

Chapter 74

Going Back to Sir John de Gray, Knight of the Garter

[originally written 3 December 2020]

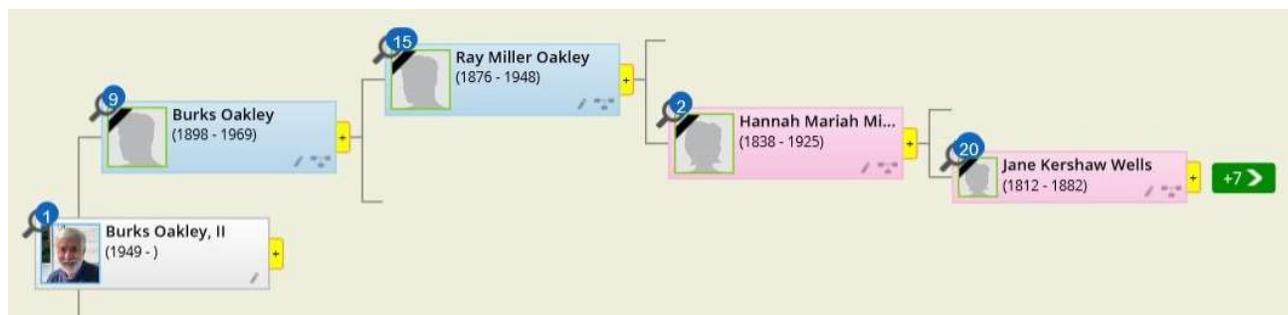
Introduction

In Chapter 73, I looked at various ancestral lines going back to Hywel Dda ap Cadell, King of the Britons. These lines were part of the World Family Tree on Geni.com. One of the lines back to Hywel Dda ap Cadell went through my 2nd-great grandmother, Jane Kershaw Wells (1812-1882). This line continued on back through Elizabeth Herbert (1594-1632). That was one of the first (if not the first) ancestral lines going back through Jane Kershaw Wells that I had seen, and I thought that I should spend some time looking at Jane Kershaw Wells' other ancestors going back from Elizabeth Herbert.

Ancestral Line Through Jane Kershaw Wells

Here is part of the ancestral line through Jane Kershaw Wells that I described in Chapter 73.

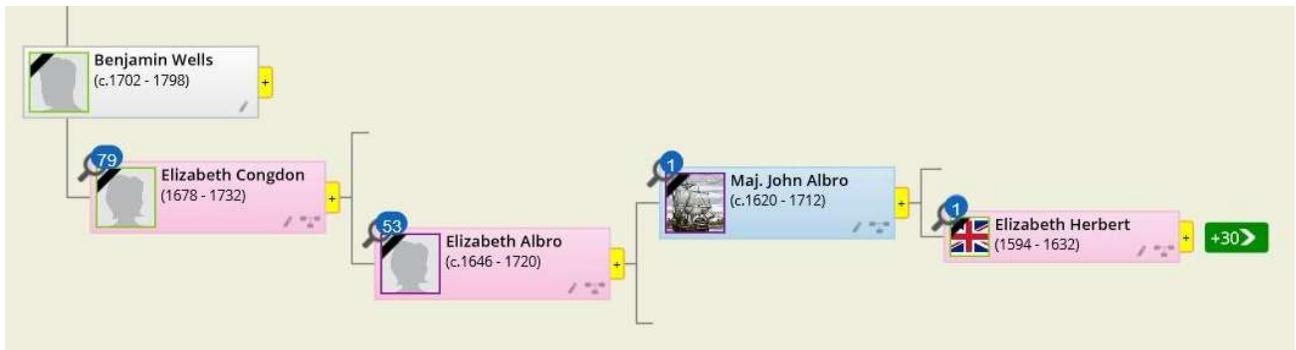
Burks Oakley II to Jane Kershaw Wells:



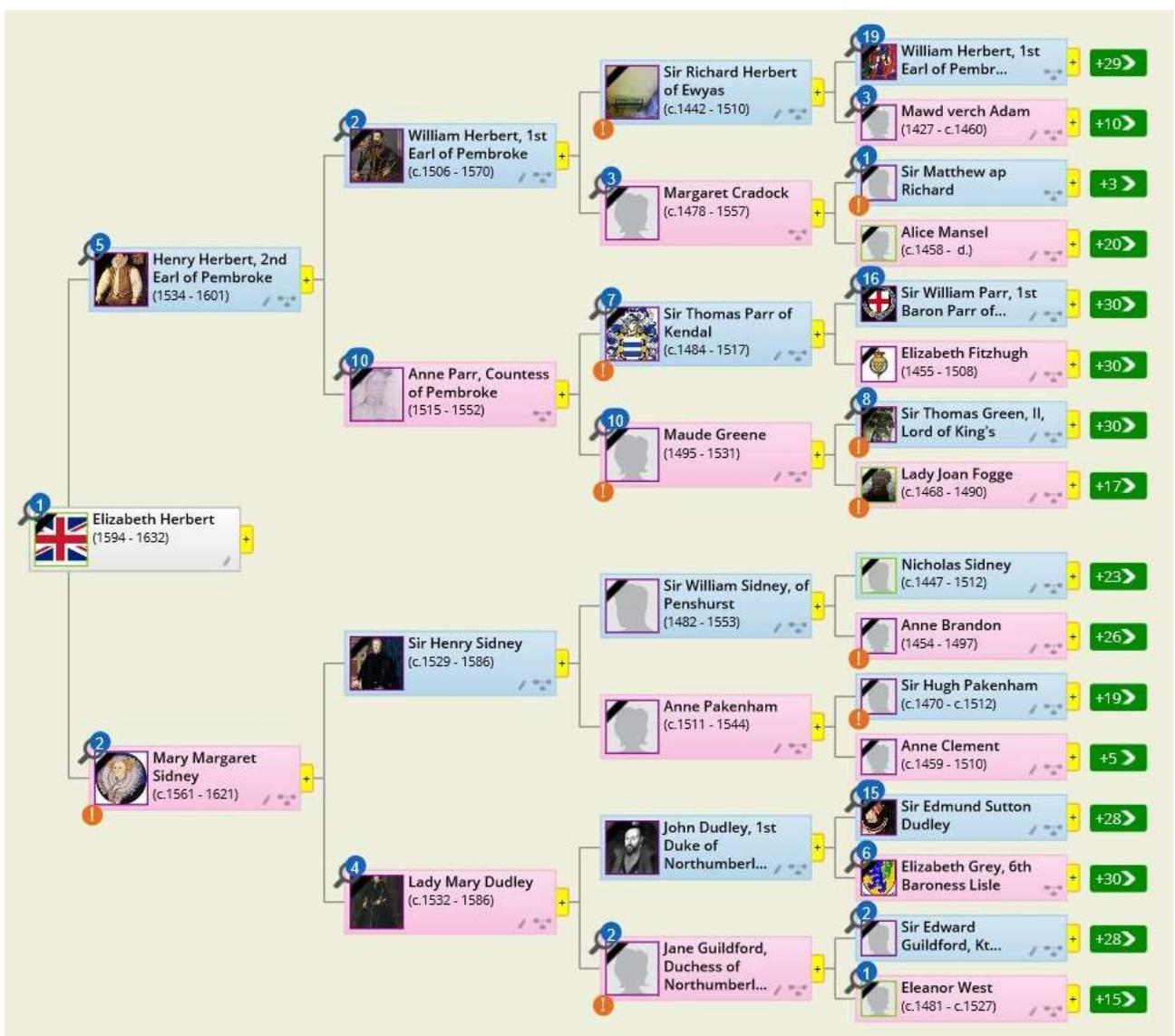
Jane Kershaw Wells to Benjamin Wells:



Benjamin Wells to Elizabeth Herbert:



This part of the line – from me back to Elizabeth Herbert – was part of a line from me back to Hywel Dda ap Cadell. But look at the green box to the right of Elizabeth Herbert – it has a +30, meaning that ALL of her ancestors for the next four generations are known. Here is her pedigree:



In the pedigree chart above, a number of Elizabeth's 2nd-great grandparents are +28, +29, or +30, meaning that all or most of their ancestors are known for the next four generations. So take your pick, Burks, which line do you want to follow? And there are lots of nobility in this pedigree chart, with titles such as Earl, Countess, Sir, Lord, Lady, Baron, Baroness, and Knight. I'm sure that I could have followed any line and found some interesting ancestors – but here is the line I took:



Here is part of Sir John de Grey Jr.'s profile on Geni.com:

Sir John de Grey, Jr., 2nd Baron Grey of Rotherfield

Gender: Male

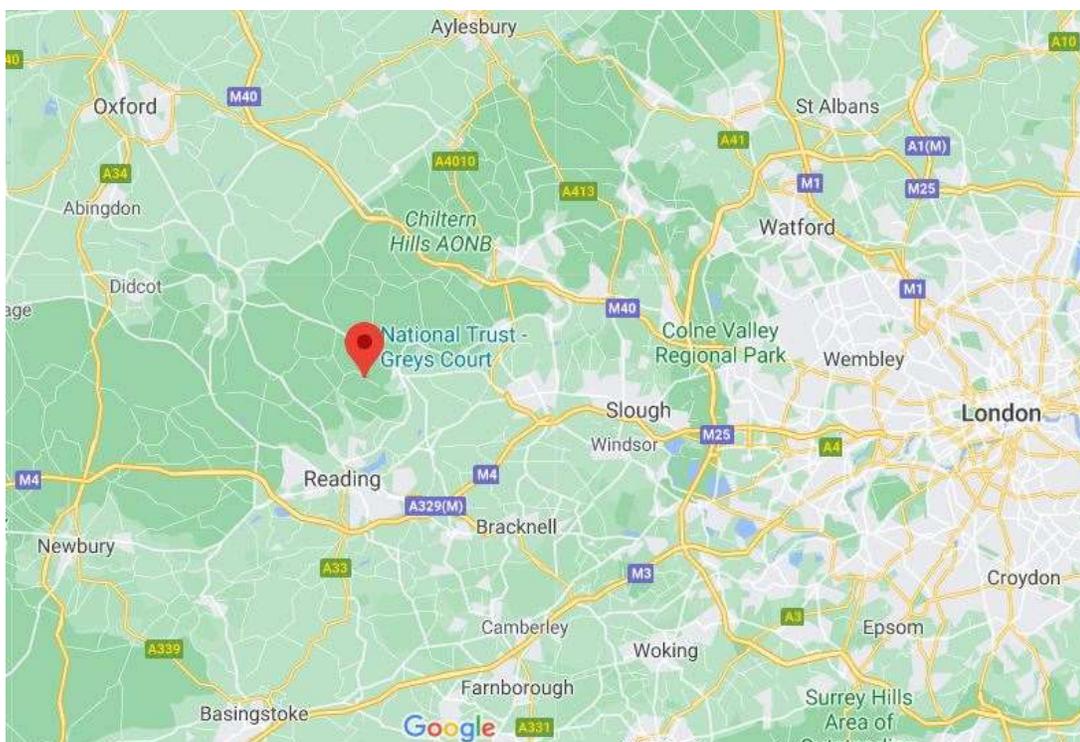
Birth: October 09, 1300
Rotherfield, Oxfordshire, England

Death: September 01, 1359 (58)
Rotherfield Greys, Oxfordshire, England (United Kingdom)

Place of Burial: Oxfordshire, England, United Kingdom

Immediate Family: Son of Sir John de Grey, Sr., 1st Baron of Rotherfield and Lady Margaret de Grey (de Oddingseles)
Husband of Lady Catherine FitzAlan and Avice de Marmion
Father of Sir John de Grey, III, 3rd Baron Grey of Rotherfield; Joan Grey; Sir Robert Grey, Kt.; Maud de Grey and John de Grey, Baron Marmion
Brother of Maud de Grey and Joan de Grey

Sir John lived from 1300 to 1359 in Rotherfield, Oxfordshire, England – a small town located southeast of Oxford:



Here is an excerpt from Sir John's entry in Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_de_Grey,_2nd_Baron_Grey_de_Rotherfield

John de Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Rotherfield, KG (October 1300-September 1359) was an English soldier and courtier. John was the son and heir of Sir John de Grey, 1st Baron Grey de Rotherfield, by Margaret who was daughter William de Odingsells and the granddaughter of Ida II Longespée.

