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The Paston Letters

A Selection in Modern Spelling

Edited with an Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

THE name 'The Paston Letters' is now generally applied to a large number of documents written in the fifteenth century and the early years of the sixteenth, mostly by or to members of the Norfolk family of Paston. They took their name from the village where they lived, about twenty miles from Norwich on the north-east coast of the county. The earliest member of the family to become known in the wider world was the first William Paston, who was born in 1378, rose in the legal profession to be a judge in 1429, and died in 1444. Of his father we know little except that his name was Clement and that he was said to be a small landholder who had to borrow money to send his son to school. William established the family fortunes so successfully that his sons and grandsons eventually attained positions of some prominence and acquired wealth and property. From the time of Henry VII onwards the family was for a century and a half among the most influential in East Anglia; but in the Civil War the royalist allegiance of another William Paston (Sir William, 1610–63) was penalized so severely that his descendants never recovered financially, though after the Restoration his son Robert was raised to the peerage as Viscount Yarmouth, and Earl of Yarmouth in 1679. Robert's son, yet another William, the second Earl, proved to be the last of the line. His three sons died before him, and he so neglected his estates that when he died in 1732 everything had to be sold to pay his debts. Among the effects he left at his house at Oxnead were a great many letters and other documents relating to family affairs over many years. A large number of these passed to Francis Blomefield, the well-known historian of Norfolk, and some to other antiquaries. The precise fate of some of the papers is uncertain, but eventually most of

them were acquired by John Fenn of East Dereham, to whom is due the credit for recognizing the significance of this material to historians and a wider public. Though some documents otherwise preserved have come to be associated with them, the papers from Oxnead form the essential core of the 'Paston Letters'. The collection was not, however, a systematically maintained archive. Blomefield's account of it shows that it was in considerable disorder, and there can be little doubt that much has simply been lost. John Fenn in 1787 published, under the title *Original Letters, Written during the Reigns of Henry VI. Edward IV. and Richard III. By various Persons of Rank or Consequence*, two volumes of transcripts of 155 of the letters in his collection, some of them abridged. They aroused great interest, and Fenn was encouraged to present the manuscripts of the letters he had printed to the King, in the expectation that they would be kept in the royal library. He was knighted in recognition of the gesture, but the manuscripts did not reach the library. They were lost to public view for a century, until in 1889 they were unexpectedly found in the library in Suffolk of a grandson of the private secretary to William Pitt, who had been prime minister in Fenn's day and had recommended dedication of the edition to the King; but they still remained in private hands until they were bought by the British Museum, which had by then acquired many other Paston documents, in 1933. In 1789 Fenn published two further volumes containing another 220 letters, and he prepared for publication a fifth volume of 110 letters which was issued after his death by his nephew William Frere. The manuscripts of these additional three volumes were also lost to sight for a time, but were eventually found and purchased by the British Museum in 1865 and 1896. All these manuscripts, and a number of others of different descent, are thus now in the British Library; a much smaller number of letters and some related documents are in other libraries. It was the

discovery of the second group that caused James Gairdner to undertake a major new edition of the collection, including a considerable number of texts which Fenn had not printed. Gairdner's edition, entitled *The Paston Letters 1422–1509 A.D.*, was published in three volumes from 1872 to 1875, and a fourth supplementary volume, incorporating additional letters and an important introduction, was added to a new edition in 1900–1. The total number of documents included, miscellaneous legal papers as well as the letters, exceeded a thousand. Finally in 1904 he issued a reset 'library edition' in six volumes. But the manuscripts of Fenn's first two volumes remained still uncollated until the selection in the Clarendon Medieval and Tudor Series, edited by N. Davis, was published in 1958, and the almost complete *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century* in 1971 and 1976. There are in fact several hundred other 'Paston letters' in existence, dating from the seventeenth century; but the name has come to be so familiarly used of the medieval group, which form a comparatively independent record of three generations of the family, that it would be inconvenient now to attempt to change its application.

