

Foliot History

*Research by Robert Follett of Taunton, Devon, England
Contributed by Connie Hoy, of Darwin, N. Territory, Australia
And Transcribed by Bonnie Follett*



NOTE: A few years ago, Connie Hoy had posted the below information online, but it is no longer available at its former url (as of Dec. 2009). (Formerly she had posted a List of Follett Surnames at this url:
[http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~connie/names1.htm#Follett.](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~connie/names1.htm#Follett))



Connie Hoy had obtained permission from Robert Follett to share his interesting research regarding the early origins of the Follett, Follet, Folet, Foliot surnames. I had transcribed this *Foliot History* text from the following url:
http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~connie/foliot_history.htm and now make it available for researchers once again. Thanks Robert for your research and to Connie for sharing !



- *Bonnie Follett, Dec. 2009, revised 2011.*

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~bfollett/>

These pieces are taken from documents held at the library of the Royal Society of Antiquarians dealing with the "Early Foliot's" and concerns the section entitled "The Foliot's of Devon".

William of Normandy, later known as William the Conqueror, had three half brothers, two of whom were **John Foliot** and **Odo Foliot**, later Bishop of Bayeaux.

It is safe to assume that the legitimate father of John and Odo Foliot was the natural father of William, who was known as William the Bastard.

That the three half brothers accompanied William on his England venture is proved by a portion of the Bayeaux Tapestry showing and naming the four of them together, and Bishop Odo is mentioned in accounts of the Battle of Hastings - he later founded Battle Abbey in Sussex.

As a reward for his assistance, **John Foliot** was given extensive lands in Yorkshire, Kent and Devon. John Foliot died in the year 1070 leaving a young son **William Foliot**, or Folet as his names is sometimes spelt and he is recorded in the Domesday

Book (1086) as William Folet and owning considerable estates in Kent. (I have found from another source a record of William Folet owning considerable estates in Kent).

Other than to say that the head of the Foliot family was one of Yorkshire branches and remained as such. I shall now concentrate on the Devon branch who became known as the **Ecclesiastical Folets**. There is a whole section dealing ecclesiastical side in the Antiquarian library, but this has not been researched. They received this name because of their close association with the church, providing three bishops, several archdeacons and numerous Priests as well as deeming a great deal of land to various churches and Priories in England and Normandy.

A major consequence of so many priests in one family was that as they were forbidden to marry, they could not provide heirs and therefore land that they had inherited passed to the church. The earliest of a Devon Foliot was when **Robert Foliot** of Devon married a lady named de Chesney and she gave birth, in 1110 to a son, **Roger Foliot** of Normandy. (Was de Chesney the daughter of a Norman family?).

From the early 12th century the Foliots appear to have held land in Devonshire and their possessions were in their main groups. The northern one was round about Bamstable and Biddeford and lay within the Honor of Bamstable (The Braose Fee).

The central settlement ranged from Okehampton to Exeter and lay mostly at a near Hemyoch.

The Southerly settlement lay near Plymouth at or near Warleigh and Tamerton and round Torquay and lay within the Honor of Plymton. In King Stevens' time the **Manor of Tamerton Foliot** lay within the lands of **Samson Foliot** (see pedigree 15a). After six descents, say 150 years; the whole of this property passed by successive heiresses and marriages, into the families of Gorges, Bonville, Goplestone and Bamphylde. The Church of Tamerton Foliot contains the figure of a knight in armour, known to be that of Sir Ralph de Gorges whose mother was a Foliot. This lady was Ellen, daughter of Robert, see Pedigree 6 & 25c, and it was by this marriage that the last of the lands of this Honour passed out of the Foliot family.



St. Mary's at Tamerton Foliot

Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, see Pedigree 6a, was born in Devon and lived in the reigns of Henry I, Stephen, Maud and Henry II from about the year 1100 to 1187. His birthplace was Tamerton Foliot. There is, in Devonshire a Knapp Farm, between Ottery St Mary and Colyton, and Knapp and Knapp Head are near Okehampton, while High and low Knapp are near Taunton in Somersetshire. All these localities had Foliot connections. Without going further into the story of Foliot lands of the law suits which took place and arguments between inheritors, sufficient has been said to show that the Foliot family were important land holders in Devon during the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. That the name lives on is shown by the names Tamerton Foliot, Tavy Foliot and Milton Foliot. The christening name Robert was probably chosen by William Foliot of Kent for his youngest son in honour of his own uncle Robert, Count of Mortain (Normandy) and Earl of Cornwall, and that the name was bestowed upon other descendants in Devonshire.

