

ART. IX – *Sir William Parr of Kendal: Part I, 1434–1471*
By SUSAN E. JAMES, Ph.D (Cantab.)

SIR William Parr of Kendal was born in 1434, the eldest son of Sir Thomas Parr of Kendal and his wife, Alice Tunstall. Sir Thomas was the third of six generations of Parrs who established themselves as *de facto* masters of Kendal and much of southern Westmorland between 1381–1571. Whereas Sir Thomas maintained a local importance for most of his life, his son, William, raised the family fortunes from local to national importance and became a man of considerable influence in the inner circle around the first Yorkist king, Edward IV. From the age of twenty, William Parr was exposed to local politics and groomed by his father to take his place as the dominant power in Kendal. William's career had begun as Sir Thomas' own career had, by securing the office of escheator for the year 1454–1455 for both Westmorland and Cumberland.¹ Prior to this, in March 1453, Sir Thomas had turned over to his son his leasehold on the pastures of "Wyryholme alias Holmewery" in Cumberland.² William was probably beginning to build up his own sheep flocks on this land and during his lifetime he was to prove to be an active entrepreneur in the northern wool trade. Thus by the middle of the 1450s, young William Parr had been given a start politically and economically in the north-west. The next step would logically have been for Sir Thomas to find his heir a well-endowed wife but civil conflict and exile in France prevented this and it was to be eight years before William Parr found an alliance to please him. Parr was born into an England ruled by the House of Lancaster but by 1455, the year in which he turned twenty-one, the houses of Neville and Beaufort, of Lancaster and York, were mobilizing their affinities for the opening skirmish of nearly three decades of internecine conflict, to be known as the Wars of the Roses. This overture to war was fought in that year of 1455 at the town of St Albans. The Parrs, as men of the north ambitious for advancement, sympathized with the equally ambitious Nevilles and their cause, and Sir Thomas Parr fought with the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick against the king's troops. In October 1455, he took out a royal pardon for his actions.³ Four years later, both the war and William Parr's own career began in earnest.

The adherents of Henry VI's queen, Margaret of Anjou, and her ally, the Duke of Somerset, met in council at Coventry on 24 June 1459 and issued indictments in the king's name against the Duke of York and the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick. This was throwing down the gauntlet with a vengeance and the Yorkists were left with no other option but to take up arms and fight. Sir Thomas Parr of Kendal, as a well-wisher of the house of Neville, received a summons from Salisbury to arm what men he could and ride to Middleham Castle in Yorkshire.⁴ On 12–13 October the opposing armies met at Ludford Bridge near Ludlow and the Yorkists were routed. The Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, and York's eldest son, seventeen-year-old Edward, Earl of March, together with Sir Thomas Parr and other supporters, travelled south into Devonshire where they took refuge with the Dinham family, probably at Nutwell manor north-east of Torquay.⁵ For over two weeks they were

forced to wait in hiding until a ship could be found willing to carry them out of England. Finally they set sail for France and on 2 November arrived at Calais. Barely a month after joining the army of the Earl of Salisbury at Middleham, Sir Thomas Parr found himself an attainted traitor, his lands lost and a price on his head, setting sail for foreign exile in an unknown land.

With their father in France, William Parr and his younger brother, John, were left in charge of the family fortunes which for the next eight months were at low ebb. Sir Thomas Parr had been declared a traitor by the Crown and by March 1460 portions of his estates had been put into the hands of receivers. On 16 March 1460, and again on 20 May, the king assigned revenues from the lands of the forfeited Yorkists to pay various debts.⁶ Yet because the Parr lands were located so far from London, it is not likely that they suffered much diminishment at the hands of the king's receivers in the next eight months while Sir Thomas was in France. During that time, William and John Parr contented themselves with remaining quietly in Kendal until the Yorkist fortunes should turn. If the Yorkists did not succeed, William Parr's entire patrimony would be forfeit. Thus he had a vested interest in the defeat of the queen's party and the victory of Neville and York.

On 10 July 1460 the event Parr had been waiting for occurred. The Yorkists, who had come back to England, defeated their enemies outside the walls of Northampton and carried the captured Henry VI in triumph to London. The pliant and conciliatory king now became the figurehead of the new Yorkist regime. John Parr went south to seek preferment at the Yorkist-dominated court while William stayed in Kendal to confront a far less attractive situation building up in the marches and along the Scottish border. The breakdown of central authority in England due to the civil war was an open invitation to the marauding Scots. Living just fifty miles from the border, the residents of Kendal were only too familiar with Scottish raids.⁷ However, the build-up of forces on the border in July 1460 was not the usual handful of Scottish predators but a royal army under the command of the vigorous and aggressive king of Scotland, James II. For the time being at least, the Scottish military effort was concentrated in the eastern marches on the Northumberland border but the threat to the western marches was very real. In Kendal, William Parr was now faced with not only the probability of an invading Scottish army but the resurgence of pro-Lancastrian feeling as the Yorkist government in London began to lose ground and prove itself unable to establish a firm control over, among other places, the north. Hostilities were resumed again in December 1460 and William and John Parr joined their father, Sir Thomas, in the van of the Earl of Salisbury's forces, as they marched north to confront the main van of the Lancastrian army. On 30 December the warring armies met at Wakefield and the Yorkists were brutally defeated. In the confusion following the battle, Sir Thomas Parr and his two sons somehow managed to escape. Although listed among the slain of Wakefield,⁸ Sir Thomas Parr lived another year and both William and John survived to see the Yorkists once again snatch victory from the jaws of defeat at Towton on 29 March 1461.

With Edward, Earl of March, now on the throne as Edward IV, the Perrys looked for reward for their loyalty. Sir Thomas Parr was made king's knight and granted the lucrative wardship of the infant heir of John Hotham of Scorbrough in Yorkshire.⁹ John Parr was taken into the royal household as king's esquire. Yet William was

apparently ignored. Although the wardship of Hotham was extended to William after his father's death, the new king did not single Parr out for particular favour. The reason for this may have been Parr's loyalty to the Earl of Warwick. Like his father before him, in this first decade of Edward IV's reign, William Parr's primary allegiance was to the Nevilles. With the power of the Percys temporarily broken in the north, the Earl of Warwick assumed an authority that rivalled the king's own. In many ways, especially in the northern counties, it was stronger than Edward's whose chief preoccupation lay in consolidating his control in the heartland of England. A not unnatural concern with the over-mighty earl in the north would have made Edward somewhat reluctant to build up the position of one of Warwick's leading supporters in the same area. William Parr, as the head of the most powerful gentry family in Westmorland and one moreover firmly seen to be in Warwick's camp, received few favours from the king. It was to be nine years after Edward came to the throne, when Parr finally broke with Warwick and offered both his services and his loyalty directly to the king, that he began to assume the powerful position at court that he was to enjoy in the second decade of Edward's reign.

