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Baronial Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire

by

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Abstract

In thirteenth-century Lincolnshire, women were at the heart of baronial families. This thesis explores the lives of women from five baronial families in Lincolnshire: the baronies of Ashby, Brattleby, Folkingham, Redbourne and Tattershall. Extensive records have survived which highlight the importance of baronial women within estate administration and religious patronage. Charters and seals provide an insight into a woman's sense of identity and how she wished her identity to be displayed to others. Baronial women were also important members of the local society and were able to attract neighbours and tenants to their affinities which I have shown with the affinity of Mary de Neville. The chapters of this study are structured to take you through the life-cycle of a baronial woman starting from her marriage and going through to her widowhood. This highlights the different roles and activities which baronial women were able to participate in and how her agency changed depending on the female life-cycle. This study provides an important glimpse into the lives of baronial women, a significant group within the aristocracy who have been curiously ignored by scholars.

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Abbreviations

CCR *Calendar of the Close Rolls* (London: HMSO, 1902-1908).

CPR *Calendar of the Patent Rolls* (London: HMSO, 1885-1903).

CRR *Curia Regis Rolls* (London: HMSO, 1919-).

RLC *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati*, (ed.) T.D. Hardy, vol. I and II (Record Commission, 1833-1844).

RLP *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati*, (ed.) T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1835).

ROF *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus in Turri Londinensi Asservati Tempore Regis Johannis*, (ed.) T.D. Hardy (Record Commission: 1835).

TNA The National Archives, Kew.

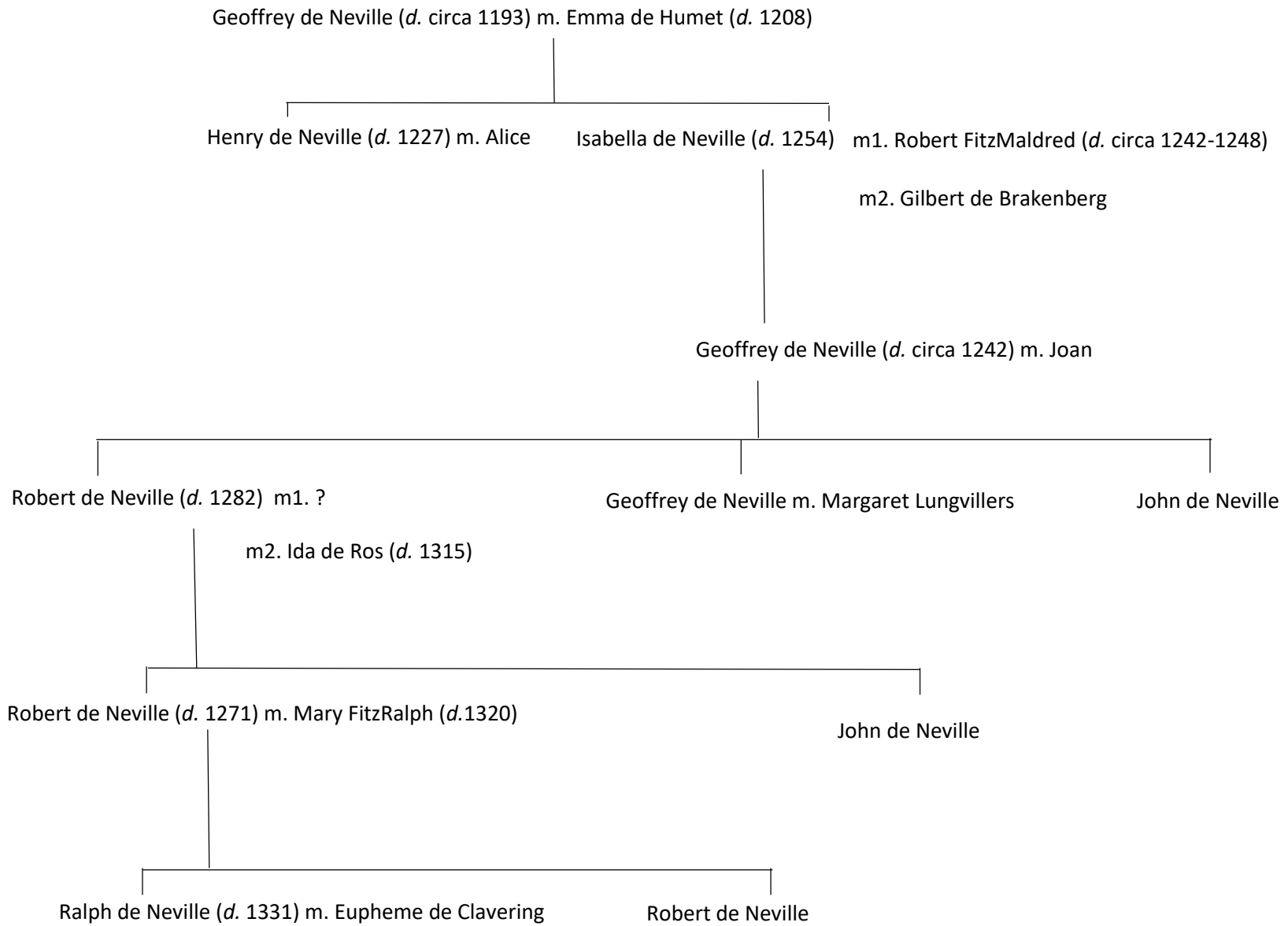


Figure One: Family Tree of the holders of the Barony of Ashby

Figures

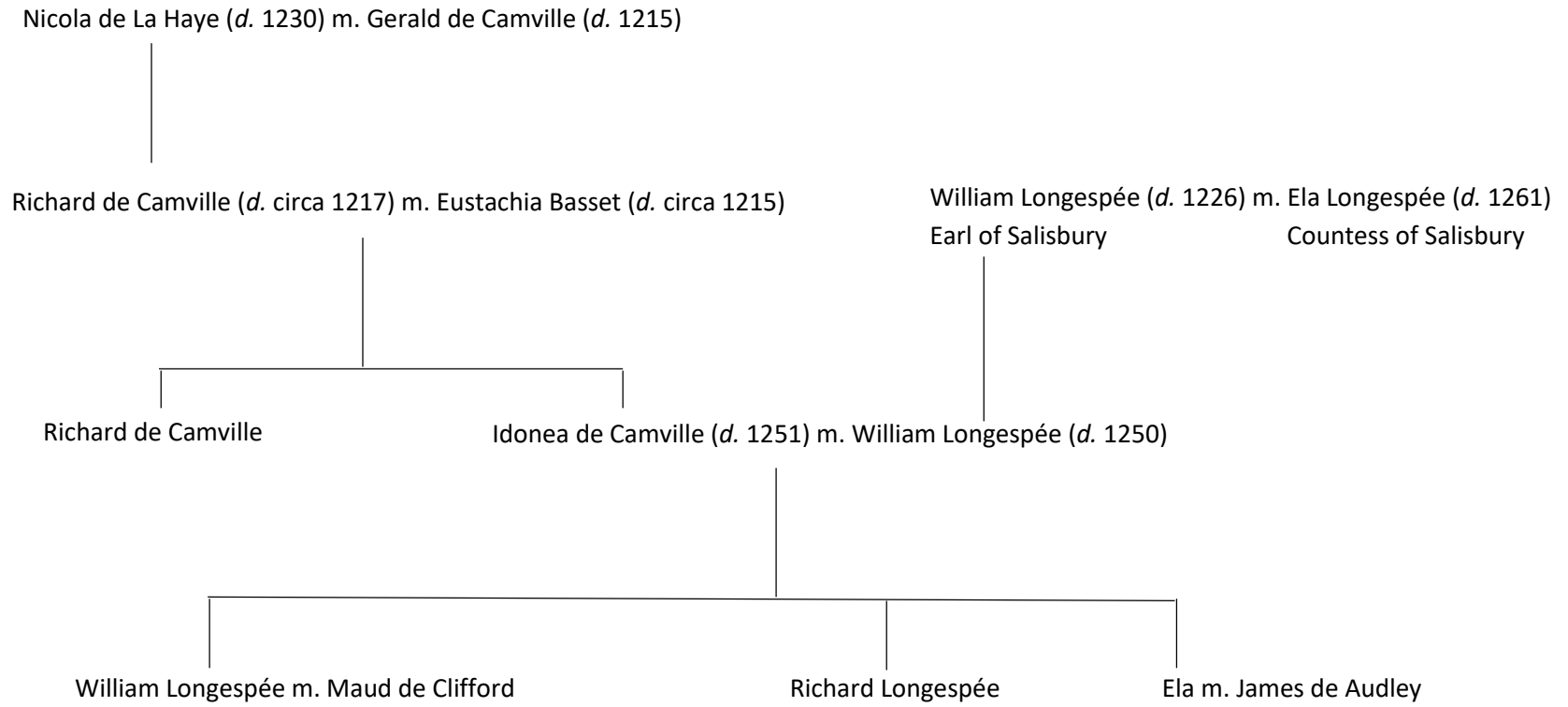


Figure Two: Family Tree of the holders of the Barony of Brattleby

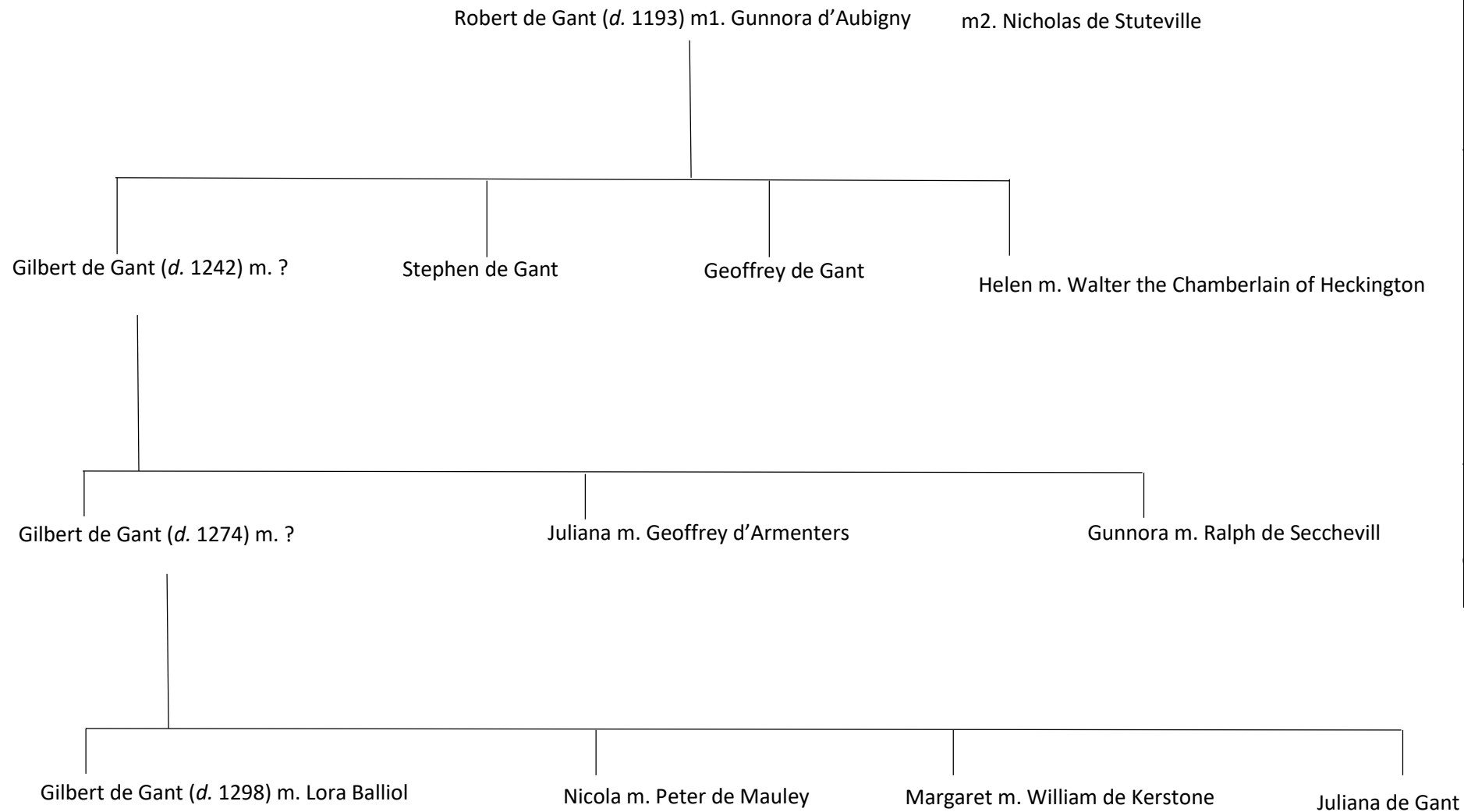


Figure Three: Family Tree of the holders of the Barony of Folkingham

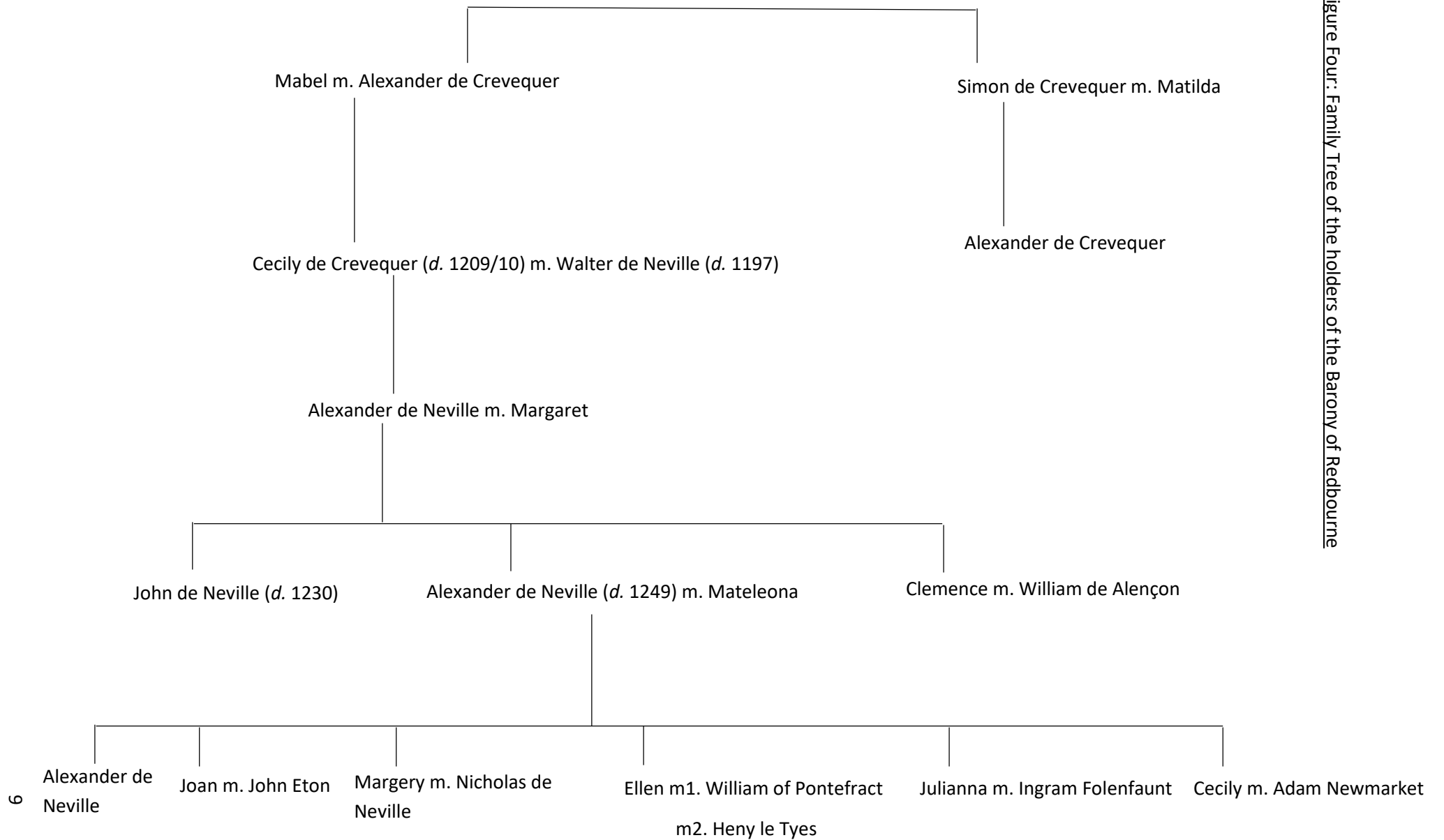


Figure Four: Family Tree of the holders of the Barony of Redbourne

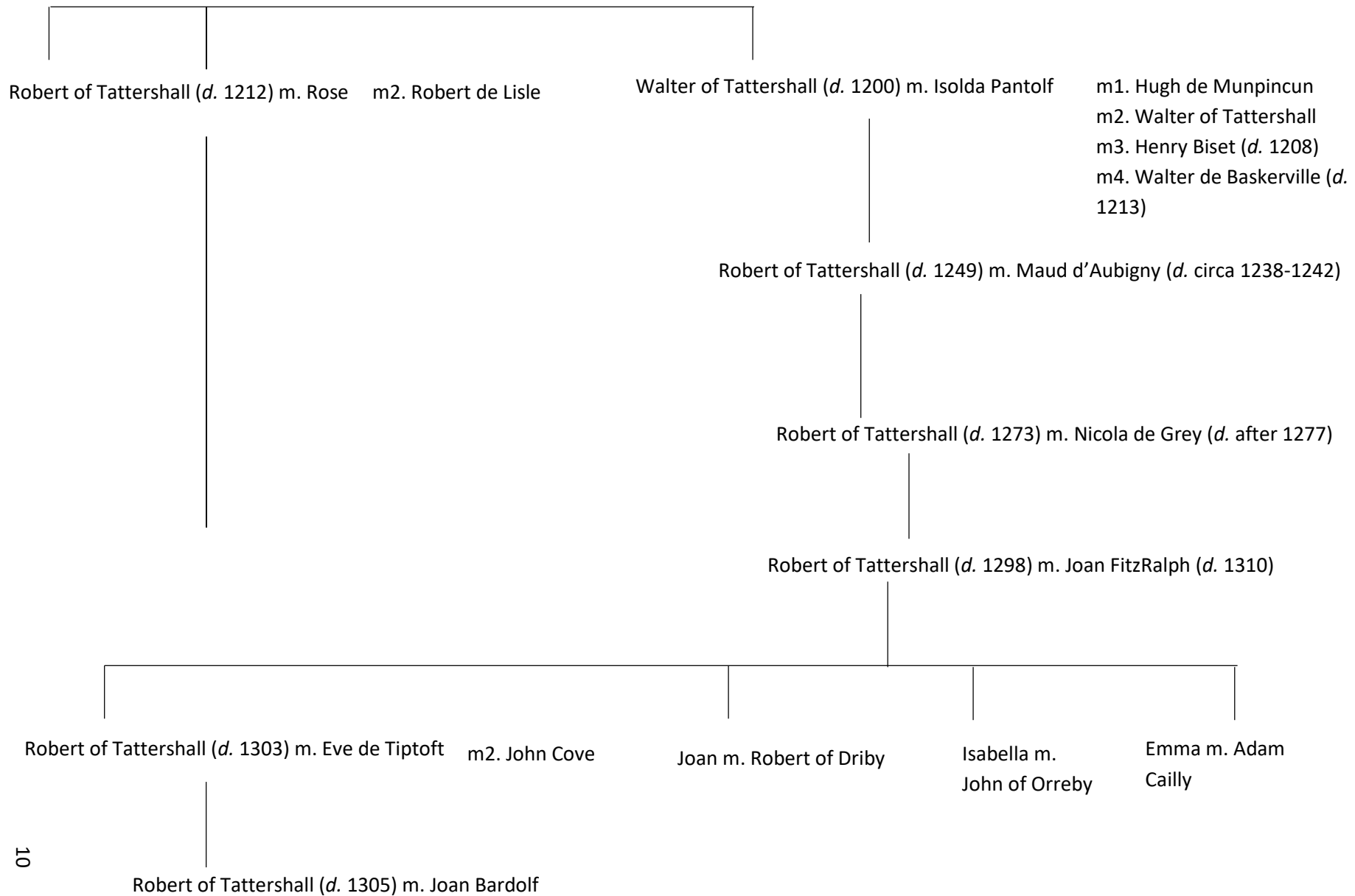


Figure Six: Family Tree of the holders of the Barony of Tattershall

Introduction

The historiography of aristocratic women has increased in recent years with studies on the place of women within medieval society. Scholars originally working on the subject during the twentieth century, such as Doris Stenton and Georges Duby, emphasised the inferior position of women. Duby's study of France from 1050 to 1235 showed that women were not expected to exercise power; they were dependent on their relationships with their male kin.¹ Stenton argued that after the Norman Conquest (1066), England became a masculine world, centred on war which caused women to become pawns.² These arguments about the lesser position of aristocratic women illustrate how women were marginalised from exercising power. More recently, however, studies published about aristocratic women have a more positive interpretation on their position within society. Susan Johns focused on how, in the twelfth century, families acted together as a 'unit of lordship', with women at the heart in their roles as wives and mothers.³ Power exercised by noblewomen was derived from their social status, access to land and from familial connections, ultimately the same way men derived their access to power.⁴ Work on French aristocratic women has also shown how women were at the centre of their families. They worked alongside their husbands to assume responsibility for the management of their estates. The role of women within their lordly households ensured that they were well placed to have experiences beyond the domestic sphere.⁵

Johns' ideas about the central position of women are still relevant when studying women in thirteenth-century England. Regional studies about aristocratic women have done much to nuance our understanding of how women exercised power, for example that of Louise Wilkinson's for Lincolnshire, which highlights how a woman's identity was often linked to the female life-cycle. Women's identities changed as they passed through the various stages of being daughters, wives, mothers and widows.⁶ The use of the female life-cycle to study medieval women can be problematic as it does not allow for the presence of women who never married and who did not enter the monastic life. Nonetheless there are too few known examples of

¹ George Dubys, 'Women and Power', in T.N. Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 84.

² Doris Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1957), pp. 29-30.

³ Susan Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵ Kimberly A. LoPrete and Theodore Evergates, 'Introduction', in T. Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 4-5; Amy Livingstone, 'Aristocratic Women in the Chartrain', pp. 50, 64.

⁶ Louise Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 7.

singlewomen amongst the baronial class to make a meaningful analysis, and it is probable that for women in baronial families to remain single was a unique event rather than being a typical experience. Therefore this thesis will use the female life-cycle to explore the lives of baronial women whilst highlighting the experiences of women who did not pursue a conventional life.⁷ Wilkinson, like Johns, examined the experiences of noblewomen to illustrate how it was possible for women to be involved within politics through the use of their landed wealth, social standing and positions within their families.⁸ Marriage was an important milestone in the life-cycle of an aristocratic woman as it brought her into a new family and widened her kinship network.⁹ Studies have shown how, during widowhood, women were able to achieve their greatest independence as a *femme sole*, so this thesis explores whether this was true for baronial women in Lincolnshire.¹⁰ Emma Cavell argues that the important function as managers of land allowed widows to have prominent roles in regions of political instability such as Shropshire.¹¹ Household and estate management have been identified as major areas of activity for aristocratic women. Jennifer Ward studied the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and discussed how, in a society where land was crucial, aristocratic women were able to exercise local power through their households and religious benefactions.¹² Aristocratic women were just as active in the management of their estates during their marriages, acting as representatives of their husbands, as they were during their widowhoods.¹³

Religious patronage was also an important area of activity for women, which is demonstrated in Emilie Amt's study of Ela Longespée, the daughter of Ela and William Longespée I, Earl of Salisbury. Ela Longespée was married first to Thomas de Beaumont, Earl of Warwick, and then secondly to Philip Basset. Ela's benefactions provide an insight into the religious sensibilities of the period and into this individual's sense of devotion.¹⁴ Ela's charters reveal how whilst married, she acted independently from her husbands.¹⁵ She favoured foundations that were associated with her natal family, such as Godstow Abbey, Oxfordshire. She also supported Merton and Balliol colleges in the University of Oxford, demonstrating her interest in education. These examples of

⁷ See p. 42-43 for a discussion of the life of Julianna Gant.

⁸ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 65-66.

⁹ Deborah Youngs, 'Life Cycle', in Louise Wilkinson (ed.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Berg, 2010), pp. 120-123.

¹⁰ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 7.

¹¹ Emma Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: the Shropshire Evidence', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 17 (2007), pp. 57-82.

¹² Jennifer Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1992).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁴ Emilie Amt, 'Ela Longespée's Roll of Benefits: Piety and Reciprocity in the Thirteenth Century', *Traditio*, vol. 64 (2009), pp. 1-56.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

her religious grants provide an insight into how she wished her identity to be displayed.¹⁶ The religious patronage of a woman is useful to explore her identity and how she wished it to be displayed. Philadelphia Ricketts' regional study of Yorkshire argued that women continued to link themselves with their natal relations throughout their life-cycle, as well as forming identities based on their marital status.¹⁷ One of the key themes of this research is to explore the religious benefactions and seals of baronial women to gain an insight into their sense of identities and how it changed throughout the female life-cycle.

The historiography surrounding aristocratic women has mostly concentrated on individuals who occupied the highest levels of the hierarchy, such as countesses.¹⁸ The evidence for women of baronial status has, by contrast, largely been neglected by historians. Johns devotes a single chapter to the discussion of women of the lesser nobility. This chapter highlights how lesser noblewomen could have similar roles to those of women of higher status, such as involvement in estate management and land transfers.¹⁹ She, however, fails to define what classes a woman as being a lesser noblewomen, and focuses mainly on women who were heiresses. This fails to explore the experiences of all women who were below the rank of countess and above those whose kin belonged to the knightly class. Linda Mitchell also focuses on women who were heiresses or on women who had extensive national roles during periods of instability like the Second Barons' War in the 1260s and Edward I's conquest of Wales.²⁰ Nevertheless one of her case studies focuses on the middling baronial family of the Ferrers sisters who inherited a share of the great Marshal estates. The experiences of the six Ferrers co-heiresses provides a useful example of how a family worked together and separately to make business arrangements concerning their joint inheritance.²¹ Ricketts' study of widows in Yorkshire also provides a useful point of comparison for baronial women in Lincolnshire.²² Wilkinson's study focused on women of the highest status by exploring the lives of the countesses of Lincoln as well as looking at gentle, town and peasant women. She studied the experiences of Nicola de la Haye (*d.* 1230), the heiress to the barony of Brattleby, who lived during a turbulent time which saw her lead the defence of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Philadelphia Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity: some Cases from Twelfth Century Yorkshire', *Haskins Society Journal*, vol. 14 (2003) pp. 117-136; Philadelphia Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows in Medieval Iceland and Yorkshire, Property, Power, Marriage and Identity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2010).

