

# **PERKIN WARBECK AND EDWARD BRAMPTON**

## **15<sup>th</sup> Century Links Between Portugal, England and Burgundy**

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### **Perkin Warbeck – The Imposter from Burgundy**



Perkin Warbeck was the most famous Pretender in English history, a young man who persuaded the courts of three European countries that he was actually Richard, Duke of York, son of King Edward IV and rightful heir to the throne of England. For most of the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, he caused the reigning king, Henry VII, concern, even panic, with his claim to be the younger of the famous Princes in the Tower, who most people assumed had been killed by their uncle Richard III.

Edward Brampton was one of Perkin's associates, a more obscure figure almost lost to history, but still a fascinating character who created his own legend and extraordinary career. Both of these 'Englishmen' had significant connections with Portugal which are largely unknown.

The situation of England in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was one of conflict and economic depression. The ruling house of Lancaster had lost nearly all England's possessions in France, and the country's major trade in wool and cloth had declined by 50% in ten years. Discontent focussed on criticism of the royal administration, increased by concern about the mental capacity of the Lancastrian king, Henry VI, who had suffered fits of apparent catatonia, when he understood nothing of what was happening around him. An alternative claimant to the throne existed from the Plantagenet House of York, and there followed a civil war between the white rose Plantagenets of York, represented by King Edward IV, and the red rose House of Lancaster, represented by King Henry VI.

By 1483, it seemed that York had won these Wars of the Roses. Edward IV had been securely on the throne for twelve years, the recession was over, England was at peace and beginning to prosper again. Edward had two sons to ensure the Yorkist succession, so when he died in 1483, it was assumed that the older boy, aged twelve, would inherit the throne as Edward V. But what followed is well-known: Richard of Gloucester took the crown himself as Richard III, and shut his nephews, the two sons of Edward IV, in the Tower of London, from which apparently they never emerged.

There remained one surviving Lancastrian claimant to the throne, the young Henry Tudor, and in 1485, Henry invaded England, defeated and killed Richard III at the battle of Bosworth and took the crown as Henry VII. In killing Richard, Henry hoped that he had brought the civil wars to an end. But there were Yorkist loyalists still at large, and the first 15 years of his reign were bedevilled by plots against his rule. Because no one could be quite sure what had happened to the Princes in the Tower, several of those plots centred around the emergence of an impostor, a Pretender to the throne, who claimed to be one or other of the two sons of Edward IV.

The most plausible, persistent and important of these Pretenders was Perkin Warbeck. For 6 years, he was a thorn in Henry's side, and so alarmed was Henry that he sent agents all over Europe to try to trace Perkin's origins. As a result, and from later research, we have a full account of Perkin's life, which, for what it is worth, was confirmed by Perkin's own confession.

Perkin confessed that he was born about 1473 in Tournai<sup>1</sup>, a port on the River Scheldt in the Low Countries – then Burgundy. It was partly a wool town, one of those where English wool and cloth was brought for sale and distribution throughout Europe. Perkin's father was Jehan de Werbecque, comptroller of the port – a customs official – and his mother was Kataryn or Nicaise de Faro, and here is the first hint of a possible connection with Portugal. Both Perkin's parents were Jews, but is it possible that his mother came of a family that originally hailed from Faro in Portugal? For a time, historians thought this likely, but there is some dispute now. Nevertheless, it remains an intriguing possibility.

Whatever the case, in 1483, when he was 10, Perkin was taken by his mother to Antwerp, to enter service with merchants, and hopefully learn a trade. Perkin worked for several employers, ending with an English gentleman and wool merchant named Edward Brampton. Because Brampton had trading interests in Portugal, he was planning a business trip there. Perkin, who claimed that he wanted to see the world, begged to be allowed to accompany him. Brampton agreed and in 1487, they landed in Lisbon.

Perkin, by now 14, looked around Lisbon, and decided to stay. He left Brampton and took service with a one-eyed Portuguese knight and companion of King Joao II named Vaz da Cunha<sup>2</sup>. In 1489, the king commissioned Vaz da Cunha to explore the River Senegal in West Africa, and it would be wonderful to be able to

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<sup>1</sup> James Gairdner, 'History of the life and reign of Richard III. To which is added the story of Perkin Warbeck. From original documents (including Perkin's confession)'

<sup>2</sup> Gairdner

say that Perkin accompanied him; in fact – with no reason to lie – he never mentions such a trip in his confession. Apparently, by then he had moved on to work for a Breton merchant based in Lisbon, named Pregent Meno, a dealer in clothes and fine silks. Essentially, Perkin became a male model: it was common then for merchants to send handsome young men out to parade the streets in the clothes which were for sale, as a sort of living advertisement, and this was part of Perkin's job.

