

# Sir Richard de la Ryvere (d. 1334–37): a Berkshire Bastard

Bridget Wells-Furby

Much can be learned about a society by study of the apparent outsiders. For the landholding society of late medieval England there were no such overtly 'outside' outsiders as bastards because under the common law the crucial legal distinction of illegitimacy was that a bastard could not inherit land. In a legal context he, or she, was therefore entirely excluded from this society; in reality, and in individual circumstances, it might be very different. While the composition of the upper ranks of society, those who might be described as the aristocracy, was largely based on the inheritance of land it was far from impermeable. Individuals who were not born within it might make their way into it by military or administrative service to kings, royal princes, or other magnates, or by successful careers in the law or the Church. These options were open to bastards but, owing to developments within the land law during the thirteenth century which allowed landholders to evade the limitations of the common law, they might also benefit from settlements which gave them a landed position.

A recent study by Helen Matthews of illegitimacy within English landed society between c. 1285 and c. 1500 has revealed the wide range of expressed attitudes to bastards during these two centuries.<sup>1</sup> It naturally excludes those, who may have been many, who were not recognized in any way by their fathers because for this very reason, at this period, they have left no record. Nevertheless, within the proportion who were recognized in some way provision ranged from a minimal cash bequest, which might or might not be intended to pay for their education, to full establishment as the heir. Whatever the nature of the support they

1 Helen Sarah Matthews 'Illegitimacy and English Landed Society c.1285–c.1500', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London (2013). This paper is written entirely within the context of this thorough and much-needed work.

received, it is quite clear that there was no social stigma attached to bastardy which might be a substantial hindrance. An illegitimate son who was provided with an education might rise to the highest possible positions in the law or the Church;<sup>2</sup> one who was provided with a landed estate might take a place within local or national society which was appropriate to that estate.<sup>3</sup> With or without these advantages, one who proved competent and useful in service might become as highly trusted and valued a servant as anyone of legitimate birth. As has been found to be the case with married women, their legal position did not in any way reflect the practical reality of their lives and opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

This paper will look at the family background and career of Sir Richard de la Ryvere, illegitimate son of a Berkshire knight of only modest means, who rose high in the service of Henry of Lancaster (d. 1345). Ryvere's career can largely be traced within the usual published public records but his background is revealed by a number of documents within the extensive archive of medieval records at Berkeley Castle (Gloucestershire) and he was not one of those who formed part of Helen Matthews's study. He provides further nuances to the range of attitudes revealed there. It is first necessary, however, to distinguish him from another man of the same name which whom he has been confused. This other Richard was a younger son of Sir Richard and younger brother of Sir John de la Ryvere (d. 1314) of Tormarton (Gloucestershire) and several other manors in Gloucestershire and Somerset.<sup>5</sup> This Sir Richard was granted the small manors of Hampton and Westrop (Wiltshire) by his mother for his life and his wife Joan

- 2 Laurence Booth, Archbishop of York (d. 1480), was the illegitimate son of John Booth (d. 1422), and John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England (d. 1452), was the illegitimate son of Humphrey Stafford of Southwick (d. 1413): H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 60 vols (Oxford, 2004–) [hereafter ODNB] VI, pp. 626–28, LII, pp. 55–57.
- 3 See, for instance, Nicholas lord Meinill (d. 1341), Sir Nicholas Stafford (d. 1394) and Sir Alfred Trussell (d. c. 1420): *The Complete Peerage*, 14 vols (1910–98), edited by G.E. Cockayne, VIII, pp. 632–34; J. S. Roskell, Linda Clark and Carole Rawcliffe (eds), *The House of Commons, 1386–1421*, 4 vols (Stroud, 1992) [hereafter *House of Commons*], IV, pp. 442–44, 664–66.
- 4 A caveat needs to be entered here as this applied only to bastard sons. Bastard daughters, if not placed in a nunnery, were, it would seem, likely to be married to husbands who were inferior to those to which legitimate daughters might have aspired.
- 5 *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem and other Analogous Documents preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1904–) [hereafter CIPM], V, no. 505; TNA, CP25/1/77/66 no. 267.

inherited the manor of Sturden, near Bristol (Gloucestershire).<sup>6</sup> It was probably these two brothers who were the Sir John and Sir Richard de la Ryvere found in the retinues of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, for two reasons.<sup>7</sup> It was Sir John of Tormarton, bearing the Tormarton family's arms of *azure, two bars dancetty or*, who served at the Dunstable tournament in 1309 with a number of Pembroke retainers under the Hastings brothers, Pembroke's nephews.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, Sir John's service with Pembroke ceased after 1314, the year in which Sir John of Tormarton died. The Richard who continued to serve with Pembroke until Pembroke's death was presumably Sir John's younger brother. Pembroke's biographer assumed that Sir John and Sir Richard were brothers but also assumed that it was this same Richard who was the Lancaster retainer.<sup>9</sup> This was not the case as Sir Richard of Hampton and Sturden was dead by 27 February 1332 while the Lancaster retainer was still alive in 1333 and probably February 1334. Furthermore, Richard of Hampton was married to Joan in 1317 when she inherited Sturden and she lived on until 1361<sup>10</sup> while our Richard, the Lancaster retainer, is recorded as married to Sarah in 1312–3, 1319, 1322, 1324, and 1331.