¹⁸ Ward, *English Noblewomen*.

¹⁹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, pp. 152-164.

²⁰ Linda E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage and Politics in England 1225-1350* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-29.

²² Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', pp. 117-136.

Lincoln castle in 1217, and become sheriff of Lincolnshire, a government office normally held by men.²³ This study expands on Wilkinson's work by exploring the lives of subsequent holders of the barony of Brattleby. The historiography of aristocratic women has illuminated different themes which should be examined when exploring the lives of aristocratic women, including their participation in estate management and religious patronage. These themes will be examined in relation to baronial women in thirteenth-century Lincolnshire.

What is a baron is a complex question, much discussed amongst historians, such as Robert Bartlett and David Crouch, due to the difficulties in defining a term like baron. Baronial estates have been identified by looking at a person's income or how many knights' fees they held.²⁴ The estates of barons were assemblages of manors, intermingled with the lands of other lords, and held by military tenure.²⁵ From the thirteenth century, the term baron became increasingly used to describe the greater tenants-in-chief of the crown.²⁶ The existence of the status of baron demonstrates how there was a need for a distinct level in the hierarchy between that of earl and knight in order to recognise the nobility and wealth of a magnate who held no title.²⁷ The number of baronial families in England is also a matter of debate. The *Cartae Baronum*, the returns made by tenants-in-chief to Henry II about the numbers of knights enfeoffed on their lands, carried out in 1166 provided important information about the number of tenants-in-chiefs and their knightly tenants. The size of the baronial class has been estimated at around 164 baronial families.²⁸

Earls were distinct from the rest of society. Similarly, barons found ways to display their status, with the most significant being the entry fine into their estates. In 1215, clause two of Magna Carta stated that a baron had to pay a relief on his inheritance of £100, whilst knights had to pay 100 shillings.²⁹ There was a great distinction in the range of wealth which different barons enjoyed, but Bartlett has estimated that in the Angevin period the average annual income of a baron was around £200.³⁰ Women who inherited baronies also paid the same relief and if they were married their husbands accounted for it in their place. The rank of baron is a male term and

²³ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, pp. 13, 18.

²⁴ Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Normans and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 213.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 212; David Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy in Britain 1000-1300* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 113; David Crouch, *The English Aristocracy 1070-1272, a Social Transformation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 39.

²⁷ Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, p. 51.

²⁸ Bartlett, *England Under the Normans and Angevin Kings*, p. 213; I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent, 1086-1327* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

²⁹ David Carpenter, *Magna Carta* (London: Penguin Classics, 2015), p. 39; Crouch, *The Image of Aristocracy*, p. 22.

³⁰ Bartlett, *England Under the Normans and Angevin Kings*, p. 213.

there was no female alternative even though women could inherit baronies. The lack of a male heir caused several baronies to become fragmented as when there was more than one sister inheriting the estates were divided up. This can be seen in the baronies which this thesis considers.³¹

Lincolnshire is a fascinating county to study for a regional analysis focused on baronial women as by the thirteenth century it had a well-established aristocracy.³² It was the second largest county behind Yorkshire and was home to Lincoln, an important commercial centre.³³ The geographical terrain across Lincolnshire varied greatly from the fens in the south-west and the wolds in the north east, to the heaths in west Lincolnshire. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a period of high farming in Lincolnshire when crop yields were good. The fens and wolds were characterised by sheep farming and wool production.³⁴ The rich arable soils and extensive sheep flocks caused the greatest landholders to become increasingly wealthy.³⁵ The religious landscape of Lincolnshire was also remarkable as it was home to England's only native religious order, the Gilbertines, founded by Gilbert of Sempringham in the twelfth century. The order proved to be very popular with communities founded at Alvingham, Bullington, Haverholme and Sixhills, amongst other places.³⁶ Lincolnshire was also home to other monastic communities, including a Benedictine house at Bardney Abbey.³⁷ Towards the end of the twelfth century, monastic houses stopped being founded, however established houses continued to receive gifts of land throughout the thirteenth century.³⁸ This study will treat Lincolnshire as a microcosm of England whilst being aware of the distinctive features of the county.

During the thirteenth century, Lincolnshire had an estimated thirteen groups of estates that could be classed as baronies, such as the baronies of Blankney, Bollingbroke, Bourne and Sotby. This study will focus on the baronies of Ashby, Folkingham, Redbourne and Tattershall. Sanders classed the barony of Brattleby as only a probable barony as there is no payment for the relief of

³¹ *Bracton: On the Laws and Customs of England*, (ed.) G.E. Woodbine and (trans.) S.E. Thorne (Cambridge: Cambridge Mass, 1968-77).

³² Graham Platts, *Land and People in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The History of Lincolnshire Committee Exchequer Gate, 1985), p. 22.

³³ J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 187; Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 10.

³⁴ Adrian R. Bell, Chris Brooks and Paul R. Dryburgh, *The English Wool Market, c.1230-1327*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 60; Platts, *Land and People*, pp. 84, 126.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁶ Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: The History of Lincolnshire Committee, 1990), p. 48; Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 165.

³⁷ Owen, *Church and Society*, pp.48-49.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

£100 to the crown.³⁹ The barony of Folkingham was held by the Gant family who continued to be amongst the wealthiest landholding families in Lincolnshire.⁴⁰ The barony was inherited by Gilbert de Gant III (d. 1242), who passed the honour to his son Gilbert de Gant IV (d. 1274). Gilbert de Gant V (d. 1298) then inherited and, after his death, the barony was divided between the offspring of two of his sisters, Margaret and Nicola, and his one surviving sister Juliana.⁴¹ The barony of Tattershall was held by Robert of Tattershall I (d. 1212) who passed the barony on to his nephew, Robert II (d. 1249) whose heir was his son Robert III (d. 1273). The honour then passed to Robert IV (d. 1298) and then to Robert V (d. 1303) and subsequently to Robert VI (d. 1306). After Robert VI's death, his aunts Emma, Joan and Isabella, inherited the honour.⁴²

The barony of Ashby was held by the Neville family, and after the death of Henry de Neville (d. 1227), his sister Isabella, inherited the honour. The barony then descended to her grandson Robert de Neville whose heir was his grandson, Ralph de Neville (d. 1331).⁴³ Another honour which was inherited by an heiress was the probable barony of Brattleby held by Nicola de la Haye until her death in 1230 when her estates passed to her granddaughter Idonea (d. 1251-52), who married William de Longespée. Their son William then inherited the barony which was merged with the estates which he inherited from his father.⁴⁴ The barony of Redbourne was of middling rank amongst those in Lincolnshire.⁴⁵ Cecily de Crevequer controlled the honour during her widowhood from 1197-98 to her death in 1209-10, when the barony passed to her son, Alexander I. His son, John, died in 1230 having just come of age. The barony passed to his brother Alexander II (d. 1249) whose heir was his son Alexander III (d. 1253). The barony then passed to his five sisters: Joan, Margaret, Elena, Juliana, and Cecily.⁴⁶

Evidence for baronial women survives in a variety of sources. Chancery records, such as the patent, close, charter and fine rolls, provide a wealth of evidence for the activities of baronial women. The patent rolls, copies of open letters, and the close rolls, closed letters, were issued to

³⁹ Platts, *Land and People*, pp. 22, 27; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. X.

⁴⁰ Platts, *Land and People*, p. 24.

⁴¹ Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 46. See Figure Three, p. 8.

⁴² G.E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage of England*, vol. 7 (St Catherine Press, 1929), pp. 645-652; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 88. See Figure Five, p. 10.

⁴³ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9 (London: St Catherine Press, 1936), pp. 491-498; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 3. See Figure One, p. 6.

⁴⁴ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 11 (London: St Catherine Press, 1949), pp. 381-383; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 109. See Figure Two, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Platts, *Land and People*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Sanders, *English Baronies*, pp. 74-75. See Figure Four, p. 9.

convey the king's instructions.⁴⁷ The charter rolls record royal charters, including grants of lands, markets and privileges, whilst the fine rolls detail financial offerings made to the crown in return for various favours and concessions from the king.⁴⁸ This thesis will use the chancery records to examine the contact and connections which baronial women had with the crown and its officials. Other useful sources of evidence for studying baronial women are contemporary surveys of landholding and services due to the crown, which can be found in the *Liber Feodorum* and the records of inquisitions *post mortem*.⁴⁹ These sources will be studied to identify the lands to which baronial women had access to. This thesis will also make use of court records which are valuable for providing evidence of the property rights of baronial women and their involvement in litigation. The plea and essoin rolls, for example, are the earliest court rolls to record the progress of legal cases heard in the King's courts.⁵⁰ Charters issued by baronial women are of great value for this study. Charters provide a glimpse into a woman's sense of identity by illustrating through her use of titles and *pro anima* clauses how she wished to be seen by others.⁵¹ There are problems when using charters, as they are very formulaic and were usually written by male clerks so how a woman is referred to may have just been the work of the clerk.⁵² The texts of charters are preserved within extant cartularies, such as Bardney Abbey, or are found as original charters in the National Archives and elsewhere.

Drawing on this rich array of evidence, this thesis aims to examine the lives of baronial women in order to shed new light on female agency in the thirteenth century. This thesis will use the term agency to mean the capability of an aristocratic woman to be able to act independently and follow her own policies thereby exercising influence. The first section of this study, on marriage and motherhood, explores the roles were open to women during their marriages, in order to determine the extent of their agency. It examines whether the experiences of baronial women who were heiresses were different to those of non-inheriting women. The second section on

⁴⁷ 'Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls', Research guide, National Archives Catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3626>, accessed 31st October 2016; 'Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Close Rolls', Research guide, National Archives Catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3614>, accessed 31st October 2016.

⁴⁸ 'Charter Rolls', Research guide, National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3613>, accessed 31st October 2016; 'Chancery: Fine Rolls', Research guide, National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3620>, accessed 31st October 2016.

⁴⁹ 'Chancery: Inquisitions Post Mortem', Research guide, National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3690>, accessed 31st October 2016.

⁵⁰ 'Court of Common Pleas and King's Bench, and Justices Itinerant: Early Plea and Essoin Rolls', Research guide, National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C10030>, accessed 31st October 2016.

⁵¹ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, pp. 43, 45.

⁵² Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 72.

widowhood focuses on the lands which the baronial women held during this period of their lives and how not having children impacted upon their ability to secure their dower. It also studies their involvement in estate management and their patterns of religious patronage to gain an insight into their sense of identity.

Part One: Marriage and Motherhood

In the thirteenth century, the marriage of an aristocratic woman was an extremely significant stage of her life-cycle. Marriage within baronial families, like that of other aristocratic ranks, was closely bound up with the transfer of land, such as the *maritagia* given by the bride's family.⁵³ The act of marriage took women into new families, often far from their natal kin. They had to adapt to their new roles of being wives and mothers and to a new domestic environment, when they joined their husbands' households.⁵⁴ Part one focuses on baronial women during the time of their marriages to examine their agency in estate management and the extent to which they acted alongside their husbands in promoting their family interests. This section will also examine the relationships that these women enjoyed with their wider kinship networks.

1. Marriage and Motherhood

In 1273, Robert de Neville granted a charter to Marton Priory, Yorkshire, for the souls of his parents, Geoffrey and Joan, and for the souls of both of his wives.⁵⁵ Marriage provided baronial women with the foundation for their influence within medieval society.⁵⁶ The relationships a baronial woman had with her husband and children were of paramount importance in determining the degree of influence that she was able to exercise over the administration of the family estates and family matters more generally.⁵⁷ Firstly, this chapter will examine the motives behind the marriages of baronial women, before considering the relationships that baronial women had with their husbands and children.

Marriage Formation

Scott Waugh has argued that members of the nobility viewed marriage as a valuable strategy for the acquisition of property and the formation of political alliances between families.⁵⁸ The barons of Ashby exploited their choice of marriage partners to establish themselves in the north of England. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Henry de Neville married Alice, whose

⁵³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 25.

⁵⁴ Ward, *Women in England*, p. 100.

⁵⁵ *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1300-1326* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1908), p. 135

⁵⁶ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Rowena E. Archer, 'How Ladies... who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates': Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages', in P.J.P Goldberg (ed.), *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1992), p. 150; Ward, *Women in England*, p. 106.

⁵⁸ S.L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England: Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics, 1217-1327* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 37.

parentage is unknown.⁵⁹ Henry's sister, and eventual heir, Isabella married Robert FitzMaldred, Lord of Raby in County Durham. The motives behind her marriage were centred on the idea of strengthening the Nevilles' position within the north of England. They held estates at Brancepeth, in county Durham, through the inheritance of Isabella's mother Emma de Humet, near to the lands of Robert FitzMaldred.⁶⁰ There has been some confusion over the identity of the wife of Isabella's son Geoffrey with some suggestion that she was Margaret de Longvillers. She was, however, the wife of Geoffrey's second son also named Geoffrey.⁶¹ A final concord of 1247 refers to Geoffrey's son Robert and his mother Joan in a case involving the Abbot of Crowland.⁶² G.E. Cokayne suggested that perhaps she was a coheir of John of Monmouth based on an entry in the *Close Rolls* for 1257. John de Neville is recorded as being one of John of Monmouth's heirs, but there is not sufficient evidence to support his argument.⁶³

Jewell argued that Robert de Neville I (*d.* 1282) was married twice, yet no evidence survives to suggest who his first wife was except that she was the mother of his children.⁶⁴ Secondly, he married, before 13 April 1273, Ida de Ros, daughter of Robert of Ros who held lands in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire.⁶⁵ Ida had previously been married to Roger Bertram around 1252 and was widowed by 1272.⁶⁶ Often widows married again as they sought the personal support that remarriage might bring them, especially if they had young children.⁶⁷ The motives behind Ida's remarriage were probably centred on the lifetime interest which she carried in her dower lands of Mitford and Felton, Northumberland.⁶⁸ Her dower lands and an alliance created with an important family would have been significant reasons behind Robert's decision to marry Ida. Robert II (*d.* 1271) married Mary, the eldest daughter and co-heiress of Ralph FitzRanulf. This was an advantageous marriage as it brought Robert extensive lands in Yorkshire.⁶⁹ The Nevilles' marriage strategies were extremely successful in increasing their land and political influence in

⁵⁹ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 493.

⁶⁰ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1226-1227*, available at www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar, no. 146, accessed 20th January 2017.

⁶¹ Helen M. Jewell, 'Neville, Sir Robert de (*d.* 1282), *Baron*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁶² *Final Concords of the County of Lincoln 1244-1272*, (ed.) C. W. Foster (Horncastle, 1920), pp. 45-46.

⁶³ *CCR, 1256-59*, p. 58; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 495, footnote B.

⁶⁴ Jewell, 'Neville, Sir Robert de'.

⁶⁵ Platts, *Land and People*, p. 26.

⁶⁶ *CCR, 1272-79*, p. 45; J.H. Round and H.W. Ridgeway, 'Bertram, Sir Roger (1224-1272), *baronial leader*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁶⁷ Barbara A. Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives, Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 104, 111.

⁶⁸ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. II (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1906), p. 249; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 39.

⁶⁹ *CCR, 1268-72*, pp. 272-274.

the north, based around the original inheritance of their ancestor Emma de Humet. This was the beginning of the Nevilles' transformation into an extremely important family.⁷⁰

The holders of the barony of Brattleby used similar strategies for their marriage arrangements as the Neville family. Richard de Camville (*d.* 1216) married Eustachia, the daughter and heiress of Gilbert Basset and Egeline de Courtenay.⁷¹ In 1194, Gilbert Basset paid the crown £100 for Eustachia's marriage to Thomas de Verdon.⁷² Nonetheless, Thomas de Verdon had died by 1200, leaving Eustachia, once again, to become a highly valued prospective bride, as any future husband would enjoy her inheritance upon the death of her father. She also now enjoyed dower in the counties of Leicestershire and Warwickshire from her first husband.⁷³ In 1200, Gerald de Camville offered the crown the large sum of £1000 to secure the marriage of Eustachia and her inheritance for his son Richard.⁷⁴ This marriage, along with his inheritance from his father, provided Richard with a land and power base in the counties of Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire.⁷⁵ Eustachia probably had little influence in the arrangement of her second marriage and this is an example of the Angevin kings exploiting aristocratic women for financial gain.⁷⁶

The marriage arrangements between Richard de Camville, for his daughter Idonea, and William, Earl of Salisbury, for his son and heir, took place around 1216.⁷⁷ This marriage marked the apogee of the barony of Brattleby's marriage strategies. Idonea and her lands were given in wardship to William of Salisbury to enjoy until his son reached his majority.⁷⁸ Simon Lloyd argued Idonea's marriage took place in 1226 when she came of age, so it is probable that her marriage was arranged when she was around the age of five.⁷⁹ William Longespée I was extremely ambitious as his earldom was not particularly wealthy in terms of land, so gaining control over Idonea's inheritance would have helped to increase his landed power and wealth.⁸⁰ Richard de Camville

⁷⁰ Charles R. Young, *The Making of the Neville Family, 1166-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1996), pp. 14, 43.

⁷¹ *ROF*, p. 348; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, p. 89.

⁷² *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Sixth Year of the Reign of King Richard the First, Michaelmas A.D. 1194*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series V, 1928), p. 94.

⁷³ *CCR, 1189-1201*, pp. 260-261.

⁷⁴ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Second Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1200*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XII, 1934), p. 87.

⁷⁵ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 20

⁷⁶ Bartlett, *England Under the Normans and Angevin Kings*, p. 548; J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 72.

⁷⁷ *RLC*, vol. I, p. 265.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 337; *RLP*, p. 178.

⁷⁹ Simon Lloyd, 'Longespée, Sir William II (c. 1209-1250), *magnate*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁸⁰ David Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 30.

may have viewed Idonea's marriage as a great achievement as she would in due time become a countess so improving her and her family's social standing.

The names of the wives of Gilbert de Gant III (*d.* 1242) and his son Gilbert IV (*d.* 1274) are unknown, as there is no mention of them in any charters or administrative documents. This shows how fragmented the evidence is and illuminates the problems of studying medieval women. Nevertheless, it is unusual that no mention can be found for the two spouses of important men, since it is likely that they were from significant families. Gilbert V (*d.* 1298) married Lora de Balliol (*d.* circa 1309), the daughter of Henry de Balliol and Lora de Valognes. They were married before 1274 when Gilbert IV placed his son and Lora in seisin of the town of Hunmanby, Yorkshire, which Lora was to receive as dower should Gilbert V die before his father.⁸¹ Lora's father succeeded to a share of the extensive Valognes estates, through the inheritance of his wife, including estates in Hertfordshire and Scotland.⁸² This marriage provided Gilbert with a useful political alliance at a time when the fortunes of the Gant family were in decline.⁸³

The barony of Redbourne possibly used their marriages to create alliances with other local Lincolnshire families. The heiress to the barony of Redbourne, Cecily de Crevequer, had married Walter de Neville by 1184 when Walter accounted at the exchequer for the relief of Cecily's inheritance.⁸⁴ Walter de Neville was the younger brother of Geoffrey de Neville of Ashby, the father of Henry and Isabella de Neville.⁸⁵ This suggests that the barony of Redbourne was creating a regional alliance with another landholding family in Lincolnshire. Cecily's son, Alexander I, married Margaret but very little is known about her, including her parentage. Furthermore very little is known about Mateleona, the wife of Alexander II. After the death of his father, Alexander II was placed in the custody of Richard de Alençon who would have decided on Alexander's wife, rather than a member of Alexander's family.⁸⁶ The marriages of Alexander I and II, like Cecily's marriage, were probably used to help boost their position and influence within Lincolnshire.

The Tattershall family made grander marriages which elevated their wealth and status in the localities. The wardship and marriage of Robert II (*d.* 1249) was granted to William d'Aubigny, Earl

⁸¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. II, p. 55.

⁸² G.P. Stell, 'Balliol [Baliol], Henry de (*d.* 1246), Nobleman and Administrator' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁸³ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 495, footnote B; J.C. Holt, *The Northerners* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 27; Platts, *Land and People*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Thirty First Year of the of Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1184-1185*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: vol. XXXIV, 1913), p. 91.

⁸⁵ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, no. 786, (ed.) W. Farrer (Edinburgh: 1914), pp. 123-124.

⁸⁶ *CPR, 1225-32*, p. 405.

of Arundel, who married Robert to his daughter Maud.⁸⁷ Both families held lands in Norfolk so it appears that William wished to create an alliance with the important Tattershall family. The marriage would have been significant for Robert II as he formed an alliance with an important comital family. Cokayne stated that Robert II remarried after the death of Maud, to an unnamed daughter of John de Grey, whilst identifying the wife of his son Robert III (*d.* 1273) as a woman called Nicola.⁸⁸ This is incorrect as it was Robert III who married Nicola, the daughter of John de Grey.⁸⁹ The *Close Rolls* for 1265 record a woman named Isolde of Tattershall pleading for dower, and she could have been Robert II's second wife.⁹⁰ Robert II and John de Grey arranged their children's marriage before 1247 when it was agreed that John's daughter would receive as her *maritagium* the manor of Shalbourne, Wiltshire.⁹¹ Their son Robert IV (*d.* 1293) married the heiress Joan, daughter of Ralph FitzRanulf. Joan inherited property in Yorkshire and Norfolk so her inheritance helped to increase the Tattershalls' holdings.⁹² Robert IV arranged the marriage of his son, Robert V (*d.* 1303), with Eve, the daughter of Robert de Tiptoft. This marriage took place before 10th November 1280, when both parties were under age. Church teaching stated that the marriage ceremony should take place when both partners had reached the age of puberty, the age of twelve for girls and fourteen for boys. In practice church teaching was often ignored. Robert de Tiptoft gave Robert of Tattershall 600 marks for the marriage and if Eve died before her thirteenth birthday, then Robert would have had to repay 400 marks.⁹³ If Robert V should die before he had succeeded to his father's estates, then Eve was to receive as her dower land worth £100 yearly from the manors of Holwell, Leicestershire, and Toft, Lincolnshire.⁹⁴ Marriage amongst the aristocracy in medieval society was an important strategy for them to increase their estates and social influence, but despite this how successful were baronial marriages?

Relationships

Marriages of aristocratic families were arranged in a practical manner, so affection would have had to develop later.⁹⁵ The *pro anima* clauses of charters are of great interest as they

⁸⁷ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. III, no. I, (eds.) J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (London: 1849), p. 218; *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi Asservati, 1199-1216*, (ed.) T.D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1837), p. 188; *RLC*, vol. I, pp. 124, 201.

⁸⁸ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12 pt. 1 (London: St Catherine's Press, 1953), pp. 649-650.

⁸⁹ *CCR*, 1242-47, p. 510.

⁹⁰ *CCR*, 1264-68, p. 111.

⁹¹ *CCR*, 1242-47, p. 510.

⁹² *CCR*, 1268-72, pp. 272-274.

⁹³ *CCR*, 1227-31, p. 307.

⁹⁴ *CCR*, 1279-88, p. 68.

⁹⁵ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 29.

demonstrate the relationships women had with their husbands and children.⁹⁶ During his marriage, William Longespée II issued five charters to Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, founded by his mother, which contain no mention of his wife, Idonea.⁹⁷ He also granted four charters to Bradenstoke Priory, Wiltshire, and only mentioned Idonea in two of them.⁹⁸ When William did issue a charter made for the benefit of Idonea's soul, he also did so for the souls of his parents.⁹⁹ This suggests that he was mentioning her more for convention than because of a deep affection for her. It is probable that they had an amicable relationship, if a distant one, as William was often away on the king's business or on crusade. The marriage of Alexander II de Neville appears to have been very successful in terms of medieval expectations. Alexander II probably married Mateleona in around 1236, when he came of age. Together they had six children: a son and heir Alexander and five daughters, Joan, Margaret, Ellen, Julianna, and Cecily.¹⁰⁰ Alexander was dead by 12th July 1249, so in a period of thirteen years, the couple produced six children who are known to have survived.¹⁰¹ Throughout this period, infant mortality was high and families could lose a large number of their children who remain unrecorded.¹⁰² Eustachia and Richard de Camville granted two charters to Bicester Priory, Oxfordshire, for the soul of their son and heir, possibly after his death during childhood.¹⁰³ These benefactions to a priory associated with Eustachia's family may illustrate the sense of loss that Eustachia and Richard felt at the death of their only son and heir. In all their charters, Eustachia and Richard only ever remembered their son; their charters contain no mention of their surviving daughter, Idonea. This demonstrates how the primary duty of a wife was to produce a son to inherit and to continue his family's name.¹⁰⁴ The death of their son meant that they had lost the person who would carry on the Camville lineage; their daughter could continue their lineage but would take her husband's name. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they did not love their daughter but perhaps their grants to Bicester Priory were concerned only with remembering the dead and not the living.

Nonetheless, not all baronial marriages were successful. The interaction of personalities was instrumental in shaping the relations between a man and his wife.¹⁰⁵ Henry de Neville of Ashby

⁹⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 53; Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 43.

⁹⁷ *Lacock Abbey Charters*, nos. 262-264, 267, 305, pp. 68-69, 78.

⁹⁸ *The Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory*, nos. 234, 302, 360, 568, pp. 84, 100, 114, 169.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 302, 568, pp. 100, 169.

¹⁰⁰ *CCR, 1234-37*, p. 288; *CCR, 1251-53*, p. 166.

¹⁰¹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. I (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1904), p. 38.

¹⁰² Ward, *Women in England*, p. 46.

¹⁰³ *Basset Charters, c. 1120 to 1250*, (ed.) W.T. Reedy (Pipe Roll Society: New Series, vol. 2, 1991), nos. 194, 195, 198, pp. 130-131, 133.