Emma, sister of the Earl of Cornwall married Richard, Count of Avranches and their daughter Allreda married Baldwin de Brione, who received from the Conqueror the Barony of Okehampton and the custody of the County of Devon and was also made Governor of Exeter Castle, and their son Richard (surnamed de Rivieres or Redvers), was created first Earl of Devon and died in the year 1137, being succeeded by his son Baldwin, the second Earl who died in the year 1155.

This family relationship probably also led William Foliot of Kent to put his younger son Robert in the service of the Earl of Devon and thus became seated in the Coventry.

It can thus be seen that although most of the Foliot land passed out of the family because of daughters inheriting and the land going to their husbands, by those same marriages the Foliots became related to so much of the nobility of that time.

About the year 1155 we begin to find the name spelt "Follioith". This is important and because in spite of the continuing connection of the family with their Norman lands about Ormonville - la - Foliot, it shows that they are becoming Anglicised because "Follioith" would be pronounced as spelt but "Foliot" would be pronounced in the French manner ie: "Folly-oh".

When King John of England was defeated by "Phillip Augustus - King of France", the possessions of the English Foliot became forfeit to the King of France. Several deaths occurred among the Foliot's during this period as the family would rally round their head and the fortunes of the family would fluctuate accordingly as to whether they had supported the winning or losing side.

During the struggles between Rufus and Robert (Natural son of Henry I) the Foliots were almost certain supporters of Robert's, following the De Lacs who were their feudal overlords. On the death of Henry I, the Foliots took the part of Queen Maud and took part in the Battle of Lincoln. When King Henry made Prince John Governor of Ireland, a number of Foliots were in his train. They secured lands in Dublin, and founded the Irish branch of the family who now spell their name "Folliott". In Prince Richard's (Lionheart) campaigns against Louis of France and the Duke of Burgundy the Foliots were engaged under de Lair, and when Richard's Castle of Chateau Galliard

was captured, Foliots were among the prisoners taken. It is not known what happened to them. It is recorded that during the Normandy campaign of 1202-3, several deaths occurred among the Foliots while fighting under their feudal lord.

Sir William Foliot (b. 1163) built a private chapel in the courtyard of his Chateau of Montfarville, near Barfleur, but when Normandy was wrested from King John of England, by Phillip of France, all the Norman possessions of the English Foliots were forfeit.

Throughout the King John (King Phillip war's), the Constable of Chester was in constant attendance on King John and the Foliots would form part of the Constables retinue. In 1233, King Henry III awarded Sampson Foliot the sum of 100 sh and later a further grant of 20 marks in respect of lands lost in Normandy in the Kings service.

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Foliot's became related by marriage to the Earls of Oxford and Devon. The family name of the Earls of Devon was de Redvers and they had relatives named de Courtnay. In 1258, Jane, a descendant of Jane Foliot, mother of John de Vere, 7th Earl of Oxford married Sir William de Courtnay of Musbury and her dowry was Coliton (Colyton) and Whiteford (Whitford). The notebook of Tristam Risdan states that among the Noble and Great men of Coliton and Whiteford and his heirs general were Foliot (see pedigree 20).

This Jane is the daughter of Sir Richard Foliot (Foly-oh) who died at Exeter on the Wednesday before midsummer 1264.

The change in spelling the name is shown by the following:

Normandy: Castrum de Foilet

Mainardus Foliet

Robertus Folet

Normandy: Simon de Foletot

Robert Foletot

Guillaume de la Follie Chevalier

There is a great deal concerning litigation and challenges querying Knights, Fees etc, but it is fairly clear that by the end of the 14th century, by gift, marriage, litigation and confiscation, most of the land held by the Foliots of Devon had passed out of the family, and in those times, loss of land could take a family from wealth to obscurity in three generations.

The following are a few entries, which may be termed as "being of interest".

Thomas Foliot is one of the customery tenants in Lopen in the Manor of Marriet, Somersetshire.

1297 Gilbert Foliot appointed Parson of Heath Fyld (Heathfield) near Taunton. Later became Abbot of Gloucester.

Thomas Foliot, at Windsor, was mentioned as one of the villains (small holders) holding land in Merriet at a rental of 12 sh.

Commission of Oyer and Terminor to try John Foliot and others for breaking into houses at Little Cheleworth (Chilworthy) near Ilminster.

Richard Foliot and other well known men of England took on the high seas a ship of war of the Kings enemies and taken it into Paderstowe (Cornwall).

