KATHERINE ROET'S SWYNFORDS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF INTERFAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND DESCENT – PART 2

by Judy Perry[1]

ABSTRACT

Part 2 of this article continues the study of Katherine (Roet) Swynford's association with the family of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer. This part focuses on Thomas Swynford (1366-1432), together with other Swynfords, and their links to the Roet family.

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Thomas Swynford: another illegitimate child of John of Gaunt?

Harris Nicholas's assertion (1833, p.185) that Blanche (Morrieux) was the illegitimate daughter of John of Gaunt by Katherine Swynford seems at odds with the fact that she is not mentioned in later legitimation efforts (Capgrave's *Chronicle of England*, p.261). The omission seems curious, but she may have died by then; she is certainly not mentioned in Gaunt's will in 1399[2]. However, others have suggested that Katherine and Gaunt had other children not mentioned in the legitimation papers: as late as 2002, Geoffrey Richardson all but explicitly states that not only was a supposed Swynford daughter illegitimate (whom he inexplicably names 'Dorothy') but the sole son, Thomas, could have been as well. Richardson cites Cole (1911, p.55) as a source, but Cole names Dorothy Swynford as Katherine and Hugh's *granddaughter*, not their *daughter*. Both are almost certainly incorrect; the name 'Dorothy' was not in use until a considerably later period in England. Nevertheless, the notion that one or more of the Swynford children was illegitimate has enjoyed some popularity thanks to the letters patent attesting to Thomas' legitimate birth, which he saw fit to request in 1411.

In these, Henry IV acknowledges the *doubt* held by *certain persons* in Hainault that prevents them from allowing Thomas his inheritance there (Bentley, 1831, p.158). This is the first indication of any doubts being raised about Thomas Swynford's paternity. Certainly, it was not questioned at his father's death, at which time it was acknowledged that Thomas was Hugh's heir and aged 4 years and more[3]. Thomas took his father's place in Gaunt's retinue by 1382 (Armitage-Smith, 1904, p.446), which apparently was a fairly normal thing to do (Walker, 1990, pp.33-37). He bore his father's arms[4] and occupied the manor at Kettlethorpe (Cole, 1911, p.59), as his father had. His descendants also inherited Kettlethorpe. It could be said that Thomas Swynford led the life that his father would

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1 Judy Perry is a lecturer in computer science at California State University, Fullerton
Contact details: judy_perry@mac.com or http://www.katherineswynford.net

2 In which Gaunt makes a bequest to, among others, *a mon tres chere bachelier mons'r Thomas Swynneford*. (Armitage-Smith, 1904, p.428). Of course, Margaret Swynford is also left unmentioned. It is difficult to ascertain the significance of such an absence. In Elizabeth of Hainault's will, for example, despite being the sister of Queen Philippa, the only relative mentioned is nephew Thomas of Woodstock (Bentley, 1831, p.24).

3 Calendar of the Close Rolls (CCR), Edward III, Vol. XIII, p.403.

4 Calendar of the Patent Rolls (CPR) 13 Henry IV, pp. 323-324.

likely have envisioned – but with a few extra perks. So, why the question of his legitimacy?

Thomas Swynford's life

Despite being handsomely remunerated by Gaunt and accepted within Gaunt's close family social circle[5], Thomas Swynford made only a fair first marriage to Joan Crophill of Nottingham. This occurred some time between 1383 and 1393; they were unmarried at the time of Joan's father's death in 1383 as he leaves her 100 marks in his will for her wedding (Gibbons, 1888, p.42) but by 1393, Joan and Thomas are married and in the receipt of an annuity of 100 marks per year from Richard II[6]. The *Dictionary of National Biography* outlines his career in the 1390s: in 1390 he is serving with Henry of Derby in Calais and went from there with him to Prussia (Lee, 1898, p.244). When Gaunt died in 1399, Thomas Swynford received 100 marks from his will. In the resulting struggle for the throne between Richard II and his cousin Henry of Derby (the future Henry IV), Swynford was a noted supporter of his step-brother Henry, and is said to have acted as constable of Pontefract Castle where Richard was kept in custody before dying under mysterious circumstances (Lee, 1898, p.244).[7]