- 6 CIPM, VI, no. 765, VII, no. 448, XI, no. 179, 256; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward III*, 16 vols (London, 1891–1916) [hereafter CPR Edward III], I, pp. 80, 472, IV, p. 242. Also see Nigel Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981), p. 228.
- 7 J.R.S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence Earl of Pembroke 1307–1324: Baronial Politics in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 102, 134, 151–52, 256, 296, 310–11. Richard served with Pembroke until 1300 and again in 1313, 1318, and 1322. The earlier appearances may have been the elder Richard, father of John (d. 1314) and Richard (d. 1332).
- 8 A. Tomkinson, 'Retinues at the Tournament of Dunstable, 1309', *English Historical Review* 74 (1959), 83–84. The arms were borne by the elder Sir Richard c.1285 and also appear on the seal of his grandson Sir John de la Ryvere in 1351: G.J. Brault (ed.), *Rolls of Arms Edward I, 1272–1307*, 2 vols (London, 1997), II, p. 359, Berkeley Castle Muniments [henceafter BCM], GC3370. Confusingly, the arms of John de la Ryvere of Tormarton appear under Berkshire in the Parliamentary Roll of Arms: F. Palgrave, *The Parliamentary Writs and Writs of Military Summons*, 2 vols (London, 1827–34), I, pp. 410–20, no. 315. There was yet a third Richard de la Ryvere with Berkshire connections, Richard of East Mersea (Essex) and Coldridge (Berkshire). This Richard was dead by May 1332 leaving a widow Alice and a son Robert: *Calendar of the Close Rolls... [of] Edward III*, 14 vols (London, 1896–1913) [hereafter CCR Edward III], II, pp. 465, 472; CIPM, VII, no. 447.
- 9 Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, pp. 256–57.
- 10 CIPM, VI, no. 765, XI, no. 256.

## I The Ryvere Family

Our Sir Richard was the son of Sir William de la Ryvere (d. 1301) of Beedon (Berkshire). As is often the case, he is not specifically identified as a bastard but this is almost certain because in family documents he occurs as son of Sir William but also as 'son of Sara de Middleton'. Maternity being so much more capable of proof than paternity, bastards were commonly identified by their mothers in these circumstances as, for instance, was Nicholas (d. 1341), son of Nicholas Meinill (d. 1322) and Lucy de Thweng.<sup>11</sup> The Ryvere family was of gentle status and was modestly prosperous having held the manor of Beedon under the abbots of Abingdon since Domesday.<sup>12</sup> Beedon was said to be worth £17 a year in an inquisition *post mortem* of 1327 but this is likely to be underestimated because as late as 1435–8 it was worth nearly £20.<sup>13</sup>

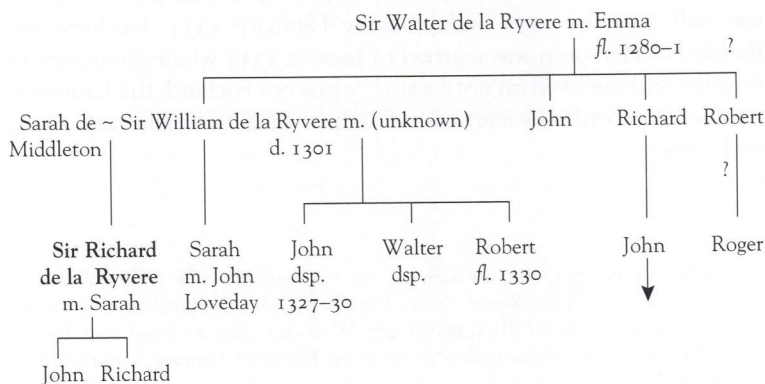


Figure 1: Conjectural pedigree of the de la Ryvere family

Sir William was probably the son of Walter de la Ryvere, who was holding Beedon in 1242–3, and had brothers John and Richard, and possibly Robert.<sup>14</sup> Richard had the manor of Wootton Rivers

11 See, for instance, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward II*, 5 vols (London, 1894–1904) [hereafter CPR Edward II], II, p. 261.

12 *Victoria History of the County of Berkshire*, 5 vols (London, 1906–24) [hereafter VCH Berkshire], IV, p. 40.

13 TNA, C135/1/12, SC12/18/46.

14 *Liber Feodorum: the Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill*, 3 vols (London, 1920–31), II, pp. 843, 846, 853. John son of Sir Walter de la Ryvere granted lands in Beedon to the vicar who in 1301–10 granted them to our Sir Richard: B. Wells-Furby, *The Great Cartulary of Berkeley Castle* (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Gloucestershire Record Series 28 (2014)) [hereafter *Great Cartulary*], no. 32.

(Wiltshire),<sup>15</sup> and probably the lands in Hampstead Sifrewast, Bothampstead, and Ashden (Berkshire) which his son John alienated by a fine of 1312.<sup>16</sup> A Robert de la Ryvere occurs in Lambourn (Berkshire) in the 1290s and later and may have been the father of Roger de la Ryvere;<sup>17</sup> Robert and Roger were involved in 1308 in settlements of Lambourn lands with Sir William's son Sir Richard. Another branch of the family settled at Great Hodcutt, in the parish of West Ilsley which was adjacent to Beedon, the earliest of which appears to be Walter de la Ryvere, living in 1324 and 1326.<sup>18</sup> This was probably a kinsman rather than Walter son of Sir William (d. 1301) as Walter probably died without issue by 1330 whereas the cadet branch remained at Hodcutt for some time.<sup>19</sup> These family details are important to establish the economic standing of the family which produced Sir Richard the bastard. They show that while the mid-thirteenth century Sir Walter had been possessed of a number of substantial properties in Berkshire and Wiltshire, these had largely been dispersed between his two or three sons. The various cadet branches held lands which were probably sufficient to enable them to remain within 'gentle' society but hardly enough for them to play a role of any prominence and it seems likely that the eldest, Sir William (d. 1301), had been left with little more than the principal patrimonial manor of Beedon, although it is unwise to draw firm conclusions.

15 The manor of Wootton Rivers (Wiltshire), which had been granted by William Marshal to Sir Walter's grandfather by 1202, was held by his widow Emma and son William in 1280-81 but passed to Walter's son Richard (d. by 1304) and to his son John (d. c.1314) and a cadet line descended from him: *Victoria History of Wiltshire* (London, 1953- ) [hereafter VCH Wiltshire], XVI, p. 232; *Pedigrees from the Plea Rolls. Collected from the Pleadings in the Various Courts of Law. A.D. 1200 to 1500*, edited by G Wrottesley (s.l., s.d.), p. 530.

