

ART. XIII.—*Margaret de Lathom or Lethom, wife of Walter de Strickland (1323-1407) of Sizergh.* By GEORGE WASHINGTON, F.S.A.

Read at Seascale, July 13th, 1962.

(This paper by the well known Anglo-American antiquary, George Sydney Horace Lee Washington, F.S.A., upon the parentage of Margaret de Lathom or Lethom, niece of Ranulph, Lord Dacre of Gillesland and wife of Sir Walter de Strickland (1323-1407), was inspired by my suggestion to him that this problem should be considered. Mr Washington has discovered that in the Sizergh MSS. she was styled "de Lethom" and suggests that, contrary to the usually accepted view, she was not a member of the well known Lancashire family of Lathom but of the less well known Scottish family of Letham of Berwickshire, from whom the Stricklands had an earlier descent. This is a new and interesting view, and is worthy of careful consideration.

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MR HORNOLD-STRICKLAND'S fascinating article, "The wives of Walter Strickland" (CW2 lxi 104-111), has prompted this new endeavour to explore the identity of one of the earlier wives — Margaret de Lathom or Lethom, married in 1366 to Sir Walter de Strickland (1323-1407) — in the long and illustrious roll of the lords of Sizergh.¹

However, first let me pause for one moment at the

¹ See Henry Hornold-Strickland, *Strickland of Sizergh* (Kendal, 1928) 37, 42; Daniel Scott, *The Stricklands of Sizergh Castle* (Kendal, 1908) 38, 40; and the Strickland pedigree (by Edward Bellasis, Lancaster Herald) in CW1 x 74. Margaret and Sir Walter were grandparents of the Walter Strickland who married Douce Croft (see below); and the latter couple were, in their turn, great-grandparents of the later Sir Walter (d. 1528) who espoused Katherine Neville, the heiress of Thornton Bridge (*a quo* the Carletons and Fairfaxes).

Stricklands' American connections. In his article, Mr Hornyold-Strickland has rightly stressed the keen interest which the Strickland pedigree possesses for New Englanders, owing to the Strickland ancestry of the wealthy Puritan Edward Carleton, the 17th century founder of Rowley, Massachusetts (and among Edward Carleton's distinguished descendants at the present time are Mr G. Andrews Moriarty, Mr Walter Lee Sheppard, and Mr John G. Hunt, the author of a scholarly article on "The wives of Walter Strickland of Sizergh" in the January 1960 number of *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 51-58). But there exists still another early line of Strickland descent in New England which is also noteworthy, although more remote, viz. that of the 17th century Mrs Mary (Launce) Sherman of Massachusetts, whose ancestor the Catholic Thomas, Lord Darcy of Templehurst (executed 1537) married Dowsabel, daughter and heiress of Sir Richard Tempest (d. 1488) and Mabel Strickland (d. 1511), the daughter of Walter (d. 1467) of Sizergh and his wife, Douce Croft (see *The American Genealogist* xxi 169-177).² Nor is that the end of the matter: for, if there are thus many Strickland descendants today among the "Puritan" families of New England, there are likewise some additional descendants among the "Cavalier" families of Virginia and the South. This is due to the marriage of Henry, 4th Lord Fairfax (d. 1688), cousin and heir to the great Puritan general, with a Yorkshire heiress, Frances Barwick (d. 1684), who was granddaughter of Walter Strickland (d. 1636) of Boynton-in-the-Wold, Yorkshire (ancestor of the Strickland baronets), son of William Strickland (d. 1598) of Boynton Hall by Elizabeth (d. 1597), eldest daughter of Sir Walter Strickland (d. 1528) and his nobly-descended wife, Katherine Neville. From the 4th Lord Fairfax and Frances Barwick sprang the

² A direct descendant of Mrs Mary (Launce) Sherman is Mr Gilbert H. Doane, the learned and charming editor of *The New England Register*.

Fairfaxes of "Belvoir", Virginia, who exerted such memorable influence over the earlier life of George Washington (whose elder brother, Laurence, was the husband of Anne Fairfax); indeed, the present writer through an 18th century Virginia forebear can boast a minute dash of Fairfax blood (cp. *The New England Register* c 78).

But now to return to Margaret de Lathom or Lethom, the "mysterious" wife in 1366 of Sir Walter de Strickland (1323-1407) of Sizergh, whose father Sir Thomas (d. 1376) was nephew of that well-dowered Joan de Strickland who (as I have noted elsewhere) had found a husband (1292) in George Washington's direct progenitor, Robert de Washington of Warton. The Sizergh muniments duly record that on 4 June, 36 Edward III (1362) Sir Thomas de Strickland bound himself at Penrith to Sir Ranulf de Dacre, Baron of Gillesland in Cumberland, to betroth his son and heir-apparent, Walter, to Margaret de Lathom (*sic*), niece and ward of the said Sir Ranulf; this was in accordance with an agreement reached at Kirkoswald. Two days later, a further indenture was signed between the two parties at Sir Ranulf's Lancashire seat of Halton (Sizergh MSS.; see Hornyold-Strickland, *Strickland of Sizergh*, 37, 42; Scott, *The Stricklands of Sizergh Castle*, 38). Mr Hornyold-Strickland (*op. cit.*) has raised the interesting point as to whether the aforesaid Margaret came of the knightly stock of the de Lathoms of Lathom and Knowsley, Lancashire, ancestors of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, who inherited from them their famous device of "the Eagle and Child". Certainly Margaret must have been born of right knightly parentage, since she is called the niece of the powerful Ranulf, Lord Dacre, and had been contracted to the young heir of the Stricklands of Sizergh. But Mr Moriarty has referred me to a very careful and critical genealogy of the medieval de Lathoms, published in vol. vii (1841) of *Collectanea Topographica et Geneal-*

