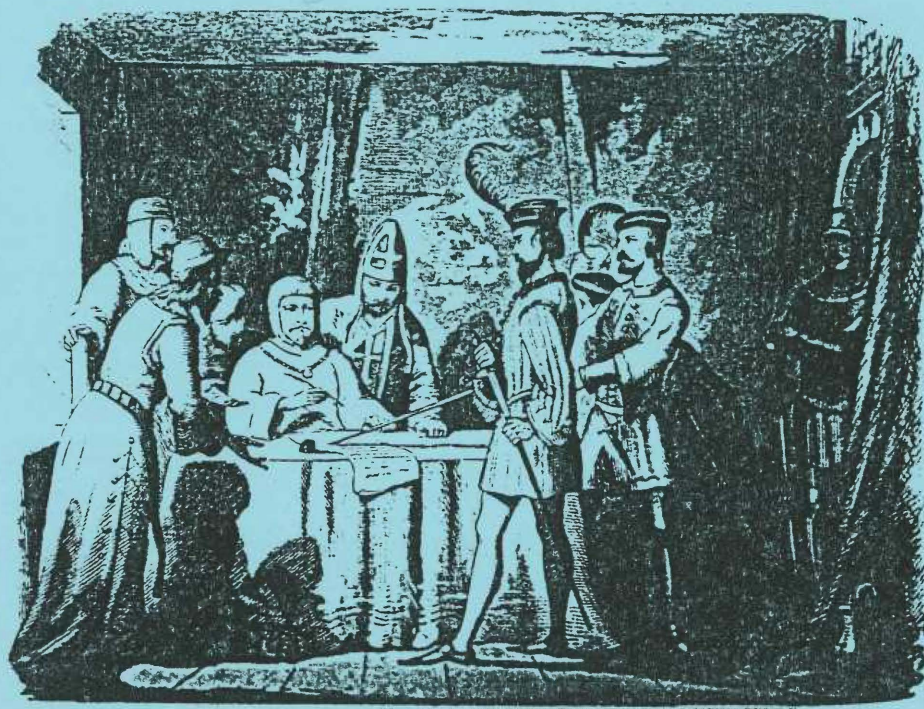


*Sir Robert Belknap  
And Abraham  
Belknap of Massachusetts*



*Linking Two Noble Families  
By Mark Goodmansen*

## *Preface*

More than a century ago, the author-historian Arthur Amory Codman, Esq. published a brief overview of the medieval Belknap family noting that the bloodlines of the four generations from Sir Robert to Sir Edward, though extinct in patriarchal succession, continued to flow in the best families of England. He went on to comment, "... for the interest of the American Belknaps, they are, apparently, not descended from Sir Robert, for I find mention of only his son Sir Hamon; -it is however, possible, of course, that Sir Hamon may have had brothers."

In 1914 and in 1931 Henry Wyckoff Belknap of Salem, Massachusetts, with the aid of the professional researcher, Mr. Charles A. Bernau of London lead us to Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, as our ancestral home and to the Beltofts extending our known heritage back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

As a child, I looked upon the Belnap coat of arms and was transported to medieval times of knights and castles. As years passed I painfully realized that the bridge linking the Beltofts and Belknaps had not been established. Many years ago I became caught up in this challenge knowing full well that these families may prove unrelated or that records no longer exist to link them.

Finally, various puzzle pieces began to come together to answer the basic questions asked for more than a century:

***From whom did the Beltofts descend?*** The existence of Richard Belknap and Laurence Belknap in Sir Robert Belknap's family addresses Arthur Codman's response more than a century ago, namely that Hamon had brothers.

***How did the Beltofts receive an inheritance separate from Hamon, the successive heir?*** The Archbishop of Canterbury appointed Richard Belknap to administer the estate of Sir Robert's wife Julianne since she died intestate. This put him in position to place his heirs to fill her vacated leases or to receive a portion of her surviving estate or to compensate him for his services.

***Where did the Beltofts live?*** The detailed location of Nidelles identified as the inherited lands of the Beltofts has been located in a section called "North End" in Sawbridgeworth parish.

***Why did the Beltofts change their surname to "Beltoft" then back again more than a century later to "Belknap"?*** It seems likely that contention between these kindred families peaked when Hamon married into the Boteler family. While Hamon's father was still in exile in Ireland his father-in-law negotiated hereditary lands from the estate of Sir Robert's archenemy. Hamon's sons would inherit from his wife's family, lands formerly held of the baron who lead the prosecution of Sir Robert Belknap and the "king's favorites". It must have seemed to the Beltoft's that their kindred Belknap's had

abandoned their patriarchal roots and defiled the memory of Sir Robert. This rift would continue as the Belknaps extended their dealings with the contemptible baron's descendants and they disposed of lands which the kindred Belknap and Beltoft families held separately but of which related to the same manor. The War of the Roses sets a bloody background during these contentious times. The Belknaps likely followed their Boteler family kinsman defending the Lancastrians and the Beltofts apparently supported the Yorkists, further alienating the Beltoft branch. The Belknap's would have inherited rights to Sudeley Castle and to have witnessed the widow of their cousin crowned Queen of England. Instead, Sudeley Castle was seized by the Yorkist Crown as spoils of war and their cousin who would be queen was cast aside and in depression, died in a nunnery.

To the readers of this book, on a personal note, I would appreciate hearing from you for your comments both positive and negative. Hopefully, over time more information will come to light to fill in greater detail to the Belknap and Beltoft sagas. Please direct your comments to:

Mark Goodmansen  
10467 South North Forty Way  
South Jordan, Utah 84095

Telephone # 801-254-2040

e-mail address: Mrvl@cs.com

The transition period in which some of the Beltoft's began changing their names back to Belknap occurred as the Beltoft's were engaging Protestantism and the Belknaps were embracing Catholicism. This transition occurred shortly after the reign of "Bloody Mary" and during the time of Queen Elizabeth when Protestantism and Catholicism divided the country and apparently divided the Beltoft and Belknap descendants.

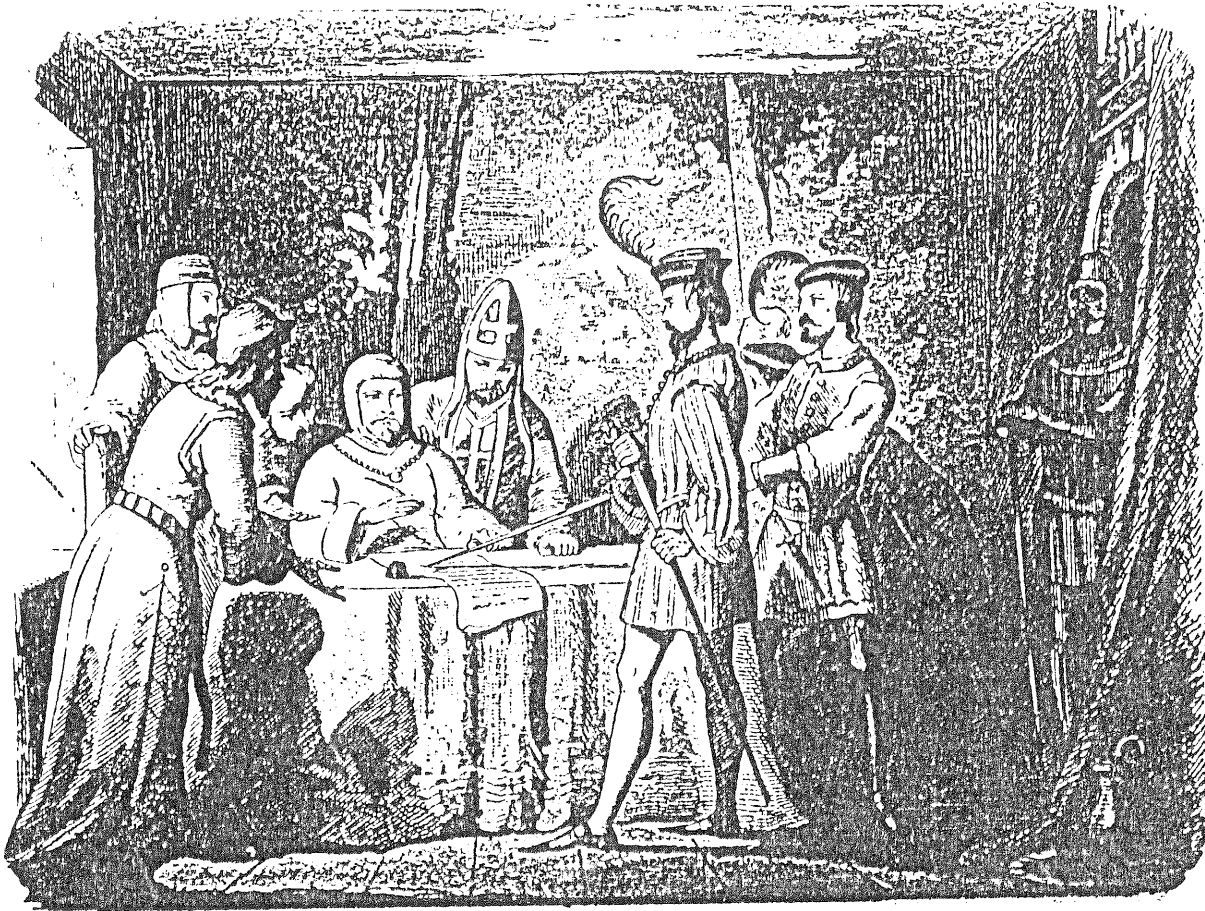
As their life drama unfolds by each new found incident and as we delve deeper into each of their characters we are escorted into a very different world and age of which we are allowed but a glimpse. This is their story...

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## *Chapter One: The Trial of Sir Robert Belknap*

“Now here lacketh nothing but a rope, that I may receive a reward worthie for my desert; and I know if I had not done this, I should not have escaped your hands; so that for your pleasures and the King’s I have done it, and thereby deserve death at the hands of the lords”<sup>1</sup>.



Before him lay the infamous manifesto of 10 interrogatories with their answers prepared in advance of his being summoned to Nottingham. Drafted by John Blake at the instigation of Chief Justice Robert Tresilian, these articles indicted for treason, five barons and sentenced them to death. It began:

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, *Lives of the Chief Justices* p. 110

“Be it remembered, that on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Aug., in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Richard II, at the Castle of Nottingham, before our said lord the King, Robert Tresilian, chief justice of England, and Robert Belknappe, chief justice of the common bench of our said lord the King, John Holt, Roger Fulthorp, and William de Burgh, knights, justices, & c. and John de Lokton, the King’s serjeant-at-law, in the presence of the lords and other witnesses underwritten, were personally required by our said lord the King, on the faith and allegiance wherein to him the said King they are bound, to answer faithfully unto certain questions here under specified, and to them then and there truly recited, and upon the same to declare the law according to their discretion, viz.: ...”<sup>2</sup>

When Richard II was placed on England’s throne he was but ten years of age. His uncles and other barons were called as a council to rule the kingdom during Richard’s minority. When at the age of twenty the king sought to rule without their help he surrounded himself with his favorites which gradually was denying access to the king’s previous court barons. When Sir Michael de la Pole was appointed Chancellor of England, the Councilors went into action and by great cunning, pressured the king to remove de la Pole.



<sup>2</sup> ibid. p 98-100. For full text see the appendix.

The following year, those favorites in the inner circle convinced the monarch to formally assert his independence from the councilors and to assume greater autonomy even from parliament. They devised a plan to have the councilors convicted of treason based on several articles identifying their having usurped the king's authority. These more militant councilors feeling threatened and accustomed to the reigns of power grasped the offensive and zealously fought back; not so much for the good of king and country but for their own selfish ambition. Both sides being driven by a lust for power, each seeking advantage over their enemies by any means, engulfed the innocent and law abiding, including Sir Robert Belknap.

Tresilian, one of the king's favorites, Sir Robert Belknap's only superior in the Judiciary, had persuaded the king to allow a summons to Judge Belknap and other judges to report to Nottingham and sign the articles to add sanction and help legitimize their attempts to remove the following barons as the king's enemies who were "accroaching the royal power". These were later referred to as the "Apellants":

Sir Thomas Beauchamp, the 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Warwick. He was the oldest and is recognized as the "moving spirit and the most responsible" of the five. He remained in the shadows of the notoriety of his father, uncle Guy, and his own son who gained much more respect and prominence as earls of Warwick. **It would be through him and his benefactors that would divide future generations of Sir Robert Belknap's family.**

Sir Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Essex and of Buckingham, and Constable of England. He was the youngest of King Richard's uncles and was described as a man of choleric temper and militant tastes.

Sir Thomas de Arundel, Bishop of Ely, and Lord Chancellor of England replacing the king's friend and ally William of Wickham, (Wickham was founder of Oxford's New College., **and a later advocate and supporter to the Belknap family**). Arundel, a man of great talents and learning who focused with no moderation on crushing his opponents and those who would threaten his authority.

Sir Henry of Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt the Lancastrian, and cousin to King Richard, the earl of Derby. He would later become King Henry IV.

Sir Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham and Norfolk. He like the others were very powerful military commanders.

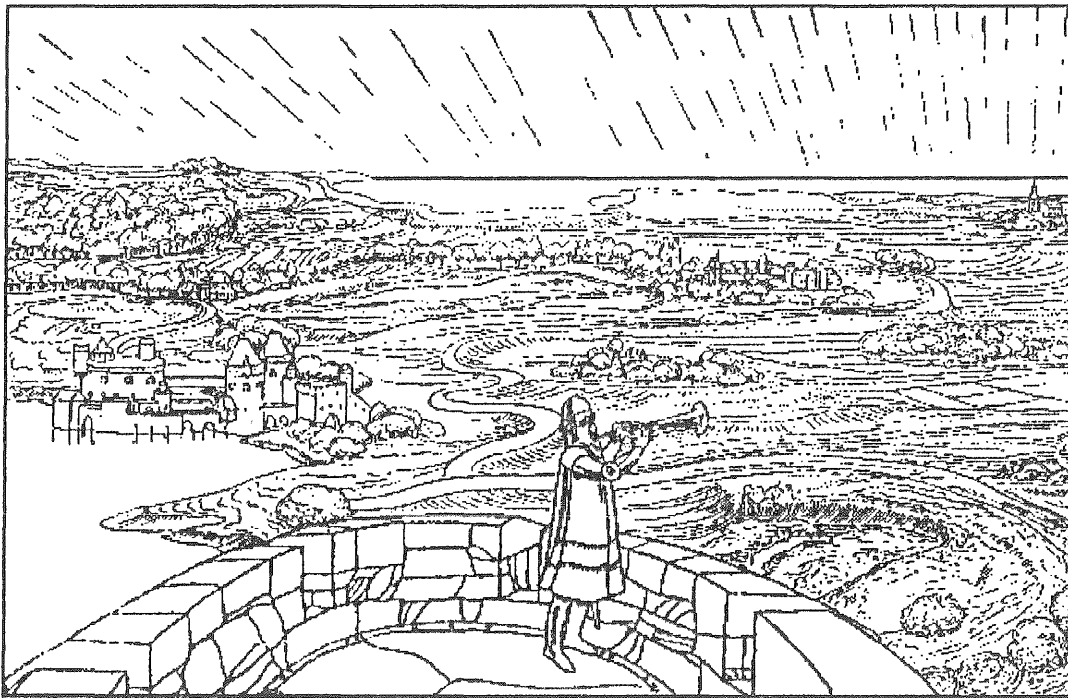
Within the ancient walls of Nottingham Castle, Sir Robert Belknap first refused but was compelled to sign the articles under the scrutiny of several of the king's favorites. Sir Robert Vere stood with sword at the ready threatening instant execution if he failed to

sign. A youthful 26 years old, five years senior to the king, this Earl of Oxford was brought into the royal family circle first as a ward to the crown and then in 1378 by his arranged marriage to Edward III's granddaughter, Philippa de Coucy.

Vere, skilled in the disciplines of combat and driven with reckless personal courage was however shown to be foolish, irresponsible and spontaneous rather than as sinister and manipulative as his counterparts. His general character was however more genteel even described as effeminate compared to the militant appellant adversaries. But Vere, connected in a very personal way to King Richard II and was elevated the previous year to Duke of Ireland causing much consternation to his enemies.

Due to Vere's royal influence, Michael de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk was appointed Chancellor of England and welcomed to the king's inner circle. The appellants had successfully removed him from office trying him in absentia of high treason earlier in the year and these articles of Nottingham included repudiation of his removal and restoration of his former position and its amenities.

Suffolk was much older than most of the king's favorites being in his late fifties. He lacked the support of the national populace being perceived as the scapegoat for the ailing English national character and economy. Their troops were failing against the French, excessive taxes caused accusations of inpropriety and misuse of crown funds by the Chancellor. Londoners were more devoted to the appellants due to their hawkish views against the French and their military prowess.



Likely within the confines of the state apartments the only castle rooms with windows and chimneys, Sir Robert Belknap appended his signature knowing the dangers awaiting

him for supporting the king and his favorites to rule beyond the entanglements of the previous oligarchy. Various clerics also lent their support with their presence. Alexander Neville, the archbishop of York, the archbishop of Dublin, the bishops of Durham and Chichester and Bangor.

Sir Robert's story continues:

"Now I want nothing but a hurdle and halter to bring me to that death I deserve. If I had not done this, I should have been killed by your hands; and, now I have gratified the King's pleasure and yours in doing it, I have well deserved to die for betraying the nobles of the land."<sup>3</sup>

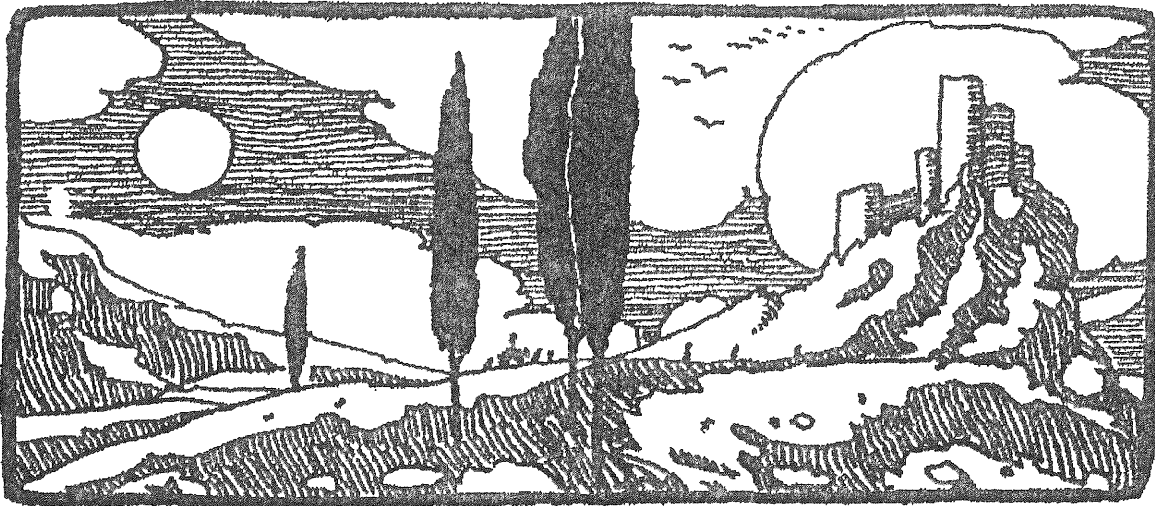


The burdensome deed done, upon leaving those chambers perhaps he found some comfort as he gazed upon the stained glass window displayed in prominence within the castle, depicting Jesus's parable of the beggar, Lazarus, and the rich man. Lazarus at his death being taken in to the bosom of Abraham while the rich man confined in hell cries out. Abraham responding, "...remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. And, Annals of Nottinghamshire p. 274 for a similar quotation. Also Holinshed, ii. p.782)

*tormented.”*<sup>4</sup> All who attended Tresilian’s mandated gathering were of England’s elite and upper class; some would soon pass the portals to judgement others would be transformed like unto Lazarus as humble beggars.



With a heavy heart Sir Robert passed the barbacon arch flanked by a fifty foot tower where sentinels gazed on. Surrounded by escorts he proceeded over the drawbridge scaling a moat and a stone bridge granting access over a deep ravine with watch houses and picket guards lining his departure from the castle estate’s nine acre enclosure.

Within a few months some of those attending this Nottingham Council would suffer torturous executions. All the others would suffer forfeitures of their possessions and banishment or self imposed exile.

The Nottingham attendees were sworn to secrecy as to the existence of the manifesto until the king deemed an appropriate time to disclose the document. An insider however alerted Gloucester and immediately Arundel and Gloucester began there plans in earnest. In November when the king requested their audience, sensing a trap they excused themselves and began to muster an army. This army joined with Warwick’s recruits as they marched against the king.

The king sensing imminent danger tried to raise an army but was scorned by his subjects. The king could only submit.

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<sup>4</sup> Nottingham Castle was long since destroyed but historical accounts document the presence there of the stained glass depiction of “Dives and Lazarus”. See Luke 16: 19-31

At Waltham Cross, on November 14 Gloucester, Arundel and Warwick presented a formal accusation against the king's friends, Suffolk, de Vere, Tresilian, Brembre, and the archbishop of York. With little choice Richard II invited them to appear at Westminster Hall on November 17 to have their charges heard.



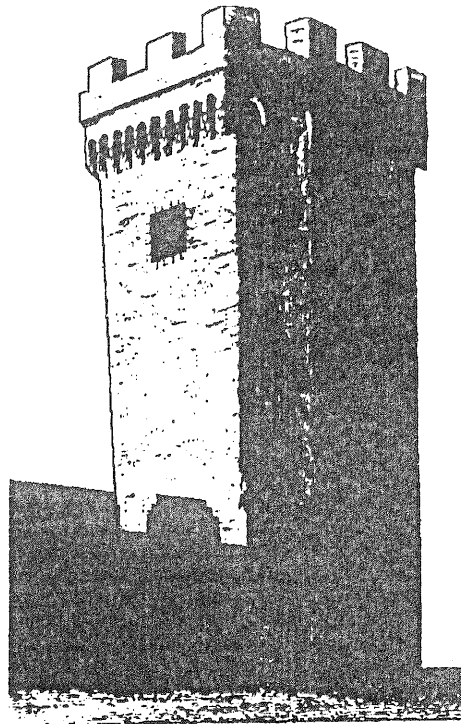
A parliamentary trial date was set for February 3, 1388. King Richard was insincere and used this postponement to allow de Vere to escape to the northwest and Suffolk to slip away to Calais. Archbishop York fled to his diocese and Tresilian went into hiding in Westminster. Brembre stayed in London and was arrested. Vere was able to amass a small army but was soundly defeated at Radcot Bridge where he deserted his troops then fled the country.

On February 1, the council had Sir Robert Belknap and the other subordinate judges arrested at court.<sup>5</sup> As with other prominent state prisoners they were likely escorted to the Tower of London through the water-gate also known as "traitors gate" rather than through the main entrance thus avoiding the gaze of London onlookers. From this approach they passed two round bastion towers adorned with cannon, then on past the infirmary, the mill and then the waterworks which supplied all the Tower grounds with water.

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<sup>5</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls. 11 Richard II. Membrane 14, February 1. Pg. 382-383

They were apparently quartered in the warders rooms within the confines of the Tower's main structure. Undoubtedly this would have been a degrading and heart- wrenching ordeal.



They would occupy these melancholy chambers for nearly four weeks in safe custody under the charge of Thomas, earl of Nottingham, marshall of England, as they awaited trial. Here they would receive updates as to the proceedings and fate of those who had coerced their participation in Nottingham and expectedly conjecturing as to their own verdicts and destinies.

On February 3, through the doors of Westminster Hall the pompous five appellants: Warwick, Gloucester, Arundel, Derby and Nottingham adorned in golden surcoats and with arms interlocked made their grand entrance and took their positions in front of the Chancellor and King Richard II. The clerk then recited the articles of the appeal against De Vere and de la Pole and three other favorites all in absentia. They were convicted and sentenced for executions when and if captured.

Early in February, The first acts of the new parliament subsequently called the "The Merciless Parliament" included rounding up others of the king's favorite supporters. Robert Tresilian, the Lord Chief Justice was found in hiding at the house of an apothecary in London where he was taken to the Tower of London. The next day he was dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn and hanged. Others involved met similar brutal deaths. Even some of the king's close friends not involved in these political parlays were

nonetheless stripped of their positions, such as William of Wykeham as Chancellor and Thomas Brantingham as Treasurer to make way for the barons' preferred appointees.<sup>6</sup>

Warwick and the other four appellants had maneuvered victoriously in destroying the king's favorites. But that was not enough. Still bloodthirsty, they went on to the judges, knowing they had been threatened and victimized and forced to participate.

The day of reckoning for Sir Robert and his fellow judges came on February 27. The king's constable and lieutenant received the prisoners from the marshall and the judges were transported to the gates of Westminster Hall. This royal palace comprised one of the largest rooms in Europe. The main hall being two hundred and seventy feet long, seventy four feet broad and ninety feet high. It was supported by buttresses instead of pillars. The roof of Westminster Hall was of timber.

It was within these same ancient walls that Sir Robert had presided as Chief Justice four times yearly in the Court of Common Pleas. When in session Sir Robert's subordinates included: the Custos Brevium, three prothonotaries and their seconds, several clerks, the chirographer, the register of fines, and other officers most of them wearing black round caps during proceedings.<sup>7</sup>

Finally on March 3, Sir Robert was deposed and testified. He pleaded the duress and compulsion he and the others suffered when signing but to no avail. They were sentenced to death to suffer the full penalties of treason. Sir Robert's pronouncements in Nottingham appeared to be prophetic. Due to a concerted appeal by the bishops their lives were spared but their sentence of banishment and forfeiture was still very severe.

