



The Godiva Gazette

The Newsletter of the Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva

Winter 2013–2014

Volume 1, Issue 1

**Founding Meeting of
the Society of
Descendants of
Lady Godiva:**

**April 13, 2014
Washington, D.C.**

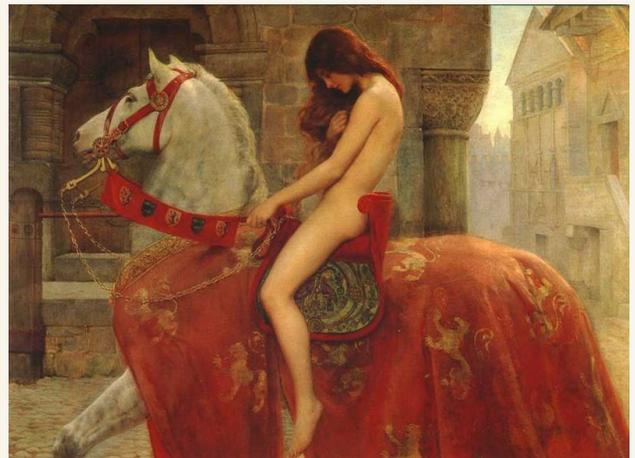
**See Lady General's
Message for details.**

Who Was Lady Godiva?

She was wealthy, privileged, devout, and long-lived. She inherited lands in her own right, married the Lord of Mercia, produced an heir. Through the tumultuous, twilight years of Anglo-Saxon rule, she and her husband Leofric held consistent power and influence with the ruling families of England. She endowed numerous churches and monasteries. She is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

Yet she is remembered for an event that may not have happened: A naked ride on a horse through the town of Coventry. Most of us know the name Lady Godiva, vaguely, as a figure in a fairy tale. But she was a real person.

For those who can trace their lineage to Godiva, this organization will provide an opportunity to share genealogy tips and information, and to learn more about Godiva and her



Lady Godiva, by John Collier, c. 1897

times. The Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva will be officially created on April 13, 2014, approximately 1000 years after her birth.

The Lady General's Message

Dear Members and Prospective Members of the Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva,

It is so exciting to see a newsletter called The Godiva Gazette, and many thanks to Suzanne Bass and Melissa Fischer for taking on the job of co-editors. It has been an exciting nine months since I decided, in April 2013, to found the Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva. The response has been overwhelming: Within two and a half months of announcing our acceptance of applications, we have 55 approved applicants and five approved supplemental ones. (Congratulations to approved applicant David Grinnell for sending in the five supplementals!) We have just received 3 new applications, and we understand that many prospective applicants are completing their paperwork. Our Keeper of the Roll, Maureen McGowan-Singer, has been working hard on reviewing and

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Lady General's Message, continued

approving the applications, and I thank her for being so dedicated! Please don't forget that the application fee for membership will go up \$50 (to \$250) on March 15th, and that is the cutoff date for founding members. So get your applications in by March 15, if you haven't already sent them.

In little over a month, fifteen orders for the Lady Godiva insignia (the gold-and-purple image shown at the top of Page 1 and bottom of Page 4) have been filled, and I have enjoyed hearing all the positive remarks through emails and phone calls. All the profits from the insignia sales are going to the Lady Godiva Scholarship Fund. Our organization is incorporated; many thanks to Justiciar General Annelies Mouring for filing the paperwork for us. We have our Employer Identification Number (EIN) and are working to complete the paperwork for our 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. I will keep you informed on this as we progress.

The Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva bylaws have been drawn up, and are being reviewed by the Parliamentarian Shelby Ward. The bylaws will be sent to approved applicants in February for further review, and we will be voting on them at our April 13, 2014 meeting in Washington, DC.

I am proud to announce that we now have 12 Florida members, and we will have an Organizing Meeting of the Florida State Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva, on Friday, February 7, 2014. It will be at four o'clock p.m. in the

suite of our Founding Registrar General Maureen McGowan-Singer at the Embassy Suites Lake Buena Vista Hotel, 8100 Lake Street; Orlando, FL 32836. If you will be in the area and would like to attend, please let Maureen or me know that you will attending. Visitors and prospective members are welcome!