The letters of the fifteenth century which survive come very unevenly from different writers and periods. Those written by members of the family were nearly all addressed to other members, which of course partly accounts for their preservation. From the first William there are only seven drafts of letters, evidently kept as file copies, and five other documents, the earliest of 1425. These are among the earliest surviving private letters in English, but not quite the earliest. From his wife Agnes there is one letter to him, probably of 1440, and about a dozen to their two eldest sons. It was in the next two generations that most of the known letters were written. The first John Paston, born in 1421, followed his father into the law, but not in the public service. He married

Margaret, daughter of John Mautby of Mautby near Yarmouth. Through her he came to know Sir John Fastolf, a relative of hers, who had served for many years as an officer in the French wars and had acquired great wealth and estates. He had retired to live in his new castle at Caister near Yarmouth, not far from Margaret's old home at Mautby. Paston became one of his legal advisers, and when Fastolf died in 1459 he was named in his will as one of the principal executors. He was desired, according to the will as propounded, to found a college of priests and poor men at Caister to pray for the souls of Fastolf and his ancestors; in return for which, and a relatively modest payment, he was to inherit Caister Castle and Fastolf's numerous other manors in Norfolk and Suffolk. Other executors, headed by William Yelverton, a justice of the King's Bench, contested this will, claiming that Paston had falsified it while Fastolf was too ill to manage his affairs. But Paston took effective possession of Caister and other property, and devoted much of his energy until his death in 1466, at the age of only 45, to trying to establish his claim. To this troubled period many of the most important letters in the collection belong. During John's absences in London Margaret took charge of running the estates, and wrote to John reporting on affairs and asking for instructions. Her letters John kept, and to some he added notes as a guide for the composition of replies. There are in all 69 letters from Margaret to him, and another 262 from correspondents outside the family, so that John can be seen to be very much at the centre of the collection. Margaret wrote to her eldest son in 1466 (no. 74): 'your father set more by his writings and evidence than he did by any of his movable goods'; and this concern for documents probably accounts for the preservation of so many. After much negotiation and litigation, during which he was three times imprisoned in the Fleet, John died with no conclusion in sight, yet in occupation of

some of the most important of Fastolf's estates. His adversaries had not let him enjoy them undisturbed. A major upheaval occurred in 1465, when the Duke of Suffolk sent a force of armed men against the manor of Hellesdon, near Norwich, and sacked not only the manor house and the lodge but village houses and even the church. Margaret was in charge at this time, though not in residence – she reported the attack a few days later, in nos. 70 and 71. This was not her first experience of violence at the hands of covetous noblemen. Long before Paston was concerned with Fastolf's property his manor of Gresham, which William Paston I had bought from Thomas Chaucer, had been forcibly seized in 1448 by Lord Moleyns, whose men (as John Paston complained in a petition to the King) 'mined down the wall of the chamber wherein the wife of your said beseecher was, and bore her out of the gates'.

Of the other family letters by far the largest number was written by the two eldest sons of John and Margaret, both named John and born only two years apart, in 1442 and 1444. About seventy letters survive from each of them. The elder, John II, his father contrived to place in the King's household, but was soon disillusioned by the young man's failure to make an impression. He emerges as a very different character from his acquisitive and censorious father – interested in books (no. 80) and in tournaments (p. 162), and known to his friends as 'the best chooser of a gentlewoman', as one of them wrote in 1467. Margaret was fond of him, but was often angered by his failure to defend his interests adequately, his constant overspending, and his neglect even to attend to a tombstone for his father. He eventually came to an accommodation with Fastolf's executors, headed now by William of Wainfleet, bishop of Winchester, by which he was to keep Caister but the college of priests was to be established at Magdalen College, Oxford, recently founded by Wainfleet. But this was frustrated by the

Duke of Norfolk, who sent a force to seize Caister Castle and besieged it until the garrison, commanded by John Paston III, was forced to surrender (no. 90). Norfolk kept the castle, with a short interval, until his death early in 1476, when John II finally won recognition of his claim to it. He spent much of his time as a soldier at Calais from 1473 to 1477. He died, unmarried, in 1479, a year of plague that carried off also his grandmother Agnes and his young brother Walter. John III was well fitted to succeed his brother as head of the family, and had long taken a vigorous part in administering and defending its properties. In 1477 he married Margery, daughter of Sir Thomas Brews of Topcroft. She died before him, but their son, a fourth William, continued the line. John III was knighted at the battle of Stoke in 1487 by Henry VII, and held an assured position in county society when he died in 1504.