Meno decided on a sales trip to Ireland, an unusual choice since it was one of the poorest countries in Europe, and unlikely to be a good market for a dealer in fine silks. However, in 1491, Meno and Perkin landed at Cork, and Perkin claims that he set off in his finery to parade the dockside. One other fact is important about Ireland: it was still a hotbed of Yorkist sympathy and hatred of Henry VII. Many of the plots against Henry Tudor had been laid in Ireland, where Yorkist loyalists had fled to exile.

So when Perkin, in his fine clothes, gentlemanly and upright bearing, and superficial resemblance to Edward IV, appeared on the dockside at Cork, it is not altogether surprising that he was asked by some of the locals if he might be a Plantagenet, perhaps an illegitimate son of Richard III<sup>3</sup>. Although Perkin denied this, the story got to the ears of two Yorkists, one a man called Atwater, former Mayor of Cork, and the other an Englishman, John Taylor. Taylor is an interesting character, a merchant of Exeter, but also formerly a yeoman of the chamber to Edward IV and Richard III<sup>4</sup>. There are strong grounds for believing that Taylor had actually been sent to Ireland by the King of France, to hatch a plot against

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<sup>3</sup> Gairdner. Unsurprisingly, there is doubt that the reasons for the trip to Ireland, and the dockside story are true. Some historians suggest that the Breton merchant, Meno, was a means by which Taylor and Yorkist sympathisers, could bring Perkin to Ireland, the launch pad of his career as a Pretender. In which case, Perkin had prior knowledge of the plot and was more of a willing conspirator than he admitted. It also suggests a possibly more active role – as talent-spotter at the least – for that old Yorkist, Sir Edward Brampton. All that is supposition, however, running counter to Perkin's confession, which is on the record.

<sup>4</sup> Calendar of Patent Rolls HVII (Jan 2 1488)

Henry VII. The reason for this was that France wished to annexe Brittany, England's ally, and French interests wished to distract Henry from interfering.

Therefore, it seems very likely that Taylor was looking for a suitable prospect, and he decided that Perkin could pass as a plausible Pretender. Perkin does not explain why he agreed to the imposture, though he was careful to describe himself as an innocent tool. Given Perkin's age, Taylor decided that he should be the younger of the two Princes in the Tower, Richard, Duke of York. Together, they went to the French court, where unfortunately, the Breton crisis was over, and King Louis had no use for them. Politely, he threw them out.

This became a pattern in Perkin's career as Pretender: something of a political pawn, picked up and recognised when circumstances demanded, disowned when circumstances changed. He perambulated the courts of Europe seeking backing and recognition, and was extremely successful. There are conflicting accounts of Perkin's credibility as Richard of York: some say he showed knowledge of the English court which could only have been gained from experience; others, that such knowledge was easily taught. One thing seems to be clear and surprising: he knew little or no English and had to be coached in the language. It is still conceivable, if rather unlikely, that he had forgotten his mother tongue in the years of his apparent exile.

His major support came from his alleged aunt, Margaret, Dowager Duchess of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV and Richard III. Understandably, she had little love for Henry VII, and had encouraged previous plots against him. Through her influence, the Holy Roman Emperor also recognised Perkin and styled him King Richard IV. James IV of Scotland followed suit, and between 1491-7 the Pretender caused Henry VII considerable alarm.

Perkin seems to have loved the attention he received, the association with royalty, and the comfort of the life he led, but naturally there was a price to be paid: it was expected that he would invade England to claim his inheritance. He was reluctant

to do this, but in fact, he did invade the country on three occasions<sup>5</sup>. Each was a disaster, largely because Perkin had a habit of fleeing in the face of the enemy. In 1493, funded by the Dowager Duchess, he crossed the Channel with a small fleet and tried a landfall at Deal, Kent. Refusing to go ashore himself, he sent about 200 men as an advance party. They were routed and most were killed by the local levies. Perkin hastily weighed anchor, and sailed to Scotland. There James IV welcomed him and even married him to a royal relative, Lady Katharine Gordon. Ever ready to make trouble for the English, James prepared an invasion with Perkin. It lasted scarcely longer than the first attempt: hardly had they set foot on English soil, than Perkin returned to Scotland, 'disgusted', he said, with the behaviour of the Scots troops. After a few desultory forays, James IV followed, possibly equally disgusted with Perkin's behaviour.