By far the most important consequence for the Parrs of the Yorkist triumph was their assumption of a number of the late pro-Lancastrian Lord Clifford's offices, most notably a life interest in the hereditary shrievalty of Westmorland. The importance and power of this office increased with the neutralization of much of the Lancastrian resistance in the north after Towton.¹⁰ A sheriff tended to be left alone when he had the support of the Neville warden of the marches towards Scotland. The growing influence wielded by Parliament, too, helped to magnify the value of the office. Usurping kings liked to have their seizure of the throne validated and this desire helped to increase parliamentary authority. The sheriff in Westmorland and Cumberland generally controlled parliamentary elections and the fact that the Westmorland shrievalty was hereditary, unlike most other shires, gave its possessor an unparalleled latitude in the exercise of authority in the county. What is surprising about the grant of this office to the Parrs is that it was given not to William Parr, who was residing in Kendal, but to his younger brother, John, who was not. John Parr was appointed sheriff of Westmorland for life on 28 May 1462 (about the same time that he moved more or less permanently to London) and he held the office until his death in 1475.¹¹ Only then was his brother, William, granted the shrievalty, and he held it until his own death in 1483.¹² Altogether, the Parrs exercised a remarkable authority over this key shire position. Between 1442 and 1483, a period of forty-one years, Sir Thomas Parr held *de facto* control of the shrievalty for nineteen years, John for thirteen, and William for eight. Parliamentary representation becomes a corollary of this fact. During the period from 1435 to 1483, of the fifteen available returns for parliamentary elections from Westmorland, the Parrs either sat for the shire or controlled those who did in at least eleven instances.¹³ Sir Thomas Parr sat in seven Parliaments for Westmorland and one for Cumberland. John Parr sat for Cumberland four times, and William for Westmorland three times and Cumberland twice. For all of the known returns for Westmorland between 1463 and 1475, John Parr as sheriff secured the election of his brother, William, as knight of the shire. This is a significant example of the Parrs' control of affairs within the shire and representation without.

Together with the shrievalty and the parliamentary seats for the north-west, the

Parrs also dominated royal commissions during the years of Edward IV's reign. They appear regularly on commissions acting in the north-west and occasionally in Northumberland and Yorkshire as well.¹⁴ Between 1461 and 1483, the duration of Edward IV's reign, William Parr served on no less than fourteen commissions of the peace, nine commissions of array, two commissions of oyer and terminer, two commissions for ditches and dikes, and four special commissions, an overwhelming testimonial to his importance in the area. Like his father before him, William Parr became an arbiter of local disputes which, considering the iron fist with which he held Kendal, is hardly surprising. Like all men who control the forces of law and order in their territories, he was appealed to for settlements in quarrels over land as well as being sought as trustee in enfeoffments to uses for his supporters in the area.¹⁵ But William Parr seems to have been a more subtle politician than his father. Sir Thomas had been as much a law-breaker as a law-enforcer, probably because he had stiff but unsuccessful competition for control of Kendal from such families as the Bellingshams.¹⁶ His son, first under the Earl of Warwick's patronage in the 1460s, and then under the king's, had no such problem. William Parr was simply too powerful for any other gentry family in Westmorland to challenge, and his participation in local quarrels was increasingly in the role of arbitrator rather than combatant.

If during the early years of Edward IV's reign, William Parr was not singled out for special honours, he was an integral part of the Yorkist effort to secure the north against the incursions of the Scots and the resurrection of Lancastrian resistance. The Scottish threat was not an idle one. In June 1461, a joint band of Scottish marauders and Lancastrian exiles raided as far south as Carlisle. The Parr manor of Cargo, which lay north of the city and thus directly in the path of the raiders, was for the next few years to be continually at risk. Parr's home of Kendal Castle was the centre of a network of armed military levies called up in the name of the manor of Kendal from the surrounding countryside and mustered at need beneath the castle itself. On average, the lord of Kendal could assemble several hundred archers, five hundred foot soldiers or pikemen and about two hundred and fifty horsemen, quite a respectable showing for a country knight.¹⁷ It is more than likely that William Parr, together with a Kendal levy, joined the forces of the Earl of Warwick in the spring of 1462 for a number of retaliatory raids against the Scots which struck north across the Scottish border. Parr was knighted during 1462 and it was almost certainly his performance in these border wars which earned him his knighthood. This experience gave him an intimate knowledge of the Scots as fighters, and he quickly gained a familiarity with them which led him to become one of Edward's chief negotiators on Scottish matters in the next decade. The first such commission to treat with the Scots on which William Parr served, was the commission convened in April 1464 at York, to negotiate a fifteen-year peace which would end at a blow Scottish support for the Lancastrian cause and the continual disruptive and destructive border incursions.¹⁸ These were no longer just by Scottish raiders but had by now been raised to national policy by the presence of the Scots king and his army harassing and capturing such strategic border castles as Bamburgh, Dunstanborough and Norham. Scottish attack was generally followed by English counter-attack with the Neville lords of Warwick and Montagu¹⁹ and their forces raiding and pillaging into southern Scotland to exact revenge and restitution. Sir William Parr grew into a

hardened veteran during these four years and was well qualified to act as one of the Anglo-Scottish negotiators in 1464. On 1 June, Edward IV signed the fifteen-year treaty which Parr had helped to negotiate with Scotland and ended the threat of a Scottish-Lancastrian invasion from the north. Sir William Parr was appointed a member of the Earl of Warwick's party designated to convey the signed truce to James III of Scotland at Lochmaben, an honour which indicates that the earl held him in high regard.²⁰

Fighting the Scots was all very well but inevitably Parr's estates suffered not only from the destruction caused by the raids but from the frequent absence of their lord on military expeditions. To alleviate the losses that Parr had sustained, the king, probably at the urging of the Earl of Warwick, secured a grant to Parr to make good his losses and to settle an old family score. Sir Henry Bellingham of Burneside, Sir Thomas Parr's old nemesis, was an arch-Lancastrian who had suffered forfeiture by Parliament in November 1461. On 10 February 1463 "in consideration of their charges in conflicts against the king's enemies", Sir William and John Parr were granted £100 a year from Bellingham's lands.²¹ This sum must have been very near the total yearly income from the Bellingham holdings and allowed the Perrys to take possession not only of the Bellingham manor of Burneside but all Sir Henry's grazing acreage, flocks, sheep folds, woodland and farmable lands as well. It was a severe blow to the family which had been the Perrys' chief competitors in Kendal since the beginning of the century. The Perrys continued to occupy Henry's holdings and on 10 December 1467, Sir William and his brother, John, were confirmed as owners of the lands with reversion to their heirs.²² But Parr showed his own sort of clemency to the beleaguered Henry Bellingham by granting him a yearly annuity of £20 for life to be taken presumably from the revenues of his own estates that Parr now held. Bellingham, once Parr's closest rival, had now become Parr's pensioner.

