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CARDINAL BEAUFORT'S ALMSHOUSE OF NOBLE POVERTY AT ST CROSS, WINCHESTER

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates how and why the Almshouse at St Cross, Winchester, founded by Cardinal Beaufort in 1443, failed to survive the political upheavals of the Wars of the Roses. An almshouse had been established there by Henry de Blois in the 12th century. Beaufort's foundation was incomplete in many respects at his death in 1447. Unfortunately there was a rival claimant to the ownership of the most valuable of the properties which Beaufort purchased to support the inmates of the new foundation. With the end of the House of Lancaster in 1461 St Cross lost its powerful patrons. Those leading supporters of the Yorkist dynasty who laid claim to those properties wasted no time in depriving the almshouse of its means of support and the foundation failed through the unscrupulous use of political power by the Neville family, closely related to Cardinal Beaufort himself.

From 14 November 1404 until his death on 11 April 1447, Henry Beaufort, Cardinal of England, was bishop of Winchester. His forty-two and a half year tenure of the see was the longest in the annals of a bishopric noted for remarkably long-lived bishops. Beaufort is chiefly remembered as a politician who had a varied career during the first forty years of the fifteenth century, and modern historians have given little attention to his activities as a benefactor to his diocese. As a benefactor his reputation has suffered by contrast with that of his immediate predecessor, bishop William of Wykeham (d. 1404), founder of Winchester College and New College, Oxford, and his successor, bishop William Waynflete (d. 1486), founder of Magdalen College, Oxford. Beaufort founded no great school or university college. Yet his will reveals that he made some very substantial bequests to charitable and educational institutions, both within and beyond his diocese (Nichols 1780, 321–41). His sole foundation was the almshouse of noble poverty at St Cross. During the last five years or so of his life he devoted considerable attention to this project, which was intended to endure as the most lasting memorial to his long association with Winchester. It was not his fault that within fifteen years of his death it had ceased to function. Its tragic history is a complicated one, bound up as it is with the political power struggles of the mid-fifteenth century and the wars of the roses. It involves unravelling the rivalry to ownership of four manors and understanding complicated family relationships. Nevertheless, the end result is all too clear: Beaufort's almshouse was the victim of the greed of his own powerful and unscrupulous kinsfolk who robbed it of most of the income intended for its support.

There had been a charity at St Cross for 268 years before Beaufort became bishop of Winchester. In 1137 bishop Henry de Blois (d. 1171) established a hospital which supported thirteen poor brethren and gave outdoor relief to another 100. In several respects Beaufort's life bears striking resemblances to that of de Blois. Beaufort, who was born in about 1375, was the second son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster (d. 1399), by his mistress, Katherine Swynford (d. 1403). In 1396 Gaunt married Katherine as his third wife, and in the following year; Henry, his brothers John and Thomas Beaufort, and his sister Joan, were legitimised. Henry Beaufort was, therefore, the half-brother of King Henry IV; the uncle of Henry V and the great-uncle of Henry VI. De Blois was also the brother of the King: King Stephen (*DNB* 1891, 26, 112–17). Both men represent the aristocratic type of medieval bishop, who was ambitious in secular politics. Beaufort owed his great political influence to three main factors; firstly his close kinship with the Lancastrian Kings. Secondly, he was a conscientious administrator; an able

diplomat and a shrewd and wise counsellor to the crown. Lastly, he was, chiefly on account of the revenues from the see of Winchester, exceedingly rich, and by the time he died his fortune was probably in excess of £50,000. He maintained his influence by making large and frequent loans to the crown. Neither he nor de Blois were content to remain purely national statesmen; both men were, at some stage in their long careers, papal legates. Finally, it is noteworthy that de Blois held the see of Winchester for only eight months less than Beaufort. At the end of his life, the latter may have recognised these similarities and consciously followed in the footsteps of his distant predecessor in choosing to endow St Cross (Radford 1908; McFarlane 1945, 316–48; 1948, 405–28; Harriss 1970, 129–48).