¹⁰⁴ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth Century*, p. 2.

and his wife Alice appear to have not had a close relationship, or at least one that is preserved within the texts of individual charters. This was probably not helped by the fact that they had no children. Henry de Neville issued three charters to different foundations associated with his family, including to Marton Priory, Yorkshire, with only one charter containing a mention of Alice.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, the men of the barony of Folkingham are quite unusual as Gilbert de Gant III issued ten charters which all contain no mention of his wife.¹⁰⁷ Charters issued by his son, Gilbert IV, and his grandson, Gilbert V, also contain no references to their wives, including in the *pro anima* clause which is quite uncommon.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the Gant charters provide no references to the involvement of wives in transferring or managing family lands, a curious omission in view of the role that women often assumed in estate administration.¹⁰⁹

Litigation

The estates of a baronial family created a common interest between a husband and his wife which could provide her with agency in household management. Yet, when a woman married, she and her property came under the legal protection of her husband, therefore she could not appear in court on her own behalf.¹¹⁰ When a husband and wife appeared together as civil litigants, the case was often concerned with lands which belonged to the wife as her inheritance or *maritagium*.¹¹¹ In 1244, for example, Johanna, the widow of Wymer de Thorneton, sued Edmund de Kemesek and his wife Matilda over land in Fordham, Cambridgeshire. When the case was heard in court, Edmund appeared without his wife and the case was postponed, so that Matilda could appear in court alongside her husband.¹¹² In Lincolnshire, baronial women were also active litigants alongside their husbands. Women could unexpectedly inherit some land after

¹⁰⁶ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, no. I, p. 199; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. VII, no. 91, p. 155; the charter which mentions Alice is in *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1300-1326*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁷ British Library, MS Cotton. Vespasian E XX, fo. 54, fo. 58, fo. 61, fo. 62, fo. 70; *Abstracts of the Charter and Other Documents contained in the Chartulary of the Priory of Bridlington in the East Riding of the County of York*, (ed.) W.T. Lancaster (Leeds: J. Whitehead and Son, 1912), pp. 250-251; W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. I, (eds.) J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (London: 1817), pp. 630-631; *Rufford Charters*, vol. II, no. 724, (ed.) C.J. Holdsworth (Nottingham: Thoroton Society Record Series, 1974), p. 383; *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 897, (ed.) C.J. Holdsworth (Nottingham: Thoroton Society Record Series, 1980) p. 479.

¹⁰⁸ Charters issued by Gilbert (IV): *Abstracts of the Charter and Other Documents contained in the Chartulary of the Priory of Bridlington*, pp. 56, 378-379.

Charters issued by Gilbert (V): *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 74.

¹¹⁰ *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England, commonly called Glanvill*, (ed.) G.D.G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 135.

¹¹¹ Janet Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman doing in the King's Courts?', in L.E. Mitchell, K.L. French, and D.L. Biggs (eds.), *The Ties that Bind: Essays in Medieval British History in Honour of Barbara Hanawalt* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), pp. 58-59.

¹¹² *CRR, 1243-45*, p. 264.

their marriage which could lead to extensive litigation when there were numerous competing heirs of different generations.¹¹³ During their marriage, Robert I of Tattershall and his wife, Rose, were involved in litigation against numerous people from Rose's natal family. Rose's mother, Gunnora Odell, was the sister of Anselm de Stuteville whose death in 1199 led to numerous disputes over his estates.¹¹⁴ In 1199, Robert of Tattershall was in dispute with Alice Stuteville, Agnes and her husband Herbert de St. Quintin, and Isabel and her husband Robert de Cramaville.¹¹⁵ Alice, Isabel and Agnes were the sisters of Gunnora and Anselm de Stuteville, so therefore Rose's aunts.¹¹⁶ Then, after Isabel de Cramaville's death, Robert of Tattershall and Rose, with Rose's sister, Agnes, and Robert Bassingham were in dispute with Alice Stuteville over their share of Isabel's estates.¹¹⁷ In their lawsuit against Alice Stuteville, Robert and Rose appointed as their attorneys Alan de Keldebec and Hugh the Clerk.¹¹⁸ Rose and her sister Agnes and their respective husbands worked together to protect the sisters' interests. This demonstrates how women were heavily active in the legal process to protect what they believed to be their rightful property.

Rose was not the only woman involved in litigation during her marriage; in 1226, Henry de Neville and his wife, Alice, were in litigation against Ralph, son of Ralph Le Marchis, concerning two bovates of land in Spridlington. Alice appointed as her representative Gilbert de Brakenberg whilst Henry appointed Gilbert Fluri. The case ended with a final concord whereby Ralph quitclaimed all his right to the land to Henry and Alice and to the heirs of Alice. In return Henry and Alice gave him 3 marks and 40*d*.¹¹⁹ Ralph Le Marchis quitclaimed the land in favour of Alice's heirs, not Henry's, which suggests that the land could have been part of Alice's *maritagium*. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know who instigated the litigation, whether it was the wife or if it was at her husband's insistence.¹²⁰

Children

¹¹³ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 62.

¹¹⁴ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. IX, (ed.) C.T. Clay (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 1952), pp. 33-34.

¹¹⁵ *Rotuli Curiae Regis: Rolls and Records of the Court held before the King's Justiciars or Justices*, vol. II, (ed.) Francis Palgrave (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1835), pp. 80-81.

¹¹⁶ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. IX, pp. 29, 33-34.

¹¹⁷ *CRR*, 1201-03, pp. 175, 236; *CRR*, 1203-05, pp. 39-40; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. IX, p. 29.

¹¹⁸ *CRR*, 1201-03, pp. 175, 236.

¹¹⁹ *Lincolnshire Records: Abstracts of Final Concords temp. Richard I, John and Henry III*, no. 66, (ed.) W.O. Massingberd (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1896), p. 177.

¹²⁰ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 62.

Baronial women, like countesses, were expected to have children, especially a son and heir.¹²¹ The holders of the barony of Brattleby, Idonea and William, had at least three children, named William, Richard and Ela.¹²² When Idonea's daughter Ela married James Audley, she was given, from Idonea's inheritance, half of the manor of Wretchwick and the manor of Stratton, Oxfordshire.¹²³ It was usual for land associated with the wife to be viewed as an acquisition and then subsequently used to endow daughters.¹²⁴ After she was widowed, Ela gave her share in the manor of Wretchwick to Bicester Priory, Oxfordshire, for the souls of her husband and parents.¹²⁵ Ela made the decision to give her *maritagium* to a foundation closely associated with her mother's family. This stress on her matrilineal kinship is significant as it was more usual for the patrilineal line to be celebrated.¹²⁶ Idonea's son, William III, also issued a charter to Bradenstoke Priory, Wiltshire, just for the soul of his mother.¹²⁷ A close relationship may have existed between Idonea and her children. Gilbert de Gant III also issued charters for the soul of his mother, Gunnora.¹²⁸ It is possible that both Gilbert III and William III remembered their mothers, as it was them with whom they would have had the most contact with whilst growing up. William Longespée II spent the majority of his time away from his family and Robert de Gant died whilst Gilbert III was very young.

The names of aristocratic children would have been carefully selected to remind people of their ancestry and connections and are useful for studying how parents perceived their families.¹²⁹ It is clear that Idonea Longespée's children were given names associated with William's family rather than hers. Their eldest son and daughter were named after William's parents. Their younger son was possibly named after Idonea's father, although Richard was also a name associated with the Longespée family. William Longespée I was the illegitimate son of Henry II, so William II named his children to emphasise his connections to the Angevin kings; William was a popular Norman ducal name and Richard may have been named after his uncle, Richard I. This suggests that

¹²¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 94.

¹²² *Lacock Abbey Charters*, no. 307, p. 78; *CCR, 1251-53*, p. 169.

¹²³ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. I, p. 261.

¹²⁴ Janet S. Loengard, 'What Did Magna Carta Mean to Widows?', in Janet S. Loengard (ed.), *Magna Carta and the England of King John* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 146; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 33.

¹²⁵ Bodleian Library, MS. Top. Oxon. C398, ff. 127,129; Kennett White, *Parochial Antiquities attempted in the History of Ambrosden, Burcester and Other Adjacent Parts in the Counties of Oxford and Bucks*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1818), pp. 391-392.

¹²⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 131.

¹²⁷ *The Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory*, no. 367, p. 115.

¹²⁸ British Library, MS Cotton. Vespasian E XX, fo. 61; *Rufford Charters*, vol. II, no. 724, p. 383.

¹²⁹ Constance B. Bouchard, 'Patterns of Women's Names in Royal Lineages, Ninth-Eleventh Centuries', *Medieval Prosopography*, vol. 9 (1988), p. 1; Freya Verstraten, 'Naming Practices among the Irish Secular Nobility in the High Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2006), pp. 45, 47.

William viewed his lineage as being more illustrious than Idonea's, despite her position as an heiress. In the thirteenth century, it was common for the aristocratic elite to name their children, especially their sons and heirs, with popular names used in the paternal family, rather than the maternal one.¹³⁰ Gilbert de Gant III chose to name his eldest son after himself, as well as his illustrious and powerful ancestors who were also named Gilbert. He also named one of his daughters after his mother, Gunnora, which illustrates the affection which he probably had for her.¹³¹ It is possible that his other daughter, Julianna, was named after his wife or that this could have been a name associated with his wife's natal family.¹³² The name of the eldest son, in particular, was usually chosen from the side of the family which was more politically powerful.¹³³ The baronial men of Tattershall were all named Robert and likewise the holders of the barony of Redbourne after Cecily de Neville, were all named Alexander after Cecily's father. The common use of the name Alexander demonstrates, perhaps, how they wished to use a name associated with the ancestors of the barony, especially as there was contention over whether Cecily was the rightful heir.

In conclusion, the men of the baronies in Lincolnshire had various motives behind their choice of marriage partners. Like most aristocratic marriages, those of baronial families were created with considerations about wealth, lands and the lineage of the prospective partner.¹³⁴ It is clear that in all these marriage arrangements the women had little say.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, despite women's apparent lack of agency the surviving charter evidence suggests that many of the marriages of baronial women were successful, especially in terms of social expectations. Baronial women were expected to produce children. Alice de Neville failed in this duty but it did not prevent her from exercising influence and from being involved in her husband's litigation. Next, this study will look at the lives of baronial heiresses to assess the extent to which their inheritance of their families' estates impacted upon their scope for action within their marriage.

¹³⁰ Bouchard, 'Patterns of Women's Names', p. 11; Verstraten, 'Naming Practices', p. 43.

¹³¹ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, nos. 907-908, pp. 484-485.

¹³² *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals*, no. 298, (eds.) L.C. Lloyd and D.M. Stenton (Oxford: Publications of the Northamptonshire Record Society, 1950), p. 205.

¹³³ Bouchard, 'Patterns of Women's Names', p. 12.

¹³⁴ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 5.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

2. Heiresses

During Edward I's reign an inquisition was held to determine who held knights' fees which owed the duty of castle ward to Richmond Castle. Robert of Tattershall and Mary de Neville held six fees in Middleham. Robert of Tattershall was accountable for his wife's inheritance, while the widowed Mary de Neville was accountable for herself.¹³⁶ This demonstrates how, during marriage, the inheritance of a woman was controlled by her husband; it was only during widowhood when she could hope to enjoy the independence to administer her property as she wished. When an heiress married, she and her lands were given into the possession of her husband.¹³⁷ In spite of this, how far did heiresses wield agency and play an active role during their marriages?

Inheritance

In the thirteenth-century, women were of great importance for the security of their families' estates. The legal treatise known as *Glanvill* stated that the surviving descendants in the direct line were the preferred heirs including women. If a son died with living offspring then his children would inherit before that of any siblings.¹³⁸ *Glanvill* also stated how, in the case of women inheriting, they would expect to inherit equal shares of the estates as co-heiresses, whilst the eldest daughter was to receive the chief messuage.¹³⁹ Inheritance practices were not always straightforward as there are examples where the estates allocated to the daughters were not always equal and, if one sister was married and had been given a marriage-portion, than her unmarried sisters might be allocated more.¹⁴⁰ Upon the death of Ralph FitzRanulf (*d.* 1270), his estates were divided between his three surviving daughters, Mary de Neville, Joan of Tattershall and Anastasia who was placed in the custody of the king. In Yorkshire, each sister received land worth £92 8s. 4d., whilst in Norfolk they each received 6 fees to be held jointly, which rendered 60s.¹⁴¹ As Mary de Neville was the eldest, she received the manor of Middleham which was her father's most valued estate.¹⁴² After the death of Anastasia in 1272, her share of the inheritance

¹³⁶ *Yorkshire Inquisitions of the Reign of Henry III and Edward I*, vol. I, (ed.) William Brown (Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Association, Record Series vol. XII, 1891-1892), pp. 227-228.

¹³⁷ J.C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England: IV. The Heiress and the Alien', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 35 (1985), p. 2.

¹³⁸ *Glanvill*, pp. 75-79.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁰ John Hudson, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England, Vol. II, 871-1216* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 352-353; Holt, 'Feudal Society', pp. 1, 3; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. V, (ed.) C.T. Clay (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 1936), p. 304; *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, vol. I, pp. 113-116.

¹⁴² *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. I, pp. 237-239; *CCR, 1268-72*, pp. 272-274.

was divided between her two surviving sisters. Mary de Neville and Robert and Joan of Tattershall petitioned the king so that they could each receive their share of Anastasia's inheritance. They were delayed in receiving the property as the wardship of Anastasia and her land had been given to the king's eldest son, Edward in 1271. Henry III had granted his son many wardships, probably to provide him with an adequate source of income, and Edward possibly wanted to keep the profits from the estates.¹⁴³ Mary and Joan, alongside Robert of Tattershall, worked together to ensure that they would receive their share of their sister's inheritance.

Idonea, the heiress to the barony of Brattleby, was another attractive bride as she inherited estates in Oxfordshire, Leicestershire, Somerset and Lincolnshire on the death of her father in 1217 and her grandmother in 1230. As early as 8th March 1216, Idonea was in the king's custody at Corfe Castle in the care of Peter de Mauley, the constable of Corfe Castle.¹⁴⁴ It has been suggested by Kennett White that this was because her father Richard de Camville died soon after he inherited his estates in 1215.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he was still alive in 1217, so it is more likely that Richard had taken up arms against King John in 1215, despite the fact that his mother, Nicola de la Haye, was a strong supporter of the king.¹⁴⁶ John gained control of Richard's castle of Middleton and gave it into the custody of his trusted servant, Engelard de Cigogne.¹⁴⁷ Idonea was perhaps placed in the care of Peter de Mauley as a hostage to her father's good behaviour; Peter had custody of many state prisoners during this period, including Eleanor, the sister of Arthur of Brittany.¹⁴⁸

During 1216, William Longespée, half-brother of King John, was granted Idonea's wardship. He also gained control over Idonea's inheritance from her mother, Eustachia, who had died by 22nd April 1216.¹⁴⁹ In 1217, after the death of Richard de Camville, Idonea inherited his estates comprising of land in Middleton worth £15 and the manors of Goddington, Oxfordshire, King's Sutton, Northamptonshire and Ardington, Berkshire.¹⁵⁰ Whilst Idonea was in his custody, William Longespée was granted the shrievalty of Lincoln and he then tried to gain control of Lincoln

¹⁴³ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1271-72*, no. 628, accessed 20th January 2017; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 177.

¹⁴⁴ *RLP*, p. 170.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 127; White, *Parochial Antiquities*, vol. I, pp. 252-253.

¹⁴⁶ *CPR, 1216-25*, p. 32; Mary D. Lobel (ed.), *A History of the County of Oxford*, vol. VI (London: 1959), pp. 243-251.

¹⁴⁷ *RLP*, pp. 241, 252.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Vincent, 'Maulay [Malo Lacu], Peter (I) de (d. 1241), Knight and Royal Councillor' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

¹⁴⁹ *RLP*, p. 178; *RLC*, vol. I, p. 265.

¹⁵⁰ *Liber Feodorum. The Book of Fees Commonly called Testa de Nevill*, vol. I (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), p. 253; *Liber Feodorum. The Book of Fees Commonly called Testa de Nevill*, vol. II (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1923), p. 825, *RLC*, vol. I, pp. 299, 337.

castle, which was in the possession of Nicola de la Haye. Nicola had a strong hereditary right to enjoy its custody, and she would not resign her rights to Salisbury as the guardian of her granddaughter and future heir. It is probable that William chose Idonea as a suitable marriage partner for his son partly because he wanted to gain custody of Lincoln castle and therefore increase his political standing within Lincolnshire.¹⁵¹ This illustrates the extent of William's ambition and how his custody of Idonea was used to further that.¹⁵²

One of the problems reflected in clauses four, five and six of the 1225 Magna Carta was concerns over the exploitation of estates, and they offered protection from unscrupulous guardians for underage heirs.¹⁵³ Following Lloyd's dating of her marriage to c. 1226, after she came of age, Idonea spent around ten years in the wardship of William Longespée I and he also controlled the administration of her estates.¹⁵⁴ This was presumably so that William Longespée could collect the revenues from her inheritance for as long as possible. During this time, William Longespée I was granted the right to hold fairs at Long Sutton, Lincolnshire, and at Stoney Middleton, Oxfordshire.¹⁵⁵ William had custody of other wards, including Roger Bigod, the heir to the earldom of Norfolk.¹⁵⁶ Marc Morris argued that the income from Roger's estates probably went to pay for William Longespée's military expedition to Gascony.¹⁵⁷ Therefore it is possible that the profits from Idonea's estates went towards the same purpose. When William Longespée drew up his will in 1225, he stated how the revenue from Idonea's inheritance was to be used for building a monastery which he wanted to be named *Locus Dei* (God's Place).¹⁵⁸ This illustrates the value placed on heiresses for their estates and how their estates could be exploited, especially when they were minors.¹⁵⁹ Yet, as with the case of Idonea, the clauses of Magna Carta concerning wardships would have been hard to enforce, especially as William Longespée was an important member of the aristocracy.

Estate Management during Marriage

¹⁵¹ Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, p. 66; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, pp. 205-206.

¹⁵² Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, p. 30.

¹⁵³ Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 421-422. Also mentioned in Clauses four, five and six of the 1216 version of Magna Carta: Carpenter, *Magna Carta*, pp. 39-41.

¹⁵⁴ *RLC*, vol. II, pp. 110, 123; Lloyd, 'Longespée, Sir William'.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, DL 10/56.

¹⁵⁶ *RLC*, vol. II, p. 71.

¹⁵⁷ Marc Morris, *The Bigod Earls of Norfolk in the Thirteenth Century* (Martlesham: The Boydell Press, 2015), p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ *RLC*, vol. II, p. 71.

¹⁵⁹ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 223.

After William II performed homage for Idonea's inheritance in 1230, her estates came under his control.¹⁶⁰ William was granted a weekly market and a yearly fair at Pole, and a weekly market at Bicester and Swaton on a Friday.¹⁶¹ The royal charters dealt with property from Idonea's inheritance but they contain no mention of her. This illustrates how a husband did not necessarily need to consult his wife in the administration of her estates.¹⁶² Nevertheless Idonea was not merely a pawn who lacked agency. Idonea, jointly with her husband, issued a charter to Valentine FitzWilliam which gave him all the land which Geoffrey son of Roger Steward and Ernald Pilly held in the village of Holmer, Herefordshire, for an annual rent of two shillings.¹⁶³ After William Longespée III succeeded to his father's estates, he confirmed both his mother's and father's charters to Valentine FitzWilliam.¹⁶⁴ This suggests that Idonea issued more than one charter, and these have not survived.¹⁶⁵ This reveals something about the nature of the power wielded by baronial women in marriage; as a woman Idonea had no legal control over the land, but as part of her family she participated in acts of lordship. William also may have consulted her in matters of estate management.¹⁶⁶ Aristocratic women were commonly involved in the transfer of familial lands during marriage.¹⁶⁷ It is probable that Idonea acted as William's representative and was involved in the administration of their estates during William's many absences. This was a common experience amongst heiresses, and aristocratic women, as they were expected to take on their husbands' responsibilities and at least be involved in administration in relation to their own inheritances.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, heiresses were not always as heavily involved in estate management, as can be seen in the example of Isabella de Neville. When Robert FitzMaldred administered Isabella's estates, he associated himself with his son and heir rather than with his wife.¹⁶⁹ Robert FitzMaldred issued a charter to Stixwold Priory confirming a grant given to them by Isabella's father, Gilbert de Neville. Robert and Isabella's son, Geoffrey then confirmed his father's charter, and there is no mention of Isabella in this action.¹⁷⁰ Then between 1227 and 1228 Robert issued a charter to York Minster, and the Prebends of Driffild and Strensall which sorted out the dispute

¹⁶⁰ *CCR, 1227-31*, p. 307.

¹⁶¹ TNA, DL 10/78.

¹⁶² *Glanvill*, p. 135.

¹⁶³ Lost charter cited in White, *Parochial Antiquities*, vol. I, p. 325.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 351.

¹⁶⁵ The survival rate of charters to private individuals is a lot lower than the preservation of charters which were issued to religious institutions.

¹⁶⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 196.

¹⁶⁸ Archer, "How Ladies... who live on their manors", p. 150; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 128.

¹⁶⁹ British Library, MS. Add. 46701, fo. 19.

¹⁷⁰ British Library, MS. Add. 46701, fo. 19 and 20.

between Henry de Neville and the men of Haxby. Robert's son, Geoffrey, acted as a guarantee for his father's charter as well as witnessing it.¹⁷¹ These charters both dealt with Isabella's inheritance, yet made no reference to having gained her consent, which could suggest the limited influence enjoyed by Isabella.

Isabella and Robert's son Geoffrey and his descendants assumed the name of Neville.¹⁷² They made a decision to associate themselves with the ancestors of their mother, rather than use their father's name. Waugh's study of royal wardships and marriages from 1217 to 1327 found that in at least ten cases, when an estate was inherited by one daughter, the heirs highlighted their attachment to the property by taking their mother's or grandmother's family name.¹⁷³ Even so this is a fairly small number when it is considered how many estates were inherited by daughters in this period. Charles Young argued that the decision to assume the name of Neville was an indication of the growing importance of the family.¹⁷⁴ It is also revealing of the emphasis placed on Isabella as the vessel for the continuation of her family's lineage.

Litigation

Heiresses were far more likely to be involved in litigation than non-inheriting women.¹⁷⁵ Husbands took care to associate their wives with their actions to ensure their legitimacy into the future.¹⁷⁶ Legal claims brought against Idonea's inheritance began almost as soon as she was married. In 1228, for example, Idonea and William were in a dispute against Sibyl de Ferrers over two carucates of land in Shalford, Surrey.¹⁷⁷ The land in Shalford came into the possession of the Basset family as part of the *maritagium* of Alice de Dunstanville who had married Thomas Basset, Idonea's great grandfather.¹⁷⁸ Sibyl de Ferrers was the widow of Walter de Dunstanville, the brother of Alice, and she claimed the land as dower. Idonea and William appointed in their place either Baldwin the clerk or William de Derneford.¹⁷⁹ The appointment of attorneys does not reflect a passive image of women. Instead it demonstrates their agency as they made the decision to have someone who was perhaps more experienced in legal matters to represent them. Although there is no mention of how the case was settled in the court rolls, it shows that right

¹⁷¹ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, no. 785, pp. 122-123.

¹⁷² *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, vol. I, p. 254, footnote B.

¹⁷³ Peter Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England, 1000-1500* (Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1998), p. 12; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁴ Young, *The Making of the Neville Family*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁵ For a discussion of women's estates being placed in the control of their husbands, see pp. 26-27.

¹⁷⁶ Holt, 'Feudal Society', pp. 3-4.

¹⁷⁷ *CCR, 1227-31*, pp. 92, 116,

¹⁷⁸ *Rotuli Chartarum*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁹ *CRR, 1227-30*, nos. 823, 1649, pp. 182, 350; *CRR, 1230-32*, no. 515, p. 100.

from the beginning of their marriage Idonea and William worked together to administer Idonea's inheritance. Even if William Longespée did not come of age until 1230, then Idonea administered her inheritance from the moment she came of age in 1226.

Idonea took an active part in legal proceedings when the case was concerned with her inheritance.¹⁸⁰ After the death of Nicola de la Haye in 1230, Oliver Deyncourt and his wife, Nicola, began proceedings against Idonea and William, ensuring much litigation over the lordship of the manor of Duddington.¹⁸¹ When Oliver married Nicola, a niece of Idonea's grandmother, Nicola de la Haye granted them the manor of Duddington. The ownership of Duddington was contested so Oliver ensured that he received a charter of enfeoffment from Nicola as proof in case it was ever needed and received £15 so that he could be assured of some income from his wife's *maritagium*.¹⁸² The manor was originally held by William de Humet, the husband of Nicola's sister, and at some point it came into the hands of Nicola and Gerald de Camville. After Nicola's death the crown tried to seize it as a Norman escheat.¹⁸³ Idonea and William appointed Alan Payn to act in Idonea's place as they had claimed that they were unable to reply as William was still a minor.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless Oliver and Nicola answered that as Idonea, the heiress of Nicola de la Haye, was of age, she could answer the claims. Idonea and William were using delaying tactics to try and prolong the case. Idonea and William then claimed that Duddington was not a Norman escheat because of a final concord which existed between Nicola de la Haye and her sisters, whereby Nicola received her father's land in England, and his Norman lands were split between her two other sisters. William demanded that an inquisition be made, which Oliver refused.¹⁸⁵ William Raleigh and William de L'Isle, the king's justices, were ordered to make an inquisition into Duddington to see whether Gerald and Nicola had been in seisin at the time of King Richard.¹⁸⁶ Although there is no further mention of this case in the court rolls, an inquest in 1293 found that Oliver held the manor for his lifetime and then passed it on to his son.¹⁸⁷ These examples

¹⁸⁰ *CRR, 1230-32*, no. 1129, 1145, 1155, pp. 238, 240, 242-243.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, no. 1129, p. 238.

¹⁸² *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery)*, vol. I, no. 1644 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1916), pp. 460-461; Trevor Foulds, 'Introduction', in Trevor Foulds (ed.), *The Thurgarton Cartulary* (London: Paul Watkins Publishing, 1994), pp. lxxxviii – lxxxix; Louise Wilkinson, 'Oliver, sixth Baron Deyncourt: a Former Rebel Enters his Inheritance', *Fine of the Month*: September 2007.

¹⁸³ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, vol. I, no. 1644, pp. 460-461; Foulds, 'Introduction', pp. lxxxviii – lxxxix.

