

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### HUGH DE PESHALL

#### Seventh in Ancestry

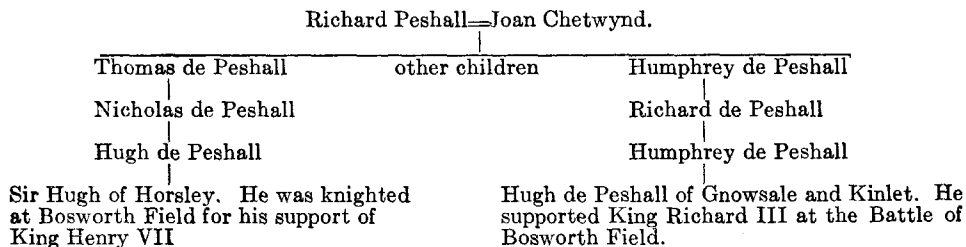
#### *Section 1. Hugh de Peshall.*

#### SECTION 1.

7. HUGH PESHALL, son of Nicholas de Peshall, Chapter 20, Section 1. Child:—

\*6. 1. SIR HUGH PESHALL, Chapter 22, Section 1.

The pedigree of the family as given by Rev. John Persall and the Pedigree of the Pearsall family of Willsbridge, make Sir Hugh Peshall the son of Nicholas Peshall; whereas the latter was father of Hugh, and grandfather of Sir Hugh. The Visitations of 1614, 1663-64 allowed the descent there claimed, but at the same time indicated that there was a generation intervening between Nicholas and Sir Hugh, which is confirmed by the records, which disclose his part in the War of the Roses, as a partizan of the side of the house of Lancaster. This statement of the pedigree of Hugh Peshall is confirmed by a comparison with the generations of descent from Humphrey Peshall brother of Sir Thomas Peshall, grandfather of Hugh Peshall, as is clearly shown by the following chart:



These two families of Peshall although near cousins were on opposite sides in the War of the Roses. Humphrey Peshall, the father of Hugh of Gnowsale, as we shall presently see, appears among the earliest appointees of the York King Edward IV. in Staffordshire. Sir Hugh, knighted on Bosworth Field, and Hugh of Kinlet and Gnowsale were contemporary, and being of the same name, it has confused the historians to find records concerning a Hugh Peshale knighted for special service to the king at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and at the same time a Hugh Peshall pardoned for special efforts to defeat the same king in this same battle.

In the Wars of the Roses the main strength of the Yorkists lay in the south and east, while the north was Lancastrian. Yorkshire was the scene of many conflicts. Nowhere else did the house of Lancaster find stauncher supporters. The Yorkshire barons fought for the cause of Henry VI., and for his heroic Queen Margaret. Fierce was the fight at Wakefield in 1460, when the Duke of York and the flower of his army was slain. A year later his son Edward, afterwards

Edward IV., had his revenge on the bloodstained field of Towton, where 30,000 men perished, and the crown was won for the Yorkists. We see a lone figure wandering on the moors between Wensleydale and Bowland, find shelter with the family of the Lindseys, the poor deserted sixth Henry, who wrote in quaint verse of the joys of a shepherd's life, and preferred it to the wearing of a crown. [Counties of England, by P. H. Ditchfield, vol. 1, page 57. Vic. Hist. of Staff., by Wm. Page.]

To a great extent the Wars of the Roses were merely a series of faction fights, fought out by the heads of the great families and their retainers, during which the greater part of the commonalty went on with their daily business. Staffordshire was mainly Lancastrian. The Duchy of Lancaster had been merged in the crown on the accession of Henry IV. and Henry VI. had granted it to Margaret of Anjou as part of her dower. Tutbury was the chief seat of the duchy, and most of the manors in the northern and eastern parts of the county were held under it. Moreover, the greatest landowner in the county, and perhaps in England, Humphrey, first Duke of Buckingham was at first a Lancastrian and so were the gentry who held under him; but there were several of the great families on the Yorkist side, Wrottesley, Audley, Blount, Stanley, Sutton, Wolseley. [Counties of England, by P. H. Ditchfield, vol. 1, page 57.]

The Duke of Buckingham was the son of Edmund, Earl of Stafford, who was killed at Shrewsbury, and Anne the daughter, and eventually sole heiress, of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, the youngest son of Edward III. When only twenty-eight he was, in 1430, made constable of France, and in 1440 was created Duke of Buckingham. [History of the County of Stafford, by William Page, London, 1908.]