After a period of neglect de Blois' hospital had been improved and restored by William of Wykeham. He appointed his capable servant, John de Campden, as master of the hospital and de Campden, an executor of Wykeham's will, remained in this office until his death in October 1410 (Moberly 1887, 92–102; Emden 1957, 343–4). Thereafter, Beaufort appointed one of his most trusted and able servants to succeed him. This was John Forest who, like Beaufort, was born illegitimate, but this proved no barrier to a successful career in the church (Emden 1958, 706). Beaufort had been bishop of Lincoln from 1398 to 1404 and Forest undoubtedly entered his service at this time. He followed his patron to Winchester and his career prospered. The mastership of St Cross was but one of several benefices which he held; for instance he was rector of Wonston in 1412 and master of another hospital, Godshouse in Portsmouth. In 1414 he was granted the archdeaconry of Surrey. Beaufort employed him on missions where trust was essential, as when, in 1414, he was sent to collect £862 from the royal exchequer; a sum which Beaufort had lent to Henry V when prince of Wales (Devon 1837, 329). For eight years, from 1417 to 1425, he was Beaufort's vicar-general, which meant he was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the diocese. Forest probably resigned the mastership of St Cross in 1425 when he was appointed dean of Wells; a benefice Beaufort himself had held in 1396. He remained at Wells until his death on 25 March 1446. His will, drawn up three years earlier, shows that he was a rich old man, having enough money to pay for 1,000 masses to be celebrated for the repose of his soul. Among the many bequests he left to 'my most special prince and lord Henry Beauford' £40 'to buy one jewel for himself...' (Weaver 1901, 153). He knew his master's tastes well. The chief executor of John Forest's will was his 'kinsman', Thomas Forest, and Thomas had succeeded John as master of St Cross, probably in 1425. The younger Forest was described as a bachelor of laws and held various local benefices, such as the churches of North Stoneham and Alresford, but we may suspect that he was not of the same calibre as his elder kinsman, for he never received an important post. He was accused of neglect and inactivity in the administration of John's estate. He died at St Cross in or just before September 1463, having failed to preserve Beaufort's new almshouse (Weaver 1901, 155; *Cal. Pap. Reg.* 9, 34; 10, 116; Greatrex 1978, 224–5; Reg. Waynflete I f. 131).

The story of Beaufort's foundation properly begins in the year 1443. However, there is evidence that he was especially interested in St Cross before that date. He granted a charter to Winchester College on 18 September 1440 while staying at the hospital, and the records of the port of Southampton reveal that, in the autumn of 1439 and early in 1440, large supplies of building materials and other household goods were being sent to his household in the Twyford area (WCM 3559e; Bunyard 1941, 32–3, 54, 65, 67, 81). On 2 March 1443, he was granted two licences by King Henry VI. The first enabled him to transfer nine specified properties, mostly manors, to whoever he chose. The second enabled him to grant to the master and brethren of St Cross property worth up to £500 *per annum*. These two licences were not unconnected because, on 1 February 1446, he granted to St Cross a charter conveying to the master and brethren seven of the properties specified in the earlier licence. These were the manors of Henstridge and Charlton Cambille in Somerset; Amesbury, Winterbourne Earls and the borough

of Wilton in Wiltshire; Tarrant Lonston in Dorset and £10.14*s*.6*d* from the fee-farm of Southampton (*Cal. Pat. R. 1441–1446*, 174; *1452–1461*, 233). Beaufort—or, to be accurate, he and his feoffees on his behalf—had purchased these seven properties from the Crown in 1439 and 1440, and they were worth, in total, £120 *per annum* (*Cal. Pat. R. 1436–1441*, 311, 439, 525, 479–80). In the course of the next six weeks, Beaufort conveyed by two further charters, another six properties to St Cross. These were advowsons and revenues from the churches at Crondall and St Faiths adjoining St Cross; the free chapels of Ecchinswell and St James, Winchester and Cold Henley, and the revenue from the hospital of St John, Fordingbridge (*Cal. Pat. R. 1452–1461*, 233–4). These endowments fell far short of his original target, set in 1443, of providing the new almshouse with an income of £500 *per annum*, and evidently Beaufort entrusted to his executors the task of purchasing more property to make up the deficit.

