

## Sir Thibault Gorges, Knight Banneret 1401—1470

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Acknowledgement is made of the help given by Professor Richard A. Newhall, of Williams College, Massachusetts, who most kindly supplied the details regarding the career of Sir Thibault in France. Professor Newhall is the author of 'The English Conquest of Normandy, 1416-1424', and is preparing a new work on fifteenth-century warfare.

THIBAULT GORGES was born in 1401, on the vigil of Saint Andrew (29 November). On the death of his elder brother, John, in 1415, he became heir and a ward of the king, his father, Thomas Gorges, having died in 1403. The fact that his mother survived until 1419 may have somewhat mitigated the hardships of the long minority, for Agnes Gorges was a woman of decided views and executive mind. The terms and the tenor of her will make that clear. This will is very long and interesting, and leaves no doubt as to the wishes of the testatrix. Though Thibault was nearly eighteen, she enjoins her executors to keep control of her bequests to him until he is married. 'And if it should happen,' she continues,<sup>1</sup> 'which God forbid, that the aforesaid Thibault should die before he is thus married, then my executors may have all my above bequeathed effects, and dispose of them for my soul, and for the souls of my late husbands.' The fact that, in 1443, Thibault's son, Walter, then presumably of age, is mentioned as one of the trustees, or feoffees, of lands dealt with by Robert Warre, seems to indicate that Thibault married within a reasonable time, thus qualifying for the legacies—the gold brooch wrought with an angel, the gold ring 'with a stone called a diamond', and the silver cup and cover wrought with a boss.

<sup>1</sup> The original will is in Latin.

In 1428, Thibault Gorges went to the French wars, on June 20 of that year a Royal Protection<sup>2</sup> being issued for him and James Gascoyne, both of Somerset, and for Richard Hankeford and Roger Champernoun, of Devon, in the retinue of the Earl of Salisbury. A week later letters of attorney<sup>3</sup> were issued to Thibault Gorges 'going abroad'. In January we find record<sup>4</sup> of a review of the retinue of Sir Richard Hankeford, led by 'Sir Thibault de Gorges', consisting of 21 men and 86 archers. The review took place before Orleans, and Sir Thibault is referred to as a knight bachelor, having apparently been knighted soon after his arrival in France. The retinue was raised in pursuance of an indenture<sup>5</sup> between the Duke of Bedford and Sir Richard Hankeford, dated 22 December 1428, and made at Meung-sur-Loire. Sir Richard agreed to provide a retinue of one knight bachelor, 22 men-at-arms, and 82 archers (Sir Richard himself is not included), to serve during the siege of Orleans, and to be paid from the day when his previous indenture made in England expired. The retinue was mustered on December 26, on which occasion the men were paid.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Thibault is again heard of in connection with the French Wars in November, 1437, when he is mentioned as serving under Lord Talbot in a force raised for the relief of Le Crotoy,<sup>7</sup> and among the original documents in the Bibliothèque Nationale is a receipt signed by him for 504 livres 11 sous 8 deniers tournois, being pay for fifteen days for himself, 27 men-at-arms, and 117 archers. This receipt is dated 27 November 1437, and has a battered seal.<sup>8</sup> Many other receipts bearing Sir Thibault's signature are extant. The name is written in a round, laboured hand, and was probably his one accomplishment along calligraphic lines.

On 3 January 1438, Sir Thibault made indenture as Captain

<sup>2</sup> French Rolls, 6 Henry VI, membrane 5, Public Record Office, c. 76/110.

<sup>3</sup> French Rolls, 6 Henry VI, membrane 2, as above.

<sup>4</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 25768, no. 339.

<sup>5</sup> Bib. Nat., fr. nouv. acq. 1482, no. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Jarry, 'Le compte de l'armée anglaise au siège d'Orléans', Orleans, 1892, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup> Brit. Mus., Additional Charters 3830.