John de Grey of Rotherfield was a founding member of the Most Noble Order of the Garter.

By December 1349, John was Lord Steward of the Royal Household of King Edward III. He distinguished himself well in the Scotch and French wars. He was summoned to parliament often from 1338 to 1357 and is regarded as having become Baron Grey of Rotherfield.

He married firstly, shortly before 1313, Katherine FitzAlan, daughter and coheir of Bryan FitzAlan, Lord FitzAlan of Bedale, Yorkshire and had a single son and heir:

- Sir John de Grey, 3rd Baron Grey de Rotherfield.

John married secondly Avice Marmion, daughter of John Marmion, Baron of Winteringham, a descendant of King John of England, by whom he had the following issue:

- John de Grey, Baron Marmion
- Maud de Grey
- Sir Robert Grey, Knight

Quite interesting to note that (1) he was a founding member of the Most Noble Order of the Garter and (2) his second wife was descended from King John of England.

Knights of the Garter

Let me now step back and address the Most Noble Order of the Garter. Here is a short excerpt from the lengthy Wikipedia article about the Order of the Garter:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Garter

The Most Noble Order of the Garter is an order of chivalry founded by Edward III of England in 1348. It is the most senior order of knighthood in the British honors system, outranked in precedence only by the Victoria Cross and the George Cross. The Order of the Garter is dedicated to the image and arms of Saint George, England's patron saint.

Appointments are made at the Sovereign's sole discretion. Membership of the Order is limited to the Sovereign, the Prince of Wales, and no more than 24 living members, or Companions. The order also includes supernumerary knights and ladies (e.g., members of the British royal family and foreign monarchs).

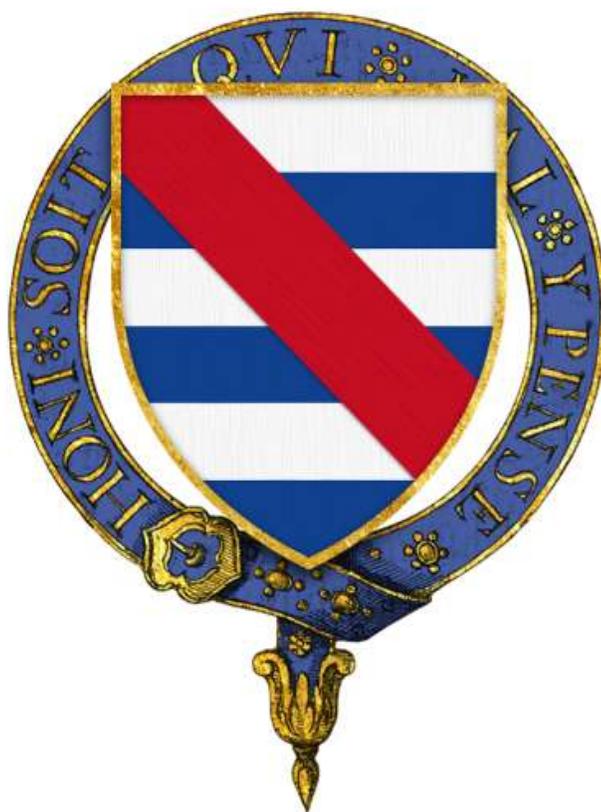
The order's emblem is a garter with the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense* (Middle French: "Shame on him who thinks evil of it") in gold lettering.

King Edward III founded the Order of the Garter around the time of his claim to the French throne. The traditional year of foundation is usually given as 1348 (when it was formally proclaimed). The foundation is likely to have been inspired by the Spanish Order of the Band, established in about 1330.

Here is an image with the Arms of the Most Noble Order of the Garter: A cross of St. George, circumscribed by the Garter:



And here is an image with the Arms of Sir John de Grey, KG:



The *Bruges Garter Book* is a 15th-century illuminated manuscript containing portraits of the founder knights of the Order of the Garter. It was made to the order of William Bruges (1375-1450), Garter King of Arms, and constitutes the first armorial (look it up!) covering members of the Order. It has been held since 1883 by the British Library in London.

Here is the depiction of Sir John de Grey from the *Bruges Garter Book*:

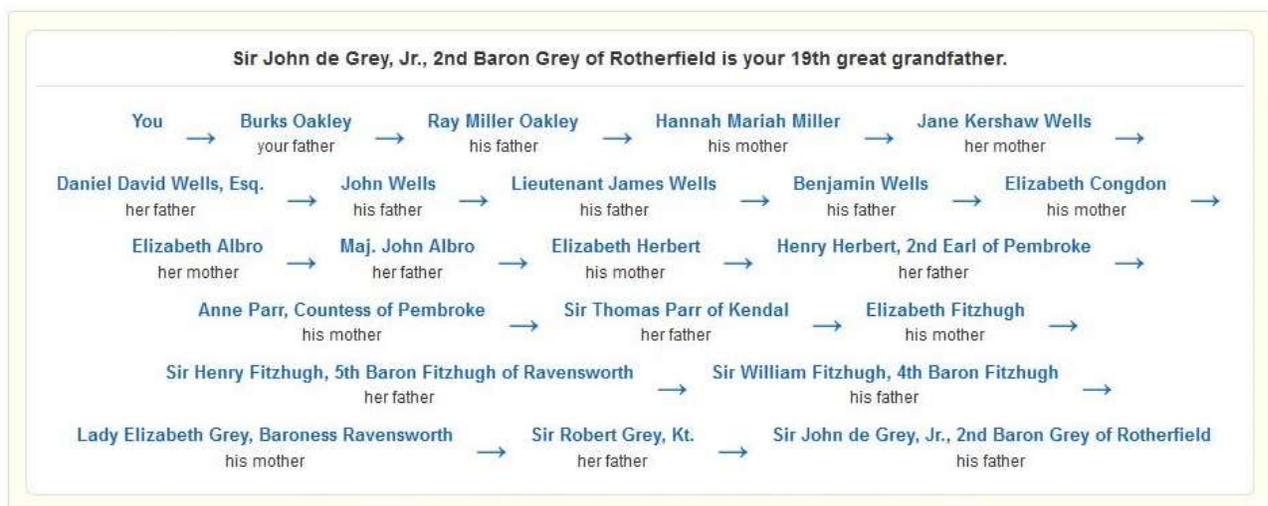


John de Grey, 2nd Baron Grey, KG, from the *Bruges Garter Book*.

Pretty cool to learn that one of my ancestors was one of the first 24 chosen for this “most senior order of knighthood”.

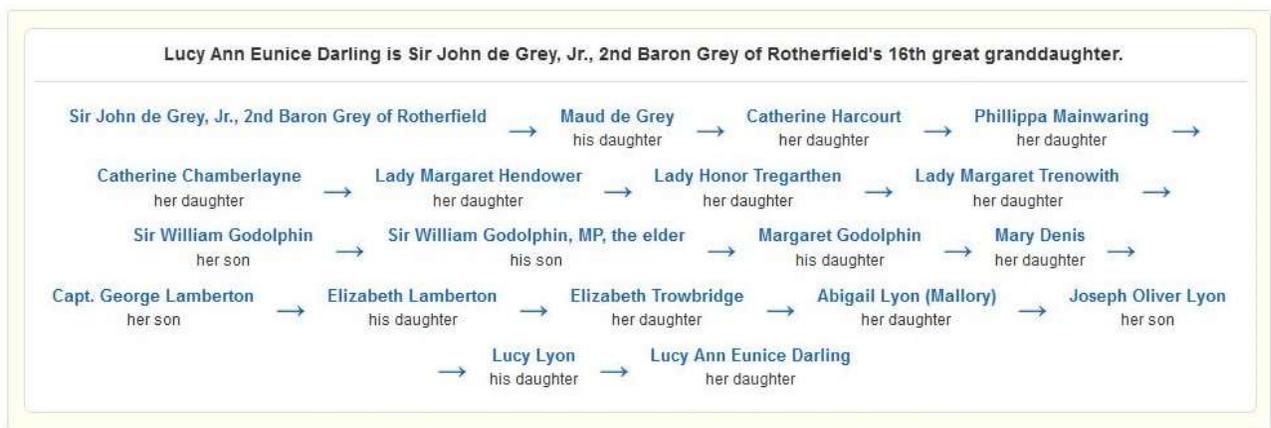
My Ancestral Lines Back to Sir John de Grey, Jr.

When I looked at my “shortest blood relationship” with Sir John, I found that it was exactly the line that I took to get to him in the first part of this chapter – going back through Jane Kershaw Wells and Elizabeth Herbert and Elizabeth Fitzhugh:

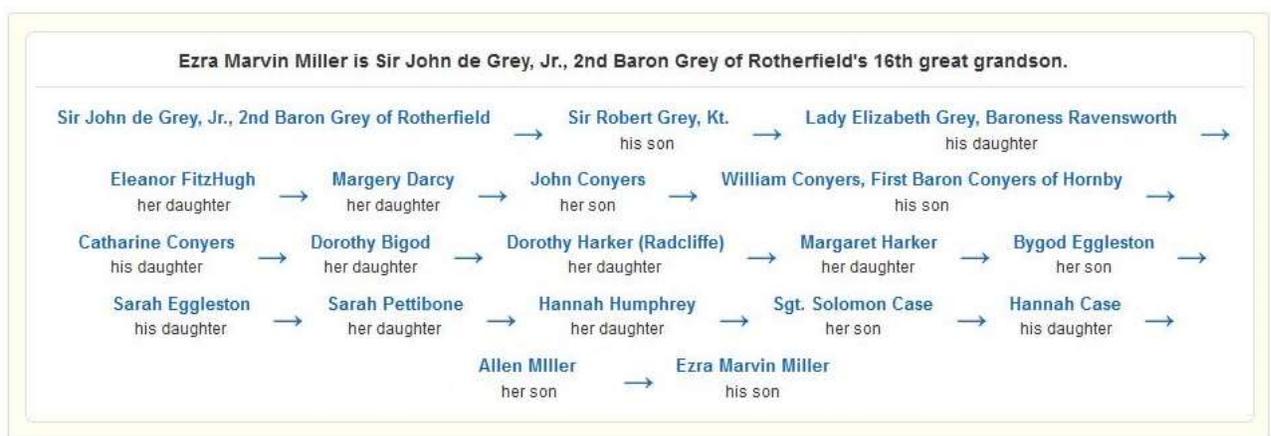


This is nice to see, since most times the shortest line is not the line that I originally followed. I naturally wondered if I had other lines back to Sir John – so I looked at some of my other 2nd-great grandparents, and I indeed found some additional lines.