As a landowner, William Parr was an aggressive entrepreneur. Wool and woollen cloth were the chief marketable commodities in Westmorland and both depended on the welfare of the local sheepowners' flocks. Kendal was famous for a coarse, heavy-weight woollen cloth called Kendal green. William Parr appears to have invested heavily in the wool market and to have taken a great interest in the manufacture of Kendal green. Not only did he build up his flocks but he was concerned with the entire process of cloth production, from the raw wool of his sheep to the markets that Kendal cloth would reach. Fulling mills were crucial to the manufacture of cloth and Parr had two new mills built, one at Ambleside and one at Grasmere, refurbished two old mills at Ambleside, and controlled two other mills at Sleddale as well. He was a powerful and progressive influence on the local industry.²³ The beginning of Edward's reign saw an increase in wool prices which, after his losses in the Scottish border fighting, Parr must have found encouraging.²⁴

Another local industry in which William Parr took an entrepreneurial interest was the net fisheries of Lake Windermere. These came under Parr's control in the second decade of Edward's reign. The fisheries had been in existence as far back as 1223 and provided an extensive freshwater larder of char, trout, pike, perch, eel and running salmon. Reckoned at being worth about three marks a year in 1472, in a food poor area like the north-west these fisheries, particularly when the harvest was bad, were probably worth a good deal more.²⁵ Parr's control of a major food source would have been an important extension of his control of the area. Not only did Parr

hold the rights to the fishing in the lake but by other royal grants he also controlled the marketplace in Kendal where the fish were sold and took fees from the local sellers. Between 1461 and 1483, William Parr used his position as master of Kendal to enrich himself from the daily commerce of the town. Thanks to royal leases held by Parr's father, Sir Thomas, and regranted to his son in 1472,²⁶ Parr took profits from the town bakery, the forge, the local dairy, the butchers' district called the shambles, the use of the town wells, the use of the grist mill at Applethwaite, and all fees and profits from the markets and fairs, the "advowsons, meadows, feedings, pastures, mills, stews, stanks, waters, fisheries, chaces, warrens, moors and forests" of all but a quarter of the old barony of Kendal. Combined with his control of the shrievalty and the offices of bailiff and sergeant, as well as his repeated appointment to all local commissions of the peace, it might be said that Parr ruled in Kendal and by extension controlled southern Westmorland. Certainly he had a finger on every facet of the lives of the people in the town and in the countryside around. Although he made use of elements of both, strictly speaking, Parr's position was built neither on classic feudalism nor on bastard feudalism.

Sir William operated within a sub-system of the feudal tradition which might be called gentry feudalism. The patrons in this socio-economic network were important gentry families; the clients were less important gentry families and ambitious yeomen. The upper gentry did not enjoy the sort of income that the nobility could command and thus could not afford to buy supporters and well-wishers with fees and annuities. But they could offer a modified patronage in the form of favours – of legal support, offices secured, trusteeship duties in enfeoffments to uses, intercession with the king or important magnates, dispute arbitration, military aid in local quarrels, help in arranging advantageous matrimonial alliances. The clients within this network were frequently but not always tenants of the patron. Occasionally, they were related by blood as well, and as in other forms of feudalism, one family tended to invest its loyalty in another family over a period of generations if not centuries. The Perrys made full and frequent use of gentry feudalism. Such families as the Middletons, Flemings, Washingtons, Lawrences, and Redmans were tenants and clients of the Perrys. Most of them had been inherited from the clientage of the de Roos family in the fourteenth century through the marriage of the first Sir William Parr of Kendal (c. 1350–1404) with Elizabeth de Roos, and most were still in occupation of their northern lands in 1571 when the last male Parr died. The stability of this group of client-tenants helped to ensure the continuing stability and control of the Perrys in Kendal. Over the passing generations the Parr family became more and more closely connected with the families who, having seen them arrive as newcomers in the fourteenth century, considered them the old guard by the end of the fifteenth. Two families are of particular interest because they were not only tenants and clients but servants of the Perrys as well. These were the Pickering family of Killington and the Leyburns of Cunswick and Sleddale.

In 1390, Sir James Pickering held the manor of Killington of Sir Thomas de Roos by homage and fealty. One hundred and forty years later, in 1530, Thomas Pickering, Sir James' descendant, the steward of Maud, Lady Parr's, household, still served the Perrys. When the Parr family inherited the sphere of influence of the de Rooses in Kendal, they inherited the Pickering family as well. The Pickering family had been at Killington as early as 1259 and served the master of Kendal Castle as his

liege men. With the dramatic changes in the feudal system which took place in the fourteenth century, the position of the Pickerings increased in importance. Sir Thomas de Roos' tenant, Sir James Pickering, served three times as speaker of the Commons in Parliament and died about 1398. His namesake and great-grandson, another Sir James Pickering, rode with Sir Thomas Parr to fight on the Yorkist side at Blore Heath and Ludford. Like Parr, he was attainted in 1459 and may have fled with the Yorkist leaders to Calais. Pickering fought beside Sir Thomas Parr once more the following year and died at Wakefield in December 1460 when the more fortunate Parr managed to escape. Pickering's descendants continued to serve Parr's descendants not only in their military levies but in their household and as stewards of their lands. For the manor of Killington, the Parrs charged them the symbolic rent of a pair of gilt spurs. The Leyburne family followed the same pattern of tenant, client, and servant as the Pickerings. From Robert Leyburne, who held lands of William Parr in 1404 for the rent of a sparrowhawk, to Sir James Leyburne, who held the same lands and served as steward of Dent and Sedbergh for the Parr family in 1537, the Leyburnes passed a tradition of loyalty to the Parrs down generation after generation. An indication of the strength of the ties between patron and client family is the fact that when the Parrs left Kendal to live in Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire and London, many of their household staff continued to be recruited from their tenants in the north. So Thomas Pickering and Francis Leyburne, servants of Maud, Lady Parr, in her various southern households, are both mentioned in her will of 1529. This bonding of families in a gentry feudal relationship, particularly in Westmorland where there were fewer noble families represented than in many other shires, added significantly to the Parrs' ability to count on the continuing loyalty of their clients and was one of the major factors in their success during the sixteenth century as absentee landlords.

