with the king before he died on 21st April.

The country was rejoicing rather than grieving. The arrival of the young king, just approaching his eighteenth birthday, six feet tall, athletic, intelligent and handsome was perceived to herald a new age free from the oppressiveness of his father's later years. A hallmark of Henry VII's reign was the monarch's attention to administrative detail, which had helped to build up the personal authority of the king. Henry VIII in contrast was not interested in routine, and his council saw they could take the initiative. This they did with an immediate attack on the personification of the taxation excesses of the old regime by arresting Sir Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley. Their execution for treason is described by Chrimes as "what was to be a characteristic response of his [Henry's] to certain sorts of political difficulties." Young Henry concerned himself with the pleasures of the court at Greenwich and announced that he would marry Catherine of Aragon. This was a surprising change of view, as a few years earlier he had chosen to repudiate the long-standing betrothal. He claimed to be carrying out his father's wishes, but it might also be that he saw the best way to match the exploits of Henry V, which he desperately wanted to do, was to have Ferdinand as his father-in-law on his side against France.

The marriage took place on 11th June, followed, amid great pageantry, with the coronation of the royal couple on 24th June, crowned by archbishop Warham. For Lady Margaret the festivities so soon after the bereavement were probably a heavy strain. She fell ill after eating a meal including cygnet and died on 29th June, leaving John Fisher with the enormously difficult task of bringing St John's College into stable existence - not finally achieved until 1524 with the co-operation of cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII.

It was in March 1509 that Thomas More was made a freeman of the Mercers' Company, the leading London guild, by which John Colet had been similarly honoured the previous year. No doubt as the foremost up-and-coming lawyer More was seen as a valuable acquisition by the Mercers, and he would be acting for them in negotiations in Antwerp in September over the streets and houses which English merchants might occupy in the city, now rapidly drawing business from Bruges. Both the Merchant Adventurers and the staplers were covered by the Mercers' guild, and negotiations would be held in December to bring order to the rivalries and create "an unity". More was probable again involved. Just as the London devotees of the new learning found no incompatibility between deep piety and the pressure for reforms in the church, so it did not inhibit their support of commerce in London. Colet decided to ask the Mercers' Company to maintain his intended school, and began the transfer of property to them as trustees. Here we must remember that the guilds were in origin fraternities with commercial and religious purposes, and were still much concerned with all these aspects of their activities.

To celebrate the coronation of Henry VIII, More composed a Latin poem praising his learning, piety and virtue. The expectation of a golden age under this monarch was also expressed by Lord Mountjoy in a letter to Erasmus in Rome, pressing him, with the encouragement of £5 for travelling expenses, to come to England to share the excitement. Erasmus was soon in London, a little strained by the journey, but he lodged with More and his family and to fill his time while recovering he wrote the treatise "In Praise of Folly" in a matter of days. The Latin title, "Encomium Moriae", can also be translated as "In Praise of More", illuminating the special relationship between the two men. The book would become one of the European works of the century, epitomising in its ironical descriptions the humanist group's views of the church and society across western Europe.

Schools were much in Hugh Oldham's mind at this time. He would have been pleased to receive under Lady Margaret's will a handsome legacy and some personal gifts. Perhaps the passing of the great lady was a stimulus to Oldham to work on his own intended educational projects. Be that as it may, he paid a long visit in 1509 to Crewkerne, Somerset, where his older brother Bernard was rector. Hugh had been instrumental in Bernard's appointment, and the arrangement shows Lady Margaret's willingness to do favours for Hugh. She went to the trouble of negotiating with Sir William Knyvett a turn in the presentation for the living, and Bernard as her candidate gained the post in the mid-1490s. At that time as the archdeacon of Exeter, Hugh would have made the acquaintance of the precentor of the cathedral, John Combe. This man, originally from the parish of Crewkerne, had become a lawyer and then held a series of posts at Exeter, where he resided from 1477 to his death in 1499. In the spirit of the day, John Combe had resolved to found a free grammar school at Crewkerne and Bernard Oldham, as local rector, assisted him in his plans which reached fruition shortly before Combe died. Hugh Oldham must have listened with interest to his brother's account of the school's founding, the terms of the foundation and the way the establishment performed in practice. There were also family matters to discuss, in particular the bequeathing of property in Ancoats in Manchester, of which Bernard was a trustee and which on the deaths of the trustees in 1514 would be available for school endowment. There must have been general agreement in the family for the scheme Hugh was proposing. The Beswick family were cloth merchants, so there seems a parallel in Hugh Oldham's closeness to business and that of the London humanists to commerce. Where one can glimpse him, Hugh appears as a man with a very practical view.

A church matter of importance to Hugh concerned the granting of probate and administration of estates. These were functions of the episcopacy rather than of the civil law; Canterbury was the authority to deal with estates whenever the assets fell in more than one diocese. Some bishops were complaining late in the previous century that the claim to act was sometimes being made by Canterbury on spurious assertions. The bishops were therefore being deprived of their rightful fees. William Warham as master of the rolls had supported the complaint, but unfortunately changed his view once he became archbishop of Canterbury. Now the bishops looked elsewhere for justice and put their appeal of 1509 to the pope, signed by Fox (Winchester), Smyth (Lincoln), Fitzjames (London) and Oldham (Exeter).