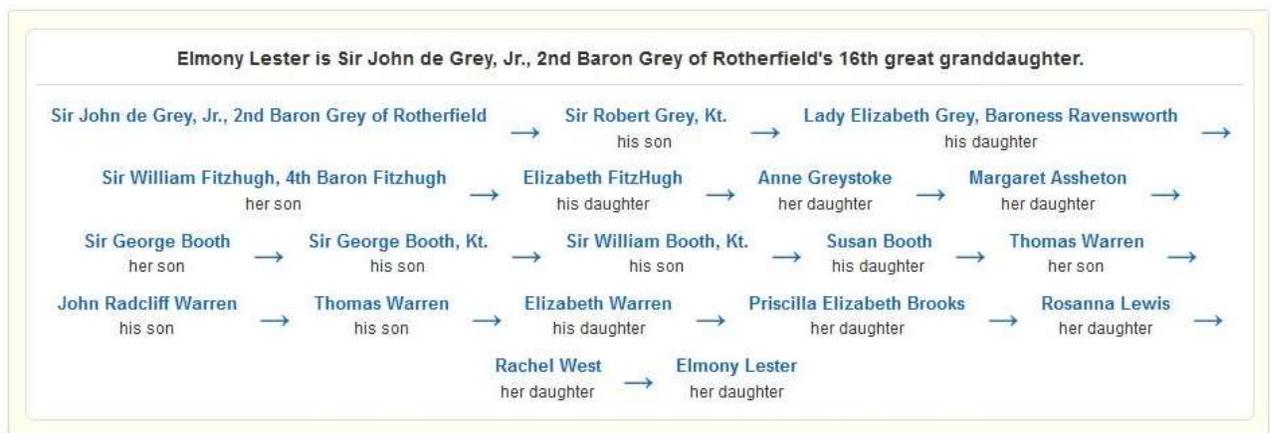
Here is the line from Sir John to Lucy Ann Eunice Darling:



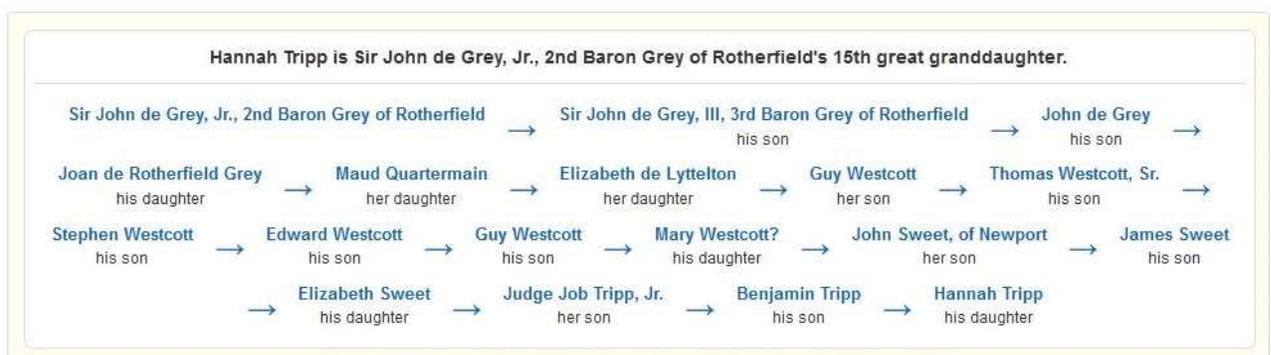
Next is the line from Sir John to Ezra Marvin Miller:



And finally the line from Sir John to Elmony Lester:

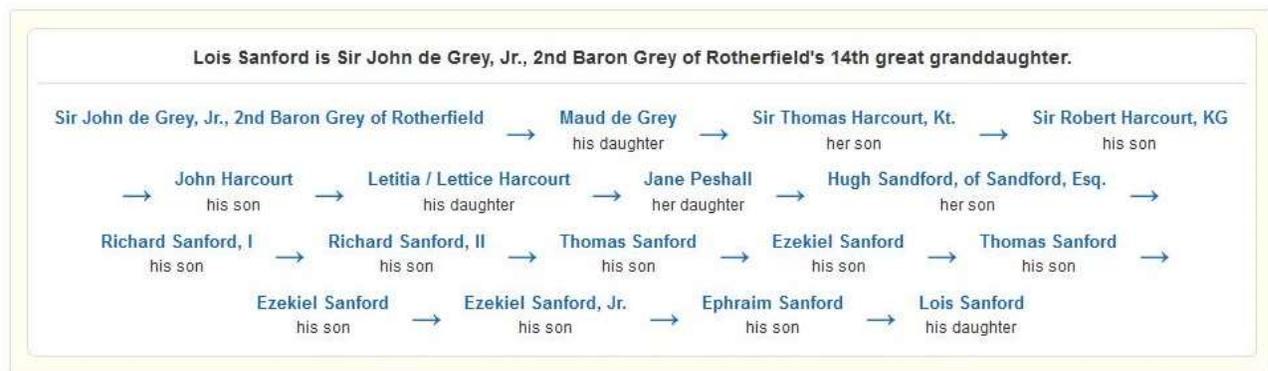


Ezra Marvin Miller's line went through his father, Allen Miller. So I also looked at Hannah Tripp, who was Ezra's mother:



This is a case where Ezra's parents were both descended from Sir John, meaning that they were (very) distant cousins.

Lucy Darling's line (above) went through her maternal grandfather, Joseph Oliver Lyon. So I looked at her maternal grandmother, Lois Sanford:



I learned that both of Lucy Darling's parents were descended from Sir John.

That probably is enough to tell the story that I have multiple lines back to Sir John. Although I will add that neither Amy Griffey nor Samuel Darling are descended from Sir John.

My paternal grandparents were Ray Miller Oakley and Kate Cameron Burks. While most of the ancestral lines I have shown here go through the Oakley branch of my family, the Elmony Lester line goes back through Kate Burks. So once again, Ray and Kate were distant cousins going back to Sir John.

The Wikipedia article about Sir John mentioned that he had two wives, Katherine FitzAlan and Avice Marmion. I note that the ancestral lines I have shown here go through three of Sir John's children. The Ezra Marvin Miller line goes through Sir John de Grey, 3rd Baron Grey de Rotherfield, who was the child from his first marriage. All the other lines go through Maud de Grey or Sir Robert Grey, Knight, who were children from Sir John's second marriage.