The next few years were, on the whole, good to Thomas Swynford. In 1402, his household wine provision is courtesy of Henry IV, who *split his gift of 4 tuns at the prayer of Katherine the King's mother*[8]. Henry IV further granted him custody of the castle of Somerton[9]. By 1402, Thomas had also become sheriff of Lincoln. In this capacity, he worked alongside his cousin Thomas Chaucer, his half-brother John Beaufort and John's wife Margaret Holland for the procession that accompanied Henry IV's daughter, Blanche, as she made her way to marry the Count Palatine at Cologne that summer (Wylie, 1896, pp.26-27). For some reason, and perhaps ominously, this procession encountered serious cost-overruns, which prompted Henry IV to issue a terse letter that *his brother,* the Bishop of Lincoln (Henry Beaufort) was to be informed that he *cannot help with money at the moment* (Kirby, 1978, p.35)[10]. Still, by 1404 Thomas Swynford is captain of Calais for half-brother

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5 Thomas Swynford joined his half brother John Beaufort, future step-brother Henry of Bolingbroke, and aunt Philippa Chaucer on being admitted to the confraternity of Lincoln Cathedral, c.1386. (Kirk, 1990, pp.256-257). Compare, however, Walker's claim that this was a normal expected activity of a ducal retainer when Gaunt was within the retainer's province (Walker, 1990, p.82).

6 CPR Richard II, Vol. 5 (1391-96), p. 266. Joan's father's inquisition post mortem indicates that he held the manor of Bonyngton with a fishery, and some other minor lands in Arnale and Sneynton (IPM Richard II, Vol.XV, 1-7, p.376). He may be related to the Crophill family that held membership in the Trinity Guild of St. Mary (Harris, 1935, pp. xi, xx, 30, 62, 30, 26 & 49). It is worth noting that other members of this guild are John Say and his wife Elizabeth Wemme (whose son Robert Ferrers of Wemme married Joan Beaufort), Gaunt himself, and his wives Constance of Castille and Katherine Swynford.

7 Citing the chronicler Adam of Usk, who names the constable as Sir N. Swynford. As there is a Norman Swynford living as late as the 1380s, this identification is uncertain.

8 CCR Henry IV, Vol. II (1402-1405) p.60 and CPR Henry IV, Vol. II (1401-1405), p.218.

9 CPR Henry IV, Vol. I, p. 42.

10 *The king is greatly surprised that the money assigned for the marriage of his daughter Blanche, and for the expenses of those who are to accompany her overseas, has been used for other things. Her passage is consequently delayed, to his great cost, and even endangers the marriage, which might cause him great harm and disrepute. He and certain lords have advanced double the sum agreed, by letters sealed with his seal of arms. He orders them to pay all that is due without further delay or excuse, to save his honour and that of the said lords. He cannot help with money at the moment and the bishop of Lincoln his brother, is to be informed of this.*

John Beaufort (Kirby, 1978, p.52)[11], where for the next few years he is on official duty for Henry IV as one of two people negotiating a treaty with France and Flanders. His son, also named Thomas, was born by 1406 (Cole, 1911, p.62).

But this overseas engagement is the beginning of troubles that were to plague Thomas to the end of his life. His reports and dealings in Calais were apparently the cause of some international concern due to Thomas' lack of fluency in French (Cole, 1911, p.60) and, one might infer, his abilities as a diplomat. His father was not retained for diplomacy, and there is no evidence that Thomas, as his father's heir, received the education necessary to succeed in this role. Additionally, Thomas' term as sheriff of Lincoln was marred by the escape of at least one prisoner, for which he was fined[12]. The fine was forgiven; perhaps a realistic assessment of Thomas' financial condition, smoothed by his familial relationship with Henry IV and his half-brothers. That Thomas Swynford suffered financial problems is also suggested by a 1409 notice of his outlawry on account of indebtedness to a London draper[13]. In this same year, he is also only *late sheriff of Lincoln* and as such is pardoned by the king of £116 of the £135 he owed as sheriff[14]. Is it any surprise, then, that in 1411 he is making a desperate bid to try to obtain a reputed inheritance in Hainault?

The letters patent issued by Henry IV in response to this bid in 1411 have been interpreted differently by some scholars. Cook, for example, suggests that the letters attesting to Thomas Swynford's legitimacy were necessary because it was common knowledge at the time that, prior to Thomas' birth, his mother Katherine had already born Gaunt one or more illegitimate sons (Cook, 1919, p. 44-56). Others, while not of the opinion that Swynford had one or more older half-Beaufort siblings, interpret the document as indicating that his mother Katherine and her sister Philippa Roet were co-heiresses to a landed patrimony in Hainault, which ultimately originated from the Counts of Hainault and passed to their father, Payne Roet[15]. Recall that several Chaucer-life scholars find Philippa Roet's marriage to the unlanded Chaucer suspicious; clearly, they believe, sister Katherine's marriage to a Hugh Swynford, whom they regard as a knight of great landed stature, is indicative of the relatively high social status of the Roet family.

