

## Further research on the name ‘Lancaster’

*By Malcolm Howe, GCMW*

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report 2015, Volume 42, which commemorated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the only English Queen of Portugal – Philippa of Lancaster, re-printed the 1937 article of the British Historical Association regarding the origin of the surname Lancaster, alias La/encastre in Portugal. Since then more research has been carried out on the reasons for the origin of this surname in Portugal, which is reproduced below.

João II, known as *The Perfect Prince*, succeeded to the throne of Portugal in 1481, just 10 days after the birth of his illegitimate son Dom Jorge de Lancastre, 66 years after the death of his great-great-grandmother - Philippa of Lancaster, Queen of Portugal 1387-1415. By 1447, his father, Afonso V, *The African*, had become the nearest legitimate male heir to his second cousin Henry VI King of England.

Henry VI was the grandson of Henry Bolingbroke, Philippa’s brother. Bolingbroke reigned as Henry IV 1399-1413, the first Lancastrian king. On his accession he had declared the Duchy of Lancaster be held separately from the other possessions of the Crown, and that it should descend to male heirs.

However, the four Beaufort children of John of Gaunt, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Lancaster (Philippa’s father) and his mistress, Katherine Swynford, whom he married in 1396, were twice declared legitimate by Parliament - in 1390 and 1397, as well as by Pope Boniface IX, in 1396. Nevertheless, the Beauforts were barred from succession to the throne by their half-brother, Henry IV. Henry VI reigned from 1422 to 1461, until dethroned in the War of the Roses, and was succeeded by the Yorkist faction.

In 1980, the late Roger Fulton Pye, a long term resident of Foz de Douro, Oporto, published his hypothesis regarding the first adoption of the Portuguese surname *de Lancastre*. The question remains as to whether the Lancastrian style given to D. Jorge de Lancastre by his father is indicative of a Portuguese claim to the rich Duchy of Lancaster, rather than commemorating the long-deceased Queen Philippa? D. Jorge de Lancastre was brought up by his father's only sister, the Princess Saint Joana, and was made Grand Master of the Order of Santiago and administrator of the Order of Aviz in 1492, at the tender age of 11. In 1509 he was created Duke of Coimbra.



**D. Jorge de Lancastre, 1481 - 1550**

His eldest son, D. João de Lancastre, received the titles of Marquess of Torres Novas in 1520 and Duke of Aveiro in 1535. Dom Jorge died in 1550 at the Castle of Palmela, seat of the Order of Santiago, and was interred there in a red marble tomb in the church within the walls. He had eight children by his wife, Brites de Vilhena, daughter of Dom Álvaro, who was the brother of Fernando II, Duke of Braganza and also recognised five illegitimate children, three of whom were also named Jorge. It is from his offspring that the Portuguese families with the surnames Lancastre, Lencastre, and Alencastro all stem from.



**Coat of Arms of D. Jorge de Lencastre,  
from Jean du Cro's *Livro do Armeiro-Mor*, 1509.**

— ooOOoo —

*Malcolm Howe, GCMW, Trinity College Cambridge, 1959, formerly the Junior Treasurer and Secretary of Cambridge University Heraldic & Genealogical Society, is a founding member of the Lusitanian Academy of Heraldry and a longstanding member of The British Historical Society of Portugal. He is a regular contributor to publications of The Heraldry Society and a member of The Society of Genealogists in the United Kingdom, and the Associação Portuguesa de Genealogia in Portugal.*