

Curci.

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A year in which the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society is visiting Stogursey seems appropriate for a review of the story of the Norman family which owned the castle in the twelfth century, and caused Stoke to become known as Stoke Curci.

The subject presents considerable difficulties, largely due to the facts that so many of the Curcis were named William or Robert, and that, while the lords of Stoke had property in Normandy, the Norman lords of Courci-sur-Dives had property in England. No previous attempt has been made to bring together and co-ordinate the scattered notices of the family.

THE earliest recorded ancestor of the Curcis was a certain Baldric, or Baudri, a noble Teuton, who settled in Normandy and married a niece of Gilbert, Count of Brionne. By her he had issue six sons and several daughters. They flourished greatly, and acquired wealth and honours. Robert, the third son, got as his portion an estate at Courci-sur-Dives, near Falaise, and took a surname therefrom.¹

Richard de Curci, presumably the son and successor of Robert, may be identified with the lord of Curci, who is stated to have slain many Englishmen at the battle of Hastings. The chronicler in another passage calls him the steward (*le seneschal*) of Curci, thus crediting him with a dignity which was certainly enjoyed by several of his descendants.² Richard de Curci was in Normandy in 1085, acting as a 'judge,' or

1. Ordericus Vitalis (ed. Le Prevost), II, 75.

2. Wace, *Roman de Rou.*

arbitrator, on behalf of the king, and he is also mentioned as one of the king's justices in connexion with Winchester.³ Nevertheless, his share of the conquered country was remarkably small, consisting only of three manors in Oxfordshire, Nuneham (Neuham), Sarsden (Secendene), and Foxcote, with two houses in the town of Oxford.⁴ In 1076, Richard de Curci, by consent of his wife Wandelmode and his sons, Robert and William, gave to the abbot and monks of Marmoutier-lez-Tours some land at Bernières, which had been bequeathed to them by his mother Hebreia, and certain other property.⁵ By a subsequent charter he gave them the church of St. Vigor and further endowments for the spiritual benefit of King William and Queen Maud, of himself and his wife Gandelmode, and of his sons Robert and William.⁶ His benefactions and those of other members of his family seem to have been intended mainly for the support of the monks of Marmoutier living at the dependent cell of Perrières.

Richard de Curci figures as a witness to many charters of William the Conqueror, between the years 1069 and 1085, and to a charter of Robert, Duke of Normandy in 1089.⁷ He was, however, one of the Norman nobles who supported William Rufus, and he was a witness to several of that king's charters.⁸ In 1090, Hugh de Grantmesnil and Richard de Curci, both grey-headed knights, rose in arms against Robert de Bellesme, who, in the following year, laid siege to Richard's castle at Courci.⁹ The date of Richard's death is not known.

Robert de Curci, being twice mentioned before his brother William by their father Richard, was presumably the elder

3. Round's *Calendar of Documents in France*, no. 116; *Domesday Book*, Additamenta, pp. 533, 534.

4. *Domesday Book*.

5. Round, no. 1193.

6. *Ibid.*, no. 1194; *Gallia Christiana*, XIV, 207.

7. Davis's *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, I, nos. 30, 69, 76, 103, 125, 171, 182, 207, 310.

8. Ordericus Vitalis, III, 475; Davis, nos. 334, 349, 433.

9. Ordericus Vitalis, III, 359, 362-367, 377; Freeman's *William Rufus*, I, 273; II, 519-522.

of the two and heir to the principal fief of his family in Normandy. In 1092, during the lifetime of his father, he appears as a witness to a charter of William Rufus, evidently issued in England.¹⁰ Six years later, he lost his right eye at the battle of Saônes, but we hear of him fighting again in 1102.¹¹ He figures as a witness to a charter of Henry I in favour of St. Pierre-sur-Dives, dated at Argentan.¹² Some time before this, he had married Rohais daughter of his father's old associate, Hugh de Grantmesnil, and she bore him five children (*filios*).¹³ In 1105, he confirmed to the monks of Marmoutier his father's gift of the church of St. Vigor at Perrières, adding some further endowments. His little boy, also called Robert, professed to give his consent and was rewarded with a kiss from the Prior.¹⁴

Robert de Curci 'the younger,' who was taken prisoner by the French at Brémule in 1119, may fairly be identified with the son of Robert and Rohais mentioned above.¹⁵ He was presumably the Robert de Curci who figures as a witness to a charter of his first cousin, Robert son of William de Curci, and to a charter of Henry I issued at Perrières in or soon after the year 1121.¹⁶ So again, he was presumably the Robert de Curci who granted the manor of Cottisford to the monks of Bec, perhaps in confirmation of a grant by his maternal aunt, Adeline, wife of Roger de Ivry.¹⁷ He may furthermore be the Robert to be mentioned hereafter as slain in 1157. It is difficult to distinguish between two contemporary Roberts. We must now turn to the uncle of one of them, the father of the other.

10. Davis, no. 328.

11. Ordericus Vitalis, IV, 34, 172; Freeman, II, 222.

12. *Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniæ*, II, xci.

13. Ordericus Vitalis, III, 359, 361.

14. Round, no. 1198. The father is styled Robert son of Robert, instead of Robert son of Richard, an example of dittography.

15. Ordericus Vitalis, IV, 363; V, 204.

16. Round, no. 1195; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 198.

17. Delisle, *Recueil des Actes de Henri II*, 563; *Rotuli Hundredorum*, II, 837.

William de Curci the First was, while a mere boy, mentioned in two charters of his father Richard, the earlier of which dates from the year 1076.¹⁸ He is mentioned again in 1105 as a witness to his brother Robert's grant to the monks of Marmoutier, being then apparently in Normandy.¹⁹ For the present purpose it is more important to observe that, at some unspecified date, he obtained the paternal estate in England. To Faritius, Abbot of Abingdon, and the monks of that place he gave the church of Nuneham and part of the tithe, this offering by him and his wife being made at the altar of St. Mary, in the presence of Serlo, Bishop of Séez, and Neal, Abbot of Burton.²⁰ A little later, he was induced to give up the remainder of the tithe, and to enlarge his benefaction by the addition of a fishery in the Thames.²¹ These gifts were soon confirmed by Henry I, who styles William de Curci his steward (*dapifer meus*), and they were also included in a general confirmation, which cannot be later than the year 1123.²² William de Curci similarly styles himself 'steward of the king of England' in a charter whereby he grants to the priory of Perrières a yearly *muid* of barley from his mill there, for the benefit of the souls of his deceased brothers, Richard and Robert, and the souls of his parents and predecessors, and for his own spiritual welfare.²³ Thus it appears that he had land on both sides of the Channel, though there is nothing to show that he was lord of Courci itself. The law of succession in Normandy was favourable to younger sons. William de Curci figures as a witness to charters of King Henry, Queen Maud and other persons of importance.²⁴

It has been seen above that, at the time of the Domesday

18. Round, nos. 1193, 1194.

19. *Ibid.*, no. 1197.

20. *Chronicon de Abingdon* (ed. Stevenson), II, 52.

21. *Ibid.*, 53.

22. *Ibid.*, 54, 110.