Evidence of Roet family wealth

The assumption of the ability of Payne Roet to pass on a landed patrimony to daughters Philippa and Katherine is further suggested by finding Philippa Pan in the household of the Countess Elizabeth of Ulster and by finding Katherine Roet in Blanche of Lancaster's house (Galway, 1960, pp.481-487; Kirk, 1900, pp.172-173[16]). While Payne Roet is never

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[11] This was apparently an appointment of trust for Beaufort; the previous year had witnessed *treachery which has arisen between the lieutenant and the soldiers there…* in Beaufort's absence.

[12] CPR Henry IV, Vol. IV (1408-1413), p.116.

[13] He places custodianship of his possessions in the protection of half-brother John Beaufort. CPR, Henry IV, vol. 4, 1408-1413, pp. 144-5. Thomas is still struggling financially as late as 1421: *Pardon, with the assent of the council, to the king's knight Thomas Swynforth and Margaret his wife, late the wife of John, lord of Darcy of all debts, accounts, arrears, intrusions, fines, issues and amercements...* CPR Henry V, vol. II, 1415-1422, p.378.

[14] CPR Henry IV, Vol. IV (1408-1413), p.24.

[15] Kraus (1932) and others. Turton's *Plantagenet Ancestry* attempted to show a descent of the Counts of Roeulx but the linkage with Payne Roet was not found (Turton, 1928). More recently, Brook (2003) suggested that Payne Roet may be identical with Gilles Roeulx. Cook, however, is of the opinion that the Payne Roet branch was probably not prosperous (Cook, 1919, p. 57-63).

[16] Here she is apparently erroneously described as *Blanche Swynford, demoiselles a les dites deux filles de Lancastre.*

described as having any social status higher than that of a knight, his ability to place his children in the households of England's royalty may be interpreted as suggesting a somewhat higher social status for Payne Roet. Furthermore, Froissart states that Katherine *knew much honour* and was *brought up in her youth* with Blanche (Froissart, pp.190-191)[17].

Problems with the theory of Thomas' inheritance

Ironically, additional family information that supports the argument of Roet wealth simultaneously threatens to destroy the argument of Philippa and Katherine as joint heiresses of their father and with it the theory that Thomas Swynford was claiming his share in 1411: Philippa and Katherine had other siblings. In 1349, another sister, Elizabeth, was pensioned into St. Waudru's at Mons (DeVillers, 1881, pp.521-522), one of Hainault's most prestigious abbeys, by the Countess Margaret of Bavaria, sister of Queen Philippa [Hainault] of England; Elizabeth died there in 1368 (DeVillers, 1881, pp.157-158). Most significantly, they also had a brother named Walter, who has been found in the household of Edward, the Black Prince[18] as well as in the Countess Margaret's (DeVillers, 1881, pp.753, 756, 765). Coincidentally, their father Payne Roet is also found in the Countess Margaret's household during the same period, in the early 1350s (DeVillers, 1881, pp.753, 756, 765). Walter Roet fits the Philippa – Katherine pattern of Payne Roet's offspring finding positions within the English royal family and the fact that Walter and Payne both served Countess Margaret seems striking evidence. Finally, Margaret's pensioning of Elizabeth Roet seems almost prescient of John of Gaunt doing likewise for Philippa Roet's daughter Elizabeth Chaucer in 1381. Walter, as the only son would apparently be Payne Roet's one true heir and this creates havoc for the co-heiresses argument – unless, of course, Walter Roet died before 1411 and left no heir.