Abandoned by the Scots, Perkin had to leave. With three small ships, he tried his luck in Ireland, the old Yorkist stronghold. But Henry VII had shrewdly closed that bolthole, and Perkin's small force was beaten off from Waterford. He could not sail on for ever, but there was no court in Europe interested in him anymore. So when some Cornishmen, who had rebelled against Henry's extortionate taxes, summoned his aid, he had little choice but to agree. By the time he landed, the rebels had already been defeated, and were in retreat. Nevertheless Perkin was welcomed, and managed to raise a ragged army, said by one source to be about 8000 strong. But when Henry VII's forces approached, true to form, Perkin deserted his men, fled to sanctuary and threw himself on Henry's mercy.

Henry was merciful, largely because he wanted Perkin to tour the towns of England, confessing that he was a fraud. After that, in 1497, the Pretender was somewhat ironically, shut in the Tower of London. Two years later, in a contrived plot, he was caught seeking to escape, perhaps to revive his claim. This time, Henry was not merciful, and took Perkin out and hanged him.

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<sup>5</sup> Gairdner

Given the detail which Henry's agents discovered about Perkin's origins, and his general treatment by his patrons – even his alleged aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Burgundy, wrote to Henry apologising for recognising Perkin – it is hard to believe that he was anything more than an adventurous and ambitious young man with gentlemanly tastes. Nevertheless, the legend has persisted, and there are people who still believe that Perkin was truly Richard of York.

So ended the brief and unfortunate career of Perkin Warbeck, almost certainly an essentially harmless character who unwisely let himself be used in the brutal politics of the time. But what of his associates, in particular that obscure English merchant Edward Brampton? Why is he of interest?

### **Edward Brampton – From the Alfama to Buarcos**



### **Medieval Lisbon**

If Perkin was the most famous Pretender in English history, then Edward Brampton out-pretended him twice over: Perkin only created one new persona, Brampton created two. We do not even know his real name, but we do know that he was born about 1440 in the Rua da Valverde, in Lisbon. I have failed to identify this street, but assume it was somewhere in the Alfama. His parents were Jews, and his father a blacksmith. Rather disloyally, though, Brampton himself, who could never resist embellishing his own legend, said that he was actually the child of an affair between his

mother and a Portuguese nobleman named Rui Barba. This may or may not be true.

Little is known of his early years. Probably, he obtained work on the docks, and almost certainly spent time as a mariner, because he later demonstrated seamanship skills. However, in 1468, when he was 28, a crisis occurred in this young Portuguese Jew's life: there was a bar-room brawl and a murder<sup>6</sup>. Brampton himself said that he fled Lisbon, at dead of night, in an open boat, with only a cloak and a sword. This melodramatic description may be true, but what, in fact, he did was to talk his way onto a ship and work his passage away from the scene of the crime and Portugal.

The ship was bound for England – not a good choice for a Jew. 200 years before, all Jews had been expelled from the country, and in 1468, if a Jew landed in England, he had two choices: to leave again within a certain number of days or to convert to Christianity; in that case, he could stay. If he chose to convert, he received a bed in an hostel called the *Domus Conversorum* – House of the Converts – a penny-halfpenny a day subsistence, and tuition in Christianity prior to his baptism.

I doubt if our young Jew spent too long considering his options; either he could continue his flight, in his own character, to unknown consequences, or he could change his religion, his name, cut himself off entirely from his past and his crime, and begin life as a new person. Brampton chose to convert.

Even so, his prospects were limited. He had arrived in the clothes he stood up in, with no knowledge of the language, and with no friends or connections. But he had three things in his favour: firstly, it was the tradition that when a Jew converted, the king of the time would stand as his godfather. When Brampton was baptised, the Yorkist king Edward IV stood beside him at the font, and naturally, Brampton took his godfather's Christian name

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<sup>6</sup> Cecil Roth, *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society* 2, 'Perkin Warbeck and his Jewish Master'

as his own. We do not know where the Brampton came from, perhaps an approximation of his Portuguese surname. Suddenly, from being friendless and without connections, he had the best connection in the realm: he was the king's godson, and he could hang about the court, hoping for employment.

