

## SOMERSET family, of Raglan, Chepstow and Troy, Monmouth, Crickhowell, Brecknock, Badminton, Gloucestershire

### CHARLES SOMERSET 1st Somerset earl of Worcester (1460? - 1526)

The illegitimate son of Henry Beaufort, 3rd duke of Somerset, beheaded by the Yorkists (1463). He was a staunch supporter of **Henry Tudor**, who from the beginning of his reign as **Henry VII** employed him about court and abroad, admitting him to the Privy Council on 14 February 1505. His advancement in Wales dates from his marriage (2 June 1492) to Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of **William Herbert (died 1491)**, 2nd earl of Pembroke of the first creation and afterwards earl of Huntingdon, on the strength of which he assumed (1504) the title of baron Herbert of Raglan, Chepstow, and Gower, 'iure uxoris'. Meanwhile (23 April 1496) he had been made commissioner of array for Wales, and between 1503 and 1515 he was given the stewardship of the chief Crown lordships in the (later) counties of Monmouth, Glamorgan, Radnor, and Montgomery, and in Ruthinland, together with the constablerships of the appurtenant castles and the titles of sheriff of Glamorgan and Morgannwg (1509) to which **Henry VII** (who continued to employ him abroad) added those of chief forester of Glamorgan, Ruthin, and Montgomery (1515). His gallantry at Tourmai (1513) was rewarded with the earldom of Worcester (10 November 1513 or 1 February 1514). He granted a charter to Chepstow on 2 December 1525, and died next year (15 April), being buried in the Beaufort chapel at Windsor.

### HENRY SOMERSET 2nd earl (died 1548)

Eldest son of Charles Somerset, who succeeded to most of his Welsh offices. He extended the family influence to west Wales by becoming steward and chancellor of Brecknock and constable of its castle (26 May 1523), and was made chief justice in eyre of Newport, Wentllwg, and Machen, Monmouth (22 July 1534) and of the whole of Glamorgan, his rights here being specifically confirmed by the Act of Union (27 Hen. VIII, c. 26, § 33); he also received at the dissolution of the smaller monasteries the site of Tintern abbey (1537), but he had little of his father's political importance outside Wales. He died 26 November 1549, and was buried at Chepstow, commemorated in a marwnad of **Lewis Morgannwg**.

### WILLIAM SOMERSET 3rd earl (1526 - 1589)

Henry's heir, who held a dignified position at the courts of Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth, joined in the intrigues against protector Somerset and, in his trial, making use in these manoeuvres of the services of **William Cecil, later lord Burghley**. He was also among the judges of Norfolk (1572) and of Mary Queen of Scots (1586), went on mission to Paris in 1573, and mustered the home forces against the Spanish threat in 1588. He was added to the Council of Wales in 1553, and was commissioner of musters for Monmouthshire in 1579; but with the revival of the **earldom of Pembroke** (1551) in the person of **William Herbert (died 1570)** most of the South Wales offices held by the first two earls of Worcester and all their influence in central and North Wales reverted to the **house of Pembroke**. To the Gwentian bards, however, Worcester was 'tew Wilym o Went,' for whom **Dafydd Benwyn** claimed in a marwnad ' traw yn un a Harbord trwy'n iaith. '

### EDWARD SOMERSET 4th earl of Worcester (1553 - 1628)

Eldest son of the 3rd earl, recovered some of the family's Welsh influence as well as being a considerable political figure in England. He was put on the Council of Wales the year after he succeeded to the earldom (16 December 1590), and on the death of the **2nd earl of Pembroke** in 1601 he secured the exclusion of Monmouthshire and Glamorgan (where he became lord-lieutenant, 17 July 1602) from the commission of **Pembroke's** successor at Ludlow. In contrast with the militant Protestantism of his great rivals he remained a 'stiff papist' under Elizabeth, who nevertheless entrusted him, after the fall of the **second earl of Essex** - in whose trial he participated - with **Essex's** mastership of the horse and a seat on the Privy Council (29 June 1601). He seems to have conformed under James I (Hist. MSS. Com., *Cecil*, xvii, 304-6), who put him on special commissions for suppressing Catholic riots in South Wales and the border (May-August 1605), banishing the Jesuits (5 September 1604), trying the Gunpowder Plotters (1605-6) and Raleigh (August 1618), and made him lord privy seal (2 January 1616) and judge of requests (7 February 1621). A 'politique' par excellence, he even employed for his children a Welsh Protestant tutor, Dr. Thomas Prichard, a correspondent of **James Howell** - while allowing the superior of the Jesuits, **Robert Jones (born 1564)**, to live under his wife's protection at Raglan: but all his children ultimately followed their mother's faith. **Thomas Williems of Trefriw, the lexicographer**, says of him: ' ni rusia ddywedyd cymraec, a'i hymgeleddu, a'i mawrhâu yn anwylgu Frytanaidd.'