Walter Roet seemingly vanishes from the records c.1355 (DeVillers, 1881), but there is a possibility that he did have a son, one who became intimately associated with Old St. Paul's[19]. Payne Roet, who also disappears in the 1350s somehow found his final resting place in St. Paul's after his death (Cook, 1919, p. 61)[20]. One might be forgiven for wondering how a man who received only scant mention in the land of his birth, and even less mention in his adopted homeland, managed to be buried in St. Paul's. Certainly, the plaque that commemorates him was not placed until after his daughter Katherine's marriage to Gaunt in 1396, as it refers to her being Duchess of Lancaster[21]. Even more interestingly, Dingley (1868, pp.134-135, 445) found the arms of Roet impaling those of the See of London, painted on the old cathedral's ceiling[22]. As no known bishop of London bore those arms, the suggestion has been offered that they perhaps belonged to a Dean of St. Paul's (Dingley, 1868, p. 135).

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17 Also noted without documentation by Armitage-Smith (1904, p.390).

18 *Register of Edward the Black Prince*, Part IV 1351-1365 (Anon, 1933).

19 Last known reference is May 1355 in *The Register of Edward the Black Prince,* Part IV 1351-1365 (Anon, 1933).

20 Here Cook repeats Dugdale … *jacet Paganus Roet, Rex armoron tempore Regis Edwardi tertii as well as Weever, hic jacet Pacanus Roet miles Guyenne Rex Armorum Pater Catherine Ducisse Lancastrie.*

21 It may be that daughter Katherine used her influence to have her father buried in St Pauls, possibly via John of Gaunt but then we must find some other, unrelated, reason to explain why the Roet arms were quartered with those of the See of London on Old St. Paul's ceiling along with other heraldry that dates at the latest to the first quarter of the 1500s. The arms do not appear elsewhere for any other family near as the author has been able to determine.

22 Dingley's sketch on p.445 shows plain wheels for Roet rather than the spiked Catherine wheels used by Katherine Swynford.

Certainly, the identification of a son or other heir of Walter Roet, who possessed an association with St. Paul's, is tenuous at best and rests solely upon heraldic arguments. The Roet arms on the ceiling of St. Pauls were recorded in the reign of Charles II by Dingley as *gules, three wheels argent* whereas Katherine's own arms on her tomb are clearly *gules, three Katherine wheels or* and the Roet arms on Thomas Chaucer's Ewelme tomb which impale Burgheresh are *gules, three wheels or.* Hence, we seem to have a discrepancy regarding the Roet family arms, a discrepancy which is made the more difficult to resolve as history has not preserved the arms borne by Payne Roet himself. Lamborn (1940, pp.82-83) in an examination of Thomas Chaucer's tomb[23] additionally notes *the occurrence of these arms on three bosses*, and, in Lee's record (Visitation Oxon., 1574, cited by Lamborn), in the windows, of the Divinity School, *in one place contiguous to the shield of the See of London*, which echoes the St. Paul's finding. Still, it remains to be examined which, if any, of the three renderings of the coat of arms for Roet are likely to be those of Payne Roet and his heirs as well as determining the reason for the heraldic variances.

It is sometimes assumed that Roet arms are found at Oxford's divinity school because of a connection with a descendant of Thomas Chaucer, whose grandson John de la Pole, 2nd Duke of Suffolk, was Steward of the University at the time of the Divinity School's construction (Lamborn, 1940, pp.82-83). However, as Lamborn has noted, while de la Pole's arms also appear at the Divinity School, their location is not near the Roet shield and hence Lamborn believes that the de la Pole connection is probably not responsible for the Roet arms' appearance at Oxford. Harriss (1988, pp.381-382) notes that Bishop Kempe, an executor of Henry Beaufort's will, whose arms also appeared on the ceiling of Old St. Paul's, received a request for a contribution for the construction of the Divinity School from Beaufort's estate. This would seem to suggest that the Roet arms at Oxford are a consequence of a connection with Henry Beaufort rather than Thomas Chaucer. The location of these arms with respect to those of the See of London also suggest a tie to the Roet arms at Old St. Paul's. But we still have a problem with silver wheels versus gold wheels versus Katherine wheels.

Payne Roet is often assumed to have been a descendant of a collateral branch of the Lords of Roeulx of Hainault (Cook, 1919, pp.45-56). The traditional argument has been that Payne Roet bore arms that were similar to those borne by the Hainault Lords of Roeulx, recorded by Rietstrap (1965) as *gu., a trios roués d'arg* (while those of the modern town of Le Roeulx are a lion passant holding a single silver wheel). The heraldic usage of a wheel for Roet is an example of a canting or punning coat of arms in which the heraldic device is a play on the name of the individual bearing the device; in this case, a single silver wheel for Roet/Roeulx/Ruet/Roelt, Latin for 'wheel'.