Secondly, he was Portuguese, a citizen of England's firm ally since 1386 and the Treaty of Windsor – so he was welcome as a friend in a way that most foreign nationals were not.

Thirdly, the Wars of the Roses were about to break out again – and what better way for a young man to make his name in a new country than through valour in battle? Shortly after Brampton was baptised, Edward IV's key ally, the Earl of Warwick, transferred his allegiance from Edward and York, to Lancaster and Henry VI. He rebelled, and Edward IV raised a force to put down the rising. Among his troops marched Edward Brampton.

At first, things went badly for the Yorkists. Edward IV was cut off far to the north, away from his support in London, and he had to take flight. With a small band of companions, he rode hard for East Anglia, where he found a ship to carry him to the Low Countries. Among his companions was Brampton. He did not actually go overseas with the king, but he accompanied him right up to the seashore, demonstrating his loyalty to his godfather.

Although it must have seemed that Brampton had chosen the losing side, Edward IV was not to be so easily dismissed. By the spring of 1471, he had raised a force, re-invaded, and in a lightning campaign, defeated and killed his former ally, Warwick, at the battle of Barnet, north of London. Then, moving rapidly to the west country, then turning north to Gloucester, he confronted the other Lancastrian army, and defeated and killed the Lancastrian heir to the throne, at the battle of Tewkesbury. With these two victories, Edward secured his throne and the Yorkist succession. Edward Brampton fought in both battles.

Now Brampton's seamanship skills came to the fore. Three times over the next two years, he was commissioned as sea

captain to take ships up and down the Channel to guard against Lancastrian attacks. Ultimately, in December, 1473, he was the commander of a fleet of 4 ships ordered to besiege the last surviving Lancastrian force in England, which had seized St Michael's Mount in Cornwall: 'Commission to Edward Brampton, Thomas Philip and William Ungle to take mariners for a ship called le Grace going to sea to resist the king's enemies. The like to Thomas Batson, master of a ship called le Cristofer, William Fetherston, master of a ship called le Caragon, Ralph Castilion, master of a ship called le Marie Shirborn'<sup>7</sup>. Brampton's task was to blockade the Lancastrians from the sea, cutting off their supplies. So successful was this endeavour that the Lancastrians surrendered in a matter of weeks.

For his good service in these wars, Brampton received two rewards: he was given 'Letters of denization for the said Edward Brampton, born in the realm of Portugal'<sup>8</sup>, and so became an English citizen. Furthermore, he was granted 'all messuages (houses), tenements, rents, and possessions late of John Kyng, clerk, within the city of London'<sup>9</sup>. The gift was about eight properties, so in the space of five years, the young Portuguese Jew had transformed himself into a Christian godson of the king of England, an English citizen and man of property – someone with a stake in the country.

By now, Brampton was 33, and it was natural that he should look around for a wife. He found a compliant widow, Isabel Pecche, who brought as her dowry several manors in Northamptonshire<sup>10</sup>. Now, Brampton could consider himself a

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<sup>7</sup> CPR Edward IV (Nov 16 1473)

<sup>8</sup> CPR Edward IV (Oct 7 1472)

<sup>9</sup> CPR Edward IV (Oct 8 CPR 1472)

<sup>10</sup> CPR Edward IV (May 2 1480) The Northants manors were Great Haughton, Hanyngton, Hasilbeche, and lands in Rothwell, Hardewyck, and Holborn in the City of London. This 1480 confirmation of his right to them, 'late of Isabel Peche, his late wife,' is our only proof that he married the lady. One of the things it seems impossible to resolve is Brampton's marital status. At some point, he certainly married an aristocratic Portuguese lady, named variously as Doña Caterina de Bahamonde or Margaret Boemond – it was as her body-servant that

gentleman, was entitled to a coat of arms, and could style himself 'esquire', the first step on the ladder of gentility. No doubt he settled back to enjoy his success – but politics intervened.

With the civil wars apparently over, and England at peace, Edward IV decided to revive the old Plantagenet claim to the throne of France. He agreed a pact with Duke Charles of Burgundy, and in 1475, he took an army over to the Low Countries for a joint invasion of France. Edward Brampton was one of his captains.

