

The Paston Files



Margaret Paston (nee. Mauteby)

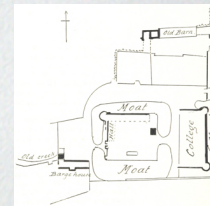
Born 1423
Died 1484
Married: John Paston
(1421-1466)

Seven children, including:
- John II (1442-1479)
- John III (1445-1504)
- Margery (b.1450)

Margaret Paston (also known as Margaret Mautby) is noted for her strength and fortitude as an English wife born in the Middle Ages, who took on her husband's duties while he was away and held her family together through disastrous events.

The first conflict that Margaret endured took place in 1448 when she took residence in the manor of Gresham. The property had been purchased by William Paston, but Lord Moleyns laid claim to it, and while John was away in London Moleyn's forces violently ejected Margaret, her men-at-arms and her household.

Similar events took place in the 1460s when the Duke of Suffolk besieged Caister Castle. There had been a dispute over ownership and in 1469 the Duke attacked. The castle was defended by John Paston junior and approximately 30 men. For two month John fought to preserve the family's ownership but in the end the defence was unsuccessful and the castle fell resulting in the death of one of the Paston's longest-serving servants by a crossbow wound.



Plan of Caister Castle.

During the siege Margaret wrote letters to her youngest son pleading for help. (See attached)

Margaret wrote 104 letters to her husband and family. Recording events both catastrophic and mundane concerning her life and the Paston family's relationships with other families and their status in society.

Miraculously many of the letters survived hundreds of years of history and are preserved in the Norfolk Records Office in Norwich.