Though escaping the executioner's axe, Sir Robert was banished to Drogheda, Ireland; his vast estates and possessions forfeited to the crown. At the time of his forfeiture, from inquisitions taken at the time, his holdings included more than 4,000 acres of lands spread out over five counties.<sup>8</sup> Within the bounds of these estates he possessed more than 1,100 farm animals. Efforts of a lifetime were lost at the stroke of a pen.

His wife and children were left to bear the burdens of a tumultuous and strife-torn nation and try to maintain the family honor. Sir Robert Belknap after a lifetime of service to king and country through this vicious twist of fate found himself on the other side of bench and gavel. The "rule and order of law" to which he had so committed himself failed to support him in his hour of need.

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Winston S. Churchill, *The Birth of Britain*. P.279. William of Wykeham and Thomas Brantingham were restored to their positions by the king in 1389. William of Wykeham, the founder of New College, Oxford is mentioned in more detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>7</sup> Chamberlains History and Survey of London, page 590.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed listing, see the appendix.

Within the very halls of Westminster where he labored earnestly to promote and defend the high ideals of law, justice and honor he was victimized by evil and self indulgent persecutors. His crime supposedly was in following the wishes of his king and acting under duress and compulsion. Hardly capital crimes even in these turbulent times as future historians would chronicle.

At the conclusion of the proceedings, Warwick, Gloucester and the other appellants had themselves awarded from the royal coffers the exorbitant sum of 20,000 pounds most of it probably coming from the blood money of the estates of the executed favorites and the other disenfranchised like Sir Robert. As for the appellants, their hypocrisy and treachery would be exposed before the end of the century but would give little satisfaction to his loved ones left behind.



Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, England, 1370. The earl's helmet is a pointed basinet. His body armor is covered by a surcoat embroidered with his family arms.

## *Chapter Two: The Life of Sir Robert Belknap*

On the eastern shore of the Isle of Ireland lies the maritime city of Drogheda. The heart of this ancient city straddles both sides of the River Boyne, completely enclosed by a massive wall twenty feet in height and width varying between four to six feet; the circumference extending one and a half miles. Separated by the river, the larger northern section was committed mostly to agricultural use and comprised the parish of St. Peter. The southern section was part of St. Mary's Parish.

Sir Robert Belknap in company with his subordinate Judge, Sir John Holt was sentenced to Drogheda and its immediate environs. Sir Robert could not pass more than three leagues (about nine miles) from the confines of this city.<sup>9</sup> From the proceeds of his forfeited estates a stipend of 40 pounds was provided for his maintenance. During the initial year of his exile, Drogheda authorities were ordered to seize foods and provisions for the maintenance of the Lord Justice and his suite.<sup>10</sup>

Accustomed to the adornments and honor of his former position he was unjustly relegated to relative solitude. Years passed slowly, away from the life he had earned and prospered, denied by the cunning and deceit of the appellants.

In 1394 King Richard arrived in Drogheda undoubtedly visiting his former justice and loyal servant. Perhaps the maturing monarch buoyed Sir Robert's countenance with hope of returning soon to his cherished home and family. His forced removal continued three more years until King Richard had amassed sufficient strength to deliver on his plans of vengeance and return those who had been mercilessly banished from their renowned stations.

Far from the companionship of his devoted family and lifelong friends, Sir Robert in seclusion had ample opportunity to reflect on his honorable and valiant history:

For half a century beginning in 1351 when he was appointed clerk of the diocese of Salisbury he served faithfully in various offices and commissions in the king's service. He joined with his father John Belknap on a commission of oyer and terminer in 1369 on a civil matter.<sup>11</sup> With six other appointees, he was in 1374 sent to meet with the Roman Papal Court to smooth and reconcile relations between the Vatican and King of England. His life was imperiled when with a small contingency of clerks and jurors he was sent to restore order and to quell "The Great Revolt" rebellion to protest a newly imposed poll tax. Being outmanned the protestors executed some of Robert Belknap's party.

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<sup>9</sup> Rot. Parliament.

<sup>10</sup> John D'Alton, Esq. "The History of Drogheda, With Its Environs" published 1863. Pg. 103.

<sup>11</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 41 Edward III (May 10, 1367) Public Record Office, London.

His legal training was further called in to the king's service when he was appointed in 1366 as a justice of the assize courts, then as a sercant at law and eventually as Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas (1374). This was the second highest judicial position in England. While serving in this capacity he with his brother Ralph were brought together in a legal matter in Colchester.<sup>12</sup> The king in recognition of his lifelong service knighted him in 1385.



Starting initially with inherited lands and lands granted as guardian of wardships and perhaps from lands earned from his legal services, he became, as some historians have observed, one of the great land speculators of his time. In 1365 he acquired from Sir William Say the manor of Sharsted in the towns of Chetham and Gillyngham, county Kent. Later from William Say he was enfeoffed in 1369 the manors of West Greenwich and Codeham in Kent and Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire. **It is with these lands in Sawbridgeworth that the mystery of "Nidelles" begins to emerge** which is discussed in depth in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>12</sup> In Campbells "Lives of the Chief Justices" mention is made of an unnamed brother. In the Colchester Red Oath Book pg. 214 mention is made of Ralph Belknep as a witness in the case and Robert Belknep as the Justice of the King's Bench in 1387. This may simply be a transcription or recording error however.

The extent of Sir Robert 's influence amongst the Kent County landowners is illustrated by his appointment as steward for the late Queen Philippa's estates during 1372-1373 for which he was paid 40 pounds.<sup>13</sup>

Various acquisitions of dwelling lands, farms and rental properties for himself, continued until at the time of his forfeiture he had accumulated various holdings in excess of 4000 acres (see Appendix for a listing) extending over seven counties. On these properties more than 1000 farm animals were inventoried.

Sir Robert's dwelling place while court convened was in the parish of St. Mary de Mountenhaut in Queenhithe Ward near Oldefisshstete in London. It was here that he dwelt when seized upon by Parliament.

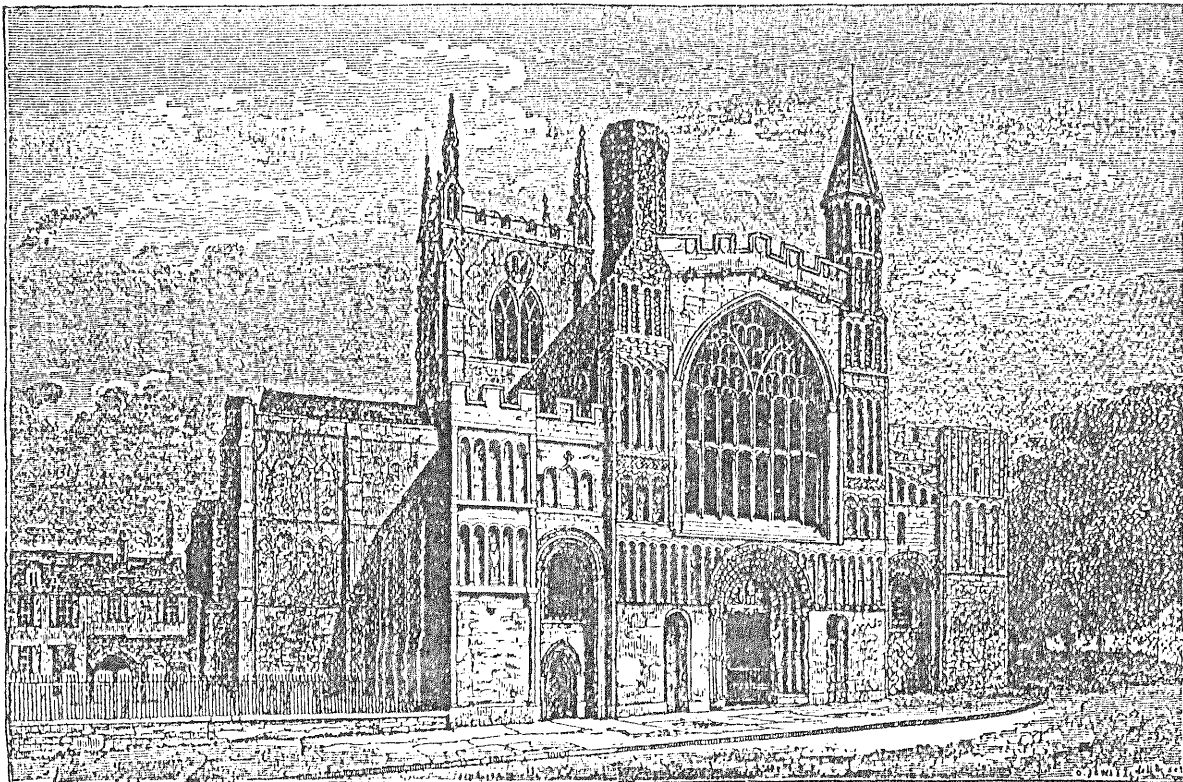
While Sir Robert languished in Irish exile, King Richard II set about to rebuild the magnificence of the monarchy. He learned to manipulate the powers of governance while discretely plotting revenge on the appellants who destroyed the lives of his favorites and demeaned his regal esteem. In these intervening years he adorned himself and his court in fine clothes and refined pomp and chivalry within the realm through tournaments and other public exhibitions which further endeared him to the masses.



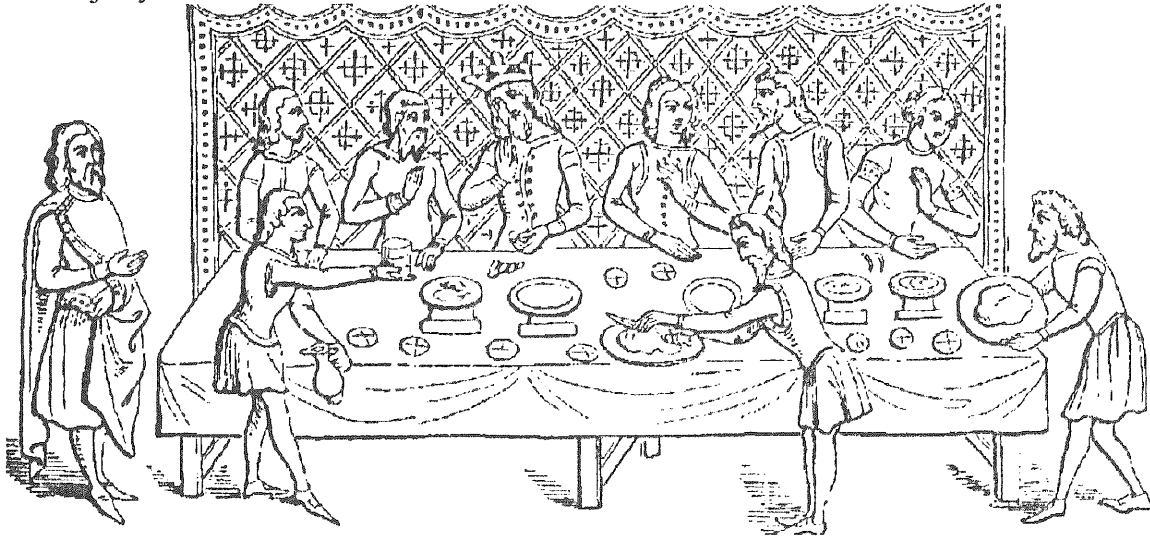
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<sup>13</sup> Select Cases, pg. xxxi.

With his improved stature and presence by royal prerogative he had Sir Robert Belknap's exile removed, considering him to be a martyr to his cause, and pressed to have some of Sir Robert's land returned. These lands included a moiety of the manor of Lydsing, to the prior and convent of Rochester. Parliament responded in 1398 and restored to him forfeited lands which had not been alienated back to the Crown. The Belknap patriarch was permitted to rejoin his beloved family, but withdrew from political attentions.



In that same year as Sir Robert Belknap's release in 1397, King Richard II set in motion his vengeance. He invited Warwick, Gloucester and Arundel to a banquet at the Lord Chancellor's house. His comrades were suspicious but Warwick accepted and dined with his majesty.



Much to his surprise, Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, was arrested, hustled through the garden and courtyard where he had just feasted, and was escorted into a waiting barge on the Thames. Just as he had done to Sir Robert and the other judges, Warwick was now conveyed to the infamous Tower of London through Traitor's Gate, to find residence in the tower chambers which would for centuries continue to bear his name...Beauchamp Tower.

The next day, the king's troops dashed to Gloucester's estates in Pleshy and arrested him. He was promptly exiled to Calais, and shortly thereafter, murdered. Arundel surrendered to King Richard's troops having been granted safe conduct but deceived, he too tread the traitors path to the Tower of London. The avenging king assured Arundel's fate would mirror what he with the other appellants had rewarded the king's favorites, nine years earlier. Arundel was beheaded on the same spot as Burley and Brembre. After a period of confinement in the tower, Warwick plead guilty at his trial and was exiled to the Isle of Man until the reign of the next monarch.

All that remained of the five appellants was Bolingbroke and Mowbray who had confessed the treasonous acts of Warwick, Gloucester and Arundel to King Richard. These two former allies then opposed each other bitterly. Their public and mutual contempt became the opening setting of Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

Bolingbroke: "Now Thomas Mowbray, do I turn to thee,  
And mark my greeting well; for what I speak  
My body shall make good upon this earth  
Or my divine soul answer it in heaven.

Thou art a traitor and a miscreant,  
Too good to be so, and too bad to live..”(Act I Scene I)

Mowbray: “And let him be no kinsman to my liege,  
I do defy him and I spit at him,  
Call him a slanderous coward and a villain;  
Which to maintain, I would allow him odds  
And meet him, were I tried to run afoot  
Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,...”(Act I Scene I)

Their threats and accusations escalated and both called for trial by battle. To the dismay of would- be spectators King Richard intervened and forbade the contest. The two were banished from the kingdom. Mowbray died soon after his removal, leaving only Henry Bolingbroke, sole remainder of the five appellants in England. In a fatal miscalculation and misjudgement King Richard II seized the estates of the banished Bolingbroke to bolster his drained royal coffers.

Throughout the kingdom most nobles were outraged, unwilling to accept this act as a precedent that all landed and hereditary estates could be confiscated by royal edicts at the king’s pleasure and denied to otherwise legitimate, blood-line heirs. Many former loyal nobles, having their estates threatened flocked to support the exiled Bolingbroke who returned to England to secure his fathers legacy. Opportunity presented itself and Henry deposed the king. Richard II, found himself now committed to the Tower of London and forced to abdicate the throne.

Five months after being secluded to Pontefract Castle the former monarch was murdered. Bolingbroke, heir to the Lancastrian, John of Gaunt, was crowned King Henry IV.



In 1400 with a new king to grace the empire, parliament reconvened and annulled the acts of the previous parliament putting Sir Robert Belknap's lands back in forfeiture. This unfortunate action put an ever increasing burden on the weary Sir Robert and Julianne.

These turbulent times took their toll. On January 19, 1401 Sir Robert Belknap was laid to rest to his great eternal reward having been denied the acclaim he deserved in mortality. History would vindicate him. Justice would in the end prevail.



In the priory of St. Andrew, in Rochester, Sir Robert had, in more peaceful times, conveyed a portion of his Lydsing manor as a humble legacy and annual observance<sup>14</sup> ... "for one monk, being a priest, to celebrate mass in the cathedral, for the souls of himself, his predecessors, and successors."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 48 Edward III (December 28, 1374) Public Record Office, London.

<sup>15</sup> Hasted, History of Kent.

Having married Sir Robert at the approximate age of 20 after the passing of his previous wife, Amy, Julianne became the matriarch of this great and noble family.<sup>16</sup> Suffering much from the relentless acts of parliament, she demonstrated her strength and determination to protect her family.

Shortly after their marriage, Julianne Belknap became an heir in her own right to Thomas Phelip and his wife Isabelle through their daughter and Julianne's mother, Elizabeth, of the estates of Leebury in Arkesden and Great Chishall and surrounding areas in Essex and in and around Baldok in Hertfordshire. These lands became critical to the survival of her family legacy.<sup>17</sup>



After Sir Robert's death she made petition to the courts to have her husband's attainder removed regarding the estates granted by her inheritance. In these precedent setting rulings her rights as "a feme sole" were decreed for the benefit of herself and her posterity.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Calendar of Inquisitions 45 Edward III. pg 104. Julianne's age in 1371 was given as 20 when she inherited the Manor of Leebury. Mention is made in 1369 of Robert and his wife Amy in Patent Rolls and thus approximates the time of Robert and Julianne's marriage between 1369 and 1371.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Campbells, Lives of the Chief Justices, pg. 113.

Her family received rents from estates in Kent to meet ever increasing financial burdens.<sup>19</sup> With Hamon her oldest surviving son, she sought and prevailed to have other estates returned.



Two daughters were married or promised marriage during their early lives. Juliana married Robert Avenel as early as 1383 but they died without heirs.<sup>20</sup> Jane (or Elizabeth) Belknap married Sir Edmund Stonor.<sup>21</sup> In this marriage, Sir Robert Belknap had been granted the marriage of the next heir to Sir Edmund de Stonor after his death in 1382, if the minor child John Stonor deceased unmarried. Associated with this wardship was Robert's maintenance and custody of lands held by the Stonor family in Watlington, Oxford. This came about due to Robert's wardship arrangement he made to John Holt for his heir to marry John Stonor.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 8 Henry IV, membrane 13, June 8, pg. 330-331)

<sup>20</sup> Chancery of Inquisition Post Mortem 12 Richard II, No. 166 and Calendar of Patent Rolls 1391.

<sup>21</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 6 Richard II membrane 34, October 27 pg. 204. In this reference Sir Robert Belknap was granted the right of marriage of the son and heir of Edmund de Stonore. Burkes, Commoners vol. II mention is made of the marriage of Jane Belknap to the Stonore heir. This reference may contain errors however.

<sup>22</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 6 Richard II-Part II, membrane 34, Oct.27, pg.204).

Two of her oldest sons, who would have been heirs, John and Thomas predeceased her.<sup>23</sup> Another son, Laurence, likewise died before her in 1401.<sup>24</sup>

That most noble and elect lady, having died on July 22, 1414 the Church, under the authority and jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Archbishop Chichele), the following year, intervened in the absence of a will to have another son, Richard, appointed as her administrator.<sup>25</sup> By this action, the mystery of “Nideles” likely begins.

Preservation of the Belknap legacy and heritage then fell to Hamon and his younger brother, Richard. How different their destinies and ambitions would contrast them. The elder, a revered soldier endeavoring to reclaim the knightly honor of “Belknap”; the younger a scholar, striving in quiet through the study of law to vindicate his father’s innocence and integrity. In pursuit of their divergent quests they would soon bear enmity as brothers that continued more than a century with their heirs.

So offended and dismayed at the elder brothers perceived family dishonor the younger branch at some successive generation abandoned the “Belknap” surname in favor of the more Norman derivative “Beltoft”.

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<sup>23</sup> In 1401, Thomas is mentioned as their son and heir. (Calendar of Close Rolls, 3 Henry IV-Part 1, membrane 14, November 17, pg. 449-450) In 1414 Thomas and John are mentioned to have died sometime earlier without male heirs and so Hamon is appointed her heir. (Calendar of Fine Rolls, 2 Henry V, membrane 22, October 18, pg. 79) Thomas and John must have died before 1408 as Hamon is mentioned as son and heir that year. (Calendar of Close Rolls 9 Henry IV, membrane 11d, June 18, pg. 394)

<sup>24</sup> Oxford University Register. Laurence Belknappe from Kent is listed as a student from 1394 to 1399. This same record indicates he died in May 1401. See Chapter Two for more details.

<sup>25</sup> Calendar of Fine Rolls, 2 Henry V, membrane 22, October 18, pg. 79. In this account Julianne’s death date is recorded as July 22, 1414. The appointment of Richard Belknap as her administrator is discussed in Chapter 3.

### *Chapter Three: The Next Generation- Soldiers and Scholars*

*"... He that outlives this day and comes safe home  
Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named  
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
He that shall see this day and live old age  
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors  
And say, "Tomorrow is saint Crispian."  
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's Day."  
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,  
Familiar in his mouth as household words-  
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,  
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester-  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.  
This story shall the good man teach his son;  
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,  
This day shall gentle his condition.  
And gentlemen in England now abed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day...".*

(William Shakespeare's Henry V. Act IV, Scene III)

Hamon, (sometimes "Hamo") perhaps was named for the honorable Hamo Dapifer of Norman fame and fortune. The son of Sir Robert Belknap and Julianna, he distinguished himself militarily as a captain under the Duke of Bedford in the infamous Battle of Agincourt in France and restored honor to this unfairly discredited family.

Henry V, shortly after his coronation and after consulting various advisors made claim that the kingdom and crown of France rightfully belonged to him and England to which he petitioned the current French royalty for redress. The speaker of Commons, Thomas Chaucer, advised Henry to first send ambassadors to France then await their reply to avoid hostilities. The second such English Embassy opened March 12, 1415 with Bishop Courtenay leading the delegation.

After a series of fruitless negotiations Henry V made preparations for war. Enlistments for service in the army were made under an indenture system. Each army captain (of which Hamon Belknap served under the Duke of Bedford also in the company of his brother in law, Ralph Boteler) contracted with the king to provide an agreed number of men-at-arms with their equestrian mounts and archers. In return, the king agreed to pay wages.

The captain was responsible to the king to make musters and adequately equip and prepare these troops. These men-at-war were fully armored knights and esquires with weapons including the lance, sword and dagger. Their terms of service traditionally consisted of between forty days to a year.

The king's military contingency arrived at Southampton in early July to formulate strategy and to make final preparations. When upon French soil, they attacked the outlying French town of Harfleur. Prevailing there, they pressed on towards Calais.





En route they were met by the French force of overwhelming size and strength. When the war came to an end the French losses were astounding and numbered more than 1,500 knights and 4,000 to 5,000 men-at-arms. From the English side, losses were estimated at less than 300 of which fewer than ten were knights.<sup>26</sup>

English chroniclers attributed the unprecedented victory to divine intervention. The English archers though heavily outnumbered were equipped with the far superior long bows. The French having failed in their initial cavalry assault to eliminate the archers responded with mass confusion and disorder in the ranks. Heavy rains had previously soaked the battlefield reducing it to thick mud. Under the heavy armor of horse and knight they were floundering and became easy prey to the well positioned longbow archers. The French men-at-arms were without adequate leadership and often bunched up likewise becoming easy targets.

The victorious troops were treated to overwhelming cheers and accolades upon their return to mother England.

This inspired the poignant (though exaggerated) literary work of William Shakespeare, *Henry V* to immortalize this battle in the annals of British history and literature. "Then

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<sup>26</sup> E.F. Jacob, *The Oxford History of England, The Fifteenth Century*, Oxford Clarendon Press. 1961 pg.156

shall our names, familiar in his mouth as household words - Harry the King, Bedford...shall the good man teach his son..."

It is possible that Hamon was thus employed in making preparations for battle in his capacity as an army captain at the time of the Archbishop Chichele's commission to Richard Belknap and was therefore unavailable. His hereditary rights at their mother's death had already been legitimized.

Four months before Richard's appointment, Hamon was recognized as the next heir to Sir Robert and Juliane's estate of the manor of Seyntlynge in Kent which extended into the towns of Orpyngton, Seintemariecraye, Paulynescraye, Chiselhurst, Chellefeld and Seyvynton. By this time John, Thomas and Laurence had all died without heirs.<sup>27</sup>

During his illustrious career, Hamon also served the king on various commissions. In 1414 he, with several others, were called upon to represent the king near the town of Rye in Kent and Sussex.<sup>28</sup>

Hamon began selling off some of the properties within a few years of Juliane's death. The property of La More in Sandon, Rushden in Hertfordshire County was part of Thomas Phelip's estate of Baldok and was sold in 1419 to John Fray and Agnes his wife.<sup>29</sup>

The war in France still raging, in 1425 he was called as the "king's esquire" to conduct musters of the army at Dover. He was to oversee the commands of five captains, including their men at arms and archers, and to "certify the council of the sufficiency of their array...".<sup>30</sup> These five captains were in the commission of William Massy and included: Lancelot de Lyle, Roger Fyenes, knight; Robert Dalton, and the brothers, Standyssh and William Gloucestre.

Hamon married Joan Boteler, a sister to the wealthy, Ralph Boteler, Lord Sudeley a relationship which would financially benefit Hamon's sons and grandson as partial heirs to the vast Sudeley estate. This marriage likely caused a major rift between the Belknap families of Hamon and the descendants of his younger brother Richard. (Discussed in Chapter Four). Hamon served in the officer ranks in the company of the Duke of Bedford with Ralph Boteler at Agincourt. It is likely that Hamon came to the attention of Ralph Boteler while proving himself worthy of command in combat in former campaigns and hence to be presented to his comrade's sister Joan Boteler.

Hamon died in 1429 living to see the Belknaps honored and respected once again.

Less is known of the other siblings. Of Thomas and John all we know now is that they were in line to be heirs of the Belknap recovered estates but died early without children.

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<sup>27</sup> Calendar of Fine Rolls, 2 Henry V, Membrane 22, October 18. P.79

<sup>28</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 2 Henry V.-Part II. Membrane 37d. July 10, pg. 263

<sup>29</sup> History of Hertfordshire p.266 referring to Feet of Fines Hertfordshire 7 Henry V, no. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 3 Henry VI.-Part II, Membrane 11d and 17d, May 16 pg. 300, 302.

Richard Belknappe at the age of 13 was determined to follow as best as he could in his father's footsteps while pursuing a legal career. Uncertain at the time if his father would ever be allowed to return, he struck off from the land of his birth in the Rochester, Kent diocese to the preparatory halls of Winchester College in anticipation for his admission to the pillar of religious and academic instruction within the revered walls of New College at Oxford University.