<sup>8</sup> Bib. Nat., Pièces Originales, 1360, section 30741, no. 2.

of Fresnay-le-Vicomte to serve from February 1 to September 29, with 20 mounted men, 20 dismounted men, and 120 archers,<sup>9</sup> and three weeks later royal orders were issued to the treasury that he be paid, for himself and retinue, one month in advance without muster, because he was a new captain and because food was dear.<sup>10</sup> On March 6 he took over the command at Fresnay from Sir John Fastolf.<sup>11</sup>

Fresnay appears to have been his headquarters during the years 1438–39, and part of 1440. The *contrerolle*<sup>12</sup> for the quarter ended 29 September 1438, however, records that in July he had been serving with the Earl of Dorset at the siege of St. Aignan, with 19 other men-at-arms and 60 archers, and later in the same year was aiding Lord Fauconberge in the provisioning of Meaux, Creil and Pontoise.<sup>13</sup>

During the summer of 1440 Sir Thibault again served at Fresnay,<sup>14</sup> but later in the year he was at Domfront acting as Lieutenant for Lord Scales, Seneschal of Normandy.<sup>15</sup> He was then a knight banneret. At Fresnay he was succeeded by Sir Richard Wydeville,<sup>16</sup> (afterwards Earl Rivers, father of Elizabeth, Queen of Edward IV).

In 1441 Sir Thibault served in the garrison at Pontoise,<sup>17</sup> which was besieged, intermittently, by the French, eventually being relieved by Lord Talbot.

In 1443 Sir Thibault became Captain of Coutances,<sup>18</sup> where

<sup>9</sup> Bib. Nat., fr. 26063, no. 3382.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 3397.

<sup>11</sup> Bib. Nat., fr. 25774, nos. 1309 and 1310.

<sup>12</sup> Brit. Mus., Add. Charters 7997.

<sup>13</sup> Bib. Nat., fr. 26053, no. 1404.

<sup>14</sup> Bib. Nat., P.O. 1360, section 30741, no. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Receipt by Lord Scales, Seneschal of Normandy and captain of Domfront, for pay for 15 days for Sir Thibault Gorges, knight banneret, and 22 men-at-arms and 72 archers, part of a force under Lords Talbot, Fauconberge, and Scales for repulsing the enemy occupying Louviers and Conches. Mustered at Pontaudemer, November 29 (? 1440). Bib. Nat., fr. 26067, no. 4173.

<sup>16</sup> 5 Jan. 1442, n.s. Archives Nationales, k. 67, no. 1<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Receipts by Sir Thibault, lieutenant of Domfront, for supplies delivered to him in Pontoise, 13 Aug. and 22 Aug. 1441—Bib. Nat., fr. 26068, nos. 4349 and 4355.

<sup>18</sup> 6 Dec. 1443—Sir Thibault, 'recently appointed' captain of Coutances, gives receipt for the garrison's pay.—Bib. Nat., P.O. 1360, section 30741, no. 8. (*See also idem*, nos. 10, 12 and 14.)

he found himself in military charge of a district which probably included the little town, or village, of Gorges. In December of the following year he wrote to inform the treasurers that the garrison had been maintained at two mounted men (himself included), 8 men on foot, and 30 archers during the quarter beginning September 20.<sup>19</sup>

Towards the end of 1446 Sir Thibault became the Duke of York's lieutenant at Rouen, York himself being captain.<sup>20</sup> Receipts for the pay of the forces at Coutances continue to bear his signature, Richard Nyter, esquire, however, acting as his lieutenant.<sup>21</sup> The Duke of York granted him a 'pension' of 200 *salus d'or* a year for two years, and there is a receipt, dated 27 April 1447,<sup>22</sup> signed by Sir Thibault, for 300 *livres tournois* paid him on this account.

Sir Thibault still held the post of Captain of Coutances when the garrison surrendered to the Duke of Brittany in 1450,<sup>23</sup> but as to whether he was there in person or was still at Rouen the present writer has no record. The Hundred Years' War wore to a close in 1453.

In 1455, the first year of the Wars of the Roses, in consequence of a rising of the country people in Devon, a royal letter was addressed to the Earls of Arundel and Wiltshire, Lord FitzWarin, Lord St. Amand, and others, advising them that the Duke of York (Protector of the Realm during a recurrence of the King's illness) was coming to redress grievances and to set down 'misgovernmaunts'. He was to have the company and assistance of worshipful lords and other persons, including the following knights: Sir Edmund Hungerford, Sir Walter Rodney, Sir Baldwin Fulford, Sir Will Stourton, Sir Philip Courtney, Sir Theobald Gorges.<sup>24</sup>

So much for military service.

In 1432, Sir Thibault was elected a Knight of the Shire for

<sup>19</sup> Bibliothèque de Caen. MSS. Mancel xxxiii, section 41.

<sup>20</sup> Archives Nationales. K 68, no. 18<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4791, no. 59; p. 4793, no. 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Bib. Nat.*, P.O. 1360, section 30741, no. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Stevenson, 'Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France, Henry VI'. (Rolls Series, 11<sup>2</sup>, p. 625.)

