

A NON-AFFAIR TO REMEMBER – THE ALLEGED LIAISON OF CARDINAL BEAUFORT AND ALICE OF ARUNDEL

by Brad Verity¹

ABSTRACT

This article explores the historiography of the Beaufort/Arundel affair. It examines what can be determined from contemporary records about the early years of the Cardinal, his illegitimate daughter, and their relationship, as well as the lives of Alice and the Arundel daughters. Evidence that the affair never took place will be followed by a theory of how and why Alice of Arundel was put forward as the mistress of Beaufort and mother of his child.

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In a magnificent chantry within Winchester Cathedral lies the tomb of Henry Beaufort (c.1375-1447), Bishop of Winchester, the first English bishop of royal blood since the 12th century and the first cardinal to retain his English see (Harriss, 1988, p.395). The power and influence Beaufort wielded as a statesman and diplomat – he served as Chancellor to his half-brother Henry IV, his nephew Henry V, and his great-nephew Henry VI – underscore his abilities as a man of wisdom, self-confidence and competence. He inspired just as much jealousy and apprehension as admiration among his contemporaries. *"Proud, ambitious, and avaricious, delegating his spiritual responsibility in his diocese to subordinates, he stands as the exemplar of a worldly political prelate in late medieval England, outshining even Thomas Wolsey."* (Cannon, 2002). Cardinal Beaufort is perhaps best remembered today for his role in the trial of Joan of Arc in 1431. What is generally not known is that the Cardinal who watched the French peasant maiden burn at the stake had an illegitimate daughter with the same first name. She was living back in England, married to a knight of Anglo-Welsh extraction.

It is common knowledge that Popes, cardinals and other prelates from medieval times through to the Renaissance had mistresses and bastards galore. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that Cardinal Beaufort fathered an illegitimate daughter, but this is, nevertheless, rather unfortunate. In the 15th century, bishops fathering bastards was not nearly as common in England as it was on the continent. Beaufort is the only English bishop from that period for whom a recorded bastard child is known.

Today's sceptical, even casual, attitude toward such matters would no doubt dismay the sensibilities of the 16th-century Elizabethan-era descendants of the Cardinal. One of these descendants in particular, Sir Edward Stradling (1529-1609) of St. Donat's in Glamorgan, when laying out his pedigree for circulation, took pains to preserve the reputation of his ecclesiastical forebear. Sir Edward was so successful in this endeavour that Alice of Arundel, the mother that he assigned to Beaufort's daughter, has been accepted in genealogies produced ever since. Even the definitive modern biography of the Cardinal by historian Gerald L. Harriss, published in 1988, retains Alice of Arundel as the mistress of the bishop and the mother of his daughter.

¹ Brad Verity is an avid enthusiast of medieval history and genealogy and resident of Los Angeles, California.

Email: batruth@hotmail.com

Affair through the ages

The first notice of Cardinal Beaufort's affair and the resulting illegitimate daughter Jane², described as the wife of Sir Edward Stradling, appeared in print in 1584. David Powel published *The Historie of Cambria*, and included within it a treatise written between 1561 and 1566 by Sir Edward Stradling entitled *The Winning of the lordship of Glamorgan* (Griffiths, 1994, p.30). The treatise included a detailed pedigree of the Stradling family and the following account of Jane, wife of the 15th century Sir Edward Stradling, and her parentage:

The said Sir Edward married with Jane, daughter to Henry Beauford, afterwards Cardinal, begotten (before he was priest) upon Alice, one of the daughters of Richard, Earl of Arundell (Powel, 1584).

Heralds pursuing the Stradling pedigree at the turn of the 17th century followed the account given by Sir Edward, but some interpreted the wording to mean that the bishop and Alice were married. Thomas Joanes, in his Wynston pedigree of 1607, made the Cardinal and Alice, daughter of Richard Earl of Arundel, man and wife, with Jane born to them before Beaufort took holy orders (Bannerman, 1902). Windsor Herald Augustine Vincent, in his 1622 book on corrections to York Herald Ralph Brooke, used Stradling's account as his source and made Jane daughter of Beaufort and Alice of Arundel, married before he took holy orders (Young, 1840). Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King of Arms, in 1678, had Jane Stradling as Henry Beaufort's daughter, and Beaufort himself made Cardinal "after the death of his wife" (Phillips, 1845)³.

However, by the late 17th century, historians were challenging the marriage of the Cardinal and Alice. In 1677, Lancaster Herald Francis Sandford provided a colorful account of Beaufort: "*In his youth he was wantonly given, and by Alice, the daughter of Richard-Fitz Alan Earl of Arundel, begat Joane a base daughter; whom he afterwards married to Sir Edward Stradling or Easterling, a Knight of Glamorganshire; but this was done before he entred into Orders*" (Sandford, 1677). Somerset Herald Peter Le Neve (1661-1729) also stated that Jane was the Cardinal's illegitimate daughter.

In the 19th century, allusions to a marriage between the Cardinal and Alice of Arundel disappeared. All things medieval became the vogue in the Victorian era and enough study into the lives of its prominent figures was undertaken for the realisation to sink in that Beaufort had never married. Confusion arose, however, as to just which Alice, daughter of Richard Earl of Arundel, had been the Cardinal's mistress. As there was no mention of the liaison and resulting daughter Jane in any Fitzalan or Beaufort pedigree, antiquarians had to resort to deduction. Nicholas Harris Nicolas, the editor of the 1826 collection of medieval wills *Testamenta Vetusta* (Harris Nicolas, 1826), stated that Jane was said to have been the Cardinal's natural daughter "*by Alice, daughter of Richard Earl of Arundel, and sister of Thomas Fitz-Alan alias Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury.*" This would make her Alice, Countess of Kent, younger daughter of Richard, 3rd Earl of Arundel (d.1376). The article on Beaufort in *The Dictionary of National Biography* mentioned the affair with Alice, but did not bother to further identify her other than as daughter of Richard, Earl of Arundel.

² 15th century records indicate that the Cardinal's daughter was known in her lifetime as Joan or Johanna. But most genealogies from the 16th century to the present refer to her as Jane. For simplicity's sake, and to help distinguish her from the two other Joans in the Beaufort family, she will be referred to as Jane in this article.

³ The author is grateful to Paul Reed for bringing his attention to this source.

In 1948, the historian K Bruce McFarlane determined the identity of Alice that has remained definitive in genealogical and historical publications to the present day (published posthumously in McFarlane, 1981)⁴

The Earl Richard who died in 1375 had a daughter Alice, from 1364 to 1397 the wife of Thomas Holland, earl of Kent; she died in 1416 ... She is a less likely candidate than her niece, Alice, daughter of the Earl Richard who died in 1397. This Alice is generally described but without evidence as the earl's youngest daughter ... if so she must have been born between 1383 and 1385 ... Before Mar. 1393 she had married John Cherleton of Powys who died in 1401 ... Her liaison with Beaufort therefore probably took place in her widowhood, i.e. when he was already a bishop.

This identification was assumed by American genealogists and published by them in works specialising in royal descent⁵. Using McFarlane as his source, Harriss (1988, p.16), in his thorough biography of the Cardinal, places the affair of Henry Beaufort and Alice, Lady Cherleton, in about 1402/3, after she was widowed and he was bishop of Lincoln.

In the four centuries since Sir Edward Stradling first circulated his pedigree in the 1560s, to the many lines of descent in print today, Alice has gone from being young wife to mother as a maiden to mistress as a widow. She should have been removed altogether, for a close examination of the late 14th and early 15th century evidence regarding Beaufort and Alice reveals she could not have been the mother of Beaufort's daughter Jane in any of the possible scenarios.

Henry Beaufort: bastard to Bishop

Henry Beaufort, the future Cardinal, was born about 1375, the second illegitimate son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and his mistress Katherine, widow of Sir Hugh Swynford. Henry, his elder brother John, and younger siblings Thomas and Joan, were all given the surname Beaufort and raised in Lancaster's household alongside his legitimate children. Lancaster started living openly with Katherine in 1378, and by 1381 the affair was common knowledge. During the Peasant's Revolt of that year, the Savoy, Lancaster's palace in the London suburbs, was burned down, and his Derbyshire castle of Horston was pillaged. Lancaster himself, who was disliked by the common people for his haughty demeanour and disdain for popular opinion, had to flee over the border to Scotland for safety. He interpreted these losses as evidence of displeasure from God and renounced Katherine. She resigned her post as governess in 1382 and retired to the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire estates that Lancaster had given her. But by 1388, their affair was resumed, for Garter robes were issued to her in that year by Richard II. She remained hated by the common people, who spat at her when she appeared in public. The nobility, following the example of the king, deferred to her, though her lowly birth and adulterous past remained topics of gossip among them (Harriss, 1988, p.1; Weir, 1995, pp.26-28; Given-Wilson and Curteis, 1984, pp.147-149).