16 TNA, CP25/1/9/41 no. 1. John son of William de la Ryvere endorsed his claim. Richard witnessed an undated Beedon charter for Sir William and another alongside him in 1288, and a charter for the neighbouring family of Peasemore before 1280: *Great Cartulary*, nos. 27, 204, 206.

17 *Great Cartulary*, nos. 172, 178, 223, 225, 304.

18 TNA, CP 25/1/10/50 no. 21, CP 25/1/10/51 no. 3.

19 The legitimate sons of Sir William are named in the order John, Walter, and Robert in the settlement of Denchworth by Sir William in 1301 and, with the insertion of Sarah Loveday, in the same order in the settlement of Denchworth in 1312 (see below). If, as seems likely, they were named in order of age and therefore Walter was older than Robert, then he had died without issue by 1330 as Robert was John's heir. For the cadet branch at Hodcutt see TNA, CP25/1/11/61 no. 21, 64 no. 32; VCH Berkshire, IV, p. 35; *Great Cartulary*, nos. 10, 21-23.

In terms of his family background it was of greater importance to Sir Richard that, as well as the relationship with his mother Sarah de Middleton, Sir William was also married as he had legitimate sons John, Walter, and Robert. They also had a sister Sarah who, on account of her name, may have been a daughter of Sarah de Middleton. Sir William's wife is unknown and Sarah de Middleton cannot be positively identified.<sup>20</sup> It would appear that Sir Richard was some years older than his eldest half-brother John, who was a minor when their father died. As will be seen, it is possible that Sir William had married Sarah after the birth of Richard, and possibly of Sarah if she too was illegitimate.

It is apparent from the arrangements Sir William made for the disposition of his lands that, despite his illegitimate birth, Richard was highly esteemed by his father. There is no record of any direct provision for the two younger legitimate sons. By contrast it would seem that Sir William acquired a holding of land in Denchworth for his bastard and on 26 March 1301 this was settled on Richard and his issue with remainders to John, Walter, and Robert in successive tail general.<sup>21</sup> Richard was also, presumably earlier, granted a virgate of land in Beedon and the wardship of two Beedon heiresses by undated charters.<sup>22</sup> It is remarkable enough that Sir William should choose to invest some of his limited resources in acquiring the Denchworth holding for the benefit of his bastard son while apparently doing little or nothing for his two younger legitimate sons, although this may be partly explained by their youth at his death. His arrangements with respect to the principal family manor of Beedon were even more remarkable.

In May 1301, shortly before his death, Sir William entrusted Beedon to Richard for his under-age legitimate brother John. In what may have been a deathbed action, William granted the manor to John and to

20 The only Middleton known to have been connected with Beedon and the Ryveres was William de Middleton who was in 1310 appointed by Warin de Lisle as his attorney to receive seisin of lands in Beedon from Richard de la Ryvere and was in the same year presented to the church of Mundford (Norfolk) by Lisle: *Great Cartulary*, no. 6; Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 11 vols (London, 1805–10), II, p. 246.

21 British Library, London, Add. Chart. 6093. Richard is here identified as son of Sarah de Middleton. According to the VCH account, there is no record of an earlier Ryvere presence in Denchworth so it would seem that Sir William acquired this holding.

22 *Great Cartulary*, nos. 31, 33. In one of these charters he is called 'Richard his [William's] son de Rypariis'.

Richard and the heirs of John, the grant being accompanied by another on the same day to Richard for life with remainder to John and his heirs.<sup>23</sup> This settlement reveals an interesting attitude by Sir William. Richard was almost certainly older than his legitimate brothers and William's eldest son but not his heir at law because of his illegitimacy. Nevertheless, William appears to have felt that Richard had some claim to the family's chief manor and resolved the dilemma by giving Richard a life interest but reserving the descent to the legitimate line. Nothing quite like this was found by Helen Matthews in her extensive study and it suggests the possibility that Richard and John had the same mother, Richard having been born before the marriage.

The attitude to bastard sons whose fathers also had legitimate sons varied widely although there is no known instance of a bastard being preferred to a legitimate son.<sup>24</sup> Some bastards were treated in a comparatively niggardly fashion but it was perhaps most frequently the case that the bastard was treated very much as any other non-inheriting son might have been. There are cases where the father subsequently married the mother of his bastard sons and in these cases he very often tried to establish them as his heirs, some more successfully than others.<sup>25</sup> Matthews found one example of a case where a father married his mistress after the birth of one son and went on to have another, legitimate, son by her. This was Sir Theobald Trussell (d. 1368) of Flore who had a son, Alfred, and a daughter by his mistress Katherine before marrying her and having a legitimate son John.<sup>26</sup> In this instance, the bulk of the estate passed to John but one manor was detached for Alfred whose position was further enhanced by his marriage to the daughter and heir of a kinsman, Sir William Trussell (d. 1380) of Kibblestone. It would seem, therefore, that Theobald's marriage to Alfred's mother did not make any difference to the usual rule of bastards being treated like a non-inheriting son, except perhaps that some particular effort may have been made to marry him to the heiress although a marriage such as this was not infrequently employed to provide for bastards.<sup>27</sup> The

23 *Great Cartulary*, nos. 2–3. Richard is here called son of Sarah de Middleton.

24 There are, however, examples of bastard sons being preferred to legitimate daughters in the Kerdiston and Argentine families: Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', pp. 114–17.

25 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', pp. 114–15, 142.

26 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', p. 104.

27 See, for instance, Nicholas Stafford, Robert Allington, and Thomas Berkeley of Tickenham: Matthews 'Illegitimacy', pp. 53, 105; B. Wells-Furby, *The Berkeley Estate 1281–1417: its Economy and Development*, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Bristol and Gloucestershire Monographs 1 (2012), pp. 258–59.