Both institutions of Winchester and New College were founded due to the devoted efforts of the prelate William of Wykeham. It was this same William of Wykeham, a close friend of King Richard II, who was removed from office due to the influence of the barons. After his appointment as Chancellor of England and Bishop of Winchester, Wykeham secured from the Crown, licence to found and endow a college of a warden and seventy scholars in Oxford. For the next six years temporary accommodations for New College were provided during the construction of the ornate walls of Wykeham's vision. In 1386 procession of warden and fellows initiated this institution for centuries to follow. It would be financed from the proceeds, rents, etc. generated from several of his landholdings in Essex and several other counties.<sup>31</sup>



NEW COLLEGE IN 1463 PLATE 8  
(The only representation of a complete Medieval College, both members and buildings. On each side of the Warden are the Doctors: in front, the Masters of Arts, Junior Fellows and Choir.)

<sup>31</sup> New College Oxford, published 1979 by the warden and fellows of New College, Oxford, in commemoration of the sixth centenary.

In the next year Wykeham diverted additional resources to his foundation for Winchester College, essentially, a Latin grammar school, with the intent that only its' scholars would comprise the seventy students of New College. His foundations would support attending scholars from the age of about thirteen for as long as they remained at New College the majority of whom were directed to study theology in preparation for the parochial ministry. Wykeham had required that all his scholars should be fit to become fully ordained clergy and during his administration until his death in 1404 he was committed to that end.

Wykeham's plans were interrupted when in 1387 he was removed from office as Chancellor having been guilty of being a close friend to the king in a high position. He was replaced by Gloucester's allies as spoils in their victorious campaign against the king's favorites. Two years later Wykeham was returned to his office as Chancellor by an older, more mature, and more resolute King Richard II.<sup>32</sup>



*Oxf. Alm.* 1849

THE TOWERS OF OXFORD

PLATE I

(From left :—New College, Merton, Music Room, All Souls, St. Mary's, Cathedral, Radcliffe Camera, Bodleian, Schools Tower, Wadham.)

It seems most likely that the Belknap sons admitted to New College and Winchester College were accepted due to the personal intervention of Wykeham as a loyal follower of King Richard II and who witnessed first hand the unjust penalty endured by Sir Robert Belknap and his family at the hands of Warwick, Gloucester, etc, and "The Merciless Parliament". His crime being to sign the articles in support of the King. Here was an opportunity for him to use his foundation to help ease the burdens of the Belknap family.

<sup>32</sup> Sir Winston S. Churchill, *The Birth of Britain*, Vol. I. p. 279

The basis of Wykeham's foundation was to support poor scholars from humble homes and who frequently were younger sons, unlikely to receive a substantive inheritance (such as the Belknap sons). A fair proportion of Winchester scholars (though their academic careers there were frequently brief) belonged to knightly families but most attendees were commoners intent on continuing on to New College at Oxford.

After apparently being examined in Richard's senior year during summer vacation at Winchester by the warden or subwarden of New College accompanied by two fellows from that Oxford institution, he proved proficient in Latin and was found sufficient in other academic and personal qualities to fill one of an average ten available annual vacancies at New College in 1393.<sup>33</sup> He would have been given but a day's notice to proceed to Oxford and enroll within the required eight days.

Richard was determined in his scholastic studies and was recognized as a fellow in 1394.<sup>34</sup> Based on normal enrollments it is likely that this Belknap scholar was born about 1389.

At New College, Wykeham incorporated in the school's statutes, though the majority of fellows were required to study theology after becoming bachelors of arts, twenty fellows should always be studying law. Ten would study civil law and ten would study canon law.<sup>35</sup>

Richard Belknap qualified as one of the ten to engage in the study of civil law. A graduate in law was trained for service in both secular and ecclesiastical government. Civil lawyers were required in some specialized royal courts such as the courts of admiralty and chivalry. For courts of common law however, students could only be trained in the Inns of Court.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps due to extenuating conditions at home, Richard vacated his academic training in 1399 without receiving a baccalaureate degree in his chosen field of civil law.<sup>37</sup>

His training at New College may have been instrumental in his being appointed by Archbishop Henry Chichele in 1415 to administer to Julianne Belknap's estate. The Archbishop was an alumni of Winchester and New College his fellowship occurring between 1387 and 1392. The Archbishop would have been well aware of Richard's expertise in Latin and civil law. He would also have known that all fellows at New

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<sup>33</sup> A.B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*. Published 1957. In this alphabetical listing Lawrence Belknappe is mentioned by name and another Belknappe is mentioned without a given name. Due to the times attending and the nature of the studies it most likely would be referring to Richard Belknappe. The source for his reference is given as the New College Hall Books.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> New College Oxford, pg. 20-23.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. pg. 23.

<sup>37</sup> *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*. Pg. 160. In this reference he is listed as vacated 1399; *civilista*. The term *civilista* is explained in the New College Oxford publication on pg. 23 as a fellow who left the study of civil law without a degree.

College were required to take part in the college's administration and that as a senior would have been regularly and frequently engaged in administration matters. They likely had much to reminisce.

In his appointment by the Archbishop, Richard was not referred to with an ecclesiastical title. He apparently did not pursue orders of the clergy in the sixteen years after vacating Oxford. He like others leaving early, married and likely settled in a career unlike their classmates who became clergy and remained celibate.

The younger brother Laurence also left his native, Kent, probably at the tender age of thirteen to pursue his academic dreams. He was admitted to Winchester College in March 1394 where he was instructed heavily in Latin and grammar. (This suggests his birth to have occurred around 1381).

He may have had to return home temporarily which would account for the period of five years since his admission to Winchester that he was approved to fill a vacancy at New College in 1399, the same year that Richard vacated there.<sup>38</sup>

Life at New College was very disciplined. They were not allowed pets or to engage in such "dishonorable games" as chess and sports and fellows were to be uniformly dressed. Also, there was little privacy since housing consisted of three or four to a room though each were provided separate beds.

Tragedy would strike early to this young man and his family. Laurence died in May 1401 at the University where it was the custom to bury the younger men in the cloister and the seniors in the antechapel.<sup>39</sup> His early demise was not such an unusual occurrence as historically one in ten fellows, on the average, died within their first four years; epidemic diseases being the most common cause. This was during the age when the average adult life expectancy was but thirty five years.

Richard was likely deeply touched by his younger brother's early passing. The name of "Laurence" appears to have been used by some of Richard's early descendants.

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<sup>38</sup> Register of Oxford University to AD 1500 p. 160. This account is from the "Registrum Pimum" records at Winchester compiled by Robert Heete after his admission in 1425. Records regarding admission to New College were compiled from Bursars accounts. (Bursars were fellows of the college taking a turn in administration responsibilities.

<sup>39</sup> New College Oxford pg. 11

## *Chapter Four: Hamon's Family and the Wars of the Roses*

Seven miles to the south of the River Thames, huddled on the western banks of the tributary river Cray was the handsome village of St. Mary Cray. The main road meanders three quarters of a mile. The parish church on its eastern side provides a spiritual respite for the weary traveler. Within its borders and extending south to the parish of Orpington lies the manor of Seyntlyng. The manor being comprised of 300 acres of arable lands and pasture with an additional nearly 50 acres of pasture and meadow was home to 350 farm animals consisting mostly of sheep and remained the family seat of the noble Belknaps.

Sir Robert Belknap one of the earliest land speculators of Kent became possessed of Seyntlyng manor shortly after the decease of Reginald de Rokesle in 1372. With the other significant manors nearby under his possession this addition brought his aggregate Kent land holdings in excess of 2600 acres. Most of these vast estates were forfeited during his attainder and exile but Juliane and Hamon were able to recover the prized Seyntlyng manor.

The year 1431 was marked as the year that Joan of Arc was put to death at the stake. An omen that foreshadowed the decline of the British military might. That same year, the manor of Seyntlyng with its' appurtenances was granted by mainprise of William Appulton and William Warner, to John Feerby the elder to hold until Hamon's son and heir John reached full age.<sup>40</sup>

Two years later John proved his age to John Brokley, mayor of London and escheator and granted to John full seisin (possession) of his father's remaining lands.<sup>41</sup>

The following year (by February 16, 1434) John would marry on the mainprise of Thomas Stokdale, gentleman of York, and Robert Ellerbek of Hertford and under commission of the Lady Dame Joan Dedham, wife of John Dedham, knight. John Belknap, four months later granted Dame Joan Dedham and John Feerby his letter of attorney, conveying rights to them to sue, collect and recover rents, and to oversee administration of his estates in Seyntlynge.<sup>42</sup>

John Belknap died in 1435, his brother William, by this time was of full age, and was granted possession of John's estates. The lands in Seyntlynge were parcel of the honour

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<sup>40</sup> Calendar of Fine Rolls, 9 Henry VI, Membrane 11, March 1. Pg. 33.

<sup>41</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls, 12 Henry VI. Membrane 15, December 6. Pg. 269.

<sup>42</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls 12 Henry VI. Membrane 17, February 16 and Calendar of Close Rolls 12 Henry VI. Membrane 6d June 29.

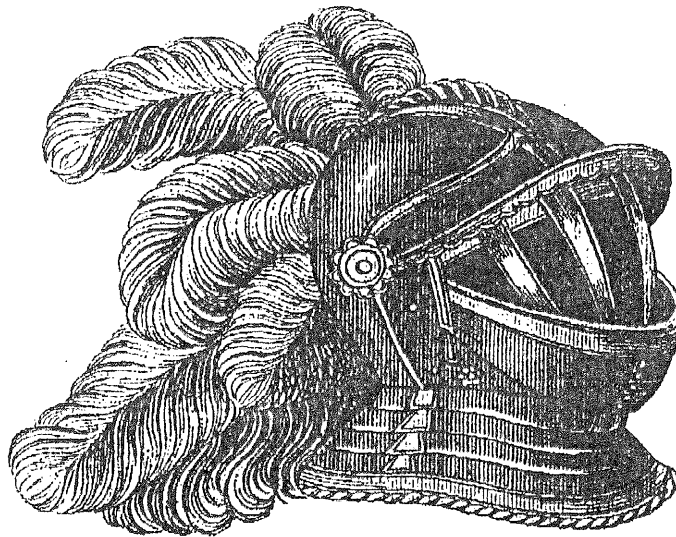
of Peverel and were held of the king as of the Duchy of Lancaster and of the fee of Lyle.<sup>43</sup>

In 1436, the brothers: William, Henry, and Philip Belknap, made a partition of the Orpynton, Kent (in Seyntlynge manor) lands into three equal parts.<sup>44</sup>

William and his cousin John Norbury were frequently in the companionship of their uncle, Sir Ralph Boteler as he ascended to great prominence amongst his fellow blue-bloods of Lancastrian nobility. One of the heirs to the Montfort estates he was advanced by letters patent, to the dignity of a peer of the realm and entitled Baron of Sudeley in 1441; his estates surrounded Sudeley Castle in Gloucester and Beaudesert Castle in Warwick.

William Belknap reached maturity amidst the glorious entrapments of this chivalrous and gallant age. Thomas Boteler, Ralph's only son and heir died shortly after his marriage to Eleanor Talbot. She, was destined the ultimate victim of fleeting fame and fortune; their cousin "who would be queen."

With the tragic death of cousin Thomas, William Belknap and John Norbury were aligned next of kin to the predominant Lord Boteler. Castles and servants, knights in glimmering armor, were but a few short years away...or so it seemed.



Expecting to occupy much loftier homesite's, William would in 1446 sell a mainstay of the Belknap estates held by Julianne at her death in 1415, the manor of Leebury in Great Chishall and Arkesden, Essex. This transaction likely severed ties to their kinsmen likewise associated with this manor. (Further discussed in Chapter Five) During that

<sup>43</sup> Calendar of Fine Rolls, 15 Henry VI. Membrane 26, December 13, pg. 309.

<sup>44</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls, 15 Henry VI. Membrane 11, December 31, pg. 86.

same year, William Belknap quitclaimed to John, Cardinal of St. Balbina and Archbishop of York the manor of Pyrye, county Kent.<sup>45</sup>

Most of the estates that had sustained the Belknap family while Sir Robert was removed had by 1446 been sold. The Belknap family fortune entrusted to Hamon and his heirs was all but gone. Only the Sussex estate of the former holdings of Julianne remained. This was the new seat of the Belknap noble family. Representing that county of Sussex, William Belknap of Knelle in Beckley would serve as sheriff beginning on November 4, 1446.

Beckley, a pleasant village lies within the woodlands of Sussex perched on an elevated site within easy eyeshot of several neighboring parish churches. In it's midst the parish church of Beckley, dedicated to All Saints, stood proudly with tower and shingled spire reaching heavenward; its six bells resonating abroad throughout the surrounding valleys .

A chapel, dedicated to Our Lady and situated as an appurtenance to the Manor of Knelle enshrined the earthly remains of some of the earliest of Hamon's descendants. The River Rother divides the town from the county of Kent and brings life to the adjacent wheat fields and sustenance to the native villagers.

This manor of Knelle was of ancient origin and was held of the honor of Hastings by the family of Knelle. Nearly two centuries later this estate descended by marriage to William de Welles. It was from him that Sir Robert had obtained his grant to the manor during the life of de Welles and in 1385, Sir Robert secured the reversion of this manor from Thomas Lyvet, cousin of Edmund de Knelle<sup>46</sup> and from Sir Edward Dalyngrigge, the builder of Bodiam Castle. In 1389, after Sir Robert's attainder it was found to be rented by Agnes, sister in law to de Welles, who had been a nun in Kent.<sup>47</sup>

Juliana successfully recovered the manor from Katharine Lady Dengayne in 1390.<sup>48</sup> In 1401 she had to contest a grant of this estate to Thomas Beaufort.<sup>49</sup> Due to her persistence, Juliana held this estate until her death whereupon Richard Belknap as administrator briefly represented her interests. Hamon eventually became seized of the manor of Knelle and died possessed of it in 1429. As with the other estates, this estate passed to John, then William, then Henry followed by Henry's wife Margaret and finally to Edward. In 1521 at the death of Edward it descended to the Shelley family.

Having shed the less prestigious estates of their noble grandfather their ambitions were tied to the more glorious Boteler legacies having just begun to flourish. Lord Boteler, as Lord Treasurer of England reinvigorated the famed Sudeley estates. In 1442 Boteler

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<sup>45</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls, 24 Henry VI. Membrane 24d, March 5, pg. 375.

<sup>46</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls, 1381-5, p. 634 and Richard II, pt. 1.m 40, Feet of Fines Sussex, Michaelmas 9 Richard II, no. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Chancery Inquisition post mortem Richard II, 86 and Calendar of Close Rolls 1385-1389 pg. 559.

<sup>48</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1388-92 pp. 231, 314.

<sup>49</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1399-1401, pp. 176,460, 463.

erected the greater part of the castle and St. Mary's Chapel, Sudeley and St. Peter's Church, Winchcombe.

From various prizes of battles won in France he rebuilt his castle, a most uncommon and magnificent edifice intended to serve him, a famous man of war and admiral of the sea in his retirement years. In particular, the Portmare Tower, was financed by the ransom paid to Ralph for the French admiral Portmare.

The walls of the castle were built of oolite, the prominent stone of this countryside. The windows glazed with berall, gave the permeating sunlight a greenish blue color of emerald.

With the death of Lord Sudeley's only child, Thomas, William Belknap and his cousin John Norbury would likely come to possess this grand castle and the castle of Beaudesert upon their aging uncle's demise.

Thoughts of his son Thomas with his bride Eleanor brought painful reminders of what might have been. Thomas was taken far too early. The tragic fate of Thomas' widow evoked even more bitter contempt of the sitting king of the House of York. As a widow she found favor of King Edward IV as his mistress.

The Belknaps must have awaited with rapped anticipation the announcement of their cousin Eleanor's coronation as Queen. They stood poised at the highest echelons of royal favor and fortune. Two castles and their attendant manors and households soon would be theirs and would be adorned as a likely retreat for their cousin soon-to-share the kings throne.



According to the preacher, Dr Shaw, in a sermon delivered at St. Paul's Cross, several years later, she had been secretly married to the monarch and hence she became entitled to the glory of a queen.<sup>50</sup>



*Dr. Shaw's  
Preaching at S<sup>T</sup>. PAUL'S Cross*

When King Edward IV announced his more politically expedient marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, the widow, Lady Boteler, who would be queen to Edward IV and gracing the halls of Sudeley Castle as Queen of the Realm, instead finished her remaining mortal years in depressed seclusion and was buried in a Norwich Carmelite convent having died of a broken heart.

Richard III, the treacherous murderer of Edward's and Elizabeth's two princes claimed these imprisoned youth were illegitimate heirs because of Edward's previous marriage to Eleanor Boteler (also written as Butler).

The Belknap lofty ambitions began to unravel unfulfilled... the worst was soon to come.

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<sup>50</sup> Neillands, The Wars of the Roses, pg. 187.

Within months after Lady Boteler's passing in 1469 the king forced Lord Sudeley's surrender of Castle Sudeley. This Yorkist monarch, victor of St. Albans, waited till his former mistress deceased before executing the foibles of war against this defeated Lancastrian officer. Edward IV would endow the castle to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, his brother who would later become the ill renowned, King Richard III.

"Sudeley Castle, thou art the traitor not I!". These were the words of the grieving Lord Sudeley, in 1469, leaving the castle he labored so diligently to build, seized from him as the spoils of war by the Yorkist victors.

Within these walls were formed precious memories of glorious times long ago. His step sons, the young Hende brothers had brought life and light to otherwise drab and dreary passageways. (The Hende family was related to the Belknaps in another way as well. Griselda Belknap, a daughter to Hamon married John Hende the elder. Through reversion rights some of his lands would descend through Henry Belknap to his son Edward. Specifically the Stondon Massey estates and the manor of Maskelsbury in White Roding, Essex descended to Edward Belknap from the Hende properties.<sup>51</sup>) His Belknap and Norbury nephews demonstrated their youthful zest and vitality amidst these same lonely halls and decorated corridors.

Gone too, were the failed dreams and ambitions of William and Henry Belknap. For them, Sudeley castle would be lost forever. Such were the whims of the royal prerogative in these most turbulent of times.

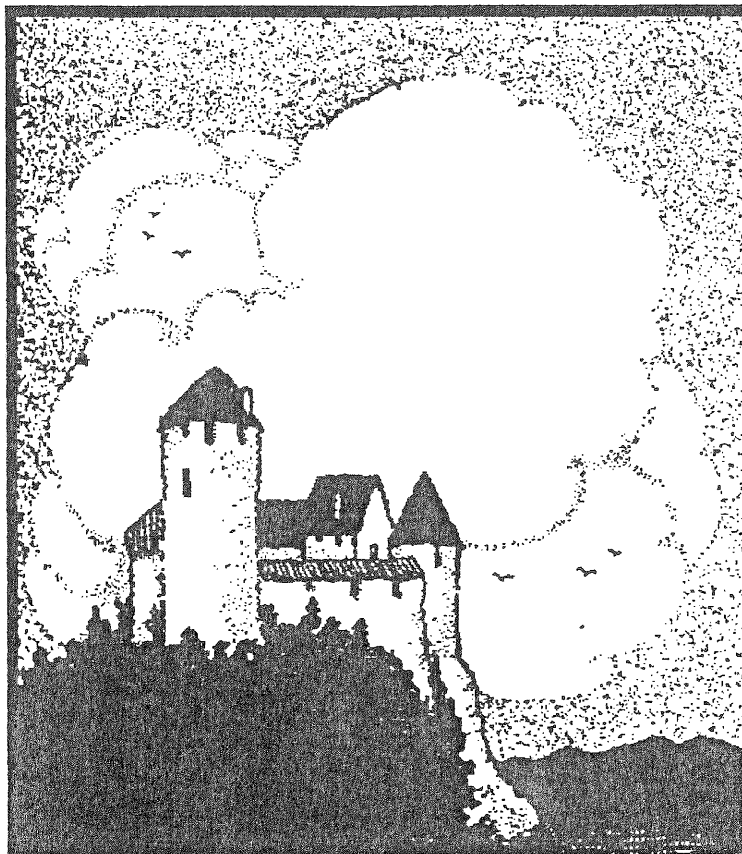
Lord Sudeley was able to retain Beaudesert Castle and the manor extending to Henley in Arden, Warwickshire which he had held by charter of Henry VI since 1449. Four years after his loss of Sudeley Castle, Lord Sudeley was laid to rest. Having founded the Gild of the Holy Trinity and St. John, Sudeley had endowed four priests to "synge dyvyne servyce within a Chapell of Saynt John Baptiste in Henley and to pray for the founders soules".<sup>52</sup>

Belknap and Norbury did take possession of Beaudesert Castle at the death of their uncle in 1473. This prized possession would be theirs for only a few years, again, forced to sell at the insistence of the Yorkist, King Edward IV in 1477.

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<sup>51</sup> Letters and Papers of Reign of King Henry VIII, Vol. 1, pg 103.

<sup>52</sup> Commissioners Report, 37 Henry VIII. Cited from The Records of Beaudesert by William Cooper, published 1931.



This Norman styled castle built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Thurston de Montfort was an imposing edifice towering high above the surrounding countryside atop an oblong shaped hill. Travelers were compelled to proceed to its gate along the high ground, easily observed from the castle keep, to avoid unexpected perils veiled by thick underbrush and densely wooded valleys.

During the time of William Belknap's occupation an invited guest would observe... at the end of the village, extending beyond Beaudesert street, the castle road winds towards the south east to the first elevation courtyard or bailey. Here the sentry mans the gatehouse, the drawbridge nearby and the portcullis rising beside. The courtyard surrounded by a ditch and palisade, was the site of the weekly market with the locals actively promoting their wares. Also within were stables, a granary and other provisions provided by the lord of the manor. At one point an earthen bank traverses the moat accessing the courtyard to the castle keep. The heart of the fortification where the lord of the manor maintains his personal and household living quarters is protected with another drawbridge, portcullis, barbican and another gateway.

With the passing of Richard III in 1485, and the last of the House of York to reign, William Belknap with Norbury, unable to inherit the Sudeley and Beaudesert estates

outright they sought King Henry VII's royal favor to restore them as Lord Sudeley's nephews and heirs. They petitioned the king to intervene reminding his highness of the devoted service to the Lancastrian cause rendered by their uncle, Lord Sudeley. Their earnest plea was ignored, the lands were never to return.



With the death of William, the Belknap knightly legacy would vest in the younger brother Henry.

In spite of the revered monarch, Henry V's best preparations for his son, Henry VI's reign was blighted by poor decisions and overall incompetency. In 1453 the king slipped into insanity for a time. The British war effort was failing, and took a devastating turn for the worse, suffering defeat at Castillon. England was in near anarchy. The Hundred Years War with France finally came to a close with very little victory won.<sup>53</sup> He had lost all that his valiant father at achieved at Agincourt.

It was under these perilous times with bitter in-fighting from within the royal families and a vulnerable Britain in a very prolonged conflict with France that Henry Belknap was commissioned to Dover to muster his men-at-arms and archers and assume orders to defend the British position at Guysnes castle.<sup>54</sup> Guysnes or Guienne had for 300 years been a British possession on French soil. Now, it was being overrun as the French fought fiercely to thwart British imperialism and to be liberated from their failures at Agincourt, nearly forty years before.

<sup>53</sup> For a more detailed analysis see Robin Neillands, "The Wars of the Roses", published 1992.

<sup>54</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 32 Henry VI, Membrane 14d. April 16, pg. 171. Guysnes (or Guienne) had come to England in 1152 as part of the dowry of Eleanor of Aquitaine for her marriage to Henry II. "For three hundred years a loyal, contented fief of the English Crown, was overrun." Churchill's History of the English Speaking Peoples, Vol. 1. Pg. 309.

Like his father, Henry Belknap was destined for military service. His appointment to defend Guynnes Castle must have been met with mixed emotions. This was much unlike his father's service at Agincourt where King Henry V lead his troops undaunted on French soil. A brilliant and cunning tactition the young and determined Henry V, had won the respect of his men at arms. In contrast, Henry VI was weak, his mental fortitude was barely on the mend, there was no field monarch to rally behind. With Henry Belknap, the troops were dispirited, they were in most areas in retreat with leaders more concerned with political strategem than daring battlefield exploits.



There would not be the triumphal return on England's soil of conquering heroes and national pride. Instead, he would return to a nation in turmoil, on the brink of civil war, with families being divided and friendships manipulated for personal gain. The Hundred Years War with France was finally coming to an end. The War of the Roses, the white and the red, was just beginning and would ravage the citizenry for the next thirty years.

Henry Belknap would live all through this tragic war through the reigns of the adventurous Edward IV and the treacherous and conniving Richard III. The Yorkist king Richard III with his 10,000 strong met Henry, the Earl of Richmond with his 5,000 rebels outside Leicester near the village of Market Bosworth. The Earl of Oxford engaged the king's forces first, then Richmond joined the fray. There on Bosworth Field Richard III was surrounded and killed. The crown was picked out of a bush and placed upon the victor, Henry Tudor, the next king, Henry the VII. The War of the Roses had come to an end on August 22, 1485.

Briefly in to King Henry VII's reign Henry Belknap went to his eternal reward on July 10, 1488 leaving his son Edward at age 17 his legal heir. Philip Belknap had died much earlier in 1458. His daughter Alice married Henry Finch.



Edward Belknap, son of Henry was the last of Hamon's male heirs. He was born in 1470 and became in the view of many "a man of much public action".<sup>55</sup> Richard III died just as Edward Belknap was coming of age.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Henry VII's rule, Edward Belknap, esquire, replaced Thomas Wynter of the keepership of the park of Weggelok, co. Warwick.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> History of Stondon Massey. Pg. 22

<sup>56</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls, 7 Henry VII, Membrane 20, April 24, pg. 376.



Edward was a member of Henry VII's and Henry VIII's Privy Councils. He followed his grandfather's and his father's legacy of military leadership in service in France. Edward served in 1513 charged with supplying 50 men. It was amongst his peers at Tourayne (Tournay) that he was knighted. In 1518 this Belknap left France to return home a victor. He was one who penned his name to the Treaty of Peace on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1518. That same year he was referred to as the King's Butler.

