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Does the Don triptych portray the ancestors of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford? [Part 4 of 4]

Margaret, the second daughter of Sir John Don and Elizabeth Hastings, was the great-grandmother of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. She was probably born about 1480 and was married by the time she was in her mid-teens. Her husband, Edward Trussell (1478-1499), the heir to an estate of more than £350 a year, was the ward of William, Lord Hastings (1430?-1483). After Hastings' death, Sir John Don purchased the wardship. A clause in Hastings' will makes it clear that he wished his brother-in-law to be given preference over other potential purchasers:

Also I will that mine executors give to my sister Dame Elizabeth Don 100 marks . . . Also where I have the ward and marriage of Edward Trussell, I will that it be sold and the money employed to the performing of this my will and for the weal of my soul; and if my brother Sir John Don will buy the said ward, I will that he be preferred therein before any other by xl li (McFarlane 3, 9, 54-5).

Edward Trussell was the scion of a family "of great antiquity" in both Warwick and Staffordshire. The family pedigree reaches back to a Richard Trussell in the reign of Henry III; one of his sons, Richard, was slain at the Battle of Evesham while the other, William, was the ancestor of the principal male branch of the family, of Cublesdon, near Barlaston in Staffordshire (Erdeswicke 10-1). This William Trussell's grandson, also named William, was a key figure in the turbulent latter part of the reign of Edward II, at which time he allied himself with

Queen Isabel and the young Prince Edward (later Edward III) against the power of the Despensers. It was he who was given the task of sentencing Hugh Despenser the Elder and of pronouncing, on behalf of Parliament, the deposition of Edward II. After Prince Edward's coronation as Edward III, William Trussell (or, possibly, his son) became an adversary of Queen Isabel's favourite, Roger Mortimer, and fled to the continent until after Mortimer's fall. In the sixteenth year of the reign of Edward III, he was made "admiral of the king's fleet, from the Thames to Berwick upon Tweed". A later William Trussell fought at the Battle of Poitiers with the Black Prince, "by whom he was greatly esteemed" (Banks 423-5; *DNB*, 1197-8).

Both branches of the Trussell family bore the same coat of arms, variously described as "argent, on a fret gules nine bezants" and "argent, fretty gules, on each joint a bezant". At one time, the Trussells were Lords of Warmincham (Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, sold Warmincham and other lands in Cheshire to Sir Christopher Hatton), and the family crest is given in the *Visitation of Cheshire* as "out of a ducal coronet or a unicorn's head proper, armed of the first"; however, in the pedigree in the *Visitation of Warwickshire*, it is "an ass's head couped sable, ducally gorged or". According to the pedigree in the *Visitation of Warwickshire*, it was from the Cublesdon branch of the family that Thomas Trussell (fl. 1610-1625) who owned Billesley Hall near Stratford-on-Avon traced his descent (*DNB*, 1196), while Edward Trussell was descended from a branch of the family with manors at Elmesthorpe (near Hinckley) in Leicestershire and Sheriffhales (near

Telford) in Shropshire (Grazebrook 466-7; Fetherstone 93; Rylands 225-6).

Edward Trussell was not quite twenty-one when he died in the spring of 1499, leaving a young widow (who later married Thomas Cardigan) and two children, Elizabeth and John, aged three and one. According to McFarlane, Edward Trussell's infant son died in the same year as his father (9, 54-5); Edward's daughter, Elizabeth, married John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford (1490?-1540) about 1508 and had eight children: four sons -- John (who succeeded his father as 16th Earl), Aubrey (ancestor of the 19th Earl of Oxford), Robert and Geoffrey -- and four daughters -- Elizabeth, Frances, Anne and Ursula. John de Vere, 15th Earl of Oxford, was described by the Venetian ambassador in 1531 as:

a man of valour and authority, with a revenue of 25,000 ducats, and it is his custom always to cavalcade with 200 horse (Cokayne 247).

Elizabeth Trussell died in 1527; her effigy and that of the 15th Earl can be seen on the black marble tomb in the chancel of St. Nicholas' Church at Castle Hedingham, Essex.

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DESCENDANTS AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS OF MARGARET DON