Ryvere arrangement treated the bastard son much more as if he had been legitimate although not to the extent of giving him a hereditary interest in the family manor over that of his legitimate brother.

There are, however, a few other cases where a bastard son was entrusted with lands during the minority of a legitimate brother, even where there is no indication that the legitimate and illegitimate sons had the same mother. When Sir John Pilkington (d. 1479) made his will in 1478 his legitimate son Edward was a minor and he gave custody during the minority of one manor and other lands to his illegitimate son Robert who was probably older than Edward; once Edward reached the age of 24 Robert was to have other specified lands.<sup>28</sup> According to John Barnard's will of 1485, his probably illegitimate son Thomas was to have the income from one manor during the minority of the legitimate son and heir.<sup>29</sup> Pilkington and Barnard both evidently expected their bastard sons to be content to abide by these arrangements. The Ryvere settlement was again more extreme than these as it gave the bastard Richard a life interest in the manor in conjunction with his legitimate brother. Something of this may, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that Sir William de la Ryvere was far less wealthy than Trussell, Pilkington, and Barnard; he had only the one principal manor and therefore far less flexibility in making arrangements.

It is, therefore, all the more surprising that Richard did not retain the manor in his own hands. On 16 July 1301, two months after the settlement of Beedon and probably after Sir William's death, he granted his life interest in Beedon to Warin de Lisle, a Berkshire knight of higher standing than the Ryveres. The grant was made on rather unusual terms which were laid out in an indenture.<sup>30</sup> Warin would have the custody of John and his marriage, John having the right and fee of the manor after Richard's death, so that John would be married to Alice daughter of Philip Lucyan, or another without disparagement with the advice of John's friends.<sup>31</sup> Lisle was to sustain the couple until John was of age and then hand over the manor to him. If John married himself against the will of Warin then Warin was to retain the manor until he was satisfied for the marriage. Warin was also to support Sarah,

28 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', pp. 111–2. Robert also had the reversion of the lands settled on Edward in tail male and duly inherited them on Edward's death in 1486.

29 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', p. 112.

30 *Great Cartulary*, nos. 4–5. Richard is here described as Richard de la Ryvere, son of Sarah de Middleton, and as brother of John.

31 Philip Lucyan married Lisle's sister Margery so Alice was presumably Warin's niece: BCM, GC1429.

sister of John and Richard, until she joined a nunnery and if Warin arranged for her to become a nun then Richard or his friends would bear half the costs, although Sarah might not take this course. If Warin was impleaded for the manor then Richard was bound to repay his expenses in defending the suit up to £100.

No consideration is mentioned. It is unlikely that there was none but, whatever Richard received from Lisle, Sir William's trust in Richard to deal honourably by his younger but legitimate brother was amply justified. He certainly had no intention of retaining an interest in the manor after John had reached full age, despite the life interest granted by his father. John later alienated the manor entirely to Lisle as on 29 September 1310, presumably after he had reached full age, he quitclaimed it to Lisle.<sup>32</sup> Lisle also acquired from Richard other holdings in Beedon and its hamlets, some probably in or before 1306 and some in 1310.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, Richard was increasing his holding in Denchworth as in January 1310 he acquired the property there of Sir John de Charlton.<sup>34</sup> After alienating Beedon, John de la Ryvere may have been left with very little land but two years later by a fine of November 1312 Richard gave him his Denchworth holding, granting it to John and his issue with successive remainders to John Loveday and Sarah his wife and their issue, and to Walter and Robert in successive tail general, and finally to Richard and his heirs.<sup>35</sup> It is likely, given the coincidence of name and that this was evidently a family settlement, that Sarah Loveday was Sarah, sister of Richard and John. The fine largely repeated the settlement made by Sir William in 1301 but inserted Sarah Loveday into the succession between John and Walter. John was holding Denchworth in 1321 but, anticipating his childless death, he passed it on to John son of John Loveday in 1327.<sup>36</sup> John de la Ryvere was alive in April 1327 when he quitclaimed a croft and grove in Beedon to his brother Robert but dead by Michaelmas 1330 when Robert was his heir.<sup>37</sup>

32 *Great Cartulary*, no. 7.

33 *Great Cartulary*, nos. 6, 8, 31, 122. In 1306 Richard acquitted Warin of £6 6s 4d in part payment of £15 6s 8d..

34 W.N. Clarke, *Parochial Topography of the Hundred of Wanting* (Oxford, 1824), p. 97.

35 TNA, CP25/1/10/53 no. 11. The holding comprised 120 acres of land, seven acres of meadow, and £3 15s od. of rent.

36 VCH Berkshire, IV, p. 283; Clarke, *Parochial Topography*, p. 98.

37 *Great Cartulary*, no. 29. The fine of Denchworth was made in 1312 but recorded at Michaelmas 1330 when John was dead and had been replaced by his brother and heir Robert.

By 1312 Richard had apparently alienated all the lands given to him by his father, having given up his life interest in the manor of Beedon in 1301, alienating his other lands there to Lisle probably in or before 1310, and surrendering Denchworth to John in 1312. This generosity to his legitimate sibling may well have been encouraged by the fact that he was by this time well advanced on a prosperous independent career in the service of Henry of Lancaster.