### HENRY SOMERSET 5th earl of Worcester, 1st marquess of Worcester (c.1577 - 1646)

Second (but eldest surviving) son of the 4th earl, was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. As lord Herbert of Chepstow he was made a deputy lieutenant of Monmouthshire (17 July 1602), added to the Council of Wales (1617), and associated with his father in the lord-lieutenancies of Glamorgan and Monmouth from 2 December 1626. A Protestant in early youth, he returned to the ancestral faith while on the grand tour, but his efforts to maintain the balancing position of his father (to the point of equality between the two faiths of his household staff) were frustrated by the growing heats of faction. To appease Protestant sentiment Charles persuaded him, on Bridgewater's succession to Ludlow (1631), to relinquish his lord-lieutenancies to the new president (11 July) and kept him out of public office, at the same time giving him constant assurances of personal regard, and during the Bishops' Wars a dispensation from the penal laws, including permission for himself and his son to bear arms (25 March 1639). The king's further orders to the South Wales deputy lieutenants at this time to place themselves under orders from Raglan (17 July 1640), and the mysterious verbal communications to Worcester through his son that followed (August 1641 to May 1642) gave currency to rumours of an intended ' Welsh popish army ' to join forces in South Wales with popish invaders from Ireland, and bulked large in debates on Strafford in the Long Parliament; these fears were strongly voiced by Welsh members, among whom suspicions of Raglan had been intensified by the foundation under its patronage of the Jesuit house at Cwm (10 November 1637) and the flocking to Raglan of known recusants like Worcester's secretary **Hugh Owen of Gwenynog** and the bard **Gwilym Puw**.

With the outbreak of war and the visit of prince Charles to Raglan there was a general rallying to the house of Raglan of its neighbours, among whom the **house of Pembroke** had lost caste by erratic politics and aloofness, while Worcester eschewed the court and lived patriarchially in their midst. Charles made him a marquess (2 November 1642), promised him **Pembroke's** Monmouthshire estates (2 December 1642), and appointed him (and after him, in 1646, his younger son lord Charles Somerset) governor of Raglan (20 July 1644), while he in return allowed his son to place the family fortune of some £24,000 a year at the king's service. But his son's schemes (see below), giving as they did solid ground for the old fear of an Irish landing in Wales, and revealed to the world after the capture of the king's baggage at Naseby, produced yet another revulsion of local feeling (especially among the **Pembroke** connection), as appeared when the king paid two extended, but unsuccessful, visits to Raglan (July and September 1645) to recruit. Early in 1646 Raglan was closely besieged, Worcester as lord-lieutenant of the forces in Monmouthshire (9 December 1645) organizing and privately financing the defence, with occasional sallies on Caerleon (26 January) and other neighbouring Roundhead centres. Having scornfully rejected calls to surrender from **Thomas Morgan (1604 - 1679)** in June, and Fairfax in August, Worcester ceded the castle to the latter on 17 August on terms which, while protecting the garrison, left him to the mercy of the enemy. Already aged and ailing, he died a prisoner c. 18 December 1646, and was given a State burial (with Presbyterian rites) in the Beaufort chapel at Windsor. His chaplain, **Thomas Bayly**, who attended him to the end, published in 1649 an account of disputations on religion between him and the king at Raglan under the title *Certamen Religiosum*, and in 1650 *Worcesters Apothegms*. Anthony Wood (*Athenae Oxonienses*, iii, 200) describes him as 'a great compromiser, a wise man, and above all a person of great and sincere religion.' Generally reputed (according to Clarendon) 'the greatest Money'd Man of the Kingdom,' he had large sums laid out on mortgage in the three counties of Brecknock, Carmarthen, and Pembroke, as well as gold and jewels concealed for the use of his grandson, the future duke of Beaufort; his revenues were impounded by Parliament from 1645 to finance the Irish campaign and his town houses used for State purposes.

