

Icomb & Lady Troy

Even though my recent visit to the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in **Icomb** was atmospheric as a thunder storm raged overhead, I was still able to see the tomb and chantry chapel of **Sir John Blaket**, died 1431. His heiress was Anne Blaket who married Ralph Baskerville of Herefordshire – the surname used centuries later by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*...

As an heiress Anne brought her coat-of-arms to her husband. Their daughter Jane, also an heiress, married Sir Simon Milbo(u)rne. He was then known as of **Icomb** and Tillington (Herefordshire) and both the Baskerville and Blaket coats-of-arms were incorporated in his coat-of-arms. They had eleven surviving daughters who all married well. Sir John Blaket was their grandfather. Two of these girls, Alice and Blanche, are especially important:

Alice Milborne married Henry Myles of Newcourt in Herefordshire and one of their daughters was Blanche ap Harry (or Parry) the confidante of Queen Elizabeth I – Blanche Parry, born 1507 or 1508, was with Elizabeth for 56 years until Blanche died in 1590. Her important monument in Bacton Church, Herefordshire, is the earliest depiction of Queen Elizabeth as Gloriana, as an icon. Blanche Parry was buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster.

Blanche Milborne married firstly Sir James Whitney and her dowry was the manor of **Icomb** - their eldest son, Robert Whitney inherited **Icomb**. Robert's first wife seems to have been Margaret Wye, and, interestingly, the 1553 Rector at Icomb is a William Wye (Way), who perhaps was a relative. Several of Robert's descendants eventually emigrated to the USA. The daughter of Robert's sister Elizabeth Morgan (née Whitney), later married Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon.

Blanche's second marriage was to Sir William Herbert of Troy, Monmouth, (now Mitchel Troy) an illegitimate son of the Earl of Pembroke (1st Creation) though such sons were treated exactly as younger legitimate sons in Wales and the March. Sir William and Blanche, Lady Troy, welcomed King Henry VII and his entourage to their house.

When widowed a second time Blanche, Lady Troy went to the Royal Court and became Princess Elizabeth's second Lady Mistress (after Lady Bryan). She was in charge of Elizabeth at Prince Edward's Christening. She brought up both Elizabeth and Edward and when she retired Elizabeth sent her a pension. She died the year before Elizabeth became Queen, her funeral elegy stating that she was the *guardian...of Henry VIII's household and his children...and To King Edward she was a true and wise lady of dignity, In charge of his fosterage, she was pre-eminent....*

Lady Troy took her niece, Blanche (Parry) to Court with her. When Kate Ashley succeeded Lady Troy as Lady Mistress, Blanche Parry was second in the household, becoming first Gentlewoman when Kate died in 1565. Blanche was then in charge of the the Queen's Privy Chamber, controlling access to the Queen, being a conduit for passing information and even Parliamentary bills to the Queen. She was Keeper of Her Majesty's jewels and, for two years, of the Great Seal of England. Blanche, cousin of Lord Burghley, was at the centre of the Elizabethan Court. Full details about Blanche Parry, and her aunt Lady Troy, can be found in *Mistress Blanche, Queen Elizabeth I's Confidante*, their first biography. Blanche's coat-of-arms can be seen above her Westminster tomb effigy and the Blaket inclusion is made clear in my book. Icomb has, therefore, a link with the two ladies influential in the lives of both King Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I.

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For a description of Saint Mary's Church, Icomb see:

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-130927-church-of-st-mary-icomb>