KATHERINE ROET'S SWYNFORDS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF INTERFAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND DESCENT – PART 1

by Judy Perry[1]

ABSTRACT

Katherine (Roet) Swynford's association with the family of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer has been the focus of much speculation. This article investigates some of the claims that have been made by examining the heraldry, lives, and offspring of the Roet, Swynford and Chaucer families. It will be concluded in the next issue of *Foundations.*

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The Chaucer connection

Katherine Swynford, nee Roet, is probably best known to students of English history as the ancestor of the Tudors via her remarkable liaison and eventual marriage to John of Gaunt[2], fourth son of Edward III and Philippa of Hainault. However, since Katherine's sister Phillipa was married to the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, she is also of interest to Chaucer-life scholars. Many of them have examined Katherine's connection to the *Swynford* family and have concluded that the status of her first husband's family raises questions about the matrimonial relationship between Phillipa and Geoffrey. The current study is an attempt to flesh-out the immediate Swynford family into which Katherine Roet married and, in the process, re-examine some of the claims of the Chaucer-life scholars.

The Swynford family tree has concerned many researchers, including Bentley (1831), Harris Nicolas (1833), and Cole (1911, pp.40-86). None were able to trace an ancestry beyond Hugh Swynford's father Thomas nor much of a descendancy beyond the occasional son or grandson of Hugh. Additionally, several Chaucer-life scholars, including Kraus (1932), Williams (1965) and Gardner (1977) based their research activities on the premise that Katherine married into a seriously wealthy, knightly family in order to examine events in the poet's life, specifically his marriage and whether he had any legitimate children[3]. Notably, Gardner (1977, p.156) remarks that Philippa Roet's marriage to mere valettus Chaucer '*looks exceedingly suspect*' because, as Williams (1965, p.45) notes, her sister Katherine '*had married into the old, landed, aristocratic Swynford family*'.

The question of Swynford wealth

An examination of the immediate Swynford family holdings c.1361 casts doubt on the assumption of Swynford wealth. The family held only two manors; at Coleby and Kettlethorpe

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[2] Katherine Swynford became third wife of John of Gaunt, the father of Henry IV of England.

[3] As will be seen later in this article, Elizabeth Chaucer probably was not the poet's daughter because John of Gaunt dowered her into Barking; Thomas Chaucer is doubtful because, after he died, someone (probably his daughter) put Thomas' aunt's (i.e. Katherine Swynford's) arms on his tomb instead of Geoffrey Chaucer's. Little Lewis Chaucer seems elusive and a second daughter, Agnes, may or may not be fathered by Chaucer.

in Lincolnshire. The Inquisition Post Mortem (IPM) for Thomas Swynford, father of Katherine's first husband, Hugh, is rather gloomy in its assessment: The soil at Coleby is hard, stony and uncultivated because of its barrenness; the dovecot and windmill are in ruins. In Kettlethorpe, the manor and meadow suffered periodic flooding from the river Trent[4]. The Swynford family holdings were neither of considerable wealth nor had they been long associated with the family: Sir Thomas Swynford and his wife, Nicholaa had bought Coleby as late as 1345[5] and Kettlethorpe, so vividly identified with the Swynfords of Katherine Roet, wasn't acquired until 1356[6], five years before Thomas' death and considerably after Hugh's birth. This description of the Swynford lands does little to substantiate Gardner and Williams' suspicions that Katherine Roet married appropriately well while her sister Philippa wed seriously beneath her, or for their suggestions that there were dark motives for an unlikely marriage to Chaucer.

What of Hugh Swynford's ancestry?