We can only speculate what effect all of this had on Henry and his siblings. Certainly they were aware of it as they grew up, though the household of their father served as a shelter from the hostile public. Lancaster worked diligently to ensure that his

⁴ Though it seems it was James Dallaway's *A History Of The Western Division Of The County Of Sussex*, published between 1815 and 1832, that first identified Beaufort's mistress Alice as Lady Cherleton. See Young (1840, p.20 n.f).

⁵ See Faris (1996) and Boyd Roberts (1993).

Beaufort children would be provided for and accepted by the crown. In the case of the youngest child, daughter Joan Beaufort, provision could easily be made through an advantageous marriage, and she was betrothed in 1386, aged 7, to Robert Ferrers of Oversley, Warwickshire, the teenaged heir to the Barony of Wem. The eldest son, John Beaufort, was marked for a military career. He remained close to half-brother Henry of Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby, and became a king's knight in June 1392. Lancaster had to take pains to make appropriate provision for the bastard children he had with Katherine without damaging the estate of the true heirs. Illegitimate children could not inherit properties, but they could be gifted with them. Lancaster granted John lands in Northamptonshire (the three manors of Oveston, Maxey and Eydon, plus half of the manor of Brampton Parva) in December 1391, which added to his annuity of £100, giving him the income equivalent to a prosperous knight (Harriss, 1988, pp.2-7).

Henry, as a younger bastard son, was probably marked for a clerical career at an early age. His provision would come from the Church rather than from lands Lancaster would need to purchase for him. From a moral viewpoint, it also defrayed the sin the adulterous union with Katherine generated: one of their own would devote a life to God. A clerical career entailed a university education, and Henry had rooms at Peterhouse, Cambridge in 1388-89. That winter, he was granted the prebends of Sutton-cum-Buckingham and Thame, which prompted a transfer to Queen's college, Oxford in 1390-91 and 1392-93. Following Oxford, Beaufort is said to have studied on the continent, at Aachen in Germany, perhaps while his brother John joined the Lithuanian crusade in 1394 (Harriss, 1988, p.2; Weir, 1995, p.27).

The death of Lancaster's second wife Constance of Castile in March 1394 opened the way for him finally to marry his mistress Katherine, an act that would help to legitimate their four children. The wedding took place at Lincoln cathedral, where Lancaster was a powerful donor and patron, in February 1396, and the papal bull legitimising their offspring was issued in September. Henry Beaufort, who had returned to England by then, received immediate benefit from his new legitimate status, and secured the deanery of Wells by papal provision at the end of 1396. He returned to Oxford to study theology, supporting himself through his deanery and prebends in the dioceses of Lincoln, York and Salisbury. In February 1397, by royal patent approved in the Parliament that month, the Beauforts were granted legitimacy. They were now no longer bastards in the eyes of the church or of the crown. The eyes of society were another matter, and the new Duchess of Lancaster was accepted only reluctantly by many of the nobility. The ladies, in particular, having a difficult time taking their position behind a woman whom chroniclers had dismissed as a low-born concubine.

The Beaufort brood, through the sponsorship of Richard II, continued to rise within the ranks of the nobility. John was created Earl of Somerset the same month Parliament approved his legitimacy⁶. Henry took deacon's orders on 7 April 1397, and was also elected chancellor of Oxford University that month. Youngest son Thomas Beaufort, whose marriage had been arranged to Margaret, granddaughter and heiress of Sir Robert Nevill of Hornby, Lancashire, was retained for life by the King with an

⁶ John was given the title Earl of Somerset because he held the reversion of a group of manors (Curry Rivel, Martock, Langport, and the hundreds of Abdyke and Bulston) in that county. Lancaster had purchased the reversion for his son in 1394 for 5000 marks from the elderly and childless William de Montagu, Earl of Salisbury. Earl William died in June 1397, and the new Earl of Somerset received the transfer of two-thirds of these lands. See Harriss (1988, p.6).

annuity of 100 marks in July. But John Beaufort, armed with a title, made the grandest match of all that spring, taking Margaret, one of the daughters of Thomas Holland, Earl of Kent, and niece of Richard II, as his wife. This was followed, in September, by his elevation to a higher peerage rank, that of Marquess of Dorset. It was Lancaster's desire that the See of Lincoln, with which he and the Dukes of Lancaster before him had had long associations, should go to Henry Beaufort, thus settling his clerical son for life. However, the current bishop of Lincoln, the aged John Buckingham, was refusing to resign. It took the intervention of Pope Boniface IX, who, on 27 February 1398, translated Buckingham to the See of Coventry and Lichfield, and provided Henry the see of Lincoln. Beaufort, at age 23, was consecrated bishop of Lincoln in July (Harriss, 1988, pp.6-8). With the eldest brother a marquess, the next one a bishop, the sister Joan a countess⁷, and all of them legitimate, the Beauforts had arrived.

Events then unfolded at a relentless pace. In September 1398, their half-brother, Henry of Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, was exiled by Richard II for a period of ten years. Young bishop Henry spent the latter part of 1398 at his episcopal manors of Sleaford and Stowe. Following the death of his father, the Duke of Lancaster, on 3 February 1399, he joined his mother in accompanying the funeral cortege from Northampton on its way to London for interment at St. Paul's in early March.

The King denied the Duke of Hereford the Lancaster inheritance, and made the exile indefinite. Henry Beaufort was one of the court bishops who accompanied the King to Ireland in May. Beaufort probably acted as tutor to his nephew Harry of Monmouth, his half-brother Bolingbroke's heir, though the possibility that he was hostage for the good behavior of his brother John, Marquess of Dorset, cannot be dismissed (Harriss, 1988, pp.8-9). He returned to Wales with the King when word was received that the Duke of Hereford had landed in England with an armed force. Young Bishop Henry observed firsthand the desertion of the King's supporters, and was one of only fifteen companions who joined the King when he fled Carmarthen in the dead of night disguised as a poor priest (Saul, 1997).

Perhaps being a literal eyewitness to the deposition of the most powerful figure in the realm helped instill in Henry a fierce sense of dynastic survival. He would remain a fierce champion of the Lancastrian dynasty, and in particular the Beaufort branch of it, for the rest of his life. With their half-brother now Henry IV, King of England, Henry Beaufort and his siblings began to reap immediate benefits. John suffered the loss of his dignity as Marquess in November 1399, and, if it had been up to the Percy family of Northumberland, who had actively supported Henry IV in his usurpation, he would have lost his life as well. But the new King held his half-brother in regard and made him Chamberlain of England the following month, which kept John at the king's side and at the centre of government (Harriss, 1988, pp.10-11).

Bishop Henry participated in Parliament and the great councils in London during the autumn of 1399, the summer of 1400, and the early months of 1401. When he was in London, Henry stayed at the episcopal residence in the Old Temple. In the seasons away from London, his favorite manor house was Lydington in Rutland. From Michaelmas term 1401 to May 1402, he returned to Oxford. The summer of 1402 marked a turning point in Henry's career – he was neither a courtier nor an administrator, but his natural abilities at age 27 were becoming more evident. He

⁷ Joan Beaufort's second husband, Ralph Nevill, Lord of Raby, whom she had married in November 1396, was created Earl of Westmorland in 1397 by Richard II, as a favour to the Duke of Lancaster rather than for any notable achievement on Nevill's part.

took a more active role in the Parliament that met that autumn, and accompanied his brother Somerset to Brittany in November to escort Joan of Navarre, their brother the King’s intended bride, to England. When Henry IV married Joan at Winchester on 7 February 1403, it was Beaufort who officiated. Three weeks later he was appointed chancellor of England (Harriss, 1988, pp.17-19).

His mother Katherine, the widowed Duchess of Lancaster, spent her final years in Lincolnshire. Not only was her son Henry bishop there, her eldest son, Thomas Swynford, had been appointed sheriff in 1401. She made generous bequests to Lincoln Cathedral, and was buried there in a splendid tomb following her death in May 1403, with Bishop Henry reading the offices (Given-Wilson and Curteis, 1984, p.150; Richardson, 2002).

During the six years between 1397 and 1403, England was thrown into a political turmoil that led to the execution, exiles, and murder of royal and near-royal peers, and the deposition of its king. This had an impact on everyone in the realm, but Henry Beaufort had the added stress of being closely related to the power players and witnessing many of the events firsthand. He and his three siblings weathered it all, dealt with the death of both their parents, and came out on top of the political and social heap, thanks in great part to a half-brother who was the new King.

In 1404, Beaufort was appointed to the wealthiest and most influential bishopric in the realm, that of Winchester, succeeding the beloved William of Wykeham. From that point, at the age of almost 30, he became submerged into the life of court, politics, diplomacy, and power that would be his milieu for the rest of his life. It was at some point prior or close to 1405 – at the dawn of his remarkable career and political dominance – that Beaufort fathered his bastard daughter Jane. Tudor-era descendant Sir Edward Stradling made a wilful or misguided error since it was very likely after, not before Beaufort took holy orders, that his affair happened and his daughter was born.

