

**Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Tyddewi a Phebidiog
St Davids and Dewisland Historical Society**

**Margaret Beaufort – Mother to Henry VII
Howard Rudge**

Lady Margaret Beaufort was the only child of John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset – who died shortly after her birth. Through her father, great-grandson of Edward III, she had royal connections but after her father's death Margaret became ward to the king and her lands were granted to William de la Pole ... who promptly tried to marry her off to his own son (as he was 8 and Margaret 6 -the marriage was quickly annulled! Margaret was then made the ward of Edmund Tudor cementing Henry VI's relations with his own half-brother! Margaret was 12 when she married Edmund and by 13 she was pregnant and a widow (Edmund was taken prisoner and died of dysentery in captivity. Margaret gave birth to son Henry in Pembroke Castle and he remains here in the care of his uncle Jasper Tudor whilst Margaret resolves to protect her son by marrying again! She set her sights on her second cousin Henry Stafford and offers him wealth, estates and position but this marriage-of-convenience soon changes to a love-match. In 1461 York triumphs over Lancashire at the battle of Towton Moor and Edward is made king and Henry is forced to flee with the remnants of his army. Pembroke Castle passed into the tenure of the William Herbert, Earl of Raglan, and Jasper was forced to flee to France - whilst Margaret's son Henry is effectively held in captivity by the Yorkists.



Margaret's lands and titles were confiscated by the crown and, aged just 17, she had to begin the battle for her son again. She and her husband were banished from court to ruinous Woking Palace, which she proceeded to restore and then invited the king and his retinue to a hunting weekend – in order to restore her family to the king's favour ... but 9 months later Edward falls out with Warwick, who stages a coup in a political about-face, restores Henry VI to the throne. Jasper returns from France to take Henry, now aged 9, to court, to his mother and Henry VI not only restores Henry Tudor to his grandfather's title of Earl of Richmond but nominates him as his own heir ... but in Holland Edward IV raised another army and Margaret's husband Henry Stafford rallied to follow the Edward's banner. In the Battle of Tewkesbury Edward is victorious – but takes his revenge on all Lancastrians through wholesale slaughter! Margaret sends news so Jasper and Henry escape through Tenby. Margaret's husband is seriously injured at the Battle of Barnet and dies of his wounds – leaving Margaret, aged 28, a widow again and unprotected.

Margaret sought security through another marriage –to widower Sir Thomas Stanley (wealthy and powerfully placed). She befriends Elizabeth Woodville (wife to Edward) who is very powerful in the court leading to her son Henry being restored to his lands and titles but Edward IV dies of pneumonia and Henry flees to France again. Edward's sons, the princes Edward(12) and Richard(9) disappeared and their uncle Richard, Duke of Gloucester proclaimed himself king. Their mother Elizabeth remained at court as the Queen Dowager and she and Margaret continued plotting to overthrow Richard and put Henry on the throne - and for him to marry the Yorkist daughter of Elizabeth and Edward IV – forming a union between the Houses of Lancaster and York. The plot failed and Margaret was declared guilty of treason - but was protected by her marriage to Thomas Stanley and placed under house arrest! Margaret continued



plotting until 1485 when Henry successfully landed at Milford Haven and marched through Wales – meeting with Richard's forces at Bosworth Field. Sir Thomas Stanley, instead of throwing in his lot with Richard waited to see the outcome of the battle ... before joining the battle on the side of Margaret's son Henry! Thomas also crowns Henry with Richard's battle-crown on the battlefield. Margaret no longer needs to battle on his behalf and instead takes a vow of chastity and separates from Sir Thomas Stanley, and after Henry's death in 1509 she lives to see the coronation of her grandson, Henry VIII ... dying a few days later, aged 66 and she was buried in Westminster Abbey.