

## The Tale of Alice Countess of Warwick

Warm yourself by my fire and let me tell you the story of my life.

I was born in Flamstead to Mary and Ralph de Tony, Lord of the Manor. We have French ancestors and my great, great, great, grandfather carried William the Conqueror's flag into battle at Hastings. And that's how we ended up in Flamstead. He was awarded this land you see here, for his bravery.

My father died when I was just 11 and all his wealth and estates, across many counties, in all directions, passed to my brother Robert.

When I was 12, I was promised in marriage to Thomas, son of a knight. The match was a good one and we were married when I was 16 years old and had 7 happy years together until Thomas died.

My daughter Juliana was just a baby and I decided that I needed to make our future solid and successful. I was lucky that my own mother taught me to read and write and I had paid careful attention to my husband's businesses; so I was able to carry his business on.

But there was more sadness to come, as my brother died too, when I was 28, and, as he had no children of his own, I inherited all his land and property as well. I was so busy and knew I could trust my sister-in-law Maud, so I asked her to stay on in Flamstead and help me.

Shortly afterwards, I married again, an important man, a favourite of King Edward the First. Guy de Beauchamp, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Warwick. Unfortunately, Guy did not get on quite so well with King Edward the Second. They would argue and the King would make fun of him. Now, Guy was not happy about that and started to talk about trying to limit the King's powers. He even arrested a key supporter of the new King and sentenced him to death.

Guy's and the King's friendship was never the same afterwards – though the pair did need each other to get business and politics done. But when my husband Guy died in mysterious circumstances there were rumours that the King had poisoned him.

I had eight children by now, and what else was I to do, but run the businesses and land like I had done before. We had a great fortune, with over 19 English counties as well as estates in Scotland and Wales. It needed a strong woman to look after it all.

One year later, I married again. A third time. To William. We live happily and have had two children together.

Life may not be simple, but I am blessed, in my wonderful manor house, in my favourite place of Flamstead. I have riches and wealth. I have servants to do as I bid. We want for nothing. My husband is a good father to all my 10 children. He takes extra care to educate my eldest son Thomas, so when the time comes, he will be wise and good and brave in his role as the next Earl of Warwick. And me, well, I teach my girls so they can be successful women too.