1509 saw the appointment of John Oxenbridge to be a canon of St George's Chapel, Windsor. It is probable that he was the overseer of building works carried out to the chapel in the course of the next few years. One presumes this close association was the reason for his being allowed a personal chantry at St George's - the last of the eight, which we have now fully accounted for. An interesting appointment made early in Henry VIII's reign was that of archbishop Christopher Bainbridge as ambassador to the pope.[58] Bainbridge had risen with great rapidity through the posts of master of the rolls, dean of Windsor and bishop of Durham to be archbishop of York. For years, Henry VII had been content to have an Italian representative for this country at the papal court in Rome, and the brothers, Giovanni and Silvestro de' Gigli, had occupied the post successively and enjoyed holding the bishopric of Worcester. Bainbridge was perhaps needed to give an impartial view on the factions in the papal court in a problematic period. Pope Julius II, a nephew of pope Sixtus IV and a wealthy cardinal who delighted in the arts, had been elected in 1503 after ten years of exile from Rome by his adversary, Rodrigo Borgia, pope Alexander VI. The Borgia years had left the pontificate with an unenviable reputation and practical problems of disintegration of the papal states as neighbouring magnates had taken advantage of papal weakness to occupy territory. Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) was perhaps perceived as committed to the French, as he had taken refuge with Charles VIII whom he joined in the march to Naples in 1494. It is explained that Julius hoped Charles would go on to depose the Borgia pope, but this did not happen as Charles had to withdraw from Italy, defeated by Ferdinand's forces. Julius stayed with the French and accompanied Louis XII on his 1502 invasion of Italy in pursuit of his claim of Milan for the house of Orleans. The death of Rodrigo Borgia in 1503 allowed the cardinal to return to Rome.

[58] D.N.B. Bainbridge, C.

Julius II has the reputation of an exceptionally militant pope - Machiavelli refers to him as a man whose nature did not allow him to do anything cautiously. The other side of this pope was his ability to inspire artistic creativity. In 1503 he conceived the idea of building a new basilica of St Peter's, and in 1506 the foundation stone of the renowned cathedral, which impresses us today, was laid. He was responsible for many new buildings in Rome and the Vatican, but we have to be grateful particularly for his close friendship with Michelangelo, whom he persuaded in 1508 to begin his painting of the Sistine chapel, one of the finest products of the Italian renaissance. In the following year Rafael also began working for the pope. On the political front Julius's first priority was to restore his temporal authority and he recovered land in 1508 by military force. At this stage he was pleased to join the league of Cambrai in which the major powers had united against Venice. The alliance duly defeated the Venetians in 1509 to restore the territorial integrity of the papal states. Julius now took a fresh view and, with a developing sense of Italian nationalism, determined to drive the French out of Italy. He therefore changed sides from anti-Venice to anti-France, and was soon followed by Ferdinand, as Franco-Spanish rivalry was being fought out on Italian territory. At this point Julius II faced a revolt by a number of cardinals who chose to support Louis XII. To ensure he could win a vote in his council, the pope had to create several new cardinals to counterbalance the defectors - one of these was Christopher Bainbridge, who accepted the unexpected honour with Henry VIII's approval. The French military power was not to be under-rated, however, and the Spanish forces were defeated at Ravenna in April 1512. This prompted the emperor Maximilian and the Swiss cantons to move against France, while the Italian areas occupied by the French rose up in revolt. Milan was soon cleared of the French invaders. A new Holy League in October brought Venice, Spain, England and the pope together to fight France.

We need to look back here at political moves in England. Thomas Wolsey made his debut as chaplain to Henry VII in 1507, and then became royal almoner to Henry VIII late in 1509, quickly winning favour by being prepared to take on any governmental work which Henry disliked. The king was longing to have a war with France, but many of his council were not persuaded. Dr. Starkey explains that the nobility were inclined to support the king and gradually gained ascendancy. Parliaments came and went in 1510 and 1512 - Richard Fox and Hugh Oldham were appointed triers of petitions on both occasions - but it was only with the Great Council of 1512 that the anti-French lobby prevailed and made possible English involvement in the Holy League. Wolsey was a major organiser of the war preparations and Henry attacked France from Calais, winning territory at Therouanne and Tournai. The dismissal of a French counter-attack at Therouanne became known as the Battle of the Spurs from the speed of the French withdrawal. The English gains had no long-term significance, but Charles Somerset won his title of earl of Worcester for commanding at Tournai, while Charles Brandon, the son of Henry VII's standard bearer killed at Bosworth, was made duke of Suffolk for his efforts in the campaign. While the king was happily employed in France, James IV of Scotland, who had followed tradition with an alliance with France, was prevailed upon to attack England on the assumption that its forces were fully occupied on the continent. Some military were hastily returned home, such as Thomas Ruthall, bishop of Durham, with his one hundred men. The Scots were thoroughly beaten and James IV killed at Flodden in September 1513. For this victory the earl of Surrey was made duke of Norfolk and Sir Edward Stanley, the fifth son of the late earl of Derby, was made Lord Mounteagle. 1513 saw the defeat of the French by the Swiss at Novara and by the Holy League in northern France, leading to peace negotiations the following year. Henry VIII's younger sister, Mary, who was said to have her eye on Charles Brandon, was obliged to marry the elderly Louis XII as a guarantee of peace. Her sacrifice was short-lived, however, as Louis was not used to her pace of living and died six months later. She was then free to marry Charles; they were the grandparents of Lady Jane Grey.

