ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO THE COMPLETE PEERAGE

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This is the third article in an ongoing series on corrections and updates to information in **The Complete Peerage**.

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The Herons of Ford and Thornton

The genealogy of the Heron family of Northumberland in the late 14th and early 15th centuries has been a source of confusion to nearly everyone who has studied it, including J Brownbill, who wrote the account of the family in *The Complete Peerage* (Cokayne, 1926, pp.484-489). The roots of the confusion are the presence of five William Herons in four generations of the family, an entail which caused one of the William Herons to be succeeded by another as tenant of the manor of Ford in the 1420s, and the fact that there was subsequently a marriage between the children of these two men.

The pedigree given by Brownbill in *The Complete Peerage* is shown in Figure 1. The five William Herons have been numbered chronologically for clarity. The descent of the senior branch from Sir Roger, son of Sir William Heron I (d.1379), to his grandson Sir William Heron V (d.1425), is not controversial. Nor is the fact that Sir William V left an only daughter and heir, Elizabeth, who later married John Heron, the son of William Heron IV (d.1427/8), lord of the manor of Ford. It is stated that a papal dispensation was given for this marriage, which was presumably necessary because the parties were cousins, but the relationship between them is not stated[2].

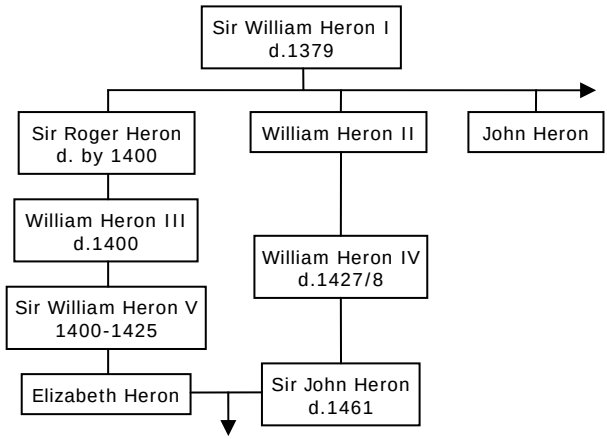


Fig 1. ***The erroneous pedigree of the Herons presented in The Complete Peerage***

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[2] The papal dispensation is noted in an abstract, made by Dodsworth, of the papers of the Heron family of Chipchase, where the marriage is said to have taken place 11 July 1438 (Oliver, 1929, p.107). No record of the dispensation appears in the printed Calendar of entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland.

Brownbill, noting that Ford was held by William Heron IV at his death, and had previously been held by Sir William Heron I, assumed that it had at some point been settled on a younger son. Putting together stray references to the tenure of the manor, he concluded that it must somehow have passed to William Heron II, the second son of Sir William I, and that William IV must have been William II's son.

This suggestion is certainly incorrect. Apart from its chronological implausibility (requiring two generations to stretch over 80 years), there is evidence to suggest that William II was dead by 1351, presumably without issue[3]. More seriously, the descent of the manor of Ford can be traced in the senior branch as far as Sir William Heron V[4].

In fact, in 1337 and 1340 Sir William I had settled Ford on himself and his wife Isabel, with successive remainders in tail male to their sons, named in the first case as Roger, William, John and Thomas, and in the second as Roger, William, John and Walter (Newcastle upon Tyne Records Committee, 1932, pp.94, 96, 97). Evidently, when Sir William V died in 1425, as a result of these settlements the manor passed to his cousin, William IV, as male heir, rather than to his daughter Elizabeth.

But what was the precise relationship between William Heron IV and William Heron V? Brownbill's reconstruction of William IV's ancestry was based on misinterpretations of records that really referred to the tenure of Ford by Sir William V and his father William III. But if Ford is set aside, and William IV's holdings in Whittingham, Thornton and Barton are examined instead, it becomes clear that William IV was in fact the son of John Heron of Thornton (d.1408)[5].

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[3] William II appears among the sons of Sir William Heron I in 1337 and 1340 (Newcastle upon Tyne Records Committee, 1932, pp.94, 96, 97), in both cases being placed after Roger and before John. In 1348 William Heron made an agreement for the marriage of one of his [younger] sons William, John and Walter to Cecily, daughter of John de Lisle of Chipchase (Oliver, 1929, p.113; in the event Cecily married Walter). But in 1351, in a dispute relating to the tenure of lands in Ford, six sons are named: Roger, John, Walter, Thomas, Robert and Andrew (Cokayne, 1926, p.485, citing De Banco Roll 367, m. 78, 228d).