In July 1467, Thomas Colt of Netherhall in Essex died. Colt had been a long-time retainer of the late Duke of York's and had ridden beside Sir Thomas Parr at the first battle of St Albans in 1455. Shortly after, Colt had been seconded to the north-west from Essex by the Duke of York to fill one of the Cumberland parliamentary seats in the 1455 Parliament. It has been claimed but is not strictly accurate to say that Colt had no connection with the north.²⁷ His family was originally from Carlisle and he had moved to Essex after purchasing the manor of Netherhall in Roydon. Colt built a house at Netherhall in the grand style using Flemish brickmakers to construct an impressive moated residence. He subsequently added to his southern holdings by royal grants. Colt had been a loyal retainer of the Duke of York's and an invaluable civil servant, holding the offices of chamberlain of the Exchequer (1454–59, 1460–67), chancellor of the Earldom of March (1463–67), councillor to the Duke of York (1453–60) and councillor to the Earl of Warwick (1463). In addition, he had been a feoffee of the Duke of York's will and had served him both in England and in Ireland.²⁸ At Colt's death at the age of forty-two, he left a widow, Joanna, and a three-year-old son as his heir.²⁹ Within two months of Colt's death, Sir William Parr had married Colt's widow.

Joanna Colt was the only daughter and heir of John Trusbut of Tattershall manor in Runcton Holme, Norfolk.³⁰ Joanna's grandfather, Thomas Trusbut (died 1452), had been a wealthy sheep farmer who owned considerable land and sheep folds in Norfolk.³¹ Joanna was the heir general of the Trusbut estates and when William Parr

married her, he assumed control not only of her inheritance but of her son's Colt lands in Essex, Cumberland, Middlesex, Berkshire and Suffolk as well. He immediately made Netherhall in Essex his home while in the south and used it as his seat for the next sixteen years.³² Only twenty miles from London, Netherhall suited Parr admirably during the last half of Edward's reign when duty and ambition took him with increasing frequency to court.

Parr's quick action in marrying Joanna Colt may have been based on personal attraction, but there were other far more sound reasons for the marriage. Parr may have hoped to inherit some of Thomas Colt's influence with the Crown and to succeed to one of the offices which Colt had held. Also, there were the Trusbut flocks and folds which would complement very well his own sheep holdings in the north-west and give him a finer clip than the coarse wool of the north to sell through the Staple. In the same month as Parr's marriage, the king lifted the trade embargo on Burgundian imports into England and two months later, on 24 November 1467, England and Burgundy signed a commercial treaty which led to a boost in English exports that doubled the amount of cloth sent to the Low Countries. Parr may have seen a chance to cash in on the escalating profits to be made in the cloth market by buying up quantities in England and selling it abroad. For this he needed investment capital but an acute shortage of bullion that had caused the devaluation of the pound in 1464–5 forced him to extraordinary measures to raise it. His marriage to Joanna Colt, combined with the pawning of the family plate (described below) provided him with the funds he needed. Another primary motivation for the quick marriage and probably a corollary of his business ventures was the morass of debt in which Parr found himself in the mid-1460s. Without a royal grant to help extricate himself as he had had in 1461, marriage was his only way out. The Bellingham lands had failed to provide Parr with sufficient income to turn his debts to solvency. Not only did Parr have to deal with the attrition of his estates from the constant fighting in the north during these years but in March 1464, in a desperate attempt to raise money, the king had required all recipients of grants of lands, offices or annuities to pay 25% of the grant's yearly value back to the Crown. This order was retroactive to 1461 and so, at a blow, Parr was penalized a quarter of the Bellingham income.³³ On 4 December 1466, Parr signed bonds together with William Berkeley, Sir Walter Wrottesley and John Browne for the repayment to John Sutton, Lord Dudley, of various sums totalling £40. Just over a year later and a few months after his marriage, Sir William Parr pawned fifty-eight pounds and four ounces of plate, mostly silver, and "a little salt cellar of crystalline garnished with gold" to John Bedham, a London fishmonger with a sideline as a pawnbroker.³⁴ For what may have been the family's entire cache of plate, in fact their savings account,³⁵ Parr received £120. It is significant that Parr had this amount of plate to pawn but the fact that he needed to pawn it at all and that he was borrowing money from Lord Dudley the year before, indicates his financial woes were still with him. Combined, the Parr, Bellingham, Colt, Hotham and Trusbut lands were failing to provide the Perrys with sufficient income to carry on their affairs.

Sir William Parr seems to have spent the years of 1463–64, just prior to his marriage, commuting between parliamentary sessions in London and border commissions in the far north. It took up to two weeks to travel between London and Kendal over roads that were difficult at the best of times. So it is understandable

why, after his marriage, Parr chose to use the great house at Netherhall as his residence as often as he could. After 1464, the amount of time Parr spent in the south increased due to a variety of factors, among them his marriage to Joanna Colt and his attendance in the sessions of Parliament. Sir William's marriage coincided with a period in which the Earl of Warwick was beginning to re-enact recent history by brooding over real or imagined ills done him by the king and the new royal favourites in the same way that the late Duke of York had brooded in the early 1450s. The widening breach between Edward's most powerful subject and Edward, himself, involved Parr just as the split between the York–Neville party and the court party had involved his father, Sir Thomas Parr, a decade earlier. Where loyalty to the Nevilles had in 1459 wedded the interests of the Parrs to the House of York, now, a decade later, loyalty to the Nevilles would tear that bond apart. For the Parrs, the estrangement between Edward IV and the Earl of Warwick brought dissension within the family itself. William Parr, as a northern landowner and Neville supporter, considered his own interests tied irrevocably to those of the Earl of Warwick's. His family had fought for and at the side of the Nevilles since his father, the young Thomas Parr, had been a recognized Neville supporter in the disputed parliamentary election of 1429.³⁶ William Parr had stuck to Warwick since the opening days of Edward's reign, and now, for the time being at least, he was stuck with him. His brothers, on the other hand, found themselves in the opposite camp. John Parr might be Warwick's deputy for the Clifford estates in Westmorland and he might exercise the shire shrievalty with a tacit acknowledgement of the earl's support, but John Parr was officially a member of the king's household and officially a king's man. Thomas Parr, the younger, the youngest of the three Parr brothers, was firmly in the king's camp as a valued friend and retainer of Richard, Duke of Gloucester. As battle lines were being drawn, the brothers were to find themselves on opposite sides of the same battlefield.