In national politics none of the Pastons played a significant part, though John I, his younger brother William II, and his two eldest sons all sat in Parliament at various times. In the conflicts of the Wars of the Roses their role was inglorious. Soon after Edward IV seized the throne in 1461 John Paston II became attached to his household (no. 40), and John III served in the north in a force commanded by the Duke of Norfolk, a prominent Yorkist (no. 50). The brothers went to Bruges in 1468 in the retinue of the King's sister for her marriage to the Duke of Burgundy (no. 79). Yet they hoped to benefit from the restoration of Henry VI in 1470 (no. 93), and fought on the Lancastrian side at the battle of Barnet in 1471 – perhaps provoked by Norfolk's conduct about Caister. They had consequently to sue for pardons, but once these were granted they soon accommodated themselves again to Edward's régime.

The present selection, necessarily a very small part of the whole, has been made mainly from letters written by members of the family, and is intended to illustrate

especially some of the important concerns of the family rather than general political or national affairs. For this reason the three attacks on Paston houses, at Gresham, Hellesdon, and Caister, are prominent, and so are the two love matches – between Margery Paston and Richard Calle in 1469, and John Paston III and Margery Brews in 1477 – which provide at least a partial relief from the prevailing attention to property. Those writers from whom a number of letters survive have generally succeeded in conveying a lively impression of their individual characters and temperaments. Agnes, who has a keen ear for the sound of a quarrel, has left one of the earliest reports in existence of informal spoken English: 'I told him if his father had do as he did, he would a be ashamed to a said as he said' (no. 16). The arrogant severity of her attitude to the villagers of Paston in this dispute recalls the harshness of her treatment of her daughter who refused to marry as she wished (no. 12); yet she can express gentler moods, as in her later advice to the indefatigably self-seeking John I: 'By my counsel, dispose yourself as much as ye may to have less to do in the world' (no. 72). John's letters to his wife give ample evidence of a disposition to which such comments might justly be applied. He reproves Margaret and her officers for slackness in managing the estates, and expels John II from the house because he behaves 'as a drone amongst bees' (no. 55). Once, it is true, and the more unexpectedly because he is in prison at the time, he allows himself to address his wife in romantically courtly terms, 'mine own dear sovereign lady', and to end the letter with a passage of facetious doggerel (no. 66). Margaret as a young woman can show an engaging vein of affectionate irony: 'I am wax so fetis that I may not be girt in no bar of no girdle that I have but of one. . . . Ye have left me such a remembrance that maketh me to think upon you both day and night when I would sleep.' (no. 3). For the most part, however, she is practical, earnest, and competent,

anxious to follow her husband's wishes. After his death she maintains much of her authority over her children. She implacably bans from her house the daughter who insists on marrying beneath her (no. 86). Towards John II she becomes increasingly censorious (nos. 87, 99), and takes the part of her chaplain against John III (no. 103). Yet in spite of such disagreements they remain affectionately devoted to her: 'I purpose verily with God's grace thereafter to dance attendance most about your pleasure and ease' (John II, no. 113); 'there is neither wife nor other friend shall make me to do that that your commandment shall make me to do' (John III, no. 137).

John II appears as generally easy-going and amiable, well-meaning but rather 'infirm of purpose'. His sense of humour lacks refinement and may indeed give embarrassing offence (no. 106), yet he takes some pride in understanding the subtleties of courtship: 'And bear yourself as lowly to the mother as ye list, but to the maid not too lowly, nor that ye be too glad to speed nor too sorry to fail' (no. 76). His relations with John III are nearly always affable and warm, but he withdraws into unsympathetic disapproval of Margaret's gift of a manor to his brother on his marriage: 'I pray you rejoice not yourself too much in hope to obtain thing that all your friends may not ease you of' (no. 125). During the siege of Caister he seems never to have understood the gravity of his brother's danger, and his attempts to negotiate relief were ineffectual. John III in comparison is firm and competent, taking responsibility without complaint and bearing defeat with commendable equanimity (no. 90). He is less interested in courtly pleasures: 'I had liefer see you once in Caister Hall than to see as many kings tourney as might be betwixt Eltham and London' (no. 77), though he longs for a hawk to relieve the tedium of his life in Norfolk, and appeals for one to his brother with an amused scepticism: 'By my troth, I die for default of labour. . . . *Memento mei*, and in faith ye shall

not lose on it – nor yet much win on it, by God, who preserve you' (no. 105). Less immediately engaging than John II, he makes an impression of sounder qualities, and it is not surprising that he was able to hand on to his son an assured and respected position.