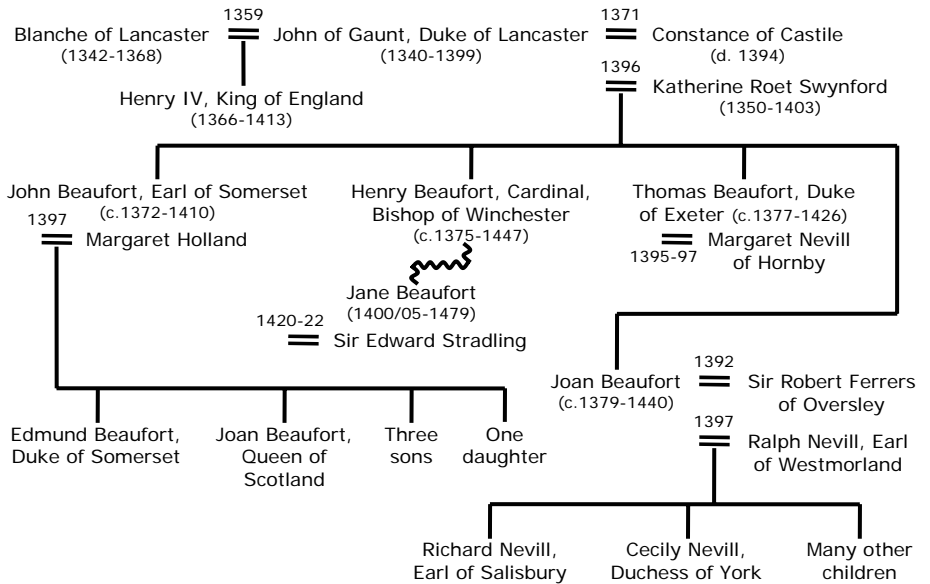


Fig 1. Descendants of John of Gaunt and Katherine Roet – The Beauforts

Jane Stradling – ‘Noblewoman’

The Cardinal's daughter first appears in the records in an entry from, appropriately enough, the Pope himself. In an *indult* dated 30 September 1423, "*Edward Stradelyng, knight, of the diocese of Bath, and Joan, his wife, noblewoman*", are granted a portable altar (*CpapR*, 1417-1431, p.300). Where and when Jane Beaufort was born, where and how she was raised, and the date and terms of her marriage to Stradling remain completely unknown. Luckily, more can be determined about her husband.

Sir Edward Stradling, born about 1389, was a member of the gentry of the Welsh Marches. His principal estate in Wales was St. Donat's castle in Glamorganshire on the Bristol Channel coast, but it was at his West Country manors – Combe Hawey and Halsway in Somerset and Compton Hawey in Dorset – that he spent much of his early career. None of these lands were held in chief of the king, and Stradling's father and grandfather had made their mark through administrative service in Glamorgan and Somerset. Though respected locally, the Stradlings were far from leading magnates of their counties. At the death of his father, Sir William Stradling, in late 1406/early 1407, Edward was not yet of age, though at 18, he had already embarked on his military career. By the time his kinsman Sir Lawrence Berkerolles died in 1411, Edward was of age to inherit as a coheir the Welsh manors of St. Athan and Merthy Mawr, plus other lands within the lordship of Coity. Edward became part of the retinue of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, brother of King Henry V, and fought at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 (Griffiths, 1994, pp.33-5). Though commendable, there was yet nothing to set Edward Stradling apart from other gentry-class knights fighting in the French campaigns of the king, and it was probably through Sir Gilbert Dennys of Gloucestershire that Edward came to the attention of Henry Beaufort.

Either late in 1416 or early in 1417, Edward Stradling's younger brother John, also a knight, managed to win the hand of Joan, the widow of Sir Maurice Russell, who had considerable estates in Somerset and Dorset. This brought John the several lucrative manors that made up his new wife's dower and it also brought the Stradling brothers into the kinship circle of Sir Gilbert Dennys, of Gloucestershire, who was married to the stepdaughter of the young widow Joan Russell. Dennys had been a Knight of the Shire for Gloucestershire in two Parliaments late in the reign of Richard II, and, though caught up on the wrong side of some of the many Welsh conflicts that troubled the reign of Henry IV, maintained powerful relationships with national figures. The Countess of Stafford saw to his appointment as steward of the lordship of Newport on the Bristol Channel, and Dennys was also entrusted with responsibilities by the Beauchamp Earls of Warwick and Worcester (Roskell, 1993). At some point between 1417 and 1421, Dennys enfeoffed his manors in Glamorgan and Gloucestershire to John Botiller, Sir Edward Stradling, and Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester (Griffiths, 1994, p.34)⁸.

Edward Stradling was intelligent, ambitious, capable, and motivated and the Cardinal may have regarded the younger man as having similar qualities to himself. It is likely that between 1420 and 1422, Beaufort married his only child to the landowning knight, who was then in his early 30s. Sir Edward started reaping almost immediate benefit. Bishop Beaufort was one of three overseers of the will of Sir Gilbert Dennys, and following the latter's death in March 1422, Edward Stradling received custodianship of all the Dennys lands in July. These provided him a nice addition to his annual income for a good nine years, as the Dennys heir was only age 12 (Roskell, 1993; Griffiths, 1994, p.34).

⁸ Citing PRO, Exchequer, TR, Council and Privy Seal 38/8.

In addition to the *indult* for a portable altar for himself and his wife, Stradling also received a licence for the church of his manor of Combe Hawey to have a cemetery. In December 1423, he was appointed Chamberlain of South Wales, a position he would hold for over thirteen years. He proved a more efficient administrator of the finances of the southern Welsh counties than any other man who served in that post before or since. It was an accomplishment that his father-in-law Beaufort, himself the most powerful financier in England during the Lancastrian reigns, must have appreciated. In 1424 alone, Edward was sheriff of Somerset and Dorset, appointed to a Commission of Oyer and Terminer in South Wales, and made Steward and Receiver of Cantref Selyf, Alexanderston and Pencelli.

Throughout the remainder of the 1420s, through the 1430s, and even after his retirement as Chamberlain of South Wales in 1437, Sir Edward Stradling, continued to be a leading figure in Glamorgan, Somerset and Dorset, and continued to receive administrative and political appointments. Yet he came up short of taking a role in the national political scene, and was never returned to Parliament. This is curious, since he demonstrated clear ability as Chamberlain of South Wales, and had the patronage of his father-in-law Beaufort, the most influential political figure in the reign of the child king, Henry VI. Perhaps it was a concerted effort on both their parts to not overstep the mark.

Beaufort, made Cardinal in 1426, had tremendous power and influence due to his great wealth. He also had many enemies (chiefly his nephew the Duke of Gloucester) and he was mistrusted by the common people. Bringing his son-in-law to the forefront of national politics would have called attention to the fact that he had a bastard daughter, a certain political liability for a churchman in his position. This is not to say that Beaufort washed his hands of Jane once she was married. On the contrary, he worked diligently to ensure she was well provided for as Stradling's wife. As early as 1424, the bishop was acting as feoffee for Stradling's Glamorgan properties. In 1429, Beaufort was one of three feoffees in the settlement of the manor of Llampha in the Lordship of Ogmore in Glamorganshire on Edward, his wife Jane and the heirs of their bodies, legitimate, with default to the right heirs of Edward (Clark, 1910)⁹.

The emphasis on legitimate heirs is ironic, considering the illegitimacy of Jane and Beaufort himself, but it served to protect the interests of Jane and her children. Attitude toward illegitimacy was very different in Wales in the 14th and 15th centuries than it was in England. The practice among Welsh lords and landholders of keeping concubines was common, and the resulting children were provided for and fully accepted in Welsh society. Some even assumed control of family estates, since many Welsh still followed the Celtic inheritance custom of splitting the lands between all of the sons rather than the eldest one receiving the bulk.

The open attitude of the Welsh toward illegitimacy may have been a factor in Beaufort choosing a Marcher knight as his daughter's husband. Once the marriage occurred, however, the bishop would have wanted the rights of his daughter and her children protected against any claims by kin of Edward, including those likely to come from the several bastards of Edward's who were born prior to his marriage to Jane.

The Cardinal seemed to have remained close to Jane, even after her marriage. Their relationship was solid enough to be known of within the locality where she resided. Halsway Manor, one of the Stradling Somerset properties, has a legend of Beaufort's

⁹ I am grateful to Paul Reed for bringing my attention to this source.

ghost haunting the chapel he used there¹⁰. Perhaps it was this local tradition that led 18th-century antiquarian John Collinson to state that Halsway came to the Stradlings through Edward's marriage to Jane Beaufort. In reality, it had been one of the family's properties since the previous century, though a dispute over rights to it with the Hewish family of Donnisdorf was not settled until 1432, when Oliver Hewish granted all his rights in the manor to Edward Stradling (Collinson, 1791; Griffiths, 1994, p.34).

At that time, it was common for a nobleman to settle his lands jointly on himself and his wife. This ensured the wife a better means of income should she survive her husband, for jointure gave her complete control over properties while dower only guaranteed her a third. It also helped ensure that family lands would not fall under wardship during the minority of the heir(s).