By the summer of 1469, discontent had come to a head in the north. On 25 July, the hastily assembled forces of the king were gathered in two widely separated camps outside Banbury. This extremely injudicious placement of troops, too far apart to support each other in case of attack, resulted from a quarrel between two of Edward's chief commanders, the Earls of Devon and Pembroke. It was to cost them their lives. That night, spies reported the positions of the royal troops to the commanders of the Earl of Warwick's northern levies. It seems to have been Sir William Parr, by now a seasoned veteran of many northern campaigns against the Scots, who realized the folly of the earls' separate encampments and the strategic advantage it offered their enemies. Parr and another Neville supporter, Geoffrey Gate, "two insistent knights",³⁷ were in command of a strike force of northern troops, many of them probably Parr's own men from Kendal, and at dawn the next morning they attacked the camp of the Earl of Pembroke and his Welsh musters on Edgecote field. As many as 1500 northerners and many Welshmen died in the ensuing battle. The Earl of Devon failed to back up Pembroke's troops sufficiently, hampered by the distance of their camps and the fact that the attack took them by surprise. The royalists were overwhelmed and scattered. The Earl of Pembroke was beheaded the following day on Warwick's orders, and the Earl of Devon met the same fate three weeks later. The chronicler, Jean Waurin, praised "les gens du Nord", the men of the north, for their courage during the battle which had thrown the victory to Warwick. William Parr was

singled out for special mention for his contribution to Warwick's victory.³⁸ Another soldier on Edgecote field, probably in the Earl of Devon's camp, was John Parr. Whether either brother knew of the presence of the other is unknown but it is interesting to speculate that William Parr chose Pembroke's camp for his attack knowing that his brother was in the Earl of Devon's.

William Parr had risked much to fight for the earl against the king. Not only was he deeply in debt but he was now in danger of suffering the fate his father had known in 1459 when Sir Thomas had been declared a traitor, forced into exile and seen his lands declared forfeit. It was at this time that a sense of disillusionment seems to have entered into Sir William Parr's calculations. He had risked all for Warwick and now Warwick rewarded him with nothing. Warwick's reservoirs of patronage were not big enough to spread among such noble allies as the Duke of Clarence and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the gentry captains and fighting men who had given Warwick his victory at Edgecote. Thus Parr's growing disaffection for the earl is understandable. It may be, too, that Parr's brothers were urging him to switch his allegiance back to the king, but with Warwick temporarily in power and Parr's interest in the north under the earl's domination, changing sides was not yet a risk he was prepared to take. Fortunately for Parr, Warwick's moment of power was brief. By mid-September 1469, having surrounded himself with men he could trust, Edward was once more in control and by the following March, Warwick was again in arms against the king. Warwick and his puppet duke, George of Clarence, took immediate advantage of civil unrest in Lincolnshire, and, with the aid of Sir Robert Welles, roused the local commons against the advancing royal army. On 12 March 1470, Edward and his troops met the Lincolnshire rebels under the leadership of Welles at Empingham, five miles west of Stamford, and routed them in the battle of Lose-Cote Field, so called because the rebels in their precipitate flight left discarded clothing behind. Edward, still determined to keep Warwick and Clarence in the royal fold, sent messages to them by one of his most trusted servants, John Donne, that they were to disband their troops and proceed to a meeting with him.

For the next seven days, Edward sent messages to Warwick and Clarence commanding their presence before him, but the two rebel lords countered with the conditions that must be met before they would agree to such a meeting. Edward was rapidly losing patience. On Monday, the nineteenth of March, the king was at Doncaster and Sir William Parr rode into the king's camp at mid-morning, the appointed messenger of the Earl of Warwick.³⁹ Parr and his fellow messenger, "Richard" Rufford,⁴⁰ were nervous, perhaps realizing only too well as they saw before them "so many goodly men and so well arrayed in the field" that Warwick, their master, was not dealing from a position of strength when he sent ultimatums to the king. William Parr must have also been uncomfortably aware of his new reputation as the rebel hero of Edgecote, a man instrumental in the defeat and executions of the king's generals, the Earls of Devon and Pembroke. As he rode into the enemy camp, he may have noticed, too, his brothers' eyes on him among the victorious royalists and his uneasiness is apparent in the way he delivered the earl's message. Parr and Rufford explained to Edward that neither Warwick nor Clarence planned to appear before him "unless then they might have sureties of their coming, abiding and departing, to have the king's pardon in form rehearsed before . . .". In a word, Parr was telling the king that Warwick and Clarence did not trust him.

Edward lost his temper and charged Parr to tell his masters to come forward or he would “repute, take, and declare them, as reason would, after as their demerits, obstinacy and unnatural demeaning required. . .”. The implication of treason was certainly apparent to Warwick’s messengers and when the king offered both Parr and Rufford free pardon if they would abandon Warwick and “come to him, according to their duty and liegeance, and give him assistance against (Warwick)”, Parr, at least, privately decided to take him at his word. Edward also charged the messengers that they should carry the news of Edward’s offer to all of Warwick’s troops, inciting them to desert the earl and return to their loyalty to the king. “. . . whereupon the said Sir William Parr and Rufford, fearing that they should not be suffered to opine the king’s commandment, humbly besought the king’s good grace that it might please the same to send an officer of arms with them to do it, as he so did, sending with them March, one of his kings of arms.”

Warwick paid no heed to Edward’s message or to his messengers. At this point in the game there is little doubt that Parr would have counselled submission to the king and a final reconciliation but Warwick’s overweening pride and unquenchable ambition refused to accept either humiliation or defeat. Rather than submit or fight with the drastically reduced troops at his disposal, the recalcitrant earl and his family, together with the Duke of Clarence, fled to France. The king then offered free pardon and amnesty to all of the former rebels who sought it before 7 May. What is more, Edward removed the last Neville, Warwick’s brother, John, Earl of Northumberland, from his office as Warden of the East March, gave him lands in the south-west, created him Marquess of Montagu and took the earldom of Northumberland away from him. In Neville’s place in the north, Edward now restored Henry Percy, the heir of the Percys, to the earldom of Northumberland. This was at last the moment of safety that Sir William Parr had been waiting for. Warwick was gone from the north; the Nevilles were momentarily in eclipse; the king was opening the arms of amnesty to former rebels. When pardons were handed out, Sir William Parr was first in line. The rewards which Warwick had been unable to bestow on Parr now fell from the hands of England’s king. Freed from the shackles which had bound him to Warwick, Parr was an eminently suitable candidate for promotion in the north. As one of Edward’s loyal affinity he could be relied upon absolutely to help hold the northern shires for the king. On 7 May, the final day appointed for receiving the king’s amnesty, William Parr was appointed lieutenant of the castle of the city of Carlisle and of the west marches towards Scotland.⁴¹ Edward’s well-known leniency which had in the past so angered many of his supporters in the north now offered Sir William Parr a way back from the brink of treason and a chance to prove himself to his king. At Carlisle Castle, Parr replaced one of his own former well-wishers, Richard Salkeld,⁴² who did not lightly forgive this loss of position and two months later joined in a local, Neville-inspired uprising. The appointment to the lieutenancy of the west marches was a very profitable one, a far more conspicuous reward for service than Sir Thomas Parr had received in 1461. Sir William Parr’s salary was £333 6s. 8d. in peace-time and £500 in time of war. One thousand marks was allocated to pay the costs of the Carlisle garrison. On paper, the profits from this appointment were great, but Parr apparently had difficulty collecting his salary on time and several warrants exist from the king ordering the payment of delinquent amounts due him.⁴³ Warwick was still technically Warden of the West

