

## The White Queen BBC 1 Sundays @ 9.00pm 10 part series



The series captures the last reigns of the House of Plantagenet - Edward IV & his brother Richard III to the start of the Tudor dynasty with Henry VII.

Although Gainsborough Old Hall is not part of the film production or referenced to, it may be appropriate to say that the Burghs of the Gainsborough Manor House were very much implicated in the fortunes of the period covered in this series.

Sir Thomas Burgh, a Yorkist supporter, established his roots at Gainsborough and began the quest of building the present House, which took him 25 years to complete. He lived surrounded by Lancastrian supporters on all sides of him. Thomas Burgh's life was to span the period captured in this BBC series.

Sir Thomas b 1431 d 1496. He won the confidence of Edward IV who was ten years older than the king. They fought at Townton together which confirmed the ascendancy of the Yorkist dynastic cause. Edward IV appointed Thomas his esquire for the king's body. It was a functional position and meant what it said – he was on a rota to attend to the King 8 weeks in every 16. With other esquires they dressed the king, slept next to his chamber to give added security, possibly managed his petty cash and 'theyre business is many secretes'. They were sufficiently close to the King to know both him intimately and in statecraft.



In 1463, Thomas was knighted and became a knight of the chamber. By 1465, Thomas began to move up the ladder – he was made Master of the Horse, which gave him responsibility for the king's stables and transport arrangements.

< the coat of arms of Edward IV

When it came to marriage, Sir Thomas was well provided for, due to his royal master – he married a rich noble widow – Margaret Botreaux in 1464. Margaret was the granddaughter of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick. As

with Edward IV this was an intriguing match. Sir Thomas was a Yorkist, whereas Margaret was from a family that had supported the House of Lancaster. In that very year, 1464, Edward IV married Elizabeth Woodville, whose family were Lancastrians, thereby uniting, as with Burgh, the red and white rose.

Sir Thomas was well rewarded for his services to the crown. When Edward IV invaded France in 1475, Sir Thomas provided over and beyond his quota of archers, in total 160, whilst other esquires managed 100. In 1469 or early 1470, Edward IV lost control temporarily and Sir Thomas' neighbours took advantage and attacked Gainsborough Old Hall. And it was Sir Thomas who came to Edward's rescue at Middleham where he was confined by the Lancastrians. However, Edward IV regained power and crushed the rebels in Lincolnshire, near Stamford on Lose coat field.

Sir Thomas flourished throughout the reign of Edward IV and continued to do so under Richard III, whom he must of known. In 1485, Richard III made Sir Thomas a Garter Knight & his stall plate may still be seen at St George's Windsor Chapel. Richard III even stayed over at Gainsborough Old Hall in Oct 1484, as he journeyed from York to London.

In August 1485, Richard III was defeated at Bosworth and Henry VII ascended the throne. We do not know if Burgh was at Bosworth, it is not evidenced although it is hard to believe that he was not there to support the Yorkist cause. Or had Burgh switched allegiances because he felt that Richard had lost confidence. We may never know. However, in 1487, Henry VII made Thomas Burgh, baron Burgh, which was a personal elevation and not hereditary, that was to come in 1529.

Gainsborough's Manor House would have been a buzz with intelligence & gossip about the period 1460 - 1485 as the 'royal cousins' fought it out for the Crown. And the fortunes made and unmade will have rested on the victor in the fight for the throne. Sir Thomas whose rise and fall depended on the events which are serialised in the White Queen paints a vivid picture of the dangers and complexities of it all.

Sir Thomas managed to survive and come through well whereas others did not fare so fortunate. However, even the Burgh's could not escape almost nemesis in 1596 much later after Edward IV had head hunted Burgh and became his patron.

writing in the Daily Telegraph, Gerard o'Donovan says of the series;

"At its heart was the intriguing story of Elizabeth Woodville, one of England's less well-remembered queens, and how this young widow of Lancastrian leanings was plucked from obscurity to marry the man who became England's first Yorkist king, Edward IV." [Elizabeth was the first commoner to marry a King of England]

"As a straight romance it had its moments. As a dramatisation of history it had serious failings, devoid as it was of any note of the hardship, chill and squalor of life in 15th-century England. Indeed, England itself was painfully absent as the entire series was shot in Belgium and looked exactly that dull and boring."

Enjoy the series!