The humanist group was busily occupied with the foundation of St Paul's School and Erasmus's visit. More's brother-in-law, John Rastell, who had been official coroner in Coventry since his marriage to More's sister, Elizabeth, returned to settle in London. He was a man of remarkable talents - lawyer, engineer, playwright, pageant-constructor, builder of the first public London stage, printer and publisher. He printed More's "Life of Pico" in 1510, copied soon after by Wynkyn de Worde. In the same year work began on the school building, while More, Linacre, Erasmus and Lily all contributed to the syllabus. Colet made William Lily the first High Master of the school, which opened in 1512. Erasmus meanwhile returned to the continent to arrange the printing of his "Encomium Morae" in Paris. Colet was a preacher of radical improvement needed in the church - so much so that some thought him heretical. Fortunately he had the backing of William Warham, so no action was taken to tone down his criticisms and scriptural interpretations.

How much Hugh Oldham went along with the radical views, we do not know, but perhaps rather more than did his friend William Smyth, who is referred to as conservative when compared with Richard

Fox.[59] Smyth died at the beginning of 1514 to be replaced by Thomas Wolsey as bishop of Lincoln. Certainly the friendship between Oldham and Fox strengthened, and we see Oldham respected as one of the senior bishops in the responsibilities allocated to him. The court of arches had ruled in 1513 that the abbot of Tavistock must submit to Oldham's episcopal authority, and I emphasise this to counter the widespread idea that Hugh Oldham was excommunicated for a continuing dispute with the abbot, only receiving absolution from Rome after his death. The story is given by Francis Godwin (not a contemporary historian) in his book, published in 1601, "Catalogue of the Bishops of England with their lives". Dr. Mumford categorically dismisses the tale, "There is no record of any such excommunication", and it would seem nonsensical when we know the issue was referred to the pope by Oldham himself. The papal response was to hand the problem back to the archbishop of Canterbury to appoint the adjudicators, who eventually reached their ruling in the court of arches. The abbot accepted the decision and had his excommunication withdrawn immediately. Godwin's account is regrettably included in Hugh Oldham's entry in the Dictionary of National Biography; it now also appears on the Net, with the qualification "is said to have incurred excommunication".

It was in 1513 that Henry VIII agreed to the bishops' wish to withdraw their appeal about probate procedures from the pope. Instead, convocation appointed a committee to settle the issue - the chosen men were Fisher, Oldham, Colet, Nikke (Norwich) and the prior of Canterbury. In 1514 when Warham officiated at the ceremony of presentation of cap and sword from the pope to Henry VIII, Oldham read the epistle. He was again the reader of the epistle in St Paul's Cathedral, with Colet preaching, on the elevation of Wolsey to cardinal soon after his rise to be archbishop of York.

In 1514 our unfortunate cardinal Bainbridge in Rome was poisoned by a chaplain in his retinue, Rinaldo de Modena. The culprit confessed but claimed to have been acting for Silvestro de' Gigli. The latter refuted this, stating that he had dismissed the chaplain some years before when in his employ in England and that he considered Rinaldo mad. That was the end of the investigation. Much had changed in the Vatican with the death of Julius II in 1513. Perhaps wanting a more emollient personality the cardinals elected Giovanni de' Medici, the second son of the late Lorenzo the Magnificent. He took the name of Leo X. This was the occasion for Machiavelli to present his famous work "The Prince" to Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, the nephew of the new pope and effective ruler of Florence in a restoration of the family's position. Machiavelli was out of work due to the new regime in Florence, and hoped to gain favour with his offering. The book is open to differing interpretations, from the rather absurd suggestion that it was just an amusing satire to the widely offered view that Machiavelli "distinguished ethics from politics".[60] Personally I prefer Sir Isaiah Berlin's assessment[61] that Machiavelli differentiated between two incompatible ideals of life, the christian and the pagan, deducing from history that the society for which man longs cannot be built on christian morality.

Cardinal Bainbridge's murder placed a heavy reporting duty on the cardinal's secretary, a young man named Richard Pace. He had started his education in bishop Langton's school at the cathedral in Winchester, where the bishop commended his musical skill. Pace's talents were not restricted to music, and from Oxford he progressed to Padua, Ferrara, where he met Erasmus, and Bologna before his return to England to take holy orders. Pace so impressed the new pope, Leo X, that he was given a recommendation to Henry VIII. The king promptly made him his personal secretary, in which post he soon became a friend of More and Erasmus in the humanist group.

[59] D.N.B. Smith, William
[60] Ackroyd, P. "Life of Thomas More" p. 88
[61] Berlin, Sir Isaiah "The Originality of Machiavelli" in "The Proper Study of Mankind" (1997)

Chapter Twelve

Cardinal Wolsey completed his collection of offices by assuming the Lord Chancellorship in December 1515, relinquished by Warham. He was now by far the most powerful subject of the king in England. His abilities were enormous, especially his capacity for work, which so attracted Henry VIII who liked to delegate. The cardinal was also highly regarded by the contemporary humanist group, and Thomas More "seems genuinely to have believed that he represented the best hope of reformation in church and state."[62]

The year had opened with the arrival of a new king of France. Making a striking parallel with Henry VIII, Francis I was only twenty years old, six feet tall and his head was full of ideas of knightly chivalry and battles. This latter obsession took the form of leading an army into Italy once more, which he did in the summer of 1515 and proceeded to a victory at Marignano over the Swiss mercenaries fighting for the pope. Peace with England was secure for the time being and immediate concerns here were more with terms of trade with the Low Countries.