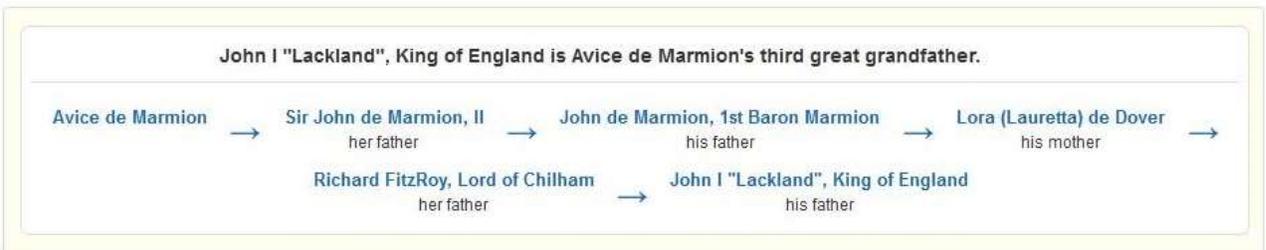
Avice de Marmion

I just mentioned that Sir John's second wife was Avice Marmion. Sir John's Wikipedia entry mentioned that Avice was descended from King John I of England. Since a number of my ancestral lines back to Sir John go through children of his second marriage, that means that I am descended from Avice, and thus from King John.

Here is my line back to Avice de Marmion:



And here is the line from Avice de Marmion back to King John I:



Of course, when I looked at my “shortest blood relationship” back to King John I, it goes through Lucy Ann Eunice Darling:



I’m sure that if I looked, I would find that I have more lines going back to King John I.

William Longespée, 3rd Earl of Salisbury

The Wikipedia entry for Sir John included that his mother was “Margaret who was ... the granddaughter of Ida II Longespée.” In turn, Ida was the daughter of William Longespée, 3rd Earl of Salisbury. Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia entry for William Longespée:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Longespée,_3rd_Earl_of_Salisbury

William Longespée, 3rd Earl of Salisbury (1176 – 7 March 1226) (“Long Sword”) was an Anglo-Norman nobleman, primarily remembered for his command of the English forces at the Battle of Damme and for remaining

loyal to his half-brother, King John. His nickname “Longespée” is generally taken as a reference to his great physical height and the oversize weapons that he used.

William was an illegitimate son of Henry II, King of England. His mother was unknown for many years until the discovery of a charter William made that mentions “Comitissa Ida, mater mea” (Countess Ida, my mother). This referred to Ida de Tosny, a member of the prominent Tosny (or Toesny) family, who had married Roger Bigod, 2nd Earl of Norfolk, in 1181.

King Henry acknowledged William as his son and gave him the honor of Appleby, Lincolnshire, in 1188. Eight years later, his half-brother King Richard I married him to a great heiress, Ela of Salisbury, 3rd Countess of Salisbury, and granted him the title and lands of the earldom.

During the reign of King John, Salisbury was at court on several important ceremonial occasions and held various offices: High Sheriff of Wiltshire; lieutenant of Gascony; constable of Dover; and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports; and later warden of the Welsh Marches. He was appointed sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire about 1213.

Salisbury died at Salisbury Castle. Roger of Wendover alleged that he was poisoned by Hubert de Burgh. One reliable source, however, states that “there is little evidence [of murder] aside from Roger of Wendover’s account in Flores Historiarum”.

He was buried at Salisbury Cathedral in Salisbury, Wiltshire, England.

Salisbury’s tomb was opened in 1791. Bizarrely, the well-preserved corpse of a rat which carried traces of arsenic, was found inside his skull. The rat is now on display in Salisbury Cathedral Chapter House. [You can’t make this stuff up!]

Here is a photo of William’s tomb in Salisbury Cathedral:



Ela of Salisbury

I just mentioned that William Longespée was married to Ela of Salisbury. She was quite a woman – here is an excerpt from her Wikipedia entry:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ela_of_Salisbury,_3rd_Countess_of_Salisbury

Ela of Salisbury, 3rd Countess of Salisbury (1187-1261) was an English peeress. She succeeded to the title in her own right in 1196 upon the death of her father, William FitzPatrick, 2nd Earl of Salisbury.

Ela married William Longespée, an illegitimate half-brother of kings Richard I and John, who thus became Earl of Salisbury, in 1196. Ela held the post of High Sheriff of Wiltshire for two years after William's death, then became a nun, and eventually Abbess of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, which she had founded in 1229.

Ela was born in Amesbury, Wiltshire in 1187, the only child and heiress of William FitzPatrick, 2nd Earl of Salisbury, Sheriff of Wiltshire and Eléonore de Vitré. In 1196, she succeeded her father as suo jure (look it up!) 3rd Countess of Salisbury.

In 1196, the same year she became countess and inherited her father's numerous estates, Ela married William Longespée, an illegitimate son of King Henry II, by his mistress Ida de Tosny. William was approximately 13 years older than Ela. After the marriage, Longespée became 3rd Earl of Salisbury by right of his wife. Together William and Ela had at least eight or possibly nine children.

In 1225, Ela's husband William was shipwrecked off the coast of Brittany, upon returning from Gascony. He spent months recovering at a monastery on the Island of Ré in France. He died at Salisbury Castle on 7 March 1226 just days after arriving in England. Ela inherited the post of Sheriff of Wiltshire and held that position for two years following her husband's death. She never remarried; some historians suggest that she did not remarry because her new husband would have become the Earl and she wanted that role reserved for her eldest son.

Three years later in 1229, Ela founded Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire as a nunnery of the Augustinian order. In 1238, she gave up all rights to the county of Wiltshire. She entered the abbey as a nun; she was made Abbess of Lacock in 1240 and held the post until 1257. During her tenure as abbess, Ela obtained many rights for the abbey and village of Lacock.