The new almshouse of noble poverty was intended to be an institution distinct from the de Blois hospital but under the governance of the same master. It was to consist of two chaplains, 35 brothers and three sisters, being gentlefolk who could no longer support themselves, or former members of Beaufort's household. From its inauguration until about 1461 there appears to have been a full complement of chaplains and brethren; the last recorded appointment of a new brother being made on 17 November 1461, when Thomas Lago replaced Richard Sheldrake who had died recently (Reg. Waynflete I f. 112b). In 1451 John Gamelyn, about whom nothing is known for certain, and John Smithford were the chaplains. The latter entered Winchester College as a scholar in 1409 and was perhaps the 'Smithford' present at a dinner which master John Forest gave at the college in October 1420 after the church at St Cross had been rededicated by Beaufort (Humbert 1857, 18; Kirby 1888, 36; 1892, 179; Emden 1959, 2177). On 22 October 1458 Walter Rede was appointed one of the chaplains by bishop Waynflete. He had previously been an inhabitant of the hospital of St John the Baptist in Oxford but in March 1458 he was made homeless when the hospital was suppressed and its possessions annexed to Waynflete's foundation, Magdalen college, Oxford (Reg. Waynflete I f. 93b; *Cal. Pap. Reg.* 11, 69–70). At about this time, too, William Sandres was a chaplain; there is a small brass commemorating him in the south transept of the church, which says he died on 29 November 1464, and was formerly chaplain to the new foundation. The names of over a dozen Beaufort brethren have come down to us (Humbert 1868, 56). Some were once members of the founder's household; there is a plaque in the church to John Newles, who had been servant and esquire to Beaufort for more than thirty years and died on 11 February 1452. Others were men of local distinction; in particular there seems to have been a close connection with Winchester College. The chancel contains a slab commemorating John Turke and John Knight. Turke had entered the college in 1415 and was a fellow from 1421 to 1424. Knight entered the school in 1419 and was a fellow from 1426 to 1441 (Kirby 1888, 41, 44; Emden 1958, 1060; 1959, 1917). Of the sisters in the new foundation nothing is known.

The master of St Cross received £20 *per annum* for governing the new house and, in his will, Beaufort made provision for this salary to be paid promptly out of the revenues of Henstridge manor (Nichols 1780, 340). The two chaplains received £8 and each of the brothers and sisters £1.6*s*.8*d* *per annum*. Over and above these pensions, the inmates were given cloaks of a deep red colour, with a cardinal's hat embroidered on them to distinguish them from the de Blois brethren who wore black. New cloaks were provided annually. Of the internal life of the almshouse very little is known. The meagre accounts which do survive show a steward of the manors, a cook and his servant, and a barber were employed. On the anniversary of Beaufort's death, 11 April, the de Blois brethren joined in the ringing of bells and, for this service, £3.5*s*.3*d* was distributed (Humbert 1857, 18–19; 1889, 8–9).

As soon as he had decided on the project, Cardinal Beaufort appears to have wasted no time in erecting the impressive buildings for the new foundation. The de Blois brethren lived, at this time, in buildings to the south-west of St

Cross church but all trace of these has now gone. The dwellings for the Beaufort brethren were built to the north-west of the church, and before about 1789 there were two more on the south range, which completed the quadrangle (Page 1912, 66). By 1444 construction was well under way; the records of the port of Southampton show large deliveries of materials; on 11 September 1444 1,000 nails were sent to St Cross and a week later 200 paving tiles arrived. In 1443 and 1444 ale; wine; fish and fruit delivered—no doubt to sustain the workmen. King Henry VI showed his enthusiasm for the almshouse by making an annual grant of a tun of red wine from Gascony to the master and brethren (Coleman 1960, 2, 38, 93, 124, 138; 1961, 298, 307; *Cal. Pat. R. 1446–1452*, 72).