However, one problem with this argument of tying the Payne Roet family to a substantial Hainault patrimony is the finding of the Roeulx' of Hainault bearing not wheels for Roet but instead the lions of Hainault, for the family from whom they descended[24]. A second problem, as Cook notes, is that Fastre de Ruet, brother of the last Lord of Roeulx, himself

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[23] Lamborn notes, *No bishop of London nor dean of St. Paul's bore the name of Roet, and none is known to have borne the arms, but it is … likely that the shields in the vault refer to some contemporary dignitary of St. Paul's of the Roet family…*

[24] The *Wijnbergen Roll* gives *Or three lions rampant gules* for Eustache V de Roeulx and the same differenced by *a label of three points azure* for Thierry de Roeulx:

http://briantimms.com/wijnbergen/wnhainault.htm.

Siginificantly the same arms of *Or three lions rampant gules* is also given for Roeulx in the later 14th century *Armorial de Gelre* and the 16th century *Armorial Lalaing*:

http://www.heraldique-europeenne.org/Armoriaux/Gelre/F84v.htm.

felt compelled to seek his fortune fighting the Scots for the English in 1326, and died *in pecuniary straits* in 1331[25]. Thus while Payne himself may well have born a coat of arms consisting of one or three silver wheels on a field of gules, it remains uncertain whether this was done to distinguish his family as a collateral branch from the Lords of Roeulx or, perhaps more likely, to simply denote that he was from the general area.

That Payne did, indeed, bear a device consisting of silver wheel(s) on a field of gules is suggested by a 15th century Harleian MS recording coats of arms for that period, as noted by Ruud (1926, p.76), shows *at the foot of the page is tricked a shield of gules with a silver wheel which is to be 'qwartly with Chawcrys'*. A note in a later hand [sixteenth century] adds *this is ment for Sir Payne Roet…* Thus, within the lifetime of Payne Roet's grandchildren, a field of gules with a single silver wheel was explicitly identified with a marital connection to the family Chaucer and, it can be inferred, with Payne Roet himself as Chaucer's father-in-law.

As for Katherine Swynford and her three gold spiked wheels, if the coat of a one or more silver wheels on a field of gules is an example of a canting coat for the Roet family, what better canting coat for Katherine herself than the spiked wheel of St. Katherine? Indeed, Jeneatte Lucraft (2002) makes a case for a deliberate formation of identity by Katherine Swynford with St. Katherine of Alexandria. Again, as with Payne Roet, history seems not to have recorded any heraldic usage by his daughter Philippa, or by his daughter Katherine prior to her marriage to Gaunt in 1396. Perhaps a switch from a silver wheel to a gold one may have been considered apropos to her new status as first Lady in England (in the absence of a queen for Richard II).

This leaves the question of why Thomas Chaucer's tomb used three gold wheels rather than Katherine Swynford's three gold Katherine wheels or even Payne Roet's silver wheel or wheels. With specific reference to the finding of 'Roet' arms in the place of Chaucer arms on Thomas' tomb, Ruud (1926, pp.78-79) makes the point that Thomas' daughter Alice, Duchess of Suffolk, likely erected the monument to her father; *and to so great a lady the important thing would be to associate her father, not with an obscure civil servant … but with all the illustrious families with which he was connected … the Burghereshes, the Roets, the Beauforts, the Neville's… these people were somebody*. But it is not certain that Payne Roet was of great renown; certainly the chroniclers and contemporary records have precious little to say about him. It is more likely, therefore, that the 'Roets' with whom Alice Chaucer sought to identify with her father were those associated with Katherine Swynford, mother of the Beauforts. The frequent professional interactions between Thomas Chaucer and the Beauforts add weight to this theory. But if the arms with St. Katherine wheels were those of Katherine Swynford alone and not those of her father and her father's family, it perhaps wouldn't do for Thomas Chaucer to be using them as he was not her direct heir. But as the shield of gules with gold wheels was apparently so intimately connected with Katherine herself, the modification of removing the St. Katherine spikes and reverting to the plain wheel may have been considered an appropriate homage by Alice Chaucer.