Of the people who are less well represented in the surviving letters, young William Paston III at Eton, with his interest in coming to 'sport me with you at London a day or two this term time' in one letter (no. 129), and in the nuptial prospects of a 'young gentlewoman' who has good expectations of money and plate but 'is disposed to be thick' in another (no. 130), is pleasantly fresh and direct. Probably the best known letters of all, and deservedly so, are the two 'Valentines' from Margery Brews to John Paston III, which express a simple tenderness hard to match at this time (nos. 121, 122). She begged him that 'this bill be not seen of none earthly creature save only yourself' – though both letters were written by a clerk of her father's. It is a happy chance that he did not comply.

All but a handful of the letters are essentially on matters of business, written quite unselfconsciously for private information or advice, and often in haste. If they have any literary qualities it is for the most part by accident. Yet not entirely so; critics have exaggerated the most obvious qualities of artlessness and simplicity. Many of the writers know enough of rhetoric to enliven a narrative or argument with metaphor, simile, or proverb: 'when I remember it it is to mine heart a very spear' (no. 97); 'the Duke of Suffolk is able to keep daily in his house more men than Daubeney had hairs in his head if him list' (no. 57): 'it is but a simple oak that is cut down at the first stroke' (no. 120); or to construct a balanced sentence: 'This matter is driven thus farforth without my counsel; I pray you make an end without my counsel. If it be well, I would be glad; if it be otherwise, it is pity' (no. 125). On occasion the older women especially use phrases or rhythms that seem most likely to be remembered from church or chaplain:

'This world is but a thoroughfare, and full of woe, and when we depart therefro right nought bear [we] with us but our good deeds and ill' (Agnes, no. 72); 'God visiteth you as it pleaseth him in sundry wises' (Margaret, no. 91). The younger men may be influenced by their reading of romances: 'as for the Duke's court, as of lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, squires, and gentlemen, I heard never of none like to it save King Arthur's court', 'he is one the lightest, deliverest, best spoken, fairest archer, devoutest, most perfect, and truest to his lady of all the knights that ever I was acquainted with' (John III, nos. 79, 102).

Predominantly, it is true, most writers aim at conveying meaning lucidly in unvarnished words, and their language is colloquial in the sense that it is easy and unaffected. Extreme simplicity of vocabulary and rhythm may sometimes anticipate the biblical translations of the next century: 'And my Lord of Winchester and my Lord of Saint John's were with him on the morrow after Twelfth Day, and he spake to them as well as ever he did; and when they came out they wept for joy' (Edmund Clere, no. 23). But the language may be shaped and heightened for special effects without losing its essentially practical and common roots: 'But, mother, I feel by your writing that ye deem in me I should not do my devoir without ye wrote to me some heavy tidings; and, mother, if I had need to be quickened with a letter in this need I were of myself too slow a fellow' (John II, no. 88); 'I pray you give them their thank, for by my troth they have as well deserved it as any men that ever bare life; . . . We were, for lack of victual, gunpowder, men's hearts, lack of surety of rescue, driven thereto to take appointment' (John III, no. 90). In this there is a sense of form that concentrates the vigour of the thought; rhythms and patterns are brought into play to make a point, but not as mere ornament.

The general level of competence in writing among so many people, so early in the history of letter-writing in English, is very remarkable. Not only the men who had

been educated at a university (as the first John and his brother William were at Cambridge, and Walter at Oxford), or an Inn of Court or Chancery (as the first John and both the Edmonds were), but their clerks and estate managers, and their wives and daughters, succeeded in expressing their thoughts and their characters clearly and vigorously. In the history of the English language this period is of high importance. The use of English instead of French, and in part Latin, in administration and business became common only in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, and these letters are a significant element in that movement. Further, they date from the years immediately before and after the introduction of printing by William Caxton in Westminster in 1476, which brought the written word within reach of an unprecedented number of readers and greatly promoted the standardization of the language. The letters give invaluable evidence of the condition of English as a means of practical communication at this critical time, and so make possible a better judgement of the achievement of the writers who used it with conscious concern for literary art.