March but by 26 August, he had been replaced in the office by the king's younger brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. This was the beginning of Gloucester's rise to power in the north where through marriage to the Earl of Warwick's younger daughter and the king's lavish patronage, he assumed the mantle of influence worn for so many years by the Neville family. Gloucester now became a major factor in Parr's world and would remain so until Sir William's death.

The summer of 1470 echoed with alarms and intrigues. All three Parr brothers were in the north. Edward had sent William to the Scottish border with the newly restored Earl of Northumberland and George Neville, Archbishop of York, to discuss the always chaotic border conditions with a group of Scottish commissioners.⁴⁴ A Neville-inspired uprising led by Henry, Lord Fitzhugh of Ravensworth, husband of Warwick's formidable sister, Alice, broke out in the North Riding of Yorkshire at the end of July.⁴⁵ Although Edward usually deputized one of his nobles to handle such situations, this time he decided to ride north himself. What seemed in fact to be a trap set by the Earl of Warwick worked. While Edward was decoyed in the north, Warwick and his cohorts landed in Devonshire in mid-September 1470. Support for the king from both ends of the political spectrum – nobles and commons – failed to materialize and Edward decided the most prudent course open to him was flight. The king, his closest advisers and a party of supporters including John Parr and Thomas Parr, the younger, sailed from King's Lynn in East Anglia and landed near Alkmaar on the Dutch coast. Once again the Parr family found itself in the anomalous position of the defeated, waiting out the uncomfortable months of a foreign exile. With John and Thomas in Holland with the king, William Parr was left to guard the family estates, waiting for the axe of attainder to fall. The Earl of Warwick was a notably vindictive man toward those he regarded as his enemies, and William Parr had numbered himself among these when he switched sides the previous spring. Parr must have viewed with forboding the restoration of Montagu to his wardenship of the east march and the further grant to him of the wardship of the lands of the late John, Lord Clifford. The disposition of the Clifford lands of which John Parr had been steward in Westmorland since 1461, touched the Parrs most nearly. William Parr was under no illusion that if the restoration of Henry VI were to be successful all that the Parrs had gained since 1461 would be forfeit. In the event, the worst thing that seems to have happened was that the new government removed William Parr from all northern commissions during the winter of 1470–71. Warwick had far too much to concern himself with to worry about his erstwhile knight in the north-west. Parr, for his part, was content to lie low and hope for better days and they were not long in coming.

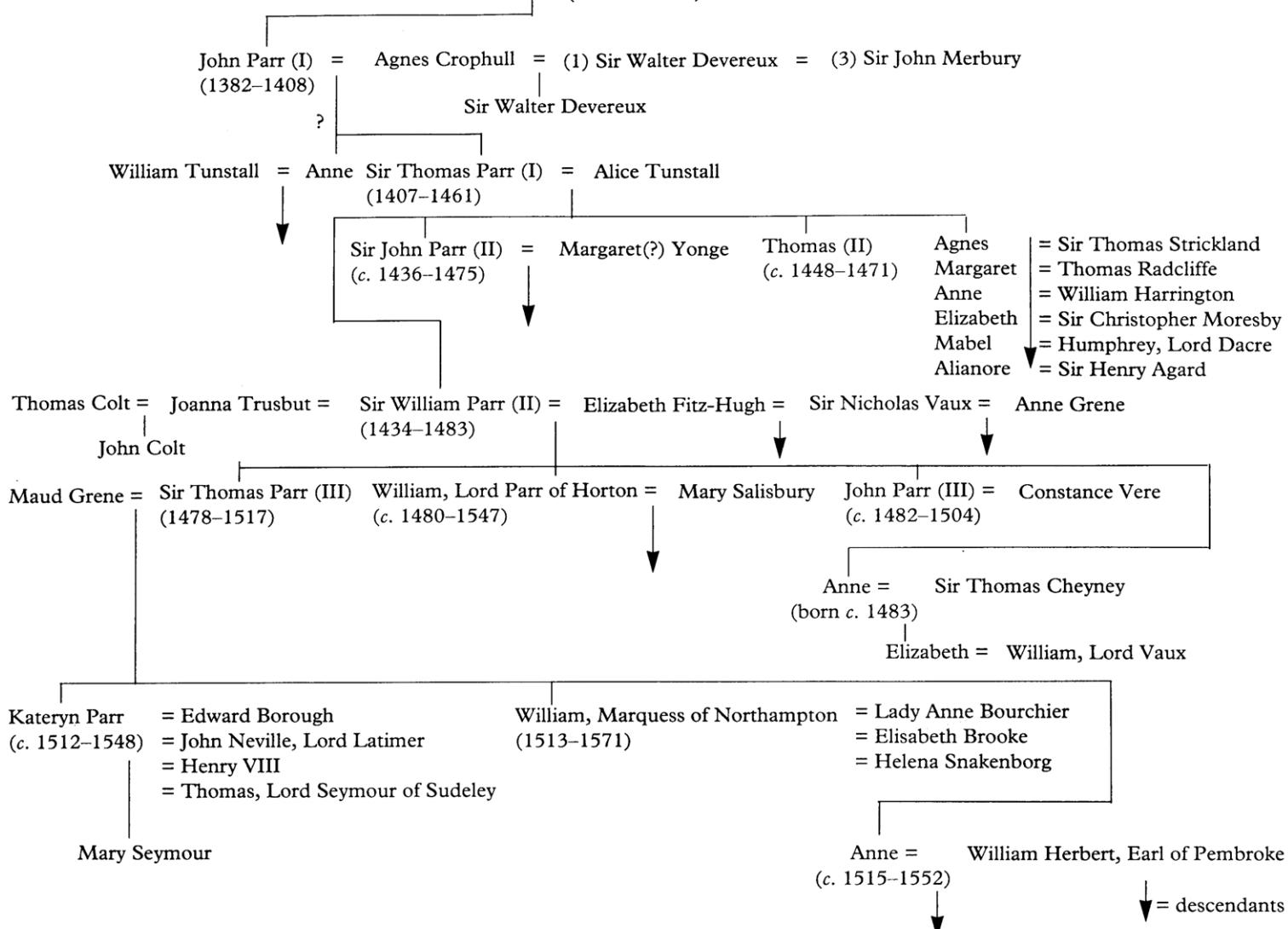
On 11 March 1471, with thirty-six ships and a small force of some one to two thousand men, Edward set sail from Flushing to recover his kingdom.⁴⁶ He landed three days later at Ravenspur on the Humber, the same landfall from which Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster, later Henry IV, had set out to reclaim his inheritance seventy-two years before. Upon his arrival in Yorkshire, Edward found few friends willing to come to his aid. Neville supporters outnumbered Yorkist sympathizers and Edward pushed first north to York and then south to his father's castle of Sandal near Wakefield. The lack of support for the royal cause among the local commons left Edward shaken and disappointed. "About Wakefield and those parts, came some folks unto him, but not so many as he supposed would have come;