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[25] Cook, p.59. Fastre's disposition of his wealth is puzzling. In 1322 he reportedly sold family holdings in Trith (gained by marriage) and Maing to the Count of Hainault, who in return granted him 'usufruct' usage; in 1325 he is said to have 'disinherited' himself to the Count and goes off to war with the English: *Ce sont deux dates fondamentales dans l'histoire médiévale de Maing , où la destinée de la communauté va prendre une autre dimension. En 1322, Fastreit du Roeulx vend au comte* ***Guillaume Ier de Hainaut*** *son fief de Trith et Maing, que le comte lui rend aussitôt en usufruit; en 1325, Fastreit, par " déshéritement ", remet son fief au comte Guillaume, reconnu comme seul seigneur de Trith et Maing. A partir de 1327, la seigneurie relève directement des comtes de Hainaut* (Trotin, *Les seigneurs de Trith et Maing*), as cited at:

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/maing.aspm/pages/chronologie.htm

The question of the silver wheels also requires further examination. The town of Le Roeulx in what was formerly Hainault uses heraldry that includes a single silver wheel held aloft by a rampant lion. Recall that the medieval family of Roeulx bore a shield of gules with three plain silver wheels. Recall, too, the 15th century manuscript ascribing to Philippa Chaucer the arms of gules with a plain silver wheel. An obvious question seems to be, 'Did Katherine Roet Swynford herself ever utilize a coat using plain silver wheel(s)?' We have the affirmative heraldic answer of Katherine herself in the vestments she left to Lincoln Cathedral. These consist of sets of various vestments containing decorations not only of her own three gold Katherine wheels but also the three plain silver wheels on a red field that was likely the device of her father[26].

All of this would seem to work in favour of a plausible argument that the Roet arms found on the ceiling of Old St. Paul's, impaled by those of a religious office and so which must be male by definition, are possibly those of Payne's son Walter Roet or his male descendant. If Walter Roet left a son associated with St. Paul's and perhaps, even more tenuously, a daughter (Haines, 1861, p.197)[27], there is little basis for assuming any inheritance in Hainault for Thomas Swynford, son of Katherine and Hugh Swynford, to claim. Moreover, there is Froissart's statement to consider; upon Katherine's marriage to Gaunt, he notes that *there was moche marveyle bothe in Englande and in Fraunce, for she was but of a base lynage ... suche a duchesse, come of so base a blode*...[28] Froissart's remark specifically relates to a comparison between Katherine's backgrounds and the more noble ancestries of Gaunt's first and second wives, but even the best that Froissart can come up with for Katherine is that she came from a knightly family[29] which, as we've seen in Hugh Swynford's case, doesn't necessarily indicate wealth.

The question also remains why Swynford's cousin Thomas Chaucer seems not to have made any bid to acquire an Hainault inheritance. Certainly, for those familiar with Thomas Chaucer's career, he wasn't likely to be reticent such matters. Kraus' assertion that it was because he was too busy proclaiming to the world that he was a bastard seems unconvincing (Kraus, 1932) inasmuch as he was a most dedicated social climber, anxious to marry well, hold stature in Parliament, and see his daughter married even better[30].

Thomas Swynford's later life

To return to Thomas' life, his wife Joan died sometime in the period of 1416-1421, having apparently given him the son – the Thomas Swynford already discussed – and perhaps another daughter Catherine, named for her famous grandmother, who married into the Drurys of Rougham, Suffolk. Outside of Drury family genealogy, this line of Swynford descendants is largely ignored. Catherine Swynford apparently married Sir

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[26] *Xx Fayre copes … having iij wheils of sylver in the hoodes … v coopes of Rede velvette wt kateryn wheils of gold…* are but two examples of such vestments (Anon, 1892).

[27] Here, Haines notes the monument in Beddington, Surrey, of Nicholas Carrew (d.1432) *and [2nd?] w. Isabella [Delamar, or Roet?] …* The tangled pedigree of Carrew is beyond the scope of this paper.

[28] Froissart's Chronicles, pp.190-191.

[29] Froissart's Chronicles, p.191; Cook (1919, pp.57-62).

[30] Thomas Chaucer married Maud Burgheresh; their daughter, Alice, ultimately became Duchess of Suffolk. It is likely that she erected the Thomas Chaucer memorial that was ironically responsible for giving rise to the claims of her father's illegitimacy. For two opposing views of Thomas Chaucer, his legitimacy, and his life, see Ruud, 1926 as well as Krauss' work. See, too, Harriss (1988) who deals at some length with the interrelationships between Henry IV, the Beauforts and Thomas Chaucer.

