

# THE CHILDREN OF ELIZABETH, COUNTESS OF HEREFORD, DAUGHTER OF EDWARD I OF ENGLAND

by Brad Verity<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This article uses primary sources, such as Chancery Roll entries, royal household accounts, and chronicles written in the first half of the 14th century, to provide a genealogical timeline for the ten children of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford (1282-1316), the youngest surviving daughter of Edward I, king of England.

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Since at least the 19th century, there has been much confusion, in various published sources, over the number and birth order of the children of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, daughter of Edward I, king of England. Luckily two cartularies, one composed at Walden Abbey in Essex, the burial seat of the Bohun earls of Hereford and Essex, and the other composed about the year 1345 at Llanthony Priory in Gloucestershire, another religious house patronised by the Bohuns, provide specific information about each of Elizabeth's children.<sup>2</sup> When combined with information contained in the *Calendars of Inquisitions Post Mortem [CIPM]*, and other Chancery Rolls from the 14th century, the chronology of the children of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, can be firmly established.

Elizabeth was born about 7 August 1282 at Rhuddlan Castle, Flintshire, Wales, and died 5 May 1316 at the Bohun manor of Quendon, Essex.<sup>3</sup> She was buried 23 May 1316 at Walden Abbey: "*Anno Domini mcccxvi...Eodem anno obiit domina Elysabet comitissa Herfordiae, soror regis Edwardi, et sepulta fuit apud Waldene, x kalendas Junii.*"<sup>4</sup> She married first, 8 January 1297 at Ipswich, Suffolk, John I, count of Holland (born 1284 in Holland; died 10 November 1299 at Haarlem, Holland; buried Dordrecht). They had no issue, and Elizabeth returned to England. She married secondly, 14 November 1302 at Westminster Palace, Humphrey de Bohun, 8th earl of Hereford and 9th earl of Essex. He was born 1276 as indicated by the IPM of his father: "*Humphrey his son, aged 22 and more, is his next heir.*"<sup>5</sup> Ten out of a total of twelve IPMs after the death of the 7th earl of Hereford, all of which were taken in January and February of 1300, returned an age for his heir. Eight stated him as aged 22 and more, and the other two (Wiltshire and Hereford) as aged 23 and more. The Essex IPM provides the added detail of the place of death of the 7th earl - Pleshey Castle, the Bohun family seat in Essex - so the age of Humphrey returned by that IPM is likely more accurate. The 8th earl of Hereford was killed in action, in rebellion

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<sup>2</sup> Both cartularies are transcribed and published in Sir William Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*. The Walden Abbey Cartulary is in Volume 4 (1823), p. 139, and that of Llanthony Priory is in Volume 6 Part 1 (1830), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> John Carmi Parsons, "The Year of Eleanor of Castile's Birth and Her Children by Edward I," *Mediaeval Studies* **46** (1984): 265. Parsons discusses the primary sources he used to determine Elizabeth's birth and death dates.

<sup>4</sup> William Stubbs, ed., *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II: Vol 1, Annales Londonienses and Annales Paulini* (1882), 279.

<sup>5</sup> Essex IPM of 7th earl of Hereford, taken 23 Jan. 1300, *CIPM* **3** (1912), 424.

against his brother-in-law Edward II, on 16 March 1322 at Boroughbridge, Yorkshire, and was buried at the Dominican Priory, York. See p.11 of this journal for a translation of his will.

**Fig 1. Elizabeth, countess of Hereford**

(engraving by Henry Colburn, based on her seal as countess of Holland, originally published in Green, 1851)



Elizabeth and Humphrey (the 8th earl) had six sons and four daughters:

### 1) Margaret de Bohun

She was born September 1303 at Tynemouth, Northumberland: “*De quorum sobole isti processerunt Margareta primogenita sua apud Tinehmue sibi fuit nata*” (Walden Abbey Cartulary); “*The situation of the countess now precluded her from encountering the hardships and fatigues of travelling; she retired to England, to reside awhile at Tynemouth, in Northumberland, where preparations were made for her ‘accouchement’, till the latter end of September, when the countess was safely delivered of a daughter. The king gave a present of fifty marks to the valet of the countess who brought him tidings of the birth of his grand-daughter.*”<sup>6</sup> Margaret de Bohun died in infancy, on 7 February 1306, and was buried at Westminster Abbey in a tomb with her brother Humphrey: “*Anno gratiae m. trecentesimo quinto...Septimo die Februarii obiit domina Maria de Boun, et sepulta est cum domino Hugone fratre suo in monasterio beati Petri Westmonasterii.*”<sup>7</sup>

### 2) Humphrey de Bohun

He was born 10 September 1304 at Knaresborough Castle, Yorkshire: “*Apud Knaresburgh, Humfridus filius suus primogenitus*” (Walden Abbey Cartulary). The Llanthony Abbey Cartulary states, “*Humfredus nonus, qui etiam juvenis obiit, x. die*

<sup>6</sup> Mary Anne Everett Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England from the Norman Conquest*, vol 3 (1851), 38-40. Green’s chapter on Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, remains the most thorough biography of that lady written to date.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Richards Luard, ed., *Flores Historiarum*, vol 3: 1265-1326, (1890), 129. The *Flores* is in error as to the first names of both Margaret and her brother Humphrey, calling them ‘Mary’ and ‘Hugh’. But original household records prove their first names. For Humphrey, see below, and for Margaret, see Alison Marshall, “The Childhood and Household of Edward II’s Half-Brothers, Thomas of Brotherton and Edmund of Woodstock,” In: *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives* (2006), 202.

*Septembris anno Domini mccciii,*" but it appears to have mistaken Humphrey's date of birth for his date of death, for on 11 October 1304, the day of churching of the countess of Hereford, "*Robert, the king's minstrel, no doubt by the king's command, together with his fifteen companion minstrels made 'minstrelcy' before the countess and the other 'magnates' and were gratified by receiving 6 marks for their efforts.*"<sup>8</sup> A lady's churching took place thirty to forty days after the birth of her child.<sup>9</sup> Humphrey lived only a few weeks, and died 28 October 1304 at the royal manor of Fulham, Middlesex: "*On Saturday, 24th October, they [the cortege transporting the infant Humphrey south] reached Leighton Buzzard, where they stayed the week-end, and on the following Tuesday they got to Fulham. And there on Wednesday, 28th October, the child, whose birth had given rise to such high hopes, passed away.*"<sup>10</sup> Humphrey de Bohun was buried 8 November 1304 in Westminster Abbey: "*On Sunday, 8th November, come the expenses for the funeral which took place in the abbey church of Westminster to the accompaniment of the tolling of the bells 'pro anima dicti Humfridi.'*" Fifteen months later his sister Margaret was buried with him in a tomb made for their remains (see above).

### 3) John de Bohun, 9th Earl of Hereford & 10th of Essex

He was born 23 November 1305 at Pleshey Castle, Essex: "*15 Feb. 1327, Westminster. Order to deliver to John de Bohun, son and heir of Humphrey de Bohun, sometime earl of Hereford and Essex, the issues of his father's lands from 31 October, in the 20th year of the late king's reign, when the late king took his fealty and rendered to him his lands, although he was not then of full age, because he learned by trustworthy testimony that John would be of full age on St. Clement's Day next following*" (CCR 1327-1330: 26); "*Apud Plessset, Johannes*" (Walden Abbey Cartulary).

**Fig 2. Pleshey Castle, the chief seat of the Bohun earls, was dismantled in the early 17th-century. All that remains today is the motte and outer bailey.**



Photo reproduced courtesy of the Essex Society for Archaeology and History

<sup>8</sup> PRO E101/370/20; Sir Charles Peers & Lawrence E Tanner, "On Some Recent Discoveries in Westminster Abbey: I. The Bohun Tomb in St John the Baptist's Chapel," *Archaeologia* **93** (1949), 151.

<sup>9</sup> Parsons, *op. cit.* (1984), 257, where he specifically states (footnote 38) that, "In 1304 Eleanor's daughter Elizabeth was churched thirty days after the birth of a son."