¹⁸⁴ *CRR, 1230-32*, no. 1145, p. 240.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 1145, 1155, pp. 240, 242-243; *Bracton's Notebook*, vol. III, no. 503, 565. pp. 391-393, 437-438.

¹⁸⁶ *CRR, 1230-32*, nos. 1155, 1196, pp. 242-243, 254; Foulds, 'Introduction', p. lxxxix.

¹⁸⁷ *Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous*, vol. I, no. 1644, pp. 460-461.

illustrate the lengths to which aristocratic families went in order to maintain their inheritances without any losses, even if it meant coming into conflict with family members.

Even though Idonea was married, she also acted independently from her husband in lawsuits. In 1233, William and Idonea were both in litigation against Gilbert de Gant over Idonea's inheritance in Lincolnshire. William appointed William de Prestwood to act as his attorney, whilst Idonea appointed John of Ashby.¹⁸⁸ John of Ashby was associated with the barony of Brattleby as he had witnessed one of Nicola de la Haye's charters to Castle Acre Priory.¹⁸⁹ This demonstrates Idonea's agency as she chose as her own representative, someone associated with her natal inheritance rather than relying on her husband or his attorney. She also appointed Alan Payn to represent her against William of Newton concerning land in Sutton and Lutton.¹⁹⁰ Idonea had also appointed Alan Payn to represent her in the litigation concerning the manor of Duddington. Alan Payn could have been part of William's and Idonea's household or wider following and as she appointed him at least twice, it suggests that she trusted him to work in her interests. Idonea was involved in litigation when the case was over her inheritance, yet she did not appear in any case which involved any of the Salisburys' estates. It was common for heiresses to appear only in cases which were centred on their estates as there would have been no legal reason for them to be involved in legal matters surrounding the lands of their husbands.¹⁹¹

Idonea's mother, Eustachia, was also an active participant in litigation because of her inheritance and dower.¹⁹² Eustachia's experiences demonstrate some of the problems aristocratic women faced before Magna Carta.¹⁹³ Eustachia and Richard appeared in court against Nicholas de Verdon, the brother and heir of Eustachia's first husband, Thomas, where Eustachia claimed £60 worth of land for her dower. In court, both Eustachia and Nicholas produced witnesses who claimed to have seen the nomination of Eustachia's dower at the church door. Intriguingly the testimonies of each side were completely at odds with each other. Nicholas de Verdon argued that Eustachia had a right to a smaller share than the share which she claimed.¹⁹⁴ Loengard has argued how, in the early thirteenth century, it was a common objection used by defendants that the endowment of dower was not a third of the land as claimed but rather a specific tenement

¹⁸⁸ *CCR, 1231-34*, pp. 307-308.

¹⁸⁹ British Library, MS Harleian 2110, fo. 71r.

¹⁹⁰ *CCR, 1231-34*, p. 308; *Lincolnshire Records: Abstracts of Final Concords*, pp. 282-283.

¹⁹¹ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 59.

¹⁹² *CRR, 1189-1203*, pp. 132, 260-261; *CRR, 1207-09*, pp. 235-236, 250; *CRR, 1210-12*, pp. 119, 123; *CRR, 1213-15*, pp. 52, 116.

¹⁹³ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 422.

¹⁹⁴ *CRR, 1189-1203*, pp. 260-261; *Staffordshire Suits extracted from the Plea Rolls temp. Richard I and John*, (ed.) George Wrottesley (London: William Salt Archaeological Society vol. 3, 1882), pp. 71, 73, 170.

which was less than the allowed third.¹⁹⁵ To act in her place, Eustachia appointed either her husband, Richard, or Hubert de Middleton.¹⁹⁶ Hubert de Middleton had also witnessed one of their charters which suggests that he was part of their circle of acquaintances or followers.¹⁹⁷ The case was finally resolved when Nicholas was ordered to restore to Eustachia as reasonable dower the manors of Farnham, Buckinghamshire, and Hethe, Oxfordshire.¹⁹⁸

Eustachia and Richard were also involved in litigation against two of Eustachia's family members, her mother, Egeline de Courtney, and her uncle, Thomas Basset. Egeline de Courtney sued her daughter and son-in-law, stating that she had not received the customary one third of Gilbert's estates.¹⁹⁹ In 1208 Richard and Eustachia paid one mark for a trial before the king concerning the manor of Wretchwick which Egeline was claiming as being rightly hers.²⁰⁰ Gilbert Basset had given half the manor of Wretchwick to Thomas de Verdon upon his marriage to Eustachia and kept the other half for himself. After Gilbert's death, Egeline received one half of the manor of Wretchwick, whilst the other half passed to Eustachia. Egeline sued her daughter for the other half as she argued that she had not been given one third of Gilbert's estates. The litigation ended with Richard and Eustachia giving their share of the manor of Wretchwick to Egeline.²⁰¹ This case suggests that Richard and Eustachia were not denying Egeline access to her dower, but instead the litigation could have been a way to gain some formal recognition from the courts of her dower.²⁰² Despite the litigation, it appears that Egeline and Eustachia had an amicable relationship as Richard and Eustachia both witnessed Egeline's charter to Bicester Priory, granting the priory half the manor of Wretchwick. She also issued the charter for the soul of her late husband, as well as for the souls of Richard and Eustachia.²⁰³ It was fairly common for a woman to be involved in litigation against family members, even if it was mother against daughter, but in the case of Egeline and Eustachia, it does not appear to have affected their relationship.²⁰⁴

When Gilbert Basset died in 1206, Richard de Camville paid 2,000 marks and ten palfreys to the king for livery of Eustachia's inheritance except for what the king claimed in the manor of Stoke, Oxfordshire.²⁰⁵ It was this manor of Stoke over which Eustachia and Richard were in litigation

¹⁹⁵ Loengard, 'What Did Magna Carta Mean to Widows?', p. 143.

¹⁹⁶ *CRR*, 1203-05, p. 132.

¹⁹⁷ *Basset Charters*, no. 197, p. 55.

¹⁹⁸ *Staffordshire Suits*, pp. 170-171.

¹⁹⁹ *CRR*, 1207-09, pp. 63, 157-158, 226.

²⁰⁰ White, *Parochial Antiquities*, vol. I, p. 241.

²⁰¹ *CRR*, 1207-09, pp. 157-158, 226; *CRR*, 1210-12, pp. 119, 123

²⁰² Loengard, 'What did Magna Carta mean to Widows?', p. 138.

²⁰³ *Basset Charters*, no. 193, p. 129.

²⁰⁴ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 57.

²⁰⁵ *ROF*, p. 348.

against Thomas Basset.²⁰⁶ In 1206, Eustachia and Richard conceded the manor of Stoke to Thomas Basset in the presence of the king, and it is possible that pressure was put on them to do so by King John.²⁰⁷ One of the grievances behind Magna Carta was King John's behaviour concerning justice and the administration of it.²⁰⁸ The litigation of barons was conducted in the king's court and David Carpenter has suggested it is possible that John interfered in their cases to influence the results, which caused justice to have political subtexts.²⁰⁹ Thomas Basset was a favourite of the king, so by Richard and Eustachia resigning the manor to him, John was ensuring that Thomas had a land base without having to provide him directly with estates. This might explain why Richard de Camville joined in the rebellion against King John as he, like other barons, had various grievances concerning royal behaviour. Eustachia's appearances in court were over the protection of her inheritance and dower lands, showing the instability which aristocratic women could face over their property rights but their determination to protect those rights.

Religious Patronage

Baronial women's ability to grant land to religious institutions provided them with a public role which was increased if they were also heiresses.²¹⁰ Eustachia and Richard de Camville issued four charters in favour of Bicester Priory, a foundation associated with the Basset family.²¹¹ It does not, however, appear that they issued any charters to foundations favoured by either the de Camville or the Haye family, such as Combe Abbey or Castle Acre Priory.²¹² They centred their religious benefactions on a foundation associated with Eustachia's natal family, a common practice for the families of heiresses. For example, when Isolda married Walter of Tattershall at the end of the twelfth century, she carried the patronage of Breedon Priory with her into her new marital family. Her son, Robert, and his descendants continued to support Breedon Priory.²¹³ Non-inheriting women tended to favour foundations associated with their husbands' families; however it was common amongst heiresses to support communities associated with their natal

²⁰⁶ *CRR, 1207-09*, pp. 235-236.

²⁰⁷ *Basset Charters*, no. 101, p. 55; *CRR, 1207-09*, p. 250

²⁰⁸ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 422.

²⁰⁹ Carpenter, *Magna Carta*, pp. 220-221.

²¹⁰ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 159.

²¹¹ *Basset Charters*, nos. 194, 196-198, pp. 130-133. See Appendix One, Table Two.

²¹² British Library, MS Harleian 2110; British Library, MS Cotton, Vitellius A I. I have explored both these cartularies and the only charters which concern the Barony of Brattleby are issued by Gerald de Camville or Nicola de la Haye.

²¹³ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, no. I, pp. 96-97.

families.²¹⁴ Richard and Eustachia issued their charters together on equal terms, hinting at the freedom of action and influence that Eustachia enjoyed during her marriage.

In their charters, Eustachia is referred to as 'Eustachia uxor sua' or as 'Eustachia Basset uxoris mee'.²¹⁵ She was described in familial terms as it was her position as a wife which underpinned her agency and access to power.²¹⁶ It is very interesting that in three of the charters, she is described using her natal name of Basset, instead of taking her husband's name.²¹⁷ Eustachia's agency was enhanced during her marriage because of her access to lands through her inheritance, which is why she stressed her natal lineage in her identity.²¹⁸ The charters issued by Eustachia and Richard were all sealed by them both, illustrating their close bond and the partnership in their relationship. Eustachia's seal is oval in shape and in the centre is a standing woman holding fleur-de-lis in her right hand, a common motif on the seals of aristocratic women. The image of the standing woman was one which demonstrated noble status similar to the equestrian imagery on men's seals, showing how the imagery of nobility was gendered.²¹⁹ The motif of the fleur-de-lis symbolised motherhood and fertility, valued roles and qualities for an aristocratic woman.²²⁰ The legend reads 'SIGILLUM EUSTACHIES BASSET'.²²¹ It is not known when Eustachia got her seal, but she chose to describe herself using her natal name rather than using those of either of her husbands. She clearly wished to associate herself with her natal ancestors and used her seal to demonstrate her position as an heiress. Twelfth-century heiresses also used their seals to show their positions as heiresses. Alice de Gant, the wife of Simon de Saint Liz, used six chevrons on her seal which were associated with her mother's family, the Clares.²²² Eustachia's descendants also continued to favour Bicester Priory. In 1317, Edward II issued a charter confirming previous charters given to Bicester Priory, around the same time as he granted to his wife, Isabella, dower lands in Oxfordshire.²²³ It is possible he confirmed the lands of Bicester Priory to ensure that there was no confusion over what land belonged to who. Edward's confirmation charter mentions land granted to Bicester Priory by William Longespée, however it

²¹⁴ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 152.

²¹⁵ *Basset Charters*, nos. 194-198, pp. 130-133.

²¹⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 73.

²¹⁷ *Basset Charters*, nos. 194-195, pp. 130-131.

²¹⁸ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 131.

²¹⁹ Adrian Ailes, 'Armorial Portrait Seals of Medieval Noblewomen: Examples in the Public Record Office', in J. Campbell-Kease (ed.), *Tribute to an Armorer* (London, 2000), p. 218; Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 128.

²²⁰ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 130.

²²¹ *Basset Charters*, nos. 194-198, pp. 130-133; *Catalogue of the Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, nos. 6581-6584 (ed.) W.G. Birch (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees: 1894), pp. 376-377; Johns, *Noblewomen*, no. 12, pp. 205-206.

²²² Ailes, 'Armorial Portrait Seals' p. 219; Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 131.

²²³ *CPR, 1317-1321*, p. 115; *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, no. I, p. 423.

is, frustratingly, unclear whether the charter was issued by Idonea's husband or son.²²⁴ Idonea influenced her natal family in their continued support for a community associated with her family.

Other heiresses in Lincolnshire also influenced their husbands' religious patronage. Walter de Neville issued three charters to Bullington Priory, Lincolnshire, at the wish and agreement of his wife Cecily, a community with links to Cecily's family.²²⁵ Walter de Neville took care to associate his wife with his religious patronage, demonstrating the importance which he placed on Cecily as an heiress. This was a common practice amongst the aristocracy; an heiress's consent was sought to legitimise and secure the grant for the future.²²⁶ In the charters, Cecily was always referred to as 'Cecilie uxoris mee', emphasising her role within the family.²²⁷ It was her position as a wife which provided her with the ability to exercise agency within religious patronage. On one of the charters which Walter issued, Cecily attached her seal alongside Walter's seal. Cecily's seal was round with an image of a hawk and the legend was 'SIGILL CECILIE DE CREVECWER'.²²⁸

Occasionally, seals of aristocratic women portray the aristocratic pursuits of hawking, like Cecily's. Danbury argued that the image of a 'great lady as master of the hunt' could be symbolic of her power and authority.²²⁹ Even though only one charter survives with her seal attached, Cecily undoubtedly issued more. Cecily's seal illustrates that her power and authority were centred on her inheritance. She co-sealed a charter alongside her husband, which demonstrates the partnership which existed in their relationship. The charters issued by Cecily and Eustachia demonstrate how their positions as baronial heiresses gave them scope for action within their family estates, in spite of their legally subordinate position as wives.²³⁰

To conclude, heiresses were valued because of their estates and for their role in continuing their families' lineages. Nonetheless, it was their positions as heiresses and their access to property which considerably increased their agency to grant land, for both lay and secular purposes.²³¹

²²⁴ TNA, DL 25/71; *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, no. I, p. 423.

²²⁵ *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw from Various Collections*, (ed.) F.M. Stenton (London: 1920), nos. 98-99, pp. 64-65; *Transcripts of Charters Relating to the Gilbertine Houses of Sixle, Ormsby, Catley, Bullington, Alvingham*, (ed.) F.M. Stenton (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society XVIII, 1922), p. 96; William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Lincoln*, vol. II (London: Victoria County History, 1906), pp. 191-192.

²²⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 70.

²²⁷ *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, nos. 98-99, pp. 64-65; *Transcripts of Charters Relating to the Gilbertine Houses*, p. 96.

²²⁸ *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw*, p. 65; Johns, *Noblewomen*, no. 37, p. 210.

²²⁹ Elizabeth Danbury, 'Queens and Powerful Women: Image and Authority', in Noel Adams, John Cherry, and James Robinson (eds.), *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals* (London: British Museum Research Publication 168, 2008), p. 21.

²³⁰ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 74.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159

Eustachia's and Cecily's experiences, in particular, demonstrate how it was a partnership formed between them and their husbands which allowed them to exercise a greater involvement within the administration of their estates. Baronial heiresses in Lincolnshire used their seals to display their identity as centred on their positions as heiresses; they identified themselves clearly with their natal families.²³² Next this study examines relationships within families by focusing on how sisters interacted with one another after they inherited property.

²³² Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 8.

3. Family Relations

After the death of Alexander III de Neville, the barony of Redbourne was inherited by his five sisters. Around 1271, Robert le Gardiner sued Robert Wacelyn over two bovates of land in Redbourne. The collective heirs and their husbands, Joan's son and heir Thomas, Margery and Nicholas de Neville, Ellen and Heny le Tyes, Juliana and Ingram Folenfaunt, and Cecily and Adam of Newmarket acted together as guarantees for Robert Wacelyn.²³³ During the thirteenth century, women could unexpectedly inherit their families' estates if their brothers or nephews died without leaving any heirs. Sisters inherited the barony together and were responsible for rendering any service to the king together.²³⁴ This chapter explores how far women worked together in managing their inheritances and whether there were examples of self-interest or conflict.

Once a baronial woman married away from her natal family, relationships between siblings might cease to be close.²³⁵ Troubles within families would also have been concerned with the internal dynamics between the siblings and the personalities of each individual. In 1213, Conan FitzEllis and Avice, his wife, paid for a writ to be brought against Henry de Neville and Geoffrey de Conyers. They worked together with Robert FitzMaldred and Isabella de Neville to claim against Henry and Geoffrey, on the behalf of Avice and Isabella, a knight's fee in Bourne and two hides of land in Horn.²³⁶ It is probable that Avice was the sister of Henry and Isabella de Neville, which made this a family affair.²³⁷ Avice and Isabella, along with their husbands, worked together to claim land which their brother, Henry, was in possession of. Siblings cooperated when it was in their interests, but they were not afraid to antagonise each other when their own profit was at stake, like Henry de Neville against his sisters.²³⁸ It is possible that, in cases like this where people were being sued by members of their extended families, emotions would also have been on trial, as well as the arguments over property.²³⁹

When a baron had no son to succeed him, the succession to the barony went to his nearest kin which often allowed women to inherit. In 1294, Gilbert de Gant V granted to Edward I his barony of Folkingham including his rich manors at Barton upon Humber, Folkingham, Heckington and

²³³ 'Lincolnshire Assize Roll, 483, m. 62', *Lincolnshire Notes and Queries*, vol. IX (1907), p. 147.

²³⁴ *Glanvill*, p. 76; Holt, 'Feudal Society', p. 10.

²³⁵ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 102.

²³⁶ *ROF*, p. 509.

²³⁷ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. V, pp. 274-275.

²³⁸ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 17.

²³⁹ Sue Sheridan Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest: Suing for Dower in the Royal Courts, circa 1272-1350', in S.S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Michigan University Press, 1993), p. 95.

Edenham.²⁴⁰ After his death, the small estate which had not been granted to the king was spilt between his two nephews and his unmarried sister, Juliana.²⁴¹ Baronial women who remained single have been neglected within the historiography, instead the focus has been on single women of lower status such as townswomen. This could be because singlewomen were more common in families of much poorer status than in aristocratic families, who viewed marriage as important for improving the prestige of their family.²⁴² Whilst he was alive, Gilbert de Gant V granted to Juliana, for her lifetime, 42l. 20d. of land from his manor in Barton, which would revert to the king after her death.²⁴³ Juliana was possibly able to remain single because she was a member of an important Lincolnshire family so could rely on her brother for financial support. Singlewomen of all statuses often forged closer ties with their siblings because their kinship networks were smaller as they did not acquire marital kin.²⁴⁴ Evidence for the involvement of aristocratic maidens in religious patronage is reasonably scarce, presumably due to their limited access to property in their own right.²⁴⁵ After she inherited, Juliana de Gant granted her share in the manor of Skendleby to Nun Cotham Priory for prayers for her soul and those of her ancestors.²⁴⁶ There is no evidence that any of her kin patronised this house which illustrates how Juliana created her own identity separate from that of her family. This suggests, that as a single woman, Juliana was able to follow her own policies without interference from a male relative. As well as participating in religious patronage, Juliana also carried out acts of lordship. She granted part of her inheritance in Well and Mawthorpe to Adam de Welle, who was a tenant of the barony of Folkingham.²⁴⁷ Juliana's position as a single woman and an heiress clearly gave her freedom to exercise agency on her own terms, not often experienced by other baronial women.

During the thirteenth century, if baronial women unexpectedly inherited then their marital families gained far more than they had anticipated when their marriages were arranged.²⁴⁸ In 1306, after the death of Robert V, the heirs to the barony of Tattershall were Joan of Driby, Isabella of Orreby, and Thomas Cailly, the son of their sister Emma. There is a debate over whether Joan, Isabella, and Emma were the daughters of Robert III or his granddaughters. In the

²⁴⁰ *CPR, 1292-1301*, p. 82.

²⁴¹ *CCR, 1302-07*, p. 504; *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1272-1307* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office 1911), p. 401.

²⁴² Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, 'A Singular Past', in Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (eds.), *Singlewomen in the European Past 1250-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 6.

²⁴³ *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1300-26*, p. 153; *CCR, 1296-1302*, pp. 350, 360.

²⁴⁴ Bennett and Froide, 'A Singular Past', pp. 13, 23-24.

²⁴⁵ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 158.

²⁴⁶ TNA, C 143/57/13.

²⁴⁷ TNA, C 143/67/7; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. V (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1908), p. 200.

²⁴⁸ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 19.

inquisition held after Robert's V death in 1306, the jurors stated that Robert's heirs were his great-aunts, the daughters of Robert III.²⁴⁹ Yet Cokayne argued that there was reason to believe that this statement was inaccurate. An examination of the chronological details of the lives of Joan, Isabella and Emma and their issue would suggest that instead they were the daughters of Robert IV and Joan.²⁵⁰ If Cokayne was wrong and they were the sisters of Robert IV, then they would clearly not have inherited a share of his wife, Joan's, inheritance. When Joan died in 1310, part of her share in the Middleham fee passed to her sister Mary Neville, who also held other estates which had formed part of Joan's share of their father's inheritance. Nonetheless, Joan of Tattershall settled her manor of Hethersett on William Bernak and his wife Alice. Alice was the daughter of Joan of Driby, so Joan of Tattershall would have had no reason to settle this manor on Alice if she was not her granddaughter.²⁵¹ C.T. Clay suggested it is possible that upon Joan of Tattershall's death, her inheritance was acquired by Mary de Neville by purchase or exchange.²⁵² It would therefore appear that the jurors were wrong in their assumptions and that Joan, Isabella and Emma were the daughters of Robert IV and Joan.

Widows could be a problem for heirs as they were entitled to one third of their husbands' estates to hold for the remainder of their lifetimes which could lead to an heir's impoverishment.²⁵³ After the death of her second husband, Walter Marshal, Margaret de Lacy, Countess of Lincoln, was entitled to a third of the extensive Marshal estates. She was successful in obtaining her dower to the discontent of the many Marshal heirs as they had to wait to gain all their property.²⁵⁴ Conflict between heirs and widows was also common amongst the baronage in Lincolnshire. When the barony of Tattershall was divided up between the three heirs, Joan of Driby, Isabella of Orreby and Emma's son, Thomas Cailly, there were also three widows claiming dower from the estates: Joan widow of Robert IV, Eve widow of Robert V and Joan widow of Robert VI. Robert VI died in 1306, but the barony was not formally divided up until 1308 which illustrates the complex matter which faced the king's officials. Each heir received lands and rents worth at least £18 13s. 7d, with Joan of Driby receiving the manor of Tattershall as the eldest sister.²⁵⁵ The division of the inheritance did not go completely smoothly; in 1310 a suit was brought by Joan, widow of Robert VI, against Isabella and John of Orreby over lands which Joan claimed as her dower, whilst Isabella

²⁴⁹ TNA, C 133/123/12; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. IV (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1913), pp. 257-266.

²⁵⁰ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12 pt. 1, p. 653, footnote C.

²⁵¹ *Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids, A.D. 1284-1431*, vol. III (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1904), pp. 444, 475, 533, 589.

²⁵² *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. V, pp. 305-306.

²⁵³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 37; Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 81.

²⁵⁴ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century England*, pp. 53-54.

²⁵⁵ *CCR, 1307-13*, pp. 58-68; *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1272-1307*, pp. 547-549.

claimed the estates as part of her share of the inheritance. The three heirs, Isabella, Joan and Thomas, all had to appear as warrantors against Joan.²⁵⁶ This reveals the tensions which existed when there was a young widow claiming dower as she could live for years and therefore reduce the size of the estates the heirs would receive.²⁵⁷

Before they received their inheritance there is no evidence that Joan or Isabella were involved in estate administration. After they inherited shares of the rich barony of Tattershall they became more visible in the surviving records. This suggests that their inheritance changed their positions within their marriages, so they were able to exercise a greater degree of agency than that which they had previously enjoyed. Isabella and John of Orreby granted to Joan of Driby lands and rents in Attleborough, Besthorpe, and Buckenham, in Norfolk, possibly because they were nearer to Joan's share of the Tattershall estates. At the same time they granted a messuage and land in Carleton, Yorkshire, and Tibenham, Norfolk, to William Florence.²⁵⁸ Isabella acted with her husband and it is impossible to know whether Isabella made the decision to grant William Florence the land or if it was her husband's. Isabella clearly had agency within her marriage and maybe her change in status to an heiress provided her with more involvement in property matters. Isabella's sister, Joan of Driby, in her widowhood, had the freedom of action to administer her inheritance as she wished, whilst Isabella was still reliant on her husband. Joan of Driby settled the manors of Tattershall, Lincolnshire, and Breedon, Leicestershire, and rents from her other inheritance on herself for life, and after her death they were to pass to her younger son Robert. She gave to her daughter, Alice, and William de Bernak her share in the manor of Wymondham, Norfolk, and an eighth part of the manor of Buckenham, Norfolk.²⁵⁹ It is clear that Joan wished to provide for her younger son and daughter, as her eldest son had inherited his father's estates.²⁶⁰ Joan also granted to Maud and her husband, James de Ros, a third of share in the manor of Hunmanby, Yorkshire.²⁶¹ Maud was the daughter of Alice Bernak, and therefore was the granddaughter of Joan of Driby. In this case, Joan was using her inheritance to ensure that she was providing for her children, specifically her female descendants. When the Ferrers sisters inherited their share of the Marshal estates, they distributed their lands in different ways. Some kept their inheritance, whilst others granted shares to their children or tenants. They acted exactly as they wished with their estates, ensuring that those who were important to them

²⁵⁶ *CCR, 1307-13*, p. 216.

²⁵⁷ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 23.

²⁵⁸ TNA, C 143/72/19.

²⁵⁹ TNA, C 143/168/1.

²⁶⁰ W.O. Massingberd, 'Lords of the Manor of Driby', *Lincoln and Nottingham Associated Architectural Society*, vol. 23 (1897), pp. 113-114.

²⁶¹ TNA, C 143/157/13.

benefited.²⁶² Their share of the barony of Tattershall meant that Joan and Isabella could act in the same manner as the Ferrers sisters; they granted their estates to the people who meant the most to them.