William Drury of Rougham by 1428 (Campling, 1937) and by her death in 1479 had produced sons Thomas, Roger, George, and daughters Catherine, Ann (both nuns) and Mary (Campling, 1937), whose monument, no longer extant, in the church at Thorndon, Suffolk, attested to the Swynford descent by displaying the Swynford family arms of boars' heads[31]. We return to Thomas and Joan Swynford's son Thomas, born by 1406, later.

Thomas Swynford's second marriage

By 1421, Thomas had married again[32], to Margaret Grey, Lady Darcy, who had been previously married but widowed in 1411[33]. In or about this same year, Thomas Swynford managed to commit some offence for which his wages were docked[34]. While Hunter (1855, pp.267-269) calls Margaret Grey a *young and well-endowed widow,* other evidence seems to indicate the opposite: a grant of £40 was made to her *in consideration of her poor estate and because she has the charge of maintenance of one son and four daughters who are not yet married*[35]. Furthermore, Thomas and Margaret are pardoned *of all debts, accounts, arrears, intrusions, fines, issues and amercements, in Ireland; and licence for them to absent themselves from Ireland for her life and receive all issues…*[36]. This adds to the documentary evidence that continues to paint a dreary financial picture of Thomas Swynford's latter years.

In securing a second wife, Thomas had managed to land the daughter of a minor baronial house; perhaps the rents from Ireland helped pave the way for Thomas' reclaiming the manor at Kettlethorpe and its related lands, as well as purchase additional nearby properties in and around East Ferry in 1426/7 (Hunter, 1855, pp.267-269). In this same year, which also sees his half-nephew John Beaufort and half-brother Thomas Beaufort prisoners in France[37] there is also mention of a son, William Swynford, who is specifically called the son of Thomas Swynford and Margaret Darcy (Hunter, 1855, pp.267-269.

Thomas Swynford jnr

However, by his 1432/3 death, Thomas Swynford snr apparently had little to pass on; his inquisition post mortem shows he had alienated Coleby and Kettlethorpe as he held no lands in Lincoln. His elder son, Thomas, fared perhaps better. He became esquire to his half-uncle Thomas Beaufort (Cole, 1911, p.62)[38] who remembered him in his will (Hunter, 1855, p.267-269). His other half-uncle, Henry Beaufort, the cardinal and sometime Chancellor of England, pulled some strings before 1427 to secure Thomas Swynford jnr's marriage to a wealthy Beauchamp heiress, an act which Harriss (1988) suggests may have been a serious abuse of his authority[39]. What these acts also signify,

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31 *In Thorndon church Suffolk in the chancel on a stone is the portraiture of a woman above whose head are these arms per pale france and Ingland qtrly a labell of 3 poynts and azure a chevron charged with 3 boars heads coupd, about the arms these words, these be the arms of dame Katherine Swinford* (Muskett, 1900).

32 CPR Henry V, vol. II, (1415-1422), p.378.

33 CPR Henry IV, vol. IV, (1408-1413), p.403.

34 CPR Henry VI, Vol. V, p.229.

35 CPR Henry IV, vol. IV, (1408-1413), p.403.

36 CPR Henry V, vol. II, (1415-1422), p.378.

37 PRO: C 47/30/9/14

38 Cole also notes that Thomas Beaufort remembered both Thomases in his will: a silver-gilt cup for the father and 50 marks to the esquire son.

39 Harriss cites Beaufort's efforts to secure Elizabeth Beauchamp for Thomas Swynford. CPR Henry VI, Part I, (1422-1429), p.455

however, is that despite novelist Anya Seton's[40] literary contrivance of hostilities between the Swynfords and Beauforts, the opposite is clearly the case; the record paints a vivid picture of family solidarity between Gaunt's legitimate heir, Henry IV and his descendants, the Beauforts and theirs, the Swynfords and the Chaucers.

Thomas Swynford, grandson of Katherine, left a son, Thomas, and daughter, Margaret, by wife Elizabeth Beauchamp. This Thomas may in turn have had a son who died young, while Margaret married into the Pauncefote family. Kettlethorpe finally came into the hands of William Swynford, Thomas Swynford's younger son by Margaret Darcy, who married Beatrice FitzWilliam[41].

