

## What's in a name? Marie Gabrielle by Donald Thorpe

On the death of the peer, an hereditary peerage usually passes to the peer's son. If there is no son, then, there might be a male who can inherit – a younger brother of the deceased peer, for instance, or an uncle or a cousin, or an even more remote male relative. In a very small number of instances, a particular peerage may pass to or through a female. There are experts who are well placed to resolve inheritance problems, but most peerage families will be aware of their own situations.

If there is no one to inherit, the peerage becomes extinct. To avoid this happening, some noble families have resorted to the interesting practice of naming the girl whom they wanted to be a boy 'Marie Gabrielle' (or variations of those names), and then hoping that the next pregnancy will produce a boy. The discovery of this practice has been a by-product in studying, for other purposes, family trees and genealogical records. It is not known how widespread this practice was, and if it is still used, and when it started. [There are examples of this practice elsewhere in Europe such as the naming of the third daughter of Karl Theodor, Duke in Bavaria, and his wife Princess Maria José of Bragança. This daughter was named Marie Gabrielle (1878-1912). The fourth child was a son, Ludwig Wilhelm.]

In the early decades of the 20th Century, several aristocratic families in our part of Yorkshire gave these names to a daughter born to them, when they had hoped to have a son and heir. In each case there were no older sons and one or more older daughters. Here are five examples.

**Helena Albreda Marie Gabriella Wentworth Fitzwilliam** was born on 25 May 1907. She was the fourth daughter of the 7th Earl Fitzwilliam and his wife Lady Maud Frederica Elizabeth Dundas (daughter of the 1st Marquess of Zetland). A son was born on 31 December 1910, who succeeded as 8th Earl in 1943. After his death in 1948, he having no sons, the earldom passed first to one distant elderly cousin, and then to another, and became extinct in 1979.

**Anne Katharine Gabrielle Lumley** was born on 16 November 1928. She was the third daughter of the heir to the Earl of Scarbrough, Lawrence Roger Lumley, and his wife Katharine Isobel McEwen. In 1945, Lawrence Roger Lumley succeeded as the 11th Earl. A son was born on 5 December 1932, and a fourth daughter on 5 October 1935.

**Mary Rosemary Marie Gabrielle Montagu-Stuart-Wortley** was born on 11 June 1930. She was the fourth daughter of the 3rd Earl of Wharnccliffe and his wife Lady (Maud Lillian) Elfreda Mary Wentworth Fitzwilliam (first daughter of the 7th Earl Fitzwilliam). A son was born on 23 March 1935.

**Elizabeth-Anne Marie Gabrielle Fitzalan-Howard** was born on 20 January 1934. She was the second daughter of the 2nd Viscount Fitzalan of Derwent and his wife Joyce Elizabeth Mary Langdale. No further children were born of this marriage, and the viscountcy became extinct in 1962.

**Kathleen Marie Gabrielle Pelham-Clinton-Hope** was born on 1 January 1951. She was the second daughter of the 9th Duke of Newcastle and his wife Lady (Mary) Diana Montagu-Stuart-Wortley. No further children were born of this marriage. The 9th Duke died in November 1988. He was succeeded by a very distant cousin who died on Christmas Day 1988, when the dukedom became extinct.

The use of the names 'Marie' and Gabrielle/'Gabriella' clearly refers to the significant incident recorded early in St Luke's Gospel (chapter 1, verses 26-38):

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph ... and the virgin's name was Mary. And he [Gabriel] came to her and said, "Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you." ... And the angel said to her: "Do not be afraid Mary ... you will conceive in your womb and bear a son ..."

The important words of Gabriel to Mary are: "You will bear a son." It is not the daughter who is given those names whom, it is hoped, may be blessed by the birth of a son – there would be a long wait if it was, and its fulfilment in the daughter would not in any way solve the problem of the heir to the peerage – it is the mother of the daughter whose next pregnancy hopefully will produce a son and heir. In three of the situations outlined above, that vacancy was filled.

Parents are at liberty to give to their children whatever names they wish, though in some families, there are constraints which cause certain names to be always used, as, for instance in the Fitzwilliam family. The 6th Earl Fitzwilliam had a very large family, in which, as well as other names, each boy was given the Christian name 'William' and each girl the Christian name 'Mary'. These names also occur in other Fitzwilliam generations.

It is debateable how far names affect other things. Maybe it is perfectly legitimate to make use of incidents recorded in Scripture for personal or family reasons. But is it the right use of Scripture to take the names 'Marie' and 'Gabrielle/'Gabriella' (the feminine forms of the male 'Gabriel') and use them, almost in a kind of magical way, to hopefully ensure the survival of a titled peerage?