23. Round, no. 1196, ascribed to A.D. 1124-1136.

24. *Chronicon de Abingdon*, II, 56, 65, 66, 75, 96, 107, 113, 116, 117; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, I, 100; IV, 100; V, 191; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 470; Robinson's *Gilbert Crispin*, 143.

survey, Richard de Curci had only a comparatively small estate in Oxfordshire. His son William had more than twenty-five knights' fees, extending into several counties.²⁵ Part at least of this great increase resulted from his marriage to Emma daughter and coheiress of William de Falaise of Stoke, co. Somerset. With her he got a moiety not only of the lands which her father held at the time of the Domesday survey, but also of those which he had acquired since.²⁶ Stoke itself became the head of the Curci barony in England.

William de Falaise and Geva his wife had established at Stoke a priory of Benedictines dependent upon the abbey of Lonlay, near Domfront in Normandy, and the monks were careful to obtain confirmations or enlargements of their estate from successive lords of Stoke. Among the persons in this category were William fitz Humphrey and Emma his wife, who had seemingly married him before her marriage to William de Curci.²⁷ Surviving both husbands, she was living in Wiltshire in 1130.²⁸

William de Curci the First had issue at least two sons, William and Robert.

The second of these may perhaps be identified with Robert de Curci who, in 1130, was pardoned 18s. of Danegeld in Sussex.²⁹ At some unspecified date, he approved and witnessed a charter of his brother William to the monks of Abingdon, to be mentioned later.³⁰ It was with the consent of this brother William that he gave the fief of Denis to the monks of Marmoutier at Perrières.³¹ He is styled Robert son of William de Curci in a grant of two churches in Normandy to the same monks.³²

25. Return by his grandson in *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 224.

26. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LXV, 3, 4, 27.

27. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353.

28. *Pipe Roll, 5 Stephen (rectius 31 Hen. I)*, 22.

29. *Ibid.*, 72.

30. *Chronicon de Abingdon*, II, 54, 55.

31. Round, no. 1197.

32. *Ibid.*, no. 1195.

It has been frequently stated that the Benedictine nunnery at Cannington, some four miles from Stogursey, was founded by Robert de Curci in the early part of the reign of Stephen. This may be true, but there is no satisfactory evidence whatever on the subject. In 1412, it was found by inquisition that a certain nameless '*dominus de Coursy*' had given some endowment to the priory there, and it is not until the reign of Henry VIII that we find the bald assertion that Robert Curci was the first founder.³³ The early history of the establishment is absolutely blank.

One of the difficulties of the Curci pedigree is the uncertainty whether Robert son of William de Curci should be identified with a Robert de Curci of whom there are frequent mentions in the third, fourth and fifth decades of the twelfth century. Robert de Curci is described as a royal steward (*dapifer*) in a charter of Henry I, dated at Marden in Sussex in 1132.³⁴ This description, however, is not appended to his name in several other charters of the same king to which he was a witness.³⁵ He was in attendance upon Stephen in 1137 and 1138, and he witnessed at least two of his charters.³⁶ At a later date, he transferred his allegiance to the Empress Maud, and he appears as a witness to one of her charters dated at Wallingford and to two dated at Oxford. In one of these he is again described as a royal steward (*dapifer*).³⁷ He was also with her at Falaise.³⁸

About the year 1144, Robert de Curci is mentioned as one of the justices of Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, and, in 1151 or 1152, he is mentioned as a 'justice' or 'steward' of his son

33. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XI, 109; Leland's *Collectanea*, I, 78; *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, I, 209.

34. Round, no. 609.

35. *Ibid.*, no. 590; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 178, 296; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 418.

36. Ordericus Vitalis, V, 109; Round's *Commune of London*, 99; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, IV, 257; V, 112; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 338.

37. *Cartulary of St. Frideswyde's, Oxford*, I, 25; Oliver's *Monasticon Dioecesis Exon.*, 195; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 279; IV, 257; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 1016.

38. Delisle's *Recueil des Actes de Henri II*, Introduction, 440.

Henry, Duke of Normandy.³⁹ Undue stress must not be laid upon the fact that no such description is appended to his name in various charters witnessed by him in Normandy between the years 1146 and 1153.⁴⁰ In this last year, he was again in England, witnessing a charter of Henry, Duke of Normandy, dated at Devizes. Here again he is styled '*dapifer*.'⁴¹ He is called simply Robert de Curci in several charters belonging to the earlier years of the reign of Henry II, and issued mostly in Normandy. The latest of them to which a definite date can be assigned was issued at Falaise in 1157, the very year in which an exceedingly noble man named Robert de Curci is stated to have been killed while fighting in Wales.⁴² The absence of any allusion to his death in the Pipe Rolls of the period suggests a doubt whether he was a tenant in chief of the crown of England. Nor is he numbered among the benefactors to the priory of Stoke. On the whole, then, it seems far more probable that he was the lord of Courci than that he was the younger son of a younger son.

The main line of the barons of Stoke was carried on by William de Curci the Second, who, in or before the year 1146, confirmed and enlarged the grants of his father, William, to the monks of Abingdon.⁴³ On his paternal estate he created four knights' fees and a fifth 'of the new feoffment,' after the death of Henry I.⁴⁴ He may perhaps be identified with the man of his name who witnessed a charter of Henry, Duke of Normandy, at Bayeux in 1151.⁴⁵ He seems to have died before the commencement of the consecutive series of the Pipe Rolls in 1155.

The Curci estate in England, which had been considerably

39. *Cartularius Ecclesiae Baiocensis* (ed. Bourrienne), I, 26, 33, 46-48, 51, 53.

40. Delisle's *Recueil des Actes de Henri II*, I, 10, 14, 17, 18, 20, 22, 45.

41. *Ibid.*, 57; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 317; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, IV, 257.

42. Delisle, 138, 221, 305; *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.* (ed. Howlett), I, 108.

43. *Chronicon de Abingdon*, II, 54, 180, 196.

44. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 225.

45. Delisle, 27.

enlarged by the marriage of William de Curci the First to Emma de Falaise, was further enlarged by the marriage of his son, William de Curci the Second, to Amice, or Avice, daughter and coheirss of William le Meschin by Cecily de Rumill, his wife. Amice seems to have married firstly William Paynel, by whom she had an only daughter Alice, married, before 1147, to Richard de Curci, and again, before August 1152, to Robert of Gaunt.⁴⁶ After the death of her second husband, "Amice daughter of Cecily de Rumill" confirmed to the canons of Embsay the gift of her said mother of the mills of Harewood in Yorkshire, for the benefit of her own soul and that of her son William de Curci, who figures as the first witness to her charter.⁴⁷

William de Curci the Second had issue three sons, William, of whom hereafter, John and Jordan.

It is impossible in this place to attempt even the briefest account of John de Curci, the famous conqueror of Ulster. The learned and careful author of his life in the *Dictionary of National Biography* recognised him as a member of the family established in Oxfordshire and Somerset, but was fain to confess, in 1887, that his parentage was a problem as yet "unsolved."⁴⁸ A few words must therefore be said here, to show the grounds upon which a definite place is now assigned to him in the pedigree. John and Jordan de Curci appear as witnesses to a charter of William de Curci (the Third), the king's steward, in favour of St. Andrew's priory at Stoke, but without any statement as to their relationship to him.⁴⁹ But in another charter of William de Curci, which cannot be later than the year 1165, Jordan de Curci is explicitly described as his brother.⁵⁰ This Jordan, who was a benefactor to St. Bees,

46. Stapleton's *Holy Trinity, York*, 36-45; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 196, 878. In a deed belonging to the period between 1147 and 1153, Avice Paynel describes herself as the wife of Walter de Perci. (Dodsworth MS. 95, f. 68d.)