Ela died on 24 August 1261 and was buried in Lacock Abbey. The inscription on her tombstone, written in Latin, reads:

Below lie buried the bones of the venerable Ela, who gave this sacred house as a home for the nuns. She also had lived here as holy abbess and Countess of Salisbury, full of good works.

Ela has been described as having been “one of the two towering female figures of the mid-13th century”, the other one being Margaret de Quincy, Countess of Lincoln.



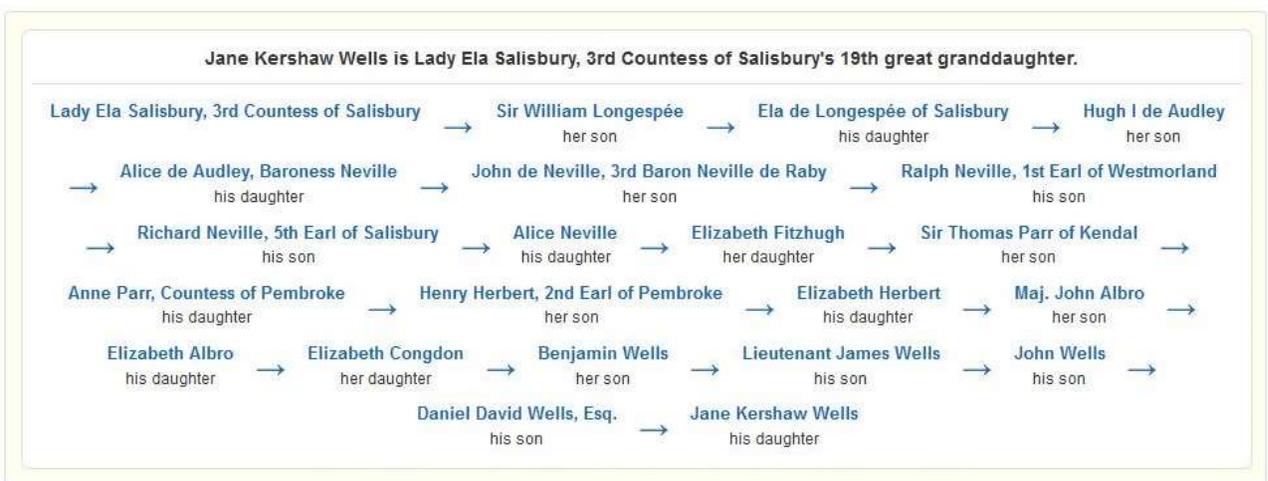
Lacock Abbey, as it looks today

Here is the line from Lady Ela Salisbury to Sir John de Grey Jr.:

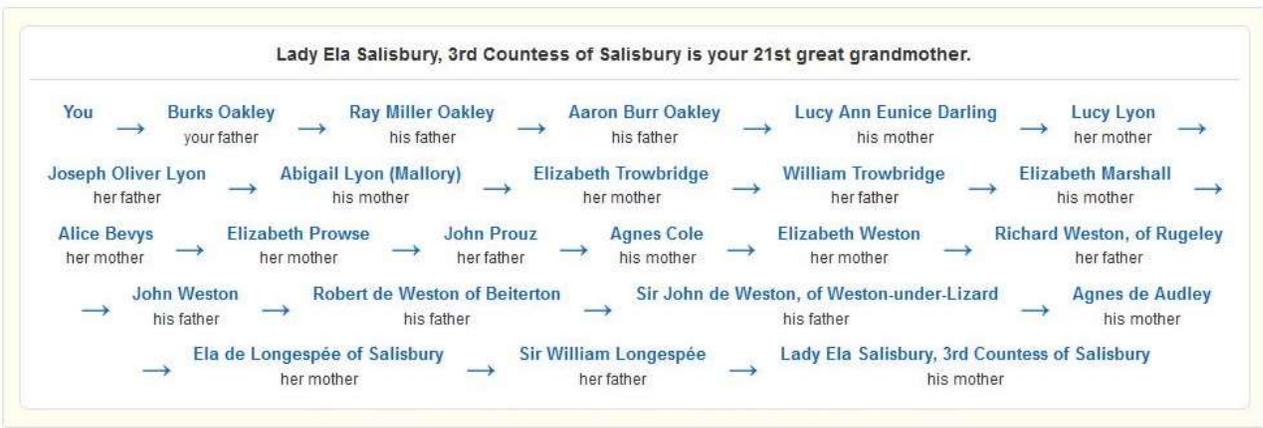


For some reason, the folks on Geni.com think that Ida “secunda” de Longespée was an illegitimate daughter of William Longespée and his mistress, so they don’t connect Lady Ela directly to Sir John. But the Wikipedia entry has Ida II as Lady Ela’s daughter. Go figure!

But Geni.com does have a line from Lady Ela to Jane Kershaw Wells:



And of course, there is a direct line from me to Lady Ela:



Grey's Court

In reading about Sir John de Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Rotherfield, I learned that his primary residence was Greys Court. I note that “Greys” is part of the name “Rotherfield Greys”, which is a small village in Oxfordshire – “Greys” is NOT a possessive. Here is part of the Wikipedia entry for Greys Court:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greys_Court

Greys Court is a Tudor country house and gardens in the southern Chiltern Hills at Rotherfield Greys, near Henley-on-Thames in the county of Oxfordshire, England.

As Redfield, it was the principal manor of the six manors held in 1086 (as listed in the Domesday Book) by the Norman knight Anchetil de Greye (1052-1086), ancestor of the prominent Grey family.

The mainly Tudor-style house has a courtyard and gardens. The walled gardens contain old-fashioned roses and wisteria, an ornamental vegetable garden, maze (laid to grass with brick paths, dedicated by Archbishop Robert Runcie on 12 October 1981) and ice house. Within its grounds are the fortified tower built circa 1347, the only remains of the medieval castle, overlooking the gardens and surrounding countryside, as well as a Tudor wheelhouse.