In June 1520, Edward was to join in the festivities of the grossly extravagant "Field of the Cloth of Gold" celebration joining France's monarch Francis with England's own Henry VIII. Wolsey, who was overseeing the month long celebration, spent far more than the king anticipated and much more than the depleted British coffers should bear, nonetheless, it was truly an amazing feat and feast.

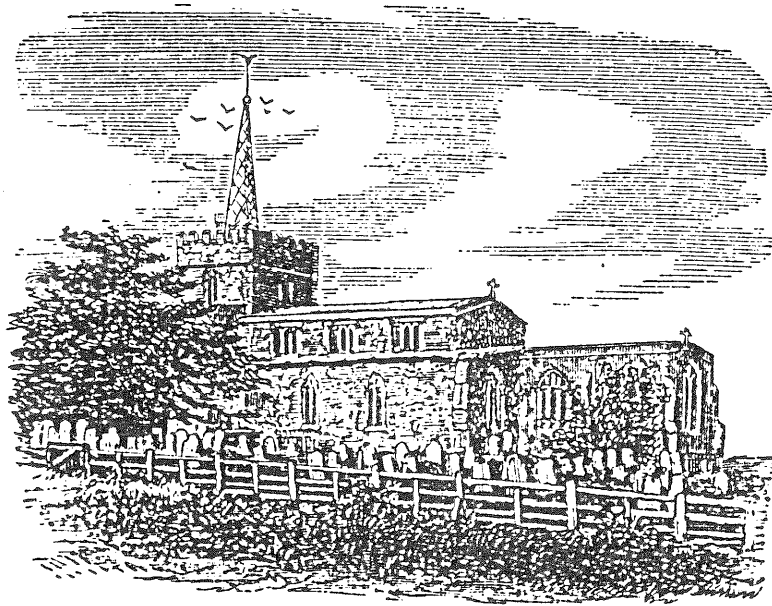
Before his death in 1521, Edward had the opportunity to visit Guisnes Castle in southern France, to make preparations for the king's visit. Here was the site, that Henry Belknap lead King Henry VI's troops in defense of the castle, but to no avail. Edward, now was privileged to return.

Edward Belknap, aged 51 died in 1521. The legacy of the Belknaps of Hamon's line had come to an end. Edward was privileged in his lifetime to see much of England's glory shine forth again. His estates went to his sister's families. Elizabeth married Sir Philip Cook. Mary Belknap married George Danet. Alice married Sir William Shelley, one of the Justices of the Court of Common Pleas. The Shelley family were papists (Catholics) and it is believed Edward Belknap was likewise.

Several historians have claimed that with Edward's passing the noble Belknap line became extinct with none to pass on their gallant heritage. Begun (as early as is known currently) with John and his wife Alice it continued for some two hundred years during some of England's most turbulent and unstable times.

Recent findings clearly suggest another Belknap line had emerged under the shadows of the more prominent Hamon Belknap descendency. Tucked away in relative obscurity within Hertfordshire's borders, within the shadows of St. Mary the Great's parish church of Sawbridgeworth, that family spread its' roots into the Essex countryside and eventually to the far distant shores of America.

The legacy of Sir Robert and Juliana was being perpetuated far away from the manorial estates of Hamon's heirs. It is time finally, for their story to be told but, with it's telling comes the mystery of Nidelles and a host of unanswered questions to beg further research.



## *Chapter Five: The Beltofts and Belknaps of Sawbridgeworth*

The manor of Sawbridgeworth at the time of Edward the Confessor was held by Asgar the Staller. With the Norman Conquest Geoffrey de Mandeville took possession from the defeated Saxon landlords. Subsequently, his son William, mortgaged the property to the Crown wherein Henry I granted it to Eudo Dapifer. The lands soon reverted back to the Mandevilles until in 1189 Beatrice de Say, William's aunt received the manor. The Say family would dominate the area for many generations, hence the manor took the name of Sayesbury.

This Sawbridgeworth manor lies perched on a hill gently sloping down to the south and east towards the valley of the Rib. Quilted cornfields patched with wheat, barley and bean crops had by this time replaced the gently waving yellow and orange crocus saffron fields of more ancient times.



To the east of the town in the section of North End, malthouses punctuated the agricultural landscape. Malt-making now had become the sustaining enterprise of these local townsfolk. Whole families would join in this enterprise demonstrating patience and

persistence in this highly labor intensive process. The barley harvesters were clearly visible from dawn to dusk with sweeping scythe and falling grain stocks in marked precision. They were followed by the bundlers and gleaners and then to the wagon loaders carting the day's yields to the malthouse.



In the malthouse, the grains were softened by steeping in cool water then spread over the malting floor some three to four inches deep until germinated. Skillful handcrafters gently and regularly turned the barley until fully modified. The malted barley was next transferred to a kiln for drying then roasting. The experienced maltster craftsman sensed the desired moisture levels and the precise temperatures and kiln times.

Most of their home town industry was destined to London by boat or wagon for final brewing and distilling. So common were these transports that the London roads were frequently etched from heavy laden wagons wedging deep bearing ruts.

Beer and ale were the most popular of beverages throughout the entire English countryside delighting noble and commoner alike. It was here in Sawbridgeworth where the favorite refreshments of numerous village inns and city taverns had their humble beginnings.

Three Mile Pond Farm, a two story dwelling with an abutting picket fence caught the eye of most travelers passing through. Nearby the "Old Malthouse" crowned the thirty acre parcel of "Nidelles."

Due to the Norman presence perhaps, this field was named from the French word “Nid” meaning “Nest” followed by the feminine pronoun “elles” depicting the plural “theirs”. This simple farm land and dwelling place would over several generations nurture a family returning to greatness and honor. Over time one of its own would venture far from this quaint but hospitable homeland to the reaches of a new frontier in America. Like Abraham of old the promise of a numerous and faithful posterity would be realized in Abraham Belknap.

Some time before 1415 and 1446<sup>57</sup>, a branch of the noble Belknaps or Beltofts turned their backs to the frenzied confines of their hereditary homelands and ventured to this god fearing dwelling site of rural Hertfordshire.



Far from the conniving and militant barons and gentry ever eager to devour those who opposed their wanton ambitions, they nestled in Asgar the Staller's ancient hideaway.

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<sup>57</sup> Since Richard was appointed administrator in 1415 it seems that would have been his first opportunity to arrange access to the Nidelles property in Hertfordshire. William Belknap sold the Leebury manor in Arkesden and Great Chishull in 1446 of which the Sawbridgeworth property appears to have been an appendage of that manor. It seems unlikely the Beltofts would have been able to secure the Sawbridgeworth property if the Belknaps had surrendered all claims to the Great Chishull portion of Nidelles.

The exodus to Nidelles likely began with the scholar Richard Belknap or his son. Had their patriarch, Richard Belknap the former Oxford scholar migrated to this quaint domain, it seems likely he would have provided for his family applying his administrative and clerical prowess perhaps as bailiff or a shire magistrate. His high-bred university training and discipline would have been very uncommon in these parts. But, if his son would have lead the way they may have immediately embraced the maltsters labors and managements.

Successive generations joined the community malting fervor that would bring greater prosperity to the determined farmer and overseer. The "Old Malthouse" became a central gathering spot for successive generations of these Belknap and Beltoft descendants as they engaged all family members in these laborious and exacting pursuits. If like most malthouses of the period the Nidelles' "Old Malthouse" consisted of a long low timbered building interrupted by a conical or pyramid-shaped roof over the kiln.

In marked contrast to the elegant and armor-bearing remnants of Hamon's descent these heirs of Richard Belknap would find a nurturing atmosphere laboring in the rich earth and roots of Nidelles and its environs far from their flamboyant Belknap cousins.

The rift between these two branches of Sir Robert's heirs likely found its genesis between Hamon and Richard. Hamon likely protested his younger brother's appointment by the Archbishop Chichele. Richard, the Oxford scholar, striving to restore the integrity of the family honor and of the law which his father so revered perhaps grew envious of his brother's military acclaim.



With the announcement of Hamon's betrothal to Joan Sudeley the rift between brothers must have escalated to contempt on the part of Richard towards his ambitious elder brother. In Richard's perspective Hamon had betrayed his father by embracing the Boteler family, heirs of the illustrious de Montforts, with their ties to the dread Thomas Beauchamp, earl of Warwick. This same "Warwick" was the senior appellant who zealously pursued Sir Robert's prosecution and death decree while knowing of his innocence. The intervening clergy narrowly prevailed to rescue their father from Warwick's henchmen.

During Sir Robert Belknap's confinement in Ireland in 1393, Sir Thomas Beauchamp, then earl of Warwick conveyed a moiety (half or a major subdivision of the main manor) of the castle and manor of Beaudesert, within the towns of Henley in Warwickshire, to Thomas Boteler and Baldwin Frevyle with rights of reversion. Thomas Boteler descended from Maud de Montfort, and Baldwin Frevyle claimed heir to Elizabeth de Montfort.

Thomas de Beauchamp was enfeoffed to this manor and castle by Peter de Montfort. Thomas Boteler held his portion of this manor and castle of the Belknap archenemy, the earl of Warwick, Sir Thomas Beauchamp, the senior of the five Lord's Appellants. Thomas de Beauchamp's knight's service to this castle and manor passed to his son, Richard, the 13<sup>th</sup> earl of Warwick. Thomas Boteler's reversion rights to this moiety passed to his three sons: John, William and finally to Ralph Boteler. Their sister Joan married Hamon Belknap.

The Beaudesert manor and castle was for four years held by Ralph Boteler's nephews, John Norbury and William Belknap. During the reign of Henry VII, Norbury and William Belknap petitioned that monarch to restore the manors of Sudeley and Beaudesert to them reminding his majesty of the loyal service of their uncle Lord Sudeley to Henry VI in the War of the Roses. Ralph, Lord Sudeley was forced to surrender Sudeley Castle and William Belknap and Norbury were coerced to sell Beaudesert to the Yorkist King Edward IV, after the Lancastrians were defeated at the first Battle of St. Albans. (Edward waited several years before evoking his prerogative the timing of which coincided shortly after the death of his former mistress and perhaps betrothed Lady Eleanor Boteler.)

The heirs of Hamon, due to their vested interest to the Sudeley estates followed the Boteler unfailing devotion to the Lancastrian cause during this Civil War. Most of Hertfordshire aligned with the Yorkists. From 1455 when the Lancastrians were defeated at St. Albans and Henry VI was captured until the fall of the treacherous Richard III at Bosworth Fields in 1485 the Belknaps and Beltofts enlisted on opposing sides.

The secluded town of Sawbridgeworth could not escape the casualties of war. The second Battle of St. Albans occurred February 17, 1461. Queen Margaret and her

youthful son, Prince Edward accompanied the Lancastrian men at arms as they engaged the Yorkists and broke their ranks. The defeated Yorkist Lords Bonville and Sir Thomas Kyriell, granted safe conduct for their protection of the Yorkist captive Henry VI were nonetheless presented to the Queen and seven year old Prince Edward. "Fair son", said the Queen to the Prince, "by what manner of means shall these knights die?" "Let their heads be taken off," replied the youthful prince.<sup>58</sup> And it was done.

The victorious Lancastrians robbed and plundered the Hertfordshire countryside perhaps reaching twenty miles to the east to the Beltofts of Sawbridgeworth. The otherwise passive townspeople who conscientiously went about their daily toils were forced to experience the evils of war. News of their heartless Queen and Prince in exile more embittered the local residents against the Lancastrian adherents. The animosity between the Belknap and Beltoft branches continued.

It was during these tumultuous times that Richard Beltoft and his bride Christian graced the grain fields of Nidelles. This Richard took great pride in his inherited birthright and sought the nurture of this gentle homeland for his sons and daughters. Richard likely lived until the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

During his lifetime he settled his message of Nidelles upon his wife with the provision that he should retain use of the land until his passing. Thomas Leventhorp among others were appointed trustees.

In Richard's will he directed that his wife maintain the property until their son John came of age hence Nidelles would pass to him and his heirs. As a contingency, the senior Richard planned that if John died childless, his son Laurence and his heirs could claim the land. Their son Edmund and Thomas were mentioned as heirs in succession if the other brothers died without descendants. Two daughters were mentioned also in his will as potential heirs.

John Beltoft married first, Isabel and secondly Margaret Tredgold. By Isabel he had a daughter Joan who married William Waller and died sometime before 1543. Their daughter Margaret or "Meg" married William Gyrton in 1545 to the dismay of her grandfather John Beltoft. In referring to her betrothed the aged John Beltoft depicted him as "but a pore yonge mand and unlykely to thrive".

In 1543 as John was gravely ill he sent for the curate, Reverend Thomas Elam to draw up his will and to administer the last sacrament. On this occasion in the midst of his close friends and neighbors he had his father Richard's will read. To meet the conditions of his father's bequests he sought the advice and counsel of a "Mr. Cooke, solicitor to Queen Katherine. As part owner of Playstowe in Halstead and Earls Colne, Mr. Cooke was personally familiar with the Nidelles estates in Essex and Hertfordshire.

The ailing John consequently sent his father's will with Dennis Adam and William Garland to deliver the will and await his response. At this time John confirmed his

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<sup>58</sup> Robin Neillands, *The Wars of the Roses*, pg. 104.

granddaughter Meg should be entitled to Nidelles according to his interpretation of his father's wishes. John would recover from this illness but died two years later. It was during this two year period that Meg married and John attempted to prevent their succeeding to the Nidelles estates.

At some time in his life, John had also acquired from Mr. Chauncey a two acre parcel of arable land in Sawbridgeworth called "Currants". After his death his second wife Margaret married Thomas Westwood and they had two sons. Five years after John Beltoft's death, possession of Nidelles was bitterly contended between Thomas Westwood and William Gyrtton wherein the matter was presented to The Chancery Court for resolution.

John's brother Laurence (likely named after Laurence Belknap the Oxford student who died in 1401) had a son named Richard. Laurence must have died at an early age for young Richard at about five years of age lived with his uncle John at Nidelles for twenty years. This Richard, apparently a well-to-do husbandman bequeathed in his will written in 1594 a legacy to his grandson Abraham. His wife Elizabeth having preceded him in death in 1588.

Richard's children included Bennet, Alice born in 1561 married Edward Lyndesell, and Josias born 1562 who left a will in 1599. It was this Josias who claimed the surname of Belknap and referred to his brother Bennet Belknap (or Benedict Belknap). Time and the absence of heirs to their distant kinsman Edward Belknap of Warwick opened the way for this branch of the family to return to their hereditary namesake. The contention between Hamon and Richard Belknap some 150 years earlier had all but been forgotten. Sir Robert's name and honor had to be vindicated by these his humble heirs. (John Belknappe a likely kinsman had already made the transition to the Belknap surname as early as 1567 in Earls Colne, Essex).

Nidelles succeeded in prospering the Beltoft family through several generations while the seeds of the Protestant Reformation took early root in these fertile Hertfordshire fields. Commencing with the teachings of Wycliffe and Lollard the Puritan zeal likewise found far reaching acceptance in these humble households. The Beltofts were anxious to espouse the Protestant revolution. In contrast, Edward Belknap, son of Henry with his brother in law Shelley actively embraced the Catholics.

The longevity of King Henry VIII, brought long awaited political stability but with his passing, religious persecution divided families and neighbors. With the divorce of his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, King Henry rid England of Papal dominion and became defender of the faith to the Church of England and filled the royal coiffures with the sale of lands confiscated by the crown by virtue of the dissolution of the monasteries. When Henry VIII died, the nation was thrust into civil strife again with Catholicism then Protestantism leading religious persecutions. Bloody Mary's retribution focused on the southeastern Protestant strongholds including Hertfordshire. Queen Elizabeth succeeded and turned religious intolerance against the Catholics.

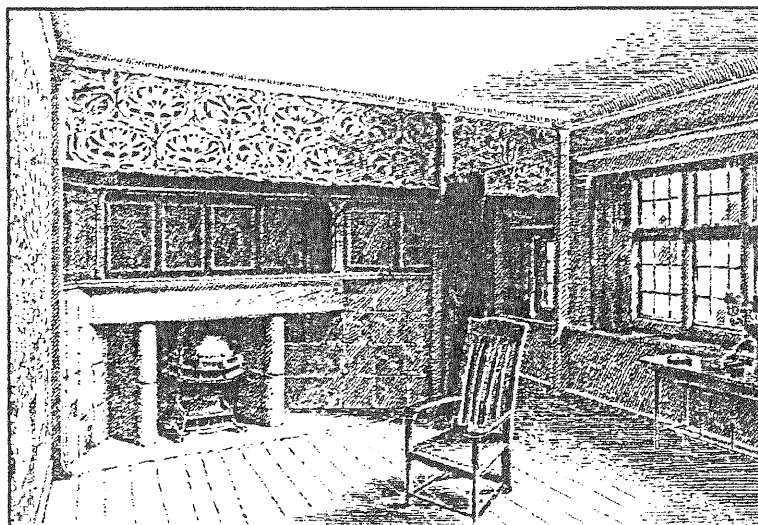
Great atrocities in the name of religion turned families from within. Hostilities between the Belknaps and Beltofts likely intensified along religious preferences as well.

Some time before the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Beltofts chose to withdraw from the Belknap namesake. Whether it originated with the Joan Boteler marriage or the bitterness emanating from the Wars of the Roses the Beltofts relinquished their Belknap surname preferring the Norman derivative "Beltoft".

After the passing of Edward Belknap, without male heirs, the armigerous descendants of Hamon ceased to carry on the Belknap noble name. Edward's estates vested with his sisters offspring. But the "Belknap" name would continue.

The mystery of Nidelles arises from several fronts surrounding the land itself and its principal inhabitants. Unmistakeably associated with Nidelles of Arkesden and Great Chishall in Essex some 20 miles to the northeast and likewise affiliated mysteriously to property to the east 20 miles in the area of Coggeshall and neighboring Earls Colne, Essex in the Colne River Valley this triangle of sorts poses many questions.

The inhabitants, namely the "Beltoft" family which over time would change their name to "Belknap" deepens the mystery of Nidelles. The manor of "Belknaps", passing through inheritance from Thomas Phelip of Baldok to his heir and granddaughter Juliane, the wife of Sir Robert Belknap, occupied the same or nearby property of Nidelles in Great Chishall. Why would the "Beltoft" family that occupied the land of Nidelles in Sawbridgeworth change their name to Belknaps after several generations? And why would members of this same family occupy land in Earls Colne quite a distance to the east under the name of John Beleknappe while they were still using the surname "Beltoft" on lands there held of the same family which possessed the manor of Nidelles in Great Chishall to the north?



## Chapter Six: Abraham Belknap, Colonial Immigrant

Abraham Belknap, with the divine yearning of the Puritan dream deeply instilled within, made the exodus across the far reaching Atlantic to Massachusetts' shores. Reminiscent of Father Abraham of the Old Testament, his namesake, and his patriarchal heirs, this colonist brought his blessed seed to the New World and turned his back on Nidelles forever. The nurturing and "nesting" of his ancestry was complete, destiny awaited his arrival.

Accompanying him in this glorious but burdensome voyage was his wife Mary (Stallion) and sons Samuel, Joseph, and John. Left behind in infant graves in North Weald Essex, were their children: Abraham born in 1622 who died very young, David buried 1624/5, and a daughter Dorcas. Their first son Abraham died December 6, 1620 in Netteswell, Essex.



It appears quite possibly that this family made their immigration with fellow Puritans that gathered in St. Albans and departed their southeastern England homelands aboard *The Planter* in 1635 to arrive in Boston harbor. Massachusetts immigrants generally came and settled as congregations under a local minister in parishes within the counties of Essex, Suffolk and Hertfordshire. That Protestant minister having been dismissed from the ministry of the Church of England by Henry VIII's despised Archbishop Laud the fleeing cleric with his devoted flock faithfully enjoined him to engage a new frontier and worship in peace.

They made their wilderness homelands on the fertile Saugus soil in general peace and harmony with the native Pawtuckets. Prior to the coming of the European immigrants this warring Indian tribe engaged the Tarratines Indians. After a series of long and bloody wars their tribes were so decimated, all that remained were a few scattered villages along the Merrimack River and on Sagamore Hill. Most of their mighty chieftains had fallen leaving but a few local sachems. Their warlike dispositions mellowed out of necessity. In general they welcomed the European visitors selling them their lands and trading with them.

The first white settlers of Saugus were lead by Edmund and Francis Ingalls who in 1629 separated from Governor Endicott's settlement in Salem. Within a few years the town of Lynn as it came to be known had become a significant settlement of more than fifty families.

By the time the Belknap family settled here, a rather mature community had developed. The Reverend Samuel Whiting, a most godly man had satisfied their spiritual needs since replacing the Reverend Stephen Bachiler in 1636. Under his strength of character this gathering unified and prospered and remained the oldest orthodox Congregational Church of the world.



Sabbath services were conducted for fifty years on the corner of Shepard and Summer streets, in a log building set in a hollow, sheltered from the powerful and frequent winds. Upon entering the door of the Old Meetinghouse the worshipper descended several steps the floor being several feet below the ground surface outside.

Every Sabbath Day the faithful Belknap family could be seen at their appropriate stations within their place of worship. As with all Puritan services the various family members sat separately during the services.

A seating committee of dignified men of the congregation would make seating assignments to the father of the home according to his rank and stature in the community. These seating assignments would be read from the pulpits for two or three weeks then posted at the church. From then on it became law. Mothers would be located on the other side of the room in corresponding seats. Little girls would sit in the aisles often on stools near their mothers. The boys were isolated by themselves near the pulpit or gallery stairs under the close scrutiny of the constable or tithingman. Once each family was seated, their faithful pastor would buoy their spirits with earnest and passionate sermons.

The monotony of the service which would generally last from two to four hours was intermingled with congregational singing of hymns from the Bay Psalm Book published in metre in Cambridge in 1640. And the congregation would unitedly stand during prayer.

The daily tasks for these hearty settlers were demanding and strenuous with little time for relief and comfort. Tempting it was for the sabbath gatherers in the humid summer heat to drift in slumber then to be rudely awakened by the tithingman. The staff of the



tithingman was knobbed on one end to rap on the heads of sleeping men or boys. The other end held a foxtail or hare's foot which he dangled in the faces of sleeping mothers or daughters.

On rare occasions the duty of tithingman in the quaint sleepy-eyed village of Lynn was put on alert after doing his duty. In 1643 a local townsman, Roger Scott of Lynn after being abruptly awakened by the tithingman struck out at him and landed a punch on the

startled churchman. The city fathers intolerant at Scott's actions sentenced him to be whipped as a warning to keep awake and restrained during services.

Three years later a neighbor, Obadiah Turner recorded in his journal the following:

June 3, 1646.-Allen Bridges hath bin chose to wake ye sleepers in meeting. And being much proude of his place, must needs have a fox taile fixed to ye ende of a long staff wherewith he may brush ye faces of them yt will have napps in time of discourse, likewise a sharpe thorne whereby he may pricke suxh as be most sound. On ye last Lord his day, as hee strutted about ye meetinghouse, he did spy Mr. Tomlins sleeping with much comfort, hys head kept steadie by being in ye corner, and his hand grasping ye rail. And soe spying, Allend did aquickly thrust hes staff behind Dame Ballard and give him a grievous prick upon ye hand. Whereupon Mr. Tonlins did spring upp much aboye ye floore, and with terrible forces stirke hys hand against ye wall; and also, to ye great wonder of all, prophanlie exclaim in a loud voice, curse ye wood-chuck, he dreaming so it seemed yt a woodchuck had seized and bit his hand. But on coming to know where he was, and ye grate scandall he had committed, he seemed much abashed, but did not speak. And I think he will not soon again goe to sleepe in meeting.”<sup>59</sup>

During one particular sabbath service a parishioner recorded:

“Ye women may sometimes sleepe and none know by reason of their enormous bonnets. Mr Whiting doth pleasantlie say from ye pulpit hee dot seeme to be preaching to stacks of straw with men among them.”<sup>60</sup>

In 1638, Abraham Belknap was granted forty acres in Lynn for his family to reside. While on this tract of land, Abraham's wife Mary gave birth to a daughter, Hannah.

Neighboring communities also began to flourish within this quaint segment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The town of Saugus was formed and in 1643 the Iron Works were established promptly providing a suitable grade of charcoal iron.

In 1646, Lynn was made a market town. On Tuesdays the townsfolk gathered along the market street in a spirited and cordial interchange of mostly homespun commodities and generous socializing. Abraham's family likely participated in these festive markets much like they did in their native Hertfordshire and Essex.

During these early years these families matured and refined but back in their homeland, thousands of miles away, families and friends left behind suffered the brutal onslaught of Civil War. Parliamentarians under the able command of Oliver Cromwell were in several heated skirmishes with the Loyalists of King Charles I. Since 1642 that nation was deeply embroiled in bitter civil conflict. In its early stages the ecclesiastical government under the despised Archbishop Laud collapsed. Cromwell's troops were

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<sup>59</sup> The Sabbath in Puritan New England, Alice Morse Earle, 1974 pg. 67-68.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pg. 71.

most vigilant against any traces of Catholic popery that had infiltrated Anglican services under Laud's leadership.

As many of these colonial Puritans had personally suffered persecution under the hands of Laud and King Charles, these settlers eagerly and actively supported Cromwell's cause. Each arrival of immigrants brought townspeople to welcome the new arrivals and converse on the recent battles and fateful destinies of friends and family subjected to the ravages of war.

Victorious in a series of civil battles and after the king enlisted the Scots and Irish Catholics to fight his own English countrymen, Parliament concluded peace could never be maintained while Charles I sat on the throne. Fifty nine judges were convened to judge Charles I for his crimes against his subjects. The king was convicted of treason and beheaded. For the next twelve years England and the colonies were ruled by the Commonwealth of which Oliver Cromwell was the dominant leader.

Cromwell himself had wanted to remove to the colonies before war broke out. Under his strict Protestant oriented leadership the Colonies, particularly the Massachusetts Bay Colony enjoyed unprecedented prosperity as they were conquering the wilderness. Abraham Belknap would not live to know of the outcome of the Great Civil War.