In fact, there was no war. King Louis XI shrewdly bought off both Edward and the Duke of Burgundy with substantial pensions at the Treaty of Pecquigny. There were many jousts and tourneys to celebrate this peace. By Brampton's own account<sup>11</sup>, so outstandingly did he perform in these mock-combats that he caught the eye of Duke Charles, and was invited to dine with him and Edward IV as their sole guest at the top table. While this honour would have been highly unusual, and sounds like Brampton exaggerating again, he clearly impressed the Duke of Burgundy, and so took a sudden decision. Reconstructing his thoughts, I assume he decided that with the Wars of the Roses over, and French war averted, there was no leverage anymore in being a soldier. If he wished to advance and prosper, he needed a new profession: he would turn merchant, and where better than the Low Countries, the hub of England's wool trade? With the patronage of the Duke of Burgundy, Brampton set himself up as a merchant in Bruges.

One of the few things that Brampton was unlucky or unwise about was his choice of patrons. They had a habit of letting him down. No sooner had Brampton settled in Bruges, than in 1477, Duke Charles died. Brampton had abandoned his godfather, and now his Burgundian patron was gone. He could have returned to

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Perkin Warbeck travelled to Portugal. But we do not know the dates of either marriage, or of Isabel Peche's death. If it was 1480, as seems likely, there is just the very slight possibility – not out of character – that Brampton was a bigamist.

<sup>11</sup> C.Roth, 'Perkin Warbeck and his Jewish Master'

his English manors, or continued in Bruges, but being an incorrigible opportunist, he looked around for something more adventurous, and as it happened, a chance entirely appropriate for someone of his origins was staring him in the face.

Alfonso V, King of Portugal, was at the court of Burgundy. Alfonso's over-ambitious plans to extend Portugal's possessions in north Africa and Spain had failed disastrously, and now he was touring the courts of Europe trying to raise finance to run his royal administration. Yet so unsuccessful had he been that he was bankrupt, without even the money to get home.

Brampton could not resist the opportunity. He proposed that he should advance Alfonso the fare, and insisted that he would go with him. So, in 1478, Edward Brampton set foot on the dockside of Lisbon once more. It must have been an extremely satisfying homecoming: only 10 years before, a young penniless Portuguese Jew had fled with just a cloak and a sword. Now, he returned, a Christian English gentleman, godson and friend of the king of England, and new friend and benefactor to the king of Portugal.

Naturally, Alfonso was grateful. Firstly, he recognised Brampton's English coat of arms and created him lord of the castle of Noudar<sup>12</sup> (now an attractive ruin with delightful views on the borders of Spain near the town of Barrancos). Secondly, Alfonso re-naturalized Brampton as a Portuguese citizen, and he became Duarte Brandao. So now he was Edward Brampton, esquire, English gentleman and wool merchant, and Sr. Duarte Brandao, lord of the castle of Noudar.

I suspect, however, that what really interested Brampton was the opportunity his new Portuguese connections gave him to deal in the Indies trade. Unfortunately, yet again, his patron fell from under him. In 1479, Alfonso V resigned his throne and retired to a monastery. Brampton had not been in the country long enough to

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<sup>12</sup> Ruy de Pina, *Chronica de el-rei D. Affonso V.* ed. Bibliotheca de Classicos Portuguezes (Lisbon, 1901),

make his name at court and he had no influence with the new king, Joao II.

Undaunted, he simply returned to England, and took up the reins of his life as Edward Brampton once more. Amazingly, Edward IV was delighted to welcome back his companion and godson, and he rewarded Brampton accordingly: in 1482, Edward IV granted the 'Appointment for life of Edward Brampton, one of the esquires of the body, as captain, keeper and governor of the island of Guernesey with its appurtenances of Orney, Sark, Arme and Gethoo.'<sup>13</sup>. Presumably, Brampton was expected to use his seaman's skill to watch French shipping in the Channel. Significantly, this grant also tells us that Brampton was now 'one of the esquires of the body' – one of Edward IV's close companions who were supposed to accompany him to his bedchamber at night and sleep outside his door as a bodyguard: another step on the ladder of gentility.

As always, though, Brampton sought preferential trading rights: in 1481, Edward IV had granted 'to John Risley, squire of the body, and Edward Brampton, esquire, the farm of the subsidy and alnage of cloths for sale, and a moiety of the forfeiture of unsold cloths exposed for sale, in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertford, Cambridge and Huntingdon and in the city of Norwich; to hold for 5 years.'<sup>14</sup>. An alnager was a royal official who inspected all cloth sent for export, to ensure it was of the right size and quality – for which, naturally, he received a fee.