## II Henry of Lancaster (d. 1345)

Henry of Lancaster was the younger son of Edmund (d. 1296), brother of Edward I, and had been provided for chiefly by his marriage to Maud, daughter and heir of Patrick de Chaworth of Kidwelly; they had livery of her lands before 2 March 1297.<sup>38</sup> This estate consisted of lands in Wales around the castles of Kidwelly and Ogmere and English manors which included Weston Patrick, Hartley, King's Somborne, Stockbridge, and Longstock (Hampshire); Market Lavington, North Standen, Berwick St. James, and Hannington (Wiltshire); Chedworth, Kempford, and Etloe (Gloucestershire); East Garston (Berkshire), and Stoke Bruerne (Northamptonshire).<sup>39</sup> From his father he had the lordship of Monmouth, the three castles of Grosmont, Skenfrith, and Whitecastle, all his father's lands beyond the Severn, and the manors of Rodley and Minsterworth (Gloucestershire); he had livery of these on 20 March 1297.<sup>40</sup>

Magnate affinities have been studied comprehensively and are well understood.<sup>41</sup> The affinity served several purposes and was composed of men of different ranks and professions with varying forms of relationship with the lord. The closest relationship was created by an indenture of retainer for service in peace and war, usually for life, and

38 *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward I*, 4 vols (London, 1893-1901), III, p. 239.

39 CIPM, II, p. 477; VCH Wiltshire, X, p. 89.

40 *Calendar of the Fine Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office*, 22 vols (London, 1911-62) [hereafter CFR], I, p. 384.

41 See, for example, M. Cherry, 'The Courtenay Earls of Devon: Formation and Disintegration of a late Medieval Aristocratic Affinity', *Southern History* 1 (1979), 71-99; C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp Affinity, A Study of Bastard Feudalism at Work', *English Historical Review* 95 (1980), 514-32; S. Walter, *The Lancastrian Affinity 1361-1399* (Oxford, 1990); J.M.W. Bean, *From Lord to Patron. Lordship in Late Medieval England* (Manchester, 1989); 'Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War 1278-1476' edited by M. Jones and S. Walker, in *Camden Miscellany* 32, Camden 5th Series, III (London, 1994), pp. 1-190.

usually incorporating a fee in land or cash and stipulated maintenance within the household for the retainer and his own servants. Another form was the grant of an annuity for past and future service and both of these would probably include an annual livery of cloth for robes. Others might simply receive a livery. Those closest to the lord were constantly or nearly constantly employed in his service and may or may not have been formally constituted as a council. The members would include his senior estate administrators, a lawyer or two, and others who provided advice and carried out particular duties. Some of these would be of gentle status but the bulk of the affinity was composed of men of this status who spent most of their time in their own localities. They were expected to guard their lord's interests and might be called upon to attend him on occasions such as military campaigns, tournaments, parliaments, or festive gatherings to provide the public visual display of power and influence which was so important. This element of the affinity necessarily reflected the lord's landed estate and members were drawn from areas where he held land.

Parts of Lancaster's estate lay close to the Ryveres' orbit, particularly his manors of North Standen and East Garston,<sup>42</sup> but it seems that Richard's first steps were made through his connection with Warin de Lisle. The constant warfare in Scotland provided a stage for ability to make itself conspicuous and Richard campaigned with Lisle's stepfather Nicholas de Segrave in 1303, with Lisle's father-in-law Henry le Tyeys and Warin himself in 1306, and alongside Lisle's brother-in-law, the younger Henry le Tyeys, under William Latimer in 1308.<sup>43</sup> By this latter year he had already joined Lancaster's service and was then his steward of Kidwelly, a post he was also, or still, holding in 1319 and 1332, and he witnessed a charter for Lancaster at Kidwelly in May 1309.<sup>44</sup> In 1318 Lancaster inherited lands in France from his brother John and thereafter for a period spent much time abroad.<sup>45</sup> During this time Richard was appointed as Lancaster's sole attorney, in May 1319 until 1 August and in August 1320 for two years.<sup>46</sup> With Sir Thomas Blount, he was an executor of the will of Lancaster's wife Maud de Chaworth who died between February 1317 and 3 December 1322

42 East Garston was adjacent to Lambourn and North Standen, although in Wiltshire, lay in the neighbouring Berkshire parish of Hungerford: *VCH Berkshire*, IV, p. 194.

43 *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, edited by James Baine et al., 5 vols (London, 1881-1986), V, nos. 2458, 2606, 2702.

44 Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, pp. 256-57; *CPR Edward II*, II, p. 222.

45 *Ibid.*, III, p. 217.

46 *Ibid.*, III, pp. 329, 503.

when they were acting.<sup>47</sup> In May 1323 he and Blount were appointed by Lancaster to prosecute his petitions for the earldoms of Lancaster and Leicester and other lands forfeited by his brother Thomas.<sup>48</sup> In 1325 he was planning to go overseas with Lancaster and he was probably at Kenilworth Castle in the spring of 1327 when the deposed Edward II was imprisoned there.<sup>49</sup> He is named as an adherent of Lancaster's in January 1329 although he may not have accompanied Henry on his march to Bedford in that month.<sup>50</sup> If this was so it does not appear to have affected their relationship as in January 1330 Richard and William Blount were granted joint tenure with Lancaster's daughter Isabel of the manor of Berwick (Wiltshire).<sup>51</sup> Richard witnessed charters for Lancaster in London on 20 January 1330, at Leicester on 1 July 1332, and at Somborne (Hampshire) on 31 October 1332,<sup>52</sup> and in February 1332 he was appointed to a commission of the peace in Leicestershire headed by Lancaster.<sup>53</sup> Finally, he was joint-auditor for the Lancaster estate in December 1331 and sole auditor in December 1332.<sup>54</sup>

Richard's illegitimacy was evidently no drawback in his successful career. Given the initial good fortune in catching Lancaster's eye, it was presumably his ability that ensured that he became a valued servant. He was of the type to be retained by indenture but as no such document survives this is uncertain. The value Lancaster placed on Richard is seen in his appointment as sole attorney in 1319 and 1320 and as sole auditor in 1332 as these positions were usually shared with

47 *Calendar of the Close Rolls... [of] Edward II*, 4 vols (London, 1892–98) [hereafter CCR Edward II], III, p. 687. Richard was still acting as her executor in 1328 and 1329 after Blount's death: Robert Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* i. 1265–1603 (London, 1953), p. 354.

48 CCR Edward II, III, p. 711. In March 1324 he and Blount, with others, acted as mainpernors for the contrariant John de Sapy: CCR Edward II, IV, p. 85.