Nevertheless, despite the progress, it is evident that, from its earliest days, there was serious instability at St Cross. Before he died, Beaufort's spiritual adviser and confessor, an anonymous Carthusian monk of Sheen, had warned him, with almost prophetic insight, to take care lest an almshouse he had instituted should become a house of ill-repute; the monk had heard rumours that his officials there received gifts and sought rewards (Thompson 1930, 341). After Beaufort's death we hear no more of trouble from this source but much more serious and fundamental threats rose up in the succeeding years.

Part of the trouble was that there was not enough money to support the new almshouse. The accounts which survive for the year 1451 show it cost £221.4*s*.7*d* to keep the 40 inmates. As has been seen, its revenues amounted to only £144 *per annum*, although the same properties were apparently worth £158.13*s*.6*d* in 1455 (Humbert 1857, 18–19; *Cal. Pat. R. 1452–1461*, 233–4). There must have been a large deficit in the accounts. Alongside the financial problems, the almshouse suffered from the disadvantage in law of not being incorporate. The failure of Beaufort, and later of his executors, to obtain corporate status meant that it was not capable of acting as a legal body for the purposes of litigation and acquiring property. There was no perpetual succession and no common seal. The thirteen properties intended for its endowment were vested in the master and brethren personally and apparently no distinction had been made in Beaufort's charters between the de Blois and the Beaufort brethren.

Had Beaufort's executors and the almshouse's patrons acted swiftly and energetically, these deficiences might not have been fatal for St Cross. The greatest threat of all was that there was a rival claimant to four of the most valuable manors owned by the master and brethren; those being Henstridge and Charlton Camville in Somerset and Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls in Wiltshire, which were worth nearly £100 *per annum*. The first indication that ownership of these properties might have been in dispute comes in 1450. In that year, parliament passed an act of resumption; a measure designed to retrieve for the crown properties which had once belonged to it but which the good-natured Henry VI had sold off or given away. Many such sales or royal gifts were exempt from this act and among those thus protected were all the manors and properties which Beaufort and his feoffees had purchased from the King in 1439 and 1440, and which he subsequently granted to the master and brethren of St Cross. However, the exemption in the act went further; it contained lengthy clauses stipulating that also exempt from the resumption would be any person or persons who had 'entred into' any of St Cross' manors 'by lawfull title of entre.... or recovered theim by title of right, or theire Auncetours whose heires thei bien....', or anyone 'having restitution of their enheritaunce' by properly proving their title to the properties (*Rot. Parl.* 5, 185). An inference which may be drawn from this unusual proviso is that, in 1450, the almshouse was in danger of being deprived of its manors, either by means of litigation or by physical occupation.

By the beginning of 1455 there was a serious crisis. The lack of internal harmony at St Cross is perhaps reflected by the expulsion, for unspecified causes, in October 1454, of one of the Beaufort brethren, Jordan Browning (Reg. Waynflete I. f. 70). The situation is described in a preamble to letters patent granted to Beaufort's six surviving executors. This related that, although Beaufort had handed over several