In 1454, he is said to have had two thousand Stafford Knots, his badge of livery, make to what intent men may construe as their wits will give them. His estates at this time stretched all over central England, from Holderness to Brecknock, and from Stafford to Tonbridge. We cannot forget how our ancestor Sir Thomas, the grandfather of Hugh Peshall, had been among the first and staunchest of the supporters of the house of Lancaster; hence we are not surprised to find this Hugh Peshall, his grandson, fighting for the house of Lancaster. And even before the death of King Henry VI. we find Hugh Peshall associated actively with the Lancaster forces in combating the enemies of the king. In the book of The Duttons of Dutton, London, 1901, page 248, appears the following interesting record which tells eloquently of the neighborhood war in Staffordshire between the followers of the Red and of the White Rose. 1453-4 March 12, John de Dutton, John de Egerton and Hugh Pesall to the king recognition for 300 marks that the sons of John de Dutton of Halton, excepting Peter his son and heir, keep the peace towards Randal Brereton and Randal his son.

In September, 1459, York raised his standard on the Welsh border, and it was to join him there that Salisbury, the father of the kingmaker, with about 7,000 men, marched southward from Middleham Castle. Queen Margaret had collected 10,000 men at Market Drayton under two Staffordshire peers, James Touchet (Lord Audley) and John Sutton (Lord Dudley), the queen herself being at Eccleshall with Prince Edward. To the queen, when at Eccleshall,

Lord Stanley, who had been raising men for the Lancastrians in Lancashire, promised to fight against the Earl of Salisbury, and his failure to carry out his promise, although he was at Newcastle, within a few miles of the battlefield, was a chief cause of the Lancastrian defeat at Blore Heath, for which treachery the Commons impeached him.

York had arrived at Ludlow and the Lancastrian forces prevented Salisbury from joining him there. On 22 September, Salisbury took up a strong position on Blore Heath, three miles east of Market Drayton, his front protected by the Hempmill Brook, a tributary of the Tern, not very broad but somewhat deep. In the early morning on the twenty-third, to quote Hall's account:—He caused his soldiers to shoot their flights towards the Lord Audeley's company, which lay on the other side of the said water, and then he and all his company made a sign of retreat. Then Lord Audeley suddenly blew up his trumpet and passed the water. The Earl of Salisbury, who knew the sleights, stratagems, and policies of war, suddenly returned and encountered Audeley when his forces were only partly across the water. The fight was sore and dreadful, but in the end the Earl's army so eagerly fought that they slew Lord Audeley and all his captains, and discomfited all the remnant of his people. If Holinshed is correct in saying that 2,400 were slain in this battle the fight must have indeed been sore and dreadful, as allowing the usual proportion of wounded to killed, more than half of the two forces must have been hors de combat. Among the prisoners taken by Salisbury was Lord Dudley; on the other hand two of Salisbury's sons, pursuing the defeated enemy too far, were captured, but their father after his victory succeeded in effecting a junction with York at Ludlow. [The Counties of England, by P. H. Ditchfield.]

The accession of Edward IV. of the house of York was followed by a year of warfare in which he finally defeated the forces allied with the house of Lancaster. The new king had married secretly Elizabeth Woodville, relict of Sir John Grey, who had been killed at the second battle of St. Alban's where he had fought on the side of King Henry. A few months later he acknowledged the marriage and heaped upon her family the greatest riches and the highest honors.

With these changes came also a change of policy. Of all Edward's councillors the most powerful was Richard Earl of Warwick, the owner of immense possessions and the governor of the important dependency of Calais. It was owing to Warwick more than to any other man that Edward had been seated on the throne. No other nobleman in England could call into the field such an army of feudal vassals and retainers. No other nobleman kept such an enormous household. When he came to London, the carcasses of six oxen were consumed at a breakfast at Warwick's Inn in Holborn. His wealth, his power, his experience, and the distinguished services he had done for Edward's house gave him a right to direct the young King's counsels to which no one else could naturally pretend. Moreover his brother Lord Montague had won for Edward the victory over Henry VI. at Hexham, for which the King had worthily promoted him to the dignity of Earl of Northumberland, with a grant of all the forfeited lands of the Percies. Also his youngest brother George, whom the King had promoted from the bishopric of Exeter to the archbishopric of York, was Edward's chancellor. [History of the House of Lancaster & York, by James Gairdner, page 180-181.]