Although something is known about Sir Thomas Swynford, Katherine Roet's father-in-law, little is known about his ancestry. It has proved difficult to trace back the immediate family tree with confidence, despite the claim by Bentley (1931, p.156) that the Swynford family had been seated in Lincoln prior to the reign of Edward II[7]. Was Thomas Swynford the son or other heir of the Sir Robert Swynford who held the Burgate Estate in Suffolk as late as 1340[8]? Two members of the Swynford family are on record as owning the Burgate Estate. One, John, held it in 1311. His reproduced seal[8] shows three boars' heads on a field crusilly. The other Swynford lord of Burgate, the Robert in question, apparently bore arms similar to those known to be borne by Thomas and Hugh Swynford. Robert's reproduced seal shows three boars' heads couped on a chevron[9]. This tallies tolerably well with Thomas and Hugh's arms, recorded as '*Arg. on a chevron Sa. 3 boares heads couped, Or*' (Bentley, 1831, p.156). By 1340, but perhaps as early as 1316, the Burgate estate is in the hands of this Sir Robert Swynford. His arms show the cadency of a chevron to indicate that he is not the direct heir of the previous lord, Sir John Swynford, but that he is likely a near relation. By 1343, however, Robert has alienated the Burgate estate. If this Robert were indeed the father of Thomas Swynford, father of Hugh, this could help explain why the said Thomas needed to purchase what would ultimately become the family inheritance of this branch of the Swynford line; an inheritance that persisted until the early 16th century, when we lose sight of any further male heirs (Cole, 1911, pp. 65-67).

This Robert may be identical with the Robert Swynford, knight of Norwich, who, with his wife Margaret and esquire Sir Thomas Swynford, was granted '*plenary remission at the hour of death*'[10] in 1345. Could this last-named Sir Thomas be the Thomas, father of Hugh Swynford? The suggestion becomes more interesting because, in the mid-15th century, Catherine Swynford, a granddaughter of Hugh Swynford, married into the Drury family of

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4 22 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, Edward III, (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1971. First published 1933), vol. II, p. 176.

5 Public Record Office: C 143/275/21.

6 *Feet of Fines*, 30 Edw III, no. 8, as cited in Cole (1911, p. 47).

7 The motto of the Swynford family website (http://www.swynford.force9.co.uk/) is '*A Family Tree With No Roots*'. Paradoxically, there is no shortage of Swynfords in the medieval period; plenty of roots below ground but few enough trees above with which to connect them!

8 Farrer (1931).

9 Farrer (1931). However, as the sketch is not colored, the description '*arg. a Chev. bet. 3 Boars Heads coupe g may be more accurate*' (Gipps, 1894).

10 Bliss et al. (1893*ff*, Vol.III, p.20).

Rougham, Suffolk (Campling, 1937)[11], a family which buried its own at the parish church at Burgate. Bentley (1831, p.157) was of the opinion that Thomas had a brother, Norman[12,] while Cole (1911, p.42-43) believed that there might also have been a sister, Anna.

As for Thomas himself, there are records of a Thomas Swynford serving variously as sheriff of Bedford, Buckingham and Rutland in the mid-1340s[13]. He is noted as one of those sheriffs who made ill-use of their authority and who apparently encountered some troublesome pigeons[14]. One possible reason for finding him in Bedford and Buckingham, as Cole (1911, p.51) suggests, is that his wife Nicholaa held land there; the manor of Newton Blossomville.

The identity of Hugh Swynford's mother

Cole (1911, p.51) is convinced that Nicholaa, wife of Thomas Swynford, was the same Nicholaa, daughter of Sir Robert de Arderne of Drayton, Oxon., who had previously been the wife of Sir Ralph Bassett of Weldon. Cole's rational behind identifying Nicholaa Swynford with the Arderne family is one of interconnected family and property relationships. Joan, daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas Adern of Hanwell and Spratton from a collateral Arderne branch, married a Sir John Swynford, later styled Lord of Spratton in Northants.