properties, the almshouse had not been properly founded, '... and will be brought into desolation unless provision be made for the preservation of the possessions thereof, specially because the chaplains and poor are not incorporate but under the governance of the said master, and the possessions of the hospital (i.e. the de Blois foundation) and the almshouse are so confused that strife arises between the brethren of the same....'. The master, Thomas Forest, and the brethren petitioned the king and on 8 April 1455 a new scheme was instituted. The executors were empowered to refound the charity and to give it the corporate status it lacked. They were to draw up statutes concerning the method of electing a new master and the governance of the brethren, who were to pray for the souls of Cardinal Beaufort, and, after his death, the king. The executors could acquire further possessions for the almshouse, to the value of £300 *per annum*. Beaufort's chief executor and nephew, Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, was appointed patron and protector 'for the preservation of the almshouse' (*Cal. Pat. R. 1452–1461*, 233–4). The new scheme was a complete failure. Somerset was, in April 1455, Henry VI's chief minister, but he was unpopular and a particular enemy of the Yorkist faction. The next month Richard, duke of York (d. 1460) and his allies took up arms against the king's ministers and on 22 May, Somerset was killed at the first battle of St Albans.

Bishop Waynflete succeeded Somerset as patron of the almshouse and immediately he did so the master and brethren transferred the legal title to the thirteen properties which Beaufort had granted them into the personal hands of Waynflete (*Cal. Pat. R. 1452–1461*, 252; *Cal. Close R. 1454–1461*, 147–8). This transfer was, in all probability, a measure designed to protect the properties from the grasp of St Cross' enemies. Like Somerset, Waynflete was a staunch Lancastrian, a personal friend of Henry VI; he was chancellor of England during the twilight years of Lancastrian government from October 1456 to July 1460. Although he was still regarded as lord of the manor of Amesbury as late as May 1459, once the Yorkist party gained permanent power in 1461, Beaufort's almshouse was doomed to extinction (Pugh 1947, 95).

The challenge came from Alice Montagu, countess of Salisbury (d. 1462). To appreciate why she should have wished to possess the four most valuable manors belonging to St Cross, it is necessary to trace the history of her family to the fourteenth century. The countess' great-great-grandfather was William Montagu. He was granted the earldom of Salisbury by King Edward III in 1337. At the same time the king granted William several lordships and manors in Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset to support the dignity of the new earldom, and among these properties were the manors of Henstridge; Charlton Camville; Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls. However, whereas the earldom was granted to William and his heirs in general, the properties were granted to him in tail male. In other words, the earldom could descend to all his heirs, whether male or female, but the estates could only descend through the male line (*Dignity of a Peer*, 5, 32–33; Cokayne and White, 9, 395, App. F, 126–32). In June 1429, earl William's last male descendant died. He was Richard Montagu, the younger brother of John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury of this creation (d. 1400) (*Cal. Inq. p.m.* 4, 127). Richard's nephew, Thomas Montagu, fourth earl of Salisbury, had been killed in August 1428 at the siege of Orleans. Earl Thomas was the father of Alice Montagu, an only child. On the death of her father and uncle, Alice inherited the title of countess of Salisbury but, as anticipated by the terms of Edward III's grant in 1337, she did not inherit the properties which supported the title (Cokayne and White, *loc cit*). Instead the estates reverted to the crown after the death of Richard Montagu. In 1439 Beaufort and his feoffees, quite legitimately, purchased from the crown the four properties which later formed the greater part of the endowment of St Cross.

Alice Montagu was born in about 1400, and before February 1421 she had married Cardinal Beaufort's nephew, Richard Neville; his mother, Joan Beaufort, countess of Westmorland (d. 1440) being the Cardinal's sister. Alice and Richard were an ambitious couple. In May 1429 Richard Neville used his powerful connections to obtain recognition by the king's council, and