The succession of numerous sisters to a barony could create cohesion amongst themselves and their husbands by creating a shared interest in their inherited property.²⁶³ When the Marshal inheritance was divided amongst its numerous heirs, they cooperated by exchanging properties to try and consolidate their estates.²⁶⁴ This practice of cooperation can also be seen amongst the heiresses to the barony of Redbourne. In 1252, upon the death of Alexander III de Neville, his barony was inherited by his five sisters which caused the estates and wealth of the already minor barony to become fragmented. In 1280, the coparceners of the barony of Redbourne were accused of allowing John Eton, the husband of the eldest sister, to hold the entire fee from the chief lord, the king. The younger sisters and their husbands would hold their fifths from Eton as his under-tenants and therefore would do homage to John Eton. This arrangement was to the detriment of the king so an inquiry was held to sort the matter out.²⁶⁵ This illustrates how a family worked together in the interests of their family. At some point, it appears that Joan and John Eton and Margaret and her husband, Nicholas, exchanged part of their inheritance. Margaret received shares in the estates in Lincolnshire, along with Ellen and Juliana.²⁶⁶ Joan Eton inherited as her share of the barony, estates at Nunnington and Mirfield, Yorkshire, near to where John Eton's family holdings were located.²⁶⁷ It appears to have been a family strategy to exchange their shares of the barony so that they received lands near their husbands' property as this would have been more practical for administration.²⁶⁸ Margaret and Nicholas also exchanged lands with Ellen and her first husband William de Pontefract. Margaret gave to Ellen her share in the estates at Mirfield and Hopton in exchange for land in Redbourne, Lincolnshire.²⁶⁹ It appears that the five sisters worked amicably towards their family strategies whereby they divided their estates in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire with discussion over which estates would be suitable for each sister.

²⁶² Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 27.

²⁶³ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 15.

²⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, p. 20.

²⁶⁵ *Placita de Quo Warranto Temporibus Edward I. II. & III.*, (ed.) W. Illingworth (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1818), p. 426.

²⁶⁶ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. II, p. 340.

²⁶⁷ *CCR, 1253-54*, p. 3; *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, vol. I, p. 103.

²⁶⁸ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 116.

²⁶⁹ Alfred S. Ellis, 'Dodsworth's Yorkshire Notes', *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topography Journal*, vol. VII (London: Bradbury, Agnew and Co., 1882), p. 268.

Transfers between family members reaffirmed the need for cooperation between families which can be seen amongst the Neville sisters and their respective husbands.²⁷⁰

In the thirteenth century, baronial families in Lincolnshire were close and worked together to support their families' interests. When women married into their new marital families, they still remained in contact with their siblings and maintained their relationships. When the baronies were divided between numerous sisters there is limited evidence of conflict between the siblings. Instead, they clearly worked together to guarantee each other's support and to see that the division of the estates went smoothly. In the case of the barony of Redbourne, the estates were divided to ensure that each sister received her inheritance in a location which suited her and her husband's interests. The subsequent section considers the next stage in the female lifecycle, that of widowhood, to examine how this changed baronial women's experiences and opportunities.

²⁷⁰ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 25.

Part Two: Widowhood

Ward and Johns, among others, view the life-cycle stage of widowhood as the period when aristocratic women experienced their greatest freedom. The roles in estate management and religious patronage which an aristocratic woman assumed during her marriage were magnified after she became a widow.²⁷¹ As a *femme sole*, an aristocratic woman was able to exercise complete control over her land and she could plead in the courts as an independent individual and without the appearance of a male relative.²⁷² Even so, in spite of this more independent experience for aristocratic women, widowhood would also have been a turbulent, emotional time, since they experienced bereavement. Ricketts has argued that the category of widowhood has been generalised when studied by historians and that instead each woman needs to be considered on an individual basis.²⁷³ This section considers the property rights of baronial widows and how effective they were in the administration of their estates. Furthermore it examines baronial women in the context of their families, looking at whether they remarried and had control over their children's wardships.

4. After the Death of Her Husband: Estates and Wardships

In 1250, after the death of William Longespée, Henry Wingham was ordered to give Idonea seisin of her inheritance.²⁷⁴ Bracton stated that a widow was entitled to a third of each tenement which her husband held in his demesne or what was allocated to her at the church door on the day of her marriage.²⁷⁵ Widowhood allowed widows to have access and control over land through dower, inheritance (if they were heiresses) or *maritagium*, which meant that in certain cases there were several wealthy and influential baronial women who played important roles in the localities.²⁷⁶ Some baronial women would have found widowhood an emotional time, since they were not only faced with the loss of their husbands, but they also had to deal with underage children as women did not automatically receive guardianship of their children.²⁷⁷ Feudal prerogative meant that the king controlled the underage heirs of his tenants-in-chiefs and it was his decision who to give the wardship to.²⁷⁸ It is necessary to consider whether baronial widows faced any difficulties in securing their dower either from their children or their husbands' heirs.

²⁷¹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, pp. 72-73.

²⁷² Archer, "How ladies... who live on their manors", p. 162; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 34.

²⁷³ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, pp. 2-3.

²⁷⁴ *CCR, 1247-51*, p. 334.

²⁷⁵ *Glanvill*, p. 59; *Bracton*, vol. II, p. 265.

²⁷⁶ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 37.

²⁷⁷ Linda Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord: Noble Widows and Land in Thirteenth-Century Britain', *Historical Reflections*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992), p. 87.

²⁷⁸ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 90, footnote 47; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 196.

This chapter also discusses the involvement which baronial women were able to have in the wardship of their children if they were underage.

Once widowed, baronial women received their dower from their late husbands' estates and secured their inheritance and *maritagium*. Clause seven of the 1225 issue of Magna Carta stated that a widow should receive her inheritance and *maritagium* immediately after her husband's death.²⁷⁹ After Mary de Neville's husband Robert died in 1271, she had independent control over her inheritance for the first time in her life. They had married in around 1260 so Mary de Neville was still of child bearing age and would have made a very eligible prospective bride.²⁸⁰ She made the decision to remain single and had control over her inheritance for 49 years until her death in 1320.²⁸¹ Another example of a wealthy Lincolnshire baronial widow was Eve, widow of Robert V of Tattershall. In 1303, she was assigned a third of the extensive Tattershall estates, receiving a share in seven manors, valued in total at around £127 2s. 2d.²⁸² The extensive dower made Eve a rich individual, still of child bearing age. Widowhood transformed the position of baronial women, from women who were dependent on their husbands to independent, and in some cases, very wealthy individuals.

The dower of aristocratic widows was supposed to be assigned to them within forty days.²⁸³ Nevertheless, in practice, baronial widows could face longer than this to secure their dower. After the death of Alexander II, custody of his lands was granted to Richard de Alençon who failed to give Alexander's widow, Mateleona, her dower. The king intervened and ordered the sheriffs of Lincoln and York to nominate the lands for Mateleona. In addition to this, Richard was ordered to give Mateleona compensation for the damages she incurred to support herself without access to her dower.²⁸⁴ Mateleona's experiences reflect contemporary legislation as the Statute of Merton of 1236 stated that if dower was withheld then she should be given damages.²⁸⁵ Nonetheless Alexander died in 1249 and Mateleona's problems in gaining her dower were not resolved until 1250, which was not within the forty days agreed in Magna Carta.

Mateleona was not the only baronial widow in Lincolnshire who faced a struggle to gain her dower. Lora de Gant also faced a long delay. K.B. McFarlane argued that Edward I had a specific

²⁷⁹ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 422.

²⁸⁰ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 496.

²⁸¹ *Calendar of Inquisition Post Mortem*, vol. VI (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1910), pp. 137-138.

²⁸² TNA, C 135/110/4; *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1272-1307*, p. 483.

²⁸³ Carpenter, *Magna Carta*, pp. 40-41; Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 422.

²⁸⁴ CCR, 1247-51, pp. 266, 271; *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1249-50*, no. 241, accessed 20th January 2017; Young, *The Making of the Neville Family*, p. 51.

²⁸⁵ Provisions of Merton, *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. I (Record Commission, 1810), p. 2; Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 60.

policy towards his earls, whereby he endowed members of his family with estates taken from his earls, including Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby, who was persuaded to give his patrimony to Edward's brother, Edmund.²⁸⁶ On the other hand, Andrew Spencer stated that Edward's relationship was not simply about taking from his earls and that his selfishness has been exaggerated.²⁸⁷ It is possible to argue that McFarlane's argument concerning the policy of Edward I could also have extended towards his barons as Gilbert V de Gant granted his barony to the king who gave it back to him for the remainder of his life.²⁸⁸ It is unlikely that Gilbert would have done this had he and Lora had a son, and this action caused his three sisters and their heirs to be partially disinherited. After Gilbert's death, Edward I settled the estates on Henry Beaumont, a close relative of Edward's wife, Eleanor.²⁸⁹ Lora de Gant was allocated her dower by the king and received lands worth £77 15s. 3d. in the manors which Gilbert had granted to the king.²⁹⁰ She also received in the manors of Skendleby and Thorpe, Lincolnshire, land worth £22 18s. 10d.²⁹¹ Lora de Gant was still being allocated dower in 1305, seven years after Gilbert's death.²⁹² Lora's experiences in gaining her dower does not reflect contemporary legislation as she did not receive her dower within forty days and she was not given any compensation for the delay. This was possibly because Edward I kept the profits after he secured possession of the estates.

Once widowed, baronial women should have theoretically taken possession of their dower without facing any obstacles.²⁹³ Nonetheless this was not always the case as Alice de Neville and Lora de Gant both faced litigation over their dower. Immediately after the death of Henry de Neville in 1227, his widow Alice sued Robert de Acford for her share in ten bovates of land in Kewick, Yorkshire; Paul of Lilling over land in Hayton and Lilling, Yorkshire; Ranulph de Greensby also for land in Lilling, Yorkshire; and Hugh of Wavell for land in Sutton, Lincolnshire, as well as others.²⁹⁴ Alice's litigation may reflect an attempt to make a record at the law courts of the dower to which she was entitled to in case of future lawsuits, rather than a struggle to gain control of it.²⁹⁵ Then, in 1231, Alice sued Robert FitzMaldred over her dower estates in Lilling, Yorkshire,

²⁸⁶ K.B. McFarlane, 'Had Edward I a 'Policy' Towards the Earls?', *History*, vol. 50, no. 169 (1965), pp. 145-159.

²⁸⁷ Andrew Spencer, 'Royal Patronage and the Earls in the Reign of Edward I', *History*, vol. 93, no. 1 (2008), pp. 20-46.

²⁸⁸ *CPR, 1292-1301*, p. 82.

²⁸⁹ *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1300-1326*, p. 107; *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1272-1307*, p. 401.

²⁹⁰ *CCR, 1296-1302*, p. 168.

²⁹¹ *CCR, 1302-07*, pp. 220-221.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

²⁹³ Janet S. Loengard, 'Rationabilis Dos: Magna Carta and the Widow's "Fair Share" in the Earlier Thirteenth Century', in S.S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Michigan University Press, 1993), p. 59.

²⁹⁴ *CRR, 1227-30*, nos. 31, 134, 147, 287, 288, 337, 340-342, pp. 7, 31, 33, 64, 77-78.

²⁹⁵ Loengard, 'What did Magna Carta mean to Widows?', p. 138.

Hoxton, Yorkshire, and Sutton, Lincolnshire.²⁹⁶ This suggests that Robert FitzMaldred obstructed Alice in gaining her dower lands as it would diminish Isabella's inheritance during Alice's lifetime. We do not know if Isabella approved of his actions or not. The fact that Alice had no children left her vulnerable as she faced a struggle against someone who presumably felt no sense of responsibility towards her. This family quarrel over dower may well have added to the emotional turmoil which Alice would have gone through after the death of her husband.²⁹⁷

Lora de Gant also faced a struggle over her dower. In 1307, the king's official, Walter de Gloucester was ordered to stop meddling with lands in Poolham. He had taken 83 acres of land into his hands after the death of Robert de Barkworth, but one fifth of the fee had been assigned to Lora by the king.²⁹⁸ Joan of Tattershall, the widow of Robert VI of Tattershall, also faced opposition over her dower, as did Eustachia from her first husband, Thomas de Verdun.²⁹⁹ These baronial women all produced no living children with their husbands so they were reliant on their husband's heirs, who would not have had a vested interest in protecting their rights to dower.³⁰⁰ In her study of the widows in the Mortimer family, Mitchell found that if the widow was claiming dower from her stepson then she might face a struggle. It was not in the heir's interest to relinquish a large part of his inheritance for what could be numerous years, so often the heir might obstruct her from gaining seisin.³⁰¹

After the death of their husbands, baronial women were not only faced with securing their dower, in some cases they were also left with young children who would have gone into wardship. Some aristocratic women were able to obtain custody of their underage children and family lands. Alice de Lacy, for example, was able to gain control of her son, Henry's, wardship in 1258 in exchange for paying around £300 a year.³⁰² Nevertheless the kin of underage heirs were not always favoured when it came to selecting guardians; after 1217 the widows of barons and earls received only five percent of grants of wardships.³⁰³ This can also be seen in thirteenth-century Lincolnshire when William de Stuteville paid 1000 marks to have the wardship of Gilbert

²⁹⁶ *CRR*, 1230-32, no. 1325 p. 281.

²⁹⁷ Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 85.

²⁹⁸ *CCR*, 1302-07, pp. 503-504.

²⁹⁹ For the discussion about Joan of Tattershall's dower see, pp. 44-45. For the discussion on Eustachia Basset's dower see, pp. 36-37.

³⁰⁰ Loengard, 'What did Magna Carta mean to Widows?', p. 142.

³⁰¹ Linda E. Mitchell, 'Noble Widowhood in the Thirteenth Century: Three Generations of Mortimer Widows, 1246-1334', in L. Mirrer (ed.), *Upon My Husband's Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 179-180.

³⁰² Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 90.

³⁰³ Susanna Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta on Widows: Evidence from the Fine Rolls 1216-1225', *Fine of the Month: November 2007*, <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-11-2007.html>; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, pp. 196-197.

de Gant, instead of it being granted to his mother.³⁰⁴ Guardians were often appointed if they had estates in the same county as the child, as it was a successful strategy in temporarily supplementing their own holdings until the heir was of age.³⁰⁵ It is hard to determine whether aristocratic widows might have had a role in encouraging a political or family ally to gain the wardship of their sons, thereby allowing them to still maintain a role in the lives of their children.³⁰⁶ Gunnora de Gant married William's brother, Nicholas de Stuteville, which suggests that she could have had some influence in encouraging William to fine for her son's wardship.³⁰⁷

Wardship was a lucrative right, as the guardian would enjoy the profits from the estates, as well as being entitled to the value of the heir's marriage. In exchange, the appointed guardian was responsible for the management of the lands and was obliged to provide suitable maintenance for the child.³⁰⁸ The barony of Redbourne experienced consecutive minorities over two generations. After the death of Alexander I de Neville in 1222, he left behind two young sons, John and Alexander, and a daughter, Clemence. John's wardship was granted to Geoffrey de Neville and Richard de Alençon who agreed that they would pay the £100 relief, in addition to paying off the debts which Alexander owed the king.³⁰⁹ Richard de Alençon was a minor official of the king, holding various positions such as the custodianship of Scarborough Castle.³¹⁰ He also held two knights' fees of the Earl of Lincoln and half a knight's fee in Fulletby and Althorpe, Lincolnshire, near where part of the barony of Redbourne was located.³¹¹ It is probable that he was granted the wardship of the heir to the barony because he was already acquainted with the family. Then upon the death of John de Neville, his mother Margaret was ordered to deliver her second son, Alexander II, to Richard.³¹² After the death of the holder to a barony, *Bracton* stated that the chief lord retained the right to the custody of the estates and marriage of each of the heirs, so that if the heir died whilst underage, the lord would have the wardship of the next child until an heir came of age.³¹³ If baronial women, such as Margaret de Neville, were unsuccessful in gaining custody of their eldest sons, they still remained responsible for their younger children,

³⁰⁴ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Ninth Year of the Reign of King Richard I, Michaelmas 1197*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series VIII, 1931), p. 62.

³⁰⁵ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 222.

³⁰⁶ Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta'.

³⁰⁷ *Feet of Fines of the Seventh and Eight Years of the Reign of Richard I, A.D. 1196 to 1197* (Pipe Roll Society: vol. XX, 1896), pp. 99-100.

³⁰⁸ Sue Sheridan Walker, 'The Feudal Family and the Common Law Courts: the Pleas Protecting Rights of Wardship and Marriage, c. 1225-1375', *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 14 (1988), p. 15.

³⁰⁹ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1221-22*, no. 192, accessed 20th January 2017.

³¹⁰ *CCR, 1251-53*, pp. 169, 287; *CPR, 1216-25*, p. 515.

³¹¹ *Liber Feodorum*. vol. I, p. 247; *Liber Feodorum*. vol. II, pp. 1061, 1093, 1103.

³¹² *CCR, 1227-31*, pp. 442-443; *CPR, 1225-32*, p. 405.

³¹³ *Bracton*, vol. II, p. 257.

particularly unmarried daughters.³¹⁴ Richard owed 20 marks and one palfrey for remaining in control of the barony of Redbourne and for having custody of Alexander until he came of age in 1236.³¹⁵ Sometime after Richard gained control of the estates of the barony of Redbourne, Clemence was married to Richard's brother, William de Alençon, strengthening the connections between the two families.³¹⁶

Once Alexander II died, Richard was again given control of the wardship and lands of Alexander III during his minority.³¹⁷ When a baronial family, such as the Nevilles of Redbourne, experienced a minority in successive generations, its matrimonial alliances were determined by the choices of royally appointed guardians, in this case Richard.³¹⁸ After the death of Alexander III de Neville, his heirs were his five sisters who were in the custody of Mateleona, their mother. Mateleona was ordered to place her daughters in the custody of Richard de Alençon, but she refused to do so and unjustly detained them. She only gave them up once she was ordered to do so by the king, causing much dispute over their wardships.³¹⁹ Perhaps she did not wish to place her daughters in the custody of the same person who had failed to look after her son. Mateleona was acting to protect her children and it must have been a very difficult time for her as she lost her son and then was unable to prevent her daughters from being placed in someone else's custody.

Before Magna Carta, aristocratic widows were more likely to gain custody of their children's wardships, in exchange for the payment of large fines.³²⁰ After the death of Henry Biset, Isolda paid £1000 for having custody of Henry's heir and estates.³²¹ Ralph Turner has argued that William Biset was the son of both Henry and Isolda, however this is likely to be incorrect and William was only her stepson.³²² In a charter Isolda issued during the period of her widowhood after the death of her fourth husband, she referred to the souls of her ancestors and her heir, Robert of Tattershall, but made no mention of any other children.³²³ Isolda presumably had a

³¹⁴ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 37.

³¹⁵ CPR, 1225-32, pp. 405, 412; CCR, 1227-31, pp. 412, 442-443; CCR, 1234-37, p. 288.

³¹⁶ *Bracton's Notebook*, vol. III, no. 1187, p. 201.

³¹⁷ CCR, 1247-51, p. 191; CPR, 1247-58, p. 46.

³¹⁸ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, pp. 209-210.

³¹⁹ CCR, 1251-53, p. 166; Young, *The Making of the Neville Family*, p. 51.

³²⁰ Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta'; RaGena C. DeAragon, 'Dowager Countesses, 1069-1230', in Christopher Harper-Bill (ed.), *Anglo Norman Studies XVII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1994* (Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 97-98

³²¹ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Tenth Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1208*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XXIII, 1945), pp. 198-199.

³²² Ralph V. Turner, 'Huntingfield, William of (d. on or before 1225), landowner' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

³²³ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. IV, no. I, (eds.) J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (London: 1823), p. 222.

close relationship with Henry's son and heir to want custody of him. It would also have been a profitable arrangement as she would have been able to enjoy the income from his estates until he came of age. She made an agreement with William of Huntingfield, whereby he had custody of William Biset, whom he married to his daughter Sarra, in exchange for paying off part of her debts.³²⁴ It does not appear that Isolda tried to gain the wardship of her eldest son, Robert II of Tattershall, and instead his wardship was granted to William d'Aubigny, Earl of Arundel, whose daughter he married.³²⁵ This was often a common motive behind why a guardian wanted a particular wardship, to marry the heir to a relative.³²⁶ When Robert V of Tattershall died, his widow Eve also was not able to secure the wardship of her son, Robert VI. It was not unusual for an aristocratic woman to make no great attempt to secure the control of her children; she possibly viewed it as a natural process of society and the best option for her son's education and chances to make a grand marriage.³²⁷ Instead, Eve was ordered to deliver her son into the custody of Hugh Bardolf, who had been granted Robert's marriage, and subsequently Robert was married to Hugh's daughter, Joan.³²⁸ Edward I's second wife, Queen Margaret, was granted custody of some of the Tattershall estates as payment for a gift of £4000 which the king had made her.³²⁹ Throughout this period, wardships were used to subsidize the cost of gifts or pensions and Edward I often used them as a means of repaying his numerous debts.³³⁰

In conclusion, throughout the thirteenth century baronial widows, like the widows of earls, knights and other men of free status, were protected under the common law which allowed them to gain a third of their husbands' property as dower. In 1225, with the issue of Magna Carta, widows were protected from exploitation by the crown and it supported their rights to dower and independence.³³¹ In practice, however, this was not always the case, as several baronial women in Lincolnshire faced a struggle to secure their dower, especially if they did not have children. Baronial widows also faced uncertainty concerning the wardship of their children as none of the women of this study were able to gain control of their sons' wardships, an experience shared by

³²⁴ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fourteenth Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1212*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XXX, 1954), p. 177; *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Sixteenth Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1214*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XXXV, 1959), p. 172; *Liber Feodorum*, vol. I, p. 141; J.W. Willis-Bund (ed.), *A History of the County of Worcester*, vol. III (London: Victoria County History, 1913), pp. 160-162; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 47.

³²⁵ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. III, no. I, p. 218; *Rotuli Chartarum*, p. 188; *RLC*, vol. I, pp. 124, 201.

³²⁶ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 198.

³²⁷ Sue Sheridan Walker, 'Widow and Ward: the Feudal Law of Child Custody in Medieval England', in Susan Mosher Stuard (ed.), *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 110-112.

³²⁸ *CPR, 1301-07*, p.152; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 12 pt. 1, pp. 652-653.

³²⁹ *CPR, 1301-07*, pp. 161-162, 206; Walker, 'The Feudal Family', p. 16.

³³⁰ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 175.

³³¹ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 81.

many other aristocratic women.³³² The next chapter will explore the remarriages of baronial widows and examine what degree of agency they experienced compared to that of their previous marriages.

³³² Walker, 'Widow and Ward', pp. 164-165.

5. Remarriage

In thirteenth-century Lincolnshire, many baronial women were still of child bearing years when they were widowed. Some decided to remain single such as Mary de Neville and Lora de Gant, whilst others chose to marry again. Once a widow remarried, she gave up her *femme sole* status and once again became dependent on her husband who gained control over her dower estates and any inheritance she might have had.³³³ This chapter examines the motives behind why baronial women remarried and their roles within their subsequent marriages.

Subsequent Marriages

It was usual for baronial women to remarry at least once, and the matter of their remarriage was an important consideration for both the crown and their families.³³⁴ From his study of 81 baronial families, Waugh has shown how women had a one in third chance of remarrying if they outlived their husbands.³³⁵ Baronial women were able to accumulate extensive dower lands obtained through successive marriages, so become important individuals.³³⁶ One exceptional example of this was Isolda Pantulf, the mother of Robert II of Tattershall, who amassed widespread estates.³³⁷ Isolda was married five times: first to Hugh de Mumpincun; second to Walter of Tattershall (*d.* 1199 or 1200); third to Henry Biset (*d.* 1208); fourth to Walter de Baskerville (*d.* 1213); and finally, until her death, to Aumary de St. Amand.³³⁸ Her access to inheritance and dower meant that Isolda had estates which stretched across England in Leicestershire, Worcestershire and Sussex, as well as lands in Ireland, which made her an extremely attractive prospective bride.³³⁹ In 1213, Isolda had to pay a fine of 100 marks and one palfrey to have seisin of the vill of Maggurman, Dublin as her dower from Henry Biset.³⁴⁰ For both this fine and the one she paid to have custody of Henry's son and heir, her pledges were Geoffrey Longchamps, Walter de Dunstanville, Fulk FitzWarin and Ranulf, Earl of Chester.³⁴¹ Geoffrey Longchamps was the brother of William Longchamps who had been the chancellor under King Richard, whilst Walter de Dunstanville held lands in Wiltshire, Shropshire and Oxfordshire.³⁴² Fulk FitzWarin was a

³³³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 41.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³³⁵ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 47.

³³⁶ Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 23.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³³⁸ G.E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 11 (St Catherine Press, 1949), p. 296, footnote B.

³³⁹ *CRR*, 1189-1201, p. 214; *CRR*, 1220-20, p. 324; *CRR*, 1223-24, p. 35.

³⁴⁰ *RLC*, vol. I, pp. 224, 298; *ROF*, pp. 511-512, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1171-1251*, (ed.) H. Sweetman (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1875), pp. 79, 99, 115, 121, 128.

³⁴¹ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Tenth Year of the Reign of King John*, pp. 198-199; *ROF*, pp. 511-512.

³⁴² Kathleen Thompson, 'Dunstanville, de, family, (*per.* c. 1090- c. 1292), *gentry*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

member of an important Shropshire family who also held land in Leicestershire. He married Matilda, the widow of Theobald Butler who had been the butler of Ireland, where some of Isolda's dower lands were located.³⁴³ Ranulf, Earl of Chester, was a great magnate who held estates in Shropshire, Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including the barony of Bolingbroke.³⁴⁴ It is clear that Isolda had access to important connections which enabled her to bring influential pressure to support her case.³⁴⁵ Before her marriage to Walter de Baskerville, Richard de Neville paid 20 palfreys to obtain the king's permission to marry Isolda; however she must have been able to exercise some agency over the decision as she turned him down.³⁴⁶ After the death of Walter de Baskerville, Isolda offered 100 marks and one palfrey to have her dower lands in Leicestershire.³⁴⁷ Isolda was able to obtain justice in her claims for dower, but it was a slow process due to the problems which King John faced during this period as she first fined for her dower in 1213 but did not receive complete restoration of her lands until 1217. Isolda, like many others, had to wait to secure her rightful lands because of the unstable political situation in England during King John's reign and the early years of Henry III's reign.³⁴⁸ Isolda had to pay numerous fines to gain control of the dower to which she was legally entitled, as well as purchasing the right to not be forced into another marriage. These were common problems faced by aristocratic widows at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and were dealt with in clause seven of the 1225 version of Magna Carta.³⁴⁹

Isolda Pantolf was not the only baronial woman who faced being remarried to a man not of her choosing. In the early thirteenth century, baronial women were often pressured to remarry men of their families' or the crown's choosing, especially as men paid large sums of money to the exchequer to marry heiresses or widows.³⁵⁰ Robert I died in around September 1212 and over a year later Rose was remarried to Robert Lisle, after he paid £100 to have Rose as his wife, along with her dower.³⁵¹ It is probable that she had no influence in the choice of her next marriage partner and that Robert wished to marry her for her lands. Another baronial woman, Gunnora de

³⁴³ Frederick Suppe, 'Fitzwarine Family (*per.* c. 1145-1315), *Landowners*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

³⁴⁴ Richard Eales, 'Ranulf (III) (Ranulf de Blundeville), Sixth Earl of Chester and First Earl of Lincoln, (1170-1232), *Magnate*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

³⁴⁵ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 184.