More importantly, in the same year, he received a 'Grant to...ship wools in the ports of London, Sandwich or Southampton and take them by the straits of Marrok quit of customs and subsidies at the rate of 4 marks on each sack to the said sum of £700'<sup>15</sup>. £700 was the equivalent of c. £450,000 today, and here is the key to Brampton's trading plan: his business would now

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<sup>13</sup> CPR Edward IV (Aug 24 1482)

<sup>14</sup> Calendar of Fine Rolls vol. 21 Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII (March 12 1481)

<sup>15</sup> CPR Edward IV (Dec 23 1481)

have a triangular shape. He would export wool to the marts of the Low Countries, carry some of it south to Lisbon and the ports of the Mediterranean, sell it, and then fill his empty ships with wood and spices from the Indies trade, bringing them back for sale in north Europe. This enterprise eventually made him considerably wealthy.

I imagine that Brampton would have remained in England for the rest of his life, had not, inconveniently, politics yet again intervened. No one foresaw Edward IV's early death and the succession crisis of spring and summer 1483, when Richard of Gloucester usurped the throne, and was crowned Richard III.

During the turbulent months of 1483, Brampton performed some notable feats. Firstly, he took ships to sea in pursuit of Sir Edward Woodville, brother of Edward IV's Queen, who had fled with the Royal treasury<sup>16</sup>. Tricking Woodville's sailors with a subterfuge (it seems he claimed to be a friend, invited them to a party, made them gloriously drunk, and then seized their vessels), Brampton returned triumphantly, not just with the treasure, but also most of Woodville's fleet.

Richard was crowned in July 1483, but by October, Yorkists still loyal to Edward IV and his sons, had rebelled. Brampton was one of Richard's captains in putting down these revolts – and for his good service, he received yet more rewards: more manors in Northants<sup>17</sup>, an increase in his right to export goods without customs duty by a further £350<sup>18</sup>, an annual pension of £100, and promotion from Esquire to Knight of the Body – he was now Sir Edward Brampton<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Dictionary of National Biography

<sup>17</sup> CPR Richard III (March 6 1484 and Aug 21 1484) The new manors were Russheton, Siwell, Eketon, Little Harrowden, Willoughby, Earl's Barton, Hanginghoughton, Aldewinckle, Wyndelingbyrgh, Assheby Mareys, and Stannewyg (formally held by the rebel knight Thomas Tresham) plus Tresham's houses and land in Northampton and the manor of Fauxston, 'late of Margaret, Duchess of Somerset'

<sup>18</sup> CPR Richard III (July 24 1483)

<sup>19</sup> Calendar of Close Rolls Richard III (Aug 21 1484)

Brampton had become a close, trusted companion of Richard III, but he was also a busy and prosperous merchant, with important interests in Burgundy and Portugal. For most of Richard's short reign, he seems to have been absent from England, probably in Bruges. There is even a suggestion that, in March 1485, he travelled to Portugal to negotiate a possible marriage for the now-widowed Richard III<sup>20</sup>. Whatever the case, he was certainly out of the country when Henry Tudor invaded in 1485, and so took no part in the Bosworth campaign. However, as a known Yorkist loyalist, he naturally lost all his estates in England, and became *persona non grata* in the country.

This scarcely mattered. Brampton's trading interests were protected, he had already settled himself in Bruges – and in 1487, he went on a business trip to Portugal, taking with him, a young man named Perkin Warbeck. By now, Brampton was nearly 50, and no doubt felt that his adventuring days were behind him: conceivably, he felt it was time to settle down in the country of his birth. He ingratiated himself with King Joao II and, once more, was rewarded: he was given a place on the Royal Council, and permitted to transfer from the uncongenial lordship of Noudar (remote and actually possessed by the Castilians – if Brampton had wanted to live there, he would have had to besiege the place) to the lordship of Buarcos<sup>21</sup>, now a suburb of Figueira da Foz. In fact, the Brandao family owned the lordship of Buarcos for the next 200 years: the Jewish son of a blacksmith had founded a dynasty.

Brampton lived out his life in ease, building several elegant mansions opposite the Serro dos Almirantes in Lisbon. In 1489, he hosted English ambassadors to the court of King Joao II so generously that Henry VII accorded him a pardon for his Yorkist loyalty. It gives a flavour of the man's transformations: pardon to 'Edward Brampton, Knight, alias of Portingal, alias of London,

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<sup>20</sup> Dictionary of National Biography

<sup>21</sup> Bisconde de Sanches de Baena, Archivo Heráldico (Lisbon, 1872)

merchant, alias gentleman, alias godson to the most illustrious King Edward IV<sup>22</sup>.