47. Farrer's *Early Yorkshire Charters*, III, 467, 468.

48. Vol. XII, 330.

49. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353.

50. Oliver's *Monasticon Dioecesis Exon.*, 136.

was killed, in 1197, by an Irishman, a member of his own household, and the chronicler who records the event says that he was "brother of John de Curci, the prince of the realm of Ulvester."⁵¹ Inasmuch then as John was brother to Jordan, and Jordan was brother to William, John was also brother to William.

It is interesting to note that when John de Curci founded a religious house known as Black Abbey at Ardes, co. Down, he made it over to the monks of St. Andrew's at Stoke, the priory founded and enriched by his ancestors in Somerset.⁵² When he got into political trouble, his property confiscated by the king included an estate at Middleton, co. Northampton, which had belonged to William le Meschin (his grandfather) in the time of Henry I, and afterwards to William de Curci (his father).⁵³ Heralds may note that he bore eagles on his shield.⁵⁴

William de Curci the Third, son of William de Curci the Second, describes himself as son and heir of Avice de Rumelli in a charter whereby he confirms a gift made by her to the nuns of Arthington. The parson of Harewood, where she lived, and her own domestic chaplain figure among the witnesses.⁵⁵ For the benefit of the souls of his grandfather William de Curci, his father William de Curci, and all his relations and ancestors, William de Curci, 'the king's steward,' granted to the monks of St. Andrew's, Stoke, a mill called Mervin's mill at Northampton, which he had bought from Hugh Gulafre.⁵⁶ There was, however, some litigation between him and the vendor.⁵⁷ By another charter William son of William de Curci, by consent of Gundreda his wife and his

51. *Register of St. Bees*, 521; *Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden*, IV, 25.

52. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VII, 1123; Orpen's *Ireland under the Normans*.

53. Round's *Feudal England*, 218, 222; *Rotulus Cancellarii, 1200-1201*, 89; *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 33; Bridges's *History of Northamptonshire*, I, 227.

54. Giraldus Cambrensis (ed. Dimock), V, 339.

55. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, IV, 520.

56. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353, cf. Dugdale's *Monasticon* V, 186.

57. *Pipe Rolls*, 16 Hen. II, 116; 17 Hen. II, 15.

heirs, confirmed to the monks of Lonlay the gifts of his predecessors (*antecessores*), to wit William de Falaise his ancestor (*attavus*), William fitz Humphrey, William de Curci his grandfather, and William his own father, that is to say a hide of land and the church of St. Andrew at Stoke, and the advowsons of the churches of Wootton and Lilstock.⁵⁸ The seal appended to this document shows the figure of a knight on horseback, executed in a somewhat archaic style.

In 1166, the barony of William de Curci the steward (*dapiferi*), held by his grandfather, his father, and himself, was returned as comprising twenty-five fees and a quarter "of the old feoffment," created before the death of Henry I, and four fees and a quarter "of the new feoffment," created by his father. He also had through his mother (*ex parte matris sue*) seventeen fees of the barony of William le Meschin.⁵⁹ All the foregoing, held of him by military service, were of course irrespective of his demesnes at Stoke, Nuneham, Harewood and elsewhere. It is therefore clear that his paternal inheritance alone was much more extensive than the combined estates of his two great-grandfathers, Richard de Curci and William de Falaise, as recorded in Domesday Book. Although his return does not name the different fees, some of them may be located with tolerable certainty. Part of the holding of Hugh Gulafre was at Sarsden in Oxfordshire, part at Blakesley in Northamptonshire, and part at Bury Blunsdon in Wiltshire.⁶⁰ The fee of Robert Gerbert was at Odstock in Wiltshire.⁶¹ The fee of William de Reyny was at Aisholt in Somerset, not far from Stoke.⁶² That of Richard of London was at Wootton, also in West Somerset.⁶³ That of Robert of Stane was at Silton in Dorset.⁶⁴ Part of the holding of the

58. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353.

59. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 224, 225.

60. Baker's *History of Northamptonshire*, II, 22; *Calendar of Inquisitions*, III, 261; *Book of Fees*, 607, 717, 932, 943; *Feudal Aids*, IV, 15.

61. *Calendar of Inquisitions*, II, 256; *Book of Fees*, 731; *Feudal Aids* IV, 248.

62. *Feudal Aids*, IV, 281.

63. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353.

64. *Feudal Aids*, I, 22, 32; *Book of Fees*, 607.

principal tenant, Simon fitz Piers, seems to have been at Brixworth in Northamptonshire.⁶⁵

In addition to the fees which William de Curci held of the king in chief in 1166, he held of his neighbour William de Mohun of Dunster one fee "of the old feoffment," which may be located at Holford, and one fee "of the new feoffment," which may be located at Honibere in Lilstock and Aley in Over Stowey, half a fee at each.⁶⁶

In 1164, William de Curci attended the council of Clarendon, at which the celebrated Constitutions were issued.⁶⁷ Later in the same year, he was denounced by Archbishop Becket at the council of Northampton for having laid hands on some of his property.⁶⁸ As steward to Henry II he was a very important person in Normandy, and he figures as a witness to many of that king's charters.⁶⁹

From the autumn of 1171 to Easter 1177, two of William de Curci's military tenants, William le Puher and Hugh Butler (*Pincerna*) were in possession of the greater part of his English estate, paying to the Exchequer a fixed yearly rent of 50*l.* 8*s.*⁷⁰ The natural inference would therefore be that he had died leaving an heir under age, or had somehow incurred forfeiture. It is, however, tolerably clear that he was neither dead nor in disgrace. In 1172 or 1173, Philip of Hanton began legal proceedings against him with regard to land at (West) Harnham in Wiltshire.⁷¹ William de Curci the steward (*dapifer*) was a witness to a charter of Henry II, issued at Caen in May 1172.⁷² In the following year, William de Curci was one of

65. Bridges's *History of Northamptonshire*, II, 80, 81; *Book of Fees*, 500, 931, 943; *Feudal Aids*, IV, 2.

66. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 227.

67. Stubbs, *Select Charters*, 138.

68. *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, III, 50.

69. Round, nos. 24, 173, 302, 406, 482, 530, 551, 577, 685, 754, 867, 962, 1218; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 101; VII, 818; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 362; Delisle, I, 202, 420, 421, 429, 443, 458, 479, 521, 523, 533, 535, 544, 556, 557, 564, 569, 571, 584.

70. *Pipe Rolls*.

71. *Pipe Roll*, 18 *Hen. II*, 128.