³⁴⁶ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Twelfth Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1210*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XXVI, 1949), p. 80.

³⁴⁷ *ROF*, p. 500.

³⁴⁸ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 184.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

³⁵⁰ Bartlett, *England Under the Normans and Angevin Kings*, p. 548; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, pp. 85-86.

³⁵¹ *ROF*, p. 487; *RLC*, vol. I, pp. 124, 132.

Gant, possibly remarried for the benefits which the match brought to her family, as by 1197 Gunnora had married Nicholas de Stuteville.³⁵² As well as bringing her dower to the marriage, Gunnora was also a coheir of her brother, Ralph d'Aubigny, so she must have been an attractive bride for Nicholas.³⁵³ Nicholas was a younger son, so Gunnora's inheritance and dower would have provided him with a landed estate.³⁵⁴

Gunnora probably agreed to the match as it allowed her to maintain contact and possibly still play a role in the upbringing of her son, who was in the custody of Nicholas's brother, William.³⁵⁵ Gilbert spent regular time in the company of his stepfather when he came of age as Nicholas witnessed several of Gilbert's charters.³⁵⁶ Gunnora's second marriage to Nicholas de Stuteville helped to strengthen the bond between two important local families, an important motive behind many baronial marriages.³⁵⁷ These connections came to the forefront during the rebellion in King John's reign as both Gunnora's husband, Nicholas, and her son, Gilbert, were leading rebels in the north.³⁵⁸ Women played a central role in creating family connections which became of great significance during periods of unrest.³⁵⁹ In 1217, Nicholas de Stuteville and Gilbert de Gant were both captured at the Battle of Lincoln which must have made it an extremely worrying time for Gunnora.³⁶⁰ Women were not passive, but shared and supported their husbands' political activities.³⁶¹

Clause seven of the 1225 Magna Carta stated that no widow was to be distrained to remarry against her wishes, but she had to give security that she would not remarry without the king's consent.³⁶² The work of Susanna Annesley has shown that after Magna Carta the consent of widows to their remarriages was still an ambiguous area. The king was concerned with compensation if a couple married without permission, not with whether the widow had consented to the match.³⁶³ Nonetheless, in Lincolnshire, baronial women appear to have enjoyed greater freedom of choice in selecting their subsequent husbands in the years and decades after Magna Carta, which can be seen with the remarriages of the women of Ashby. After the death of

³⁵² *Feet of Fines of the Seventh and Eight Years of the Reign of Richard I*, pp. 99-100.

³⁵³ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. IX, p. 15.

³⁵⁴ Walker, 'Litigation as a Personal Quest', p. 97; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 47.

³⁵⁵ Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta'. See the discussion on pp. 52-53.

³⁵⁶ *Rufford Charters*, vol. II, no. 724, p. 383; *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 896, p. 479.

³⁵⁷ Carpenter, *Magna Carta*, pp. 40-41; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 20; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 54.

³⁵⁸ Holt, *The Northerners*, p. 15.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 20.

³⁶⁰ Holt, *The Northerners*, p. 141.

³⁶¹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 17.

³⁶² Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 422; Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 85.

³⁶³ Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta'.

Robert FitzMaldred, Isabella de Neville married Gilbert de Brakenberg, who was a tenant of the fee of Bayeux.³⁶⁴ Gilbert de Brakenberg was already associated with the barony of Ashby as Alice de Neville had appointed Gilbert to act as her attorney in 1226.³⁶⁵ Gilbert had also witnessed the charter of Robert FitzMaldred issued to York Minster.³⁶⁶ Some baronial women, like Isabella de Neville, enjoyed this new sense of freedom often by choosing men of less wealth and lower status than themselves.³⁶⁷

Isabella was not the only baronial woman from the Neville family who married a man of her choice. Three years after the death of Robert de Neville, Ida de Neville married as her third husband, John FitzMarmaduke.³⁶⁸ John FitzMarmaduke held estates in Horden and Ravensholm, Durham, so it possible that she had become acquainted with him during her previous two marriages, as both Roger Bertram and Robert de Neville held lands in county Durham.³⁶⁹ If Ida de Ros was of age when she married Roger Bertram in 1252, she would have been in her late thirties or early forties when she married her third husband. She would have been moving towards the end of child bearing age, which demonstrates that her motives were not centred on having a family as she had not had any children with her previous two husbands.³⁷⁰ John FitzMarmaduke had a son with a previous wife, so it is probable that they may have married for love. Ida did not have the king's permission to marry, which demonstrates the agency that she exercised in her choice of third husband, as her first two husbands had been chosen for her by her family. After Ida's marriage to John, the king decided to return her dower lands to the couple as a special favour to her new husband.³⁷¹ It was common practice to seize the land of any widow who remarried without permission; this was to ensure they appeared before the king or paid a fine, and it was not a permanent forfeiture.³⁷² Access to land through dower allowed baronial widows to have greater independence in their decision of whether to remain single and if not, who their choice of husband would be. It, however, is difficult to determine how much baronial women were pressured by their families to remarry or how much practical and emotional considerations were involved in their decisions.³⁷³ Nonetheless many baronial women did choose to marry again, and this should not be seen as a desperate necessity because of their inability to function without

³⁶⁴ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 494.

³⁶⁵ *Lincolnshire Records: Abstracts of Final Concords*, p. 177.

³⁶⁶ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, no. 785, pp. 122-123.

³⁶⁷ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 40.

³⁶⁸ *CCR, 1279-88*, pp. 170, 318; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 496.

³⁶⁹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. II, p. 249.

³⁷⁰ For discussion about Ida's previous marriages, see p. 20.

³⁷¹ *CCR, 1279-88*, p. 318.

³⁷² Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, p. 89.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

a husband. Instead it should be viewed as another avenue where women exercised agency in controlling their lives.³⁷⁴

Litigation

When a baronial woman remarried, her dower properties came under the control of her husband, so he would have had to appear in any lawsuits which arose in connection with these properties.³⁷⁵ This did not, however, prevent baronial women from being active participants in bringing lawsuits or from being sued over their dower estates.³⁷⁶ Gunnora de Gant and Nicholas de Stuteville were involved in litigation against Maurice de Gant, the grandson of her first husband, Robert, from his first wife. Gunnora de Gant received the manor of Saltby as dower, but Maurice de Gant contested it as belonging to him through the inheritance of his grandmother, Alice Paynel, Robert de Gant's first wife.³⁷⁷ The case began in 1200, but was still being dealt with six years later.³⁷⁸ Gunnora appointed Robert of Edenham as her attorney, whilst her husband, Nicholas, appointed Henry Norris.³⁷⁹ Around the same time, Gilbert de Gant, Gunnora's son, also appointed Robert of Edenham to act as his representative.³⁸⁰ Henry Norris was also connected to the barony of Folkingham as he witnessed a charter of Gunnora.³⁸¹ This illustrates the authority Gunnora was able to enjoy within her second marriage, to choose her own representative and likely influence her husband's choice. Gunnora and Nicholas were also involved in litigation over Gunnora's inheritance. In 1197, Gunnora and Nicholas, alongside her sister Alice and her husband sued their cousin William d'Aubigny for their right to the lands of their brother, including 15 knight fees in Aubourn, Lincolnshire.³⁸² Gunnora de Gant does not appear to have been involved in litigation alongside her first husband, but with Nicholas de Stuteville she was involved in numerous cases. Gunnora and Nicholas demonstrated a determination to pursue and protect Gunnora's property rights.

³⁷⁴ Sue Sheridan Walker, 'Introduction', in S.S. Walker (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Michigan University Press, 1993), pp. 11-12

³⁷⁵ For a further discussion of this see pp. 26-27.

³⁷⁶ Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 82.

³⁷⁷ *CRR, 1189-1201*, p. 288; *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the First Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas 1199*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series X, 1933), p. 252.

³⁷⁸ *CRR, 1205-06*, p. 133; *ROF*, p. 61.

³⁷⁹ *CRR, 1189-1201*, p. 428; *CRR, 1205-06*, pp. 15, 133.

³⁸⁰ *CRR, 1205-06*, p. 10.

³⁸¹ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 890, p. 470.

³⁸² *Feet of Fines of the Seventh and Eight Years of the Reign of Richard I*, pp. 99-100; *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. IX, p. 15.

Isolda Pantolf was also involved in lawsuits because of her dower lands as she and Henry Biset sued Randolph de Amundeville over her dower in Sussex from her first husband.³⁸³ With her fifth husband, Aumary de St. Amand, Isolda was involved in litigation against Sara and Richard de Keynes concerning land in Shamblehurst, Hampshire, and Kidderminster, Worcestershire, which formed part of Isolda's dower from Henry Biset.³⁸⁴ Sara was the widow of William Biset, the son of Henry Biset.³⁸⁵ It does not appear that William lived to come of age as Sara was unsuccessful in claiming her dower in Kidderminster against Isolda.³⁸⁶ Sara and Richard called to warranty John Biset, the brother and eventual heir of Henry, who probably viewed Isolda as an inconvenience.³⁸⁷ John Biset and Aumary de St. Amand came to an agreement, whereby Aumary held the whole manor instead of the third to which Isolda was entitled, and then after the death of Isolda the manor reverted back to John Biset.³⁸⁸ This illustrates how the influence that she assumed in her marriages was centred on her dower lands from previous husbands. Isolda was actively involved in litigation, but only when the case was concerned with her properties, instead of those of her husbands.³⁸⁹ The control of property that ladies enjoyed as heiresses and widows gave baronial women power and status in their subsequent marriages, provided they enjoyed a solid, working relationship with their new spouses.³⁹⁰

In theory widows had a free choice over remarriage; however they could face pressure to take a new husband. The evidence from the lives of baronial women surrounding their remarriages supports the work of Annesley that as the thirteenth century went by, after Magna Carta, baronial women had a greater say over their futures.³⁹¹ They were not forced to marry men of the Crown's choosing during the reigns of King Henry III and Edward I, or to pay fines for the right either to remain single or to choose their own partners. If a baronial woman did remarry without the king's permission, then she faced having her dower lands confiscated. Yet, in the case of Ida de Neville, she was not punished for long and she did receive her lands back as a sign of favour. It is probable that access to dower estates allowed them to exercise increased agency in their

³⁸³ *CRR*, 1189-1201, p. 214.

³⁸⁴ *CRR*, 1220-21, p. 324; *CRR*, 1223-24, p. 35; *Rolls of the Justices in Eyre being the Rolls of Pleas and Assizes for Lincolnshire 1218-19 and Worcester 1221*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Seldon Society, vol. 58, 1934), pp. 513, 520, 649.

³⁸⁵ Turner, 'Huntingfield, William of'.

³⁸⁶ *Bracton's Notebook*, vol. III, no. 1580, pp. 458-459; *RLC*, vol. I, p. 568; Bund, *A History of the County of Worcester*, vol. III, pp. 160-162.

³⁸⁷ *CRR*, 1223-24, p. 35.

³⁸⁸ *CPR*, 1225-32, p. 175; *Calendar of the Charter Rolls, 1226-1257* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1908), p. 235.

³⁸⁹ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 59.

³⁹⁰ Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 82.

³⁹¹ Annesley, 'The Impact of Magna Carta'.

subsequent marriages which they did not enjoy during their previous ones. Baronial widows were, however, often able to gain control over extensive estates, both from dower and their inheritance, which allowed them to have greater influence within their local communities, which will be discussed next.³⁹²

³⁹² Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 79.

6. Estate Management

In the mid-thirteenth century, Robert Grosseteste wrote a treatise for Margaret de Lacy, the widowed Countess of Lincoln, on estate and household administration.³⁹³ Robert advised that the lord or lady should know a great level of detail about their estates: where their properties were located; how they were stocked; and what the lands could yield in crops.³⁹⁴ The treatise demonstrates the central role countesses were expected to take in the management of their estates, which would also have been expected of baronial women.³⁹⁵ The legal right to property enjoyed by aristocratic widows meant that some women could achieve considerable positions of influence within the localities.³⁹⁶ Once widowed, women enjoyed the same responsibilities as their husbands during their marriages. They carried out business with their tenants, answered for the military dues owed from their estates, and issued charters. Even so, the experiences of each baronial widow in the administration of their estates varied according to individual circumstances.³⁹⁷ This chapter examines the acts of lordship in which baronial women were involved and it also analyses the affinity of Mary de Neville. Charters provide the main evidence for the involvement of baronial women in administration as no household rolls have survived for the families in this study.

The Charters of Mary de Neville

During her lengthy widowhood, Mary de Neville exercised extensive agency in the localities, issuing charters as 'Mary de Neville, Lady of Middleham'.³⁹⁸ Through the use of this title, Mary was expressing her authority to act as lord within her family's estates.³⁹⁹ She issued one surviving charter during her marriage compared to the sixteen surviving charters issued during her widowhood.⁴⁰⁰ These land transactions of Mary de Neville illustrate how the life-cycle stage of widowhood allowed her to experience an increase in her involvement in the administration of her property, and in her opportunities to alienate property.⁴⁰¹ Nevertheless this could just be an accident of survival and that she could have issued more charters during her marriage which have

³⁹³ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 44.

³⁹⁴ *Walter of Henley's Husbandry, together with an Anonymous Husbandry, Seneschaucie and Robert Grosseteste's Rules*, (ed. and trans.) Elizabeth Lamond (London: Longmans, 1890), pp. 121-145; Ward, *Women in England*, p. 108.

³⁹⁵ Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century England*, p. 61.

³⁹⁶ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 80.

³⁹⁷ Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 117; Wilkinson, 'Pawn and Political Player', p. 122.

³⁹⁸ TNA, E 210/4599; E 210/7613; E 326/278; E 326/1050; E 326/2450; E 326/3364; E 326/3700; E 326/6526; E 327/448; E 327/698; E 327/730; E 327/681; West Yorkshire Archives, WYL639/172.

³⁹⁹ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 266.

⁴⁰⁰ See Appendix One, Table one.

⁴⁰¹ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 79.

not survived. Aristocratic widows experienced a greater degree of independence, but their actions still continued to be centred on their families.⁴⁰² In her charters, however, Mary de Neville did not associate herself with anyone including her son and heir, which many baronial women chose to do. This demonstrates Mary's agency and her policy to act on her own behalf, independently of her kin. Frustratingly, although there are many surviving examples of her seal, they are in poor condition, which makes it difficult to discern clearly the imagery. During her widowhood, she appears to have spent most of her time at her main residence of Middleham, where she issued the majority of her charters.⁴⁰³ She was active in many acts of lordship, including granting lands and rights to third parties, thereby acting as lord of the Middleham fee.⁴⁰⁴ Mary's position as an heiress gave her great potential to act which not every baronial widow was able to enjoy. Widows were not able to have complete control over their dower, since they could not alienate it away permanently, and after their deaths it reverted back to their husbands' heirs.⁴⁰⁵

Mary issued a charter to Gilbert de Helton, giving him two messuages and three tofts in her estate of Snape.⁴⁰⁶ She gave him the lands for his lifetime, after which they would revert back to Mary or her heirs. Temporary grants became an increasingly common practice in the thirteenth century as lords needed to reward the people who served them.⁴⁰⁷ Mary appears to have been generous as she also granted Geoffrey Hamsby and his wife, Alice, land and rents in Middleham.⁴⁰⁸ Mary also jointly enfeoffed John de Walton and his wife, Margaret, with land in North Pickenham, Yorkshire.⁴⁰⁹ The charter which recorded her grant of land to them has not survived, but it was possibly in return for John's service, as he witnessed three of her charters before his death in 1304.⁴¹⁰ Mary de Neville was also the recipient of several charters.⁴¹¹ She received from Helewise de Perrow all her rights in the lands which belonged to John de Farwald and, in exchange, Mary gave her 100 marks.⁴¹² She was also given a charter from Eleanor, daughter of Henry, who granted Mary her life interest in the land of Snape.⁴¹³ Mary de Neville

⁴⁰² Ward, *Women in England*, p. 102.

⁴⁰³ TNA, E 210/4599; E 210/4646; E 210/7613; E 326/278; E 326/2450; E 326/2516; E 326/3364; E 327/448; E 327/698; E 327/730.

⁴⁰⁴ West Yorkshire Archives, WYL639/172.

⁴⁰⁵ Ward, *Women in England*, p. 106.

⁴⁰⁶ TNA, E 326/1050.

⁴⁰⁷ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 133.

⁴⁰⁸ TNA, E 210/4646.

⁴⁰⁹ CCR, 1302-07, p. 164; *Inquisitions and Assessments*, vol. III, p. 446.

⁴¹⁰ TNA, E 327/698; E 327/448; E 326/6525.

⁴¹¹ See Appendix Two.

⁴¹² TNA, E 326/3700.

⁴¹³ TNA, E 327/693.

rewarded her maid, Preciosa, with one messuage and a tenement in Nosterfield, with liberty to take wood from the forest of Well for her service.⁴¹⁴ Matilda de Percy, Countess of Warwick, was heiress to her father's estates in Yorkshire and during her widowhood she granted lands to her female chamberlain, Julianna. This illuminates how women were able to form personal ties with, and, through their patronage reward, the people closest to them.⁴¹⁵ Johns argued that in the twelfth century there are many examples of noblewomen retaining female household members. Even so, there are few instances of noblewomen granting land to their female retainers.⁴¹⁶ This suggests that Mary de Neville was a generous lord. Mary de Neville's access to extensive estates provided her with wealth and power which allowed her to exercise influence within Yorkshire and local communities, like other important aristocratic widows.⁴¹⁷

The Charters of Other Baronial Women

Mary de Neville issued more charters than any other women which this study has looked at. No surviving charters issued by Mabel, Nicola, Joan or Eve of Tattershall, Margaret and Mateleona de Neville of Redbourne or Ida de Neville of Ashby have been found.⁴¹⁸ Even if we make allowance for the low survival rate of charters issued by women, the numbers of extant charters for other baronial women in Lincolnshire are far smaller than for Mary de Neville. This demonstrates how widowhood was not necessarily a guarantee to allow women more freedom of action, and it supports Ricketts when she argued that the generalisation that all widows had more room to manoeuvre after their husbands' deaths needs to be reconsidered.⁴¹⁹ It may have been that Mary de Neville issued more charters because of her high status in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire as the widow of a man from an important barony and due to her position as an heiress, as well as having a long widowhood.⁴²⁰ The charters which have survived for baronial women in Lincolnshire are mainly concerned with grants to religious institutions or family members, except for the charter issued by Idonea Longespée. After the death of her husband, Idonea issued a charter to Mabel of Ardington, granting her a virgate of land from her inheritance in exchange for an annual payment of rent and one palfrey.⁴²¹ Unlike Mary de Neville, Idonea associated her son in the grant. In the charter Idonea used her maiden name of Camville instead of her natal one of Longespée. Idonea also used her maiden name of Camville on her seal legend. The seal depicts a woman holding a

⁴¹⁴ TNA, E 326/2450.

⁴¹⁵ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 159.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴¹⁷ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', pp. 78-79.

⁴¹⁸ See Appendix One.

⁴¹⁹ Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 131.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁴²¹ Berkshire Record Office, D/Q1/T13/6.

bird in her right hand, surrounded by three lioncels on each side; the counterseal has one central lioncel.⁴²² Brian Kemp argued that the lioncels represented the heraldic arms of her husband's family, which also appear on the seal of her husband. Nonetheless the lioncel could also have represented the Camville lion of her father.⁴²³ Throughout the thirteenth century it became common for women to include the arms of their natal and marital kin on their seals to symbolise their lineage.⁴²⁴ It is possible that Idonea included the lioncel to represent both her natal and marital families, therefore illustrating her position as heiress to the Camville lands and her marriage into a powerful family.

There were other baronial widows who were active in the administration of their estates. In June 1206, Cecily de Crevequer came to an agreement with Henry de Spanna, one of her tenants and steward of her household.⁴²⁵ She acknowledged that land in Hardwick, along with its mill, belonged to Henry. In return Henry agreed to the payment of one sparrow-hawk or 12*d.* each year and an immediate payment of 40*s.*⁴²⁶ This was a common activity whereby baronial women could exercise power by confirming their tenants' possessions.⁴²⁷ Emma de Humet, the mother of Henry and Isabella de Neville, granted Robert de Humet six bovates of land in Thormanby, previously held by Robert's uncle, Geoffrey, in return for his homage and service.⁴²⁸ Emma was performing an act of lordship by issuing a charter to a tenant which allowed her to display her authority as the heiress and successor of her father.⁴²⁹

Grants to Family Members

Baronial women in Lincolnshire were generous with their estates and widows often gave their children lands, which possibly avoided tensions from emerging within their immediate kin groups. Gunnora de Gant granted her younger son, Stephen, all of her inheritance from her brother, Ralph, including her share in his fief of fifteen knights in Aubourn and Binbrook, Lincolnshire.⁴³⁰

⁴²² Berkshire Record Office, D/Q1/T13/6.

⁴²³ Ailes, 'Armorial Portrait Seals', p. 234, footnote 39; Brian Kemp, 'Family Identity: The Seals of the Longespées', in Philipp Schofield (ed.), *Seals and Their Context in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), pp. 142-143.

⁴²⁴ Ailes, 'Armorial Portrait Seals', p. 220; Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 130. For a more detailed discussion of the seals of baronial women, see pp. 39-40.

⁴²⁵ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Eleventh Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1209*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XXIV, 1955), p. 43.

⁴²⁶ *Lincolnshire Records: Abstracts of Final Concords*, p. 72.

⁴²⁷ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 231.

⁴²⁸ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, no. 786, pp. 123-124.

⁴²⁹ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 303.

⁴³⁰ *Liber Feodorum*. vol. II, p. 517; Thomas Stapleton, 'Historical Details of the Ancient Religious Community of Secular Canons in York prior to the Conquest of England', in *Memoirs Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of the County and City of Lincoln* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1850), p. 49.

Isabella de Neville, also, granted her grandson and heir, Robert, all her rights in the town of Paythorne, part of her inheritance.⁴³¹ In the charter Isabella is referred to as 'Isabella de Humas' the widow of Gilbert de Brakenberg. The name Humet was possibly the name of Isabella's great grandmother on her mother's side of the family and was the name which Isabella's mother, Emma, also used.⁴³² She centred her identity on her mother and her female ancestors, demonstrating her position as heir to estates of her female kin. Baronial widows acted to ensure that their younger children were protected and often provided them with lands, so ensuring their children's future financial security.⁴³³ Nonetheless it was the personal individual relationships between a baronial widow and her family, and the degree of wealth that she enjoyed which influenced whether she granted her children estates.⁴³⁴ Each of the baronial widows discussed above, who provided their kin with land, were heiresses and so had access to land which they could alienate and manage as they wished.

The Affinity of Mary de Neville

Mary de Neville inherited estates in Yorkshire and Norfolk upon the death of her father which resulted in her being a figure of influence in the localities. This is reflected in Mary de Neville's affinity which can be reconstructed by analysing the names which appear in the witness lists of her acts. The affinity was an important demonstration of power for a nobleman or woman as the members of the affinity represented them in local affairs and looked after their interests as lords.⁴³⁵ The charters of Mary de Neville allow us to examine how a baronial woman was able to maintain family contacts and networks in Yorkshire.⁴³⁶ Keith Stringer and J.R. Maddicott have reconstructed the affinities of David, Earl of Huntingdon, and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, respectively.⁴³⁷ In his reconstruction of David of Huntingdon's affinity, Stringer suggested that the frequency with which a person witnessed David's charters reflected their standing in his affinity. Men who witnessed six times or more were in the earl's inner circle, whilst those who witnessed four or five times were in his outer circle. The men who witnessed fewer than three charters should be considered as insignificant within the affinity.⁴³⁸ Nonetheless Maddicott noted how it was difficult to apply the traditional method to studying Simon de

⁴³¹ TNA, E 210/146.

⁴³² TNA, E 210/146, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. XI, (ed.) C.T. Clay (Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 1963), p. 181.

⁴³³ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 242.

⁴³⁴ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 92.

⁴³⁵ J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 59.

⁴³⁶ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 161.

⁴³⁷ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*; K.J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152-1219* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985).

⁴³⁸ Stringer, *Earl David*, pp. 155-158.

Montfort's affinity as only twenty-four of his charters have survived.⁴³⁹ For the study of Mary de Neville's affinity, I will use Stringer's model. As, however, only seventeen charters issued by Mary de Neville are extant, this study will also identify men who probably witnessed other charters which have not survived, following the example of Maddicott's study.

Mary de Neville granted four charters to ecclesiastical institutions, and thirteen to members of the laity. This is quite unusual, as often the survival rate for charters addressed to religious houses is higher because ecclesiastical archives were more successful in preserving their records than private individuals.⁴⁴⁰ Of these charters, fifteen have surviving legible witness lists which can be used to reconstruct the affinity of Mary de Neville.⁴⁴¹ Three men can be identified as being part of the inner circle of Mary de Neville's affinity: Thomas of Richmond; William de Dursa; and Roger Oysel. Thomas of Richmond held land in Burton and Stainwick, so was a neighbour of Mary de Neville.⁴⁴² I can find no record of who William de Dursa was, but he could have been a member of Mary's household. Roger Oysel was a tenant of Mary de Neville, as he held his land in Aysgarth from her.⁴⁴³ He also held land in Thoraby of Robert of Tattershall, who controlled the property in right of his wife, Joan.⁴⁴⁴ This illustrates how Mary de Neville was able to maintain some continuity with her late father's administration, as Mary was able to attract her sister's tenants to her own affinity.

A further six men can be identified as belonging to the outer circle of Mary de Neville's affinity: Robert of Brompton; John of Barton; Richard of Barningham; Peter FitzHugh of Thoresby; Hugh FitzPeter of Thoresby; and Ranulf FitzRanulf. Robert of Brompton held land in Ellerbeck, north Yorkshire, so was a neighbour of Mary de Neville, as was Richard of Barningham, who held his estates from the Earl of Richmond.⁴⁴⁵ John of Barton held three carucates of land in Tholthorpe, Yorkshire from Roger Mowbray, as well as land in Sutton of the barony of Ashby.⁴⁴⁶ John of Barton was not the only witness to Mary's charters who held land from the barony of Ashby; Brian FitzAlan, who witnessed three charters, held land in Heworth also of the Bulmer fee.⁴⁴⁷ Mary maintained links with the tenants of her marital family; however she would also have been

⁴³⁹ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, pp. 59-62.