But with the marriage of the King, Warwick and the Nevills must have known that their influence over him was certain to decline. The act itself, indeed, was something like a forcible breaking away from their rule; for Warwick had already set on foot negotiations for marrying the King to Bona of Savoy, who was sister to the queen of Louis XI. of France. It was this division of the forces of York which heartened the forces of Lancaster and encouraged them to continue the warfare of the Roses.

From 1460 to 1463 all constitutional forms of government were in abeyance and the regular machinery of the government was paralyzed, and Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire were given over to open civil warfare. It is true that the conditions were reversed, and that the Lancastrians were now entirely out of political sympathy with the reigning king. In fact they looked upon him as their enemy. This was a time when families divided as they always do in civil warfare, and the descendants of Humphrey Peshall were in full accord and sympathy with the house of York, an allegiance which later nearly led to the gallows one of that branch of our house. It is easy therefore to understand that the local feeling remained. It was impossible that the Wars of the Roses should not be keenly felt there. Indeed, one of its battles took place on Staffordshire ground. The Audleys owned Heeley Castle as their principal stronghold. It was only a few miles from Eccleshall. In the sad tragedy of Blore Heath, September 3rd, 1459, the Lancastrian queen fled, after the battle was lost, to the protection of the bishop at Eccleshall. But Lord Audley, her commander, and very many of his 10,000 men were left dead on the field. No wonder the Sowe ran blood that day. [Vict. Hist. of the Co. of Staff. & Counties of England, by P. H. Ditchfield, vol. 1, page 223-225.]

The political state of Staffordshire in these wars is clearly shown by the first commission of the peace, issued by Edward IV. in 1461, in which the only Staffordshire names are Sir John Sutton of Dudley, Sir Walter Blount, John de Audeley, John Harpur, Thomas Everdon, Thomas Wolseley, Thomas Asteley, Walter Wrottesley, and Nicholas Waryng. In the commission issued by Richard III. the same policy can be traced, for the only names of landowners of the county are John Sutton, Lord Dudley, John Blount of Mountjoy, John Gresley, Richard Wrottesley, Humphrey Persall, Nicholas Mountgomery, Ralph Wolseley, and John Cawardyne. [Staff. Hist. Col., vol. 4, new series, page 138.]

Here are all the old enemies of the house of Lancaster now basking in the sunshine of the favor of the English king of the house of York, except that the families of Audley and Peshall have divided.

While these events happened so fast and the changes were so rapid as to bewilder even those who took part therein on either side, nevertheless there were a few who stood fast to the Red Rose of Lancaster; amongst the rest was Hugh Peshall together with Roger Corbet and Thomas his brother, sons of Roger Corbet, Robert Cresset, son of Hugh Cresset, and John Leighton son of John Leighton, all of them bearing the family names of those who appeared in one of the first affrays of the Wars of the Roses when their ancestry became surety to keep the peace for Richard Peshall uncle of this Hugh Peshall. Thus we see that in the Wars of the Roses Hugh Peshall was not a mere idle spectator. The Plea Rolls tell us that.

De Banco Trinity 5 Edward IV. 1466 Staffordshire, Margaret the countess of Shrewsbury sued Roger Corbet of Moreton, knight, Robert Chorleton of Appley armiger, Roger Kynaston late of Middue, armiger, John Leighton of Stretton armiger, Robert Cresset of Upton armiger, Thomas Corbet of Lee armiger, John Lowe, late of Hide, co. Stafford, armiger, Fulk Sprengeaux of Plasshe armiger, Ralph Eyton of Willeley armiger, Richard Story of Salop armiger, William Newport of Great Erkoll armiger, Hugh Persall of Sandford armiger, John Delves of Uttoxather, co. Stafford, armiger, William Mutton of Weston-under-Lizard, co. Stafford, armiger, Hugh Egerton of Wyrnhill, in the parish of Madeley, co. Stafford, armiger, and John Cote of Wodecote, co. Stafford, armiger, for collecting together a large body of malefactors and disturbers of the peace and breaking into her close and houses at Whitchirche and Blake-mere and so threatening her servants and tenants that for fear of their lives they were unable to attend to their business or perform their duties to her. The defendants did not appear. [Staff. Hist. Col., vol. 4, n.s. page 138.]

The house of York was destined to rule England only for the space of one generation. In twenty-four years three kings of this house had ascended the English throne, but the continued opposition of the followers of the house of Lancaster, coupled with the moral depravity of the last king of the York line, was to remove that line under a cloud of infamy which time will never efface from English history. In the meantime our ancestor was bravely fighting under the banner of the Red Rose.