nevertheless his number was increased. And so from thence he passed forth to Doncaster, and so forth to Nottingham." At Nottingham, the first sizeable reinforcements that Edward had received rode to meet him and at their head were Sir William Parr and his kinsman, Sir James Harrington. They brought with them "two good bands of men, well arrayed, and habled for war, the number of vi^c (600)." These were troops recruited from the Harrington estates in Yorkshire and Parr's own lands in southern Westmorland. By this act of support, made at a critical moment when the king was desperately seeking fighting men, both Parr and Harrington won a future of friendship and gratitude from Edward. He never forgot their gesture and he was to reward it lavishly in the years to come.

The royal army moved south, slowly acquiring size and momentum. At Leicester, Lord Hastings' men, numbering some three thousand, joined the king's army and on Thursday, 11 April, Edward entered London still unchallenged. Upon learning of Edward's entry into the capital, Warwick and his army left Coventry and marched to meet the royal forces. The two armies met at Barnet, north of London, during the morning hours of 15 April, Easter Sunday. Thomas Parr, the younger, faithful friend and retainer of the Duke of Gloucester, died fighting at the side of the duke. Gloucester's affection for Thomas was such that on his orders, Parr was buried with full honours and a flattering memorial at the church of the Greyfriars in London and some years later, masses were commissioned by Gloucester to be said for Parr's soul at Queens' College, Cambridge. There was little time, however, for Thomas Parr's remaining brothers to mourn him. The Neville-led rebels had been defeated at Barnet but the Lancastrian rumblings were beginning to get louder and louder, particularly in the north. Edward needed another Yorkist victory to smash all resistance as quickly as possible. On Saturday, 4 May, the two armies of Lancaster and York met again in the final moment of truth near the town and abbey of Tewkesbury and following this final victory, Edward returned triumphantly to his capital, unchallenged king at last of England. It was the support that Edward had received among the baronage and the gentry which had proved to be decisive, and the political and military encounters of 1471 "demonstrated the importance of committed baronial support against wide popular backing."⁴⁷ Between 19 March 1470, when Sir William Parr had appeared before the king as the Earl of Warwick's spokesman, and Edward's ultimate victory at Tewkesbury on 4 May 1471, William Parr had shown himself to be reliable, courageous, resourceful and trustworthy. That his brother, John, had friends among the king's closest adherents did not hurt either, nor did the fact that Thomas Parr, the younger, had given his life for the Duke of Gloucester on Barnet field. With Edward's final consolidation of power in his own hands, unthreatened by over-mighty magnates, he proceeded to pursue two goals, one to reward past loyalty and the other to secure talented men of tested ability from the non-noble classes to help in the effective governance of the kingdom. William Parr's influence in the north-west coupled with his proven loyalty to the king placed him in a strong position to advance his career under Edward's patronage. He had already made a notable start as lieutenant of Carlisle Castle and of the west marches. John Parr, too, had shown unwavering loyalty and would be rewarded, but his importance to the king would be primarily as a link between Edward and the merchant community into which he would shortly marry. Both Parr brothers faced the dawn of a new Yorkist day with ambitious optimism.

THE PARRS (1370–1571)

Elizabeth de Roos = Sir William Parr (I) = Margaret Dutton (widow)
| (c. 1350–1404)