At least three of the Stradling properties – Combe Hawey and Halsway in Somerset and Compton Hawey in Dorset – were settled jointly on Jane, probably during her father's lifetime and perhaps as part of the marriage contract. In Beaufort's will, made out on 20 January 1447, Jane received a generous bequest of plate and vessels, plus 100 pounds in gold. Her husband Edward, in the codicil written on 9 April, received a bequest of "*a certain portion of silver vessels*" (Harris Nicolas, 1826). The Cardinal died two days later, on 11 April 1447, aged about 72, the last surviving child of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and the last surviving (and longest-lived) grandchild of Edward III. By that date, Beaufort himself was a grandfather and most likely a great-grandfather.

Jane and Edward had three sons¹¹. In the inquisition post mortem of Edward, conducted

in 1453, their eldest son and heir was found to be aged 30¹². He was named Henry, after his esteemed grandfather, and prior to the Cardinal's death, his marriage was arranged to Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir William ap Thomas of Raglan Castle in Monmouthshire.

Thomas, like Edward Stradling, had fought at Agincourt, and had risen to local prominence within south Wales as Steward of the Lordship of Abergavenny and Sheriff of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, as well as a stint as Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1440. While Henry Stradling his wife Elizabeth and their daughter were sailing the Bristol Channel from the Somerset properties to the castle of St. Donat's in 1449, their ship was boarded by Breton pirates led by Colyn Dolphyn. Henry and his family were held for ransom for 1,000 marks and Henry was taken to the pirate's headquarters in St. Malo. Jane and Edward had to pull out all the stops to raise the

¹⁰ The Cardinal's ghost is said to pelt the unwary with apples, perhaps distressed that his chapel fell into disuse and became an apple store! See Roberts (1999, pp.5, 15).

¹¹ In the Wynston pedigree of 1607, a daughter, Katherin Stradling, wife of Watkyn Wynston, Lord of Wynston, is assigned to Edward and Jane. Curiously, in the Dennis pedigree published in a manuscript copy of the 1623 Visitation of Gloucestershire (Maclean and Heane, 1885), a Katherine, daughter of Sir Edward Stradling, is given as the first wife of Maurice Dennis. An earlier pedigree of the Dennis family, dating to about 1530 and now housed in the College of Arms (London, College of Arms, Muniment Room, MS. 3/54), names the first wife of Maurice Dennis as 'Johanna Stradling' but doesn't ascribe parentage to her. Neither of these daughters is found in surviving 15th-century records, and they are not named, nor are their marriages listed, in Sir Edward Stradling's account of his family from the 1560s.

¹² The IPM of Edward Stradling is PRO C139/148/13. It has not yet been published, but it is cited by Hutchins (1861-1874) as the source for the age of Edward's heir.

ransom for their heir. This involved selling properties in Oxfordshire and Monmouthshire, and their second son John standing surety in 1451 for the balance owing and surrendering himself for imprisonment. This second son, John Stradling, emulated his grandfather Beaufort and embarked on a career in the Church, becoming Archdeacon of Llandaff in 1448. The third and youngest son, David Stradling, focused on the administration of the Somerset and Dorset family properties.

Jane had no sooner had the ordeal of her eldest son's capture and ransom end when her husband decided, in his early 60s, to journey to the Holy Land as his own father had done. He became a Knight of the Sepulchre, and died there on 5 May 1453. In 1454, second son John Stradling acquired the Rectory of North Tawton in the Diocese of Exeter, while Henry succeeded to St. Donat's and the other Welsh properties of the Stradlings. Jane spent her remaining years as a widow, predominantly at her Somerset and Dorset jointure properties. What she felt about her eldest son and heir joining the Yorkists by December 1454 remains unrecorded, though it undoubtedly made grandfather Beaufort roll over in his monument (Griffiths, 1994, pp.34-35, 45)¹³. Though youngest son David married, he apparently had no surviving children, and Jane was a grandmother only to Henry's son Thomas Stradling and two daughters. Jane survived her husband by 26 years, and her father the Cardinal by 32 years, and even outlived her son Henry, who died on his way back from Jerusalem in 1476¹⁴.

Her final act before her death would have made her father Beaufort, ever the dynast, very proud. The death of her son Henry was followed by the premature death of Jane's grandson Thomas Stradling, the family heir, probably in the summer of 1479 in his early to mid 20s¹⁵. With the family heir now Jane's great-grandson Edward Stradling, a mere boy aged about 4, the prospect loomed that Jane's properties would be held under a long wardship after her decease, until young Edward came of age. From what must have been her deathbed, on 17 September 1479, Jane enfeoffed her jointure manors of Compton Hawey, Halsway and Combe Hawey onto her son David and his wife for their lifetimes, following her death¹⁶. This wisely kept these manors in the safe hands of family rather than farmed out to wardship and gave the young heir added years to mature. Jane probably hoped that Edward would reach the age of 21 before David Stradling and his wife died¹⁷. Jane herself survived only a few weeks following her enfeoffment, and died on 19 October 1479. Her place of burial is unrecorded, but it was likely in Somerset or Dorset, the counties where she had lived for most of her adult life.

¹³ It was through his father-in-law William ap Thomas, Steward of the Welsh estates of Richard, Duke of York, and his brother-in-law Sir William Herbert, that Henry Stradling came under Yorkist influence.

¹⁴ David Stradling's wife Margaret is mentioned in Jane's IPMs. For the details on Henry Stradling and his brother John see Griffiths (1994, p.35).

¹⁵ Most accounts of the Stradlings give the date of Thomas Stradling's death as 8 September 1480, but this is incorrect, as Jane's IPMs clearly show he was dead before June 1480. If the day and month of his death are correct, and the year off by one, Jane's enfeoffment must have occurred immediately after she received news of his death.

¹⁶ PRO C 140/75/42 – The Somerset and Dorset IPMs of Jane Stradling ('Joan Stradlyng') taken in June 1480. I am very grateful to Rosie Bevan for obtaining a copy of this document from the Public Record Office and sharing it, and to Paul Reed for providing a translation of it.

¹⁷ If this was Jane's plan, it seems to have succeeded for a while. David Stradling survived until at least 1487, when he presented to the church of Combe Hawey (Somerset Record Society, 1937).

Knowing that Jane was married about 1420-22, a mother by 1423, and that she died in 1479, can help estimate when she was born. She would have to have been at least age 15 when she gave birth, so born no later than 1408. And since it was highly unusual for a 15th-century woman to live into her 80s, Jane was likely born no earlier than 1400. Having established the likely time window for Jane's birth, we must now examine closely the chronology of Alice of Arundel, her alleged mother. Doing so proves that the two could not have been mother and daughter, as will be explained below.

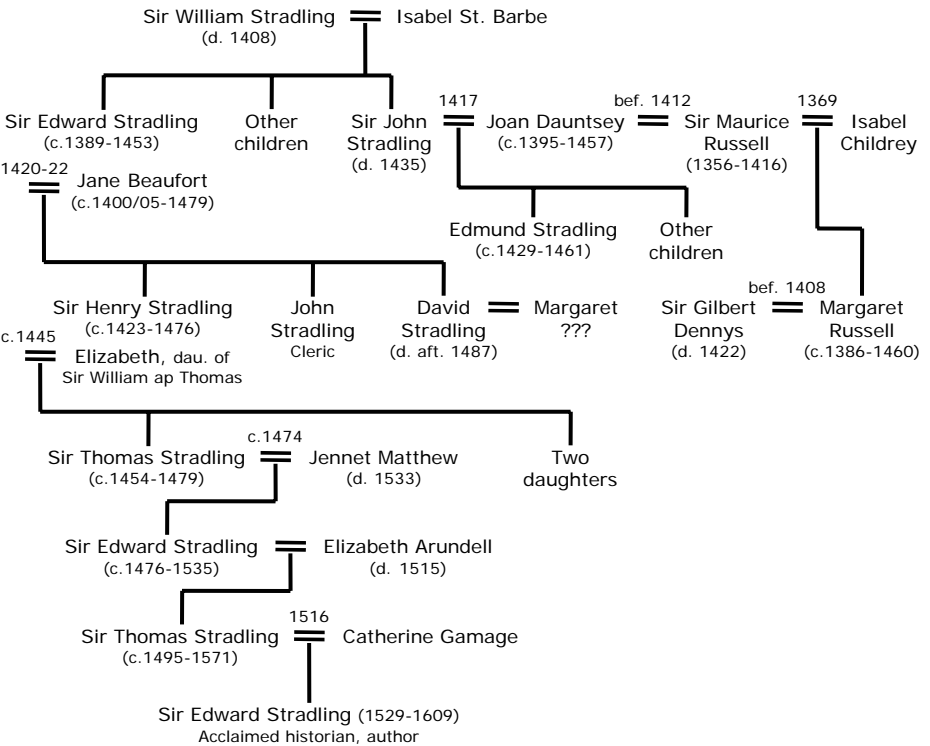


Fig 2. Descendants of Sir William Stradling (d. 1408)

Alice and the Arundels

Alice's father, Richard Fitzalan, 4th Earl of Arundel¹⁸, was born in 1346, ironically enough, with the taint of illegitimacy himself. His father the 3rd Earl, well versed in papal diplomacy from having served as envoy to the curia in 1343 to negotiate Anglo-French affairs, managed to get his first marriage annulled by papal mandate in December 1344. Two months later he took for his second wife, his mistress Eleanor of Lancaster, the widowed Lady Beaumont and favoured kinswoman of Edward III. Another Papal dispensation in July 1345 was granted for this new marriage, but the

¹⁸ Using one of the numberings provided in *Complete Peerage* [CP], 1: 244 (Cokayne et al., 1910).