This John Swynford is of interest to our current study for two other reasons. Firstly, his fine alabaster monument at Spratton is the first known instance of the famous Lancastrian SS collar (Gardiner, 1940, p.29; Goodman, 1985, p.73)[15]. Secondly, and as a matter of trivia, John Swynford, like Hugh Swynford, husband of Katherine Roet, was a retainer of John of Gaunt and both John and Hugh died in the same year[16]. Cole's main argument is that the marriages were an elaborate attempt to keep family properties in the family, a common practice, and that the manor of Newton Blossomville held by Nicholaa Swynford '*was a possession of the great Basset family*' (Cole, 1911, p.51).

However, a conflicting view is that Nicholaa Swynford and Nicholaa de Ardenne were actually different women entirely. While Thomas Swynford and Nicholaa did indeed in 1357 convey their interest in Newton Blossomville to Sir Ralph Basset of Drayton[17], other evidence seems to suggest that Nicholaa possessed these lands, not in dower from an earlier marriage, but in her own right. The Victoria History of the County of Buckinghamshire records that the Nicholaa who held Newton Blossomville in the 1340s was instead the daughter and heiress of

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11 Campling does not, alas, provide a source for his claim. However in the handwritten *Drury Family Papers* compiled in 1889 by Richard Montray, Drury states that this Catherine was the daughter of '*Sir William Swyneford*' by his wife '*Catherine Roel*'. Moreover, the arms given for Swynford do not resemble anything remotely related to boars' heads. Campling and Drury appear to have had access to two separate, but unnamed accounts inasmuch as they differ substantially in detail, agreeing only upon a descent from Katherine Swynford.

12 He may be identical with the Norman Swynford and his wife and others who were granted plenary remission at the hour of death in 1345 (Bliss et al. (1893*ff*, Vol.I, p.76).

13 Public Record Office: E 358/2; E 358/4;

14 Sir Thomas de Swynford and his falconers play havoc with the pigeons at Barton in 1355, in spite of the reeve's protests. Page (1904, p.87).

15 See, too, Salzman (1937), p. 105. Goodman unfortunately identifies the occupant of the tomb as Hugh himself but VCH and other sources seem conclusive that the tomb is that of Sir John Swynford of Spratton.

16 Salzman (1937), pp.100-102.

17 *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, 29 Edw. III., pp.194, 388, 390 & 391.

John and Amice Druel, who had granted the manor to her in 1311 for life[18], perhaps in anticipation of her marriage. The Druel family's connection with Newton Blossomville is further supported by the fact that two members of the Druel family were rectors of the parish church of St. Nicholas, Newton Blossomville in 1298 and 1340[19]. The matter of ownership of Newton Blossomville seems to be finally settled by the record showing that in 1311, '*William Costentyn came before the king, on Saturday after the feast of SS. Marcellinus and Peter, and sought to replevy to John Druel the said John's lands in Newenton Blostmevill and Clyfton, taken into the king's hands for his default before the justices of the Bench against John son of Arnald de Bukyngham*'[20].

Dating Hugh Swynford's birth

If Nicholaa, Thomas Swynford's wife, was not Nicholaa de Arderne, the young widow of Richard Bassett, this means we no longer have the difficulty of resolving the year of birth for her son Hugh Swynford based upon her supposed Bassett widowhood. Since, Richard Basset was married by 1332 and dead by 1339[21], this probably did not occur until 1338-39[22]. It is typically assumed that Hugh Swynford was born in 1340, the earliest date suggested by Thomas Swynford's IPM. Any theory that Nicholaa Arderne Bassett was Hugh Swynford's mother assumes an unseemly and hasty remarriage to Thomas Swynford and also ignores the historical connection of the Druel family to the manor of Newton Blossomville.

Considering Hugh himself, history assumes that the birth of Thomas, his son with Katherine, takes place within a year of their marriage. Hugh's IPM indicates that when he died in 1371/2, his son and heir, Thomas, was about four years old. This puts his birth c.1367/8 (Bentley, 1831, p. 157) and a likely date for his parents' marriage c.1366/7. However, in 1377 an interesting notice is found of Richard II, at his accession, exercising royal privilege in nominating a nun to the prestigious Barking Abbey. Her name was Margaret Swynford[23]; could she be an earlier-born daughter of Hugh and Katherine?