Our official founding meeting will be held in Washington, DC, at the Army and Navy Club on April 13, 2014, in the John Paul Jones Room immediately following the Order of the Descendants of the Justiciar 1050-1650 Convocation which starts at 3:30 p.m.. We will be using the same room, and our meeting will start at 4:30 p.m. At our founding meeting, all approved applicants will officially become members.

It is such a good feeling to know there are others who enjoy proving their ancestry as much as I do, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you on April 13, 2014, for our founding meeting. Help us spread the word about the Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva. May you and yours have a very happy and prosperous New Year!

B. Davine Moore Roberts
Lady General
Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva

Message from the Keeper of the Roll

The Society has started off with a significant amount of activity; like Lady Godiva, we act with dispatch. Initial interest has been very high. As of January 14, 2014, we have 55 approved applicants (to be confirmed as members at our opening meeting in April) and 5 supplementals. Forty (40) different Gateway Ancestors have been approved to date. Many prospective members are busy working on their papers and we continue to receive inquiries about membership. As time permits I am building an index of ancestors identified in various lineages. Each listing will show the Membership #/Generation for each ancestor. This should help anyone working on an application and those working on supplementals with research efforts. The best method of contact is via e-mail (Singer6307@peoplepc.com). Once your e-mail is in my system I will have it on record and will respond as quickly as possible.

Maureen L. McGowan-Singer
Keeper of the Roll (Registrar General)
Society of Descendants of Lady Godiva

Godiva's Ride: An Enduring Legend

She may — or may not — have ridden nude, but her name is forever linked with the famous story.

Perhaps it was a tale told by countless firesides in medieval England. Or maybe it was an ancient pagan legend that evolved into racy gossip about a local noblewoman. The story lingered for centuries, yet now most people only recall an image: a naked woman on a horse. That image, however, is so commonly recognized that Lady Godiva is surely one of the most famous Anglo-Saxon women in history.

The first written record we have of the story was set down by the chronicler Roger of Wendover in the early 1200s — nearly two centuries after the famous ride was said to have happened.

Roger's account was brief: The powerful Lord of Mercia, Leofric, had imposed heavy taxes on the people of Coventry, where Leofric and his wife, Godiva, had one of their chief residences. The people entreated for relief from the oppressive tax, but their lord was deaf to their pleas. His wife, however, was sympathetic to the people's plight, and begged on more than one occasion for Leofric to free the people of Coventry from the tax. Her husband refused, but she regularly repeated her request on the people's behalf. In time, exas-

perated by her persistence, Leofric flung an outlandish and (as he thought) daunting challenge to Godiva: "Ride your horse na-



Lady Godiva, by Marshall Claxton, 1850

ked before all the people, through the town market, from one end to another, and I will grant your request."

Godiva surprised Leofric by accepting the bargain immediately, but with a dutiful nod to her position as his wife: "Will you

give me permission if I am ready to do it?" "Yes," replied the lord, apparently believing she would back down when the time came to make good on the bargain.

But Godiva (as the story goes) did not back down; she got on her horse, and arranged her long hair so that it covered her whole body "except for her fair legs," as Roger notes. (You can imagine him smiling as he wrote down that detail — handed down through 7 generations?) Attended by two knights, Godiva rode the length of the marketplace, and when she returned home, her astonished husband lifted the tax on his people.

Thus Godiva, in the legend, is a heroine: A dutiful wife who nevertheless identified with the common man so far as to risk her husband's anger and public humiliation to spare ordinary people from a burdensome tax.

For many reasons, historians have expressed doubt that Godiva ever made such a ride. The chief argument against the story is a legal one: In Godiva's England, thriving under Anglo-Saxon rule as it had for centuries, married women

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The Meaning of the Name Godiva

"Godiva" is a version of the Old English name Godgiftu, pronounced "GOAD-givuh." The meaning is translated often as "God's Gift" but probably "Good Gift" is more accurate. Although very common at the time of our celebrated ancestor, the name Godgiftu had fallen out of fashion by the late Middle Ages — at least among the aristocracy, whose names appear more frequently in documents. The 13th Century monks and historians who first popularized the lady's legendary ride used the spelling Godiva, a more Latinized rendering, and the pronunciation we now know likely dates from later years.