later by the lords in parliament, as the new earl of Salisbury (*Proc. Ord. P.C.* 3, 234–326). However, the earl and countess resented being debarred from possessing the former Montagu estates. Their desire to gain control of the four manors which became the property of St Cross perhaps partly motivated their alliance with the duke of York in the 1450s in opposition to the government of Henry VI. Salisbury and his eldest son and heir, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick (d. 1471), better known as Warwick the Kingmaker, were York's most important allies at the first battle of St Albans in May 1455 at which Somerset was killed. The two protectorates of York (April 1454 to February 1455 and November 1455 to February 1456) must have been periods of extreme anxiety at St Cross, especially because, during the first protectorate, Salisbury was chancellor of England. At the Lancastrian parliament in 1459 several leading Yorkists, including Salisbury and Warwick, suffered attainder. In addition, Alice countess of Salisbury, was also attainded for provoking York to rebellion, an event which must have caused a great deal of relief and satisfaction at St Cross (*Rot. Parl.* 5, 349). However, the Lancastrian ascendancy was short-lived. The next year York, Salisbury and Warwick renewed the offensive and although the first two were killed at the battle of Wakefield in December 1460, the Yorkist faction triumphed. In March 1461 Henry VI was deposed and in his stead Edward, earl of March, was elevated to the throne as King Edward IV.

The most powerful nobleman in the kingdom was now Warwick, who had also inherited the earldom of Salisbury. The young and inexperienced Edward IV was very much under his influence and Warwick and his mother wasted no time in stripping Waynflete, and hence Beaufort's almshouse, of the four manors. St Cross now lacked a powerful patron to protect its interests, for Waynflete was completely discredited as a politician. He could do no more than watch the fraudulent method by which Alice and her son gained control of Henstridge, Charlton Camville, Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls.

On 5 July 1461, Edward IV granted Alice a licence 'to enter into all castles, lordships, manors and other possessions of Thomas Montagu, late earl of Salisbury (d. 1428), her father, whose heir she is ... and to hold the same in fee simple.' (*Cal. Pat. R. 1461–1467*, 15). This licence was perhaps insufficient to enable Alice to gain control of the manors because, in the first parliament of the reign, which sat from November 1461 and May 1462, she and Warwick chose a different line of attack. Probably with the help and favour of Edward IV, they caused an act to be passed which restored to Alice all the Montagu family estates which had been held in the fourteenth century by Alice's grandfather, John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury (d. 1400). This act of 1461/2 described how the earl John had been a loyal subject of King Richard II, and how he had opposed the usurpation in 1399 of the first Lancastrian king, Henry IV. The year after the usurpation, the earl John had participated in a rebellion against Henry IV; the rebellion had failed and he had been cruelly murdered. The act then described how an act of attainder had been passed, posthumously, against earl John in 1401 and how his estates had been forfeited by the Lancastrian king. The 1461/62 act, in reversing the attainder of 1401, asserted, quite untruthfully, that earl John's heirs never had the estates restored to them. As a result of this alleged injustice, it was implied that Alice had been deprived of her birthright by the arbitrary rule of the Lancastrian kings (*Rot. Parl.* 5, 484–5; 6, 446–7). The truth, however, is that in 1409, Henry IV had restored to earl John's son and heir, Thomas Montagu, both the earldom of Salisbury and the bulk of the Montagu estates. Before his death in 1428, earl Thomas was in full possession of all the family estates, including Henstridge, Charlton Camville, Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls (Hicks 1980, 143). The true reason why his daughter Alice did not inherit these manors was that they had originally been granted to the Montagu family in tail male by Edward III. Moreover, the Nevilles may have been responsible for a further injustice to St Cross. Warwick, who had inherited the 'restored' Montagu estates on his mother's death in or shortly before December 1462, was killed at the battle of Barnet in 1471, leaving only two

daughters. The elder, Isabel Neville (d. 1476) was married to George, duke of Clarence (d. 1478). After Clarence's mysterious death, an inquisition was made into the estates which he had held in the right of his wife. This revealed that they had been jointly in possession not only of Henstridge, Charlton Camville, Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls, but also of the borough of Wilton. Wilton was one of the thirteen properties which Beaufort had purchased and then given to his almshouse. At no period in the middle ages had it formed part of the Montagu estates (*Cal. Inq. p.m.* 4, 391; Crittall 1962, 9). It can only be conjectured that at some point the Nevilles helped themselves to Wilton and had not even attempted to justify the seizure.