In the spring of 1515 More and his friend Cuthbert Tunstall were sent on a trade mission to the Low Countries which was to have the incidental but very fortunate result of More's book "Utopia", an outstanding work of the period. Tunstall was the illegitimate grandson of the Sir Richard Tunstall who had been master of the mint in 1483. Cuthbert had enjoyed an excellent education at Oxford, Cambridge and Padua, knew Greek and Hebrew, and would write a book on mathematics dedicated to More. He had been chancellor to Warham since 1511, so was a natural member of the humanist group. As amanuensis More had taken with him John Clement, one of the first old boys of St Paul's School, who had joined More's household as a tutor. The negotiating team sailed to Flanders and settled in Bruges in mid-May. Archduke Charles's negotiators were slow to get their act together, so it was now that More found himself unoccupied and thought of writing a treatise to fill his time. Erasmus called on them at the end of May on his way to Basle. No doubt this stimulated More's pen, as Erasmus had just completed "The Education of a Christian Prince" and was off to see his printer, Froben. At the very same time an eighteen-year-old artist was working actively in the humanist centre of Basle, and was drawing a series of marginal illustrations for Froben's new edition of "Encomium Moriae". He was Hans Holbein the younger, who would come to Henry VIII's court in 1526.

The frustrations for the English party in Bruges dragged on, until at the end of July More rode to Antwerp, the growing city which was steadily replacing Bruges as the commercial and banking centre of northern Europe. There More stayed with Peter (Pieter) Gillis, whose position was something like town clerk of Antwerp and whose portrait can be seen in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts there. More was among like-minded people and was encouraged by Gillis to add to the humanist publications. It seems that the concept of an ideal society as his subject was decided here. Cuthbert Tunstall had travelled on to Brussels and stayed with Erasmus, perhaps at his house in Anderlecht. This is now an Erasmus museum, open to the public.

The negotiators returned to Bruges and good progress was made. At the same time More somehow found time to draft his story, which becomes book two of the printed work, with book one written shortly afterwards in England The whole, amended with comments from Gillis, was seen into print by Erasmus with the printer Martens in Louvain and appeared by the end of 1516.

Utopia was written in Latin and an English translation was not published until 1551. Book one, the introduction, features Peter Gillis (Giles) speaking to Ralph Hythloday, a Portuguese traveller and learned man, exceedingly devoted to Greek ("nothing extant in Latin that is to any purpose..."), and More joins them. This provides the occasion for a discussion of a variety of issues, such as whether a philosophic and experienced man can usefully be an adviser to a king or prince and thereby serve the common good, even though he knows that most of his advice will be rejected. One senses a very personal interest here on More's part, foreseeing his coming move into royal service. Hythloday is invited to express his views of England, in which he spent some months in 1497. This enables the author to put into a foreigner's mouth some criticisms he might not wish to speak directly, whilst also recalling archbishop Morton's household, including what must then have been a popular, disparaging view of friars in general. Book two is Hythloday's detailed description of the island and state of Utopia. This is open to interpretation, but is clearly not an indirect statement of More's concept of the ideal society. Rather it seems like a wide-ranging offering of the subjects of greatest interest for debate by the humanist group. This is where one may be surprised by the then current discussions - private property vs property in common, the corruption of christian teaching to

[62] Ackroyd, P. "Life of Thomas More" p 176

render usual courses of action less demanding or less altruistic, the morality of hunting, vegetarianism, the undesirable effects of fashion in clothing, treatment of convicts, freedom for different religious beliefs, the limitations of complex law and the treatment of women. On the latter point, even More giving education to his daughters, agrees they must be subject creatures. So we have made some changes, one might even say advances, in five hundred years, but how little our scientific understanding of the world changes the issues for debate!

While Erasmus and More were engaged abroad, Hugh Oldham had been pursuing his plan for a school. With the death of the old trustees, a new endowment trust deed was signed and dated 2nd July 1515, from which date Manchester Grammar School now records its foundation. It was in the following year that Hugh Oldham paid a long visit to Manchester, discussing his project with other members of his and the Beswick families and finally buying a site for his school in September 1516. He then had to arrange for the building which was begun in April 1517 and was completed by the end of August 1518. Hugh defrayed most of the cost himself. The foundation deed records the trust revenues should be applied to a master to teach grammar in Manchester, with an usher as his deputy, according to the form used at Banbury.[63] This was a school founded, as we have seen, by William Smyth, so it seems Hugh Oldham stayed with the ideas he had discussed long before with his old friend.

Another incidence of friendly influence, but in the opposite direction, involves Oldham and Fox. The latter had been a bishop for nearly thirty years, but his main work had been that of senior government official. By 1515 he was seeking to reduce his attendance at the king's council. Finally he resigned the privy seal in 1516 in favour of bishop Ruthall so he could devote himself fully to religious duties and personal affairs. His favourite project was for the foundation of an Oxford college, which he had been considering for some time. We have it on the authority of the sixteenth century historian, Hooker, that Fox had intended to found a religious institution for young monks from St Swithin's monastery at Winchester. Fox was already a supporter of the new learning and in conversation with Hugh Oldham was persuaded to favour a secular college by the words "What! My lord, shall we build houses, and provide livelodes for a company of buzzing monks, whose end and fall we ourselves may live to see. No, no. It is more meet to provide for the increase of learning and for such as who, by their learning, shall do good in the Church and commonwealth."[64] Oldham was a substantial benefactor, and Corpus Christi was duly founded in 1517 with public lecturers in divinity, Latin and Greek.

Ferdinand of Spain died in 1516. Archduke Charles thereupon became king of Spain, uniting it with the Low Countries under a single Habsburg ruler. So the scene was set for decades of struggle between France, the outstanding individual nation at the time, and the Habsburg countries. There was, however, another enormously disruptive influence about to change the medieval unity of western Europe. In October 1517 Martin Luther's ninety-five theses were posted on the castle church door at Wittenberg. These were questions for debate, but they would open up divisions in Europe for centuries to come. Erasmus sent a copy of Luther's articles to More in 1518. All three men were looking for reforms in their church, but had no idea at this stage how destructive of the old order the Reformation would be.