Bishop of Chichester asked to be excused, probably due to disapproval. Edmund de Arundel, the Earl's now disinherited and bastardised 18-year-old son from his first marriage, challenged the entire procedure during the two years that followed. Though the second marriage ultimately prevailed, there was enough lingering legal doubt to force the Earl to settle his Arundel inheritance on his sons by Eleanor through the process of fines, first in 1347 then again in 1354, rather than rely on traditional inheritance¹⁹.

In the autumn of 1359, the marriage of Richard, the Earl's son and heir, to Elizabeth, only daughter of William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton, was finalised. This took place at the same time as the marriage of Richard's sister Joan to Humphrey, only son and heir of Northampton. Even at this late date, a tainted air surrounded the marriage of Richard's parents, for Earl William's settlement of property upon his son and his son's new bride Joan provided, unusually, for the scenario of a divorce (*CPR, 1358-1361*, p.304). Humphrey de Bohun was age 17 at the double marriage, Richard Fitzalan was 13, and his sister Joan about 2 or 3 years younger. The birthdate of Richard's bride Elizabeth de Bohun is not recorded, but she was almost certainly older than her new husband²⁰.

Richard and Elizabeth did not consummate their marriage immediately, and may have lived apart for the first couple years²¹. Richard and his younger brother John de Arundel were members of the royal household as teenagers and were the only esquires listed with the household knights for whom robes were to be provided for the Christmas festivities in 1368. Knighted soon afterwards, the brothers saw their first military service in Picardy the following year (Goodman, 1971, pp.3-4). A child for Richard and Elizabeth first appears in documentation in 1371. From the mid-to-late 1360s, the couple had three sons and five daughters that survived to be recorded. The union was ended with Elizabeth's death on 3 April 1385 (Cokayne et al., 1910-1998 - *Complete Peerage [CP]*, 1: 245).

We have a definitive birthdate for only one of these children – the youngest son and eventual heir, Thomas Fitzalan, 5th Earl of Arundel, who was born 13 October 1381 (*CP* 1: 245)²². The birth order of the daughters became quite muddled through the centuries. Sir William Dugdale (1605-1686), citing Ralph Brooke's Catalogue of Nobility as his source, listed them in the following order: Elizabeth, Joan, Margaret and Alice (Dugdale, 1675, p.320). Nineteenth-century antiquarian Rev. Mark A Tierney, Chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk, wrote an extensive history of the Arundel castle and family, using Dugdale, surviving family muniments, and public records as sources. He kept the same birth order for the daughters as Dugdale, and explicitly called Alice the youngest daughter²³.

¹⁹ For Richard's father the Earl as envoy to the curia in 1343, see Aston (1967). For the matrimonial machinations of Richard's father see *CP* (1: 243-244; 14: 38).

²⁰ She is listed as '*Elisabeth de Boon, damsel, of the Diocese of London*', along with her parents, brother Humphrey and half-brother Roger de Mortimer, in a papal entry dated 3 Feb. 1349, granting them indult to choose their confessor (*CPapR, 1342-1362*, p.306).

²¹ She is styled '*Elizabeth of Northampton*', rather than her married name, in the will of her uncle Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex, dated Oct. 1361 (Bigelow, 1896).

²² Though no source is cited for this date, it appears to be derived from Tierney (1834, pp.192, 237). Tierney cites "*Vinc. MS. Ashm. 846r*" as his source.

²³ "...the Lord Charleton was John Charleton, Lord Powis, who married the youngest daughter, Alice" (Tierney, 1834, p.270, n. a).

Tierney's chronology for them is confused and rife with discrepancies. He has daughter Margaret (incorrectly) born in 1386 in his pedigree chart on p.193, and her mother (correctly) dead a year before in a footnote to his narrative on p.275! Luckily, there are enough entries for the Arundel daughters in surviving contemporary documents, especially the 1415-6 inquisitions post mortem [IPM] of their brother Thomas, plus the cartulary of Lewes Priory, where the Arundels were chief patrons and maintained the family burial vault, to determine the correct birth order (*CIPM*, 1413-8; Salzman, 1934, pp.13-14, 19-21).

Daughter Eleanor was the firstborn child of Richard, 4th Earl of Arundel, and Elizabeth de Bohun, born in the mid-1360s. She was mistakenly listed as a daughter of Richard's parents by Dugdale and by Tierney, but the Patent Roll entry from which we know of her existence unmistakably identifies her as Richard and Elizabeth's daughter²⁴. Her marriage to Robert, the son and heir of William de Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, was arranged in 1371, but she must have died, still a child, not too long after that. Robert de Ufford was dead in 1375, and there is no record following of her being assigned the manors that had been jointly settled on them, indicating that she predeceased him. Young Eleanor of Arundel did not live long enough even to be recorded alongside her siblings in the cartulary of Lewes Priory.

The eldest surviving child of Richard and Elizabeth was Alice, who is listed first among their daughters in two different instances in the cartulary of Lewes Priory. Chronology supports the cartulary's account, for in 1374, Richard was granted wardship of the lands of John de Cherleton, thirteen-year-old heir of the recently deceased Lord of Powis (*CFR*, 1368-1377, p.256)²⁵.

Tierney, by making Alice the youngest daughter, would have us believe that poor young Cherleton had to wait over a dozen years for his bride even to be born, in the meantime being denied marriage to the three successive daughters of the Earl of Arundel born before her. In truth, Alice was born in the late 1360s and, since the 1374 grant of the Cherleton wardship did not include the marriage of the heir, it is likely John and Alice's marriage was contracted prior to then, when John's father the Lord of Powis was still alive. Marriage arrangements for noble children no older than toddlers were common in this period, especially for heirs. John's own mother Joan, daughter of Ralph, 1st Earl of Stafford, had been contracted in marriage to John's father the future Lord Cherleton, in December 1343, when he was age 9 and she no more than 5 (McFarlane, 1973)²⁶.

The Arundels had many Welsh estates, most importantly the lordships of Clun and Oswetry and strengthening their relationship with the neighbouring lordship of Powis would increase the family status as Marcher lords. Richard's influence over the Cherleton lordship extended to the widowed Joan, Lady of Powis, who had to take an oath before Richard's attorney and others of his counsel that she wouldn't marry without licence of the king (*CIPM*, 1373-1377, p.22)²⁷.

²⁴ "Eleanor, daughter of Richard, son of the said earl of Arundel" (*CPR*, 1370-74, pp.150-151).

²⁵ According to his Proof of Age, John de Cherleton was born 25 April 1361 (*"Sunday the feast of St. Mark, 35 Edward III"*). See *CIPM*, 1377-1384, pp.268-270.

²⁶ John de Cherleton, father of Alice's husband, was born in 1334 (*CP* 3: 161). Joan de Stafford was born no earlier than 1338.

²⁷ She broke this oath just over two years later about January 1377 when she married Gilbert, Lord Talbot, without licence.

Richard succeeded his father as Earl of Arundel in 1376, becoming the richest English magnate of his day – the wealth of the Fitzalans was even commented on in France (Given-Wilson, 1991). As his own political career rose, Earl Richard continued the supportive relationship with the young Lord Cherleton, who came of age in 1382 and received his lands with no obstacle or protest from the Earl. When the Appellants, of whom Earl Richard was the wealthiest, were in control of Richard II's government, Lord Cherleton was appointed Justice of North Wales in March 1388 (*CIPM*, 1377-1384, p.268; Goodman, 1971, p.114).

The Earl's sponsoring of his son-in-law was good politics but may have had a personal motivation as well. In Arundel's will, which is dated 4 March 1393, he demonstrated particular fondness for Alice, referred to as "*his very dear daughter of Charleton*". He made three separate bequests to her: head-dresses of pearls and other ornaments (which she was to divide equally with her two brothers for their future wives after the death of their stepmother), a small gold enameled tablet of two leaves, and his bed of red silk with full canopy and all of its furniture²⁸. Her father's will is the last appearance of Alice on record during her lifetime. The Earl of Arundel was executed by order of Richard II on 21 September 1397, and Alice's husband Lord Cherleton died "*without heirs of his body*" on 19 October 1401 (*CP* 1: 244; *CIPM*, 1399-1405, p.215). Alice was not returned as a co-heiress in the IPMs of her brother Thomas, Earl of Arundel, so she definitely died before he did in 1415. Also, the cartulary of Lewes Priory account, written in the 1430s, specifically states that she "*dyed wtofte yssue*" (Salzman, 1934, p.13), but doesn't provide a date.