The particular value of the Paston Letters lies in the unsurpassed picture they present of so many features of life in fifteenth-century England – private ambitions, anxieties, hopes, and loves in the midst of political uncertainties and war. They are not quite the earliest family papers surviving in English, but those that are older are few and of minor interest. The Stonor papers from Oxfordshire are of similar date and offer a good deal of the same kind of social information, but they are less numerous and the family's affairs were less eventful. The other principal collection somewhat later in the century, the Cely letters, exhibits the more specialized concerns of wool merchants of London. In the range of the activities it covers, and the extent of society and literacy it illustrates, the Paston collection is richer than any other private English documents of the late Middle Ages.

THE MANUSCRIPTS

The letters printed here are all written on paper, which was cheaper than parchment (still normal for legal documents) though not always plentiful – Margaret Paston added a postscript to a letter probably of 1451 written on an irregularly cut sheet, 'Paper is dainty' (scarce). They vary greatly in size. A full sheet measured about 430 × 290 mm., but generally much less than this was needed and the sheet was cut off when the letter was finished. The writing was done across the shorter side, but since it was often not long enough to reach an equal length down the sheet a common shape is a rectangle with the lines of writing across the longer side. Most frequently a letter was written continuously without division into paragraphs, with little or no punctuation (where there is any the usual sign is /, which may be doubled), and with erratic use of capital letters. When writing was finished the paper was folded to form a small packet, secured by passing stitches or narrow paper tape through it, and sealing with wax, and the address was written on the outside. If a letter bears an address it almost always has the remains of a seal as well, and the folds are well marked, with the parts exposed soiled by carrying; and even when there is no address such marks are evidence that a letter was actually sent and is not a mere draft or copy.

It is often evident that a letter is in the handwriting of its author – sometimes by explicit statement, as 'with the hand of your brother' in William Paston III's nos. 129 and 130, more often by comparison with a series of others. It is also often clear that an author has used an amanuensis, who may be identifiable from other letters in his own name; and in such cases it may be uncertain whether the text was made from a written draft or taken down from

dictation, or indeed even composed relatively freely in accordance with general instructions. Such letters are frequently subscribed with the name of the author but in the hand of the amanuensis. This applies in particular to the letters of Margaret Paston, whose 104 letters are in a great variety of different hands none of which can be shown to be her own; from which it seems likely that she could not write, or at any rate did not like it.

THIS EDITION

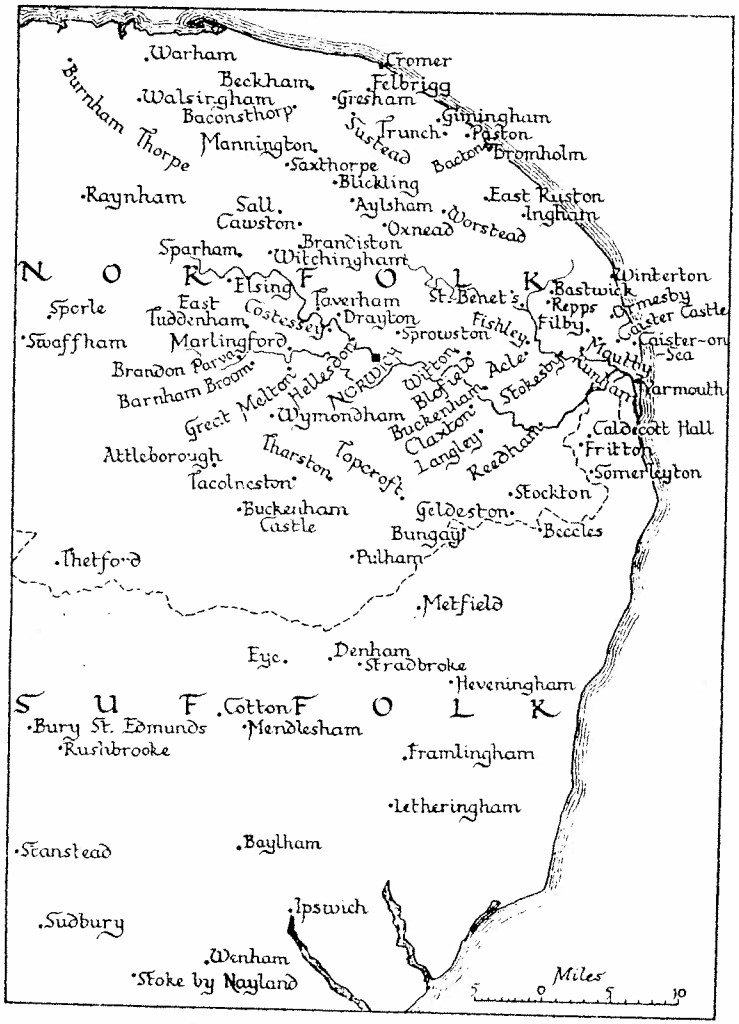
Because of limitations of space many of the letters selected for printing have had to be abridged, to exclude comparatively technical matters or passages requiring more annotation than these pages could accommodate. To save space the addresses of the letters have been omitted. In most cases the destination is obvious or unimportant; where it is not, it is given in a note.