49 CPR Edward II, V, p. 167; CCR Edward III, II, p. 115. He later testified to a delivery of wine there for the use of the late king.

50 CCR Edward III, I, p. 356; *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous* 8 vols, (London, 1916–2013) [hereafter CIM], II, no. 1111. Orders were given for the seizure of the lands of Lancaster's followers on 16 January but on 23 January the sheriffs of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Oxfordshire with Berkshire were ordered not to seize those of Ryvere.

51 CPR Edward III, I, p. 474.

52 *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters* (London, 1893–), II, p. 411; CPR Edward III, II, p. 321; Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock D258/26/2/3 (I owe this reference to the National Archives website and have not seen the original).

53 CPR Edward III, II, p. 287.

54 Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 354.

at least one other, and in his choice in 1323 to put Lancaster's difficult and dangerous case as his brother's heir. In 1323 and 1329 Lancaster described Richard as 'nostre ame bachelor' and it is likely that this was more than a customary courtesy.<sup>55</sup>

### III The Creation of a Landed Estate

During his long service with Lancaster, Richard accumulated a landed estate. It may not be coincidence that his first recorded efforts occur in 1308, the year when he is first found in Lancaster's service. In this year he was involved in three fines concerning lands in various of the many villis of the parish of Lambourn with Robert and Roger de la Ryvere who may have been his uncle and cousin. Two large holdings, which together comprised seven messuages, two carucates and 78 acres of land, 34 acres of wood, and £3 5s. 6d. rent, in Blagrove, Eastbury, and Bockhampton, were settled on Robert for life with remainder to Roger and his issue and then Richard and his heirs, and a smaller one of a messuage, 53 acres of land, and an illegible acreage of wood in Blagrove and Hadley was settled on Robert for life with remainder to Richard and his issue and then Roger and his heirs.<sup>56</sup>

The next and more positive step came in 1312 and, again, it may not be coincidence that it was in this year that he surrendered Denchworth to his brother John. The step was his marriage to Sarah de la Hawe and in April 1312 her aunt Agnes de Madresdon granted to them a holding in Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) which was a moiety of the manor of Kingston.<sup>57</sup> The witnesses to Agnes's charter included Sir Thomas le Blount, Richard's colleague in Lancaster's service, and it may have been the Lancaster lands in Gloucestershire which brought him into contact with Agnes and Sarah, but he still had strong Berkshire connections. By a fine of Easter 1313 Richard and Sarah acquired a property in East Garston (Berkshire), the Lancaster manor which was adjacent to Lambourn, to hold for their lives at a rent of 10 marks annually.<sup>58</sup>

These acquisitions were supplemented by grants from Henry of Lancaster. By 1316 Richard held what appears to be the Lancaster

55 CPR *Edward II*, V, p. 246; TNA, DL25/2305, 2307.

56 TNA, CP25/1/9/39 nos. 7, 8, 22.

57 BCM, GC1875. Richard and Sarah are recorded as holding the moiety in 1322: TNA, SC12/36/11 m. 7. In June 1313 Richard witnessed a Slimbridge charter of Thomas II lord Berkeley and in January 1331 Thomas III lord Berkeley granted common of pasture in Slimbridge to Richard and Sarah: BCM, GC1927, GC2718.

58 TNA, CP25/1/9/40 nos. 8, 17, CP25/1/10/42 no. 19.

property in Market Lavington (Wiltshire),<sup>59</sup> and in 1319 Lancaster granted to Richard and Sarah, for their lives, a property in Market Lavington (Wiltshire) valued at £7 13s. 4d. but likely to be worth rather more, as well as a messuage and virgate of land in East Garston valued at 7s. 4d.<sup>60</sup> In February 1323 Lancaster granted the whole manor of East Garston, worth at least 20 marks a year, to Richard for his life, and in 1329 a grove within East Garston, formerly held by Richard for life, was granted to him and his issue at a rent of 4s. a year, although Lancaster quitclaimed the rent to Richard for his life.<sup>61</sup> In January 1324 Richard and Sarah had a quitclaim from William le Brun of lands in East Garston and its vill of Poughley which Brun had recently recovered at law.<sup>62</sup>

So far Richard's lands were chiefly held for life only but towards the end of his life he began to acquire land in fee. By January 1330 some or all of the Lambourn lands of his Ryvere cousins had reverted to him as he was then identified as Richard de Ryvers 'of Blagrave'. It is almost certain that by this date Robert de la Ryvere had died and Richard had therefore inherited the smaller holding in Blagrave and Hadley but he may also have acquired by this date the two larger holdings in Blagrave, Eastbury, and Bockhampton which had been settled on Robert's son Roger and his issue.<sup>63</sup> Roger was probably the clergyman of that name who was closely connected with Sir Edmund de Bohun of Lambourn between 1324 and 1329;<sup>64</sup> he was still alive in March 1331 but may have surrendered the lands to Richard.<sup>65</sup>

59 *Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids ... preserved in the Public Record Office*, A. D. 1284-1431, 6 vols (London, 1899-1920), V, p. 204; VCH Wiltshire, X, pp. 89, 102.

60 TNA, C143/135/22, 140/15. Licence for the grant of ten marks of land was granted in November 1320: CPR Edward II, III, p. 524.

61 TNA, DL25/2305, 2307. Licence was granted on 22 February 1323 for the manor and again in May 1328 for twenty marks of land and rent: CPR Edward II, IV, p. 246; CPR Edward III, I, p. 302.

62 *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office*, 6 vols (London, 1890-1915), IV, A. 6486.

63 In December 1329 Robert de la Ryvere was bound in 1,000 marks to Richard but it is unclear whether this was Richard's half-brother Robert, who had then recently succeeded their brother John, or Robert of Lambourn in which case the bond may have been connected with the surrender of the Lambourn lands: CCR Edward III, I, p. 586.