⁴⁴⁰ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p. 152.

⁴⁴¹ See Appendix Three.

⁴⁴² *Inquisitions and Assessments Relating to Feudal Aids, A.D. 1284-1431*, vol. VI (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920), pp. 182, 186, 241.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86, 184.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 188.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

connected to them through her own inheritance in Yorkshire. Peter FitzHugh of Thoresby witnessed Mary's charters until his death and then his son and heir, Hugh, took his place in her affinity. This suggests that they might have been in the inner circle rather than the outer one. They were neighbours of Mary, as they held their land from the Earl of Richmond.⁴⁴⁸ Peter and Hugh of Thoresby also held four carucates of land in Thornton of Robert of Tattershall.⁴⁴⁹ This meant that Peter would have been a tenant of Mary's father and so was already connected to Mary's estates. Ranulf FitzRanulf was Mary de Neville's cousin, as his father, Ranulf, was the brother of Mary's father, Ralph FitzRanulf, which illustrates how she associated with family members within her affinity. Ranulf also held land in Swainby and East Bolton from Mary.⁴⁵⁰ Mary Neville does not appear to have found it difficult to recruit followers because of her sex and the rewards that she offered appear to have been attractive offers of patronage.⁴⁵¹ She was able to rely on her tenants and recruit her neighbours to be part of her affinity.

Among the witnesses to Mary's acta there are examples of sons replacing their fathers after their deaths, just like Peter and Hugh of Thoresby, which illustrates the close connections between families in Yorkshire. William le Scrope witnessed two of Mary de Neville's charters and, after his death in 1312, his sons Henry and Geoffrey le Scrope took his place in her witness lists. William le Scrope was bailiff to the Earl of Richmond and he had been able to establish himself in north Lincolnshire and in the East Riding.⁴⁵² Mary was a neighbour to William le Scrope as they both held land in West Bolton and East Bolton.⁴⁵³ The Scrope family were rising members of the Yorkshire landed community and they presumably viewed Mary's service as being suitable for their ambitions. The two brothers worked closely together throughout their lives and they both trained as lawyers and were active in the crown's service from 1306.⁴⁵⁴ This demonstrates how baronial women were able to attract important players in both local and national politics to their affinities.⁴⁵⁵

Geoffrey Pigot also witnessed one charter and, after his death, his son, Ranulph, replaced him in the witness list. Geoffrey Pigot held two carucates of land from Mary in Melmerby, Yorkshire, and

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴⁵⁰ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. V, p. 303; *Inquisitions and Assessments*, vol. VI, pp. 90, 103.

⁴⁵¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, pp. 133-134.

⁴⁵² James Tait, 'Scrope, Sir Henry (*b.* in or before 1268, *d.* 1336), *Justice*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁴⁵³ *Inquisitions and Assessments*, vol. VI, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁵⁴ Tait, 'Scrope, Sir Henry'; Brigette Vale, 'Scrope, Sir Geoffrey, (*d.* 1304), *Justice and Administrator*' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, Online Edn.).

⁴⁵⁵ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 134.

Ranulph held land in Howell, Lincolnshire.⁴⁵⁶ Ranulph Pigot and Geoffrey le Scrope continued to maintain links with the Neville family after Mary's death, as they both witnessed a charter of Mary's son, Ralph de Neville.⁴⁵⁷ Geoffrey Pigot and Geoffrey le Scrope were both rewarded for their services. Geoffrey Pigot was granted land in Melmerby, and freedom from all suits at her court in 1286.⁴⁵⁸ Then, in 1293, Mary gave him a vaccary in Coverdale, with the right to common pasture in the forest of Coverdale and forty loads of firewood and timber for the maintenance of the vaccary.⁴⁵⁹ In 1313, Mary issued a charter to Geoffrey le Scrope, releasing him from any services due from the lands which he held in Coverdale, Caldbergh, and Agglethorpe, in return for his homage.⁴⁶⁰ During their widowhoods, noblewomen were able to create and expand their own retinues.⁴⁶¹ Mary de Neville was no exception to this; she was able to attract followers and men possibly viewed membership of her affinity as being advantageous to their careers and advancement in society.⁴⁶²

Litigation

In widowhood many baronial women experienced the law courts for the first time, acting as their own representatives instead of being reliant on male representatives.⁴⁶³ In 1230, Alice de Neville was involved in litigation with Geoffrey de Neville, the son of Isabella de Neville, against Adam, Abbot of Bardney, and Geoffrey, Abbot of Topholme, concerning the boundaries of land in Burreth.⁴⁶⁴ Alice held land in Burreth as dower from her late husband, Henry de Neville. The abbeys of Bardney and Topholme had been granted land by ancestors of the Neville family and they were each disputing who held what.⁴⁶⁵ There is no record of how the dispute was resolved, but the case is suggestive of Alice's interest in protecting her dower lands. Aristocratic women often found themselves suing or being sued by the heads of religious houses as they sought to defend their rights to land.⁴⁶⁶ Baronial widows, like all members of the aristocracy, acted to safeguard and defend their estates in the royal courts.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁵⁶ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. I, p. 238; *Inquisitions and Assessments*, vol. III, pp. 128, 194.

⁴⁵⁷ TNA, E 326/692.

⁴⁵⁸ TNA, E 326/2516.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, E 326/1059.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA, E 327/698.

⁴⁶¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 129.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴⁶³ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', pp. 58-59. For a further discussion of this, see p. 49.

⁴⁶⁴ *Bracton's Notebook*, vol. II, no. 534, p. 417; *CCR, 1227-31*, pp. 395-396; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 493.

⁴⁶⁵ *CCR, 1227-31*, p. 404.

⁴⁶⁶ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 57.

⁴⁶⁷ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 43.

After Lora de Gant faced the long struggle to secure her dower after her husband's death, she then faced more insecurity, when Robert de Askeby sued her over lands in Hale, Lincolnshire. Robert de Askeby brought a writ of *utrum* against Lora over twenty acres of marshland in Hale, which she claimed was part of the manor of Heckington that the king had assigned to her as dower.⁴⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Robert stated that the land was leased to Gilbert de Gant for his lifetime by his predecessor and that after Gilbert's death the land should have reverted back to the church. Lora refused to answer without the king who had been responsible for nominating her dower estates.⁴⁶⁹ The king ordered an inquiry and the jury decided that the land was rightfully the church's.⁴⁷⁰ It does not appear that after the land was given back to Robert de Askeby, Lora was given any form of compensation in exchange. For widows who relied only on their dower estates and who had no inheritance, their dower would have been an important source of financial support, necessary for their maintenance. Therefore they would have viewed any loss or challenge to their estates as detrimental to their personal interests, and they defended these strongly in court, demonstrating their agency.⁴⁷¹

Women's involvement in litigation was not just focused on the protection of their dower lands; baronial widows could also face legal action over their inheritances. In 1212, after the death of Robert of Tattershall, Rose continued to be involved in litigation against Agnes and Herbert de St. Quintin and the other heirs of her uncle, Anselm de Stuteville, which had started in 1199 during her marriage.⁴⁷² She appointed William Baldwin as her representative, a different attorney from the ones appointed in 1203.⁴⁷³ This shows how widowhood had provided her with a greater degree of agency than that which she had enjoyed during her marriage.⁴⁷⁴ Gunnora de Secchevill was involved in litigation against her brother Gilbert de Gant II concerning her *maritagium* and dower which she held as a tenant of her brother. She complained that Gilbert did not observe a fine which was made between her husband and her father over five carucates of land in Barton and part of the service of three knights' fees in Barton, Ferriby, and Brandon. She also complained that her brother had demanded toll from her tenants and that she was being held accountable to her brother for the running of the estates. They came to an agreement whereby Gilbert and his heirs would only claim payment of fines of Gunnora and her tenants that were paid during the

⁴⁶⁸ TNA, SC 8/9/404.

⁴⁶⁹ TNA, SC 8/9/404; CCR, 1302-07, pp. 380-381.

⁴⁷⁰ CCR, 1302-07, pp. 380-381.

⁴⁷¹ Cavell, 'Aristocratic widows', p. 70.

⁴⁷² CRR, 1210-12, pp. 285, 360.

⁴⁷³ CRR, 1201-03, pp. 175, 236; CRR, 1210-12, p. 285.

⁴⁷⁴ CRR, 1210-12, p. 285.

time of their father, Gilbert III, and no more.⁴⁷⁵ Once married it is hard to know how much contact Gunnora would have had with her brother and it is probable that there was not much sibling affection between them.⁴⁷⁶ The examples of baronial women involved in litigation demonstrates their agency; they knew their property rights and were prepared to defend them even against siblings.⁴⁷⁷

Inheritance practices in late twelfth- and thirteenth-century England were, in theory, fairly straightforward, as demonstrated in the legal treatise of *Glanvill* and as discussed earlier in this thesis.⁴⁷⁸ Nonetheless, S.F.C. Milsom argued that, in practice, the succession to estates was not always so clear cut.⁴⁷⁹ He has shown how Henry II chose to dispose of the barony of Redbourne by overlooking the daughter of the eldest son in favour of his living younger brother. The heiress to the barony, Maud, had married Reginald de Crevequer and they had two sons. After the death of the eldest son, Alexander, the barony was obtained by his younger brother Simon.⁴⁸⁰ When Simon de Crevequer died, the barony reverted back to Cecily as the heir of Alexander, as it was in the financial interests of the crown for it to do so. Cecily was of age and so had to pay a relief to inherit the barony, whilst her cousin Alexander de Crevequer was under age and so would not have had to pay any fine.⁴⁸¹ This resulted in Cecily de Crevequer facing a serious lawsuit surrounding her inheritance of the barony. In 1203, Alexander came of age and paid forty marks to have a writ of *mort d'ancestor* against Cecily de Crevequer, to discover who the rightful heir to the barony of Redbourne was.⁴⁸² Then, in 1205, Cecily de Crevequer paid ten marks for being allowed to bring a lawsuit against her cousin, Alexander de Crevequer.⁴⁸³ Alexander de Crevequer claimed that his father was seised of the barony at the time of his death and that as Alexander was his heir the barony should have passed to him. Cecily, however, tried to have the writ dismissed by claiming that their fathers were brothers, and therefore too closely related to settle

⁴⁷⁵ *Final Concords of the County of Lincoln 1244-1272*, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷⁶ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 101.

⁴⁷⁷ Loengard, 'What is a Nice (Thirteenth-Century) English Woman', p. 69; Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 81.

⁴⁷⁸ See the discussion on p. 30.

⁴⁷⁹ S.F.C. Milsom, 'Inheritance by Women in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries', in Morris S. Arnold (ed.), *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honour of Samuel E. Thorne* (North Carolina: Chapel Hill, 1981), pp. 64, 68.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls, A.D. 1201-1209*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Lincoln Record Society, vol. 22, 1926), pp. lxxx-lxxxii; Milsom, 'Inheritance by Women', pp. 64, 68; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 74.

⁴⁸¹ Milsom, 'Inheritance by Women', p. 68.

⁴⁸² *ROF*, p. 113.

⁴⁸³ *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Seventh Year of the Reign of King John, Michaelmas A.D. 1205*, (ed.) D.M. Stenton (Pipe Roll Society: New Series XIX, 1931), p. 211; *ROF*, p. 284.

the issue.⁴⁸⁴ Once this failed, the court then sought to discover whether Cecily's father, Alexander, was seised of the estates before his death because, if so, Cecily was the rightful heir all along.⁴⁸⁵

Cecily de Crevequer first appointed as her attorney Peter of Beckering, a tenant of the barony, and then two years later she appointed her son, Alexander de Neville, to represent her, who had possibly just come of age.⁴⁸⁶ Often when baronial women were active in litigation, they associated themselves with their sons in their activities. In this case, Cecily probably viewed it as essential to get her son's involvement as he was her heir, so she was fighting to save the barony for her future descendants. There is no record of what the court decided, but the verdict seems to have gone in Cecily's favour as she continued to hold the barony and Alexander de Crevequer appears in later records as a tenant of a half-fee which he held from the barony.⁴⁸⁷ Cecily faced difficulties in securing her inheritance and her experiences were the opposite of those of Mary de Neville and Joan of Tattershall whose entrance into their inheritance was relatively simple.

In conclusion, baronial widows, like countesses, were involved in various activities linked to estate management. They issued charters to tenants and family members and were active members of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire society. Ricketts has argued that widows who were heiresses, as a group possibly, had different experiences from women who only received dower.⁴⁸⁸ This chapter supports her theory as the baronial widows in Lincolnshire who were also heiresses, such as Cecily de Crevequer, Mary de Neville and Isabella de Neville, were far more active in the surviving records than those who only received dower. The widows of the barony of Redbourne are hardly visible in medieval sources when compared to Mary de Neville; however they had access to more limited estates and therefore wealth. Heiresses were, perhaps not altogether surprisingly, often in the strongest position when it came to safeguarding and managing their landed property effectively.⁴⁸⁹ Even so, we should be wary of generalising women's experiences; the involvement of baronial women in estate management varied for each individual as they were all faced with different problems and had access to varying levels of wealth.⁴⁹⁰ Next this thesis considers the

⁴⁸⁴ *CRR, 1201-03*, pp. 182, 223-224; *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls*, pp. 17, 61, 84-85; Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 130.

⁴⁸⁵ *CRR, 1201-1203*, pp. 238-239, 282; *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls*, pp. 226, 229-231.

⁴⁸⁶ *CRR, 1201-1203*, pp. 92, 235; *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls*, pp. 211, 232; *Liber Feodorum*, vol. I, p. 189.

⁴⁸⁷ *The Earliest Lincolnshire Assize Rolls*, p. 261; *Liber Feodorum*, vol. I, p. 189; Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 130.

⁴⁸⁸ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 3.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁴⁹⁰ Mitchell, 'The Lady is a Lord', p. 85.

involvement of baronial women within religious patronage and considers questions of their identity.

7. Religious Patronage

Religious patronage allowed aristocratic women to commemorate and remember their families, activities in which ladies were expected to be involved.⁴⁹¹ Benefactions to ecclesiastical institutions allowed baronial widows to display their piety, whilst also, perhaps, using it as a means of demonstrating their independent control over property and their personal interests.⁴⁹² Their religious grants were one way in which women could form their own identities which this chapter will explore. It is also important to remember that not all baronial widows had a positive relationship with the church, so this chapter will also examine the conflicts which widows could face with religious institutions.

Concern for the remembrance of their families was an important influence on the lives of baronial women which they expressed through religious patronage.⁴⁹³ Gunnora de Gant favoured Rufford Abbey, which had been founded by Gilbert de Gant (*d.* 1156), Earl of Lincoln, in the twelfth century.⁴⁹⁴ She granted Rufford Abbey land, from her inheritance, in Aubourn for prayers for her soul, those of parents, her brother, Ralph, and for both of her husbands.⁴⁹⁵ Gunnora's charter demonstrates her concern for the spiritual wellbeing of her family, both past and present. During her first marriage, Gunnora issued a charter with Robert de Gant to Vaudey Abbey which was also a community favoured by the Gant family.⁴⁹⁶ She was influenced by tradition and family commemoration so favoured religious institutions which had long been linked to the Gant family.⁴⁹⁷ Her sense of identity is reflected in her charter where she retained the name from her first marriage, 'Gainnor de Gant' and she also used the name 'Gant' in the legend of her seal. The image on the seal is of a woman standing with her arms outstretched holding a fleur-de-lys and a falcon.⁴⁹⁸ Her seal and choice of benefactions demonstrates how Gunnora constructed her identity to celebrate her marital links to her first husband.⁴⁹⁹

Her granddaughter, Gunnora de Secchevill, also granted two charters to her family's foundation of Rufford Abbey.⁵⁰⁰ In her 'full power and free widowhood' Gunnora gave them land in Barton

⁴⁹¹ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 282; Elisabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), pp. 62, 84.

⁴⁹² Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 242.

⁴⁹³ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, p. 78.

⁴⁹⁴ William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Nottingham*, vol. II (London: Victoria County History, 1910), pp. 101-105.

⁴⁹⁵ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 890, p. 470.

⁴⁹⁶ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. V, p. 490; Page, *A History of the County of Lincoln*, vol. II, pp. 143-145.

⁴⁹⁷ Coss, *The Lady*, p. 12.

⁴⁹⁸ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 890, p. 470.

⁴⁹⁹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 131; Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Lincolnshire*, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁰ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 907-908, pp. 484-485.

from her *maritagium* to be held in free alms.⁵⁰¹ During her widowhood, Gunnora was able to follow her own policies by favouring her family's monastery, thereby displaying a familial preference.⁵⁰² She also confirmed all the land which the abbey held in Barton which had been granted by her tenants, Philip the Chamberlain, William FitzWilliam and William FitzWalter.⁵⁰³ Gunnora was performing an important act of lordship by confirming the religious gifts of her tenants as she was reinforcing her tenurial bond with her vassals. She may also have had some influence on their decisions to favour Rufford Abbey.⁵⁰⁴ Both charters were witnessed by John of Barton and Simon of Barton, who were clerks of Lincoln cathedral, demonstrating the important local connections she was able to maintain during her widowhood.⁵⁰⁵

Gunnora de Secchevill centred her identity on her natal family rather than that of her husband. She reverted back to her natal name of Gant, presumably as she viewed the Gant name as being more illustrious than that of her late husband, who was a former tenant of her father. The legend on her seal reads 'Gvnnore de Gaunt' and the imagery is almost identical to the imagery on the seal of her grandmother, Gunnora de Gant (as discussed above).⁵⁰⁶ She clearly wished to display her connections to the more powerful Gant family and demonstrate her authority in the land which she held as *maritagium*.⁵⁰⁷ Gunnora's decision to associate herself with her grandmother and her namesake displays a close attachment to one particular family member.⁵⁰⁸ Baronial women often maintained important links between themselves and their natal kin throughout their lives, as well as enjoying those with their marital families.⁵⁰⁹ In Gunnora de Secchevill's case, it appears that she viewed her natal kin as being more important than her marital kin.

Through their religious patronage, baronial women were able to advertise their positions as heiresses of their natal ancestors.⁵¹⁰ After the death of her fourth husband, Walter de Baskerville, Isolda Pantolf favoured the nunnery of Langley by confirming the lands which her father, William Pantolf, had granted to this community. She also gave them land in Ketteby and Tonge, with tofts and pasture, and the churches of Somerby and Dalby.⁵¹¹ The nunnery of Langley was founded in

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., no. 907, p. 484.

⁵⁰² Johns, *Noblewomen*, p. 69.

⁵⁰³ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, no. 908, pp. 485.

⁵⁰⁴ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, pp. 225, 242.

⁵⁰⁵ *Rufford Charters*, vol. III, nos. 907-908, pp. 484-485.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., nos. 890, 907-908, pp. 470-471, 484-485.

⁵⁰⁷ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 266.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 251.

⁵⁰⁹ Coss, *The Lady*, p. 43; Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 118.

⁵¹⁰ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 45.

⁵¹¹ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. IV, no. I, p. 222.

the twelfth century by Isolda's grandparents, William Pantolf and his wife, Burgia.⁵¹² She gave them the land in return for prayers for her soul and for those of her ancestors, but her charter made no mention of any of her previous four husbands.⁵¹³ She ensured that her legacy would be safe for the future by gaining the consent of her son and heir, Robert of Tattershall, and by including him in the guarantee clause. The commemoration of ancestors would have been one motive behind the religious benefactions of baronial heiresses. The grant might also have been part of Isolda Pantolf's wish to express her independent control over her property during her widowhood.⁵¹⁴

Isolda Pantolf was not the only Lincolnshire heiress who supported a foundation closely linked with her natal family. In 1298, Mary de Neville granted Coverham Abbey the right to wood for the souls of her ancestors, although this charter is too damaged to make out where the wood was located.⁵¹⁵ She also gave them a further four messuages, four bovates and eighty acres of land and eight acres of meadow in Crakehall and Thoraby, Yorkshire, for prayers for herself and for the soul of her husband and her ancestors.⁵¹⁶ Coverham Abbey was founded in the later twelfth century by Mary de Neville's ancestors and her father had continued to support this community.⁵¹⁷ Mary de Neville chose Coverham Abbey as her final resting place, which demonstrates her concern for her lineage and family identity which was centred on her position as an heiress.⁵¹⁸ Her father, Ralph, also chose for his bones to be buried at Coverham Abbey although his heart was buried in the quire of the Franciscans at Richmond.⁵¹⁹ Her decision to choose Coverham Abbey as her burial place also possibly reflects her desire to create a family tradition and a place focused on the commemoration of her birth kin.⁵²⁰ Ward has shown how it was mainly heiresses who chose to be buried in religious institutions associated with their natal families rather than their marital ones.⁵²¹ Mary de Neville also gave lands in South Pickenham, Norfolk, for the services of two chaplains for the church of Houghton for prayers for the souls of

⁵¹² W.G. Hoskins and R.A. Mckinley (eds.), *A History of the County of Leicestershire*, vol. II (London, Victoria County History, 1954), pp. 3-5.

⁵¹³ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. IV, no. I, p. 222.

⁵¹⁴ Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 120.

⁵¹⁵ TNA, E 210/7613.

⁵¹⁶ TNA, C 143/98/6; E 327/448.

⁵¹⁷ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. VI, p. 920; William Page (ed.), *A History of the County of York* (London: Victoria County History, 1974), pp. 243-245.

⁵¹⁸ TNA, E 327/448; *CPR, 1313-17*, p. 43; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, vol. 9, p. 497.

⁵¹⁹ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. V, p. 304.

⁵²⁰ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, p. 94; Jennifer Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment: the Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066-1314', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 32 (1981), p. 432.

⁵²¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 152.

her parents, husband, and her two sons, Ralph and Robert.⁵²² This reflects a common motive behind baronial women's religious grants, a concern over the spiritual wellbeing of their families.⁵²³ Isolda Pantolf and Mary de Neville both chose to associate themselves closely with their natal families, probably because of their positions as heiresses. Their role as lords helped to shape their identity, whilst other baronial widows, such as Lora de Gant who only had access to dower estates, may have had different influences in their choice of identity.⁵²⁴

Even so, relationships did not always run smoothly between ecclesiastical institutions and the aristocracy. Aristocratic families could create close links with specific religious houses, although this did not prevent them from being watchful of their advowsons and controversy could arise between lords and abbots. The Clare family were closely associated with the abbey of Tewkesbury, but this did not prevent a disagreement between Earl Richard and the abbey from developing over criminal jurisdiction in 1250.⁵²⁵ Baronial widows also faced disputes against religious foundations, especially when contested lands formed part of their inheritances. During the early thirteenth century, Emma de Humet was involved in a disagreement with St. Mary's Abbey, York, with her son, Henry de Neville, and Walter de Neville, the parson of Sheriff Hutton. They were in dispute over who had the rights to the advowson to the church of Sheriff Hutton, part of Emma's inheritance. As a solution Emma granted St. Mary's Abbey an annuity of 20 marks in return for a release of the right to the advowson to the church of Sheriff Hutton.⁵²⁶ Emma was ensuring that she lost none of her rights over an important source of patronage at the centre of her inheritance. Baronial widows worked closely with their sons and heirs to safeguard their titles to the property concerned in each case. A widow would not want her decisions to be set aside after her death.⁵²⁷ Later in the thirteenth century, Mary de Neville was also in dispute with St. Mary's Abbey concerning the boundaries of land and marshes in Burniston and Snape.⁵²⁸ St. Mary's Abbey was an important abbey in Yorkshire which was patronised by many members of the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire aristocracy, including Mary de Neville's ancestors.⁵²⁹ The contested lands formed part of Mary's inheritance and it is probable that Mary actively worked to ensure that they were not diminished, even by the church. Baronial women were not afraid to defend

⁵²² TNA, C 143/12/10. Charter cited in Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume Six* (London: 1807), p. 133.

⁵²³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 160.

⁵²⁴ Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage, and Family Identity', p. 128.

⁵²⁵ Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment', p. 448.

⁵²⁶ *Early Yorkshire Charters*, vol. II, no. 1054, pp. 365-366; *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. III, no. I, p. 534.

⁵²⁷ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 179.

⁵²⁸ TNA, E 326/681.

⁵²⁹ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. V, pp. 530-531, 533.

what they saw as their rights and lands against the church, which illustrates the agency which they enjoyed in thirteenth-century society.

Baronial women in Lincolnshire were active participants in religious patronage especially when they were heiresses. The names and titles found in charters, and their choice of religious foundations illustrate how baronial women maintained close links with their natal kin throughout their lives. Some women viewed their natal connections as being more important socially than their marital ones. Heiresses patronised houses associated with their ancestors, thereby demonstrating their positions as heirs to their families' estates and as continuators of their lineages. As heiresses, baronial women celebrated and remembered their ancestors, therefore remembering the kin from whom they derived their standing in the localities.⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ Ricketts, *High Ranking Widows*, p. 265; Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, p. 148.

Conclusion

This regional study of baronial women in thirteenth-century Lincolnshire has shed new light on the property rights and identity of baronial women. The experiences of baronial women have been examined to see what influences, such as family relationships and the female life-cycle, had on their lives. The numerous surviving records illustrate how baronial women's agency depended on their individual situations. This thesis has focused on major areas in the lives of baronial women starting at the time of their marriages and exploring their lives through to their widowhoods. In doing so, it has illustrated the importance of baronial women within society.

Marriage was a significant event in the life of a baronial woman as it provided her with her entrance into society and involvement in estate management, litigation and religious patronage. The motives behind baronial marriages were focused on gaining a monetary benefit or a political alliance between two families. The lords of Ashby used marriage as a tool to further their ambitions in the north of England, whilst Idonea's marriage was used by William Longespée I to advance his interests in Lincolnshire. Occasionally it was a woman's dower, such as those of Eustachia Basset and Ida de Ros, which proved to be an attractive prospect for future husbands. Although baronial women could expect to have no involvement in the arrangement of their marriages, many baronial marriages developed into successful working partnerships. For example, Idonea and William Longespée, and Henry and Alice de Neville appear to have had close working relationships rather than ones based on love and affection. The marriage between Alexander de Neville II and Mateleona seems to have been extremely successful in terms of medieval society's expectations of marriage as they had at least six surviving children in a relatively short time span. The most significant role which was expected of a baronial woman was to have children, especially a son and heir to continue their family's lineage. This was reflected in the names which their sons received as they were usually named after their paternal ancestors, demonstrated by the use of William in the Longespée family and Alexander in the Nevilles of Redbourne. Daughters were more often named after a maternal ancestor, like Gilbert's III daughter, Gunnora, who was named after her grandmother. Gunnora's name was possibly chosen because of Gilbert's affection for his mother, as well as to associate his daughter with an important female ancestor who was also an heiress. Baronial women were pawns in the arrangements for their marriages. Yet marriage provided them with positions in society and with the ability to exercise agency.