The language of the manuscripts has been drastically, yet not completely, modernized. That is, it has not been simply transliterated into modern spelling by removing letters no longer used and regularizing such details as the use of *i* and *j*, *u* and *v*, and final *-e*. This would have left too many merely technical obstructions to a reader unaccustomed to the variety of form characteristic of fifteenth-century English. For instance, in the originals 'their' and 'them' are often (but not always) *her(e)*, *hem*; 'give' is usually (but not always) *yeue*; the past tense of 'see' is often *sey* or *sye*. Most of such archaic forms have been replaced by their modern equivalents. It has not, however, seemed necessary to alter familiar archaisms like *spake* or *saith*, or those verbal inflections which do not impede understanding. Thus *-e(n)* has been retained in many occurrences of the infinitive (e.g. *buyen*, *writen*, *sayn*), the present plural (e.g. *arn*, *weeten*, *been*), and the

past plural (e.g. *wern*, *hadden*); it has been omitted in many past participles (e.g. *be*, *do*, *know*); *-eth* has been kept in the few imperatives in which it occurs (e.g. *weeteth*, *cometh*), and an occasional present plural (e.g. *beth*); and the prefix *i-* has been kept in past participles (e.g. *ibound*, *ihad*, *iwriten*). The result is, of course, that the text is given in a language that never existed at any time, for modern forms appear inconsistently together with medieval syntax; but this is true of any modernization, and this edition is not intended for readers interested in such details of language. (For them the original forms, and photographic facsimiles of many of the manuscripts, are given in *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Part I 1971, Part II 1976).

All editorial omissions, whatever their length, are shown by . . . . Letters or words lost by damage to the manuscripts are supplied in ⟨ ⟩ when there is no reasonable doubt about them. When reconstruction is uncertain, the gap is shown by ⟨ . . . ⟩. Miswritten words are emended without any notice if the error is judged to be obvious or insignificant. If the change is one of some substance, words or letters omitted in the original but necessary to the sense are printed in [ ]; letters substituted for others are printed in ( ), but no note is given of the manuscript form unless it is of special interest.

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Trustees of the British Museum (the predecessors of the British Library Board), and the authorities of the Bodleian and the Cambridge University libraries for permission to print from manuscripts in their charge.



PART OF NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK

THE PASTONS

WILLIAM PASTON I. Born 1378, son of Clement Paston of Paston, Norfolk. Steward of the Duke of Norfolk 1415. J.P. Norfolk and elsewhere, and member of commissions, 1418 onwards. Married Agnes Berry 1420. Serjeant-at-law 1421. Justice of the Common Bench 1429. Trier of petitions in Parliament 1439, 1442. Died 13–14 Aug. 1444.

AGNES. Daughter and heiress of Sir Edmund Berry of Horwellbury near Royston, Herts. Lived mostly in Norwich, sometimes at Oxnead or Paston, until at least 1469; but before 1474 went to live in London with her son William. Died Aug. 1479.

Their children:

JOHN PASTON I. Born 1421. Educated at Trinity Hall and Peterhouse, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple. Married Margaret Mautby *c.* 1440. J.P. Norfolk 1447, 1456–7, 1460–6. Elected a knight of the shire 1455, but the election declared invalid by the Duke of Norfolk. An executor of Sir John Fastolf's will 1459. M.P. Norfolk 1460–1, 1461–2. Imprisoned in the Fleet 1461, 1464, 1465. Died in London 21 or 22 May 1466, buried in Bromholm Priory, Norfolk.

MARGARET. Daughter and heiress of John Mautby of Mautby. Lived mostly at Norwich, but from about 1474 at her old home at Mautby. Died 4 Nov. 1484.

EDMOND I. Born 1425. At Clifford's Inn 1445. Died in London 21 March 1449.

