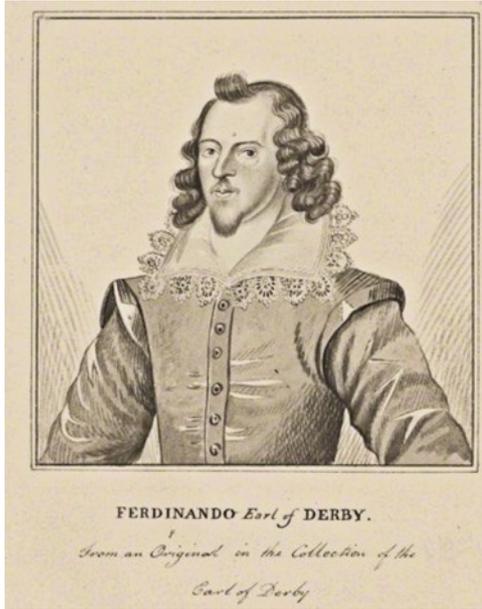
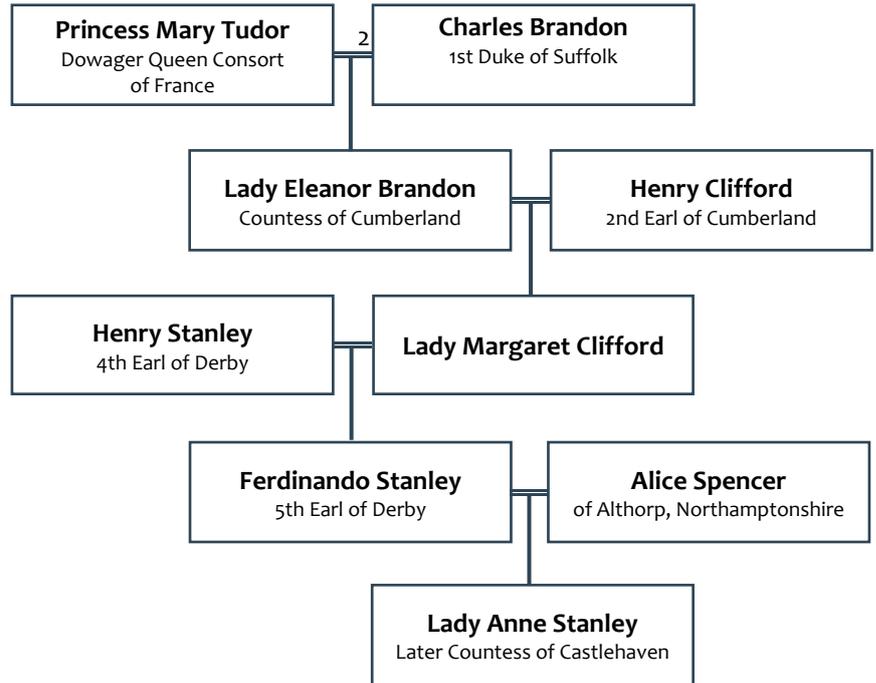


Lord Stanley & The Hesketh Plot



Ferdinando Stanley, 5th Earl of Derby by Silvester Harding. Pencil, pen and ink and wash. National Portrait Gallery NPG D2139



The Stanley Family can be traced back to Cheshire and Lancashire from ancient times. In the 14th century Sir John Stanley, KG (c. 1350–1414) was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and titular ‘King of Mann’, the first to bear that title and hold tenure of the Isle of Man. In 1456 his son Thomas became 1st Baron Stanley; he died in 1459. He was succeeded by his son Thomas, a landed magnate of immense power, particularly across the north west of England where his authority went almost unchallenged, even by the Crown, Stanley managed to remain in favour with successive kings throughout the Wars of the Roses until his death in 1504. His estates included what is now Tatton Park in Cheshire and Lathom House in Lancashire. Thomas married Lady Margaret Beaufort, widow of Edmund Tudor and, after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, was made 1st Earl Derby by Henry Tudor, his step-son.

Ferdinando Stanley (Baron Strange from 1589) was born in 1559 and died in 1594. He was the son of Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby and Lady Margaret Clifford. His mother was a grand-daughter of Mary Tudor by her second marriage to Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk. This made Fernando and his daughter Anne both potential heirs to the throne of England, under Henry VIII’s will and Third Succession Act .

The Third Succession Act granted Henry the right to bequeath the Crown in his Will. His Will specified that in default of heirs to his children, the throne was to pass to the heirs of his younger sister Mary Tudor, Queen of France, bypassing the line of his elder sister Margaret Tudor, “being foreigners” and represented by the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots. Edward VI confirmed this by letters patent.

This suggested that the legitimate and legal heir of Elizabeth I was therefore, in 1603, Lady Anne Stanley, who was unmarried at the time of Elizabeth’s death; the marriage of Lady Catherine Grey having been annulled, and her children declared illegitimate by Elizabeth I.

The Hesketh Plot

Shortly after succession to his father’s estates as 5th Earl of Derby in 1593, Earl Stanley was embroiled in a plot which proposed to replace Queen Elizabeth on the throne of England with Stanley. A number of Catholic rebels, who had fled to foreign countries, sent over a man named Richard Hesketh to urge him to claim the crown of England by right of his descent from Mary Tudor.

The Heskeths were ancient retainers of the Stanley family and were family friends. This is why Richard was chosen to approach Stanley about the matter that has come to be known as ‘The Hesketh Affair’. Stanley held two secret meetings with Hesketh and also took him to London for further discussions with his mother - who had earlier been excluded from court for allegedly plotting against Elizabeth. Stanley finally rejected Hesketh’s proposal and turned him over to the authorities; Hesketh was interrogated and later executed.