Margaret Swynford and Elizabeth Chaucer

The parents of the Margaret Swynford in question are not named. As girls most commonly entered the novitiate at the age of 13 or 14, it would seem that Margaret was born by 1363/4 (Galway, 1960, p.483). Interestingly, the same letters patent that nominate Margaret Swynford to Barking Abbey also nominate one '*Elisabeth Chausier*' to St. Helen's Priory in London. This could be the same Elizabeth Chaucer who is later dowered by John of Gaunt into Barking Abbey in 1381[24]. Coincidence? While it is *possible* that this

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18 Page (1905-27), p.423.

19 For 1298, William Druel is rector; Simon Druel holds the post in 1340 (Lipscomb, George (1847). *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, as cited at http://met.open.ac.uk/genuki/big/eng/BKM/NewtonBlossomville/rectors.html 20 Feb 2003).

20 *Calendar of the Close Rolls of Edw. II (1307-1313)* 4 Edw. II, p.355.

21 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls for Edward III 1330-1334*, 6 Edw. III pt. I, p.267; and for 1338-1340, 12 Edw. III, Pt. 1, pp.17-18 (pp.17-18); and 13 Edw. III Pt. I, p.237.

22 On 20 February 1338, Nicholaa and Richard are both referred to as living (*Calendar of Patent Rolls* 12 Edward III Part I, pp. 17-18). By March 30 of the following year, the same enfeoffment arrangement has been changed to reflect the fact that later son Ralph Bassett and his wife Joan are now the heirs of Nicholaa Bassett's father-in-law. *Ibid*, p.237.

Hugh Swynford is stated as being 21 years of age and more at his father's death in 1361, which indicates a birth year of 1340 or earlier. Of course, this may signify nothing more than the fact that Hugh Swynford was of age to assume his patrimony. (IPM Edw. III, vol. II., p. 176 #197).

23 Public Record Office, *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1377-81*, 20.

24 John of Gaunt's Registers [II] 1379-1383; #524, p.169, dated 12 May 1381.

Margaret is not the daughter of Katherine and Hugh Swynford, thus not the cousin of Elizabeth Chaucer, this link and the continuing history of interfamily dealings between the Swynfords, Chaucers and Beauforts (illegitimate children of Katherine Roet by John of Gaunt), imply that it is likely that the Margaret Swynford who is sent by the Crown to Barking Abbey, later becoming its abbess, may be none other than Katherine and Hugh's daughter.

Upon his accession and in the early years of his reign, Richard II relied heavily upon Gaunt in managing the country's affairs and was hence likely to do things to please him. This argument has been put forward (Loftus and Chettle, 1954; Sturman, 1961)[25]. to support the assumption that Margaret was either Katherine and Hugh Swynford's daughter or at the very least a close kinswoman.

The identification of Margaret as Katherine Roet's daughter may also help explain findings made in 1720 at Barking's ruins. One was the keystone of an arch carved with the name of Thomas Beaufort and the date 1430, the other was piece of masonry bearing the name of Thomas' brother Henry Beaufort (Loftus and Chettle, 1954, p.46 and (n) 282), two men who would have been half-brothers to Margaret. Thomas Beaufort is also on record has having left the Abbey '*a number of vestments*' in his 1427 will (Loftus and Chettle, 1954, p.46 and (n) 282).

