

The Grey Family and the Earls of Stamford and Warrington

The Earls of Stamford and Warrington were descended from the Grey family of Groby (Leicestershire), which was founded by Sir Edward Grey, second son of the third Lord Grey de Ruthyn. He married Elizabeth, granddaughter and heir of the fifth Lord Ferrers of Groby (whose family had held land in Leicestershire since the thirteenth century), and died in 1457/8. His grandson Thomas Grey was created Marquess of Dorset in 1475. The third Marquess was created Duke of Suffolk, but was attainted and executed in 1555. His Groby and Bradgate (Leicestershire) estate passed, however, to his nephew Sir Henry Grey, who was created Baron Grey of Groby in 1603. The second Baron married in 1620 Anne, youngest daughter of the second Earl of Exeter, through whom the manor and borough of Stamford (Lincolnshire) was acquired. He was created Earl of Stamford in 1628.

Enville (Staffordshire) was inherited by Ambrose Grey, younger son of the first Lord Grey of Groby, in 1594, on the death of his distant relative John Grey of Enville. John Grey's ancestor, Edward Grey of Whittington (Staffordshire), had acquired a moiety of the neighbouring Enville property in 1540. In 1687 there was another failure of the direct Enville line, and the estate passed to a cousin John Grey, a younger son of the first Earl of Stamford. On John's death in 1709 he was succeeded by his son Harry who in 1720 also succeeded his first cousin as third Earl of Stamford, thus uniting the Staffordshire and Leicestershire estates. Property in Nottinghamshire (North and South Collingham, near Newark, and Newthorpe, near Nottingham) came to the Grey family through the marriage of Anchitel Grey, another son of the first Earl of Stamford, to a co-heir of the Willoughby family of Risley (Derbyshire).

Harry Grey (1715-1768), elder son of the third Earl, married in 1736 Mary, only daughter of George Booth, second and last Earl of Warrington, through whom estates in Cheshire (Dunham Massey, Altrincham, etc) and Lancashire (Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge, etc) came to the Grey family. Harry Grey succeeded his father as fourth Earl of Stamford in 1738, continuing to live at Enville until his death in 1768. His son the fifth Earl, having succeeded his mother in 1772, was created Earl of Warrington in 1790, and was lord lieutenant of Cheshire, but he too died at Enville, in 1819, as did his son the sixth Earl, in 1845. Important work was carried out on the gardens at Enville in the mid-eighteenth century (by the fourth Earl) and on the house towards the end of the eighteenth century (by the fifth Earl). The seventh Earl, who succeeded in 1845, enlarged the Enville estate and remodelled the gardens, but later built a new house at Bradgate Park, where he died in 1883.

He left the Stamford and Warrington family estates to his widow for life, but on her death in 1905 they were divided. The Cheshire estates went with the earldom; the Leicestershire estates passed to his niece Mrs Arthur Duncombe, and the Enville estate (including property in Worcestershire and Shropshire) was inherited by Lady Stamford's grandniece Catherine Sarah, wife of Sir Henry Foley Lambert (later Grey). The Lancashire estates were devised jointly to Mrs Duncombe and Lady Lambert: they were divided in 1959. On the death of Sir John Foley Grey, Bt, in 1938 he was succeeded in the Enville estate by his daughter Eileen (b1922), who married first the Earl of Harrington and secondly Mr J P Bissill.

The property at Stamford (Lincolnshire) was re-acquired by the Cecil family, Earls of Exeter, in the mid-eighteenth century, and the Nottinghamshire properties were sold in the mid-nineteenth century. An investment property in the Lincolnshire Fens was purchased in 1818 but sold again *c*1842. By 1883 the Stamford estates consisted of 9,012 acres in Leicestershire, 8,612 acres in Cheshire, 7,339 acres in Staffordshire, 5,231 acres in Lancashire, 606 acres in Shropshire, 93 acres in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 68 acres in Worcestershire and 1 acre in Warwickshire, a total of 30,962 acres worth £58,393 a year