### EDWARD SOMERSET 2nd marquess of Worcester and titular earl of Glamorgan (1601 - 1667)

Eldest son of the 1st marquess, was brought up a Roman Catholic and educated abroad instead of going to Magdalen like his father and his four uncles. As lord Herbert of Raglan he was put on the Council of Wales (12 May 1633), made a deputy lieutenant in Monmouthshire (November 1635), and commissioned to raise forces against the Scots in the Bishops' Wars. This roused among Welsh Protestants a resentment which reached a head at the outbreak of the Irish rebellion of November 1641 (despite Herbert's offer of money towards quelling it), and again at the opening of the Civil War, when as commissioner of array for Monmouthshire (June 1642) he advanced to the king from the family fortune sums eventually amounting (on his estimate) to nearly £100,000. Parliament declared him a public enemy (September 1642) and insisted in subsequent negotiations with the king (e.g. February 1643) on his removal from office. His offer of neutrality for Monmouthshire and his gesture of removing the county magazine from his town of Monmouth to Caerleon (in **Pembroke** territory - whence he soon transferred it to Raglan) having been spurned, he raised, led, and equipped at his own cost 1,500 foot and 500 horse as well as garrisoning Raglan, Chepstow, Monmouth, and Caerleon; but he was absent, and his brother lord John Somerset inactive, when these were annihilated by Waller near Gloucester (24 March 1643). He rallied what remained to check Waller's progress in South Wales, but the jealousy caused

among his colleagues by his religion and the independent powers given in his latest commission as lieutenant-general (4 April 1643) made him throw up his Welsh command in favour of service in Ireland, where his religion and his Irish wife (the earl of Thomond's daughter) would be an asset.

The authenticity of the alleged commission of 1 April 1644, empowering him to raise two armies of 10,000 each in Ireland (to land respectively in North and South Wales) and another of 6,000 on the Continent by negotiation with Catholic powers, with the title of earl of Glamorgan and the promise of further honours, is still sub judice (see Dodd, *Studies in Stuart Wales*, 90-99, and authorities cited, p. 92 n.), but the earldom was certainly conferred informally early in 1645, when he was instructed to negotiate with the Confederate Catholics. He and his brother lord John Somerset crossed to Ireland in June, when he speedily secured the promise of military help (treaties of 25 August, 3 September, and 20 December) in return for concessions so wide that he was seized as a traitor by Ormonde (26 December) and repudiated by Charles (29 January 1646) after the terms had leaked out. On his release (21 January) he tried to outbid Ormonde by working for Charles (who still kept in touch with him till July, 1646) with the papal legate, but gave up and left for Paris in March 1648. Parliament retorted with a decree of banishment (14 March 1649) and the inclusion of his estates in the Act of 1651 for the sale of delinquents' lands, but with a proviso reserving to the heir on succession such as had not already been alienated (e.g. £1,700 worth, including Chepstow and Gower, voted to Cromwell - who in turn confirmed the leases held since 1648 by **colonel Philip Jones**, and smaller grants made to Hugh Peters. Driven home by poverty in July 1652, Glamorgan was imprisoned in the Tower from 28 July till he was released on bail on 5 October 1654, having meanwhile (26 July 1653) been granted by Cromwell a pension of £3 a week from the Raglan estates. After the Restoration his claim to the duchy of Somerset (in fulfilment of Charles I's supposed promise) was heard by a Lords' committee (September 1660), but dropped by him on the ground of his failure to fulfil the implicit conditions. He was more concerned about the state of his fortune, which he reckoned to have been depleted by nearly a million pounds through the losses of the interregnum and his unpaid exertions in Ireland and elsewhere, on top of the loans which the Crown failed to honour; nor did the hopeful essays as an inventor described in his *Century of Inventions* (written 1655, published 1663) save him from becoming a prey to duns during his last months. He died suddenly in London on 8 April 1667, and was buried in Raglan church. Clarendon (no friendly witness) describes him as one ' whose Person many Men lov'd, and very few hated.'