72. Delisle, I, 584; Round, no. 1218.

the sureties for the king of England to the Count of Maurienne.⁷³ So again, in 1174, he was a witness to the conventions made at Falaise between the king of England and his sons, and between the kings of England and Scotland, being specifically styled the steward (*senescallo*) in one of the documents.⁷⁴ A charter of Henry II, dated at Valognes and witnessed by William de Curci, has been ascribed to the year 1175.⁷⁵ Two chroniclers state that in 1176 there died William de Curci, 'Justice of Normandy,' thus describing his office by a name which it had also borne in 1171.⁷⁶ The historian of Mont St. Michel, dealing with the events of the year 1176, says:—"There died also William de Curci, leaving a little son by the daughter of Richer de Laigle (*de Aquila*)."⁷⁷

We are thus faced by the fact that part of William de Curci's estate was in the hands of persons paying rent to the English Exchequer, at a time when he was exercising high functions in Normandy. By way of explanation it may be suggested that, in the course of his administration, he had got into debt to the Crown and had temporarily made over some of his lands for the satisfaction of the amount owing. Something of the sort must have occurred before, for, in 1168, the sheriff of Dorset and Somerset had accounted at the Exchequer for 4*l.* received from the land of William de Curci.⁷⁸

As stated above, William le Puher and Hugh Butler continued in possession until Easter 1177, accounting yearly for that part of the honour of William de Curci which was in the king's hand (*de parte illa que est in manu regis*). At the final settlement, they paid 25*l.* 4*s.* for half a year according to the terms of their lease, and furthermore 5*l.* for half a year's farm of Harewood, and smaller sums from the land of William

73. Benedictus Abbas (ed. Stubbs), I, 37. See also Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VII, 818, and Eyton's *Itinerary of Henry II*, 170.

74. Rymer's *Fœdera*, I, 30, 31.

75. *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.* (ed. Howlett), IV, 356.

76. Benedictus Abbas (ed. Stubbs), I, 125; *Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden*, II, 100; Delisle, 453.

77. *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.*, IV, 271.

78. *Pipe Roll*, 14 *Hen. II*, 140.

le Neveu, and the land of Robert of London at Wootton.⁷⁹ Thus it appears that Harewood had not been included in the original demise to them. Later evidence shows that it did not form part of the dower of the relict of William de Curci. He may have retained it for his own use in the event of his return to England before the liquidation of his debt to the Crown. Wootton seems to have fallen as an escheat to its overlord. William le Neveu (*Nepos*) occurs as a witness to two Curci charters.⁸⁰

In 1180, the heirs of William de Curci were entered as still owing to the Crown 74*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* of the debt of their father in Normandy, and a further sum of 200*l.* in respect of the Channel Islands. The king had discharged William's debt of 34*l.* 3*s.* 3*d.* to Peter de Bures.⁸¹

A few words must now be said about Gundreda de Warenne, the second wife of William de Curci the Third. Although nothing is certainly known about her parentage, it is clear that she was closely related to the Earls of Surrey. Her uncommon Christian name recalls that of a more illustrious Gundreda, the wife of William de Warenne, the first Earl of Surrey, and she appears to have retained her original surname throughout her life.⁸² While a mere child, she was married to Peter de Valognes, who died in 1160 without issue.⁸³ She was, however, old enough to acquire an interest in some of his property, and, in 1166, she is entered as holding a fee of Robert de Valognes, the brother and heir of her deceased husband.⁸⁴ She married secondly William de Curci, who, in her right, enjoyed the Valognes estate at Dersingham in Norfolk.⁸⁵ As seen above, she is mentioned by name in one of his charters.

Gundreda de Warenne's third husband was Geoffrey Huse, a Wiltshire man, who was appointed sheriff of Oxfordshire in

79. *Pipe Roll*, 23 *Hen. II*, 24, 25, 78.

80. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 353.

81. *Rotuli Scaccarii Normannie*, I, xciv, 44, 50, 66.

82. *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXIII, 338.

83. *Bracton's Note Book*, III, 147; Cotton MS., Claudius D. XIII, f. 153.

84. *Pipe Roll*, 6 *Hen. II*, 11; *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 362.

85. *Red Book*, cclxxi.

1179, presumably by reason of his enjoyment of her dower in the Curci estate at Nuneham.⁸⁶ It was at her request that he gave the church of Little Fakenham in Suffolk to the canons of St. Denys near Southampton. The advowson, belonging to the Valognes family, had formed part of her first *maritagium*.⁸⁷ After the death of Geoffrey Huse, she, in 1199, obtained the wardship of his son of the same name.⁸⁸ On his behalf she, in 1201, paid scutage on a knight's fee in Wiltshire, held of the king in chief.⁸⁹ In 1219, she is described as a widow in the king's gift, holding land at Dersingham (which had belonged to Valognes) and at Nuneham (which had belonged to Curci).⁹⁰ In the following year, she acknowledged the right of the church of Salisbury to the church of Stapelford, which was Huse property.⁹¹ She died at an advanced age in 1224, in possession of the Curci estate at Nuneham and the Valognes estate at Fakenham.⁹²

After the death of William de Curci the Third, the king became, in the ordinary course of things, entitled to the wardship of his infant son, and he granted it out without the exaction of any rent. There were, however, some liabilities.

An official return of the year 1185 states that William son of William de Curci was then twenty years of age and a ward of the king, who had committed him to the charge of Robert le Puher. His land at Wethersfield in Essex, valued at 20*l.* a year, is furthermore stated to have been in the hands of this guardian for fifteen years.⁹³ There is, however, reason to suspect that the age of the young man and the duration of his tutelage are alike overstated. In 1187, Robert le Puher, as guardian of the land and heir of William de Curci the steward,

86. *List of Sheriffs*, 107.

87. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 214.

88. *Cartæ Antiquæ Roll*, C. 19; *Rotulus Cancellarii*, 230; *Rotuli de Oblatis*, 8.

89. *Rotulus Cancellarii*, 232; *Rotuli de Oblatis*, 172.

90. *Book of Fees*, 252, 278.

91. *Sarum Charters and Documents*, 100.

92. *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, 123.

93. *Rotuli de Dominabus* (ed. 1915), 73.

accounted at the Exchequer for 45*l.* 10*s.* for the scutage of the knights of William de Curci and William le Meschin of the old and the new feoffment alike, the heir being in the king's hand.⁹⁵ Tallage was also exacted in the same year from Curci's men at Stoke, Wootton, and Cannington, as if they were tenants on the royal demesne. The sheriff of Wiltshire accounted for the issues of Harnham up to Easter 1189, and Hugh Bardolf for those of Stoke and Wethersfield up to Midsummer.⁹⁶ It was not until the financial year, 1189-1190, that William de Curci was entered in the account for Yorkshire as owing a hundred marks "for having his land," a phrase which may mean that he had obtained livery a little before reaching the full age of twenty-one.⁹⁷

William de Curci appears in November, 1190, as one of the sureties of Richard I to Tancred, king of Sicily.⁹⁸ Among the muniments of the alien priory of Stoke, there is an original charter whereby William de Curci, steward of the king of England, confirms all the gifts of his predecessors to the church of St. Andrew and the monks thereof.⁹⁹ This must probably be assigned to William de Curci the Fourth, as the seal appended to it differs materially from the seal of his father. The equestrian figure is in a better style, and there is a counter-seal showing an eagle, with the legend:—"Sigill. Will. de Curci senescalli regis Anglie." The first witness named is Simon fitz Simon, who is mentioned in the Pipe Roll of 1187, being apparently the son and heir of Simon fitz Piers who held eight fees of Curci in 1166.