<sup>10</sup> Peers & Tanner, *op.cit.* (1949), 152.

Green confirmed the birth of a son at Pleshey: "A few months afterward [in 1305], Elizabeth seems to have left court and retired to Pleshy, where her son and heir was born...To the valet who informed him of the birth of his grandson (Ward. Book, 34 Edw. I., Queen's Rememb.), the king gave 40l., a sum equal to 600l. in the present day,"<sup>11</sup> but she mistook this son for Humphrey (b/d. 1304). John married firstly Alice, daughter of Edmund Fitzalan, earl of Arundel: "To John de Boun, son of Humphrey earl of Hereford. Dispensation, at the request of Edmund, earl of Arundel, to marry one of the daughters of the said Edmund, they being related in the fourth degree."<sup>12</sup> She died by 1329, and was buried at Walden Abbey: "Et Alicia Arundell uxor ejus sepelitur apud Walden, in medio capellae beatae Mariae" (Walden Abbey Cartulary). The 9th earl married secondly, by 1330, Margaret, daughter of Ralph, 2nd Lord Basset of Drayton. A papal dispensation was issued 19 February 1331 at Avignon: "To the bishops of Lichfield and Coventry and London. Mandate to summon the parties to London, and hear the cause touching the marriage of John, earl of Hereford, and Margaret Bassett, who after their marriage discovered that they were related in the fourth degree, and thereupon ceased to live together"<sup>13</sup> John died without issue 20 January 1336 at Kirkby-Thore, Westmorland: "Comes Johannis supradictus, moriebatur apud Kirkeby Thore, sine haerede, in festo sanctorum Fabiani et Sebastiani, anno Domini mccccxxv" (Llanthony Abbey Cartulary). He was buried at St Mary Abbey, Stratford Langthorne, Essex: "Cujus corpus sepelitur apud Stratford at Bowe" (Walden Abbey Cartulary). Margaret died after 1 December 1347, when she exchanged one of her dower properties with her brother-in-law the 10th earl of Hereford.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4) Humphrey de Bohun, 10th earl of Hereford & 11th of Essex

He was born 1307 at Lochmaben Castle, Dumfriesshire, Scotland: "Apud Longmaban in Scotia, Humfridus" (Walden Abbey Cartulary). Green referred to the birth of a son to Elizabeth before the death of Edward I in July 1307: "In 1307, her second son John [sic] was born (Rot. Exit., 35 Edw. I., Pasch.)"<sup>15</sup> Although she identified this son as John, she had incorrectly identified John's birth in 34 Edward I as that of the first Humphrey (b/d.1304). So this son born in 35 Edward I (1307) would have to have been the second Humphrey. There were twenty-three IPMs for the 9th earl of Hereford, all taken in January and February 1336, that returned ages for his brother and heir Humphrey. Eleven stated he was aged 27 and more, eight said aged 26 and more, three returned aged 25 and more, and one aged 24 and more, giving him a birth range of 1308-1311. But we know he was born in Lochmaben Castle, and Elizabeth his mother was there for most of the year 1307. The 10th earl died unmarried 16 October 1361 at Pleshey Castle, Essex: "Anno Domini Mccclxj. xvij. kal. Novembris, obiit Humfridus de Boun, comes Herefordiae et Essexiae" (Walden Abbey Cartulary). He was buried at the Augustinian (Austin) Friars Priory, London, which he had founded: "cujus corpus sepelitur Lundoniae in ecclesia fratrum sancti Augustini. Iste Humfridus claustrum nostrum fecit" (Walden Abbey Cartulary).

<sup>11</sup> Green, *op. cit.* (1851), 49.

<sup>12</sup> Dispensation dated 22 February 1325 at Avignon, CPapR 1305-1342, 242.

<sup>13</sup> CPapR 1305-1342, 349.

<sup>14</sup> CPR 1345-1348, 440

<sup>15</sup> Green, *op. cit.* (1851), 50.