If Margaret is indeed the daughter of Hugh and Katherine Swynford, this certainly calls for a new interpretation of the nature of gifts and payments made to Philippa and Geoffrey Chaucer. In 1381, when Elizabeth Chaucer was sent to Barking Abbey as a nun, perhaps in companionship to her cousin (Kirk, 1900), John of Gaunt is noted to have given a large sum of money to the abbey as a gift and to cover various unstated expenses[26]. In other words, he dowered Elizabeth into the small and prestigious institution, no small feat in itself. Barking Abbey was the religious house of choice for highborn women who were not to marry. Admission frequently involved the lobbying of a member of the royal family and/or the inducement of material wealth. Part of the prestige of the abbey, no doubt, was the fact that its abbess was first among the realm's abbesses, held the female stature of a baron, and would have served in Parliament had women then been allowed (Loftus and Chettle, 1954, p.55).

Daughter of Chaucer or John of Gaunt?

What concerns Chaucer-life scholars is that Elizabeth's father certainly possessed neither the social stature nor the wealth commensurate with the typical Barking admission, begging the question of why Gaunt would take it upon himself to secure Elizabeth's place there. Both the intent to place Elizabeth at Barking as well as the high financial cost of admission have invited the conclusion '*that one cannot help suspecting that Gaunt had a more intimate interest in Elizabeth*' (Williams, 1965, p.47). Another Chaucer-life scholar adds, '*obviously, if Elizabeth Chaucer was the illegitimate daughter of John of Gaunt, it would be natural that the Duke ... should take care of his own*' (Gardner, 1977, p.154).

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[25] Loftus and Chettle postulate that Margaret was certainly a kinswoman of Sir Hugh; Doubleday *et al* (1903-2001) pp.117 & 121. Sturman takes the position that Margaret is Katherine and Hugh's daughter but doesn't cite a source. Interestingly, while Elizabeth's admission to Barking resulted in a most munificent gift courtesy of Gaunt, it was Margaret who was later elected Abbess, in 1419, and who held the post for '*14 uneventful years*' until her death in 1433 (Loftus and Chettle, 1954, p.46).

[26] *John of Gaunt's Registers, 1379-1383* p.169 (#524). The editors of John of Gaunt's Registers , in noting his gift to then Barking Abbess Matilda de Montecute, state that she was '*said to be a daughter of Katharine Swynford by her first husband*' and cite Dugdale's *Monasticon* as a reference, p.113 (n)1.

These researchers support their arguments by backdating Elizabeth's birth to c.1367, assuming that she was of age to enter the novitiate at Barking in 1381. This is coincidentally about a gestation period after the first mention of Philippa, wife of Geoffrey Chaucer (Williams, 1965, p.43), at the time when both became recipients of decent pensions from Gaunt's father, Edward III (Williams, 1965, pp.44-45). Williams (p.46) argues that *the pension Philippa received on the eve of the Duke's departure, and the larger pension Geoffrey received when the Duke's child* (i.e. Elizabeth Chaucer) *was born, may be explained,* in addition to Gaunt's later dowering of Elizabeth into Barking.

However, the causal argument of Gaunt begetting Elizabeth on Philippa Roet, 'paying-off' Chaucer to marry her, and, a few months later, 'paying them off' again upon the birth of Elizabeth falls apart. She was fourteen in 1377 upon her admission to St. Helen's Priory, not in 1381 when she entered Barking, and so was more probably born c.1363. Thus, we must find another explanation for many of the 'suspicious' events involving Gaunt and Elizabeth Chaucer and the well-researched interfamily professional relationships outlined between Thomas Chaucer, Thomas Swynford and the Beaufort offspring by Harriss (1988)[27] seems a more compelling argument that explains the admission of Elizabeth to join her cousin Margaret at Barking.