<sup>24</sup> Acts of the Privy Council, referred to in MSS. by Rev. F. Brown.

Somerset, his colleague being Sir Thomas Beauchamp, who may have been his mother's brother, mentioned in her will.

Sir Thibault, as patron, made five or six presentations to the rectory of Wraxall. He was also patron of the church of Horsington and the chapel at South Cheriton, in Somerset, as well as of Bridport, Dorset.

In 1450, a perpetual chantry was founded at the altar of St. Cross, on the north side of Wells Cathedral for the performance of masses every day for ever for the good estate of Sir Thibault his ancestors and successors. It was endowed with a pension of ten pounds issuing out of the fruits and profits of the church of Wraxall, with the consent of Sir Thibault, patron, and of Thomas Hayes, the rector. Out of the ten pounds a pension of forty pence was to be paid to the Dean and Chapter of Wells and twelve pence to the Archdeacon of Bath.

The Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, received from William Canynges certain jewels of Sir Thibault Gorges, which had been pawned to him for one hundred and three score pounds.

Sir Thibault certainly married twice, possibly three times. His first wife may have been Jane, daughter of Richard Hankeford. According to the *Visitation of Somerset* for 1531 and 1573, as printed in 1885 (F. W. Weaver), the mother of the heir, Walter, was a daughter of Thomas Beauchamp of Crouch Lakins. The name of the mother of the younger son, Richard, emerges from the chancery inquisition, dated Tuesday after St. Bartholomew, *i.e.* Tuesday after 24 August 1470, taken on the death of Sir Thibault. She was Joan, daughter of John Flegge, esquire. Richard is declared to be heir to certain lands, including Horsington, settled on Sir Thibault and Joan, and the heirs of their bodies. Joan had predeceased her husband, Richard was twenty-two, and Agatha was their daughter.

That there had been alliances with Hankeford and Beauchamp is indicated by one of the shields of arms displayed on the tomb of Sir Edmund Gorges, K.B. (died 1511). The Beauchamp coat may refer to the marriage of Thomas Gorges with Agnes Beauchamp, but the arms quartered for many years by Sir Thibault resemble those of Hankeford, as noted below.

The seal used by Sir Thibault during the great part of his

service in France bore his own arms, *lozengy or and azure, a chevron gules*, quartered with a coat which from Professor Newhall's description appears to be Hankeford (*argent, two bendlets wavy gules*). The crest is 'a dog's head', undoubtedly a greyhound's, and the legend *Sigillum Theobaldi Gorges*. In 1447 he used another seal, his own arms, quartering Russel of Dyrham, Glos., *argent, on a chief gules three bezants*. The crest is similar save that a collar has been placed round the greyhound's neck, and the legend reads *Seel Thibault Gorges*. Probably the Russel arms were quartered after Sir Thibault, becoming heir male of the Russel family of Kingston Russel, succeeded to the Horsington estates.<sup>25</sup>

Sir Thibault died on 7 July 1470, as is proved by the chancery inquisition taken the August following.<sup>26</sup> He was found to be seized, in Somerset, of the manors of Wraxall, Horsington, and South Cheriton, as well as of the manor, or messuage, of Hole House in Tickenham; in Dorset, of the manor of Sturminster Marshall (probably one of the 'four principal manors' mentioned by Hutchins), together with a messuage in same next the rectory, and a messuage in Kentcombe; and, in Devon, of the manor of Braunton Gorges. In addition to his English estates, he had held lands in Normandy, for a time at least, for in a document dated 12 July 1445, he is referred to as *Seigneur de Roucheville*, in the bailliage of Rouen.<sup>27</sup>

Sir Thibault was laid to rest with his ancestors, beneath the chancel of Wraxall Church, and, being patron, probably near the high altar. The thick sandstone ledger which recorded his name, however, has been moved twice, and is now at the base of the western tower. The inscription is within marginal border lines, in bold incised Gothic letters:

Here lyeth Sir Tybbot Gorges knyghte and  
Banneret of whos soule God habe mercy. Amen.

<sup>25</sup> Inq. p.m. Sir Thomas Russel, 10 H. vi.

<sup>26</sup> Collinson gives 1468 as the date of his death.

<sup>27</sup> Many such grants to the various English captains are recorded in the Archives Nationales at Paris (Professor Newhall).