The last of the Swynfords

William Swynford, the end of the direct male line of descent from Katherine and Hugh Swynford, apparently lacked some of the finer social graces that could have kept him out of trouble. Until 1459 he held the keeping of the manor of Torkesey, which belonged to the Darcy family, as his mother's heir during the minority of the legitimate Darcy heir. In 1459 his letters patent granting him the manor were revoked because he failed to appear when summonsed to explain his expulsion of the wards of the heir[42].

By 1483, he is dead (Cole, 1911, p.65), apparently without leaving any heirs; a somewhat ignominious end to what could have been a tale of a family's rapid ascension to the very core of England's power structure. John of Gaunt was clearly committed to family solidarity and actively sought an affinity that would not only serve the needs of his legitimate heir, Henry IV, but also his bastard-born Beauforts. Gaunt's relationship with Swynford matriarch Katherine Roet brought the Swynford children and their descendents into his familial orbit, and the record shows he sought their advancement as well – in this way to serve better both Beauforts and Henry IV.

Gaunt also strongly supported the Chaucer offspring, although his reasons are less easy to explain. Certainly, their mother Philippa – Katherine Roet's sister – served Gaunt's second, unloved wife Constance of Castile. Perhaps it was Katherine's fondness for his sister that resulted in Gaunt extending the hand of familial affinity to Philippa Chaucer and her children as well, by helping Elizabeth Chaucer obtain a dowry for Barking Abbey and retaining her brother Thomas Chaucer in his service.

The Swynford descendents of Katherine and Hugh, despite their lack of wealth, stood poised to command the same benefits and social advancement as did their non-knightly Chaucer cousins. Yet, while the Chaucer descendants maximised their resulting position, the Swynfords did not. Despite its connections and favours, the Swynford family never quite managed to rise beyond its original stature and its end is a sad rejoinder to the claims of grandeur supposed by Chaucer life scholars.

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40 Seton (1954) wrote a fictional account of the life of Katherine Swynford.

41 http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~monticue/Woodruff_Line_Kent_England.htm; http://www.uftree.com/UFT/WebPages/Tonya_Zoch_Hettler/ZCHHTTLR/d5/i0002240.htm; Beatrice married secondly Sir Richard Woderove of Woolley.

42 CPR Henry VI, Vol. VI (1452-1461), p.472.

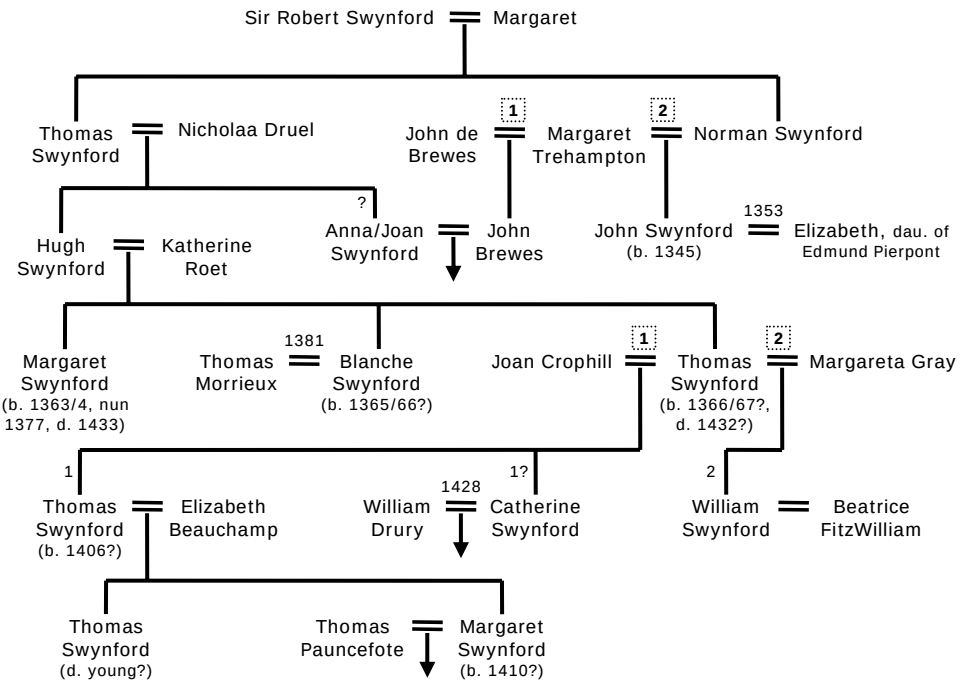


Fig 1. ***The Descendants of Sir Robert Swynford***

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