Earls and Sherriff's of Devon ordered to arrest Richard Foliot and others for resisting the Kings mandate.

This Richard appears the type of man who over the years helped to turn England from being a dependency of Normandy into the great power it eventually became.

From this point there is a gap of two centuries in the records of the Foliots of Devon but mention of the following wills show that the line continues.

I can find no mention of a coat of arms, but the family crest was a "Pugs Head". This may be the reason why so many Inns in Devon and Somerset have this name.

At the present time it is not possible to state with any degree of certainty from which branch of the Devon Foliots, the Somerset Folletts descended.

The Family Tree (1) is authenticated at each step by marriage and/or death certificates. This information was obtained from the Parish of Chard records held at Taunton. The marriage of John and Honor is the first time the name Follett appears.

There is no record of parents or from where they came although there are some indications that it may have been Tarcombe in Devon or according to later Foliot's (p30) it may just as well be Chilworthy or Merriot.

There is a great deal of research still to be done of Parish records in Exeter and Taunton, but once the parents of John have been located their records will take us back to 1540's, when Parish records began. If that can be done then we have only a gap of about 100 years, and through the various family trees at hand, it may be possible to establish from which branch we came and the link can be made which will complete one thousand years of Foliet / Follett history.

Of this we can be sure our ancestors held land in Normandy, came to England as part of

the entourage of William the Conqueror and fought at Hastings in 1066. Through the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries they played a major part in the changing history of England and made their mark not only on the Political but also the Ecclesiastical scene.

We, and future generations should be proud and honoured to be part of such a family and to be at great pains to ensure that no member commits any act that might cast a shadow on that honour.

Robert Follett

April 1977

Later Foliots

(XIIa) **Thomas Foliot** is mentioned in 1285 when he was one of the customary tenants in Lopen, (17'E. of Hemyock, and 3'SE. of Barrington), and in Stratton, (which was probably an adjacent village on the Fosse Way), in the manor of Merriet, Somersetshire, of land belonging to Ela, widow of John de Merriet; (Close Rolls). Merriet is less than 2'SE. Of Lopen, and both are near the Fosse Way, which passed through Ilchester, and from which Stratton would take its name. There is another Stratton on this Fosse Way further north and 10'SW of Bath.

In 1308, at Windsor, (XIIa) Thomas Foliot is mentioned as one of the villein holding land in the manor of Merriet, Somerset, at the annual rent of 12sh. (Close Rolls).

Note. Isabel Bardolf, sister of Beatrix Bardolf, wife of (IVa) Jordon Foliot, of Yorkshire, married Hugh de Merriet.

In 1297 (XIIb) **Gilbert Foliot** was appointed parson of Hethfylde (ie: Heathfield, 5'WNW. Of Taunton, Somerset). This is probably the origin of the assertion that Bishop Gilbert Foliot was Rector of "Heytefield", Somerset, before he was made Abbot of Gloucester in 1139. He was born in the early Twelfth century of an Anglo-Norman family and connected with the earls of Hereford. He died in London in 1186.

Probably the above Thomas and Gilbert were scions of the Hemyock Branch.

On 12 July 1339 a Commission of Oyer and Terminus was issued to try (XIIIa) **John Foliot** and others for breaking into houses at Little Cheleworth, (ie. Chilworth, 3'SW of Ilminster), Somerset, and carrying away goods, and assaulting and imprisoning the owner's servants; (Pat.Rolls). He may have been a son of (XIIa) Thomas Foliot.

A deed dated 1350 concerning land at Bristol was exemplified in 1389, and John Foliot and others attested the exemplification. In 1396 the will of John Foliot, burgese, St Mary atte Port, was proved at Bristol.

In 1377 William Hervey of Thirley died. His wife wasFoliot, daughter of (XIIIb) **Richard Foliot**; (Pedigree of Hervey of Aylesbeare, 7'E. of Exeter, visitations of Devon, 1564, and 1629, by Col: Vivian).

Richard was probably another son of (XIIa) Thomas Foliot. Prior to 8 February 1379 (XIIIb) Richard Foliot "and other well known men of England" were stated to have taken on the High Seas from the King's enemies in time of war, a ship Flanders, which was brought into Paderstowe, (ie. Padstow), Cornwall, and on the above date a Commission was issued to enquire about it; (Pat.Rolls).

On 21 February 1384 the Earl and Sheriffs of Devon were ordered to arrest (XIIIb) Richard Foliot and others, who had resisted the King's mandate in respect of three Spanish Ships, which had been driven ashore at Plymouth; (Pat.Rolls).