## 5) Sir Edward de Bohun of Annandale

Edward was born about 1309 at Caldicot Castle, Monmouthshire, Wales, twin with his brother William (see below): “*Apud Caldecot, duo gemelli nobiles, Edwardus et Willielmus*” (*Walden Abbey Cartulary*). *Complete Peerage [CP]* states the twins were born c.1312, but we know their sister Margaret was born in 1311, and the *Llanthony Priory Cartulary* states that the twins and Eleanor were born prior to Margaret. Two March of Wales IPMs for the 9th earl of Hereford (one at Huntington, taken 18 Feb. 1336, and the other taken at Hay-on-Wye the following day) return his heir Humphrey as “*aged 26 years on the feast of St. Nicholas last.*” But given the chronology of the Bohun children, this date fits much better for the birth of the twins, and since they were born in Wales, it may be the jurors were giving their date of birth instead of that of their elder brother. Sir Edward was granted the lordship of Annandale, Scotland in 1334,<sup>16</sup> and was drowned in that country a few months later, shortly before 8 November 1334: “*Hoc anno circa festum Sancti Martini, dominus Edwardus de Boun, frater comitis Herfordiae, miles strenuissimus, fuit submersus in marchis Scotiae, dum voluit liberasse domicellum suum fugantem praedam animalium per aquam, ita quod neuter evasit*” (*Annales Paulini*).<sup>17</sup> The feast of St Martin is November 11th, but the order to take his lands into the king’s hand was issued on November 8th.<sup>18</sup> He was buried at Walden Abbey: “*Cujus corpus in capella beatae Mariae apud Walden*” (*Walden Abbey Cartulary*). Sir Edward married, with contract dated 26/27 January 1332,<sup>19</sup> Margaret, daughter of William, 2nd Lord Ros of Helmsley. She died shortly before 26 July 1341, when a writ of *diem clausit extremum* was issued on her.<sup>20</sup> They were childless.

**Fig 3. Caldicot Castle, Monmouthshire, the birthplace of Elizabeth's twin sons Edward and William de Bohun.**



Photo by Brad Verity, 2004

<sup>16</sup> CChR 1327-1341, 319.

<sup>17</sup> Stubbs, *op. cit.* (1882), 363.

<sup>18</sup> CFR 1327-1337, 424.

<sup>19</sup> CCR 1330-1333, 529.

<sup>20</sup> CIPM 1336-1346, 8 (1913), 224.

## 6) William de Bohun, earl of Northampton

William was born about 1309 at Caldicot Castle, Monmouthshire, Wales, twin with his brother Edward (see above). William, created earl of Northampton in 1337, married<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth, daughter of Bartholomew, 1st Lord Badlesmere, and widow of Edmund, Lord Mortimer of Wigmore. She was born about 1310: “*Elizabeth the wife of Sir William de Bohun, earl of Northampton, aged 28 years.*”<sup>22</sup> Of the dozens of IPMs for the 2nd Lord Badlesmere, all taken in June and July 1338, six returned Elizabeth as aged 28, two as aged 26, and another two as aged 25. Given that her first marriage was arranged in 1316, the oldest age returned for her seems the most accurate. The countess of Northampton died 8 June 1356: “*She died on Monday before St. Barnabus.*”<sup>23</sup> She was buried at the Black Friars Priory, London: “*Et Elizabetha uxor ejus sepelitur Landoniae in ecclesia fratrum praedictorum ante majus altare*” (*Walden Abbey Cartulary*). They had one son and one daughter, whose marriages to children of Richard, earl of Arundel, were arranged by the earl of Northampton in 1359. The earl died the following year on 16 September 1360.<sup>24</sup> The Llanthony Priory Cartulary confirms the day and month of the earl’s death, apparently in an insertion made in 1450: “*moriebatur xvi. die Septembris anno Domini mccccl.*” He was buried at Walden Abbey: “*Cujus corpus sepelitur in parte boreali presbyterii nostri*” (*Walden Abbey Cartulary*).