64 BCM, GC2455; CFR, III, p. 156; CCR Edward III, I, p. 582; John Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire* 2 vols, (Oxford, [1762], I, p. 490.

65 CPR Edward III, II, p. 80. In 1333 a Roger de Ryvers, although not identified as a clergyman, witnessed a charter of Sir Richard's: TNA, DL25/2290.

By a fine of January 1330 Richard acquired the manor of Blgrave and sixty acres of land and six shillings of rent in Eastbury from Edmund de Bohun.<sup>66</sup> In May 1333, again described as Richard de Ryvers of Blgrave, he acquired from Robert Fokeram the reversion of a knight's fee with the homage and service of a number of named tenants, together with 100 acres of wood, 200 acres of pasture, and a £5 rent in Sandon, then held by Alan de Hanville for the life of Margaret, widow of Henry le Tyeys (d. 1322).<sup>67</sup> Sandon, like the Lancaster manor of North Standen, lay in Hungerford parish and Richard also acquired the reversion of a meadow in Hungerford which Sir Robert de Hungerford held for life.<sup>68</sup> It is noticeable that Robert de Hungerford was also prominent in Lancaster's service from 1313,<sup>69</sup> while Fokeram was the grandson of another Lancaster retainer, Richard Fokeram, who had been granted land at Sandon with the manor of West Ilsley by Edmund of Lancaster c. 1271.<sup>70</sup>

Sir Richard de la Ryvere last occurs in February 1334 when he witnessed a charter for Warin de Lisle's widow Alice.<sup>71</sup> He was presumably dead by November 1337 when Lancaster had licence to grant the manor of East Garston to his daughter Isabel and Henry de la Dale, clerk, for the life of Isabel.<sup>72</sup> Despite his successful career, Sir Richard did not found a dynasty. He left two sons, John and Richard. John, who was born in 1312–3, is identified as Sir Richard's son and heir but by 1331 he had joined the church and the king's service.<sup>73</sup> He had the Berkshire lands but alienated them to Henry de la Dale and to Lancaster's son and heir Henry.<sup>74</sup> Richard had the Slimbridge lands, and had a son Richard who left two daughters.<sup>75</sup>

66 TNA, CP25/1/10/53 no. 2.

67 TNA, DL25/2290. Robert's father Richard Fokeram had granted this holding to Henry and Margaret le Tyeys for their lives by a fine of 1315–6 which does not survive: CIM, II, no. 817.

68 CCR Edward III, IX, p. 213.

69 Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 87, 353, 355.

70 Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 7n. 13, 84n, 349; VCH Berkshire, IV, p. 190.

71 BCM, GC2787.

72 CPR Edward III, III, p. 553.

73 *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers ... Papal Letters*, II, pp. 343, 383.

74 He had granted Blgrave to Henry de la Dale by 1348, and in 1350 he quitclaimed the Sandon holding to the duke: VCH Berkshire, IV, p. 257; CCR Edward III, IX, p. 213. Margaret Tyeys had died in 1349.

75 BCM, GC3256, GC3504, GC3212; John Smyth of Nibley, *The Berkeley Manuscripts: the Lives of the Berkeleys, Lords of the Honour, Castle and Manor of Berkeley in the county of Gloucester from 1066 to 1618, with a Description of the Hundred of Berkeley*

## IV Conclusion

Sir Richard may have been unlucky in his children but nevertheless his life was one of considerable interest. It reveals that the legal disability of bastardy carried with it no social stigma to prevent him enjoying either a successful career in Lancaster's service or close relations with his family. There can be no doubt that it was his father's decision to recognize him so fully which was the essential starting point but, after that, it was his own qualities which brought him his modest landed estate. The full assimilation of Richard as a member of the family is seen in his bearing the Ryvere name and a variant of the Ryvere arms. This was usually the case with recognized bastards, but it is the latter, the bearing of the family arms, which is the most powerful indicator of how far these bastards were considered as full members of their families.

At this comparatively early stage in the development of the science of heraldry many of the later rules, such as a formal 'mark of bastardy', had not yet been established.<sup>76</sup> While the 'marks of cadency' later distinguished between younger sons according to their age, during the fourteenth century the only rule was that younger sons and the cadet branches descended from them invariably differenced the arms of the senior line in some way. This applied as much to bastard sons who were able to gain a position within chivalric society as other non-inheriting sons.<sup>77</sup> The arms on John de la Ryvere's seal are *fretty, on a canton a mullet*, while Richard's arms were *ermine fretty sable, an escutcheon gules*,<sup>78</sup> and there are many other examples of this principle. The Clare cadet branch of Thomond differenced the Clare arms *or, three chevrons*

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and of its Inhabitants, edited by John Maclean, 3 vols (Gloucester, 1883–85), III, pp. 242–45.

- 76 The 'bar sinister' of popular fiction is apocryphal. The *bend* or *baton sinister* was established as the standard mark of illegitimacy at the court of Burgundy by the late fifteenth century but in English heraldry the *bordure wavy* was adopted during the eighteenth century. For this and other aspects of the heraldry of bastardy, see Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', p. 161; C. Given-Wilson and A. Curteis *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London and New York, 1988), pp. 51–53.
- 77 Bastards who were fortunate enough to be established as heirs by their fathers naturally bore the family arms undifferenced. See, for instance, those of Sir Baldwin de Bereford, Thomas de Sackville (d. 1432), and William de Vescy (d. 1314): T. Willement (ed.), *A Roll of Arms of the reign of Richard II* (London, 1834), pp. 15, 26; Brault (ed.), *Rolls of Arms*, II, pp. 46, 369–70, 438.
- 78 BCM, GC1 768; N.H. Nicholas (ed.) *A Roll of Arms compiled in the reign of King Edward the Third, and Apparently between the years 1337–1350* (London, 1829), p. 19. On the so-called 'Boroughbridge' Roll, Richard's arms appear as *fretty sable, an escutcheon gules*, omitting the ermine field: British Library, London, Egerton 285od.