1519 brings to a close the lives of a number of our protagonists - the emperor Maximilian, dean Colet, William Grocyn and Hugh Oldham, whose tomb is located in the St Saviour's chapel at Exeter cathedral and whose addition of this and the St George's Chapel are his attractive embellishments to the building. The loss of Colet and Grocyn to the London humanist group was severe, especially as Thomas More left the legal/commercial world to become wholly occupied in direct service to Henry VIII as councillor attendant to the king. Wolsey became deeply absorbed in political manoeuvering, trying to keep England punching above its weight internationally, and the possibility of church reform suffered.

Hugh Oldham enjoyed a reasonably long life with a closeness to some great events. It would have been fascinating to read a personal record, but we must be content with our subjective interpretation of the limited information we have. For me, the very lack of record is an indication of Hugh Oldham's modesty about his achievements. I imagine him ready to acknowledge the element of good fortune in his elevation from yeoman background to the high status of bishop. Some degree of luck placed him at a critical time in the service of Lady Margaret Beaufort, where his ability, trustworthiness and discretion exactly fitted the need, gaining him the confidence of the future king and his mother - something far beyond his expectations at the time. He seemed truly to value humility, such as made him decline to be nominated a founder of Corpus Christi college with bishop Fox, but merely a benefactor.

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[63] Mumford, A.A. "Hugh Oldham" p 118
[64] Mumford, A.A. "Hugh Oldham" p 108

His later years, Hugh Oldham clearly devoted to his work in the church and his educational interests, securing the future by selecting reliable trustees to see his aims completed. His determination to provide facilities for boys in south Lancashire and Cheshire to develop their abilities for service in church and state, in the way he had been fortunate to do, has been tremendously fruitful. He would surely never have guessed that his own rebus badge of the owl with a band bearing the letters DOM (recalling the Lancastrian pronunciation of his family name) would still be thriving nearly five hundred years later as a badge of the Manchester Grammar School. His practical point of view, encapsulated in the motto to his episcopal arms, "Sapere aude" (Dare to be wise) was meant to refer, Dr. Mumford explains, to wisdom in action, not pure knowledge in thought. So the goal beyond the preparatory period in education was wisdom in the council chamber and the market place, where the activities of the living populace are found.