It is the assumption that Alice survived her husband as a widow that caused historians McFarlane and Harriss to deduce that her affair with Bishop Beaufort occurred after 1401, with their daughter Jane born in the early 1400s, and Alice dead at some point before 1415. It would seem reasonable that Alice's husband Lord Cherleton, well familiar with wardship having lived it, would have enfeoffed at least some of his many properties onto Alice jointly. It is also likely that her father would have encouraged this at their marriage, as it would allow better provision for his daughter's future. Yet there is no record of any jointure, and the properties listed in John's 1401 IPM match exactly to those in his father's 1374 IPM. Even without it, Alice would still have been entitled to her dower of a third of all of the Cherleton lands for her provision during widowhood.

The IPM of the Lord Cherleton previous to Alice's husband John mentions dower for the surviving widow, and the two widowed Lady Cherletons who came before and after Alice are mentioned in the Fine Rolls (*CIPM*, 1373-1377, p.22; *CFR*, 1368-1377, p.381; 1413-1422, p.399). Yet there is no mention of Alice or dower in her husband's IPM, nor any mention of Alice in the Chancery Rolls between 1401 and 1415. There is no record of Alice paying homage to the King for her dower, which was the procedure for widows of a tenant in chief such as Lord Cherleton. There is no writ of *diem clausit extremum* issued to take Alice's lands into the King's hand after news of her death, which one would expect for a woman who held dower from such important lands as the lordship of Powis. There is no inquisition post mortem for Alice, as there are for the previous and subsequent widowed Lady Cherletons²⁹. Edward de Cherleton, the younger brother and heir of Alice's husband, was ordered one month after John's

²⁸ His other daughters are simply referred to as "my daughter", and received fewer bequests (Tierney, 1834, pp.271-273).

²⁹ Joan (de Stafford), Lady Cherleton's 1397 IPM is in *CIPM*, 1391-1399, pp.368-369. Elizabeth (de Berkeley), Lady Cherleton's 1479 IPM is not yet published, but is PRO C140/69/19.

death to receive "*all the lands which his said brother held of the king in chief*", with no mention of dower (CFR, 1399-1405, p.146).

The widowed Lady Cherleton of Powis, even if she was having an affair with the brother of the new King of England, could not disappear entirely from official records. The clear conclusion is that Alice predeceased her husband. Her betrothal to John de Cherleton occurred at a very young age for her, and the marriage took place far sooner than the "before Mar. 1392" parameter that *Complete Peerage* provides (CP 3: 161)³⁰. English law was such that any child born to the wife of a man while he was on the island of Britain at the time of conception was legally his.

Alice could not have borne Jane while she was married to John de Cherleton, or Jane would have been the heir to the Lordship of Powis in the eyes of the law. At no point could Alice of Arundel, Lady Cherleton of Powis, have had an affair and bastard daughter with Cardinal Beaufort.

If not Alice, then who?

What of her aunt Alice, the younger daughter of Richard, 3rd Earl of Arundel, by his wife Eleanor of Lancaster? Could the antiquarians in the 18th/19th centuries who proposed her as the mistress of Cardinal Beaufort and mother of his daughter have been correct? This elder Alice was born about 1350-51³¹, and was married in 1364 to Thomas Holland, the young Earl of Kent and elder stepson of Edward the Black Prince. She was widowed in 1397 in her late 40s, and though she did not die until 1416, was too old to bear a daughter to Cardinal Beaufort, even if he'd been inclined to begin an affair with a woman almost twenty-five years his senior.

Perhaps Sir Edward Stradling, writing 150 years after the event, erred in the first name of the Earl of Arundel's daughter, and one of the younger sisters of Alice, Lady Cherleton, was Beaufort's mistress and mother of his daughter Jane? Alice's birth in the late 1360s was followed in about 1370-71, by that of twin daughters, Elizabeth and Joan³².

Elizabeth was married off, in about 1378 at the age of 8, to William de Montague, the only son and heir of William, Earl of Salisbury (CP 9: 390-391)³³. William was a teenager at the marriage, which was never consummated and ended in tragedy when he was accidentally killed by his own father during a tournament in 1382. The Earl of Arundel soon found a second husband for his young widowed daughter, marrying her

³⁰ This parameter was derived using the date Alice's father made his will, in which it is clear Alice was married to Cherleton. Yet it seems equally clear, given the chronology presented above, that the marriage took place years before Arundel made out his will.

³¹ Margaret Aston (1967) speculates that Alice was the youngest of Earl Richard's children, following after Thomas, who was born in 1353. But negotiations for a marriage between Alice and Edmund de Mortimer, son and heir of Roger, Earl of March, were taking place in 1354 (see CCR, 1354-60, pp.92-94).

³² Salzman (1934, p.21) states that "*Elizabeth and Joan were born at one time*", and their ages match each other exactly in the 1415-1416 IPMs of their brother Thomas, Earl of Arundel. They were found to be aged 30 years and more, and 40 years and more, in various counties, but the Essex IPM returned on 2 Nov 1415 which found them 44 years and more was the most accurate. Elizabeth's first child, Thomas Mowbray, was born in September 1385. Twins ran in the family – maternal grandfather William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton, was a twin.

³³ The Earls of Salisbury and Arundel together commanded a fleet to implement the Anglo-Navarrese treaty in the spring of 1378 (Goodman, 1971, p.123.).

in 1384 to Thomas Mowbray, Earl Marshal. Mowbray went on to give Elizabeth of Arundel the title of Duchess of Norfolk, plus two sons and three daughters, before dying in exile in 1399.

Elizabeth wasted no time in taking a third husband of her own choosing in 1401, Sir Robert Goushill, of Hoveringham, Nottinghamshire, a widower in his 40s who had been a retainer of her late husband Mowbray. He was killed at the battle of Shrewsbury two years later, leaving Elizabeth with two additional daughters. She took a final stab at matrimony in 1414 with Sir Gerard Usflete, of Ousfleet, Yorkshire, who fought in the Norman campaigns of Henry V. He was dead by Feb. 1421, and Elizabeth died in 1425, a four-time widow.

From 1403-1414, the period after Goushill's death and before her marriage to Usflete, Elizabeth was aged about 33 to 44, so capable of giving birth to Jane, daughter of Cardinal Beaufort. But his having an affair with the widowed Duchess of Norfolk would surely not have gone unnoticed by contemporaries, and there is no mention of it. With Elizabeth as her mother, Jane would have been closely related to such prominent families as the Mowbrays and Stanleys, yet there is no evidence that the Stradlings had any interaction with them. Though Elizabeth seemed to inherit some of the independent spirit that made her father the most vocal political opponent to Richard II, it appears the men she chose as mates became husbands rather than lovers. It is highly unlikely that the Duchess Elizabeth was Bishop Beaufort's mistress.

The date of the marriage of the other twin sister, Joan of Arundel, to Sir William Beauchamp, younger brother of Thomas, Earl of Warwick, is harder to determine. It probably occurred between 1385-1388³⁴. Beauchamp was more than twenty-five years older than his wife, and indeed older than her own father Earl Richard. They had one son and two daughters that survived infancy. Through a flukish (for the 14th-century) inheritance, Beauchamp succeeded his distant kinsman John de Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, to the Lordship of Abergavenny³⁵. After William's death in 1411, Joan became a formidable Marcher widow whose extensive holdings were increased when she inherited her portion of the Arundel lands after her brother's death. She outlived all of her children, and died in 1435 aged about 65, the last surviving child of Richard, 4th Earl of Arundel. Joan, Lady Abergavenny, with the same first name and a questionable reputation, would be a strong candidate for mistress of Beaufort and mother of his daughter Jane, but chronology removes her from consideration³⁶.

³⁴ Joan as "*Lady Joan Beauchamp*" received robes of the Order of the Garter in 1390 (Collins, 2000). As far back as 1376, her father and William Beauchamp were associated – they both stood surety for Lord Latimer, Vice-Chamberlain of the Household, whom the Commons wished to impeach during the Good Parliament (Goodman, 1971, p.4). It is likely, both chronologically and politically, that William was allied in marriage to Arundel by the time the Appellants took power in 1388.

³⁵ William was born about 1343. In 1371, when he and his maternal cousin John Hastings, Earl of Pembroke were "*lying together in a bed*" in France, the then-childless Hastings, who was mad at his heir-presumptive Reynold Lord Grey of Ruthin, told Beauchamp that he would leave the county of Pembroke to the king and the rest of the Hastings inheritance to Beauchamp, who had no hereditary claim (Catto, 1990). In William's will, dated 25 April 1408, he leaves a bequest to his son Richard Beauchamp, and 1000 marks each to his daughters, Joan and Elizabeth, for their marriages (Dugdale, 1675, p.239).

³⁶ For Joan's date of death, see CP 1: 26 (though it incorrectly gives her birthdate as 1375). "*The chronicler, Adam of Usk, who knew William Beauchamp personally and disliked his wife, describes Lady Joan as 'that second Jezebel'.*" (Pugh, 1971, p.186).