By another charter, addressed to Frenchmen and Englishmen alike, William de Curci, steward of the king of England, confirmed to Henry Huse his brother (*fratri meo*) some land at Harnham which Hugh Huse formerly held of the grantor's grandfather and father, by the service of a sixth of a fee. For this confirmation Geoffrey Huse, the father of Henry, gave

95. *Pipe Roll*, 33 *Hen. II*, 161, 164.

96. *Pipe Roll*, 1 *Ric. I*, 8, 179.

97. *Pipe Roll*, 2 *Ric. I*.

98. *Benedictus Abbas*, II, 134.

99. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 253.

William de Curci a great Spanish horse.¹⁰⁰ It has been seen above that he was the third husband of Gundreda de Warenne, and consequently the step-father of William de Curci.

The latest contemporary mention of William de Curci the Fourth is in 1194, when he paid the hundred marks exacted from him "for having his land."¹⁰¹

No mention of the death of William de Curci the Fourth has been found on the Pipe Rolls. He was succeeded by his sister Alice, who, although twice married to men of importance, retained her maiden name of Curci. Her first husband, Henry of Cornhill, died in the financial year ending at Michaelmas, 1193.¹⁰² After his death, Alice de Curci, widow, granted to Richard son of Hugh of Buveneye some land at Cathanger in the manor of Stoke, which Geoffrey of Buveneye his brother afterwards conveyed to the Augustinian canons of Barlinch.¹⁰³

In 1197, Warin fitz Gerold, the king's chamberlain of the exchequer, undertook to pay no less than a thousand marks for the hand of the great heiress described as the relict of Henry of Cornhill.¹⁰⁴ In Hilary term 1200, there was an assize to try a question as to the advowson of the church of Harewood, which the canons and chaplains of St. Mary's, York, claimed under a grant of Avice de Rumilli, confirmed by Archbishop Roger.¹⁰⁵ After an adjournment to the following term, it was found that William de Ste. Mère Eglise, then Bishop of London, had been presented to the church of Harewood by William de Curci, brother of the wife of Warin fitz Gerold. Inasmuch therefore as she was the heir of the person who had last exercised the right of patronage, the advowson was adjudged to her husband.¹⁰⁶

By an undated charter of this period, Warin fitz Gerold,

100. Add. MS. 28870, f. 103.

101. Pipe Roll, 6 Ric. I.

102. Pipe Roll, 5 Ric. I.

103. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 386.

104. Feet of Fines, York, 9 Ric. I; Pipe Roll, 10 Ric. I.

105. Curia Regis Roll, no. 20, m. 9.

106. *Rotuli Curie Regis*, II, 222.

chamberlain of the king of England, confirmed to the monks of Marmoutier dwelling at Perrières the endowments given to them by William son of William de Curci the younger (*junioris*). A very similar charter was issued by his wife, who describes herself as "Aaliz de Curceio" and the grantor of the endowments as her father. Her seal appended to it shows an eagle displayed.¹⁰⁷ There is also a charter whereby "Aaliz de Curceio," the wife of Warin fitz Gerold, confirms to the abbey of St. André de Gouffern certain grants of tithes and land at Villy, saving the rights of her own fief.¹⁰⁸ It is important to observe that Villy is situated within a few miles of Courci-sur-Dives.

Alice de Curci figures as a witness to a charter whereby Warin fitz Gerold, the king's chamberlain, granted tenements at Sparsholt and Baulking in Berkshire to his brother Henry fitz Gerold.¹⁰⁹

Subject to the dower of Gundreda de Warenne, Warin fitz Gerold enjoyed the whole inheritance of the Curcis of Stoke. In 1201, he held forty-two fees of the king in chief and two fees of the Honour of Dunster.¹¹⁰ He was in possession of Harewood in 1207 and 1209.¹¹¹ In September 1210, King John visited him at 'Stokes Curcy' and gave him 20s. for his play (*ad ludum suum*).¹¹² In 1212, he was returned as the owner of Stoke, and the manor of Wootton was described as forming part of his barony of Stoke Curci.¹¹³ So again, Wethersfield was described as belonging to the Honour of Curci.¹¹⁴ In 1211, Warin fitz Gerold accounted to the Exchequer for twenty-five fees and a quarter of the Honour of William de

107. Round, nos. 1199, 1200.

108. D'Anisy's *Chartes et Actes Normands*, I, 426. The description of her seal there given differs from the engraving of it, which in turn differs from the description given in Demay, *Sceaux de la Normandie*, no. 208.

109. Jeayes, *Berkeley Castle Charters*, 44.

110. Pipe Roll, 3 John.

111. *Rotuli de Oblatis*, 389; *Coucher Book of Kirkstall*, 10.

112. *Rotulus de Prestito*, 231; *Rotuli Litt. Patent*, I, Itinerary.

113. *Book of Fees*, 83.

114. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 498.

Curci and sixteen fees and a half of the Barony of William le Meschin.¹¹⁵

Warin fitz Gerold got involved in the political troubles of the reign of John, some years after the loss of his wife's estate in Normandy. Being one of the barons responsible for the issue of the Great Charter in June 1215, his relations with the king became somewhat strained.¹¹⁶ In November of that year, John Marshal, who was apparently in charge of the castle of Stoke Curci, was ordered to hold it for the king, with the assistance of three or four additional men to be supplied by the Prior of Stoke Curci for its defence. The administration of the manor was by the same writ committed to the Prior, who was to pay over the issues to Warin fitz Gerold, and it was explicitly laid down that Warin was to suffer no damage by this interference with his rights.¹¹⁷ A few weeks later, Warin was given the land in Oxfordshire of two of his tenants who were with the king's enemies.¹¹⁸ On the 28th of May 1216, he obtained restitution of land at Down Ampney which had been taken away from him.¹¹⁹ But by the 4th of June, John had become more suspicious of Warin's loyalty. John Marshal was accordingly given discretionary power to destroy the castle of Stoke Curci, or to make it quite secure against hostile attack.¹²⁰ On the 12th of July, the Prior and Hervey Belet were specifically ordered to cause it to be destroyed and entirely overthrown without delay.¹²¹ The town of Stoke Curci and the manors of Stoke Curci and Wootton, "late of Warin fitz Gerold," were shortly after committed to William Briwere, and some of his land in Staffordshire was similarly committed to Thomas of Erdington.¹²²

115. Pipe Roll, 13 John.

116. Rymer's *Fœdera*, I, 131.

117. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 239.

118. *Ibid.*, 242.

119. *Ibid.*, 272.

120. *Rotuli Litt. Patent.*, I, 186.

121. *Ibid.*, 190.

122. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 277, 278, 281.

The king's wrath against Warin fitz Gerold did not extend to his wife. In September 1216, Alice de Curci obtained a royal grant of the manor of Down Ampney for her maintenance, with the chattels therein that had belonged to her husband.¹²³

One of the first acts of the government of Henry III was to commit the manor of Stoke Curci to Falkes de Breauté, who had just married the only child of Warin fitz Gerold and Alice de Curci.¹²⁴ They themselves in their distress (*necessitate*) were fain to pledge their manor of Wootton to him for 200 marks paid down and a yearly rent of 20s.¹²⁵ In January 1217, the sheriffs of several counties were informed that Warin fitz Gerold had returned to his allegiance, and were directed to reinstate him in possession of various lands of which he had been deprived.¹²⁶ He obtained specific restitution of Down Ampney and other lands in Wiltshire and Berkshire in October, and of certain rents in Lincolnshire in January 1218.¹²⁷ He died in the course of the next four months, evidently predeceased by his wife, the last of the Curcis of Stoke.¹²⁸ There is an incidental notice of a bequest by her to the nuns of Clerkenwell of 50s. a year out of the manor of Nuneham.¹²⁹

Alice de Curci left issue two daughters, Joan and Margaret, one by each of her husbands. The wardship of the elder, Joan daughter of Henry of Cornhill was, in 1196, sold by the Crown to Hugh de Neville, and in due course she married him.¹³⁰ There is a singular entry on one of the rolls of Chancery of

123. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 285. An explanation offered by Mr. Hamilton Hall is more ingenious than convincing. (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LVIII, ii, 24-28).