[4] That Sir William Heron V (d.1425) held Ford is clear from the following evidence:

(i) In 1404 lands forfeited by Henry Percy in 1403 (including the manor of Ford) and the custody of William Heron son of William Heron, a minor, were in the king's hands, and were granted to Richard Arundell (Public Record Office, 1905, pp.309, 310). Brownbill interprets this as a reference to William Heron IV, but as shown below, he was the son of John Heron of Thornton, who did not die until 1408.

(ii) In a list of castles in Northumberland, dated about 1415, the name of William Heron, knight (chivaler), is shown against Ford and Simonburn (British Library, Cotton MS Julius F. X. ff. 155b, 156b). William Heron IV, who was never knighted, appears in the list as plain William Heron, against Whittingham (f.156).

(iii) Between 1415 and 1418, two thirds of the manor of Benwell (and the reversion of the remaining third) was settled on John Bertram and Isabel his wife, with successive remainders to William Heron of Ford and his heirs male, William Bertram and his heirs male, Robert Bertram and his heirs male, Margaret, sister of Robert and her heirs male, and finally to the right heirs of Richard Scot (Dodds, 1930, p.219). The William Heron of Ford referred to here must be William V, whose mother was Isabel, the daughter of Richard Scot (she having evidently remarried to John Bertram).

(iv) On 31 January 1426/7 the bishop of Durham granted the wardship and marriage of Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Sir William Heron [V], to William Heron esquire [IV], and a marginal note describes the deceased Sir William Heron as of Ford (Public Record Office, Kew, England, DURH 3/38, m. 14d).

[5] The William Heron who was killed in January 1427/8 was found by a chancery inquisition post mortem, taken 18 June 1428, to have held lands including two thirds of a fourth part of the

The lands in question had earlier been held by Sir William Heron I. In 1371, licence had been granted to enfeoff Sir William Heron and Sir John Heron [of Crawley] of the manor of Whittingham (Public Record Office, 1914, p.143). This was actually a moiety of the manor, and the quarter share held by John Heron in 1408 must have represented Sir William's half of the moiety. Moreover, Sir William's third son John had a grant of land in Thornton in 1377 (British Library, Lansdowne MS 326, f.45b), and was accused with his father in 1378 of breaking the house of Sir Donald de Hesilrig at Whittingham and depasturing his corn and grass there, and at Thornton and Barton (Public Record Office, 1894, p.311).

In the light of this evidence, it seems likely that Sir William settled the lands at Whittingham and Thornton on his son John. Chronologically, the John Heron who died in 1408 would probably be the son of this John[6]. The resulting Heron pedigree is shown in Figure 2.

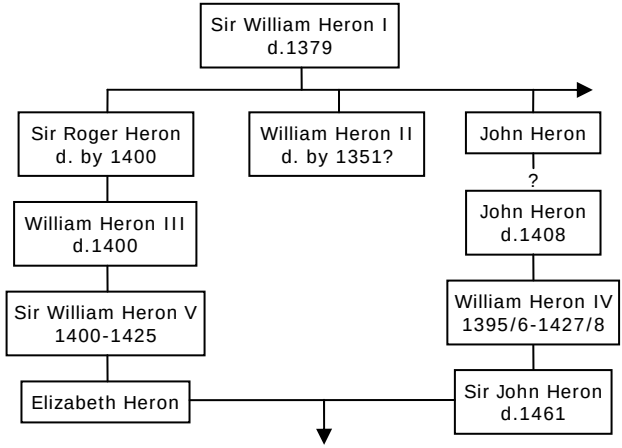


Fig 2. ***Suggested revision of the Heron pedigree***

Additional information

Further corrections to the Heron article in *The Complete Peerage* can be found at: http://www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk/cp/heron.shtml

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manor of Whittingham and of Barton and Thornton hamlets (Public Record Office, Kew, England, C 139/32 no 15). Clearly this William was the son, aged 12 on 12 March 1407/8 - and therefore born 12 March 1395/6 - of John Heron of Thornton, who died 5 Oct 1408, holding the manor of Thornton and other lands including a quarter of the manor of Whittingham and a quarter of the vills of Thornton and Barton (Public Record Office, Kew, England, DURH 3/2, f. 164; Kirby, 1992, no 504).

6 The final concord of 1337, already referred to, shows that Sir William I's son John was then living, apparently with two younger brothers. So he was born no later than the mid-1330s. William IV, the son of the John Heron who died in 1408, was born in 1395/6. On the evidence we have, it cannot absolutely be ruled out that John the son of Sir William was identical with the John Heron who died in 1408. But this would imply that he did not produce his heir until he was in his 60s. It is more likely that there were two Johns, father and son, as shown in Figure 2.

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