## 7) Eleanor de Bohun, countess of Ormond

She was born about 1310. Of Elizabeth’s ten children, the birth date of Eleanor is the most difficult to determine. Within a petition to Parliament in 1425, it was stated she was younger than her sister Margaret,<sup>25</sup> and *CP* has followed this source. But the *Llanthony Abbey Cartulary*, written in the lifetime of Eleanor, specifically states she was the elder surviving daughter, and lists her after twin brothers Edward & William, and before sister Margaret.<sup>26</sup> Eleanor had to be of full age (sixteen) by the autumn of 1327, when she was enfeoffed with Kilpeck Castle and other properties.<sup>27</sup> As we know Margaret was born in 1311, a birthdate of about 1310 for Eleanor is estimated. Finally, Mary Anne Everett Green wrongly assumed that the child Elizabeth bore at Knaresborough in September 1304 was Eleanor (it was really the firstborn son Humphrey), and many subsequent genealogists have perpetuated this erroneous birthdate. Eleanor married firstly, shortly before 21 November 1328, James Butler, 1st earl of Ormond: “*Pardon and acquittance to James le Botiller, earl of Ormound, the king’s kinsman, who married Eleanor de Bohoun, the king’s kinswoman, with his consent, of the arrears of the fine of 2,000 marks, made by him with the*

<sup>21</sup> Papal dispensation dated 13 November 1335 at Avignon, *CPapR 1305-1342*, 527-528.

<sup>22</sup> Kent IPM of 2nd Lord Badlesmere taken 10 July 1338, *CIPM 1336-1346*, **8** (1913), 132.

<sup>23</sup> Herefordshire and March of Wales IPM, taken at Hereford 25 June 1356, *CIPM 1352-1360*, **10** (1921), 248-9

<sup>24</sup> Essex IPM, taken at Thaxted 16 Feb. 1361, *CIPM 1352-1360*, **10** (1921), 525-6.

<sup>25</sup> “*Ye which Doughtre was wedded to Yerele of Hereford, by the whiche Erle she had two Sonnes and two Doughters, yat oon was Erle of Hereford, and yat oyr Erle of Northampton; ye eldre Doughtre was wedded to Courteney Erle of Devenfhire, and yat oyr to Yerle of Ormond, of which eldre Doughter come Yerchebifshop Courteney, and all Yerels of Devenfhire.*” *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, **4** (London: 1783), 268.

<sup>26</sup> “*De quibus sex filii et quatuor filiae; viz. Margareta, Humfredus nonus, Johannes, Humfredus decimus, Edwardus et Willielmus nati ad unum tempus; Alianora, Margareta secunda, Eneas, Isabella...Elianora de Bohun supradicta, senior filii praedicti Humfredi octavi.*”

<sup>27</sup> *CPR 1327-1330*, 181.

late king for the marriage.”<sup>28</sup> John Lodge, in his 1754 *Peerage of Ireland*, which CP follows, provides no source for his marriage date of 1327, and the *Patent Rolls* show Eleanor was unmarried as late as February 1328.<sup>29</sup> The marriage likely took place later in the autumn of that year, close to the time James was created earl of Ormond. He was possibly born 18 March 1305 in Ireland, and died 16 February 1338 at Gowran Castle, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland. By her first husband, Eleanor had two sons and a daughter. She married secondly, by licence dated 24 January 1344 to marry at her manor of Vachery, Cranleigh, Surrey, Thomas, 1st Lord Dagworth (born about 1310; killed 20 July 1350 at Auray, Brittany), and by him had a further daughter. She died 7 October 1363.<sup>30</sup>