In 1332, (XIVa) **William Foliot**, who may have been brother or son of the last RICHARD, was manucaptor for Robert de Carburra, burgess in the Parliament in Westminster for a Cornish borough.

In 1360 William Foliot paid customers at Dartmouth, Devon, on 5 ½ dakers of hides and 1 ½ dakers of kips, customed and cocketed at Waterford, Ireland, which came over in a Spanish ship, that was seized by one of the King's ships on suspicion of smuggling; (Cl.Rls.)

Note. From this point there is a gap of some two centuries in the records of the Folios of Devon, which it would take five or six generations to bridge.

The examination of Wills mentioned below might corroborate Marjorie, daughter of John Shorte of Exeter, who was buried on the date mentioned; (Pedigree of shorte of Newton St : Cyres, Vivian's disitations).

In 1612 the will of **John Foliot of Honiton** was proved at Exeter.

In 1615 the will of (XXb) **Robert Foliot of Uplyme**, (3'E. of Tusbury, and 11'SE of Honiton), was proved at Exeter. ROBERT may have been brother of the last named John Foliot.

In 1622 the will was proved at Exeter of **Catherine Folliett**, who may have been the widow of the above (Xxa) John Foliot of Honiton.

In 1623 the will of (XXIa) **William Folliett of Exeter** was proved at Exeter. He may have been a son of (Xxa) John Foliot.

In 1626 (XXIb) **Robert Follett** and others wrote a letter about shipping; (Cowper MSS., Hist.MSS.Comm). He may have been a son of (XXb) Robert Follett.

In 1635 the will of (XXIIa) **Thomas Folliett of Loopit**, (I.e. Luppitt, 4'SSE. Of

Hemyock), was proved at Exeter. He may have been son of (XXIa) William Foliot.

About 1645-55 **Daniel Foliot of Axminster** subscribed £10 in a list adventurers in Ireland; (Prendergast's "Cromwellian Settlement if Ireland.")

In 1647 the will of (XXIIb) **Walter Folliett of Honyton** was proved at EXETER; and in 1663 the will of **Joan Folliett** of Honyton was also proved at EXETER. She may have been the widow of WALTER, who may have been son of (XXIb) Robert Foliot.

In 1686 the will of (XXIIIa) **William Folliett of Exeter** was proved of Exeter.

In 1702 the will of (XXIIIb) **John Folliet of Cleyhidon**, (2'NE. of Hemyock), was proved at Exeter.

In 1708 the will of (XXIIIc) **Walter Folliet of Childon**, (I.e. Cheldon, 14'NE. of Okehampton), was proved at Exeter.

To verify or correct the foregoing conjectures, it would be necessary to examine the above wills and the Parish Registers of the places mentioned, and to make a search in Somerset House for more wills of Devonshire Folios.

The above information was compiled by Robert Follett.

April 1977

Gilbert Foliot

Bishop of London, b. early in the twelfth century of an Anglo-Norman family and connected with the earls of Hereford; d. at London in 1186. He became a monk at Cluny in France, where he rose to the rank of prior; then he was abbot at Abbeville, and later at Gloucester. He became Bishop of Hereford in 1147. As abbot and bishop he took an important part in ecclesiastical and national affairs, was a supporter of Empress Matilda and a confidential adviser of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1163 he was transferred to the Bishopric of London, though such a translation was very exceptional at the time. But he received the support of Becket and the special consent of Alexander III. Foliot was a man of learning and eloquence and a good administrator. The austerity of his life was almost too widely known. However, in the great struggle for the rights of the church between Henry II and St. Thomas of Canterbury he definitely took the king's side. In the stormy scenes at Clarendon and Northampton and during the prolonged negotiations of the years of St. Thomas's exile, his name is foremost among opponents of his archbishop; and he was one of the prelates who, by their remonstrances against a renewed excommunication in 1170, brought about indirectly St. Thomas's martyrdom. It may be true that Gilbert was opposed to Becket's personality and methods more than his aims, but Henry II would have been

more than a match for a diplomatic bishop. A king combined to such an extent intelligence and passion could have been checked only by a wave of popular enthusiasm.

Gilbert Foliot's name appears on nearly every page of the Becket controversy and reference must be made to the bibliography of St. Thomas.

The treatment of Foliot's character is particularly full in Lhuillier, *St. Thomas de Canterbury*, 2 cols. (Paris, 1891); see also Perry in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XIX, 358 sqq.

F.F. Urquhart.



Hereford Cathedral