In 1643, our faithful immigrant, Abraham Belknap was laid to rest, valiant to the end. He courageously brought the honorable Belknap name to this American continent and inspired a noble and prolific descent.

At the time of his departure he was possessed of a significant estate consisting of "houses and 5 akres of land, 7li.; 2 akres of planting Land, 1li. 10s.; 2 akres salt marsh,

1li; 6 akres saltmarsh at fox hill, 2li.; 30 akres at the village, 2li.,..." also mentioned were many farm animals and implements.<sup>61</sup> Far greater that the physical remnants of his life he left a legacy for future generations to cherish and magnify.

Samuel the oldest surviving son was born March 16, 1627-8 at Northweald, Essex. After arriving in Massachusetts he met and married Sarah Jones the daughter of Robert Jones and Sarah Soane, of Hingham, Massachusetts. Sarah Jones had immigrated from Reading, Berkshire, England.

Samuel was anxious to widen his roots and with Sarah acquired two small lots in South Hampton, Long Island as early as 1653. They would take residence in Salem between the present Essex Street and North River before 1657. For a while they lived in Maulden, Massachusetts, during which time he in company with his brother Joseph of Boston and his sister Hannah sold their thirds pertaining to a parcel of their fathers estate which included the family home. Two years later, Samuel purchased a two and a half acre lot in Haverhill, Massachusetts which he kept for twelve years. Earlier he had established family residence elsewhere in Haverhill.

The Haverhill meetinghouse was a log house twenty- six feet by twenty wide. The roof consisted of clay-filled chinks, its steep roofs thatched with long straw or grass. The floor consisted of beaten earth.<sup>62</sup>

Samuel seems not to have followed his father's occupation as a farmer. A skilled craftsman he adopted the trade of a joiner (a type of carpenter). Before his death sometime after 1701, he had extended his estate to include more than 127 acres in Haverhill. In his aged years he conveyed his lands to his two sons, Abraham and Ebenezer in 1695.

Joseph Belknap was born in Northweald, Essex on May 12, 1633. Also an heir to his father Abraham's estates he sold six acres of fresh meadow in Lynn to Edward Hutchinson, which was part of the 40 acres granted to Abraham in Lynn. At some point of time after Samuel had moved away from Lynn, Joseph the younger brother had secured the portions of his brother Samuel's and his sister Hannah's inherited portions of the family estate in Lynn. Shortly after Joseph's death in 1712 his sons sold to parcels of salt marsh lands, one of two acres the other of six acres to Joseph Belcher.

From these noble Belknap sons, hundreds of thousands of descendants would claim their Belknap heritage far from England's shores

More than six hundred years ago; more than a century before Columbus's famed voyage to the America's did Sir Robert Belknap, heartbroken and alone in exile in Ireland, despair as to the destiny of his descendants? Did he ponder that his name would forever be tainted and held in contempt as his legacy? Having gone to his eternal reward, what does he think of us now?

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<sup>61</sup> For a listing of his complete inventory see the appendix.

<sup>62</sup> The Sabbath in Puritan New England by Alice Morse Earle 1974. Pg.2-3

# *Appendix*

*Parliamentary Questions to the Captives*

*Sir Robert's London Residence Inventory*

*A Chronology of the Noble Belknaps*

*Sir Robert's Estates and Possessions*

*The Beltofts of Sawbridgeworth Report & Summary*

*A Chronology of the Manor of Belknaps and Nidelles*

*Lands Held by Sir Robert at time of Forfeiture*

*Livestock Held by Sir Robert at time of Forfeiture*

## *Parliamentary Questions to the Captives*

“Be it remembered that on the 20<sup>th</sup> August, in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of King Richard II, at Nottingham Castle, in the presence of our lord the king, Robert Tresilian, Chief Justice, and Robert Bealknap, Chief Justice of the Common Bench of our lord the king, and John Holt, Roger Fulthorp, and William Burgh, knights, colleagues of the aforesaid Robert Bealknap, and John Loketon, king’s serjeant at law, in the presence of the lords and other witnesses who have personally subscribed, were asked by our lord king, on the faith and allegiance by which they are firmly bound to the king, that they should reply faithfully to certain questions given below and recited in their presence and state the law on these points according to their discretion.

1. First, they were asked whether the new statute and ordinance and commission made and published in the last parliament celebrated at Westminster derogate from the regality and prerogative of the said lord our king. To which question they unanimously replied that they do derogate, especially because they were against the king’s wishes.
2. Also, they were asked how those who procured the making of such a statute ordinance and commission are to be punished. To this question they unanimously replied that they deserve to be punished with the capital penalty of death, unless the king shall wish to show them grace in the matter.
3. Also they were asked, what penalty was merited by those who incited the king to consent to the making of a statute, ordinance, and commission of this kind. To which question they unanimously replied that unless the king shall show them his grace, they are worthy to be punished with the capital penalty.
4. Also they were asked, what penalty was merited by those who compelled or enticed the king to consent to the making of the said statute, ordinance, and commission. To which they unanimously replied that they are worthy to be punished as traitors.
5. Also they were asked how those are to be punished who prevent the king from exercising those functions which belong to his regality and prerogative. To this question they unanimously replied that they are also to be punished as traitors.
6. Also, they were asked whether, when parliament has been assembled and the business of the realm and the cause of summons of parliament have been shown and declared by the king’s command, and certain articles have been defined by the king, upon which the lords and commons of the realm ought to proceed in the same parliament; if then the lords and commons wish to proceed entirely upon other articles, and not at all on the articles defined by the king, until the king should first have replied to the articles put forward by them, notwithstanding that they were enjoined by the king to the contrary; whether the king ought to have the direction of parliament in this matter,

and in fact to rule to this effect that they ought first to proceed on the articles defined by the king, or whether the lords and commons ought first to have an answer from the king to the articles set forth by them before they proceed any further. To which question they unanimously replied that the king should have the governance in this matter; and similarly in turn in all other articles touching parliament until the end of parliament. And if anyone shall act against this rule of the king, he is to be punished as a traitor.

7. Also they were asked whether the king may dissolve parliament whenever he pleases and may order the lords and commons to go away, or not. To which question they unanimously answered that he can. And if anyone then proceeds to act against the king's wishes, as if parliament were still in session, he is to be punished as a traitor.
8. Also they were asked, since the king may remove any of his ministers and justices whenever he pleases and examine and punish them for their offences, whether or not the lords and commons can without the king's consent impeach those officials for their offences in parliament. To this question they unanimously replied that they cannot. And if anyone shall do the contrary, he is to be punished as a traitor.
9. Also they were asked how he is to be punished who moved in parliament that they should send for the statute by which King Edward, son of King Edward, great grandfather of the present king, was adjudged in parliament to be no longer king; by the inspection of which statute and ordinance and commission abovesaid were conceived in parliament. To which question they unanimously replied that both he who moved this as well as the other who by pretext of this motion brought the statute into parliament, deserve to be punished as traitors and criminals.
10. Also they were asked whether the judgement given in the last parliament held at Westminster and delivered against the Earl of Suffolk was erroneous and revocable or not. To which they unanimously replied that if they were called upon to give this judgement, these justices and sergeant would be unwilling to give it, because it seems to them that this judgement is revocable as so erroneous in all its parts.

In witness of all these things the justices and serjeant have opposed their seals to these presents. Witnessed by the reverend fathers the lords Alexander, Archbishop of York, Robert Archbishop of Dublin, John Bishop of Bangor, Robert Duke of Ireland, Michael Earl of Suffolk, John Rypon, Clerk, and John Blake, Esquire. Given in the place, day, month, and year aforesaid.

## *Sir Robert's London Residence at the Time of his Forfeiture*

Writ of *mittatis* to Nicholas Exton, late mayor and escheator in the city of London, requiring him to transmit an inquisition taken *virtute officii* concerning the possessions late of Robert Bealknap, knight, forfeited to the king. Westminster. 4 November, 12 Richard II (1388).

Inquisition taken *virtute officii* before the same mayor and escheator by oath of a jury of Queenhithe ward, where the said Robert lately lived. London. 10 July, 12 Richard II (1388).

On 5 May, 11 Richard II, the said Robert had goods and chattels in the parish of St. Mary de Mountenhaut in Queenhithe ward which were arrested by the escheator and valued at 55 pounds 17s. 4 ½ d., as appears in the schedule annexed. On 1 August, 11 Richard II, the day of his forfeiture, he (held) as of fee by his own purchase, but by what estate the jurors do not know, a messuage or inn (*hospicium*) in the said ward and parish, wherein he was living (at the time) of his impeachment. The messuage is worth 9 marks 6s. 8d. gross yearly, but for letting it is worth only 5 marks net yearly, since there is a quit rent of 2 marks payable yearly to John Boneby, citizen and vintner of London, and Margery his wife, daughter of Katherine daughter of John Cros, sometime citizen (and fishmonger of London), by right of inheritance of Margery... in the parish of St. Mary (de Mountenhaut in ) Oldefisshstrete, London, and now called the one messuage or inn aforesaid, ... The (said Margery), who is still alive, is daughter and the lawfully begotten next heir of Katherine and said quit rent descended to her by right. Robert Bealknap had the issues of the said messuage from (the said 1 August) to the day when judgment was given against him and since then it has remained empty and unlet to the date of the inquisition. Robert had not then or since any other lands or goods in the city or its suburbs nor did any others have any to his use there by bargain or otherwise, so far as the jurors can discover.

Schedule of the goods and chattels of Robert Bealknap, knight, found in his dwelling house by the Old Fishmarket, London, on 5 M(aym 11 Richard II), and valued in detail as follows; a dossal and coster of red and black striped (*panlee*) 'worsted', old and in poor condition, worht 10s. , 2 boards (*tabule*), 2 forms and 2 pairs of trestles, all old, worth 4s., 4 brass pots, a 'chafour' and 5 brass pans weighing 100 lbs. And worth, at 1 ½ d. a pound, 12s. 6d. a barrel for equipment (*barellus pro armatura*) worth 2s. 6d., a pair of table knives and a 'trenchourknyf' worth 3s.4d., 3 linen cloths and 2 old 'canevaz' cloths, a 'sanenap' and a towel wirht 5s.6d., a cupboard and a pipe to hold bread, old and in poor condition, worth 20d., 5 chests and an old reckoning board (*computatorium de bordo*) worth 12s., 9 'liengefisshes' fowth 9s., 2 dozen dishes and a dozen saucers, silver vessels weighing 283 ounces and worth, at 2s. an ounce, 28 pounds 6s., a silver saltcellar worth 13s.4d., a silver pot worth 60s., 3 cups with covers of silver and three silver pieces of plate without covers worth 6 pounds 13s., a cup with a cover of silver worth 36s., a silver nut with a gilt cover worth 19s., a mazer with a cover and 2 small mazers in poor condition worth 15s., 10 silver spoons worth 10s., a basin with an ewer of latten worth

2s.6d., a tester with a half canopy, a coverlet of blue 'worsted' and 3 curtains of blue 'carde', with 2 old 'banker' of red 'worsted' and 12 'cusshins' in poor condition and old, worth 22s. 8d., 4 pieces of red and white striped (panlee) 'worsted', namely, a dossal, 2 costers and a 'banker' in poor condition, worth 12s., a tester with a half canopy, a coverlet and 3 curtains of white 'worsted' in poor condition worth 16s., an amice, an 'albe', a stole, a 'fanon', a 'cheziple', a corporal and 2 towels, one of them with a frontal in poor condition, worth 10s., a chalice with a paten worth 16s., a missal and 2 antiphoners, very old and in poor condition and apparently (ut apparent) of the use of Bangor, worth 6s. 8d., a leather girdle with a dagger mounted with silver and gilt worth 16s. 8d., 2 cloaks lined with untrimmed 'menyver' and 2 hoods lined with trimmed 'menyver', old and in poor condition, worht 40s., a 'sengle' surcoat, a 'kirtil' and a robe lined with 'stringlyng' in poor condition worth 10s., 2 cloaks and 2 hoods, whereof one cloak with its hood is lined with red 'tartaryn' and the other with green 'tartaryn', worth 28s., a set (par) of 'plates', 'greves', 'cussheaux', 'vanbras', 'polynes', 'gavez', and 'sabatons' of 'quyrbroille', old and in poor condition, together with a cupboard to put them in, worth 5s., an old 'goune', 'kirtil', and hood of blue cloth in poor condition worth 3s.4d., a 'squerell' fur for a surcoat and an old fur for a hood worth 5s., an old board (tabula) and settle (cathedra longa) worth 5s., a sword in poor condition worth 16d., 9 pairs of old gilt spurs in poor condition worth 2s., 3 old pewter vessels weighing 19 lbs. and worth, at 1 ½d. a pound, 2s. 4 1/2d. Total-55 pounds 17s. 4 ½ d.

The valuers-John Eston 'upholdere', Geoffrey atte More, Peter Smert 'joynour', Sayer Neuman 'juweler', John Neuman 'goldsmyth'. (Calendar of Inquisition Misc. File 332 (54-56).

## *A Chronology of the Noble Belknaps*

- 1351 **Robert Belknap**, appointed clerk of the diocese of Salisbury. (Regesta, Vol. CCIII. 16 Kal. June. 1351 pg. 412)
- 1353 "Commission to Master Andrew de Ufford, William de Newenham and **Robert de Bilknap** to survey the state of the abbey of Battle, which is the king's free chapel and founded of the alms of his progenitors, the goods whereof, as reported, by default of rule and inexcusable insufficiency and neglect of some of the abbey, are dilapidated and wasted, to the great depression of the state and possible ruin of the abbey; and to remedy the defaults according to their discretion. (Calendar of Patent Rolls. May 8, Membrane 4 -pg. 440)
- 1354 "Commission to Robert de Halsham and **John Belknap**, to inform themselves by inquisition and such other ways as shall be expedient touching a complaint by John de Artoys, Vincent de Chastel, Bertin Bollard and Luke de Portenfeno, merchants of Normandy, that some evildoers took a ship laden with their goods and merchandise on the sea by Calais in the time of the last truce with France and brought the same to the port of Shorham and had their will thereof contrary to the truce, and in whose hands the goods and merchandise are... to arrest those guilty of the taking of the same, and imprison them until further order, and to certify him in the chancery of all that they do herein. The sheriff of Surrey and Sussex and the bailiffs of Shorham are by these presents commanded to be attending and answering to them in the execution of the premises. (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 28 Edward III.-Part 1. Membrane 8d, May 16, pg. 68)
- 1361 "To Robert de Herle and **Robert Belknap**. Order to stay altogether the execution of the king's commission to them, with certain other lieges, to hear and determine divers alleged trespasses and felonies committed at sea be certain subjects of the king and others against certain merchants, as well aliens as natives, being in a ship of John Goldbetere and John Saleman of England and Jakemart Flemyng merchants, Christian Rous of Lescluse master, which was laded at Nautes in Brittany with divers goods to the value of 20,000 pounds to be taken to Flanders, and to intermeddle no further therein; as the business has newly been brought before the king and council, and the king has revoked their said commission because it is thought agreeable with law and custom that felonies, trespasses and wrongs committed at sea should be brought before the king's admirals and terminated according to maritime law, and not before his justices at the common law. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 35 Edward III. Membrane 28d, May 11, pg. 265)
- 1365 "... Charter of William de Say knight, giving with warranty to **Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife**, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, his manor of Sharsted and all his lands, woods, pastures, farms, warrens, liberties, rents and services etc. in the towns and parishes of Chetham and Gillyngham co. Kent. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 39 Edward III. Membrane 6d-pg. 206)

- 1366 **Robert Belknapp** and Thomas de Lodelowe mentioned as justices of assize in Essex. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 40 Edward III. Membrane 24d-pg. 272)
- 1366 "Pardon to **Robert de Beleknappe and Amy, his wife**, for acquiring for life from the abbot and convent of Battle the manor of Knygessnode, held in chief, as is said, at a rent of 40 marks yearly and entering therein, without license; and license for them to retain the same." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 40 Edward III. Membrane 13-pg. 336)
- 1366 Writing of Thomas Daldoun knight, being a quitclaim with warranty to **Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife**, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, of all the lands, rents, reversions, farms and services in Wy, Bocton Alulphi and Godmersham which aforetime were of Stephen de Etyngbroke or of John de Etyngbroke... Writing of Thomas Daldoun knight, being a quitclaim with warranty to Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, of all the lands, rents, reversions, farms and services in Wy, Godmersham, Thremworthe and Grundale which were of Thomas Daldoun father of the said Thomas, and in all those now or ever heretofore held in dower of his heritage by Maude who was wife of the said Thomas the father in the said towns, in Bocton Alulphi, Ditton, Cranebroke and elsewhere in Kent." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 40 Edward III. Membrane 8d November, 23-pg. 300)  
Appointed king's sergeant at salary of 20 pounds.
- 1367 "Commission of oyer and terminer to Robert de Thorp, Thomas de Lodelowe, Edward de Sancto Johanne, **Robert Bealknapp**, John Wyn and **John Bealknapp**, on information that, whereas a plan is pending before the justices of the Bench between Roger de Assheford and Joan, his wife, and John Botiller and Margaret, his wife, demandants, and John de Stopeham, tenant, of a moiety of the manor of Gretham, co. Sussex, Robert atte Mulle, under-sheriff of that county, maintaining the cause of the plaintiffs, by pretext of writs directed to the sheriff to summon the said John de Stopeham before the justices in this matter, returned him as summoned, when he was not but was wholly ignorant thereof, in order that he might incur loss of the said moiety; and that the under sheriff, with Richard atte Mulle and Richard atte Combe, his bailiff, and many other accomplices, went armed to Gretham, entered the close and houses of John de Stopeham there, set fire to a stack of heather near his house and would have burned him therein, compelled him and his household to flee, took away, wasted and consumed his goods, and daily threaten him and the panel appointed to decide the plea so that these dare not say the truth and he dares not defend his right in the matter." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 41 Edward III. Part I. Membrane 27d, May 10, pg. 436)
- 1369 "Writing of Thomas Travers, granting with warranty to **Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife**, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, the reversion of all the lands, rents and services in Ditton and Estmallynge co. Kent sometime of Simon Fraunceys of London, now held by Geoffrey de Ditton during the life of

Maud who was wife of the said Simon by her demise with reversion to the said Thomas and his heirs; and quitclaim with warranty to the said **Robert and Amy** and to the heirs of Robert of the manor or tenement in Kenyngton in the same county called Ullee sometime of the said Simon, with all lands, rents, services and commodities thereto belonging... being a quitclaim to **Robert de Beleknappe, Amy his wife** and the heirs and assigns of the said Robert of all the lands, rents and services sometime of Simon Fraunceys of London in Kenyngton, Ditton and Estmallyngg co. Kent with all commodities etc. thereto belonging. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 43 Edward III. Membrane 34d, February 9-pg. 68-69)

- 1369 "Pardon, for 50 marks paid to the king, to Adam Fraunceys, citizen of London, for acquiring in fee from William Say, 'chivaler,' the manor of Edelmeton and twenty cartloads of firewood to be taken yearly in the foreign park of Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, of Enefeld, which manor and park are held in chief by knight service, and entering into the manor and taking the firewood without licence; and licence for him to retain the same. Licence also for him to enfeof **Robert Bealknap** and John Wroth, the younger, of the manor and firewood, and for them to grant them to him for life, with remainders to Adam Fraunceys, the younger, in tail, and Maud daughter of the first named Adam, in tail, and to the right heirs of the same Adam. (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 43 Edward III. Membrane 18, October 19,-pg. 312-313)

- 1369 "Commission to John de Cobeham, **Robert Bealknap**, William de Horne, Simon de Kegworth and Thomas de Garwynton to survey the coasts of the isle of Thanet and to have all places in which ships or boats can put in defended by walls and dykes where possible, and all other necessary measures taken for defence of the island." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. Membrane 45d, June 11, -pg. 343)

- 1372 "Order to John Bataill, escheator in the county of Essex, to take the manor of La Lebury into the king's hand, cause **Robert Bealknapp and Juliana, his wife**, to have full seisin thereof, and levy for the king's use the issues thereof taken by John Neuport and Isabel, his wife, since the death of Isabel late the wife of Thomas Phelipp of Baldok... and that **Juliana, wife of Robert de Belknapp**, is Thomas's kinswoman and next heir, to wit, the daughter of Elizabeth, his daughter, and of full age, and that John Neuport and Isabel, his wife, occupied the manor and took the issues and profits after the death of Isabel late the wife of Thomas,- ordered the sheriff of the county to warn the said John and Isabel to be before the king in the Chancery on a certain day now past to shew cause why the manor should not be seized into the king's hand and delivered to the said **Robert and Juliana**, and why they should not answer to the king for the issues thereof taken by them, and to do and receive what the court should award, and they did not come on that day, although sufficiently warned by Geoffrey Michel and Walter Weston,... but one Robert Maryon was then present there, who asserted that the said John and Isabel held the manor for life of his demise, with reversion to him, and prayed that he might be admitted to defend his right in this behalf, and was admitted; and now by process before the king between the said **Robert**

**Bealknapp and Juliana** and the said Robert Maryon it is awarded that the manor be seized into the king's hand, and that the record of the matter be sent before the king in Chancery for execution because delivery of the manor out of the king's hands pertains to the office of the Chancery, as is found by the tenor of the record and process thereof, which the king has caused to come before him in the Chancery, and the king has taken the fealty of the said **Robert Bealknapp**. And be it remembered that **Robert Bealknap** came in the Chancery at Westminster on 28 January and made a protestation that he did not acknowledge that the manor is held of the king by the service of a fourth part of a knight's fee, as is supposed by the aforesaid inquisition." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 46 Edward III. Membrane 30, January 28, pg. 157-158)

- 1373 "Charter of Alexander de Goldyngham knight, giving with warranty to **Robert de Beleknappe and Juliana his wife** and to the heirs and assigns of the said Robert his whole manor of Wyltynge, with all services of free tenants and neifs, and all liberties and other properties and profits to the same belonging, and all his lands, rents and services in the rapes of Hastings, Peveneseye and Lewes and elsewhere in Sussex, with the warren upon the said manor and lands... Indenture made between Alexander de Goldyngham knight of the one part and **Robert de Beleknappe and Juliana his wife** of the other part, witnessing a grant, made by the said Alexander to the said **Robert and Juliana** and to the heirs and assigns of the said Robert..."(Calendar of Close Rolls. 47 Edward III. Membrane 10d, October 23, -pg. 593)
- 1373 **Robert Belknap** received 40 pounds as steward of the late Queen Phillippa's estates in Kent during 1372-1373. (Issue Rolls, no. 447 quoted in Select Cases 942 P355 Vol. 88 pg. xxxi)
- 1373 **Robert Belknap** received five marks for going to Southampton in 1373 to take security from the earl of Salisbury. (Issue Rolls, no. 449 (28 June 1373) quoted in Select Cases 942 P355 Vol. 88 pg. xxxi).
- 1374 **Robert Belknap** received 11 pounds 4s. for expenses in Flanders on the king's business in 1374. (Issue Rolls, no. 456 (4 November 1374) quoted in Select Cases Family History Library 942 P355 Vol. 88 pg. xxxi).
- 1374 **Robert Belknap** was one of seven sent to meet with representatives of the Roman Papal Court to help resolve differences between the Church and the King of England.
- 1381 "The Great Revolt", **Robert Belknap** was sent into Essex to restore the peace but his clerks and small entourage were outnumbered some of whom were killed.
- 1382 "Acceptance of the grant made for a sum of money by John Holt, king's servant, to **Robert Bealknap**, knight, of the marriage, heretofore granted to the said John Holt by the king by letters patent, of John son and heir of Edmund de Stonore,

tenant in chief, a minor in the king's custody; and grant that if the said heir die during his minority unmarried the said **Robert** shall have the marriage of the next heir if a minor, and so from heir to heir." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. Membrane 34, October 27, pg. 204)

- 1383 John of Buckingham, bishop of Lincoln, granted the manor of Little Holwell, Bedfordshire formerly of Robert Avenel, to **Robert Belknappe**. Robert Avenel son of John, who married **Juliana daughter of Robert Belknappe**, disputed the claim of the bishop to the manor, "...and it was finally arranged that Robert and Juliana should have the manor, which failing their heirs, should revert to **Robert Belknappe**. They subsequently died without heirs, and the manor fell to **Robert Belknappe**, and for having been found guilty of treason in 1388, Little Holwell escheated to the crown." (History of Bedfordshire pg. 296 from Chancery of Inquisition Post Mortem 12 Richard II, No. 166, Feet of Fines Bedfordshire Hil. 8 Richard II and Calendar of Patent Rolls 1391 pg. 47)

- 1385 **Sir Robert Belknappe** knighted

- 1386 **Sir Robert de Belknap** as one of the Knights of the Shire for Sussex was involved in the impeachment of Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk

- 1387 "Plea at Westminster before **Robert Bealknap** and his fellow Justices of the King of Common Bench, Hilary Term, 10 Richard II., Roll 315. Essex. William Ratlesden, suing in his own person against John Curteys for 10 acres of land with appurtenances in Colchester as his right and inheritance, wherein the said John has no right of ingress except by John Ratlesden, sometime husband of Agnes Ratlesden, mother to the said William, whose heir he is, who demised them to him in her lifetime, etc..."

"Plea at Westminster before **Robert Bealknap** and his fellow justices of the Lord King and Common Bench, Hilary Term, 10 Richard II., Roll 112. Essex. John Curteys was summoned to answer William Ratlesden of a plea that he should restore to him 40s. which he owes and unjustly detain, etc..."