Supposing that Gaunt had nearly contemporaneous sexual relations with the sisters Roet also presents a significant theological problem. What might today be seen merely as lascivious would have been considered positively incestuous in the 14th century. Kelly (1991) has argued persuasively that such an act, combined with Gaunt's admission of possessing spiritual kinship with Katherine by standing as godfather to one of her daughters by Hugh, would have nullified the resulting papal dispensation necessary for his marriage to Katherine and would further have subjected him to automatic excommunication and a life in the state of mortal sin; '*it is impossible to believe that he would have taken such a risk*' (Kelly, 1991). Gardner (1977, p.162) argues that perhaps '*Gaunt didn't give a damn about canon law*', a view that may be a result of Gaunt's many conflicts with English ecclesiastic officials and his association with John Wycliffe. While Williams (1965, p.50) finds the canon law theory unconvincing, it should be noted that the church could and did burn people for this offence (Christopherson, 1986, pp.33-35). Certainly, not one contemporary of Gaunt's saw fit to vilify him with the accusation, even though there were a fair number of detractors around who were willing to magnify, if not fabricate completely, evil deeds with which to castigate him[28]. It is more likely that Elizabeth Chaucer and Margaret Swynford were cousins born c.1363/4.

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[27] Swynford, Chaucer and the Beaforts also dealt in real estate acquisitions together: '*Demise by John Stodele, to Henry, bishop of Lincoln, John, earl of Somerset, Thomas Beayfort, Thomas Swynford, and John Daprichecourt, knights, Thomas Chaucer, John Rous, John de Boys, esquires, John Lucas, clerk, and Roger Louth, of all his estate in the manores of Sautre, Ravele, Gyddyngg, Luddyngton, and Roweye and in the advowson of All Saints church in Sawtre*' Public Record Office: E 326/3199.

It should be noted that one of Chaucer's most recent biographers, Derek Pearsall, does not believe that Elizabeth Chaucer is necessarily Geoffrey's (or even Philippa's) daughter, noting that '*Chaucer has also had daughters rather arbitrarily assigned to him. An Elizabeth Chaucer ... appear[s] in late-fourteenth-century records... but the supposition ... rests on no more than the coincidence of the common surname*' (Pearsall, 1992). Of course, we are then saddled with the task of trying to come up with an explanation for Gaunt and Richard II favouring some other Swynford and Chaucer girls with the honour as opposed to those within documented close reach.

[28] He was, for example, accused of poisoning his first wife's sister and co-heiress so that he could inherit the entire Lancastrian fortune rather than merely his wife's share; regrettably, for his detractors, Maud of Lancaster died of the plague (Armitage-Smith, 1904, p.143).

Katherine Swynford's offspring

Katherine Roet married Hugh Swynford c.1363; their daughter Margaret was born the following year and son Thomas followed in 1366/7. About this time, Hugh Swynford received letters of protection to join Gaunt in Guienne (Bentley, 1831, p.157). At some point, Katherine and Hugh evidently had another daughter, Blanche, probably named after Gaunt's first wife.

The elusive Blanche Swynford

Blanche Swynford is only known to us via two references, one of which is indirect (Bliss et al., 1893*ff.,* Vol.IV, p.545)[29]. The other, from 1375, shows John of Gaunt making financial preparations for her future – perhaps her marriage[30]. Blanche could have been born before Margaret (pre-1364), in the period between Margaret and Thomas' birth, c.1365, or after Thomas' birth (1367/8 to 1372). The presentation of the wardship to her mother Katherine in 1375 makes the latter period unlikely; it was not uncommon for children to die young and making dower arrangements for a female child under 10 seems a little premature. There doesn't seem to be any record of Hugh Swynford returning alive to England, thus we may assume a tentative year of birth for Blanche of 1366/7 but there are no other known references to Blanche Swynford, daughter of Katherine and Hugh, and goddaughter of John of Gaunt. Was the dowry for naught? Did she die before marriage, or could she have been the Blanche who married Gaunt's retainer Sir Thomas Morrieux, receiving on her wedding day a dozen silver spoons, saucers, two basins with ewers, a basket with a silver top and other items in March 1381, '*a magnificent gift from John of Gaunt*'?[31]