Margaret, the final child of Richard, Earl of Arundel, and Elizabeth de Bohun, was born about 1383, and was a dozen years younger than the twins Elizabeth and Joan – all three of their brothers being born between them³⁷. Earl Richard, in his 1393 will, left his youngest child an annuity of one hundred marks until her marriage, as well as 1000 marks for her marriage portion, to be increased to 1500 marks at the discretion of his executors (Tierney 1834, p.273).

If any daughter of Earl Richard had an affair with the young bishop Henry Beaufort, Margaret is the likeliest candidate. Her father's execution by Richard II left the orphaned teenaged girl a ward of the crown, and she did not marry until at least the usurpation of Henry IV. The exact date and circumstances of her marriage to Sir Rowland Lenthal, a Herefordshire knight of relatively obscure origin, are not known, but it occurred before her brother's 1415 death. It was undoubtedly a reward from the new Lancastrian regime to its faithful retainer Lenthal³⁸. Margaret's elder son and heir, Edmund Lenthal, was born on 17 June 1420, when she was about age 38, quite advanced for a medieval woman to have her first recorded child. Another son followed before Margaret's death in the spring of 1423. Her husband remarried, fathered more children, and died in 1450³⁹.

It is intriguing to speculate that Margaret's late marriage to a man much lower than her in social status may have been due to her being the mistress of the half-brother of new King Henry IV and mother of his illegitimate daughter. But positing an affair between Beaufort and any of the daughters of the Earl of Arundel leads to a handful of problems. It would certainly have had to occur after the execution of Earl Richard, and thus after Beaufort took holy orders, which is in direct conflict to the Stradling statement of the 1560s that introduced the affair in the first place.

³⁷ Margaret was said to be aged 32 years and more in the Surrey IPM of her brother Thomas, Earl of Arundel, returned 1415-1416. The other ages returned for her of 30 years and more and 24 years and more, are either less exact or do not work given that her mother Elizabeth died in the spring of 1385. The eldest Arundel brother, Richard, survived the execution of his father, was placed under the care of John Holland, Duke of Exeter, half-brother of Richard II, in October 1397, and probably died in his custody (Goodman, 1971, pp.71-72). Richard had to have been born after 1376, since he wasn't of age in 1397. The birth of the middle son William presumably followed at some point prior to 1381, when youngest son Thomas was born. William isn't mentioned in his father's will dated March 1393, and must have died before it was made.

³⁸ An interesting website on the history of Hampton Court says, "*The estate was originally formed by the merging of the manors of Hampton Richard and Hampton Mappenor. It was granted by Henry IV to Sir Rowland Lenthal at the time of his marriage to Margaret Fitzalan, daughter of the Earl of Arundel and a cousin of the King.*" (http://www.hamptoncourt.org.uk/about/castle_history.html). Per her 1423 IPM, Margaret was granted several manors by her brother Thomas, Earl of Arundel, "long before" his own marriage in 1405 (CIPM, 1422-1427, pp.144-146). She must have married Lenthal at some point between 1405 and 1413.

³⁹ For Edmund's date of birth, see CPR, 1436-1441, p.562. Margaret died on 30 April 1423 (CIPM, 1422-1427, p.145), and the first writ of *diem clausit extremum* for Sir Rowland Lenthal was issued 9 Dec 1450 (CFR, 1445-1452, p.177). Edmund Lenthal married Margaret, daughter of William, 5th Lord Zouche of Harryngworth (Edmund's half-sister Catherine Lenthal married his wife's brother, William, 6th Lord Zouche), and died without issue on 18 April 1447, when the line of Margaret of Arundel came to an end. Edmund was buried in the Grey Friars' church in London, alongside his younger brother Henry, who must have predeceased him. Margaret Zouche, widow of Edmund, married secondly Sir Thomas Tresham, had issue by him, died on 16 January 1483, and was buried next to her first husband in the London church of the Grey Friars (Nichols, 1838). Tierney (1834, pp.192-193), who mistook the IPM of Margaret Zouche (PRO C/141/4/43) for her mother-in-law, had Margaret of Arundel with a second husband Tresham, and dying in 1483 at the age of 97!

Cardinal Beaufort saw first hand what happened when a noblewoman, betrothed to a peer, had an affair that resulted in a pregnancy. His half-sister Elizabeth of Lancaster was betrothed to John Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, but became pregnant by John Holland, Richard II's half-brother. Their father John of Gaunt immediately pulled her out of the Pembroke union and married her to Holland. It's logical to think the Earl of Arundel would have done the same if one of his daughters had been in a similar situation during his lifetime.

If one of Arundel's daughters took up with Beaufort after the Earl's 1397 execution, the expectation would be that the family would provide assistance to the resulting daughter Jane, and maintain links to her throughout her lifetime. Yet there is no evidence of any Mowbrays, Beauchamps, Lenthals, or the more distant male-line Fitzalans who inherited Arundel Castle and eventually the title after 1415, having any connection with either Beaufort's daughter Jane or her husband Sir Edward Stradling. What can be deduced from surviving 15th-century documentation is that up until his death, the Cardinal provided well for his daughter. Indeed, it is one of the few pleasing qualities in this most powerful and complicated medieval political personality. From her marriage, to the given names of her elder two sons, to life on her manors, to his will, Beaufort has documented links to Jane Stradling. On the Arundel side, there is an absolute lack of any 15th-century documentation linkage to Beaufort's daughter. The conclusion then follows that the mistress of the Cardinal certainly wasn't Alice, Lady Cherleton of Powis, or an Arundel at all. The answer as to how and why Jane was assigned this erroneous mother in the first place is found 150 years after her birth with a close examination of the activities of her Stradling descendants in the mid-16th century.

Revisionist Recusants

The marriage of Edward Stradling, Jane's four-year-old great-grandson and heir at her 1479 death, was later arranged to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Arundell of Lanherne, Cornwall, and Edward took possession of the Stradling inheritance when he came of age in 1496 or thereabouts. It was during his tenure as head of the family that the Stradlings began to embrace Welsh traditions and culture. Bards frequently visited St. Donat's, and many of the legends surrounding the previous native Welsh owners of the properties became associated with the relatively newcoming (late thirteenth-century) family of Stradlings (Pugh, 1971, pp.457, 512; Griffiths, 1994, pp.36, 42-43).

By the time Edward died in 1535, his son and heir Thomas Stradling had already served at the royal household of Henry VIII as sewer of the chamber and had enjoyed the patronage of his kinsman Thomas Arundell, a leading supporter of Cardinal Wolsey. By 1547, Stradling had entered the political and social circle of Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel, who had married as his second wife Stradling's cousin Mary Arundell of Lanherne, and he was knighted in 1549. Arundel and Stradling were caught up in the political intrigue of Edward VI's reign, arrested in November 1551, and shared imprisonment in the Tower for over a year. Thomas Stradling also shared with the earl of Arundel the conservative sympathies for the old religion, and both prospered under the reign of Mary. Arundel saw that Thomas was returned to Parliament in 1553 and in 1554, and in February 1557 Stradling was appointed to root out heretics and to investigate the spread of heretical books. In the last parliament of Mary's reign in 1558, the earl of Arundel helped arrange for Sir Thomas Stradling's two sons, Edward and David, to sit as Members for Arundel (Bindoff, 1982; Griffiths, 1994, pp.37-8).

The accession of Elizabeth brought the political careers of the Earl of Arundel and of the Stradlings to an abrupt halt. Thomas's younger son David Stradling was an ardent Catholic, and moved to the continent where he remained for the rest of his life, along with two of his sisters. Sir Thomas witnessed the miracle of St. Donat's on 20 March 1559, when he saw the figure of a cross in the stump of an old ash left standing after a storm. He commissioned four paintings of it, pilgrimages to St. Donat's to view the tree began, and the story even reached the Pope.

By 1561, Elizabeth's government had had enough, and Sir Thomas was arrested and sent to the Tower, while his tree-stump was cut down. Set free in October 1563, he remained firm in his Catholicism, and refused to subscribe to the act of Uniformity in 1569. By then entering his eighth decade, Sir Thomas died shortly after in January 1571, at the age of 72 (Griffiths, 1994, pp.38-39). His associate and patron the Earl of Arundel, had the sad fate to outlive all three of his children and witness what must have seemed to him the final moments of twilight before the extinction of his noble family. He was the last male descendant of Richard Fitzalan, 3rd Earl of Arundel, and by the year 1576, when his elder daughter Lady Lumley died childless, his grandson Philip Howard, son of his younger daughter Mary, was his sole heir (*CP* 1: 250-252).

Sir Thomas Stradling's elder son and heir Edward was, unlike his younger brother and two of his sisters, a conformist, but with the stigma of Catholicism remaining, he retreated to local Glamorgan politics, society and, most of all, history. When Edward distributed his treatise on the winning of Glamorgan in the early 1560s, his family's current prominence had been curtailed, all of them under suspicion, and it may have been therapeutic to focus on the renowned exploits of their medieval predecessors. The problem, as it turns out, is that Edward's account of the origins of the Stradlings and the earliest generations, is pure fiction (Griffiths, 1994, pp.42-43). Whether he was aware of this or simply believed the praiseworthy family accounts sung by the bards cannot be determined. It is more certain that when it came time to explain the parentage of his ancestress Jane Stradling, Edward's account was wrong on both assertions – she was neither born before Cardinal Beaufort took holy orders nor the daughter of the prelate by Alice of Arundel.