"In the 10<sup>th</sup> Richard II., Easter Term, in the time of Simon Fordham and John Christion, Bailiffs of Colchester, John Regewyne, Sherriff of Essex, sent to the said Bailiffs return of a certain writ of the King, addressed to him in these words:- Richard, by the grace of God, etc., to the Sheriff of Essex. We command you to cause to appear before our Justices at Westminster, in the morrow of the Ascension, Robt. Atte Forde and Stephen Baroun, Bailiffs of Colchester, John Halle, Thomas Fraunceys, and Simon Fordham, witnesses named in a certain writing of quit-claim which Thos. Hynton has preferred in our Court at Westminster, under the name of John Lovet, to exclude Sir Thom. De Swynborne, Clement Spyce, and John de Boys, from payment of an annual rent of 10 pounds in the manor of East Merseye,... Witness: **Roger Bealknap**, at Westminster, May 7, 10 Richard II." (Above three references in Colchester Red Oath Book pg. 214)

to 218) **Note: This may be, if transcribed correctly the missing brother of Sir Robert Bealknap.**

- 1387 Conspiracy by Archbishop of York, Duke of Ireland, Earl of Suffolk, Chief Justice Tresilian, having stirred up the king to resist encroachment of his authority the judges were summoned to Shrewsbury to entrap them in to treason by forcing them to declare the king's ordinance by which Michael de la Pole was convicted as illegal. **Bealknap** refused but after threatening his life he submitted purportedly exclaiming as he did so, "Now here lacketh nothing but a rope, that I may receive a reward worthie for my desert; and I know if I had not done this I might not have escaped your hands; so that for your pleasures and the king's I have done it, and deserved thereby death at the hands of the lords." (Judges of England FHL 942 D3fo pg. 65)
- 1387 "Inquisition taken *virtute officii* before William de Hampton, escheator in co. Gloucester. Harnhull... **Robert Bealknap**, who was condemned for divers treason in the last parliament at Westminster, had on the day of his forfeiture the wardship of the manor of Harnhull worth 18 marks 2s. 7d. net yearly, and of a messuage in Condicote worth 4 marks 6s. 8d. net yearly by royal grand during the minority of Ralph son and heir of Edmund de Stonore, and 7 marks 20d. rents of assize in Boorton, parcel of the inheritance of the said Ralph... On 1 August 11 Richard II the said **Robert** held the manor of Salthous and Kellyng with the advowsons of the churches there for 12 years then to come by demise of John de Bukyngham, bishop of Lincoln, who in November 8 Richard II granted them to Robert son of John Avenel and **Juliana his wife, daughter of the said Robert Bealknap**, and the heirs of their two bodies, with remainder to the heirs of Robert son of John lawfully begotten of his body, and ultimate remainder to **Robert Bealknap and Juliana his wife and his heirs**. The said Robert son of John died about two years ago, but Juliana his wife is still alive... The said **Robert Bealknap** has taken the profits of the manor from the said 1 August to the eve of the Purification last past. It is held of the earl of March by service unknown... On the said 1 August the said Robert, convicted as above, held the manor of Netherholwell, which he had acquired of John, bishop of Lincoln. The site of the manor is of no net yearly value. There are two gardens ...containing 2 acres and worth 3s. 4d. yearly, 10 pounds rents of assize of free tenants in Netherhollwell, Schefford and Hennellowe,... The said Robert received the issues and profits of the premises from the said 1 August to the following 1 October and from thence till Epiphany he received from the farmer 100s. 7 ½ d. Thus Richard is charged to hold the manor of the king and has taken the oath." ..(Inquisitions-Miscellaneous. #408 pg. 221)
- 1388 "Order by advice of the council to receive **Robert Bealknap**, John Holt, John Cary, William Burgh knights and John Lokton, whom Thomas earl of Notyngham marshal of England shall deliver to the king's name, and to keep them in safe custody in the Tower until further order of the king and council." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 11 Richard II. Membrane 14. February 1, pg.382-383)

- 1388 "To the constable of the Tower of London and to his lieutenant. Order, by advice of the council, to cause **Robert Bealknap**, Roger de Fulthorp, John Holt, John Cary, William Burgh knights and John Lokton (in margin the justices) henceforward to come day by day before the king and council in this parliament jointly and severally as directed by the council, to answer touching what shall be laid before them, until by the king and council discharged of their custody as for particular causes laid before the king and council by advice of the council the King lately by divers writs commanded the constable and lieutenant to receive the said Robert and the others, whom Thomas earl of Notyngham marshal of England should deliver to them at the king's command. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 11 Richard II. Membrane 10, February 27. Pg. 392)
- 1388 In February, **Sir Robert Bealknap** was removed as judge and arrested with the other subscribing judges. He was conveyed to **close imprisonment in the Tower**. At the trial on March 3, **Bealknap** pleaded the duress and compulsion he was under when signing but was found guilty and adjudged to be drawn and hanged as a traitor and his heirs to be disinherited and forfeited to the king. Others intervened and changed his sentence to banishment for life to Drogheda, Ireland with an allowance of 40 pounds for support of his family. (Judges of England FHL 942 D3fo pg. 65)
- 1388 "Appointment of the king's clerk, William de Horbury, to be the king's receiver of all the manors, lordships and lands in the counties of Devon, Cornwall and Somerset late of Robert de Veer, duke of Ireland, Robert Tresillian, 'chivaler', **Robert Bealknap**, 'chivaler', John Cary, 'chivaler', and John Blake, which are forfeit to the king by reason of certain judgements rendered in the present Parliament, to hold the said office from the Annunciation last during the king's pleasure, taking therein whatever may reasonably be agreed upon between the treasurer and him; provided that he answer at the Exchequer for the money's forthcoming from the said manors etc." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 11 Richard II. Membrane 9. May 13, pg. 231)
- 1389 "Commission in like terms to Thomas Kempe, escheator in the counties of Kent and Middlesex, and Robert Kent, to arrange for the sale of all the goods in the said counties late of **Robert Bealknap**, 'chivaler', Simon Burley, 'chivaler', and James Berners, 'chivaler.' Commission to Robert Kent and John Olyvere, escheator in the counties of Surrey and Sussex, to appraise by the oath of good and lawful men all the goods in the said counties late of the bishop of Chichester, **Robert Bealknap**, 'chivaler', and James Berners, 'chivaler', and to arrange for their sale as advantageously as possible; provided etc. as above." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 11 Richard II. Membrane 10. May 24, pg. 229)
- 1397 Parliament remitted **Robert Belknap's** judgement and he was allowed to return to England. (Rot. Parl. Iii, 233-244). Also, "Restitution to the common law, in accordance with the statute cited... enacted in the last Parliament at Westminster

in the feast of St. Vincent, allowing **Robert Bealknap**, John Holt and William de Burgh, knights, banished and living in Ireland, to return to England to live subject to the common law, notwithstanding the statute of the eleventh year-of persons aforesaid and placing them under the king's special protection, saving however against them all other articles contained in the earlier statute. (Calendar of Patent Rolls. Membrane 18, February 16-pg. 72)

- 1398 Parliament reversed **Robert Belknap's** earlier sentence and restored forfeited lands which had not been alienated back to the crown. (Rot. Parl. Iii, 346,358)
- 1399 "To the sheriff of Essex. Order to make restitution and give **Robert Bealknap knight and Juliana his wife** livery against Andrew Newport esquire of 100 acres of land in Elmedoun which were of the said **Robert and Juliana in her right**, and by colour of a judgment against the said Robert rendered in parliament holden at Westminster on the morrow of the Purification 11 Richard II were seized into the king's hands; as by advice of the justices, sergeants at law and others of the council learned in the law it was determined in chancery that by virtue and authority of a judgment and statute made and rendered in the last parliament they shall have restitution." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 22 Richard II. -Part I. Membrane 6, January 22, pg.369)
- 1399 "To the sheriff of Hertford. Order to make restitution and give **Robert Bealknap knight livery against Juliana his wife**, John Brode, Robert atte Cherche, Richard Cristelton clerk and Thomas Semelegh of 60 acres of land in Baldoke, Wylyen, Weston, Cloothale and Bygrave, seven shops in the of Baldoke, a messuage with curtilage, 240 acres of land, 8 acres of meadow, 7 acres of wood and 13s 8d. of rent in Risseden, and a messuage with curtilage, 80 acres of land, 1 acre of meadow, 1 acre of pasture and 1 acre of wood in Sandoun which were of the said knight, and by colour of a judgment against him rendered in the parliament holden at Westminster on the morrow of St. Mary (sic) 11 Richard II were seized into the king's hands; as by advice of the justices, sergeants at law and other of the council learned in the law it was determined that by virtue and authority of a judgment and statute made and rendered in the last parliament he shall have restitution... To the sheriff of Essex. Like order, mutatis mutandis, concerning certain lands in Elmedoun called Leebury, namely a messuage with curtilage, 160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 15 acres of pasture... To the sheriff of Kent. Like order, mutatis mutandis, concerning the manor of Sentlynge in 'Seyntmariecraye'... To the sheriff of Sussex. Like order, mutatis mutandis, concerning the manor or Knelle.
- 1399 "License for **Robert Bealknapp**, knight, to levy and keep the arrears of all debts and rents long due to him which have never been seized into the king's hands but are hitherto unpaid." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. Membrane 42, April 2-pg. 514)

- 1400 Henry IV made king. Acts of the previous parliament were annulled so that the previous forfeiture of **Robert Belknap's** lands in attainder was reinstated.
- 1400 "**Robert Bealknapp** knight to William de Makenade, Thomas Brokhulle, Stephen Bettenham, Stephen Paytefyn and William Emery. Quitclaim of the yearly rent of 20 marks issuing from the manor of Sharstede, a moiety of the manor of Lydesynge and other lands in Chetham and Waldham which the said **Robert** reserved to him and his heirs in a demise of the said manor, moiety and lands by him made to the prior and convent of Rouchestre and to their successors, and which John Scarle clerk after had by gift of the late king." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 2 Henry IV. Membrane 31d. October 8, pg. 277)
- 1401 **Robert Bealknapp** died 19 January. (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 2 Henry IV. – Part II. Membrane 21d., February 28, pg. 460)
- 1401 "Commission to William Brenchesley, John Tauke, Vincent Fynche and the sheriff and the escheator in the county of Sussex to enquire into the petition of **Julian late the wife of Robert Bealknapp** that whereas by a fine levied at Westminster, Michaelmas, 9 Richard II, Richard de Cristelton, clerk, and William Batelesford granted the manor of Knell and 90 acres of land and 32s rent in Bekkele, co. Sussex, to John de Preston of Werehorn for the life of William de Welles of Canterbury with remainder to the said **Robert and Julian and the heirs of the body of the said Robert** and afterwards the said William de Welles died and the said Robert and Julian entered into and were seised of the above, and Alexander de Goldyngham, chivaler, by charter granted to them and the heirs of Robert the manor of Wiltyng, co. Sussex...". (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 2 Henry IV.-Part II. Membrane 21d. February 28, pg. 460)
- 1401 "Commission to William Rikhill, William Makenade, John Colpeper and the sheriff and the escheator in the county of Kent to enquire into the petition of **Julian late the wife of Robert Bealknapp, chivaler**, concerning the manors of Wyghtresham and Seintlynge, co. Kent." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 2 Henry IV.-Part II. Membrane 10d, February 28, pg. 463)
- 1401 "To William Gascoigne and his fellows, justices appointed to hold pleas before the king. Order, upon petition of the said **Juliana**, to proceed in the plea hereinafter mentioned, the allegation of Thomas Beauforde notwithstanding, so that they proceed not to rendering of judgment without advising the king; as it is found by inquisition, taken before William Makenade, John Colepeper and others, that Nicolas Bronde knight was seised of the manor of Sentlynge co. Kent, and by charter of Wednesday the eve of Allhallows 4 Richard II, gave it to **Robert Bealknapp knight and Juliana his wife for their lives, with remainder to Thomas their son and the heirs of his body**, that the tenants thereof attorned tenants to Robert and Juliana, that hey were thereof seised, and continued their estate until by force of a judgment against the said **Robert** rendered in the parliament holden at Westminster on the morrow of the Purification 11 Richard II

the manor was seized into the late king's hands, and that the **said Robert died 19 January last**; and by letters patent of 18 November 1 Henry IV the king gave to Thomas Beaufort his brother, his heirs and assigns, the manor of Seyntlynge in Seynt Maryecreye late of **Robert Bealknapp knight** which came to the king's hands by virtue of the said judgment affirmed in parliament in 1 Henry IV; and at suit of the said Juliana, shewing that the manor contained in the said inquisition and that specified in letters patent are one and the same, and praying that in respect thereof the said letters be revoked and that she be put again in possession thereof with the issues and profits since the **death of Robert Bealknappe**, the king ordered the sheriff to give Thomas Beaufort notice to be before the king on the morrow of Allhollows in order to shew cause wherefore that ought not to be done, and the sheriff appeared in person and Thomas Beaufort by John Corve his attorney, and alleged the aforesaid grant, averring that he is the tenant of the manor by grant of the king, and craving aid of the king, wherefore the justices have deferred to proceed. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 3 Henry IV.-Part I., Membrane 14, November 17, pg. 449-450) The same with Sussex lands pg. 444-445 and pg. 448)

- 1407 "Licence for Richard Lentwardyn, clerk, John Hurlegh, clerk, and John Cook, clerk, to grant in mortmain the manor of Wyghtresham and seven messuages, three cottages, 156 acres of land, 9 acres of meadow, 50 acres of pasture, 27 acres of wood, 90 acres or marsh and 8s. 2d. rent in Maydeston, Lose, Boxele and Hoo, not held of the king, worth yearly 15 pounds 2s. 4d. besides 20 marks yearly which **Juliana Bealknap** receives yearly from the manor for life, as appears by an inquisition taken by Thomas Horden, escheator in the county of Kent, to the master and college of All Saints, Maydeston, to hold to the value of 50 marks yearly in full satisfaction of a licence by letters patent of Richard II." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 8 Henry IV, Membrane 13, June 8, pg.330-331)
- 1408 "**Hamon son and heir of Robert Bealknapp** knight to Seman de Tonge, his heirs and assigns. Quitclaim with warranty of the manor of Pyrye co. Kent, of 60 acres of pasture in Stoutyngge, rents of 1 quarter 2 bushels of barley to be taken of William Bollynge's tenements, and 1 quarter of Edmund Robyn's tenements in Crumdale...and a rent of one cock in Wy and Bocton Alluph, all of William Barroke, which by forfeiture of the said Robert came to the late king's hands, and whereof the said Seman is now seised. Dated 20 June 9 Henry IV. Witnesses: William Arderne clerk, Roger Rye, Richard Seynteler." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 9 Henry IV. Membrane 11d. June 18. Pg. 394)
- 1409 "Grant for life to William Messyn, in furtherance of a grant to him on 13 August last, of the messuage, 60 acres of land and 2 ½ acres of wood there mentioned with 52 acres of land in the same town of Gamelyngey, co. Cambridge, which the **said Robert Belknapp** held and which are in the king's hands by reason of the judgement against him and for which the king was answered for 25s. yearly at the Exchequer, to hold altogether to the value, of 100s. yearly." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 10 Henry IV.-Part 1. Membrane 23. October 2, pg. 26)

- 1414 “*Commission de walliis et fossatis* to John Pelham, ‘chivaler,’ Richard Norton, Thomas Colepeper, ‘chivaler,’ William Cheyne, Stephen Bettenham, Robert Oxenbregg, Henry Hoorne, William Marchaund, **Hamo Bealknap** and John Chydicroft between the port of the town of Rye and the bridge of Bodyam in the counties of Kent and Sussex.” (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 2 Henry V.-Part II. Membrane 37d. July 10. Pg.263)
- 1414 “Order to the escheator in the county of Kent;-pursuant to an inquisition made by him showing that Joan (sic) late the **wife of Robert Bealknap**, ‘chivaler,’ on the day of her death held for term of her life the manor of Seyntlynge in the towns of Orpyngton, Seintemariecraye, Paulynescraye, Chiselhurst, Chellefeld and Seynnynton, co. Kent, of the gift and grant of Nicholas Bonde, knight, made with the king’s licence to the said **Juliana and Robert, (by name of Robert Beleknep, knight)** for the whole of Sentlynge and all the lands, rents, services, liberties, and customs late of the said Nicholas with all their appurtenances in the towns and parishes of Orpyngton, Seintemariecraye, Paulynescraye, Chiselhurst, Chellefeld and Seyvynton, co. Kent), with remainder to **Thomas, son of the said Robert and Juliana**, and the heirs of his body, and remainder over to the heirs of the body of the said **Robert Bealknap**, as, by a certain charter of the said Nicholas made to the said **Robert and Juliana** and by the king’s license aforesaid, (which were shown to the jurors of the said inquisition) more fully appears; and that the said Thomas and John died, each without heir of his body; and that the manor, except 7 acres of land and 7 acres of pasture held of other lords, is held of the king in chief by knight service; and that **Juliana died on 22 July last**; and that **Hamo Bealknap is her son and heir and is also son and heir of the body of the said Robert Bealknap, and of full age**;- to cause the said **Hamo to have full seisin of the manor**, lands, rents, services, liberties and customs aforesaid, as the king has taken his homage and fealty.” (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 2 Henry V. Membrane 22. October 18. Pg. 79)
- 1417 “Thomas Stonore to Robert bishop of Salisbury, Thomas Chaucer, John Golafre, **Hamon Bealknapp** and John Warefeld, their heirs and assigns. Quitclaim with warranty of the manors of Dudecote and Sotewelle, and of all other his lands, woods, rents, reversions, services etc. in Berkshire, which they hold by his charter of feoffment, dated Dudecote 7 September 3 Henry V...”(Calendar of Close Rolls. 5 Henry V. Membrane 17d. pg. 430)
- 1422 “John Stafforde clerk and William Hale to Thomas Stonore, his heirs and assigns. Charter of demise of all lands, rents and services in the town of Westminster which the grantors had by feoffment of Thomas Chaucer, John Golofre, **Hamon Belknep** and John Warvile, under a condition that if the grantors, their heirs or assigns be impleaded in time to come concerning a tenement in the city of London which they have by gift of the said Thomas, and the same shall without fraud or covin be recovered by his heirs, the heirs of Thomas Pabenham or by any man who has right or title therein by them, their heirs or ancestors, or shall be evicted

out of their possession by reason of the dower of Alice wife of Thomas Stonore, or of any recognisance, and they shall be thrust out, if shall be lawful for them their heirs and assigns, again to enter and hold the tenements in Westminster in their first estate, this demise notwithstanding..."(Calendar of Close Rolls. 1 Henry VI. Membrane 23d. November 14. Pg. 42)

- 1425 "Commission to **Hamon Bealknap, king's esquire**, to take at Dover on 25 May next, the musters of the following captains and of the men at arms and archers in their companies, and to certify the council of the sufficiency of their array, viz. of the first five companies mentioned in the commission to William Massy above." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 3 Henry VI.-Part II. Membrane 17d. May 16. pg.300)
- 1425 "Commission to **Hamon Bealknap, esquire**, to take the musters at Dover on 25 May, and certify the council as to the array of the following: Lancelot de Lyle and Roger Fyenes, knight; Robert Dalton, the brothers Standysssh and William Gloucestre." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 3 Henry VI.-Part II. Membrane 11d. May 16. Pg. 302)
- 1431 "Commitment (with like clause) to John Feerby the elder,-by mainprise of Roger Appulton and William Warner, both of the county of Kent,- of the keeping of two-thirds of the manor of Seyntlyng, 16 acres of arable land, 30 acres of pasture and heath and 25 acres of underwood in Paulynescreye, and 10 acres of arable land in Orpynton, co. Kent, late of **Hamon Belknap, esquire**, who held of the king in chief on the day of his death; to hold the same from Michaelmas last until the fall age of John son and heir of the said **Hamon**, rendering the 6 pounds 9s. 1 ½ d. at which the said two-thirds are extended, and an increment of 17s. 6 ½ d., yearly at Easter and Michaelmas equally; provided always that if any other person shall be willing without fraud to give more by way of increment for the said keeping, then the said John Feerby shall be bound to pay such larger sums if he will have the keeping." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 9 Henry VI. Membrane 11. March 1. Pg. 33)
- 1433 "To the escheator in Kent. Order to give **John Bealknap, son and heir of Hamon Bealknap esquire (armigeri)**, seisin of his father's lands; as he has proved his age before John Brokley mayor of the city of London and escheator therein, and the king has taken his homage and fealty." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 12 Henry VI. Membrane 15. December 6. Pg. 269)
- 1434 "Commission to lady Dedham, on the mainprise of Thomas Stokdale of the county of York, 'gentilman,' and Robert Ellerbek of the county of Hertford, 'gentilman,' of the **marriage of John Belknap, son and heir of Hamon Belknap**, tenant in chief, she paying for the same at the receipt of the Exchequer 20 pounds at Michaelmas next, and 20 pounds at Easter following." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 12 Henry VI.-Part I. Membrane 17. February 16. Pg. 332)

- 1434 “**John Bealknap, son and heir of Hamon Bealknap**, to Dame Joan Dedham, late the wife of John Dedham knight, and John Feriby the elder of Creye St. Paulinus. Letter of attorney, appointing them his attorneys general to sue, collect, recover and receive rents, moneys and profits due for terms past and future of all his lands in St. Mary Creye, Creye St. Paulinus and elsewhere in Kent, to rule, survey, repair and demise the same to farm, sell woods and underwoods, receive the money and give acquittances, to prosecute, answer and defend in all causes and actions touching his person and lands, appoint and revoke attorneys etc.” (Calendar of Close Rolls. 12 Henry VI. Membrane 6d. June 29. Pg. 315)
- 1435 “Order to the escheator in the county of Kent;- pursuant to an inquisition made by him showing that **John Bealknap, esquire, on the day of his death** held in his demesne as of fee, among other things, two-thirds of the manor of Seyntlyng in the town of Seyntmarycraie of the king in chief as of the honour of Peverell, and 16 acres of land in Paulynescray, and 20 acres of pasture, 10 acres of heath and 25 acres of underwood there, of the king as of the duchy of Lancaster and of the fee of Lyle; and that **William Bealknap is the brother and next heir of the said John**, and of full age;- to cause the said William to have full seisin of the premises, as the king has taken his homage and fealty.” (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 15 Henry VI. Membrane 26, December 13, pg. 309)
- 1436 “To the escheator in Kent. Order in presence of **William Bealknap, Henry Bealknap and Philip Bealknap**, or of their attorneys, to make a partition of 10 acres of land in Orpynton into three equal parts, and to give the said William seisin of his purparty, and to remove the king’s hand from the purparties remaining, delivering up any issues thereof taken; as it is found by inquisition, taken before the escheator, that John Bealknap esquire at his death held that land of William Haute esquire in tenure of ‘gavelkynde,’ and that the said William, Henry and Philip are his brothers and next heirs according to the custom of such tenure; and the king has taken homage and fealty of the said William due for his two thirds of the manor of Seyntlynge in the town of Seyntmarycraie which the said John held in chief as of the honour of Peverell. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 15 Henry VI. Membrane 11, December 31, pg. 86)
- 1446 “**William Bealknap** to John cardinal of St. Balbina and archbishop of York, his heirs and assigns. Quitclaim with warranty of the manor of Pyrye co. Kent and all manors, lands, rents etc. in Kent by the cardinal now occupied, by reason of any entry, recovery or restitution to the said William, his heirs or assigns by authority of parliament or other authority whatsoever. Witnesses: Gervase Clifton, Thomas Syngilton esquires, John Bamburgh.” (Calendar of Close Rolls. 24 Henry VI. Membrane 24d. March 5. Pg. 375)
- 1454 “Commission to Richard Wyderton and Thomas Stones, appointing them to take in any suitable place near Dover on 20 April instant the muster of **Henry Belkenap** and the men at arms and archers ordered to go with him to the defence

of Guysnes castle.” (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 32 Henry VI. Membrane 14d. April 16, pg.171)

- 1466 “Memorandum of the intent of a bond in 2,000 marks bearing date 23 February, 5 Edward IV, wherein Richard earl of Warwick and Salisbury...and Walter Blount knight lord Mountjoy be bound to Thomas Mountgomerey knight, **Henry Belknap squire** and Cristofer Huet squire, that whereas the said earls and lords have delivered to them their surety, writing and seals for payment of 8,000 skutys to Joachym Rouvant Frenchman due to him for part of the fenaunce of John Norbury squire now prisoner in France under the keeping of the seid Joachym, if he be delivered out of prison the said sureties etc. shall be delivered again to the said earls and lords, their heirs or executors pay to Thomas Mountgomerey etc., their executors or assigns...” (Calendar of Close Rolls. 5 Edward IV. Membrane 8d. pg. 328.)
- 1473 “To the escheator in Warwickshire...as it is learnt by inquisition before John Burgchier knight, Henry Boteler and Thomas Waldyene, that Ralph Boteler of Sudeley knght, deceased, was seised in his demesne as of fee before his death of the above lands etc. and by charter of indenture he granted the same to Thomas Throkmerton esquire, ...and being so seised the said Thomas and John demised and by charter confirmed the same to Ralph Boteler and Alice his wife who is still alive, under the like terms: and Alice after Ralph’s death held the manor by right of increase with reversion to John Norbury knight and **William Belkanpe esquire, as kinsmen and heirs to the said Ralph**, John being the son of Henry Norbury knight, son of Elizabeth sister to Ralph; and William being son to Joan another sister to Ralph, who died without issue; saving to the king any payments made in the interim to Alice by the said escheator. (Calendar of Close Rolls. 13 Edward IV. Membrane 12. July 12, pg. 290-291)
- 1485 “The like to Thomas Wynter, esquire, king’s servant, to be keeper of parker of the whole park of Weggenok, co. Warwick, with power to appoint all sub-officers. *Vacated because surrendered, the king having granted the office on 24 April, 7 Henry VII, to Edward Belknap, esquire.* (Calendar of Close Rolls. 1 Henry VII.- Part I. Membrane 24. September 23, pg. 24)
- 1492 “Grant for life to **Edward Belknap, esquire**, of the keepership of the whole park of Weggenok, co. Warwick, on surrender in his favour of letters patent dated 23 September, 1 Henry VII which granted that office for life to Thomas Wynter, esquire.” (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 7 Henry VII. Membrane 20, April 24. Pg. 376)

From this peerage Belknap chronology we add the updates to the Beltoft research.