Godiva Descendants In The News

George J. Hill, M.D., D.Litt., M.A., distinguished surgeon, educator, author — and Godiva descendant — in May 2013 received the David Cowen Award for Achievement in Medical History. Dr. Hill was honored for his many years of publications and presentations in medical history, especially his work on Thomas A. Edison.

Dr. Hill has published over 150 scientific reports and is the author/ editor of 14 books. He is Emeritus Professor of Surgery at the UM-DNJ-New Jersey Medical School and is Clinical Professor of Surgery at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. He is a veteran of the War in Vietnam and was recalled to duty as a surgeon in the Navy during the Gulf War of 1990-91. Dr. Hill was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal from the U.S. Navy in 1993 and in 2001 received the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal. His latest book is *Proceed to Peshawar*, based on his father-in-law's experiences in World War II.

The Story of the Ride, continued

could hold land in their own right (a privilege that would disappear after the Normans invaded in 1066). Moreover, Godiva herself held Coventry; she had brought this property with her upon her marriage to Leofric. She could have abolished the Coventry tax just as easily as her husband, this argument goes.

The main reason to be skeptical of the Godiva legend is that we simply have no record of it before Roger of Wendover penned it in the early 13th century. While many records went missing from the medieval period, it seems amazing that a story this memorable would not have been recorded and preserved in the roughly 175 years between its alleged occurrence and Roger's account. Historians point to the appearance of Godiva's name, chiefly as a generous benefactress of religious houses, all over her and Leofric's extensive landholdings. Clearly she was wealthy, married to a powerful man. Wouldn't some mention of a nude ride have crept into the records somewhere, if it really happened?

Who knows? It seems strange that such a racy tale would attach to a real person. But historians in the Middle Ages were not burdened by modern standards of accuracy. They could use history to make a point, to settle a score, or

simply to entertain. Perhaps a nude ride by a wealthy lady had been part of the folklore in Anglo-Saxon England for some time before Roger recorded it, filling in Lady Godiva as the heroine. The lady herself was real, and she has real descendants. We (those descendants) can celebrate the story that has made her name a household word.



Gateway Ancestors: To assist in our prospective members' research, here are the persons that, to date, we have approved as links to Lady Godiva, along with their American colony of residence.

Abney, Dannett	Virginia	Savage, Anthony	Virginia
Barham-Bennett, Anne	Virginia	Skipwith-Dale, Diana	Virginia
Batte, Henry	Virginia	Southworth, Constant	Massachusetts
Batte, Thomas	Virginia	Stevens, John	Connecticut
Blakiston, George	Maryland	Trowbridge, Thomas	Connecticut
Blount, James (Capt.)	North Carolina	Vaitche (Veitch), James	Maryland
Booth, Robert	Virginia	Waller, John	Virginia
Brown, Nathaniel	Connecticut	Warren, Thomas	Virginia
Bull, Stephen	Virginia	Washbourne, William	New York
Carlton, Edward	Massachusetts	Westmoreland, James	Virginia
Chetwode-Bulkeley, Grace	Connecticut	Yale, Thomas	Connecticut
Derehaugh-Stratton, Anne	Massachusetts		
Edgeworth, Richard	North Carolina		
Filmer, Henry	Virginia		
Foulke, Edward	Pennsylvania		
Gascoigne, Thomas	Virginia		
Gye-Maverick, Mary	Massachusetts		
Harris, John	Virginia		
Humphrey-Owen, Rebecca	Pennsylvania		
Hutchinson, Edward	Rhode Island		
Ligon, Thomas	Virginia		
Isaac, Joseph	Maryland		
Johns(t)on, Edward	Virginia		
Lynde, Simon	Massachusetts		
Mallory, Roger	Virginia		
Marbury-Hutchinson, Anne	Massachusetts		
Newberry, Thomas	Massachusetts		
Newton, John	Virginia		
Owsley, Thomas	Virginia		

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