ogica, 19-20, which proves that the contemporary Sir Thomas de Lathom (d. 1370), of Lathom and Knowsley, was twice married and neither time to a Dacre. By his first wife, one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Sir Hamon de Massey (of Dunham Massey, Cheshire), Sir Thomas left four married daughters, though none of them wife to a Strickland: by a second marriage to Eleanor Ferrers he left a son, Sir Thomas de Lathom, Junior (d. 1382), who espoused Joan de Venables and was father of the heiress, Isabel Stanley (wife of Sir John Stanley, K.G., d. 1414, the notorious favourite of John of Gaunt). Hence it is plain that our Margaret's father was *not* the Lancastrian Sir Thomas de Lathom.³

However, it may be that a clue to Margaret's true origin can be discerned in the final marriage settlements, which as the Sizergh MSS. show were drawn up four years after her betrothal in the spring of 1366. At Easter, 40 Edward III (1366), Sir Thomas de Strickland conveyed by deed poll to three trustees his property in Sedgwick in Kendal (reserving to himself the service of free tenants), together with his lands and tenements in Levens, all of which were to be entailed upon the forthcoming marriage of his son and heir-apparent, Walter, with Margaret de *Lethom*. On the following 18 April, the same trustees released to Sir Thomas various lands, etc., to the intent that after the death of Sir Thomas the property should remain to his son, Walter, and to the heirs male of his body by Margaret de *Lethom*, his intended wife. These trustees were Thomas de Seynesbury, vicar of the church of Kirkby Kendal, Walter de Welles, parson of the church of Lowther, and William de Washington: if this latter was the contemporary Sir William (*fl.* 1360), of Durham and Helton Flecket, Westmorland,⁴ his wife

³ The theory that Margaret might be daughter of Sir Thomas de Lathom was first broached in 1889 by Edward Bellasis, whose pedigree unfortunately contains many inaccuracies.

⁴ In July 1371 Sir Thomas de Strickland and Sir William de Washington, knights, were appointed as trustees of the Northumbrian manor of Rudchester, *NCH* xii 202.

was a Scottish lady, viz. Catherine, widow of Sir Robert de Colville, baron of Ochiltree (Sizergh MSS.; see Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 40, and Farrer, *Records of Kendale* ii 183). Now, as I have previously demonstrated, the Stricklands had acquired the manor of Great Strickland near Appleby (whence they took their surname) through the alliance nearly two centuries before of the first Sir Walter de Strickland (*alias* FitzAdam, or de Vaux) with an important Anglo-Scottish heiress, Dame Christina de Letham, the lady of Great Strickland and also of Letham (otherwise Leitholme) in Berwickshire. Moreover, it is evident that from Dame Christina's two sons, Adam and Robert, were descended the subsequent de Lethams of Berwickshire and the Stricklands of Westmorland (CW2 lxi 71-78).

Here, then, would appear to be a not unlikely solution to the true identity of our elusive Margaret de Lathom, *vel* Lethom. Her father quite probably was not of the family of the English lords of Lathom in Lancashire at all, but was the *Scottish* lord of Letham in the parish of Eccles in Berwickshire, who in turn may perhaps have married a daughter of the proud Cumbrian house of Dacre of Gillesland — a family which in this generation, as well as by descent, possessed extensive influence north of the Border.⁵ It may be worth while, therefore, to give some further brief particulars concerning these de Lethams of Berwickshire, which I have culled from Scottish sources. Sir John de Letham — inferentially the eldest grandson of Sir Walter de Strickland (d. 1236) and Dame Christina de Letham, through their first son

⁵ The Sir Ranulf de Dacre (3rd Lord Dacre) of 1362-66 was a priest in Holy Orders; born *c.* October 1322 and murdered in his bed at Halton in August 1375. Despite his clerical status, he served as Warden of the Western Marches and was much in Scotland; and his brother and successor, Hugh (4th Lord), married in 1354 Elizabeth Douglas, Countess of Atholl, and left a son who also married a Scottish wife (*GEC* iv 4-6, ix 405; and I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies* (1960) 24, 124). The Dacres had become heirs by marriage to the de Vauxes, the Norman barons of Gillesland (Gilsland) in the north-east corner of Cumberland, of whom a male cadet was the first Sir Walter de Strickland, husband of Dame Christina.

