

# *Fauconberg*

This title would seem to be an odd one to choose in the early 17th century and the Bellasis family seems to have been unaware of the existence of Baron Fauconberg before or since in other families. During the Wars of the Roses, the Bastard of Fauconberg was an irritant to Edward IV and was eventually executed for treason by Edward's son, Richard; later Richard III. Why was Thomas Neville nicknamed the Bastard of Fauconberg and where does the title come from?

In the early 13th century, a Norman mercenary became useful to King John, who was having a lot of difficulty with his nobles. This mercenary was Faulkes de Breauté and he acquired a fearsome reputation. He was always referred to by his first name, a nickname meaning scythe. He was known to be illegitimate and he committed many atrocities in the line of duty. He was so successful at suppressing discontent in the First Barons War, whether it came from an abbey or a whole region, that he was eventually rewarded with the sheriffdom of six midland shires and the custody of many castles, including Windsor Castle and also Luton and Bedford. At some point he was knighted and his heraldic device was the griffin. He achieved all this in just five years, having first come to note in 1208 as Sheriff of Glamorgan. He made Bedford his headquarters and demolished two churches to expand the castle.

In 1216, Faulkes married Margaret, widow of Baldwin de Redvers or Revières. This marriage brought him considerable wealth and he built Falkes Hall in London. From this came the names Foxhall and Vauxhall, which is why the griffin is used by the car company. Foxall was the father-in-law of Thomas Walmesley; father of Mary, who married William Bellasis. It is not known if there is a direct connection between our Foxall and Faulkes.

Falkes Hall was the pinnacle of Faulkes' success, which was enhanced by his part in the defeat of the French at the Battle of Lincoln in 1217. The barons had invited the French in after King John had ignored the terms of Magna Carta, but King John had died the previous year and the new king, Henry III thought differently. When the Dauphin of France took over St Albans, Henry's forces, led by the notorious Faulkes de Breauté, sacked the town and routed the French. By 1220, the barons were regaining their lands. Gascon Fawkes de Breauté lost Oxford and Hertford castles and the sheriffdoms of Oxford, Bedford, Buckingham, Cambridge, Huntingdon and Gannoc. This gave rise to insurrection led by Faulkes and his brothers and resulted in the siege of Bedford. The king prevailed. William de Breauté was executed and Faulkes was sent into exile in France, where he died. His other brothers were spared and recovered some of their wealth and status.

Assuming that there is a derivation of Faulkes de Breauté to Fauconberg, the reason for the first creation of Baron Fauconberg in 1295 needs to be established. The first Baron was Walter de Fauconberg, who died in 1304. Wikipedia maps the progress of the title through history and is supported by other websites. The gap between the death of Faulkes in 1226 and the creation of the title requires some research.

The second creation was bought by Thomas Belasyse, of Newburgh Priory, in 1627. Given the Yorkshire bias of the Belasyse family, and the Lancastrian allegiance of the Neville family, the second creation may have happened as a measure of one-upmanship. The Nevilles also held the title Baron Conyers and when, in modern times, that title was reclaimed by Marcia Amelia Mary Pelham, she also assumed the title Baroness Fauconberg.

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