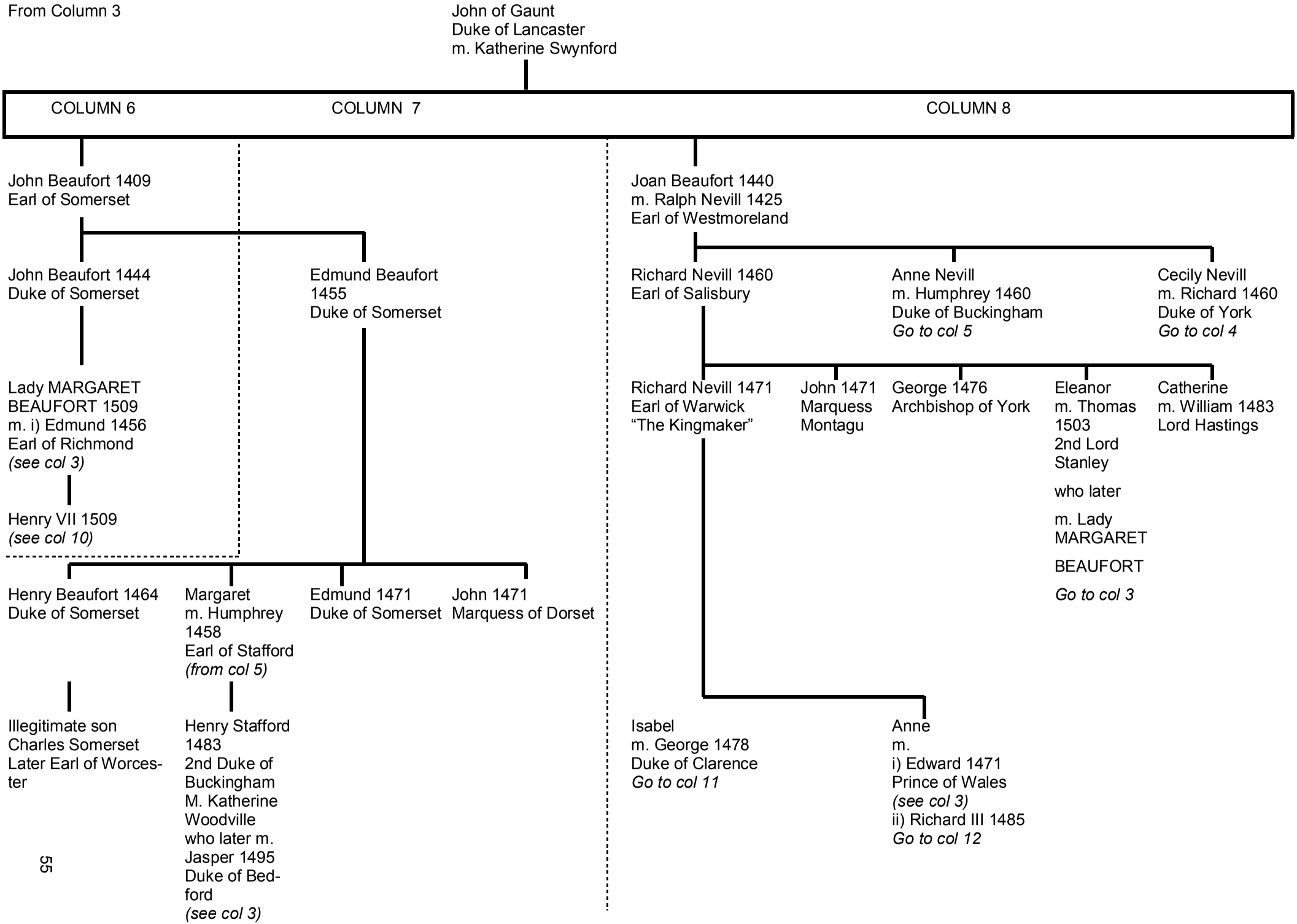
CHART 1

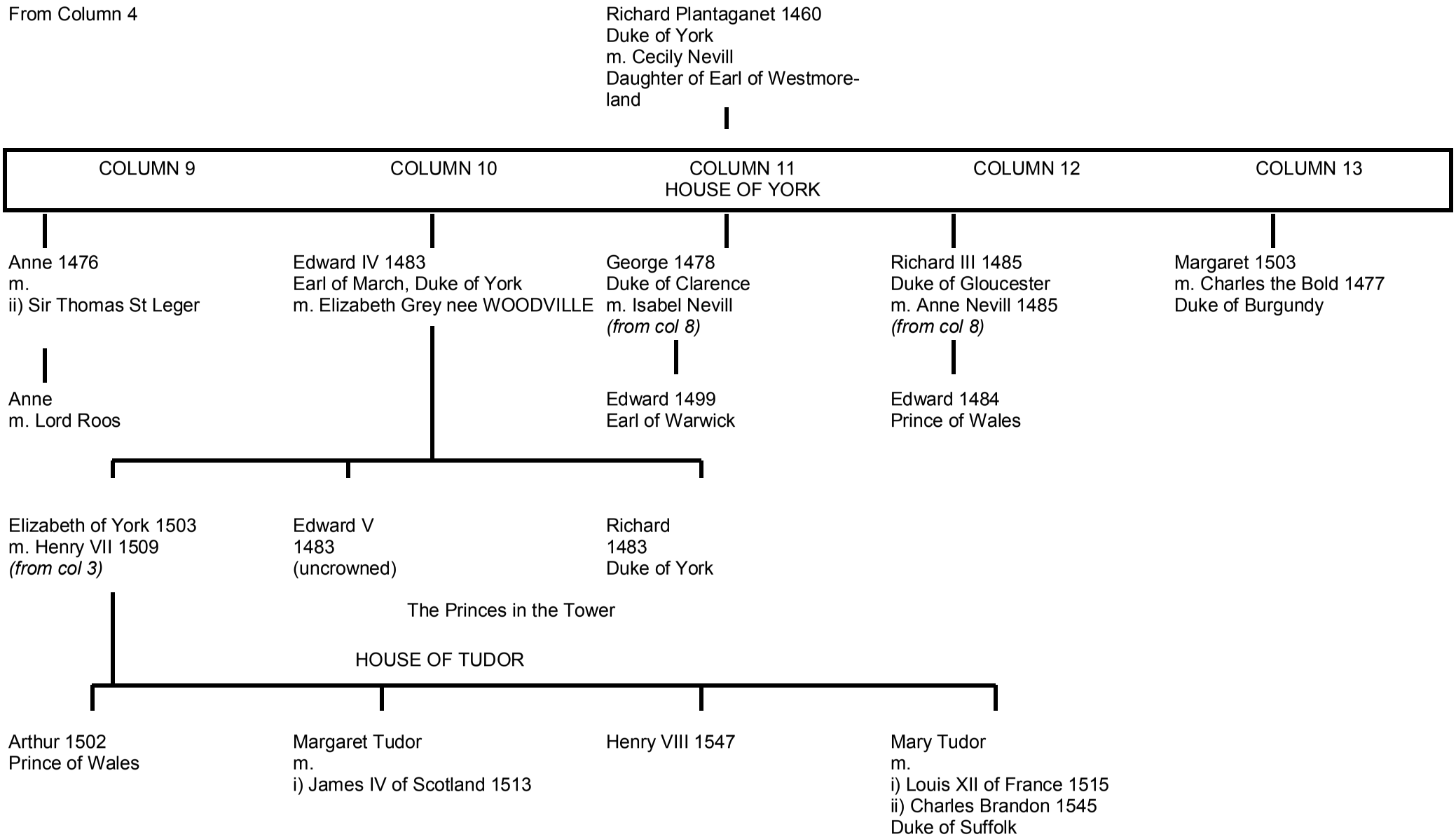
Battles of the Wars of the Roses

2nd May 1455	St. Alban's (first battle of)	victory for York aided by Warwick
23rd Sept.1459	Blore Heath, Staffs.	victory for Lancastrians against Salisbury
12th Oct. 1459	Ludford Bridge, nr. Ludlow	victory for Lancastrians. Duke of York flees to Ireland
10th July 1460	Northampton	victory for Yorkists. York himself returns from Ireland
30th Dec. 1460	Wakefield	Lancastrian victory with York and Salisbury killed
3rd Feb.1461	Mortimer's Cross, nr. Ludlow	victory for Yorkists under earl of March
16th Feb.1461	St. Alban's (second battle of)	victory for Lancastrians, but London refuses them entry. Earl of March acclaimed as Edward IV
29th March 1461	Towton, nr. Leeds	victory for Yorkists
25th Oct. 1462	Bamburgh	Queen Margaret lands but soon withdraws. Castle surrenders to Yorkists 24th Dec.
early May 1464	Hedgeley Moor, nr. Bamburgh	victory for Yorkists over rebels
15th May 1464	Hexham	victory for Yorkists
June 1464	Bamburgh	final surrender of rebels to Yorkists
26th July 1469	Edgecote, or Banbury	victory for Lancastrians, now supported by Warwick
13th April 1471	Barnet	victory for Yorkists on Edward's return from Burgundy. Warwick killed.
4th May 1471	Tewkesbury	total victory for Edward IV

Selective genealogical chart number 2 — genealogy restricted mainly to names mentioned in the text. Year of death shown.