## *Sir Robert's Estates and Possessions*

**Sir William Say, in the year 1369, enfeoffed Sir Robert Belknap and others to various manors in Kent and to Sabrichesworth, co. Hertford.**

This could be extremely significant since it ties manorial property in Sawbridgeworth to the peerage Belnaps, particularly, Sir Robert Belknap (Although it indicates he regranted the property to Sir William Say and his wife Beatrice. The specific reference is from the Calendar of Patent Rolls (43 Edward III.-Part 1):

May 10. Westminster (1369)

**License for William de Say, 'chivaler,' to enfeoff Robert de Bealknap, William de Appeldrefeld and Roger Digge, of the manors of Westgrenewych and Codeham, co. Kent, and Sabrichesworth, co. Hertford, held in chief; and for them to grant the same to him and Beatrice, his wife, in tail, with remainder to his right heirs.**

The specific lands held by Sir William de Say are specifically identified in the Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem (Edward III). Apparently Sir William de Say died about the year 1375.

#207. William De Say, knight.

Writ, Rokyngham, 3 September, 49 Edward III.

HERTFORD. *Inq.* Taken at Ware, Friday after St. Luke, 49 Edward III.

Sabrichesworth. The manor (extent given), held of the king in chief by service of one knight's fee. The extent includes among rents of assize of free tenants 11lb wax (ciri), 3 great arrows, and a sparrowhawk or 2s., the last item forthcoming from the manors of Rykelyngge and Elsyngham, co. Cambridge.

He died on Monday before St. Laurence last. John Say, his son, aged 2 years and more, is his heir.

In this same Inquisition, his other land holdings listed are: In Sussex-Bukstede, Hammes, and Stret, in Kent,-Smethorn, Mallyng, Norton, Newenham, Herteye, Birlyng, Burgham and in Codham and Westgrenewych.

The Codham listing in this Inquisition Post Mortem seems to better describe the relationship in the Calendar of Patent Rolls mentioned above.

Codham. The manor (extent given), held of the king in chief by knight's service, as the jurors understand. William de Appulderefeld and others gave it, with the advowson of the church, to the said William de Say and Beatrice, his wife, and the heirs of their bodies. The said William and Beatrice afterwards gave the

advowson and 1 a. land, parcel of the manor, to Roger Digge and Master John Digge and their heirs. The extent includes a capital messuage completely destroyed, lands in Beddrede, Northberdenne, Southberdenne, Thornfeld and Mede, a park with deer, area not known, of which the parker receives 14d. weekly wages, and leets twice a year soon after Easter and Michaelmas.

From this account we learn that after Robert Belknap, William Appeldrefeld, and Roger Digge were enfeoffed to lands in Sawbridgeworth and Codeham, Kent they granted the land back to William and Beatrice Say. In return, at least Roger Digge received the advowson and an acre of land to himself in Codeham, Kent. Perhaps, Robert Belknap received land in Sawbridgeworth the same way.

There were other lands held of Sir William Say which Sir Robert Belknap was involved:

- a. **Edelmeton (or Edmonton) county Middlesex.** Calendar of Patent Rolls. 43 Edward III-Part II; Oct 19 (1369) "Pardon, for 50 marks paid to the king, to Adam Fraunceys, citizen of London, for acquiring in fee from William Say, 'chivaler', the manor of Edelmeton... License also for him to enfeoff Robert Bealknap and John Wroth, the younger, of the manor and firewood, and for them to grant them to him for life, with remainders to Adam Fraunceys, the younger, in tail, and Maud daughter of the first named Adam, in tail, and to the right heirs of the same Adam." Also, from Calendar of Close Rolls. 45 Edward III. Membrane 25d (1371) "Charter indented of Robert de Beleknappe and John Wroth the younger, granting to Adam Fraunceys citizen of London the manor of Edelmeton... sometime of William de Say knight, to hold in chief of the king during the said Adam's life..."
- b. **The Manor of Sharstede (in Sharstede, Chetham and Gillyngham, co. Kent)** Calendar of Close Rolls 39 Edward III Membrane 6d (December 1365) "Charter of William de Say knight, giving with warranty to Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, his manor of Sharstede and all his lands, woods, pastures, farms, warrens, liberties, rents and services etc. in the towns and perishes of Chetham and Gillyngham co. Kent... Writing of William de Say knight, being a quitclaim with warranty to Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, of the manor of Sharstede... which they have of the said William's gift; and further grant and bond that William and his heirs will acquit and save them harmless towards the king of all debts and accounts, and towards any other of all charges, debts and recognisances made by the said William or by any other tenant of the premises before this date... *Memorandum* of acknowledgement of the foregoing charter and writing in the chancery at London, 22 December."
- c. **The Manor of Lydesynge co. Kent (mentioned sometimes with Sharstede)** Calendar of Patent Rolls. 48 Edward III (December 28, 1374)... granting license for the alienation in mortmain to them by Robert Beleknappe, knight,

of the manor of Sharstede by Rouchestre, 23 acres of land, 80 acres of pasture and one acre of wood in Chetham and Woldeham, and a moiety of the manor of Lydesynge at a rent of 22 marks yearly to find a monk to celebrate divine service. In Hasted's History of Kent, Lidsing (Lydging, etc.) is described as: "... a manor and hamlet lying at the southern extremity of this parish, near Bredhurst, part being in the parish of Chatham... This estate was formerly the inheritance of the ancient family of Sharsted; Simon de Sharsted held it at his death, in the reign of Edward I; and Sir Henry de Leyborne was possessed of it under Edward II... In the reign of Edward III, it was in the family of Say's as Sir Roger de Say, in the 30<sup>th</sup> year of that prince, granted to his brother, Sir Jeffry de Say, his manor of Sharsted and Lyesinge, to hold in perpetual inheritance. He appears to have alienated these premises to Robert Belknapp, who, under Edward III, granted, among other premises, a moiety of this manor of Ledesinge, to the prior and convent of Rochester... The other moiety continued longer in the name of Belknapp, as Robert Belknapp, above mentioned, was afterwards knighted,... he was attainted, and banished to Ireland by the Parliament, and though by the same power permitted to return, his attainder still continued, and his lands remained forfeited as before. The king considering him a martyr to his interest, then granted him several estates, and among others, this moiety of Lidesinge; of Henry IV, he gave it to the priory of St. Andrew, in Rochester, for one monk, being a priest, to celebrate mass in the cathedral, for the souls of himself, his predecessors, and successors... At this manor of Lydsing there has been a chapel of ease to the parish of Gillingham." Sharsted, Lydsing and Gillingham are within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the diocese of Rochester and within the deanery of Shoreham.

- d. **The manor of Keston (alias Southcourt) co. Kent.** From Hasted's, History of the County of Kent, Keston in Ruxley Hundred is presented as: ... "In his descendants Keston continued till Wakelin de Maminot dying without issue, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of King Richard I., his sister Alice became his coheir, and brought this place, with much other inheritance, to her husband, Geoffry, second son of William de Say; after which it appears, that William de Pesun held this manor... of William, great grandson of the above mentioned Geoffry de Say... In the next reign this manor was in the possession of Sir Robert Belknap, chief justice of the common pleas, who was attainted and banished to Ireland... This manor escheated to the crown in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of King Henry V. by the death of Juliana his wife, who was then in possession of it.
- e. **The manor of Kenyngton, Estmallynge and Ditton, co. Kent.** Calendar of Close Rolls 43 Edward III Membrane 34d (February 8, 1369) "Writing of Thomas Travers, granting with warranty to Robert de Beleknappe and Amy his wife, the heirs and assigns of the said Robert, the reversion of all the lands, rents and services etc. in Ditton and Estmallynge co. Kent sometime of Simon Fraunceys of London, now held by Geoffrey de Ditton during the life of Maud who was wife of the said Simon by her demise with reversion to the said

Thomas and his heirs; and quitclaim with warranty to the said Robert and Amy and to the heirs of the said Robert of the manor or tenement in Kenyngton in the same county called Ullee sometime of the said Simon, with all lands, rents, services and commodities thereto belonging...(February 8, 1369)Writing of John de Middelton, John de Southam, Henry de Herbury, John Grene clerk and Richard Bythewatre clerk, being a quitclaim to Robert de Beleknappe, Amy his wife and the heirs and assigns of the said Robert of all the lands, rents and services sometime of Simon Fraunceys of London in Kenyngton, Ditton and Estmallyngg co. Kent with all commodities etc. thereto belonging.

A review of these documents involving the Say family and Sir Robert Belnap provide several noteworthy observations which, combined with other key references, suggest strong clues supporting Belnap and Beltoft relationships.

.... The other moiety continued longer in the name of Belknapp, as Robert Belknapp, above mentioned, was afterwards knighted,... he was attainted, and banished to Ireland by the Parliament, and though by the same power permitted to return, his attainder still continued, and his lands remained forfeited as before. **The king considering him a martyr to his interest, then granted him several estates, and among others, this moiety of Lidesinge**"; From this account regarding Lidsing, co. Kent it is evident that the king granted Sir Robert lands (several estates) during Sir Roberts attainder. These lands would have passed to Julianne after Sir Robert's death and would then have been part of the estate of which Richard Belknapp was commissioned by the archbishop as administrator. Since these lands were located within the deanery of Shoreham, these properties could likely have been the basis for the archbishop to claim jurisdiction. Also, since these properties were located in the area of Rochester it seems possible that the other Belknappe family member who attended Oxford (listed as from Rochester) could have been Richard.

## *The Beltofts of Sawbridgeworth Report & Summary*

The ancestry of Abraham Belknap has been traced earlier this century to the Beltofts of Sawbridgeworth due to the efforts of Henry Wyckoff Belknap, Esq. of Salem, Massachusetts and Mr. Charles A. Bernau of London and published primarily in three separate issues in the New England Historical Register in 1914, 1931, and 1950.<sup>63</sup>

In this first publication, Mr. Henry Wyckoff Belknap, Esq. gave the account of the breakthrough research:

“The clue, however, which led to the discovery of the English home of the ancestors of Abraham Belknap was obtained from an old gentleman whose acquaintance was made several years ago through his reply to some genealogical queries. He had formerly lived in the parish of Sawbridgeworth, co. Herts., and remembered that the name Belknap occurred in the parish registers there. He was employed to make a search, and in due time produced many entries from the registers of St. Mary the Great, Sawbridgeworth, together with a number of wills from the Commissary Court of London for Essex and Herts. By piecing together the facts obtained from these records an incomplete pedigree of the family was secured, and a certain Bennet or Benedict Belknap seemed most likely to be the father of the American immigrant. Unfortunately, however, the will of this particular man, while recorded as having been offered for probate, was nowhere to be found, and the officials connected with the probate registry came to the conclusion that it had been placed at some time in the wrong bundle and was therefore practically lost.

The search, therefore, came to a standstill until about two years ago, when it was decided to make one more attempt to identify positively the father of the immigrant. The services of Mr. Charles A. Bernau of London were obtained, and he was furnished with all the material at hand.

Mr. Bernau began his search with the Lay Subsidy Rolls in the Public Record Office in London, and there discovered that the surname of the Sawbridgeworth branch of the Belknap family was sometimes Beltoft or Beltofte. With this fact in mind, it was easy to find in the probate records the missing will of Bennet Beltoft, the father of Abraham Belknap. It had been proved 15 June 1624 by his widow Grace and his son Josias in the Commissary Court of London for Essex and Herts., and was entered in the Probate Act Book for 1623-1626 under the name Belknapp, while it appeared in the Calendars of Wills under the name Beltoft, which is the form used in the will.”

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<sup>63</sup> New England Historical Register Jan 1914 p.83-92 and April 1914 p.190-198, July 1931 p.265-288 and October 1950 p.316-317.

This original account in 1914 was updated, modified and supplemented in 1931 in the Register. In this account with passages from Chancery Court proceedings the first known Beltoft was determined to be Richard. Based on depositions from these Chancery proceedings it was established that Richard and his wife Christian had a son John who inherited property known as "Nydells" containing approximately 30 acres and another property called "Currants". These depositions dated in and around 1550 described the history of Nydells and various issues of inheritance involving John's heirs.

From the answer of "William Gyrton to ye bill of Compleynt of Thomas Westwood" (1550) we find the following testimony regarding the property of Nydelles:

"...At which day (4 February 1535/6) ye said John Beltofte was therof sole seaisid in his demeane as of fee tayle by force of ye statute therto made for extinguisement of usis and willes And he so beyng of ye p'misses seaisid toke to wife one Isabell and had by her issue one Johan And ye said Johan toke to husebond one William Waller and had issue betwene them on Mergret now wife to ye said defend't ...next heire of ye said John Beltofte that is to say dowghter & heire of ye body ye said Johan Waller dowghter & heire of ye said John Beltofte."

From this and other testimony it is reasoned that Richard Beltoft the eldest Beltoft would have been born approximately in 1450 to 1465 since his great granddaughter Margaret was married to William Gyrton before the deposition in 1550.

From this same response by William Gyrton it is understood that John Beltoft attempted to sell the property of Nidelles to Henry Chauncey of Sawbridgeworth:

"...John Beltofte was ev' seaisid of ye p'misses in his demiane as of fee or yf he by his dead indentid sufficient in ye law did gyve or gr'unt ye same to one Henry Chacy the elder and others in ye bill of compleint resited to have to them and to ther heires to the use of ye said John Beltoft for erme of his liffe and after to ye use of Mergeret then his wife for xv years next after his death and after to thuse of Emond Beltofte in man' and forme as in ye said bill is resited ...".

We find also that Richard directed that Nidelles, should be under the trusteeship of Thomas Leventhorp and others.

When various issues arose concerning the property of Nidelles in regards to hereditary claims, John Beltoft directed that Mr. Cocke, solicitor to Queen Katherine, be consulted for advice.

From the deposition of John Kyrkham of Shynghlehall, parish of Sawbridgeworth comes this response:

"...and the said John Beltofte confessed the same to be his fathers will and said he must do as he was directyd by the same will and then det'myned to send it to Mr Cocke late solicitr to the late noble Kat'yn Quene of England decessed to have his

advise therin and it was then delyv'yd to one Dennys Adam and William Garland who went therwith oute of said house called Nidelles and said that they wold go to the said Mr. Cocke ...”

References to Henry Chauncey, Thomas Leventhorp and Mr Cook have significance in this text (to be presented later) as their names or that of their descendants surfaces under other circumstances and in other locations involving the Beltofts.

In this 1931 publication, the author determined that Bennet, the father of Abraham must have descended from Lawrence, mentioned (according to the deponents) as the next heir to John, son of Richard and Christian. The author lists as probable children of Lawrence:

- a. Richard, born about 1520.
- b. Alice (perhaps a sister of Richard Beltoft), m. at Sawbridgeworth. 14 April 1562, William Stubbs.
- c. A daughter (known to be a sister of Richard Beltoft) m. –Sutton with children including Clement, William and Richard Sutton. According to Richard's will, they were living in Cocksall (Coggeshall) in Essex.

From his will it is determined that Richard was the father of Bennet and hence, grandfather of the immigrant Abraham.

Henry Wyckoff Belknap in this 1931 issue did elaborate on this assumption:

“Positive proof of the parentage of this Richard Beltoft has not been found. He was evidently closely related to John Beltoft (2) of Nidelles and Currants, in Sawbridgeworth, for he deposed on 14 Oct. 1550 that he dwelt with John Beltoft, in the house called Nidelles, for about twenty years (that is, from about 1525 or 1526, when he was only five or six years old, to the death of John Beltoft, 4 Feb 1545/6). He was not John's son or grandson, for in that case he would have succeeded to Nidelles in preference to John's daughter Joan and her daughter Margaret. He was born too late (about 1520) to have been a younger brother of John, and moreover, had he been a son of the first Richard Beltoft, his father in his will would probably have included him among the possible successors of Nidelles. He was not a cousin of John's, for then John would hardly have placed him before his (John's) brother Edmund in the succession to Currants. For the same reason it is very unlikely that this Richard Beltoft was Edmund's son, for one would scarcely name a young man in a settlement and then, in default of his issue, leave the remainder to the young man's father. John had only three brothers, Laurence, Edmund, and Thomas, who, with the heirs of their bodies, were named in that order by their father as successors to Nidelles, in default of John and the heirs of John's body. Richard Beltoft, therefore, was probably a son either of Laurence or of Thomas; and, as Laurence was Edmund's elder brother and the settlement of the succession to Currants made by John about 2 Feb.

1544/5 placed Richard and his heirs before Edmund, it is reasonable to conclude that Richard was probably a son of Laurence.”

Findings presented later may be found to challenge or elaborate on this previous assumption.

In 1950 another article appeared in the New England Register that supplements findings regarding Abraham, the immigrant, and his family.

“Although Mr. Belknap (referring to Henry Wyckoff Belknap, esq.) gave quite a full account of some of Abraham’s children, some ambiguity still hung over Abraham’s children, owing to the fact that, although he left a will, it cannot now be found. Mr. Belknap states (in vol. 68, pg. 195 of the Register) that Samuel, son of Abraham, born about 1627/8, was ‘living in 1731’. This is an error, for the Samuel living in 1731 was evidently Samuel’s son Samuel, born 1 May 1662 (cf. Savage’s ‘Genealogical Dictionary of New England’, vol. 1, p.159).”

Also in this 1950 publication was a listing and discussion of Abraham’s children:

“Abraham Belknap had a number of children before he came to New England, baptized in North Weald, co. Essex, who were found by Mr. Belknap after his articles were published. It appears that before coming to New England, Abraham had removed from Sawbridgeworth to the neighboring Essex parish of North Weald, where he had of record the following children: David, buried 2 March 1624/5 (evidently an infant); Immanuel, bapt. 16 March 1627/8 (evidently a clerical error for Samuel); Dorcas, bapt. 7 Feb. 1629/30; Joseph, bapt. 12 May 1633; and John bapt. 10 May 1635. Prior to this he had a son, Abraham, buried in Netteswell, co. Essex, 6 Dec. 1620, and soon after another Abraham, who is mentioned in the will of his grandfather Bennet on 14 April 1623. This Abraham evidently also died young as there is no trace of him in New England. Mr. Belknap gives a full account of Samuel and Joseph who came to New England with their father, as did John. John occurs but once in New England, when, on 27 March 1655, he made a deposition, filed in the Court at Ipswich on 25 March 1656 (Essex Quarterly Court Files, vol. I, p. 417n.). He evidently died soon after, a young unmarried man.

On 6 Dec. 1663, Christopher Osgood of Andover married Hannah Belknap. There can be no doubt that she was a daughter of Abraham, born about 1639/40. There was no other Belknap family in Massachusetts.

Accordingly, the family of Abraham Belknap and his wife Mary appears to be as follows:

1. ABRAHAM, buried 6 Dec. 1620.
2. ABRAHAM, b. ca. 1622; alive 14 April 1623; d. young.
3. DAVID, buried 2 March 1624/5.
4. IMMANUEL (Samuel), bapt. 16 March 1627/8.

5. DORCAS, bapt. 7 Feb. 1629/30; d. young.
6. JOSEPH, bapt. 12 May 1633.
7. JOHN, bapt. 10 May 1635.
8. HANNAH, b. about 1639/40; d. 21 Nov. 1679; m. 6 Dec. 1663  
CHRISTOPHER OSGOOD of Andover, Mass.

The following are transcriptions of wills of some of the Beltoft family members in and around Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire:

The will of RICHARDE BELTOFTE "of the pishe of Sabridgeworth in the Countie of Hartford Hunsbandman beinge sick in Bodie... by reason of age," 20 August 1594. To bee buried in the Churcheyarde of the pishe Church of Sabridgeworthe. To Tenne poore Folcks inhabytinge in the pishe of Sabridgeworth Tenne Groats sterline, that is to saye, to everye one of them foure pence apeece att the daye of my buryall. To Clement Sutton, Willm: Sutton, and Richard Sutton, my Sisters sonnes, dwellinge in Docksall (Note: this should be Cocksall) in the Countye of Essex, 10s., that is to saye, to everye of them 3s. 4d. apeece, wthin sixe monehtes next after my decease, "Item I Geve to Abraham Beltofe sonne to Bennett Beltoft my Godchilde Tenne shillings to be paide him wthin one yeere next after my decease.: To Josias Beltofte my Sonne my Best Bedd standinge in the Parler, with the Bedsteade as it is, a payer of my best Fyne Flaxen Sheets, the moste principiall Sheets I have in the Howse, the Best Coveringe, a payer of the Best Blancketts, the Best Pillowes, and other furniture to the same Bedd belonginge, to his owne proper use and bestowe att his free will and pleasure. To the said Josias the Table and Frame with the Settle standinge in the Hall. To the saidd Josias my Sonne my Best Brasse Panne and my Best Brasse Pott I have in the Howse, to use and dispose att his pleasure, wth Two Chests as they are standinge in the Parler out (sic, ?one) att the Bedds Hedd and th' other att the Bedds Feete. My full purpose mynde and intent is That all and singuler suche Goods Chattells moveables and possessions whatsoever, That is to saye, all manner Corne and graine, Horsses, kyne, Cattells, Househouldstufte, ymplements, utensills, apparell, Lynnen, wollen, and other possessions and necessities whatsoever to me Lawfullie belonginge and whereof I shalbee possessed att the tyme of my deathe. The goods and severall bequests first afore geven and by this present Laste will devised onlie excepted, shalbee by myne Executor and Overseers hereunder named, wth some other neighbors and assistants whome they shall thinck good, devided into Two equall pts and porcions as nere as possiblie canne, the one proper pte and porcion to bee and remayne to the sole and onlie proper use and behouft of Josias Beltoft my sonne, the said Josias after the same equall pticion and devision to have f(r)ee libertie to choose whether pte he will or his assigns for him, and th other pte and porcion to bee and remayne to Bennett Beltoft my Sonne, whom I make and Ordeyne sole Executor of this psent Last will and Testament. Overseers: Christopher Preston and Willm: Perrye of Fryers, and to eyther of them for eheir paynes 3s. 4d. a peece. If Josias my Sonne shall decease before the tyme of this pte to him

growinge due, the same shall wholye bee & Remayne to the afrenamed Bennett Beltoft & his heirs for ever. The mke of the saide Richard Beltoft the Testator, p. me Willmum Compton. Witnesses: Richard Darter wth others, Raufe Broune, Raufe Perie, John Smyth. (Commissary Court of London for Essex and Herts. (Somerset House), original will.)

The Will of JOSIAS BELKNAP "of the pshe of Savridgouth Co. Harford." 28 January 1599 (1599/1600). Unto my Brother Bennet Belknappe my landes & 20 pounds of money, whereof he oweth me 6 pounds for three yeares rent for my landes & he oweth me more for one yeare, 5 pounds:6:8, & I lent him 7 pounds the 25<sup>th</sup>, Januaire, & I give him those goodes & legacies wch my fathr left me & the lynnyn & Househoulde stuffe wch he hath of myne in his keepinge & all my apparell but one black suite & one black cloke. To my cousin John Brown in Southwark 20 pounds, & to Jone his wyfe 20 nobles, & I give him my white coton & all suche lynnyn as I have in his house & one suite of blacke & one black cloke & one Bonde of Daell (Daniel) Sheltons to the some of 10 pounds & one Bill of William Shelton to the some of 10 pounds & all my small Billes & Bondes & all such dettes as may be gott upp in Ireland. To his servaunte Annie 20s. To the Poore of Sebridgeouth 40s. There is due me uppon a certaine accomptes 40 pounds, that being received I give to my brothr Ralfe Browne 5 pounds, to my Brother Robart 5 pounds, & to my cosen John 10 pounds more, & to the Poore where I shalbe buried 20s., & 40s. more to the Poore in Sabridgeouth pshe, & to my sister Marye Browne widowe 5 pounds & to Mrs. Ffrances Shelton fower aungells to make her a Ringe, & the rest to my Brother Bennett Belknappe, whom I make full extr & my cosen John Browne my Overseer. Witnesses: ffrances Hadswells, Josias Belknappe, John Lawlye. Proved 6 February 1599 (1599/1600) by Benedict Belknappe, executor. (P.C.C., Wallopp, 10.)

The will of BENNET BELTOFT "of Sawbridgeworth in the Countie of Hartford husbandman," 14 April 1623. Unto Tenn poore people of the pishe of Sabridgworth 3s. 4d., to be paid unto them wthin one month after my decease. Unto Grace my wife my Messuage or Tenement wheare in I now dwell, wthall the barnes, stables, & oughthowes, yards, orchards, & gardens theare unto belonginge, Lyine & beinge in Sabridgworth, an dallso all my free Land Lyinge in Sabridgworth, duringe hur natural lyfe, & to keepmy Howsen in good & suffycient repracon, & that she shall make no stripe nor waste of the wood, And after hur decease my sayd Tenement, wthall the barnes, stables, oughthowes, yards, orchards, & gardens theare unto belonginge, and all so all my free Land aforesaid, I give & bequeathe unto Josyas Beltoft my sonn And to the heires of his Body Lawfully begotten, "and for want of heires of his body lawfully begotten then my will & mynd is that the foresaid Tenement & free Land shall be & remayne unto Abraham Beltoft my sonn & his heires for ever." Unto Fraunces Beltofte my daughter my Joyned Bedsted now standinge in the parler, wth one fetherbed, one fether bouldster, tow fether pillowes, two blanckets, two payer of sheetes, one flexen & the other Lenen (?),

one payer of pilloweres, & a coveringe, one Longe Table wth a frame standing in the parler, Two of the best Joyned stolles, my Beste brasse pott, two of the best pewter platteres, two of the best Candelstickes, Two of the best pewter porringers, & the best sault siller. Unto John Beltoft my sonne one bedstedell standinge in the Cheseloft, one flockbed, one boulder, one payer of sheets, one (torn?blanket), & a coveringe. Unto Dannill Beltoft my sonn one Bedsted standinge in the Chamber ou(torn) the hall & the fetherbed theare on, one bouldster, the best flexen sheete that was his grandmotheres, one payer of sheets, one blancket, & one coveringe. "Item I give & bequeathe unto Abraham Beltofte my son twentye shillings of good & Lawfully mony of England to be payd unto him by myne Executors wthin one yeare next after my decease Item I give & bequeathe unto Abraham Beltoft by Grand Child & godsonn Tenn shillings of good & Lawfull mony of England to be payd within one yeare next after my decease by myne Executors." Unto Josyas Beltoft my sonn the table & frame standinge in the hall, wth the frame benchees & settelles theare unto belongeinge, all wayes to beloft (?) to the howse. All the rest of my movable goods & chattolles, corne, & Cattell, shat so ever not before bequeathed, unto Grace my wife & Josyas Beltofte my sonn. Whome I make my Executors. I appoynt Willm: Preston and Willm: Addam my overseaers, & I give unto eyther of them for theare paynes 3s 4d. apeece. The marke of Bennet Beltofte. Witnesses: Willm: Preston, The marke of Raphe Browne seer, The mark of Willm: Addam. Proved at Stortford 15 June 1624 by the executors named. (Commissary Court of London for Essex and Herts (Somerset House), original will.)