Unfortunately, as Gaunt's biographer Armitage-Smith (1904, p.461) has noted, '*the problem has been complicated by the existence of a second Blanche*'. Writing nearly contemporaneously (between 1370 and 1400), chronicler Jean Froissart identifies Blanche, wife of Sir Thomas Morrieux, as an illegitimate daughter of Gaunt by Marie de St. Hillaire[32]. Although Froissart's chronicles are undoubtedly an important monumental work, they are known to contain errors[33], both major and minor. Historians therefore find it difficult to accept matters presented by Froissart that are not corroborated elsewhere, including the identity of Thomas Morrieux's wife Blanche. While Armitage-Smith (1904, p.461) takes Froissart's statement at face value, going as far as to suggest that Blanche Morrieux '*was the fruit of a very early liaison*' in 1358/9, so as not to disturb the idyllic marriage of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, Harris Nicholas (1833, p.185) was of the opinion that Blanche Morrieux was Katherine Swynford's daughter, the illegitimate offspring of her affair with Gaunt.

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[29] The Papal Petitions simply indicate that Gaunt stood godfather to a daughter of Hugh and Katherine.

[30] Gaunt grants to Katherine the wardship of the lands of the heir of Sir Robert Deyncourt on the marriage of Blanche Swynford in 1375. John of Gaunt's Registers, vol.I, p.82, #181, and Vol.II, p.279, #1607. While not specifically referring to the Deyncourt wardship, Walker (1990, p.90) notes that, in general, the more profitable wardships awarded by Gaunt were received by Katherine Swynford. In addition to the Deincourt dowry, Gaunt grants her the wardship of the lands and heir of Elys de Thoresby and Bertram de Sumby in 1381. Registers, *op cit.,* pp.162, 305, 192-193, #503, 979 and 589.

[31] *John of Gaunt's Registers II: 1379-1383.* #558, p.183-4.

[32] As cited by Armitage-Smith (1904, p.140)

[33] As one example, he has Gaunt's daughter Philippa bidding her mother goodbye as she leaves to make her life with King John of Portugal; clearly, it was Gaunt's second wife Constance who was bade farwell as Phillipa's mother was already dead by the time of her marriage.

Blanche, wife of Thomas Morrieux

We have only Froissart's word that the Blanche who was recognized as a part of Gaunt's household in 1381 (Walker, 1990, p.13) and who presumably became the wife of the ducal retainer Sir Thomas Morrieux in that same year, was Gaunt's illegitimate daughter. There does not appear to be any period of time in which Blanche, daughter of Katherine and Hugh Swynford, and Blanche, daughter of John of Gaunt are both mentioned. The fact that Gaunt takes care of her wedding to a favoured retainer and that this Blanche is numbered as among his close household – which included Katherine Swynford herself – strongly suggests that Blanche was close to the duke. At least as close as Katherine herself, or her son Thomas Swynford, or the Duke's recognized offspring. It is possible that she was Gaunt's illegitimate daughter, by either Katherine or Marie St Hilaire but it is equally possible that she was Thomas Swynford's sister, daughter of Katherine and Hugh. Curiously, the same entry in Gaunt's registers that orders the production of the various silver items for Blanche Morrieux's wedding also contains instructions for the production of what Goodman (1994, p.12) calls the '*cosily domestic gift*' of a silver chafing pan, in addition to two silver and enamel tablets and other items as gifts for Katherine Swynford[34]. This adds weight to the suggestion that Blanche was Katherine Swynford's daughter as opposed to being the child of Marie St. Hilaire's.

Somewhat suggestive, too, is the treatment of the Morrieux by Gaunt. Sir Thomas Morrieux was apparently a respected military figure (Walker, 1990, p.50; Armitage-Smith, 1904, pp.461-462) and a chamberknight of Richard II (Walker, 1990, p.50), who seems to have been the only son of the Sir Thomas Morrieux of Thorpe-Morrieux in Suffolk[35]. Beyond Thomas Morrieux le Fitz'[36] military exploits with Gaunt, remarkably little is known of his family, which might suggest that it was not particularly well-off[37].