John de Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Rotherfield, one of the original founder Knights of the Garter, was granted a license to crenellate¹ his Rotherfield house in 1346, when he also considerably enlarged the group of buildings.

Here is a photo of the present-day Greys Court:

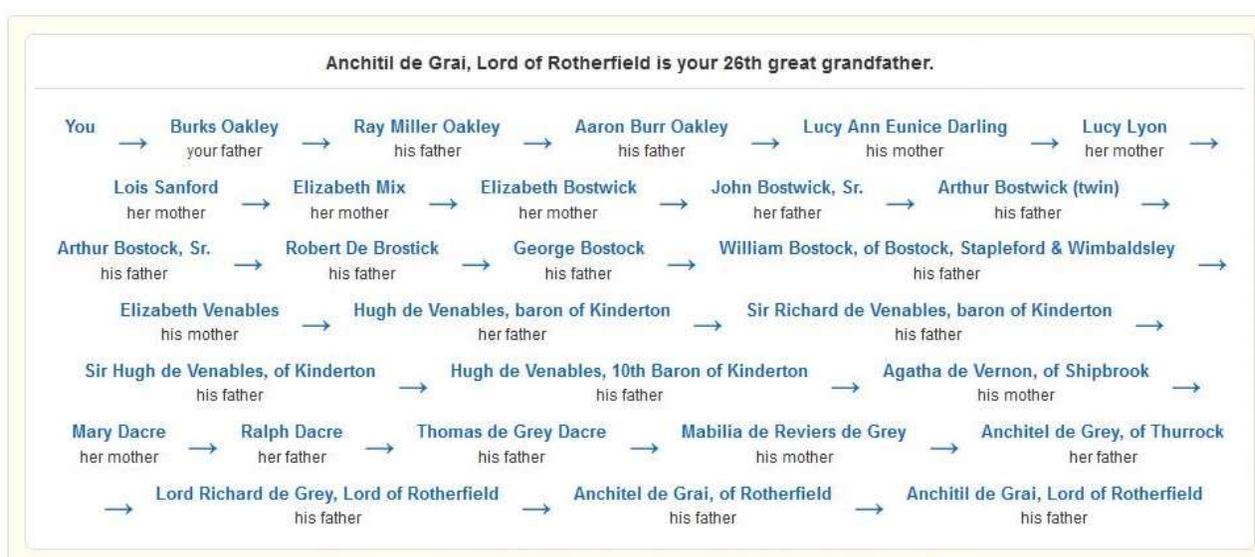
¹ To crenellate – to provide (a wall of a building) with battlements. In medieval England, Wales and the Channel Islands, a license to crenellate (or license to fortify) granted the holder permission to fortify his property. Such licenses were granted by the king, and by the rulers of the counties palatine within their jurisdictions, i.e. by the Bishops of Durham, the Earls of Chester, and after 1351 by the Dukes of Lancaster.



One more place in England to visit when it is safe to travel again.

Anchetil de Greye

In the previous section, I mentioned “Norman knight Anchetil de Greye (1052-1086), ancestor of the prominent Grey family.” Here is my “shortest blood relationship” connecting to Anchetil de Greye:



Here is an excerpt from his Wikipedia entry:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anchetil_de_Greye

Anchetil de Greye (c. 1052 – after 1086) was a Norman chevalier and vassal of William FitzOsbern, 1st Earl of Hereford. Anchetil was one of the great magnates of early Norman England and one of the very few proven companions of William the Conqueror known to have fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. He is regarded as the ancestor of the noble House of Grey, branches of which held many peerage and other titles in England.

In his Latinised name of Anschtallus de Grai, he is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 as the lord of six Oxfordshire manors, all held from William FitzOsbern, 1st Earl of Hereford, lord of the manor of Breteuil, in Normandy, a relative and close counsellor of William the Conqueror, whose chief residence was Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, one of many English castles he built. The manors held by Anchetil de Greye were as follows:

Black Bourton, Bampton hundred, Oxfordshire;
Brighthampton, Bampton hundred, Oxfordshire;
Rotherfield Greys, Binfield hundred, Oxfordshire;
Cornwell, Shipton hundred, Oxfordshire;
Radford, Shipton hundred, Oxfordshire;
Woodleys, Wootton hundred, Oxfordshire;

The principal estate granted to Anchetil de Greye in England was Redrefield (subsequently Rotherfield Greys), the manor house of which is today represented by Greys Court, in South Oxfordshire.

It is likely that Anchetil de Greye was of Norse ancestry in whole or in part since the given name Anchetil (from Ásketill “God-Cauldron”) was a fairly common Norse-origin name in Normandy. The “Greye” in his name then was either simply a reference to his estate, or to his mixed Scandinavian-Frankish ancestry, which was also common in Normandy by the time of the invasion of England. His immediate ancestry is uncertain, but some researchers believe he was the son of a certain Hugh Fitz Turgis, that means “Turgis’ son” (from Thorgisl “hostage of Thor”), another clue he was from Normandy.

Pretty cool to see a Norse connection through Normandy. Recall that Norman refers to “North Men” – Vikings from the north who raided France starting in the 8th century. And on that note, I’ll wrap up this chapter about my Grey ancestors in England in the Middle Ages.

Summary

In this lengthy narrative, I traced my ancestral line back through my 2nd-great grandmother, Jane Kershaw Wells, to Sir John de Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Rotherfield, KG (1300-1359). Sir John was one of the twenty-four founding members of the Knights of the Garter, England’s “most senior order of knighthood”. I have multiple ancestral lines going back to Sir John, connecting through three of his children.

I also presented some information about Avice de Marmion, who was Sir John's second wife. Avice was a direct descendant of King John I.

I also discussed William Longespée, 3rd Earl of Salisbury, and his wife Ela of Salisbury.

The Grey family can trace its origins to a Norman knight named Anchetil de Greye (1052-1086). Anchetil was one of the great magnates of early Norman England and one of the very few proven companions of William the Conqueror known to have fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.