### Medieval Buarcos

Brampton died in 1508 at the age of 68. He was first buried in a private tomb, but then transferred to the Carmelite monastery in Lisbon, where I believe his memorial tablet can still be seen. Brampton surely wrote it himself, and true to form, even on his tombstone, he could not resist adding to his own remarkable deeds. It reads: 'Here lies Duarte Brandão Knight of the Garter an Honour which he earned through his many and famous services to King Edward: who was of the Council of the Kings of Portugal'<sup>23</sup>. Well, he was a Knight right enough, but not of that select Order of the Garter.

In person, Brampton must have been an amazing character – restless, shrewd, ambitious and opportunistic, yet always something of a wandering Jew, an outsider who craved the status and trappings of gentility to assure himself that he had arrived, and who was always in need of a patron to give him the secure base from which his self-confidence could soar. In summary, his career reminds us that the late Middle Ages was not so very

<sup>22</sup> CPR Henry VII (Aug 21 1489)

<sup>23</sup> Afonso de Domelas, Historia e Genealogia, vol. I, p. 179

different from our own: it was by no means a period of rigid demarcation between layers of society, but one where the talented individual could transform his life and circumstances by drive, ambition, and hard work.

In 1532, the Portuguese poet and annalist Garcia de Resende published a rhyming history of his time<sup>24</sup>, describing the great personages of his era. Duarte Brandao appears and here, in translation, is what it says:

We saw too that captain bold  
Duarte Brandam, heart of gold:  
So valorous a man in war,  
Who our name to England bore  
And honoured thus our native fold

A fitting tribute to an intriguing and extraordinary man.

One other thing remains to be considered: was there perhaps more than seems apparent to the relationship between Perkin Warbeck and Edward Brampton? Was Brampton, that Yorkist loyalist, perhaps involved in the conspiracy to present Perkin as the rightful Yorkist king of England?

In 1496, those agents of Henry VII who were scouring Europe to identify Perkin's origins, came to Portugal. The king of Portugal agreed to set up a commission of enquiry, which convened at Setubal. A key witness was Edward Brampton.

He claimed scarcely to remember Perkin Warbeck. He admitted that, in 1487, he moved temporarily from Bruges to Middelburg to avoid the plague. Perkin was a servant in the house opposite, and on hearing of Brampton's impending trip, badgered the merchant into taking him along. However, the boy was a thorough nuisance, continually begging Brampton to adopt him as his son. Since 'I did not want another child', Brampton refused – and as soon as they arrived in Lisbon, he sacked Perkin.

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<sup>24</sup> Garcia de Resende: *Chronica de el-rei D. João II* (ed. Classicos Portuguezes, Lisbon, 1902)

That is Brampton's evidence, and it is natural that he should disown Perkin: the Pretender was still at large, Brampton had made his peace with Henry VII, and there would have been no sense in admitting any association with a conspiracy against him.

But consider – just suppose Perkin was Richard of York, escaped from the Tower and sent secretly to the Low Countries by Richard III. Who better to facilitate this escape than a close companion of Richard, whose ships plied regularly between England and the Low Countries? And who, indeed, might have actually known the comptroller of the port of Tournai – might even have had his cargoes inspected by Jehan de Werbecque? And who, as a former Jew, might have thought that this Jewish family of Tournai was the perfect hiding place for a Royal prince? Who could have tutored Perkin/Richard better about the court of the Yorkists Edward IV and Richard III? And who, four years later, employed Perkin, took him to Portugal, and in a way, launched him on his strange and eventful career?<sup>25</sup>

I am pretty sure that it is a question of adding 2 and 2 and making 55, but it is a frustratingly intriguing thought, and a scenario quite in keeping with the amazing life of this opportunistic and extraordinary man.

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<sup>25</sup> I'm loath to confuse matters even further, but James Gairdner (p.343) states: 'There is indeed, in one contemporary writer a story ... that Perkin was brought up in England by a converted Jew, to whom Edward IV had stood as godfather'. Unfortunately, he does not name the writer and this, surely, is a muddled account of Brampton's relations with Perkin – unrecognized by Gairdner, because he had no idea Brampton was a converted Jew.