### **HENRY SOMERSET 3rd marquess of Worcester and 1st duke of Beaufort (1629 - 1700)**

The eldest son of the 2nd marquess, and as lord Herbert was believed to have attended his father in the operations round Gloucester in 1643; but the charge of delinquency, made in December 1650, was withdrawn the following June, probably because he had by this time turned Protestant and accepted the new order. Later in the year he negotiated the sale to **colonel Philip Jones** of £1,600 worth of family estates in Glamorgan, securing his father's consent in 1656. He was on good terms with Cromwell (who paid him an allowance out of his Glamorgan lands), and supported the Protectorate even to the point of using in 1657 the new form of civil marriage; but the statement that he represented Brecknock (**Williams**, *The parliamentary history of the principality of Wales*, 16) or Worcester (*D.N.B.*, liii, 242) in the 1654 Parliament lacks confirmation. After Oliver's death he worked for a Stuart restoration, supporting Booth's rising in July 1659 (for which he was imprisoned in the Tower till November), and representing Monmouthshire in the Convention (April 1660), which sent him as one of the twelve commissioners to escort Charles II home from Holland. He secured (by dealings stigmatized by his father as 'underhand') the reversion of Cromwell's slice of the family estates, but since Raglan was no longer habitable he transferred his principal seat to Badminton (inherited from a collateral branch), where he lived in regal state, entertaining Charles II in 1663, James II in 1685, and William III in 1690. But till the end of the 19th century the family still had nine-tenths of its land in South Wales, with two seats in Monmouthshire and one in Brecknock and manorial rights in three counties, while their former rivals, the **earls of Pembroke**, were being driven by extravagance to dispose of their Welsh interests. The restored prestige of the Somersets appears not only in lord Herbert's continued representation of Monmouthshire in Parliament till his succession to the marquise (1667), but in the strong local pressure which procured his appointment (30 July 1660) as lord-lieutenant of Monmouth, Gloucester, and Hereford and captain of militia, with the right of garrisoning Chepstow. On 19 March 1672 he became president of Wales, with the lieutenancy of the whole Principality, and a privy councillor on 17 April, retaining the latter post when the privy council was reorganized on a representative basis in 1679. He rarely visited Ludlow, ruling rather by correspondence from Badminton or Chelsea and with his deputy-lieutenants; and he used his authority, as his forebears had done, to combat faction and to buttress up Crown and church, though not arbitrary rule (witness his opposition to the Dissolution of 1679 - *E.H.R.*, xxxvii, 50). Like them he came under popular suspicion, largely through his Roman Catholic relations at Powis castle and his intimacy with the duke of York, later James II (*Hist. MSS. Com.*, 14 th R., ix, 370, *Ormond*, n.s. iv, 459, vi, 262, *Popham*, 258).