124. *Ibid.*, 293.

125. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, *Report on Rutland MSS.*, IV, 55, 56.

126. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 295.

127. *Ibid.*, 330, 350.

128. *Ibid.*, 363; *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, ii.

129. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, IV, 83; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, lxxviii.

130. *Rotuli de Oblatis*, 295; Pipe Rolls, 6 Ric. I, Surrey; 1 John, London and Middlesex; *Rotuli Curie Regis*, I, 380; *Rotuli Chartarum*, 54; *Placitorum Abbreviatio*, 69; *Book of Fees*, 68.

1205, showing that at that time she was not allowed to cohabit with him.¹³¹

Margaret the only child of Alice de Curci by Warin fitz Gerold married firstly Baldwin de Reviers, son and heir apparent of William, Earl of Devon. He died on the 1st of September 1216, aged about sixteen.¹³² Although her own father was still living, the young widow fell into the hands of the king, who, within seven weeks, gave or sold her to Falkes de Breauté, a foreigner whom a very temperate historian styles "a ferocious and sanguinary ruffian."¹³³

Falkes soon contrived to obtain not only the wardship of his stepson, Baldwin de Reviers, but also an extraordinary dower for the heir's mother, his own wife, to wit the castle and honour of Plympton and all the lands of the Earl of Devon in the county from which he took his title.¹³⁴ In May 1218, he did homage to the king for all the lands of Warin fitz Gerold, arranging to pay as relief the 100*l.* chargeable on succession to a barony.¹³⁵ In November of the same year, he got Down Ampney and Stratton in Wiltshire.¹³⁶

Hugh de Neville and Joan his wife, the elder daughter of Alice de Curci, with no claim upon the paternal estate of Warin fitz Gerold, may reasonably have expected to get a moiety of Alice's inheritance. In 1220 therefore they commenced legal proceedings against Falkes de Breauté and Margaret his wife for lands at Stoke, Wootton, Rodway and Middleton. The suit was adjourned more than once, because the principal parties to it were in the king's service, and it does not appear that the plaintiffs met with any success.¹³⁷

131. *Rotuli de Oblatis*, 275.

132. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 381; *Complete Peerage* (1916), IV, 316.

133. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, V, 323; *Memoriale Walteri de Coventria*, II, 233; Lingard's *History of England*. Fuller particulars of Falkes's career are given in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (vol. VI), and in Miss Norgate's *Minority of Henry III.*

134. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 378; *Patent Rolls, 1216-1225*, 144, 145.

135. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 363; *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, 11.

136. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 480, 481.

137. *Curia Regis Rolls*, no. 72, m. 1; no. 74, m. 23.

One of the tenants at Stoke Curci, Richard the Crossbowman (*balistarius*) fared no better, for, although he got judgment with damages against Falkes, he could not retain possession of his tenement on account of the power (*propter vim*) of the lord.¹³⁸

In 1224, Falkes de Breauté broke out into rebellion. The government therefore, on the 19th of July, issued a stringent order to the constable and all others in the castle of Stoke Curci for its immediate delivery to the sheriff of Somerset, threatening them, in case of disobedience, with personal punishment and forfeiture.¹³⁹ Henry de Vernay, however, who had been left in charge by Falkes, had been forbidden by him to give it up to anybody except the king in person or Falkes himself.¹⁴⁰ A siege accordingly ensued, but it did not lead to any result before the surrender of Bedford Castle and the collapse of the rebellion.¹⁴¹ On the 19th of August, Falkes sent one of his adherents to the west of England to arrange for the delivery of the castles of Plympton and Stoke Curci to persons acting for the king.¹⁴² The actual transfer, however, can hardly have been made before Hugh de Neville came forward with a statement of his wife's claim. On the 27th of August, he arranged to pay 100 marks for a moiety of the manor of Stoke Curci and of the services pertaining thereto. The sheriff, being ordered to put him in immediate possession, had to go up to London for further instructions.¹⁴³

Margaret de Reviens, the younger coheirress of the Curci estate, was of course vitally affected by the stirring events of 1224. After being besieged for a time with her husband in Bedford Castle, she was allowed to leave with her infant son Thomas.¹⁴⁴ Provision was also made for her due maintenance

138. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 644.

139. *Patent Rolls, 1216-1225*, 456.

140. *Ibid.*, 490.

141. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 617, 642.

142. *Patent Rolls, 1216-1225*, 462, 463, 490; *1225-1232*, 210; *Close Rolls, 1227-1231*, 228.

143. *Fine Roll*, 8 Hen. III, m. 3; *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 464; II, 16.

144. *Annales Monastici*, III, 88; *Flores Historiarum*, II, 181.

under the direction of William, Earl of Warenne.¹⁴⁵ Falkes being banished, she applied for a divorce from him on the ground that she had never consented to marry him.¹⁴⁶

About this time, died Gundreda de Warenne, thé aged relict of the penultimate William de Curci. The land which she held in dower at Nuneham is described, in December 1224, as divisible between Joan the wife of Hugh de Neville and Margaret the wife of Falkes de Breauté.¹⁴⁷ A moiety of it was in the first instance allotted to the Nevilles, but the Crown claimed the other moiety as guardian of the younger lady, already the mother of two sons.¹⁴⁸ In May 1225, the Nevilles and Margaret de Reviers set up a claim to land at Fakenham of which Gundreda de Warenne had died seised, apparently believing that it was part of the Curci inheritance.¹⁴⁹ Some two months later, Hugh de Neville obtained a writ authorising him to levy scutage at the rate of two marks on the fees and on the military tenants of the Honour of Stoke Curci, he having served in the army of Bedford in the previous year.¹⁵⁰ In September, the king gave him six oaks out of the forest of Dean, for the repair of his buildings (*domos*) at Stoke Curci, which had doubtless suffered in the siege.¹⁵¹

In December 1225, about a year after the death of Gundreda de Warenne, the king ordered that the manors of Stoke Curci and Nuneham, with all services, rents and other appurtenances, should respectively be divided into equal portions, of which one should be delivered to Hugh de Neville and Joan his wife, and the other to Margaret de Reviers.¹⁵² Such an arrangement, although theoretically equitable, was obviously

145. *Annales Monastici*, II, 300; *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 617.

146. Roger of Wendover (ed. Howlett), II, 281; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, VIII, 87, 88; *Annales Monastici*, III, 89; *Royal and Historical Letters* (ed. Shirley), I, 547; Walter of Coventry, II, 259-274.

147. *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, 123.

148. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, II, 10.

149. *Ibid.*, 37.

150. *Ibid.*, 45.