Adam FitzWalter — occurs in charters of the Earls of Dunbar c. 1250-70 (*Coldstream Chartulary*, ed. Rogers, 2, 3; Raine, *North Durham*, Appendix, 28): and in 1296 a second John de Letham appears in Berwickshire as an adherent of the Baliol faction, while Robert de Letham was a Scottish prisoner taken at the siege of Dunbar castle (Bain, *Cal. Docs. Scots.* ii 742). In 1304 a Scottish rebel, Ketel de Letham (a name also borne by the 12th century founder of the race), is mentioned as the husband of a widow with lands at Barrowby in Lincolnshire, Christina Pesson (*Cal. Geneal.*, 745); and Edward de Letham was one of the Scots hostages on the surrender of Berwick to Edward III in 1333, and witnessed a charter to Dryburgh abbey c. 1350 (*Register of Dryburgh* (1847) 232). Sir Robert de Letham was seneschal to Earl Patrick V of Dunbar, who backed both the English and Scottish parties alternately and died in 1368 (Raine, *North Durham*, Appendix, 33); and in 1403 Sir John de Letham obtained a grant of Letham (Leitholme) as tenant *in capite*, upon the forfeiture for treason of his hereditary overlord George, Earl of Dunbar and March (*Reg. Great Seal of Scotland* i 647). With this Sir John the male line seems to have terminated; and it might even be that Margaret “de Lethom”, who as has been seen married Sir Walter de Strickland in 1366, became the eventual representative of the Berwickshire family. Chronologically speaking, at all events, Dame Margaret could easily have been daughter of Sir Robert, Earl Patrick’s seneschal, and sister (and heiress) of his successor, the last Sir John.

I am under deep obligations to Mr G. Andrews Moriarty, who both suggested and has collaborated in this little paper, for his always inspiring guidance and help: and to Mr Henry Hornyold-Strickland of Sizergh and Mr John G. Hunt for their very kind interest. It is a pleasure to add that my past two articles⁶ dealing with the Strick-

⁶ *The Anglo-Scottish Lords of Leitholme and Great Strickland and Strickland and Neville*, CW2 ix 46-51; lxi 71-78.

lands' ancestral associations with the manor of Letham, *alias* Leitholme, have been warmly received in Berwickshire, where abstracts of each of them accompanied by illustrative charts, skilfully arranged by Miss Ruth Donaldson-Hudson, F.R.Hist.S., have recently appeared in the *History* of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club.

Postscript: Strickland — De Gevelstone.

In my *Early Westmorland M.P.s* (Kendal, 1959) I stated that Sir Robert de Strickland (1205-78), M.P. for Westmorland in 1258, had espoused a lady of the curious surname of de Genellestane, sister of a certain Master William de Genellestane, a cleric, who occurs in a Balliol deed of 1271 as brother of "la Dame de Stirkeland", who had been wrongfully interned at Appleby (*HMC*, 4th Report, Appendix, 444; cp. Hornyold-Strickland, *Strickland of Sizergh*, 13). No such family, nevertheless, seems traceable in other records: but welcome light on the problem is shed by the long and valuable introduction which Dr R. C. Reid contributed to *Wigtownshire Charters* (Scottish History Society 35 li 1960). On page xxvii Dr Reid notices the Scottish barons of Gevellestane, Gevelstone, or Gevilston in Galloway, who *temp.* Edward I also had interests at Hutton John, Cumberland, whilst Sir William de Gevelstone witnessed a charter of Alan, lord of Galloway *c.* 1217 (*Liber de Calchou*, 203). Obviously this must be the stock to which Sir Robert de Strickland's wife belonged. I have lately unearthed traces of Sir Robert himself in southern Scotland; for "Robert de Stirkeland" was one of the principal witnesses in 1239 to the confirmation by Alexander, son and heir-apparent of Walter (d. 1241), 3rd High Steward of Scotland, of the latter's gifts to the abbey church of Paisley (*Registrum monasterii de Passelet* (1877) 225). Since the d'Eyncourts of Sizergh derived their name of "Gervase" from the Scottish baronial family of Avenel (see G. Andrews Moriarty, "Gervase d'Eyncourt of Sizergh", *The New*

England Register cvii 122), might it not be possible that the Stricklands' favourite name of "Walter" originated through a parallel connection with the early ancestors of the royal house of Stewart?⁷

⁷ I have noted one further "Lethom" reference in Dr R. C. Reid's valuable paper on "Edward de Balliol", *Trans. Dumfriesshire and Galloway Antiq. Soc.*, 1958, p. 52, which quotes a Scottish Act of Parliament, 13 January 1364, ordering that Sir Edward de Lethame, Sir William de Washington, knights, and two others (all followers of the disinherited Balliol faction) be restored to their forfeited Scottish lands. The occurrence of William de Washington's name in Margaret de Lethom's marriage settlement has already been mentioned (*supra*).