ELIZABETH. Born 1429. Married Robert Poynings 1458. He died 1461 and she married Sir George Browne probably 1471. Died 1 Feb. 1488.

WILLIAM II. Born 1436. At Cambridge 1449. J.P. Norfolk 1465–6, 1469–70, 1473–4. Married Lady Anne Beaufort, daughter of Edmund, Duke of Somerset, before 1470. M.P. 1472–5, 1478, 1491–2. Died in London 1496.

CLEMENT. Born 1442. In London under a tutor 1458. Died not later than 1479.

Children of John I and Margaret:

JOHN II. Born 1442. Joined Edward IV's court 1461. Knighted 1463. M.P. Norfolk 1467–8. In Princess Margaret's train for her marriage in Bruges 1468. J.P. Norfolk 1469–70. Took Lancastrian side 1470 and fought at Barnet under Warwick April 1471. Pardoned Dec. 1471. At Calais often 1473–7. M.P. Yarmouth 1478. Died in London about 15 Nov. 1479.

JOHN III. Born 1444. Served under the Duke of Norfolk 1462–4. In Princess Margaret's train 1468. In command of Caister during siege by Norfolk 1469. Fought at Barnet 1471. Pardoned 1472. At Calais 1475. Married Margery Brews 1477. J.P. Norfolk 1480–2. Pardoned by Richard III 1484. M.P. Norwich and sheriff Norfolk and Suffolk 1485–6. Knighted at the battle of Stoke 1487. J.P. Norfolk 1494–7. Married Agnes, daughter of Nicholas Morley, after 1495. Died 1504.

MARGERY. Daughter of Sir Thomas Brews of Topcroft, Norfolk. Died *c.* 1495.

EDMOND II. At Staple Inn 1470. At Calais 1473. Indentured to the Duke of Gloucester for service with the King 1475. Married Catherine, widow of William Clippesby, 1480–1. Married Margaret, widow of William Lomnor and of Thomas Briggs, after 1491. Died not later than 1504.

WALTER. Born after 1455. Went to Oxford 1473. Took degree of B.A. June 1479. Died at Norwich about 19 Aug. 1479.

WILLIAM III. Born after 1461. At Eton 1478–9. In the service of the Earl of Oxford 1488. Became insane probably 1503.

MARGERY. Married Richard Calle 1469. Died not later than 1479.

ANNE. Married William Yelverton 1477. Died 1494–5.

Sons of John III and Margery:

CHRISTOPHER. Born 1478. Died before 1482.

WILLIAM IV. Born *c.* 1479. At Cambridge about 1495. Later knighted, married Bridget, daughter of Sir Henry Heydon of Baconsthorpe, Norfolk. Died 1554.

LIST OF DATES

1413 Accession of Henry V.

1415 Henry V's first campaign in France. Battle of Agincourt.

1420 Treaty of Troyes.

1422 Accession of infant Henry VI. Duke of Bedford regent.

1429 Joan of Arc raises siege of Orleans. Henry VI crowned at Westminster.

1430 Joan of Arc captured by the English. Henry VI in France.

1431 Joan of Arc burnt. Henry VI crowned in Paris.

1435 Death of Bedford. John Fastolf governor of Anjou and Maine.

1436 French recover Paris. Duke of York lieutenant in France. Scotland at war with England.

1440 Siege of Harfleur. Eton College founded by Henry VI.

1444 Peace negotiations with France.

1445 Henry VI marries Margaret of Anjou.

1447 Arrest and death of Duke of Gloucester.

1449 War with France renewed. Rouen and eastern Normandy lost.

1450 Duke of Suffolk impeached and murdered. Jack Cade's rebellion.

1453 Henry VI insane. Constantinople falls to Turks.

1454 Duke of York made Protector. Henry VI recovers at Christmas.

1455 Henry VI resumes power. First battle of St. Albans won by York, who becomes Constable of England and again Protector.

1458 Reconciliation of the lords in London. Warwick at Calais.

1459 Yorkists defeated at Ludford. York escapes to Ireland.

1460 Earls of March (later Edward IV), Warwick, and Salisbury invade England. Battle of Northampton. Henry VI taken prisoner. York claims the crown. Battle of Wakefield, York killed.