151. *Ibid.*, 62.

152. *Ibid.*, 89.

inconvenient to both parties and liable to lead to friction. They therefore came to an agreement whereby the Nevilles got Stoke Curci, Harnham, and Wethersfield, while Margaret de Reviers got Nuneham and Harewood. In 1228, Hugh de Neville obtained a charter of free warren for himself and his heirs at Stoke Curci.¹⁵³

The history of the Curci inheritance after its partition cannot be given here, except in the briefest manner.

Margaret de Reviers, the owner of one moiety, died in 1252, and was succeeded by her grandson, Baldwin, Earl of Devon, who survived her only ten years and left no issue. His sister and heiress, Isabel, Countess of Aumale, died without surviving issue in 1293, but it was not until 1310 that such lands as she had not surrendered to the Crown got divided between the two claimants, Robert de l'Isle, descended from the brother of Warin fitz Gerold, and Hugh de Courtenay, descended from the sister of the first husband of Margaret de Reviers. Harewood went to the former, Nuneham to the latter.¹⁵⁴ Neither of them was, however, of the house or lineage of Curci.

Turning now to the other moiety, it may be noted that, in 1234, the king took the homage of John de Neville for the land of his father Hugh and his mother Joan.¹⁵⁵ This John de Neville died at Wethersfield in 1246, leaving a son and heir, Hugh, under age. John de Courtenay thereupon undertook to pay 2500 marks for the wardship and marriage of the boy, with the enjoyment of his castle of Stoke Curci.¹⁵⁶ In connexion with various scutages of the reign of Henry III, the Neville of the day was assessed on twelve fees and a quarter and a sixth of Curci and eight fees and a quarter of Meschin.¹⁵⁷ By espousing the popular side in the Barons' War, Hugh de

153. *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, I, 74.

154. *Complete Peerage*, IV, 318, 321-323; *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1307-1313*, 273, 274.

155. *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, 260; *Close Rolls, 1231-1234*, 488, 489.

156. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, IV, 563; *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, I, 461; II, 228, 408; *Close Rolls, 1242-1247*, 436.

157. *Pipe Rolls, passim*.

Neville got into serious trouble with the king, who granted all his lands to Robert Walerand. A compromise was, however, effected at Christmas 1266, whereby Neville recovered the manors of Wakering and Wethersfield, the reversion of his mother's dower and of the fees that went with it, and the homages and services of Philip Basset, William de Reyny, and the heirs of William of Eston. The foregoing was reckoned as two-thirds of his former estate. On the other hand, he absolutely surrendered the castle and manor of Stoke Curci, the manor of Rodway with the hundred, the manor of Harnham, and the homages and services of certain specified tenants.¹⁵⁸ Philip Basset mentioned above was lord of Wootton, and William de Reyny was lord of Aisholt and Aley in Over Stowey.¹⁵⁹ The heirs of William of Eston held three fees at Chilton, Stockland, and Clayhill under Neville, who in turn held under Malet.¹⁶⁰

Hugh de Neville was succeeded in 1269 by his brother John.¹⁶¹

The inquisitions taken in 1281 after the death of John de Neville do not credit him with any demesnes in Somerset, and credit him with only five and a half fees. He had, however, some parts of the Curci inheritance elsewhere.¹⁶² His son Hugh was succeeded in 1335 by a son John, who died without issue in 1358, shortly after selling the reversion of his estates.¹⁶³

It remains to notice a few Curcis to whom no definite places in the pedigree have so far been assigned.

A certain Simon de Curci occurs as a witness in the year 1128, and again soon afterwards.¹⁶⁴

158. *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1258-1266*, 536, 577, 609, 654, 668; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, lxii-lxvi; *Archæologia*, LVI, 359-361.

159. *Feudal Aids*, IV, 296; Assize Roll, no. 759, m. 2.

160. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 227; Feet of Fines, Somerset, 9 John; *Feudal Aids*, IV, 254.

161. *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium*, II, 498.

162. *Calendar of Inquisitions*, II, 254.

163. Inq. post mortem, 32 Edw. III, no. 30; Feet of Fines, Divers. Counties, 32 Edw. III.

164. Round, nos. 124, 1410.

In the third and fourth decades of the twelfth century, there are several mentions of a Richard de Curci, whose interests seem to have lain mostly in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.¹⁶⁵ He was one of the principal Englishmen who fought at the Battle of the Standard in 1138.¹⁶⁶ He married Alice daughter and heiress of William Paynel.¹⁶⁷ At some unspecified date between 1139 and 1147, he and his wife, as mesne lords of Sturton in Lincolnshire, confirmed a grant of sixty acres of land there to the monks of Kirkstead.¹⁶⁸ They do not appear to have left issue.

In August 1152, Alice Paynel, the relict of Richard de Curci, was the wife of Robert of Gaunt, and it was presumably in her right that he was responsible for four and a half fees of the fee of Matthew de Curcy.¹⁶⁹ This Matthew, oftener described under the French form of 'Maci,' was a witness to the charter of Richard de Curci and Alice his wife mentioned above, and it appears likely that he was Richard's brother or nephew. In 1166, he held a fee and a half at some unspecified place under William Paynel.¹⁷⁰ To the Knights Templars he gave some land at Tealby (Taflesbi) in Lincolnshire, and, with Maud de Royl, his wife, he gave some land at Newton in Yorkshire to the canons of Kirkham.¹⁷¹

A parson named Robert de Curci was presented to the church of Langton in Yorkshire between the years 1237 and 1241.¹⁷²

Part of Tealby in Lincolnshire was held by Richard de Curci in 1242, and by William de Curci in 1303, of the suc-

165. Round, no. 804; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 954.

166. *Chronicles of Stephen, etc.*, III, 159.

167. *Placitorum Abbreviatio*, 67; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, III, 175; Stapleton's *Holy Trinity, York*, 37.

168. Cotton MS. *Vespasian E. XVIII*, f. 159.

169. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VI, 196; Stapleton, 39-48; *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 483.

170. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 430.

171. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, VII, 828; *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, IV, 369.

172. *Placitorum Abbreviatio*, 144.

cessors of William Paynel, of whom Matthew de Curci held in 1166.¹⁷³

In the later part of the twelfth century, there are various notices of the elder branch of the Curci family, which owned property in England and Normandy alike. Henry II is stated to have confirmed a charter whereby a certain Robert de Curci divided the whole of Farlington in Hampshire between two brothers, William fitz Walter and Roger fitz Walter. Nevertheless, there is also a statement that, after this, William de Curci, his brother, presented a parson to the church of that place.¹⁷⁴ Nothing is certainly known with regard to the parentage of these two Curcis. They may have been sons of the Robert de Curci who was killed in Wales in 1157. Anyhow, there are fair grounds for supposing them to have been grandsons and eventual heirs of the Robert de Curci who married Rohais de Grantmesnil in the previous century. The second of them may safely be identified with a William de Curci who is mentioned, in 1167, in connexion with Islip in Oxfordshire, which, at the time of the Domesday survey, had belonged to Adeline daughter of Hugh de Grantmesnil and wife of Roger de Ivry.¹⁷⁵ He was probably the William de Curci who, about the year 1172, had in Normandy five knights of the Honour of Curci, three knights of the Honour of Ecajeul, and fifty knights and a quarter "at his service."¹⁷⁶ There are at Courci-sur-Dives the remains of a castle of the twelfth century.