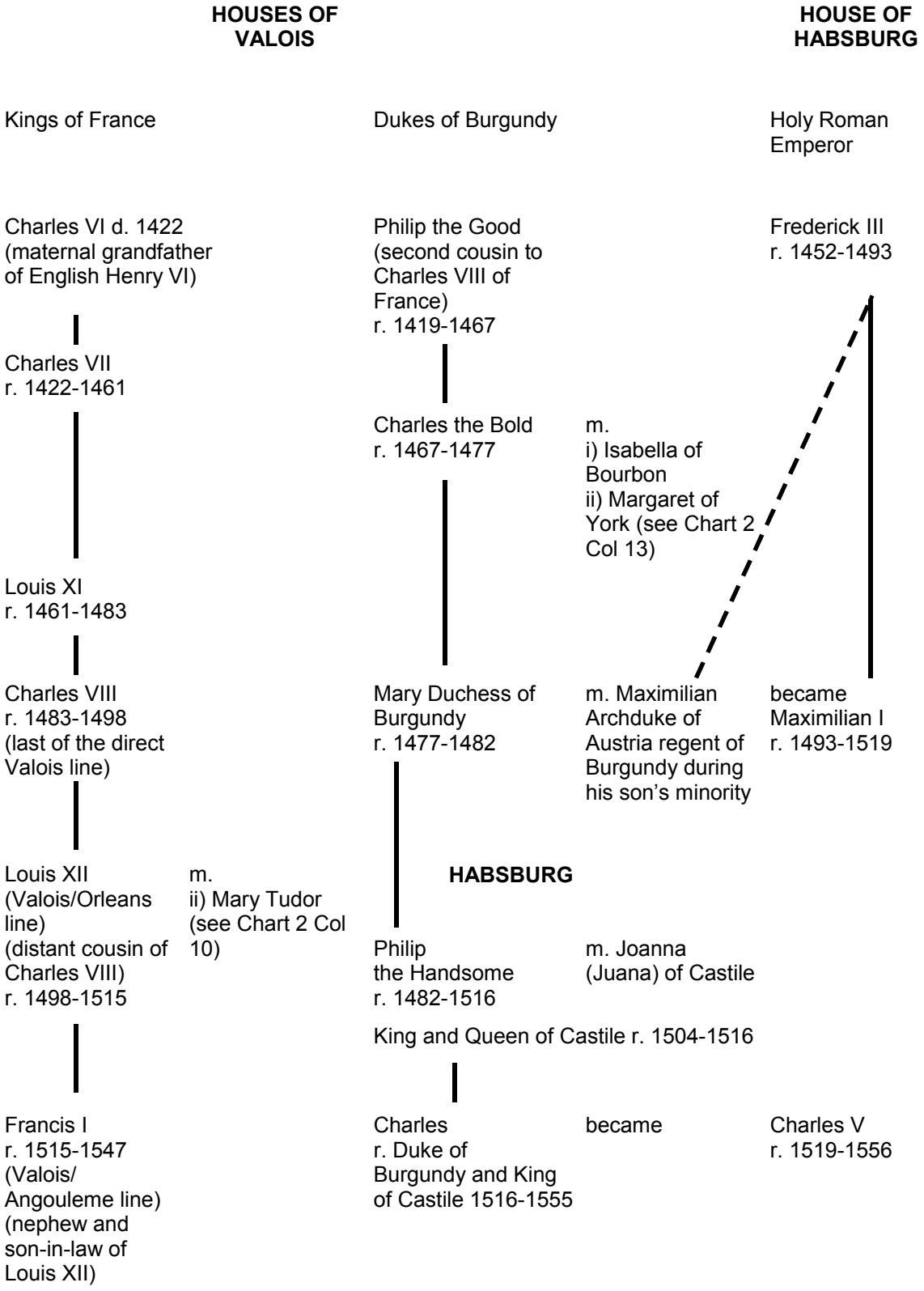
COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4	COLUMN 5
Eldest son Edward 1376 The Black Prince	3rd son Lionel 1368 Duke of Clarence	4th son John of Gaunt 1399 Duke of Lancaster	5th son Edmund 1402 Earl of Cambridge, Duke of York	7th son Thomas of Woodstock 1397 Duke of Gloucester
Richard II 1400	2 intervening generations	HOUSE OF LANCASTER	Richard 1415 Earl of Cambridge m. Anne Mortimer *(from col 2)*	Anne m. Edmund 1403 Earl of Stafford
	Anne Mortimer m.Richard 1415 Earl of Cambridge *Go to col 4*		Richard Plantaganet Duke of York 1460 m. Cecily Nevill *(from col 8)*	Humphrey Stafford 1460 1st Duke of Buckingham m. Anne Nevill *(see col 8)*
m. i) Blanche of Lancaster		m. iii) Katherine Swinford (nee Roet) *Go to cols 6 to 8*	*Go to cols 9 to 13 for HOUSE OF YORK*	Humphrey 1458 Earl of Stafford m. Margaret Beaufort *Go to col 7*
Henry IV 1413				Henry Stafford 1471 m. Lady Margaret Beaufort *Go to col 3*
Henry V 1422 m. Katherine de Valois	later m. Owen TUDOR 1461			
Henry VI 1471 m. Margaret of Anjou	Jasper 1495 Earl of Pembroke and later Duke of Bedford m. Katherine Woodville *(from col 7)*	Edmund 1456 Earl of Richmond m. Lady Margaret Beaufort *(see col 6)*	Who also married ii) Henry STAFFORD 1471 *(from col 5)*	
Edward 1471 Prince of Wales m. Anne Nevill *(from col 8)* who later m. Richard III *Go to col 12*		Henry VII (TUDOR) 1509 m. Elizabeth of York *Go to col 10 for HOUSE OF TUDOR*	iii) Thomas, Lord Stanley 1503 *(from col 8)*	