This would seem to make him a curious choice for Gaunt's son-in-law, even for a natural daughter[38], but a perhaps entirely appropriate choice for a daughter of the equally not-so-prosperous Swynford family. Despite the family's apparent lack of wealth, Morrieux nevertheless became one of Gaunt's highest-paid retainers, one of only a very few earning more than £100 per annum (Walker, 1990, p.91)[39]. As Walker (1990, p.91) notes, '*by any standards, these were substantial sums, roughly equivalent to the annual income of a prosperous knightly family ... they were exceptional*'. Most of the group were of noble birth but it is notable that the members of this income group who were of lower social status include Morrieux, Thomas Swynford and the above-mentioned Robert Ferrers of Wemme. Were Thomas Swynford not among the very highest-paid retainers, the best suggestion for finding Morrieux there might well be that he had married Gaunt's natural daughter, but the inclusion of Swynford makes this supposition less certain.

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[34] *John of Gaunt's Registers II*: #558, pp.183-184.

[35] His sister Mary married Richard Walkfare of Dersingham and Great Ryburgh, Norfolk, by 1356 (see http://papayne.rootsweb.com/d0006/f0000089.html and similar sites retrieved 15 Apr 2003) which is odd given that Thomas' date of birth is commonly given as '*about 1355*'.

[36] So-called to distinguish him from his father.

[37] See however, the brief outline of the Morrieux family (Harris Nicholas, 1833, pp.183-186).

[38] Prior to legitimation, Gaunt's other known natural daughter, Joan Beaufort, secured Sir Robert Ferrers of Wemme, one of the minor baronial Ferrers, as her husband.

[39] Also noted as being in the high-earner's club was Sir Thomas Swynford (p. 282). All in all, Walker notes four others in the £100+ bracket and an additional ten others with a fee of £100 or greater (p. 91), which included Gaunt's son-in-law Sir Robert Ferrers in 1392 (p. 269). In comparison, Geoffrey Chaucer earns £10 p.a. and his son Thomas Chaucer £20 p.a. (p. 266).

In June 1380, Gaunt granted Thomas and Blanche Morrieux £100 p.a. *for good services which they have done and will do*[40] and in 1383 he granted them an additional £25 6s 8d p.a.[41]. The Morrieux also leased a farm from Gaunt[42]. 1383 is the last time that Blanche Morrieux is mentioned in the records (Armitage-Smith, 1904, p.460)[43]. Thomas Morrieux appears to have died in Galacia before 5th May 1387, possibly making Blanche a widow, if she was still alive (Armitage-Smith, 1904, p.462).

To summarize, the suggestion that Blanche, wife of Thomas Morrieux was the same person as Blanche, daughter of Katherine Swynford by Hugh Swynford, and not the offspring of Gaunt and Marie St. Hilaire, is supported by the following:

- Gaunt helps secure Katherine and Hugh Swynford's daughter Margaret Swynford's admission into Barking Abbey via royal nomination;
- Gaunt retains Katherine and Hugh Swynford's son Thomas Swynford in the highest-paid eschelon;
- Gaunt makes arrangements for the marriage of Katherine Swynford's daughter Blanche with a wardship;
- Thomas Morrieux marries a woman named Blanche who is of Gaunt's household;
- Gaunt's order for the production of wedding presents for Blanche, wife of Thomas Morrieux, includes the production of gifts for Katherine Swynford.

*[To be concluded in Foundations **1** (3). Part 2 of the article will focus on Thomas Swynford (1366-1432), other members of the Swynford family and their links to Roet.]*

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[40] John of Gaunt's Registers, 1379-1383, #982, p.306.

[41] John of Gaunt's Registers II, #1009, p.312.

[42] John of Gaunt's Registers II, #1039, p.325.

[43] One unimportant reference to Dame Blanche Morieux in the Patent Rolls, a pardon for homicide 'at the supplication of Blanche wife of Thomas de Murrieux the King's knight'.

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