At home he was hotly opposed by **John Arnold** and **Sir Trevor Williams**, who had local grievances over Wentwood forest (now exploited intensively by the marquess for iron smelting) and Chepstow garrison respectively; he removed **Arnold** and seven other opponents from the Monmouthshire bench in 1678 and had **Williams** included with twenty-four other Welsh magistrates in the Privy Council's purge of 1680. **Arnold** retorted by organizing the out-boroughs of Newport and Usk against his use of Monmouth as a pocket borough, and so unseating his son (on petition, 26 November 1680) as borough member, **Williams** having ousted him from the county seat at the last election. Early in 1681 they joined **Sir Rowland Gwynne** in pushing through the Commons an address for his banishment from court and council and promoting an abortive bill for 'taking away Lord Worcester's Ludlow court for Wales ' as 'too great a trust.' Charles II retorted by making him duke of Beaufort (2 December 1682), while the new duke silenced **Williams** and **Arnold** by obtaining heavy damages against them for ' scandalum magnatum ' (November 1683), and his son (now marquess of Worcester) won back the Monmouthshire seat and kept it till 1688. To consolidate his victory Beaufort made a viceregal tour of his presidency (14 July-21 August 1684). James II renewed his presidency (28 March 1685), gave him a colonelcy of foot, and enlisted his services to prevent an outbreak of political faction in Denbighshire in March 1685, to hold Bristol against the duke of Monmouth the following June, and to rally Wales to the Declaration of Indulgence in 1687; but a meeting of local magnates summoned to Ludlow for the purpose in October fell flat, and was followed by another purge of county benches and militias and municipal corporations. Despite concessions like the duke's cancelling of these dismissals (September - October 1688) and his advocacy of the calling of Parliament (December), Wales failed in the end to back up his promise in October to raise 10,000 men there against William of Orange, nor did he this time succeed in holding Bristol for James. Favouring a regency rather than the crown for William, he nevertheless took the oath to him belatedly as William III in March 1689, but he was superseded at Ludlow by the earl of Macclesfield, and what little part he took in the politics of the reign was largely in opposition. He died at Badminton on 21 January 1700, and was buried in the Beaufort chapel at Windsor. His eldest surviving son, CHARLES SOMERSET, 4th marquess of Worcester, after being deprived of his army commission in favour of his Roman Catholic cousin of Powis because he helped to draw up the Commons' address of November 1685, urging the removal of Roman Catholic officers (May 1687, Luttrell, *Brief Relation*, i, 403; *C.J.*, ix, 756-9), had joined the prince of Orange early in December 1688; he was killed in a coaching accident in Wales in July 1698, and the dukedom went to his son, HENRY SOMERSET (1684 - 1714), 2nd duke of Beaufort, a more advanced Tory who eschewed public life till the Tory reaction of 1710. His second son, CHARLES NOEL SOMERSET (1709 - 1756), 4th duke, was reputed a Jacobite, and sheltered his son-in-law **Sir Watkin Williams Wynn** after the collapse of the 'Forty-five.'

Although the 1st duke's prestige throughout Wales was not repeated in his successors, the wide and increasing extent of their family lands and wealth ensured their continued influence in the south-east. The family has generally provided Monmouthshire, and often Brecknock as well, with lords-lieutenant, and the former county continuously from 1805-74 with Tory M.P.s, while the boroughs from 1799 to 1831 gave each successive heir his entrée to Parliament. In 1799, however, Newport - now developing commercially, and always less open than the other boroughs to ducal influence - with the help of **Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar** successfully disputed the claim of the 5th duke (HENRY SOMERSET, 1744 - 1803) to possession of its wharf, while Monmouth itself threw over the municipal domination of the 6th duke, HENRY CHARLES SOMERSET (1766 - 1835), in 1818. A challenge to his son in the borough election to the Parliament of 1820 - memorable because **John Frost**, the future Chartist, supported it - failed, but in 1831 the Beaufort interest in the boroughs was routed by the reform candidate, the future **lord Llanover**, who, although unseated on petition, was returned again next year. Under these two dukes the coal and iron on the Beaufort estates, which had brought in a steady revenue since the 17th century, forged rapidly ahead. The 5th duke also extended his sway in Monmouthshire by buying the old **Pembroke** lordships of Usk and Trelech; but in 1901 the 9th duke, HENRY ADALBERT WELLINGTON FITZ ROY SOMERSET (1847 - 1924), sold the Raglan estate (excepting the castle) to the Crown and the manorial rights there to his kinsman, lord Raglan, grandson of FITZROY JAMES HENRY SOMERSET (1788 - 1855), 1st baron Raglan, youngest son of the 5th duke of Beaufort, and famous as a soldier who, having served under Wellington in the Peninsula and at Waterloo, married his grand-niece, succeeded him as commander-in-chief, and led the British forces in the Crimea till his death in the field, 28 June 1855.

## **Author**

**Emeritus Professor Arthur Herbert Dodd**, (1891 - 1975)

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## Images

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