Occasionally baronial women were also heiresses which allowed them a greater scope of action during their marriages. They were greatly sought after as brides because their estates allowed

families to build up extensive lands and to become more powerful. This thesis has highlighted how, as wives, many baronial women had little involvement in litigation, including the women of the baronies of Folkingham and Redbourne. During their marriages, the involvement of baronial women in lawsuits was limited to women who inherited their families' estates, or more rarely when the case concerned their *maritagium*, such as with Alice de Neville. When women appeared in court in disputes over their inherited properties and rights, legally they had to appear with their husbands. Idonea Longespée was heavily involved in lawsuits concerning her estates, nonetheless she never appeared in cases which were concerned with the estates of her husband. This demonstrates how her agency was limited to affairs which were centred on her property. She occasionally appeared on her own and when she did appear with her husband she appointed a different attorney to represent her, often appointing someone linked with the barony of Brattleby. Her decision to choose a person associated with the barony, rather than someone from her husband's administration, demonstrates the importance of her natal heritage to her. Heiresses also celebrated their natal heritage through their religious patronage and seals. Cecily de Crevequer and Eustachia Basset both patronised religious communities which were closely associated with their natal kin. They used their seals clearly to demonstrate their positions as heiresses by illustrating their roles as the continuators of their families' lineages. In spite of these examples discussed above, there are cases of heiresses who were not perhaps as active within their marriages, or whose activities are, at least, not as well documented in the extant records. Isabella de Neville was not associated in charters by her husband in the management of her estates and instead her husband Robert associated himself with their son and heir, Geoffrey. The experiences of aristocratic women, however, varied greatly and a lot could depend on a woman's relationships with her husband and children, as well as her skills in shaping her life and interests.⁵³¹ This demonstrates how the relationship which a baronial woman had with her husband was of the utmost importance as it was her husband who allowed his wife to play a role in estate affairs. The importance which was placed on an heiress as the successor to her family's lineage is shown by Isabella de Neville's descendants' decision to take Isabella's natal name of Neville rather than the less prestigious one of Isabella's husband. The access to property rights through their inheritance often gave baronial heiresses more agency when compared to that exercised by non-inheriting women.

Lincolnshire baronies sometimes descended to women unexpectedly after the death of the last male heir, including the baronies of Folkingham, Redbourne, and Tattershall. The division of the

⁵³¹ Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows', p. 71; Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 117.

estates between numerous heirs often caused the baronies to become too fractured, resulting in the barony falling into abeyance which happened with the barony of Redbourne. In some cases, after the unexpected inheritance of many sisters, such as with the barony of Redbourne and Tattershall, they worked together because of their shared interest in their property. They enacted their own policies and came to agreements to exchange estates to ensure that they received estates near the lands of their husbands, and which therefore gave them easier, more compact territories to administer. Both Joan and Isabella of Tattershall used their inheritance to provide for people who were close to them, including their younger children and other associates. Even so, the relationships between siblings of baronial families were not always as amicable, such as the relationship between Henry de Neville and his two sisters Isabella and Avice. The descent of the barony of Folkingham to the king left Gilbert de Gant's sisters and their heirs partially disinherited and they did not have any agency to prevent this. His sister, Julianna de Gant, is an extremely useful example of how baronial women were not always forced to marry or to enter the religious life. She was supported by her brother as Gilbert granted her lands for her maintenance. We cannot know, however, whether it was this grant of land which allowed her to remain single or whether Gilbert granted her the land specifically because she chose to remain single. The lands which she inherited allowed her to participate in religious patronage which was an extremely rare action for a single baronial woman. She granted land to Nun Cotham Priory which was a community which had no association with her family, so as a single woman she was able to pursue her own policies. Julianna was an exceptional baronial woman; her position as an heiress provided her with experiences not often enjoyed by baronial women, including her involvement in acts of lordship. This thesis has therefore shown that women from baronial families were sometimes able to choose to remain single and not enter the religious life, but this subject needs more study to see how far Julianna's experiences were similar to those of other single baronial women.

Widowhood changed the experiences of baronial women both for the better and for the worse. Ricketts argued that widows as a group have been generalised in the historiography as often historians state that widows were more independent and had a greater degree of action than wives.⁵³² This thesis supports her argument. On the one hand, there were baronial widows in Lincolnshire who held great estates and were important figures in the localities. On the other hand, there were also baronial widows, like the widows of the barony of Redbourne and Lora de Gant, who did not fare as well and whose experiences were not as positive. Most baronial women

⁵³² Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 117.

in this study faced no struggle to gain control of their dower and their access to land caused them to be wealthy individuals, like Eve of Tattershall. Yet the experiences of some baronial women concerning their dower did not reflect contemporary legislation as often they did not receive their dower within the forty days stated in Magna Carta. Lora de Gant faced the longest struggle as she had to wait seven years for all of her dower to be allocated to her. She had no children and the estates were in the hands of the king; she had no one to support her in her attempts to secure them. Baronial women who had no children tended to face opposition in gaining their dower, when compared to women who had children and specifically a son and heir. Joan of Tattershall, Eustachia Basset (after the death of her first husband, Thomas de Verdun), and Alice de Neville, all faced problems in securing their dower from their husbands' heirs, who all probably viewed it as against their interests to grant the women their rightful dues. Age, health, personality and sheer necessity are all factors which would have influenced baronial women's involvement within litigation.⁵³³ Alice de Neville appears to have had a strong personality as she pursued numerous people to gain control of her dower from her tenants. Widowhood must also have been a fairly emotional time, since widows experienced the loss of someone extremely close to them and often, as with the widows of the barony of Redbourne, they also lost custody of their children. This study has been unable to find one example of a baronial woman in Lincolnshire who was able to gain the wardship of her heir. The crown clearly viewed the wardships of heirs to baronial families as being a good source of patronage and so heirs were seldom able to remain with their mothers.

The remarriage of baronial widows demonstrates the improved position of women throughout the thirteenth century. Magna Carta worked to stop women paying large fines to avoid remarriage and they were no longer forced to marry the king's candidates. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Isolda Pantolf, Eustachia Basset and Rose of Tattershall all remarried men who paid the king sums of money for the rights to their marriages, along with their dower estates and any inheritance. Later in the thirteenth century, Ida de Neville married John FitzMarmaduke without the king's permission, but she faced no lasting retribution such as her estates being confiscated. It is probable that this marriage was the closest one to a love match as Ida had already been married twice before and she was possibly past child bearing age. There would have been many motives behind the remarriages of baronial women and it is often overlooked in the historiography that maybe they remarried specifically because they did not wish to be on their

⁵³³ Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 84.

own, rather than because they were forced.⁵³⁴ Baronial women often enjoyed greater independence in their second marriages when compared to their previous ones. Gunnora de Gant was active in litigation during her second marriage and was able to act independently in her appointment of her attorney. She chose Robert of Edenham who was closely connected to the barony of Folkingham and she may have influenced her husband's decision, since he also chose someone who was connected to the barony. She maintained links to the marital connections of her first marriage by issuing a charter to Rufford Abbey, instead of favouring a community linked to her new marital family. In subsequent marriages, the access to land through dower possibly allowed baronial women to exercise greater influence over decisions relating to property than they had previously enjoyed.

After their widowhoods, baronial women became more visible in the surviving records. Mary de Neville, for example, issued one charter during her marriage, compared to the sixteen charters issued during her widowhood. Access to land allowed women to become more visibly involved in the management of their estates, probably a role which they had participated as representatives of their husbands earlier in their lives. Baronial widows, like countesses, participated in various acts of lordships, including confirming their tenants' grants, providing their tenants with land in exchange for rent and using their estates to provide for younger children or other family members. It was not just men who benefited from the grants of baronial women. Both Mary de Neville and Idonea Longespée issued charters to women. Mary de Neville rewarded her female servant, Preciosa, with a generous grant, whilst Idonea granted land to Mabel of Ardington in exchange for an annual payment of rent. Mary de Neville's inheritance and dower lands allowed her to assume an important position within the local society in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. She was able to attract both tenants and neighbours to be part of her affinity, suggesting that her gender was no barrier in preventing her from being sought after as a lord. Walker has argued that control of property gave women power and status, and required them to be active within legal culture.⁵³⁵ Lora de Gant was involved in litigation for the first time, if we can trust the extant records, after she gained property rights through her dower. Other baronial women had been active during their marriages because disputes arose that concerned their inherited lands and rights, as was the case with Idonea Longespée. Yet for others widowhood was often the first time that non-inheriting women experienced the law courts. Once they reached the life-cycle stage of widowhood, the length of widowhood, whether they remarried, or whether they were heiresses,

⁵³⁴ Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives*, pp. 104, 111.

⁵³⁵ Walker, 'Litigation as Personal Quest', p. 82.

all influenced the amount of freedom and agency enjoyed by a widow.⁵³⁶ Mary de Neville had a long widowhood and access to lands held in hereditary rights, not just dower, which allowed her to be considerably more active in issuing charters than other baronial women, such as Lora de Gant who struggled to gain control of her dower.

This study has shown that religious patronage was a major area of activity for baronial women, both during their marriages and then during their subsequent widowhoods. The charters issued by baronial women at which this thesis has looked, were all issued by baronial women who also inherited estates. During their marriages, Cecily de Crevequer and Eustachia Basset issued charters with their husbands to religious communities associated with their natal ancestors. Eustachia's husband, Richard de Camville, inherited land from his father and was heir to the barony of Brattleby, so Eustachia may have exercised influence over her husband to persuade him to favour a community associated with her ancestors rather than one associated with his ancestors. When widowed, Isolda Pantolf and Mary de Neville both supported religious institutions also associated with their natal ancestors, therefore demonstrating their positions as heiresses. These examples support the existing debates by illustrating how heiresses created their identity by linking themselves with their birth kin, thereby demonstrating their positions as the heirs to their families' estates and the continuators of their lineage. Nonetheless, Gunnora de Gant was also an heiress, yet she chose to support a house connected with the family of her first marriage. She was carrying out an important role expected of a baronial woman to commemorate her family, both natal and marital. Her granddaughter, Gunnora de Secchevill, centred her identity very closely on that of her grandmother, thereby associating herself with an important female ancestor. The images and legends employed on their seals, the titles used in their charters, the *pro anima* clauses, and the foundations which they patronised, were all methods by which baronial women created their own identities. They associated themselves with their natal families and celebrated their lineage, often demonstrating, like Gunnora de Secchevill, how they viewed their natal families as being more illustrious than the one into which they had married.

The historiography has largely neglected to study baronial women. This is a major oversight as they were important individuals who were at the centre of their families. This study adds to existing debates by illustrating how baronial women were valued members of their local society and were involved in acts of lordships. Their experiences were similar to those of women of higher social status: they acted as their husband's representatives, were active in estate

⁵³⁶ Ricketts, 'Widows, Religious Patronage and Family Identity', p. 132.

management, and preserved the memory of their family through their religious patronage. Baronial women were, however, more influential in the localities when compared to the national involvement of countesses. Their marriages provided them with a position in society, whilst widowhood allowed them to follow their own policies, which often were still centred on their families. The position of heiresses allowed some baronial women to experience a much greater degree of agency when compared to that of non-inheriting baronial women, so demonstrating the importance which access to estates had on the lives of baronial women. The experiences of each individual varied greatly and a lot could depend on a woman's relationships with her husband and children, as well as her skills in shaping her life and interests.⁵³⁷ This study has explored the lives of the women of five baronial families. Each individual faced her own problems and difficulties and had different influences impacting on her life. The varying levels of wealth of each family also impacted on their lives, as the women of the barony of Redbourne faced different problems when compared to the ladies of the wealthier barony of Ashby. Making generalised statements about the position and agency of baronial women fails to illustrate the variety of experiences which baronial women had; they were valued individuals both in the context of their families and in the localities.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p. 117; Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows', p. 71.

Appendices

Appendix One: The Acta of Baronial Women in Lincolnshire

Table One: The Acta of the Barony of Ashby

Woman	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Grant/Confirmation Subject
Emma de Humet	<i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , vol. II, no. 786, pp. 123-124.	Grant	1193-1208.	Grant to Robert de Humet of six bovates of land in Thormanby. Granted during her widowhood.
Emma de Humet	<i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , vol. II, no. 1056, pp. 365-366.	Grant	1199-1203	Grant to St Mary's Abbey, York of an annuity of 20 marks in return for a release of the right to the advowson to the church of Sheriff Hutton.
Isabella de Neville	TNA, E 210/146	Grant	Unknown	Grant to Robert de Neville of all her rights in the town of Paythorne.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/3364	Grant	21 st September 1313	Grant to Gilbert de Helton, of two messuages, three tofts and two tenements in Snape.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 210/4646	Grant	1276	Grant to Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice, his wife, of land, rent and villeins at Middleham.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/1050	Grant	8 th September 1293.	Grant to Geoffrey Pigot, for the term of his life, of a vaccary in Coverdale, with common pasture throughout the forest of Coverdale, with forty loads of firewood and timber.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/6525	Grant	1304	Grant to Geoffrey Pigot of land in Middleham.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/6526	Grant	Unknown	Grant to Noel FitzAdam de Hunter of lands and rents in Middleham.

Mary de Neville	TNA, E 210/4599		1281	Grant to Thomas Longespey of a place in Richmond in Frenchgate.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 327/730	Grant	1312	Grant to Peter of Bolton of a messuage and land in Nosterfield.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 327/698	Grant	1312	Grant to Geoffrey le Scrope of release of services due for lands in Coverham, Caldbergh, and Agglethorpe.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 327/448	Grant	1314	Grant to Coverham Abbey of messuages and land in Crakehall and Thoraby.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 210/6093	Grant	Unknown	Grant to Walter FitzHenry of Middleham, of one acre in Middleham.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/2516	Grant	2 nd February 1286	Grant to Geoffrey Pigot, for his life, land in Melmerby and a right of pasture in Coverdale Forest.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 210/7613	Grant	1298	Grant to Coverham Abbey of wood.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/278	Grant	29 th September 1313	Grant to John de Merk of the mill of Aysgarth, with wood from the forest of Bishopdale.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/681	Indenture	Unknown	Indenture terminating a suit between the Abbot of St. Mary, York and Mary de Neville concerning the boundaries of the marshes of Burniston and Snape.
Mary de Neville	TNA, E 326/2450	Grant	21 st September 1313	Grant to Preciosa, the maid of Mary de Neville, of a messuage and tenement in Nosterfield with liberty to

				take wood from the forest of Well.
Mary de Neville	TNA, C 143/12/10	Grant	1287	Grant to two chaplains in the church of Houghton, Norfolk, of rent in South Pickenham.
Mary de Neville	West Yorkshire Archives, WYL639/172	Grant	1312	Grant to Robert de Spence of messuage and two bovates of land at Thoralby, and confirmed his tenancy of the forest of Bishopdale.

Table Two: The Acta of the Barony of Brattleby

Woman	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Subject
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 101, p. 55	Final Concord over the manor of Stoke.	30 th April 1206	Final concord between Eustachia and Richard de Camville against Thomas Basset over the manor of Stoke.
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 194, p. 130	Grant	1206-1216.	Grant to Bicester Priory of the whole tithe of their hay in the villis of Bicester, Stratton Audley and Wretchwick. She placed her seal on the charter.
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 195, pp. 130-131	Grant	1206-1216.	Grant to Robert the Clerk of a virgate in the vill of Bicester; in exchange Robert furnished one lamp before the altar of the church of Bicester Priory for the soul of Eustachia, Richard and their son. She placed her seal on the charter.
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 196, p. 131.	Confirmation	1206-1216	Confirmation of the messuage held by Walter of

				Crockwell granted to Bicester Priory.
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 197, p. 132	Grant	1211-1216.	Grant to Bicester Priory of part of the manor of Wretchwick and the wood of Graven Hill. She placed her seal on the charter.
Eustachia Basset	<i>Basset Charters</i> , no. 198, p. 133.	Grant	1211-1216.	Grant to Bicester Priory of the vill of Wretchwick with the woods of Graven Hill and the furlong of 'Cubrugge'. She placed her seal on the charter.
Idonea Longespée	Lost charter cited in Kennett White, <i>Parochial Antiquities attempted in the History of Ambrosden, Burcester and Other Adjacent Parts in the Counties of Oxford and Bucks</i> , vol. I, p. 325.	Grant	Sometime after 1242.	Grant to Valentine, son of William Clerk, of land in the village of Holmer.
Idonea Longespée	Berkshire Record Office, D/Q1/T13/6	Grant	Sometime after 1249	Grant to Mabel of Ardington of a virgate of land. She placed her seal on the charter.

Table Three: The Acta of the Barony of Folkingham

Woman	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Subject
Gunnora de Gant	<i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> , vol. V, no. II, p. 490.	Confirmation charter of Richard I	Unknown	Grant given by Robert and Gunnora of land in Holmer to Vaudey Abbey.

Gunnora de Gant	<i>Rufford Charters</i> , vol. III, no. 890, p. 470.	Grant	1197-1217	Grant to Rufford Abbey of half a carucate of land and toft in Aubourn. Nicholas de Stuteville, her second husband, and Stephen de Gant witness the charter. She placed her seal on the charter.
Gunnora de Gant	Lost charter cited in <i>Memoirs Illustrative of the History and Antiquities of the County and City of Lincoln</i> , p. 49.	Grant	Unknown	Grant of her inheritance to her younger son, Stephen. The charter was witnessed by her other sons Gilbert, Geoffrey and Reginald.
Gunnora de Secchevill (daughter of Gilbert I)	<i>Rufford Charters</i> , vol. III, no. 907, p. 484.	Grant	1250-1260	Grant to Rufford Abbey of land in Barton. She placed her seal on the charter.
Gunnora de Secchevill (daughter of Gilbert I)	<i>Rufford Charters</i> , vol. III, no. 908, p. 485.	Confirmation	1250-1260	Confirmation to Rufford Abbey of all the lands they held in Barton from her and confirmed the charters of her tenants. She placed her seal on the charter.
Juliana de Gant	TNA, C 143/57/13	Grant	1305-1306	Grant to the nuns of St. Mary, Nunnery of Cotham, of her share in the manor of Skendleby in return for prayers for her soul.
Juliana de Gant	TNA, C 143/67/7	Grant	Unknown	Grant of land in Well and Mawthorpe to Adam de Welle.

Table Four: The Acta of the Barony of Redbourne

Woman	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Subject
Cecily de Crevequer	<i>Gilbertine Charters</i> , no. 14, p. 96	Grant	Henry II	Grant to the Priory of Bullington. Walter de Neville's charter at the wish and consent of his wife.
Cecily de Crevequer	<i>Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw</i> , no. 98, p. 64.	Grant	Henry II	Grant to the Priory of Bullington. Walter de Neville's charter at the wish and consent of his wife.
Cecily de Crevequer	<i>Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw</i> , no. 99, p. 65	Grant	Late twelfth century	Grant to the Priory of Bullington. Walter de Neville's charter at the wish and consent of his wife. Cecily placed her seal on the charter.

Table Five: The Acta of the Barony of Tattershall

Woman	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Subject
Isolda Pantulf	<i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> , vol. IV, no. IV, p. 222	Grant	1217	Grant to the Nunnery of Langley founded by her ancestors
Joan of Driby	TNA, C 143/168/1	Grant	1323-1324	Joan of Driby granted to herself a lifetime interest in the castle and manor of Tattershall. She further granted a third of the manor of Wymondham and an eighth part of the manor of Buckenham to William de Bernak and Alice, her daughter; tenements in

				Boston to Robert, her son; and the manor of Breedon to John, her son.
Joan of Driby	TNA, C 143/157/13	Grant	1322-1323	Grant to James de Ros and Maud, Joan's granddaughter, her share in the manor of Hunmanby.
Isabella of Oreby	TNA, C 143/72/19	Grant	1308-1309	John and Isabella de Orreby grant to William Florence a messuage and land in Carleton and Tibbenham. They also grant to Joan of Driby (Isabel's sister) messuages, lands and rents in Attleborough, New and Old Buckenham, and Ellingham.

Appendix Two: Charters issued to Mary de Neville

Grantor	Source	Grant/Confirmation	Date	Subject
Joan Pigot	TNA, E 327/697	Grant	1310	Joan Pigot, widow of Geoffrey Pigot, granted the common in the forest of Coverdale back to Mary Neville.
Eleanor FitzHenry	TNA, E 327/693	Grant	Unknown	Eleanor, daughter of Henry, granted back to Mary Neville her life interest in land in Snape.
Richard Hukelford	TNA, E 210/3993	Grant	Unknown	Richard, son of Alan de Hukelford, granted back one and a half acres in Houghton field to Mary de Neville.
Helewise de Perrow	TNA, E 326/3700	Grant	Unknown	Release by Helewise de Perrow, a widow, of all her rights in all the lands that belonged to John de Farwald in Well in return for 100 marks.

Appendix Three: Witnesses to Mary de Neville's Charters

Name:	Recipient of Charter	Reference:	Number of Charters Witnessed:
Robert of Brompton	Coverham Abbey Peter of Bolton Geoffrey le Scrope Coverham Abbey Robert de Spence	TNA, E 326/681 TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 210/7613 West Yorkshire Archive, WYL639/172	5
John of Barton	Coverham Abbey Noel FitzAdam de Hunter Coverham Abbey Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 326/681 TNA, E 326/6526 TNA, E 210/7613 TNA, E 210/4646	4
Robert de Wycliffe	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/681	1
John de Helleck	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/681	1
Robert de Ameotes	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/681	1
William of Gatenby	Coverham Abbey Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/681 TNA, E 326/2516	2
John of Thornton	Coverham Abbey Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 326/681 TNA, E 210/4646	2

Richard of Barningham	Peter of Bolton Coverham Abbey Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 210/4646	4
William de Dursa	Peter of Bolton Geoffrey le Scrope Coverham Abbey Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot Preciosa, maid	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2516 TNA, E 326/2450	6
Ranulph Pigot	Peter of Bolton Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 327/448	2
Geoffrey Pigot	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 210/7613	1
Hugh FitzPeter de Thoresby	Peter of Bolton Coverham Abbey Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Preciosa, maid John de Merk	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2450 TNA, E326/278	5

Peter FitzHugh de Thoresby	Noel FitzAdam de Hunter Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot Geoffrey Pigot Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/6526 TNA, E 326/6525 TNA, E 326/1050 TNA, E 210/7613	4
Matthew FitzRichard of Snape	Peter of Bolton Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Preciosa, maid	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2450	3
Adam of Driffield	Peter of Bolton Geoffrey Pigot John de Merk	TNA, E 327/730 TNA, E 326/1050 TNA, E 326/278	3
Ranulph de Neville (Son)	Geoffrey le Scrope Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 326/2516	2
Robert de Neville (Son)	Geoffrey le Scrope	TNA, E 327/698	1
Robert de Neville (Husband)	Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 210/4646	1
Thomas of Richmond	Geoffrey le Scrope Coverham Abbey Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2516	6

	Preciosa, maid Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/2450 TNA, E 210/7613	
Thomas Albec of Couhin	Geoffrey le Scrope	TNA, E 327/698	1
Roger Oysel	Geoffrey le Scrope Noel FitzAdam de Hunter Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot Geoffrey Pigot Coverham Abbey Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 326/6526 TNA, E 326/2516 TNA, E 326/1050 TNA, E 210/7613 TNA, E 210/4646	6
Robert de Mousters	Geoffrey le Scrope	TNA, E 327/698	1
Robert of Crakehale	Geoffrey le Scrope	TNA, E 327/698	1
John de Wauton	Geoffrey le Scrope Coverham Abbey Noel FitzAdam de Hunter	TNA, E 327/698 TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/6525	3
Henry FitzHugh	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 327/448	1
John le Marauen	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 327/448	1
Henry le Scrope	Coverham Abbey John de Merk	TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/278	2

Geoffrey le Scrope	Coverham Abbey John de Merk	TNA, E 327/448 TNA, E 326/278	2
William le Scrope	Geoffrey Pigot Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/1050 TNA, E 210/7613	2
Richard de Eglis	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 327/448	1
Alan de Rodhagbe	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 327/448	1
Ranulf FitzRanulf	Noel FitzAdam de Hunter Geoffrey Pigot Coverham Abbey Geoffrey of Helmsley and Alice his wife	TNA, E 326/6526 TNA, E 326/1050 TNA, E 210/7613 TNA, E 210/4646	4
Adam de P?	Noel FitzAdam de Hunter	TNA, E 326/6526	1
Thomas of Thornton	Noel FitzAdam de Hunter	TNA, E 326/6526	1
John, Abbot of Coverham	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/6525	1
Geoffrey of Sherburn	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/6525	1
John de ..?	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/6525	1
Stephen of Cobham	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/6525	3

	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/2516 TNA, E 210/7613	
Simon de Notcull	Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Preciosa, maid	TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2450	2
Thomas de Lardaunt	Gilbert FitzRoger de Helton Preciosa, maid	TNA, E 326/3364 TNA, E 326/2450	2
Brian FitzAlan	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot John de Merk Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 326/2516 TNA, E 326/278 TNA, E 210/7613	3
Richard FitzIngram	Geoffrey son of Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/2516	1
Peter de Bon..?	Preciosa, maid	TNA, E 326/2450	1
Henry de W..?	Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/1050	1
Thomas de Pre..?	Geoffrey Pigot	TNA, E 326/1050	1
Adam de Thorn..?	John de Merk	TNA, E 326/278	1
Robert de ..?	John de Merk	TNA, E 326/278	1
Walter de Hepden	Coverham Abbey	TNA, E 210/7613	1
William of Burton	Robert de Spence	West Yorkshire Archives, WYL639/172	1

William de Spence	Robert de Spence	West Yorkshire Archives, WYL639/172	1
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