In 1182, William de Curci obtained writs of pardon for fines imposed on his men at Chalton and elsewhere in Hampshire. His land at Catherington seems, however, to have been in the king's hand at that time.¹⁷⁷ In Normandy, William de Curci and Robert his son gave the church of

173. *Book of Fees*, 1017; *Feudal Aids*, III, 153.

174. *Curia Regis Roll*, no. 24, m. 6d.

175. *Pipe Roll*, 13 *Hen. II*, 14; *Domesday Book*, 160; *Delisle*, 563.

176. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 627.

177. *Pipe Roll*, 28 *Hen. II*, 140-142.

Savigny to the canons of St. Stephen's, Plessis Grimould.¹⁷⁸ The former seems to have died about Michaelmas 1186, and, a year later, William le Rus (*Ruffus*) accounted at the Exchequer for the farm of his lands at Warblington, Milton, Chalton, Clanfield, Catherington and Farlington in Hampshire, Bilsington in Kent, and Islip in Oxfordshire. His men at some of these places were tallaged as tenants on royal manors, and some old debts from them for default were charged against "the keeper of the Honour of William de Curci."¹⁷⁹ In 1188, William le Rus accounted for 8*l.* 4*s.* 4*d.* for the farm of "five manors," Bilsington, Warblington, Milton in Portsea, Islip and Farlington, and for 27*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* from the manor of Chalton with its appurtenances, presumably Clanfield and Catherington.¹⁸⁰ He accounted again for the five manors up to Midsummer 1189, before the new king restored (*redderet*) the land of William de Curci to Robert de Curci.¹⁸¹ Chalton with its members seems to have been held of the Honour of Arundel, anyhow not directly of the Crown.¹⁸²

A son of William de Curci is mentioned, in 1180, as holding four librates of land at Géfosse in Normandy, which he may have obtained in marriage.¹⁸³ Under the name of Robert de Curci, he is mentioned in the English Pipe Roll of 1184, and also in a fragmentary roll of the Norman Exchequer which is attributed to that year.¹⁸⁴ So the king's occupation of his lands for nearly three years can hardly have been due to his being under age. It may, however, be remarked that no record has been found of any relief paid by him on succession to lands in England. As late as 1195, Hamon Butler (*Pincerna*) and Otes fitz Viel owed 97*l.* 18*s.* 1*d.* to the Norman Exchequer of the residue of the issues of the lands of Curci.^{184a}

178. Round, no. 553.

179. *Pipe Roll*, 33 *Hen. II*, 24, 25, 198, 201.

180. *Pipe Rolls*.

181. *Pipe Roll*, 1 *Ric. I*, 7. The date on the title-page is incorrect.

182. *Pipe Roll*, 2 *Ric. I*.

183. *Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniæ*, I, 7.

184. *Pipe Roll*, 32 *Hen. II*, 168; *Memoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, XIV, 109, 112.

184a. *Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniæ*, I, 267.

In 1198, there was an assize to try whether William de Curci, father of Robert, had died seised of two hundred acres of land at Snaresgate, which the Abbot of Robertsbridge claimed as having been given to his church in frank almain by Alice, Countess of Eu.¹⁸⁵ An order from Robert de Curci to his bailiff at Bilsington with regard to the administration of his estate at Snaresgate is undated, but special attention should be given to the fact that he despatched it from Courci, the Norman home of his ancestors.¹⁸⁶ In a suit of the year 1200 concerning the advowson of the church of Farlington, Robert de Curci is described as the son of William and the nephew of Robert, a former owner.¹⁸⁷

In 1198, Robert de Curci accounted at the Norman Exchequer for 45*l.* of the residue of the *vicomté* of the Oximin, and he is again mentioned as holding four librates of land at Géfosse.¹⁸⁸ At some unspecified date, he, again described as the son of William de Curci, gave the tithes of his fief at Feugères to the abbey of Lessay.¹⁸⁹ We may fairly suppose that his stake in Normandy was greater than his stake in England, for in the quarrel between King John and Philip Auguste, he espoused the cause of the latter. Some of his lands in England were accordingly committed to the custody of Geoffrey fitz Piers in 1202.¹⁹⁰ Bilsington was, in 1204, granted to Henry of Sandwich, in compensation for land which he had forfeited in Normandy. It afterwards changed hands more than once.¹⁹¹ Part of Warblington, with Milton, went to Herbert fitz Matthew, and part, with Emsworth, to William Aguillon.¹⁹² As a subject of the French King, Robert

185. *Rotuli Curie Regis*, I, 142.

186. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 668.

187. *Curia Regis Roll*, no. 24, m. 6*d.*

188. *Rotuli Scaccarii Normannie*, I, 374, 404, 405.

189. Delisle's *Recueil*, Introduction, 440.

190. *Rotuli Litt. Patent.*, I, 24.

191. *Rotuli Litt. Claus.*, I, 9, 94, 302; *Rotuli Normannie*, 140; *Book of Fees*, 1345.

192. *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, I, 133; *Book of Fees*, 258, 708; *Liber de Antiquis Legibus*, xxxix, xl.

de Curci figures in various transactions of 1205 and subsequent years.¹⁹³

William de Curci who occurs as a witness to a charter of King John, dated at Orival in July 1200, may be identified with the William who witnessed a writ of his brother Robert issued from Courci, and a grant by him to the monks of Perrières.¹⁹⁴ Having apparently been enfeoffed of the manor of Islip, he, in 1203, received the homage of a man who had acquired a carucate of land there.¹⁹⁵ But, like his brother, he was primarily a Norman. So it was that the Abbot and convent of Westminster recovered the manor of Islip which had been taken from them by William the Conqueror.¹⁹⁶

No attempt can here be made to trace the subsequent history of the lords of Courci, but we may note that, in 1244, Richard de Curci confirmed to the monks of Marmoutier living at Perrières all the gifts made to them by his ancestors (*avis*).¹⁹⁷ A deed executed between the years 1241 and 1260 is corroborated by a large seal showing a shield charged with six billets and a legend:—"S. Ricardi de Corceio, militis."¹⁹⁸ As seen above, three members of the family of Curci of Stoke bore eagles on their shields or seals.

A certain William de Curci occurs as Prior of Modbury in Devonshire in 1269, and a Robert de Curci was Prior there from 1351 to 1362.¹⁹⁹ There is, however, no reason to suppose that either of them were members of the noble house of Curci. It was usual for monks to take a surname from the place of their birth, and Modbury was a very small house, dependent upon the abbey of St. Pierre-sur-Dives, close to Courci.

193. Delisle, *Cartulaire Normand*, nos. 124, 230, 326, 1140; cf. D'Anisy, II, 313.

194. Round, nos. 614, 1197; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, V, 668.

195. *Curia Regis Roll*, no. 31, m. 6d.

196. *Red Book of the Exchequer*, 799; *Book of Fees*, 614.

197. *Gallia Christiana*, XIV, 228.

198. D'Anisy, *Chartes et Actes Normands*, I, 22, 23; Demay, *Sceaux de la Normandie*, no. 210.

199. *Hist. MSS. Comm.*, Report IX, App. i, 351; Oliver's *Monasticon Diocesis Exon.*, 298.