Notes and References

- ¹ *Cal. Fine Rolls 1452–1461*, 101–2.
- ² *ibid.*, 88.
- ³ PRO: C67/41/f.20. Parr took out another pardon in January 1458.
- ⁴ *Rot. Parl.* V, 348–9.
- ⁵ Charles D. Ross, *Edward IV* (1974), 21.
- ⁶ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452–1461*, 572; *Cal. Close Rolls Henry VII*, vi, 409.
- ⁷ M.A. Gordon, *A Short History of Kendal* (1950), *passim*, and C.M.R. Bouch and G.P. Jones, *A Short Economic and Social History of the Lake Counties 1500–1830* (1961), 16. A list made in 1318 of the tax due from the benefices in the province of York lists churches “devalued due to Scottish depredations”. Kendal Church is listed as having its taxes reduced from £133 6s. 8d. to £26 13s. 4d. Such a substantial reduction indicates the extent of damage done by the Scots in and around the Kendal area, damage which continued well into the sixteenth century, A. Hamilton Thompson, “Registers for the Archdeaconry of Richmond”, *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XXV, 141ff.
- ⁸ Edward Hall, *Chronicle* (ed.) H. Ellis (1809), 250; John Stow, *Annales or a Generall Chronicle of England* (1615), 684; *Annales Rerum Anglicarum* in J. Stevenson (ed.), *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France* (Rolls Series, 1864), II, pt. ii, 771. See also, Clements R. Markham, “The Battle of Wakefield”, *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*, IX, 122.
- ⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1461–1467*, 27.
- ¹⁰ The power of the sheriffs and their abuse of this power is exemplified by the number of statutes placed on the books during Edward’s reign to try and curb such officials who arrested and fined without due process. A. Luders (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, II, 388–91.
- ¹¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1461–1467*, 187.
- ¹² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1467–1477*, 532.
- ¹³ See J.C. Wedgwood (ed.), *History of Parliament: vol. ii, Register of the Ministers and Members of both Houses, 1439–1509* (1938) for the relevant years.
- ¹⁴ Northumberland: 28 February 1462; Yorkshire: July 1477, July 1478, 20 June 1480, 5 March 1482.
- ¹⁵ For an example of Parr as an arbitrator, see Frederick W. Ragg, “Helton Flechan, Askham and Sandford of Askham”, *CW2*, xxi, 190, and as a feoffee, *Cal. of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, 1 Henry VII, 77, and *Cal. Close Rolls 1500–1509*, 548.
- ¹⁶ Susan E. James, “Sir Thomas Parr (1407–1461)”, *CW2*, lxxxi, 19–20.
- ¹⁷ M.A. Gordon, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
- ¹⁸ D. Macpherson, J. Caley, W. Illingworth and Rev T.H. Horne (eds.), *Rotuli Scotiae* (1814–1819), II, 414.
- ¹⁹ John Neville, Lord Montagu, was the brother of the Earl of Warwick, and one of Edward’s staunchest supporters, even against the ambitions of his own brother, until Edward took the earldom of Northumberland away from Montagu when he restored the Percys to the title.
- ²⁰ James II of Scotland was killed by an explosion while besieging Roxburgh Castle on 3 August 1460, and his nine-year-old son succeeded to the throne as James III.
- ²¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1461–1467*, 224.
- ²² *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1467–1477*, 45.
- ²³ Mary L. Armitt, “Ambleside Town and Chapel”, *CW2*, vi, 19.
- ²⁴ T.H. Lloyd, “The Movement of Wool Prices in Medieval England”, *The Economic History Review Supplement* (1973), 68.
- ²⁵ Charlotte Kipling, “The Commercial Fisheries of Windermere”, *CW2*, lxxii, 156–204.
- ²⁶ *Cal. Fine Rolls, 1437–1445*, 316; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1467–1477*, 334.
- ²⁷ Patricia Jalland in her article, “The Influence of the Aristocracy on Shire Elections in the North of England, 1450–70”, *Speculum* (1972), 47, 500, counts Colt as one of the “quite exceptional” alien elements in parliamentary representation in the north-west. In fact, Colt had landed interests in the borough of Kendal as early as 1447. *Cal. Fine Rolls 1445–1452*, 69. At his death, he held a patchwork of lands in eight counties stretching from Cumberland and Yorkshire to Middlesex.
- ²⁸ J.R. Lander, “Council, Administration and Councillors, 1461–1485”, *BIHR*, xxxii, 177; J.C. Wedgwood (ed.), *History of Parliament: vol. i, Biographies of the Members of the Commons House, 1439–1509* (1936), 208; J.T. Rosenthal, “The Estates and Finances of Richard, Duke of York”, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* (1965), II, 180–1, 185; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1452–1461*, 85.

- ²⁹ Thomas Colt may have had two daughters by Joanna as well as a son. In John Colt's will (PRO: PCC: 18 Maynwaryng f.139), he mentions "my sister, Elizabeth Roseley" and "my brother [probably brother-in-law] Thomas Lisle".
- ³⁰ In 1436, John Trusbut held land in London valued at £12., Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (1948), 384.
- ³¹ Charles Parkin (ed.), *Blomefield's Norfolk* (1745), VII, 403–4; Bodleian MS B.129.41–48; *Early Chancery Proceedings*, Bundle 28, #28, for Joanna's fight against her grandfather's feoffees, and Bundle 71, #28, where a legal dispute over the Trusbut manor of Bulmarsh in Berkshire was instigated by Bernard and Alice Delamere after Joanna's death.
- ³² In February 1472, William Parr is described on a royal pardon as "late of Mintshead next Kirby in Kendal . . . alias William Parr of Netherhall, Essex, knight." J. Wedgwood, *Parliament: Biographies*, 663.
- ³³ Parr is specifically excluded from the April 1461 Act of Resumption passed by Parliament, *Rot. Parl.* V, 572.
- ³⁴ HMC: Report 7, 599b.
- ³⁵ For the use of plate as a medieval family's saving account see Sylvia Thrupp, *op.cit.*, 147.
- ³⁶ Susan E. James, *op.cit.*, 21.
- ³⁷ Anthony Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses* (1981), 68. Sir Geoffrey Gate, a Neville retainer, was lieutenant of the Isle of Wight in 1464 and governor of Calais in 1470–1. He was compromised in the Bastard of Fauconberg's pro-Neville rebellion in the spring of 1471 but subsequently pardoned by Edward IV.
- ³⁸ Jean Waurin praised Parr and his men for "le courage des gens du Nord à la bataille de Banbury et fait tourner la victoire du côté de Warwick . . ." Jean de Waurin, *Anchiennes Chronicques D'Engleterre*, 3 vols., Société de l'Historie de France, E. Dupont (ed.), (1858–63), II, 408.
- ³⁹ J.G. Nichols (ed.), *Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire, 1470*, Camden Society (1847), 14–16. All subsequent quotes to the end of the paragraph are from this source.
- ⁴⁰ "Richard" Rufford is probably a mistake for Robert Rufford, esquire, of Buckinghamshire, who served on commissions of peace and array for that county in 1471. He apparently switched sides from Neville to York as Parr did, *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1467–1477*, 285–6, 363, 608, and P. Holland, "The Lincolnshire Rebellion of March 1470", *EHR*, 103 (1988), 859, note #1, but the page references given in this citation are not correct. Robert Rufford died 27 November 1472 leaving a son and heir, Thomas Rufford, who was under age.
- ⁴¹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1467–1477*, 209.
- ⁴² Richard Salkeld had served as sheriff for Cumberland in 1461–2 and represented that shire in the Parliament of 1467–68. He was staunchly pro-Neville and his resentment against Parr kept him in the Neville camp when Parr went over to York.
- ⁴³ Thomas Neville, son of the Earl of Salisbury, had held the lieutenancy under the joint wardenship of his father and brother, the Earl of Warwick, in 1457, for the same sum. Parr's wages at times had to be gouged out of the Exchequer (PRO: E404/76/1/86, 16 March 1475), and at times were levied on assigned sources such as the Abbot of Waltham which probably – although not necessarily – made them easier to collect. See PRO: E404/75/3/63, 20 February 1474. Also, R.L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (1966), 116–17, and for the Carlisle garrison, M.A. Hicks, "Dynastic Change and Northern Society: The Career of the 4th Earl of Northumberland, 1470–89", *Northern History*, XIV (1978), 94.
- ⁴⁴ *Rotuli Scotiae* II, 422.
- ⁴⁵ For an analysis of the men of Warwick's affinity which Lord Fitzhugh raised, see: A.J. Pollard, "Lord Fitz-Hugh's Rising in 1470", *BIHR*, LIII (November 1979), 170–5.
- ⁴⁶ For a contemporary description of the following events, see: J. Bruce (ed.), *Historie of the Arrivall of King Edward IV* (Camden Society 1838). The quotations in this paragraph are from this source.
- ⁴⁷ Charles D. Ross, *op.cit.*, 176.