The Will of JOSIAS BELKNAP of Sawbridgeworth, co. Herts. 29 March 1674. To Anne my wife my house & two acres of free land called Rickotte & two acres of free land called Church Croft & my householde stuffe for her life, then to my son Dan'l Belknap & his heires for ever. If he dye without issue, then to my son James & his heires for ever. To James Belknap my third son 11 pounds, my son Daniel to pay him six months after my decease, & for none payment hereof my son James shall take possession of three roodes of free land lying in Hartecroft belonging to Groves. To my son John Belknap 10s. To my son-in-law Thomas Browne 1s. Anne my wife to be sole executrix. The Marke X of Josias Belknap. Witnesses: Robert Cowle, Barrington Addames senr. Proved 12 June 1674 by the executrix named. (Commissary Court of London for Essex and Herts (Somerset House), Pleasant, 354)

From the Parish Registers of Sawbridgeworth, co. Herts, 1558-1709

#### Baptisms

- 1561 Alice Beltoft daughter of Richard 16 September.
- 1562 Josias son of Richard Beltoft 6 September.
- 1589 Abraham Beltofte 10 March (1589/90)
- 1590 Frances daughter of Benet Beltofte 3 January (1590/91).
- 1593 John Beltofte 8 April.

- 1595 Daniel son of Benet Beltoft 2 November.
- 1599 Josias son of Benet Beltofte 12 August.
- 1630 Grace daughter of John and Elizabeth Belknap 10 July.
- 1631 John son of John Belknope 25 September.
- 1632 Josias son of Josias and Anne Belknap 4 August.
- 1633 Elizabeth daughter of John and Elizabeth Belknop 31 March.
- 1634 Mary daughter of Josias Belknapp 4 May.
- 1634 Daniell Beltknopp son of Daniel and Barberie his wife 5 October.
- 1635 Daniell son of Josias Belknap 17 January (1635/6).
- 1637 John son of Josias Belknap 28 January (1637/8).
- 1640 James son of Josias Belknape 29 March.
- 1641 Grace daughter of Josias Belknape 12 February (1641/2).
- 1664 Henery son of Henery Beltknap 7 May.
- 1665 Elizabeth daughter of Henry Beltknap 30 December.
- 1667 James son of Henery and Mary Beltknap 28 September.
- 1668 Daniell son of Henry Beltknap 17 March (1668/9).
- 1670 Mary daughter of Henery Beltknap 1 April.
- 1673 Samuel son of Henery Beltknap 22 July.
- 1674 Benett son of Henery Beltknap 2 February (1674/5).
- 1675 Daniel son of James and Susan Belknap 24 January (1679/80).
- 1679 Abraham son of Henry and Mary Belknap 24 January (1679/80).
- 1681 Mary daughter of Henry and Mary Belknap als Beltoft 11 October.
- 1682 Susan daughter of James and Susanna Belknap 24 December.

#### Marriages

- 1563 William Stubbs and Alice Beltoft 14 April.
- 1578 Edward Lyndesell and Ales Beltoft 5 October.
- 1586 Bennet Beltoft and Grace Adam 25 May.
- 1624 Edward Doucet and Frances Belknap 19 October.
- 1631 Josias Belkap and Anne Milles 2 May.
- 1666 Henery Beltknap and Mary Pery by licence 19 June.
- 1708 James Hockley and Susanna Belknap 26 October.
- 1709 John Chesson of Harlow and Susanna Belknap 8 May.

#### Marriage Licence

- 1667 Samuell Bellknapp and Elizabeth Nicholls 18 February (1666/7).

#### Burials

- 1560 Elizabeth Beltofte (? Wife of Henry) 14 January (1560/1).
- 1561 Henry Beltofte 5 July.
- 1588 the wife of Richard Beltoft 17 January (1588/9).
- 1599 Richard Beltoft 2 December.
- 1624 Bennet Belknap 21 May.

- 1630 Grace Belkap 29 October.
- 1637 John son of John Belknapp 22 October.
- 1655 John Beltrap 19 October.
- 1656 Josias son of Josias Beltkanpe 13 July.
- 1663 a new borne infant of Henery Beltoft 6 April.
- 1663 Daniel Beltofte 5 June.
- 1664 The wife of Henery Beltknapp 30 December.
- 1674 Josias Beltknap 3 April.
- 1678 Daniel Belknap of Spellbrooke son of James and Susannah 2 January (1678/9).
- 1678 Elizabeth Belknap widowe 7 February (1678/9).
- 1680 Daniel Belknap of Spelbrooke 2 September.
- 1683 The widow of Josias Belknap 31 October.
- 1686 Henry Belknap Jr. 9 April.
- 1686 Henry Belknap Sr. 13 April.
- 1687 Mary Belknap widow 18 November.
- 1687 James Belknap 20 November.
- 1688 Daniell Belknap 20 February (1688/89).
- 1695 A child of James Belknap 10 April
- 1704 Sarah Belknap 11 May.
- 1704 Mary Belknap 13 August.

From the Parish Registers of Netteswell, co. Essex.

#### Baptisms

- 1637 Henrie Belknopp son of Daniel and Barberie 14 May.
- 1639 Samuell Belknoppe son of Daniel and Barberie 3 February (1639/40).
- 1642 Barberie (?Belknopp) daughter of Daniell and Barberie 9 November.

#### Burials

- 1620 "Abra Bel...f.s. Abra et Mara" 6 December.
- 1658 Daniell Belnap widr. 19 October.
- 1704 Mary Belknap 8 January (1704/5).

From the Parish Registers of Gilston, co. Herts.

- 1661 Henry Belknapp and Elizabeth Dowsett married by licence 9 December.

## *A Chronology of the Manor of Belknaps and Nidelles*

### **The Chronological History of the Belknap Connection to the Leebury Estate (Inc. Great Chishull, Arkesden, Elmdon, etc.)**

The following are excerpts from documents recording the history of the Leebury estate leading up to and then during the time of Sir Robert's and Julianne's possession.

1341 "To William Talemach, escheator in cos. Essex, Hertford, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Norfolk and Suffolk. Order to deliver to **Isabella late the wife of Thomas Phelipp of Baldok, the manor of Lebury, co. Essex**, restoring the issues thereof, as the king has learned by inquisition taken by the escheator that Thomas at his death held no lands in his demesne as of fee in chief, but that he held the said manor jointly with Isabella as of the honour of Boulogne, by knight's service and suit of court of that honour every month, except 6 acres of land 1 ½ acres of meadow, 28s.5d. rent in **Chishull and Arkesden**, which are parcel of the manor which said manor, land, meadow and rent are held of others than the king has taken the fealty of Isabella." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 15 Edward III.-Part 2, Membrane 38, May 15, pg. 165-166)

1362 From the inquisition post mortem of Henry Trippelowe.  
"Writ to the escheator to enquire as to the lands and heir of the said Henry, and who has been in possession of his lands since his death and received the issues. 30 April, 36 Edward III.

Essex. Inq. Taken at Newport, Thursday after the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, 36 Edward III.

Elmedon. A manor (extent given), held of the king in chief, as of the honor of Boulogne, by service of a fourth part of a knight's fee.

He died on the feast of St. Margaret, 3 Edward III. Robert Marioun his kinsman, aged 38 years and more, is his heir.

**Thomas Phelipp of Baldok**, who is dead, had possession of the manor for twelve years after his death; **John de Benyton**, who is dead, had possession for twenty years; and Isabel the wife of the said John de Benyon, who survives, has been in possession for one year and is still in possession. The jurors do not know by what title the said Thomas, John and Isabel received the issues and profits. (Calendar of Inquisitions. Edward III. #437 pg. 337)

1371 "Item 126. **THOMAS PHELIPP of Baldok**. *Writ of precipimus*, 20 October, 45 Edward III. **ESSEX**. Inq. Taken at Stratforde Langthorn, Wednesday before St. Nicholas, 45 Edward III.

LaLeebury. The manor, held of the king, as of the honor of Boulogne, by service of a fourth part of a knight's fee. Thomas held it jointly with Isabel his wife by gift and feoffment of Peter Beauchamp to Thomas and Isabel and the heirs of Thomas. Peter had acquired the manor from Thomas, who acquired it from Ellen late the wife of Henry Trippelowe, who acquired it jointly with her said husband from Robert de Beverlaco, clerk, to hold to her husband and their heirs and assigns.

Thomas died on the morrow of St. Margaret. 15 Edward III. Isabel survived him and died on the morrow of the Purification. 45 Edward III. **Juliana wife of Robert de Beleknapp, aged 20 years, is kinswoman and next heir of Thomas, to wit, daughter of Elizabeth his daughter.**

**After the death of Isabel, John Neuport and Isabel his wife had possession of the manor and received the issues thereof.”** (Calendar of Inquisitions. 45 Edward III. Pg. 104)

- 1372 “Order to John Bataill, escheator in the county of Essex, to take the manor of La Lebury into the king's hand, **cause Robert Bealknapp and Juliana, his wife, to have full seisin thereof, and levy for the king's use the ussues thereof taken by John Neuport and Isabel, his wife, since the death of Isabel late the wife of Thomas Phelipp of Baldok;** as the king of late,-in pursuance of an inquisition made by the escheator shewing that the said Thomas was seised of the manor in his demesne as of fee on the day of his death jointly with Isabel, late his wife, deceased, of the gift and feoffment of one Peter de Bequchamp made to Thomas and Isabel and the heirs of Thomas, (Peter having formerly acquired the manor from Thomas, who acquired in from Ellen late the wife of Henry Trippelowe, who acquired in jointly with her said husband from Robert de Beverlaco, clerk, to hold to her and her husband and their heirs and assigns), and that the manor is held of the king as of the honour of Boulogne by the service of a fourth part of a knight's fee, and that Thomas died on the morrow of St. Margaret the Virgin, 15 Edward III, and **that Isabel died on the morrow of the Purification last, and that Juliana, wife of Robert de Belknapp, is Thomas's kinswoman and next heir, to wit, the daughter of Elizabeth, his daughter, and of full age, and that John Neuport and Isabel, his wife, occupied the manor and took the issues and profits after the death of Isabel late the wife of Thomas,-ordered the sheriff of the county of warn the said John and Isabel to be before the king in the Chancery on a certain day now past to shew cause why the manor should not be seized into the king's hand and delivered to the said Robert and Juliana, and why they should not answer to the king for the issues thereof taken by them, and to do and receive what the court should award, and they did not come on that day although sufficiently warned by Geoffrey Michel and Walter Weston, as the sheriff has returned, but one Robert Maryon was then present there, who asserted that the said John and Isabel held the manor for life of his demise, with reversion to him, and prayed that he might be admitted to defend his right in this behalf, and was admitted; and now by process before the king between the said Robert**

Bealknap and Juliana and the said Robert Maryon it is awarded that the manor be seized into the king's hand, and that the record of the matter be sent before the king in the Chancery for execution because delivery of the manor out of the king's hands pertains to the office of the Chancery, as is found by the tenor of the record and process thereof, which the king has caused to come before him in the Chancery, and the king has taken the fealty of the said Robert Bealknap.

**And be it remembered that Robert Bealknap came in the Chancery at Westminster on 28 January and made a protestation that he did not acknowledge that the manor is held of the king by the service of a fourth part of a knight's fee, as is supposed by the aforesaid inquisition."** (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 46 Edward III. Membrance 30, January 28, pg. 157-158).

- 1388 "Commitment in like terms to William More, citizen and vintner of London,-by mainprise of Thomas Nele of London, 'vynter' and William Brantyngham of the county of Northampton,- on the keeping of a messuage, a curtilage, **160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 15 acres of pasture in Elmedon, co. Essex, late of Robert Bealknap, 'chivaler', which are in the king's hand by the forfeiture of the said Robert**, to hold the same from Michaelmas last for seven years, rendering 66s. 10d. yearly at the Exchequer by equal portions at Easter and Michaelmas. The sain mainpernors and William More are jointly bound to the king in 6 pounds 13s. 8d., as above." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 12 Richard II. Membrane 20, November 12, pg. 261)
- 1390 "Grant, with the assent of the Council in the present Parliament, for the more **speedy payment to Robert Bealknap, knight, who by the king's appointment is staying in Ireland, of the 40 pounds a year granted to him for his maintenance by letters patent dated 13 July, 12 Richard II, now surrendered, to Juliana his wife, John Brode, Robert atte Cherch, Richard Cristelton, clerk, and Thomas Semelegh, at farm for the term of the said Robert Bealknap's life, of the manor of Sentlyng with appurtenances in Seintemariecraye, co. Kent, the manor of Knelle, co. Sussex, certain lands and tenements in Elmedon, co. Essex, called 'Leebury,' viz. A messuage with curtilage, 160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 15 acres of pasture in Elmedon, 60 acres of land in Baldok, Wylyen, Weston, Cloothale and Bygrave, co. Hertford, 7 shops in Baldok, a messuage with curtilage, 240 acres of land, 8 acres of meadow, 7 acres of wood, 13s.8d. of rent in Rissheden, a messuage with curtilage, 80 acres of land, one acre of meadow, one acre of pasture and once acre of wood in Sandon, co. Hertford, lately the said Robert Bealknap's, come to the king's hands by his forfeiture, extended at 45 pounds 6s. a year, for which they are to pay 40 pounds a year to the said Robert, for life, in satisfaction of the aforesaid grant, and the residue, viz. 106s. a year at the Exchequer.**" (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 13 Richard II.-Part III, Membrane 26, February 20. Pg. 230)
- 1390 "Grant, reciting the preceding in part, with the assent of the Council, in **consideration of her great poverty, to the said Juliana Bealknap, of the said**

residue during her husband's life, in aid of the maintenance of herself and her children." (Calendar of Patent Rolls. 13 Richard II.-PartIII, Membrane 26, March 15)

- 1391 Commitment to Roger de Walden, clerk, and **Andrew Neuport**, king's serjeant-at-arms,-by mainprise of John Ikelyngton, clerk, and **John Neuport, esquire**,-of the keeping of a messuage, a curtilage, 160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 15 acres of pasture in Elmenden, co. Essex, which belonged to Robert Bealknap and are in the kings hands on account of his forfeiture, to hold the same from Michaelmas last for ten years, rendering 66s. 10d. yearly at the Exchequer by equal portions at Easter and Michaelmas; with clause touching maintenance of buildings and support of charges." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 15 Richard II. Membrane 18, pg. 21)
- 1396 "Commitment (with like clause) to **Andrew Neuport, esquire**,-by mainprise of Thomas Willesdon and **William Neuport of London**,-of the keeping of a messuage, a curtilage, 160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow, and 15 acres of pasture in Elmedon, co. Essex, late of **Robert Bealknap**, which are in the king's hand by reason of the forfeiture of the said Robert, to hold the same from Easter last for forty years, rendering 66s. 10d. yearly at the Exchequer by equal portions at Michaelmas and Easter." (Calendar of Fine Rolls. 19 Richard II. Membrane 13, June 12, pg. 178)
- 1399 "To the sheriff of Hertford. **Order to make restitution and give Robert Bealknap knight livery against Juliana his wife**, John Brode, Robert atte Cherche, Richard Cristelton clerk and Thomas Semelegh of 60 acres of land in **Baldoke, Wylyen, Weston, Cloothale and Bygrave**, seven shops in the town of Baldoke, a messuage with curtilage, 240 acres of land, 8 acres of meadow, 7 acres of wood and 13s. 8d. of rent in Risseden, and a messuage with curtilage, 80 acres of land, 1 acre of meadow, 1 acre of pasture and 1 acre of wood in Sandoun which were of the said knight, and by colour of a judgment against him rendered in the parliament holden at Westminster on the morrow of St. Mary (sic) 11 Richard II; were seized into the king's hands; as by advice of the justices, serjeants at law and others of the council learned in the law it was determined that by virtue and authority of a judgment and statute made and rendered in the last parliament he shall have restitution.

To the sheriff of Essex. Like order, *mutatis mutandis*, concerning certain lands in **Elmedoun called Leebury**, namely a messuage with curtilage, 160 acres of land, 4 acres of meadow and 15 acres of pasture.

To the sheriff of Kent. Like order, *mutatis mutandis*, concerning the manor of **Sentlynge in 'Seyntmariecraze.'**

To the sheriff of Sussex. Like order, *mutatis mutandis*, concerning the manor of **Knelle.**" (Calendar of Close Rolls. 22 Richard II.- Part 1. Membrane 4, February 4, pg. 373)

- 1399 "To the sheriff of Essex. **Order to make restitution and give Robert Bealknap knight and Juliana his wife livery against Andrew Neuport esquire of 100 acres of land in Elmedoun** which were of the said Robert and Juliana in her right, and by colour of a judgment against the said Robert rendered in the parliament holden at Westminster on the morrow of the Purification 11 Richard II were seized into the king's hands; as by advice of the justices, serjeants at law and others of the council learned in the law it was determined in chancery that by virtue and authority of a judgment and statute made and rendered in the last parliament they shall have restitution." (Calendar of Close Rolls. 22 Richard II.- Part 1. Membrane 7, January 22, pg. 369)
- 1427 "...Richard Fox, Richard Baynard, George Langham, Robert Darcy, Andrew Michell, Henry Stampe, Edward Hager, William Garton, clerk, and William Hord, chaplain, plaintiff. John Drayton, and Agnes his wife, defendant. 1 messuage, 340 acres of land 6 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture, 25 acres of wood and 60s. rent in Elmedon. Defendant quitclaimed to plaintiff and the heirs of William Garton..."(Feet of Fines for Essex, 5 Henry VI)
- 1431 "Richard Fox, esquire, and John Basset of Magna Chishall, plaintiff. William Glamvyle of Chulham, co. Oxford, and Joan his wife, defendant. 1 messuage, 1 toft, 160 acres of meadow, 10 acres of wood and 10s. rent in Magna Chishall and Parva Chishall. Defendant quitclaimed to plaintiff and the heirs of John." (Feet of Fines for Essex, 10 Henry VI-page 16)
- 1432 "John Tuwe of Colne Engayne esquire to Richard Fox, George Lanham, William Neuport, John Noreys, John Basset the elder esquires, John Walton clerk, John Basset of Chishulle the younger and Richard Skylfulle, their heirs and assigns. Quitclaim with warranty of the whole manor called Nideles otherwise Lyles with appurtenances in Great Chishulle, Little Chishulle, Heyden and Shepenes, and of all other lands, rents and services, homages, reliefs, heriots, escheats, liberties, commons, ways, profits, etc. there which descended to John Tuwe by inheritance after the death of Thomas Tuwe his brother, all which Richard Fox and the others now have in possession by feoffment of John Tuwe. Dated 1 April 10 Henry VI." (Calendar of Close Rolls 10 Henry VI. Membrane 8d. pg. 182)
- 1445 "Hamon Belknap, who held it jointly with Joane his wife, dyed in 1428.—John was his son and heir, William Belknap, another son of Hamon, with Joane his wife, released all their right in the manor of Leebury in Elmdon, Chishall, Wendon, Arkesden, and Creshall, to Thomas Grene and his heirs, in the year 1445." (Morants Essex, Vol.2 pg. 599)

- 1488 Inquisition Post Mortem of Henry Langley, "By deed dated 8 Feb., 11 Edward IV, James Asteley, vicar of ... and ... gave the under-mentioned manors of Wodehall and Elmedon, 100 acres land, 10 ac. meadow, and 6 ac. wood in Arkesden, Clveryng, Wenden, and Wyken, a tenement ... and 300 ac. of land, & etc. in ... to the said Henry, and Katherine, then his wife, who survives, and the heirs male of their bodies, with remainder to the said Henry in tail with remainder to the heirs of the body of Anne, daughter and heir of Richard Fox, esq. deceased, with remainder to Joan the wife of John New... esq. with remainder to ... by deed dated at Rykelyng, 4 Sept. ... the said Henry gave the other under-mentioned manors and lands to James Asteley, clerk, **William Fynderne, knight, William Grene, esq...** **Denis Leventhorpe,** ... and directed his feoffees to ..."

This manor included the following: The manor of Wodehall, in Arkesden, Manors of Elmedon, called "Mounteneys" and Daggeworthes; 300 ac. land, 7 ac meadow, 20 ac. pasture, and 10 ac wood in Elmedon, Manor of Rykeling... held of... **as of the maner called "Sayesbury" in Sawbridgeworth**, by service of ½ of a knight's fee, A meadow called, "Lytelholme mede," in Elsenham,... **as of the manor called "Sayesbury," in Sabrichesworth**, service unknown... Manor of Arkesden... Manors of Wiggepet and **Coggeshales**, 2 messuages, 600 ac. land 44 ac. pasture, 20 ac meadow, and 80 ac. wood in **Arkesden, Elmedon, Wenden, Lowts, Walden, and Wyggepet,**..." (Inquisition Post Mortem-3 Henry VII.-Henry Langley-pg. 127-128)

Miscellaneous Inquisitions Reference taken in 1388 for Forfeiture of Sir Robert Beaknapp

Inquisition item #	Acreage description	Buildings on premises	misc.land	arable	meadow	woods	pasture	Total acres
<b>36 Hertfordshire</b>								
1.	Baldok, Wylyen, Westone Cloothale, Bygrave	seven shops in Baldok	60					60
2.	Ressheden	messuage with a curtilage		240	8	7		255
3.	Sandon	messuage with a curtilage		80	1	1	1	83
<b>37 Kent</b>								
1.	Lyde	hall, chamber, stable, etc.		149	12		21	182
2.	Elderomone, Middelie		36					36
3.	Saltewode, Postlynge	hall, cottages in poor cond.		123	1		120	244
4.	Aldyngton, Herst, Bonyngton		58					58
<b>39 Kent</b>								
1.	Wy and Bocton Allulphe	farm		47	2	10	50	109
<b>40 Kent</b>								
1.	Manor of Pyrye, Atynbroke	dovecote			5	10	80	95
2.	Aldon, Chelchebourne Nacholte, Bronesford	two cottages			6			6
<b>41 Kent</b>								
1.	Wy and Bocton			20	3	11	70	104
<b>42 Kent</b>								
1.	Kenyngton, Bocton Alluph Estwelle, Henxhelle	cottage	130		8			138
<b>43 Kent</b>								
1.	Hempstede, Benynden			216		200		416
<b>46 Kent</b>								
1.	Seyntlyng, St Mary Cray	dovecote		200	7	100	40	347
2.	Crokkerneheld, Eynesford	messuage, grange, etc.		300				300
<b>48 Kent</b>								
1.	Grenestedes, Kingessnode	messuage, tenement			22		510	532
2.	Kingessnode, Great Chart	messuage	12					12
<b>49 Kent</b>								
1.	Sharstede, Lydesyng	lands, etc. granted to Rochester Cathedral						
2.	Dittone		10					10
<b>50 Buckingham</b>								
1.	Burton, Aylesbury, Walton	dovecote, manor in ruins		117	11		1	129
2.	Betgrove and Caldecote			20				20
3.	Aylesbury			13				13
4.	Walton			28				28
<b>51 Berkshire</b>								
1.	Sotwell, Dudcote			213	20		115	348
<b>52 Berkshire</b>								
1.	Stonore, Byxbrond			190		20	100	310
2.	Bixgibbewyn			20		55	40	115
3.	Bixbrond			60		100	40	200
4.	Hoo in Watlington	watermill					22	22
<b>54 Sussex</b>								
1.	Knelle	Several substantial property rents						
Approximate total acreage			306	2,036	106	514	1,210	4,172

**Miscellaneous Inquisitions Reference taken in 1388 for Forfeiture of Sir Robert Bealknapp**

<b>Inquisition item #</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>horses</b>	<b>stots</b>	<b>cattle</b>	<b>oxen</b>	<b>sheep</b>	<b>pigs</b>	<b>swans</b>	<b>Total animals</b>
<b>44 Kent</b>									
1. Lyde						200		2	202
2. Elderomone, Middelie									0
3. Saltewode, Postlynge		2		14		80			96
4. Aldyngton, Herst.Bonyngton									0
<b>44 Kent</b>									
1. Wy and Bocton Allulphe				20					20
<b>44 Kent</b>									
1. Manor of Pyrye,Atynbroke			10	23		140	23		196
2. Aldon, Chelchebourne Nacholte, Bronesford									0
<b>44 Kent</b>									
1. Hempstede, Benynden		2		6	4		10		22
<b>45 Kent</b>									
1. Seyntlyng, St Mary Cray		6	2		15	300	27	2	352
2. Crokkerneheid, Eynesford									0
<b>47 Kent</b>									
1. Grenestedes, Kingessnode									0
2. Kingessnode,Great Chart		11	3	58	10	170			252
<b>Totals</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1,140</b>