From Column 3
John of Gaunt
Duke of Lancaster
m. Katherine Swynford
COLUMN 6
COLUMN 7
COLUMN 8
John Beaufort 1409
Earl of Somerset
John Beaufort 1444
Duke of Somerset
Lady MARGARET
BEAUFORT 1509
m. i) Edmund 1456
Earl of Richmond
(see col 3)
Henry VII 1509
(see col 10)
Edmund Beaufort
1455
Duke of Somerset
Henry Beaufort 1464
Duke of Somerset
Illegitimate son
Charles Somerset
Later Earl of Worces-
ter
Margaret
m. Humphrey
1458
Earl of Stafford
(from col 5)
Henry Stafford
1483
2nd Duke of
Buckingham
M. Katherine
Woodville
who later m.
Jasper 1495
Duke of Bed-
ford
(see col 3)
Edmund 1471
Duke of Somerset
John 1471
Marquess of Dorset
Joan Beaufort 1440
m. Ralph Nevill 1425
Earl of Westmoreland
Richard Nevill 1460
Earl of Salisbury
Anne Nevill
m. Humphrey 1460
Duke of Buckingham
Go to col 5
Cecily Nevill
m. Richard 1460
Duke of York
Go to col 4
Richard Nevill 1471
Earl of Warwick
"The Kingmaker"
John 1471
Marquess
Montagu
George 1476
Archbishop of York
Eleanor
m. Thomas
1503
2nd Lord
Stanley
who later
m. Lady
MARGARET
BEAUFORT
Go to col 3
Catherine
m. William 1483
Lord Hastings
Isabel
m. George 1478
Duke of Clarence
Go to col 11
Anne
m.
i) Edward 1471
Prince of Wales
(see col 3)
ii) Richard III 1485
Go to col 12

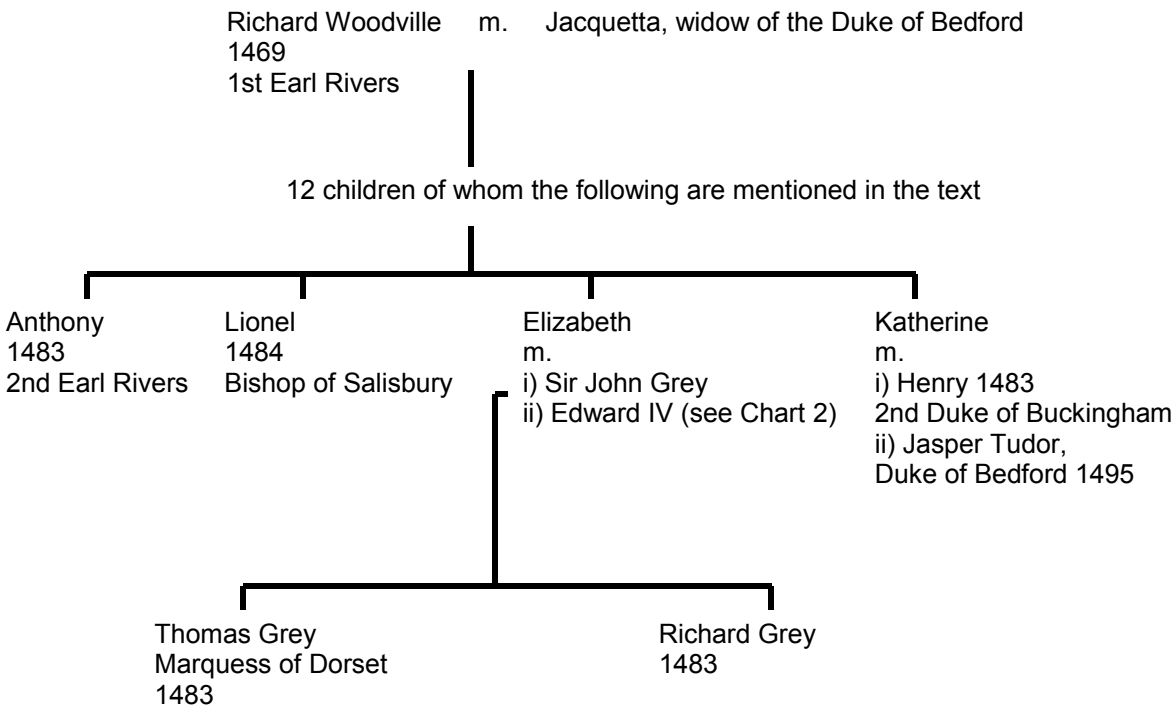


The year of death is shown to help identification

Selective genealogical chart number 3:
The Houses of Valois and Habsburg



Selective genealogical chart number 4: The Woodvilles



Year of death shown

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