

The Malet - Mallet Family

History

The story of the Mallets of Ash begins with the Malets of Enmore. There are at least two theories as to the origin of this family. One is that the first Malet to reside at Enmore was Baldwin d. 1191-1197, the second son of Robert, the first Malet to reside at Curry Mallet.

A second possibility is that Robert Malet d. 1106, who held large estates in Suffolk and elsewhere, also held Enmore castle in Somerset, and lived there, at least part of the time. When Robert was banished from England, along with his eldest son William, Robert's second son, Hugh, changed his name from Malet to Fichet, and continued to live at Enmore. Hugh Fichet's son Baldwin retook the name Malet, and succeeded his father at Enmore.

Both of the above paths lead to Baldwin as the effective progenitor of the Malets of Enmore

Enmore line has some members who warrant special mention:

Sir Baldwin, Knight of the Body of Henry IV (1399-1460) who married the daughter of the soldier Sir Thomas Trivett, noted for his exploits during the Hundred Years War. Sir Baldwin was summoned to the Great Council held in the second year of the reign of Henry IV. Thomas (d. 1503) married Joan the daughter of Sir William Wadham de Meryfield, who founded Wadham College, Oxford University.

Sir John who was a Knight of the Bath (Knighthood at the Coronation of James I) and High Sheriff of Somerset in 1601 married Mary the daughter of Sir John Popham, Chief Justice of England.

After 12 generations, the Enmore line ended with "the Malet heiress", Elizabeth Malet. She was the daughter of John Malet and Urita, daughter of Lord Hawley. She was much desired by the men of the Court (both for her looks and her money). She was first kidnapped by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (for which his great friend Charles II was obliged to commit him to the Tower of London) and later, with appropriate approval, married her. She had a very considerable annual income, in excess of £1000 per year, from the family estates. Rochester was substantially responsible for the general reputation of Charles II's Court being totally dissolute. He wrote of the King "He never said a foolish thing nor ever did a wise one". To which Charles replied "My words are my own, my acts are my ministers." Rochester has the dubious distinction of having written some of the most outstanding bawdy verse in the English language. True to his lifestyle, he died in his early thirties, a burnt out shell of a man.

After the Enmore line died out the Mallet's of Ash became the "senior" branch of the Malet/Mallet family in England, and the Malets of St. Audries became the "junior" branch. Both lines are extant

Malet of St. Audries

The St. Audries line begins with Sir Baldwin Malet, the second son of Thomas Malet (d. 1602)

who had married (inter alia) Joan Wadham. Sir Baldwin was the Solicitor General to Henry VIII.

Notable members of this line were:

Sir Thomas Malet of Poyntington who followed Sir Baldwin in the legal profession and became Solicitor General to Charles I's Queen, Henrietta Maria, and was appointed Judge of the Kings Bench in 1641. He was imprisoned in the Tower by the Parliamentarians in 1642 but was released in 1644. His second son, Baldwin was killed in a skirmish with the Parliamentary forces, aged 20. Sir Thomas received a patent of Baronetcy from Charles II (1663) but this was never sealed and was therefore ineffective to confer a Baronetcy on the family.

On 24th February 1791 a Baronetcy was conferred on his descendent, Sir Charles Warre Malet of Wilbury House in Wiltshire, for his services in India to the Honourable East India Company and the Empire. Charles Warre Malet negotiated the Treaty with Mahdeo Rao Narrayun in 1790 against Tippoo Sultan. He subsequently held office as Governor of the Bombay Presidency and retired in 1798.

The surviving branches of the family went on to produce notable military men and diplomats right up to WW11.

Mallet of Ash

The Mallets of Ash began with Richard, who married Jane Aysshe, who inherited her father's estates. The family lived at Ash House in Iddesleigh for 11 generations, until the estate was sold in 1881 by the mother of Sir Claude Coventry Mallet, having been in the possession of the family for more than 350 years.

Wagner, Garter King of Arms, has stated that the Malet Family was, when he wrote the comment in the 1960's, the only (English) family with a reasonably direct male line from one who is known to have fought at the battle of Hastings.