*gules with a label azure*, and Master Richard de Clare, illegitimate son of Thomas (d. 1287) of Thomond sealed with *three chevrons, and a bordure engrailed*.<sup>79</sup> Edmund Stafford of the cadet branch of Stafford of Clifton bore the Stafford arms *or, a chevron gules* differenced with *three martlets sable* and Edmund's illegitimate brother Sir Nicholas (d. 1394) bore them differenced with *a chief azure*.<sup>80</sup> The bastard John Lovel of Snorscomb differenced the arms of his legitimate brother John Lovel of Minster Lovell (d. 1314), *barry undy or and gules, with a label azure and a mullet argent*.<sup>81</sup> The arms of Edward de Warenne, illegitimate son of Edmund earl of Arundel by Maud de Nerford, combined the checky of Warenne and the lion rampant ermine of Nerford.<sup>82</sup> Otto de Bodrugan (d. 1389) bore *argent, three bends gules* and the seal of his illegitimate son William shows *three bends, in sinister chief a ring*.<sup>83</sup> The arms of Montfort of Beaudesert were *bendy or and azure* and the seals of John and Richard, illegitimate sons of Peter de Montfort (d. 1370) show arms of bendy differenced with a fess and a bordure respectively.<sup>84</sup>

Sir William's actions in acquiring the Denchworth holding for Richard to hold in fee and giving him a life interest in the principal manor of Beedon is evidence of particular care and affection. This may have been earned by Richard himself but it may also have been generated by the fact that Sir William later married Richard's mother and that the only distinction between Richard and his brothers was the crucial and cruel one that, having been born out of wedlock, he could not be his father's heir. Such care and affection on the part of the father would not necessarily be inherited by his legitimate children but it is clear that relations between Richard and his brothers were close. Relations between legitimate and illegitimate siblyngs were often amicable,<sup>85</sup> even to the extent of a legitimate heir providing for an

79 Brault (ed.), *Rolls of Arms*, II, p. 106; Roger H. Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals in the Public Record Office: Personal Seals*, 2 vols (London, 1978-81), II, p. 25 (P1201).

80 Willement (ed.), *A Roll of Arms of ... Richard II*, pp. 2, 6, 12, 20, 37; *House of Commons*, IV, pp. 442-44; ODNB, LII, pp. 40-41, 61-62.

81 Palgrave, *Parliamentary Writs*, I, pt. 2, pp. 410-20, nos. 59, 327.

82 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', p. 161.

83 Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals: Personal*, I, p. 8 (nos. P86, P87); Brault (ed.), *Rolls of Arms*, II, p. 58; *House of Commons*, II, pp. 271-72.

84 Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals: Personal*, I, p. 45 (nos. P550, P551); Brault (ed.), *Rolls of Arms*, II, pp. 298-99.

85 In some cases, relations appear to have been closer between brothers than between father and son; Sir Robert Swillington left his bastard son Thomas Hopton only £20 but Sir Robert's son Sir Roger included Thomas in a settlement of the family

illegitimate brother,<sup>86</sup> but there is no known other example of a bastard giving up his lands to the legitimate son.

As has been seen, Richard's generosity to John was probably at least partly due to his own career which was so much more successful than John's. Richard's estate was created partly through marriage, partly through grants from his lord, and partly by his own efforts. It is clear that it was highly influenced by his service with Lancaster, not only by the grants of land by Lancaster himself, but also probably in his marriage and by the location of the lands he acquired for himself. Nevertheless, it was focused on the Berkshire corner of Lancaster's extensive estate and Richard remained a Berkshire man, another facet probably of his strong family roots.

Finally, he was far from unusual in showing that bastardy was no hindrance to a successful career in service. To give lengthy examples would be tedious, but among knights of royal and princely households who were bastards might be named John Golafre in the service of the Black Prince and latterly a chamber knight of Richard II, William de Lisle in the household of Richard II, Henry IV, and Henry V, and particularly James de Audley (d. 1359) who was not only a knight of the Black Prince but also a founder member of the Garter.<sup>87</sup> Within magnate retinues, Nicholas Stafford served his cousin the earl of Stafford, and the lawyers James Nash and John Selman II followed their fathers in the service of the earls of March and Devon respectively.<sup>88</sup> These magnates employed their servants because of their qualities, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. The same attitude is revealed in the way other bastards took up the social and political position appropriate to their landed circumstances, regardless of how this had been achieved. Nicholas Meinill succeeded to his father's position as a peer of parliament and married a daughter of the eminent Roos of Helmsley, while William de Argentine, Thomas de

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estate which ensured that the estate later passed to Thomas's son John: Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', p. 11,

86 Laurence de Hastings, Earl of Pembroke (d. 1348), granted to his illegitimate brother William de Hastings (d. 1349) a life interest in a number of manors in 1342, soon after proving his age and taking possession of his estate in 1341: CIPM, IX, p. 287; TNA, SC 8/159/7948; VCH Berkshire, IV, p. 100; CCR Edward III IX, p. 40. Although euphemistically referred to as William 'the nephew' in his inquisition *post mortem*, the fraternal relationship is confirmed elsewhere: *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Petitions to the Pope*, edited by W.H. Bliss (London, 1896), p. 162.

87 Matthews, 'Illegitimacy', pp. 141, 166-67, 197.

88 *House of Commons*, III, pp. 814-15, IV, pp. 335, 442-44.

Sackville, Nicholas Stafford, and many others played their role in local society and married among their father's peers.<sup>89</sup> Bastards may have been technically excluded from late medieval landed society by their inability to inherit land under the common law but it is quite clear that they suffered no practical or social hindrance.

89 *The Complete Peerage*, VIII, pp. 632-34; *House of Commons*, II, pp. 50-52, IV, pp. 272-74, 442-44.