## 8) Margaret de Bohun, countess of Devon

She was born 3 April 1311: “*Haec Margareta matrem habuit ingenuam, dominam Elizabetham illustrissimi principis et regis incliti Edwardi post conquestum Angliae primi filiam, anno Domini mcccxj. iij. nonas Aprilis nata*” (*Ford Abbey Cartulary*).<sup>31</sup> Margaret was contracted to marry 28 February 1315, Hugh Courtenay, later earl of Devon. It is odd that Elizabeth arranged the marriage of her younger surviving daughter, who was only in her fourth year, before that of her elder. But along with the earl and countess of Hereford, Margaret of France, the widowed queen of Edward I, was also a party to the contract on young Margaret de Bohun’s behalf.<sup>32</sup> The queen, who remained very close to her stepdaughter the countess of Hereford, was no doubt godmother to this Margaret, which may have been a factor in why she was chosen over her elder sister for the Courtenay marriage. The actual marriage took place on 11 August 1325: “*Nupserat autem filius suus et haeres dominus Hugo tertius patre adhuc vivente anno Domini mcccxxv. iij. die idus Augusti, generosae dominae Margarete filiae comitis Herefordiae domini Humphredi de Bohun*” (*Ford Abbey Cartulary*). Margaret, countess of Devon, had nine sons and seven daughters. She died at the age of 80 on 27 December 1391,<sup>33</sup> and was buried with her husband in Exeter Cathedral, the last surviving child of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, and the last surviving grandchild of Edward I and Eleanor of Castile.

## 9) Eneas de Bohun

He was born about 1313, was named for the fabled Knight of the Swan, from whom the Bohun earls of Hereford and Essex claimed descent.<sup>34</sup> He died unmarried 29 September 1331 at Kimbolton Castle, Cambridgeshire, and was buried at Walden Abbey: “*Anno Domini mcccxxxj. circa festum sancti Michaelis obiit Aeneas de Bohun apud*

<sup>28</sup> CPR 1327-1330, 340.

<sup>29</sup> CPR 1327-1330, 230.

<sup>30</sup> “*She died on 7 October last,*” Suffolk IPM, taken at Finborough 13 Dec. 1363, CIPM 1360-1365, 11 (1935), 376.

<sup>31</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, *op. cit.*, 5 (1825), 381. Ford Abbey was a religious house in Devon patronised by the Courtenays. The cartulary was written in Margaret’s lifetime, in 1335, only ten years after her wedding.

<sup>32</sup> An English translation of the marriage contract is provided by Jennifer C Ward, *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry 1066-1500* (1995), 29-30.

<sup>33</sup> “*She died on Wednesday, 27 December last,*” Buckinghamshire IPM, taken at Aylesbury 14 Feb 1392, CIPM 1391-1399, 17 (1988), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (2001), 291.

*Kymbolton, et sepultus est apud Walden, in capella beatae Mariae ad caput Elizabethae matris suae” (Walden Abbey Cartulary).*

## **10) Isabella de Bohun**

She was born 5 May 1316 at Quendon, Essex, and died there the same month, probably living no more than a day or so, and was buried in Walden Abbey. Her birth cost her mother the countess of Hereford her life: “*Anno Domini Mcccxxvj. tertio nonas Maii Elizabetha, comitissa Herefordiae, peperit filium apud Quenden, et eodem tempore obiit puerperio. Cujus corpus jacet in capella beatae Mariae ad gradus altaris, et corpus pueri jacet in pariete in parte australi*” (Walden Abbey Cartulary).

## **Concluding remarks**

Only three of the ten children of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, went on to have children of their own. The male Bohun line ended in 1373 with the death of her grandson Humphrey de Bohun, 11th earl of Hereford, 12th of Essex, and 7th of Northampton. His two daughters and heiresses were married into the royal family: the elder Eleanor to Thomas of Woodstock, the youngest son of Edward III, and the younger Mary to Henry of Lancaster, who, after her death, assumed the throne of England as Henry IV. Both the Walden Abbey and Llanthony Abbey cartularies cover these later Bohuns. The 11th earl of Hereford’s sister Elizabeth de Bohun, through two twin daughters from her marriage to the earl of Arundel, is an ancestor to such notable 15th-century families as the Mowbrays, Nevilles, and Berkeleys. The descendants of Elizabeth’s daughter Eleanor, countess of Ormond, branched out into dozens of families in Ireland by the end of the 15th century, and those of her sister Margaret, countess of Devon, did the same in the West Country of England. The descendants of Elizabeth, countess of Hereford, who are living today number in the millions and have spread throughout the western world.

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