With his father yet alive and actively witnessing and sponsoring miracles, it is understandable how Edward would not want to sully the reputation of his ancestor the Cardinal and document his affair after becoming a bishop. In his youth, Edward had studied at Oxford, where the Cardinal's influence had been greatly felt. Serving as High Steward of Oxford from 1555 to 1559, and Chancellor for the first six months of the latter year, was Stradling family friend and patron Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel (Bindoff, 1982; *CP* 1: 251).

Edward may have had a desire to create a blood kinship to Arundel. Or perhaps he was in collusion with the Earl himself, who was a constant conspirator and leader of the old nobility and Catholics, to preserve the reputation of Beaufort, the most renowned prelate of medieval England. Whatever motivation Edward Stradling had in creating the Cardinal's relationship with Alice, daughter of Richard, Earl of Arundel, his effort was successful. When the treatise was published and received wide distribution in 1584, the Earl of Arundel, the last of his line, had been dead four years, and there was no one to challenge the erroneous assertion. By the time Edward, who was knighted in 1573, died in 1609 aged about 80, his reputation was widespread as a serious and respected antiquarian, his library at St. Donat's was renowned, and the whitewashing of Cardinal Beaufort's reputation was firmly entrenched, with fiction becoming history as centuries progressed.

A Not-So-Unusual Affair

Who then, if not Alice of Arundel as the pedigree states, had been the mistress of Henry Beaufort and mother of his daughter Jane? Her identity will probably never be determined, but some sections of society can be eliminated. She was not a noblewoman such as the Earl of Arundel's daughters and sisters. Women of the medieval English aristocracy, especially if they were heiresses, were off-limits as mistresses even to the king. A clandestine liaison would greatly effect the marriage prospects of highborn ladies, and wives and daughters of English nobles were closely guarded as a rule. The women who made up the households of the nobility and became royal mistresses in the 14th and 15th centuries may have been labelled 'low-born' but in reality were not peasants. They were wives, widows or daughters of the lesser landowning gentry – exactly the social level of Jane's husband Sir Edward Stradling – or they were part of the mercantile and administrative classes (Given Wilson and Curteis, 1984, pp.12-13, 39).

Chronology favours Beaufort having his affair and daughter between 1400 and 1405, probably while he was Bishop of Lincoln. He was, at this time, spending much of his time at Oxford and in residence at his country manors and it was before he moved to the forefront of English politics as Chancellor and Bishop of Winchester. A bishop's household would have no use for female members other than a laundress. Yet Beaufort could have met his mistress within the household of his mother the widowed Duchess of Lancaster, or of his sister-in-law Margaret, Countess of Somerset, or even of her mother the widowed Alice, Countess of Kent. Perhaps a liaison with a woman in the household of the Countess Alice was the seed that germinated 150 years later into Beaufort's mistress being Alice herself.

His mistress could have been a young widow or maiden from his diocese who had no marriage prospect to lose by starting an affair with the well-connected bishop in his 20s. Beaufort may even have provided her with an income or found a husband for her after the affair ended, both of which were common practices among noblemen. The surviving registers of the Bishop, once they are published, may provide a clue. Beaufort's younger brother Thomas and sister Joan married within the lesser baronial class of their father's retainers, and it wasn't until after legitimation and elevation to the peerage that elder sibling John Beaufort married into the nobility. As a Bishop of royal blood, Henry would still be hard put to find a woman even of the baronial class who would risk her reputation and future prospects to begin an affair that could not end in matrimony. The Bishop's mistress was likely of the same class as his mother.

The identity of Jane Stradling's true mother is currently lost to history, but surviving documents reveal that Beaufort as her father was never in doubt. His provision for her throughout his lifetime can be viewed as one of the most humanizing qualities of this most formidable figure. That no hint of scandal or propaganda regarding the Cardinal's bastard daughter seeped into chronicles is a credit to them both. Illegitimacy was becoming a political weapon in late medieval England. Accusations of bastardy toward his own father the Duke of Lancaster and toward Richard II occurred during Beaufort's youth, when he also had to have been aware of his mother's unpopularity and poor reputation. Three years after Beaufort's death William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, his chief ally in Henry VI's government, faced impeachment before Parliament in 1450. One of the charges levelled at him was having committed adultery with a nun, fathering an illegitimate daughter by her (Given Wilson and Curteis, 1984, p.40).

The Cardinal had an *"obsessive sense of his own dignity, his pride and his touchiness over his birth, a readiness to scheme against and malign others for his own defence and advantage, and a concern to amass*

wealth" (Harriss, 1988, p.397), but he also had a fierce sense of dynasty. That he included and recognized a bastard daughter, who could not inherit his vast wealth and could indeed prove a political liability, and maintained a relationship with her, is at least commendable. Jane Stradling may not have had the gift of an Arundel ancestry or nobility of blood from her mother, but through his recognition of her existence and compassion regarding her illegitimacy, she gave the Cardinal the gift of nobility of character.

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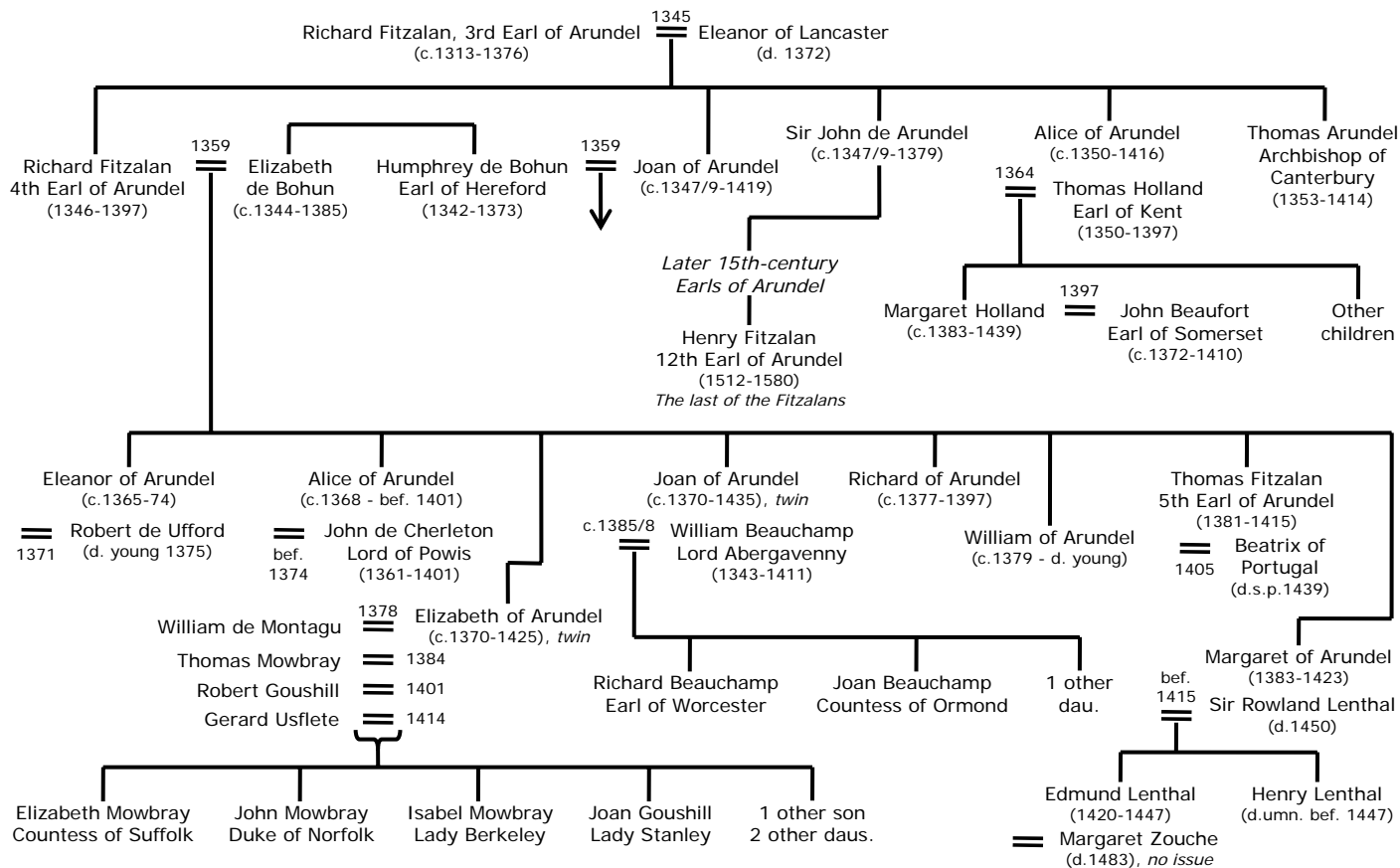


Fig 3. Descendants of Richard Fitzalan, 3rd Earl of Arundel (c.1313-1376)