Warwick appears to have suffered some remorse about the way he and his family had treated St Cross and attempted to make some amends. The fifteenth-century chronicler of the Neville family, John Rous, stated that he intended to endow a charity at Guyscliffe in Warwickshire. Warwick 'wold haue had a certen (number) of pore gentylmen found ther as were at Seynt Cros of Wynchestre by the fundacon of Maister herre Beauford cardynal and bishop of Wynchestre ... wich place was endowid with forfet lyuelode (livelihood) of the earl of Salisbury (i.e. John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury, died 1400)...' Rous added that Warwick had recovered the Montagu property 'by auctorite of parlement' (Courthope 1859, No. 57).

The Yorkist period ended with the battle of Bosworth in 1485 and Henry Tudor, the son of Cardinal Beaufort's great-niece, Margaret Beaufort, became king. This event apparently prompted bishop Waynflete, now an extremely old man, to remember his predecessor's charitable intentions. On 2 August 1486 he refounded Beaufort's almshouse by using the revenues from the seven properties which had not gone astray during Yorkist rule. These properties only yielded about £44 *per annum* and so the foundation was limited to only one chaplain and two brethren. The master of St Cross at this time, Richard Harward, was paid £4 *per annum* for governing the new house; the chaplain received £6.13*s*.4*d* annually and each of the brethren received £3.6*s*.8*d* annually as pensions. In the document appointing the reconstitution, which is contained in Waynflete's episcopal register, he rehearsed the history of Beaufort's project and concluded that 'by the craft of succeeding persons, the lordships, rents, tenements and possessions are wholly taken from the said almshouse and are occupied by the power of noble persons.' The provisions were confirmed by Waynflete's successor, bishop Peter Courtney, in 1487 but after that date the almshouse disappears from view (Reg. Waynflete II, f. 132; Humbert 1868, 33; Chandler 1811, 224–6). In 1492, Lady Margaret Beaufort, as Cardinal Beaufort's heir, petitioned her son, King Henry VII, for possession of Henstridge, Charlton Camville, Amesbury and Winterbourne Earls. The petition was granted and St Cross' interest in the properties was ignored. Once again the power of 'noble persons' defeated Beaufort's charitable intentions (*Rot. Parl.* 6, 446–7; Hicks 1980, 146–7). The new almshouse appears to have merged with the old hospital, and ceased to have an independent existence. It was not, in fact, until the nineteenth-century that Beaufort brethren once more became a distinctive part of St Cross; in 1877 provision was made for eight such brethren and today they wear red cloaks with cardinals' hats embroidered on them.

During the short period of its existence, life at the almshouse for noble poverty was a far cry from the haven of peace and retirement which Beaufort had envisaged it would provide. Its failure to take root demonstrates how the power struggles at the centre of government could vitally affect the fate of a small, vulnerable institution. On the one hand, its patrons Somerset and Waynflete were both favourites of Henry VI; on the other hand, St Cross' enemies were leaders of the rival faction. The properties intended to support the almshouse added to the quarrels among the nobility, which are such a prominent feature of the wars of the roses. However, part of the blame for the charity's failure must rest with Beaufort's executors and the almshouse's patrons, especially Waynflete. These men failed to acquire additional property to support the institution and failed to complete the formalities of foundation which would have

given it enough strength to have resisted the assault launched by the countess of Salisbury and her son the earl of Warwick. An historian of Edward IV's reign has commented, 'Even by the standards of an acquisitive age Warwick appears exceptionally grasping' (Ross 1974, 71). To greed, the vice of dishonesty must also be attributed to him and his mother. Without a scrap of justification, they robbed St Cross of certainly four, and possibly five, of its manors and, by making false representations to the king and parliament in 1461, they attempted to justify their crime. Furthermore, the countess had been married to Beaufort's nephew and Warwick was therefore Beaufort's great-nephew. In better days, an almshouse such as the one at St Cross might have looked to such kinsfolk of the founder for protection and patronage.

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