1461 Battles of Mortimer's Cross and St. Albans II. Edward IV proclaimed king 4 March, crowned 28 June. Battle of Towton. Henry VI and Queen Margaret in Scotland.

1462 Margaret of Anjou invades Northumberland.

1463 Margaret retreats to Flanders, Henry remains in Bamburgh.

1464 Margaret seeks French help. Edward IV marries Elizabeth Woodville privately.

1465 Queen Elizabeth crowned. Henry VI captured and imprisoned in the Tower.

1468 Princess Margaret (Edward IV's sister) married in Bruges to Charles of Burgundy. Edward declares war on France. Warwick disgraced.

1469 Robin of Redesdale's insurrection. Edward captured by Warwick after battle of Edgcote, but later released.

1470 Edward attacks Warwick and Clarence, who escape to France. Warwick invades England. Edward flees to Burgundy. Henry VI restored (recrowned 13 October). Sir T. Malory finishes *Morte Darthur*.

1471 Edward IV lands at Ravenspur 14 March. Battle of Barnet, Warwick killed. Queen Margaret lands in England, is defeated and captured at Tewkesbury and her son Prince Edward killed. Edward IV enters London 21 May. Henry VI put to death. Caxton in the service of the Duchess of Burgundy.

1472 Truces with Scotland and France.

1473 Edward IV raises taxes for an expedition against France, but postpones it. Earl of Oxford seizes St. Michael's Mount but is besieged there.

1474 Oxford surrenders. Edward makes treaty with Burgundy.

1475 Edward invades France, but makes Treaty of Picquigny

in return for money payment. The first book printed in English, Caxton's *Histories of Troy*, produced in Bruges.

1476 Margaret of Anjou handed over to France for ransom. Caxton sets up press in Westminster.

1478 Clarence attainted of treason and executed.

1481 English fleet raids Scotland.

1482 Duke of Gloucester captures Edinburgh. Berwick surrendered to England.

1483 Edward IV dies 9 April. Edward V aged 12, Gloucester Protector, later assumes crown as Richard III. Edward and his brother murdered in the Tower.

1484 Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, lands in Wales from France. Battle of Bosworth. Richard III killed, Richmond succeeds as Henry VII.

1485 Caxton's edition of Malory.

1486 Henry VII marries Elizabeth of York.

1487 Lambert Simnel's revolt crushed at battle of Stoke.

1488 James III of Scotland murdered after rebellion of his son James IV.

1489 Rising in Yorkshire. Earl of Northumberland killed.

1491 Henry VIII born.

1492 Henry VII invades France. Columbus discovers West Indies.

1495 Perkin Warbeck attempts to land at Deal.

1509 Death of Henry VII.

1. *William Paston I to the Vicar of the Abbot of Cluny*[1]

Probably 1430, April

My right worthy and worshipful lord, I recommend me to you. And forasmuch as I conceive verily that ye arn vicar general in England of the worthy prelate the Abbot of Cluny, and have his power in many great articles, and among other in profession of monks in England of the said order; and in my country, but a mile fro the place where I was born, is the poor house of Bromholm,[2] of the same order, in which arn divers virtuous young men, monks clad and unprofessed, that have abiden there ⟨with-ou⟩t abbot nine or ten year, and by lenger delay of their profession many inconvenients arn like to fall; and also the prior[3] of ⟨the said house⟩ hath resigned into your worthy hands by certains notables and reasonables causes, as it appeareth by an instrument and a simple letter under the common seal of the said house of Bromholm, which the bearer of this hath ready to show you; whereupon I pray

[1] This letter is only a draft, mostly in the hand of a clerk but with corrections and conclusion in Paston's own hand. The sheet was later used for scribbling and bears various notes in Paston's hand, three of which mention dates in 1429–30. The Abbot of Cluny's vicar-general in England from 1419 to 1431 was Thomas Nelond, Prior of Lewes, the premier Cluniac monastery in England.

[2] Bromholm Priory, ruins of which still exist near Bacton, almost 2 miles from the present village of Paston (about 20 miles north-east of Norwich), was a Cluniac foundation. It was an important object of pilgrimage because it claimed to possess a piece of the True Cross, which is mentioned by both Chaucer and Langland.

[3] This prior was a certain John Wortes, who had been appointed by 1425 in opposition to a locally elected candidate supported by Paston. In the ensuing dispute in the papal court Paston lost his case and was fined and excommunicated.