

The Early Owners of Limington.

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ACCORDING to Domesday Book, the great Norman baron, Roger de Curcelle, was the tenant in chief of the extensive manor of Limington, which his father had acquired by exchange with the Abbey of Glastonbury; but there was another manor in the parish, called Dreicot—now Draycot—of which Robert, Earl of Cornwall and Count of Mortain, was the chief lord, William de Curcelle being his tenant,¹ and, according to Mr. Eyton,² he was the father of Roger.

There is in the *Liber Albus* of the Dean and Chapter of Wells a mandatory letter of William the Conqueror, addressed to this William de Curcelle, requiring him, by proclamation at Montacute and Bristol, to expedite the collection of the Peter Pence tax. All defaulters were to answer for their non-payment before Giso the Bishop, and himself; and as the bishop at that day sat with the sheriff in the County Court, we may conjecture that William de Curcelle was the sheriff, and probably the first after the Norman Conquest.³ At Montacute, it should be noticed, was the castle of the Earl, William de Curcelle's feudal lord. We do not again meet

(1). See *Exon Domesday*, p. 247. (2). *Somerset Domesday*, vol. i, p. 60.

(3). This very ancient document was first printed in Hicke's *Institutiones Grammaticæ, etc.*, p. 164; but very recently it has been published in a more accessible form, in the volume of the Historical Commission, called *Index to the Wells Cathedral MSS.*, but which, in fact, is a full calendar and abstract of the archives of the Dean and Chapter. It is a most valuable addition to the materials for elucidating the early history of the diocese and the county, and great credit is due to the compiler for the very accurate manner in which he has executed the laborious task confided to him.

with Draycot as a separate manor during the period of which we are treating, and no doubt, on the death of William de Curcelle, it descended to Roger, his son, and became part of Limington.

The superior lordship of the manor of Limington, and the advowson of the church, remained part of the De Curcelle barony, and descended, with many other manors belonging to that barony, to the families of—(1) Malet, (2) Vivonia or De Fortibus, by the marriage of Hugh de Vivonia with Mabel, daughter and co-heir of William Malet (whose forfeiture was condoned), (3) to the co-heiresses of William de Fortibus, and (4) to Beauchamp of Hatch, by the marriage of John de Beauchamp with Cecilia, one of such co-heiresses. But the land constituting the territorial manor was divided into three parts, and we will trace their descent separately.

One-third was at a very early period held by the family of Fitz Bernard, and was we assume, the knight's fee held by Robert Fitz Bernard, of William Malet, 12th Henry II.¹ He held also half a knight's fee in Devonshire, of the King's son,² and was sheriff of that county 15th Henry II. He was probably the father of Ralph Fitz Bernard, who by charter without date gave to the church of St. Andrew Wells, and to Reginald the bishop (who occupied the see from 1174 to 1191), the church of Holcombe, Devon—now called Holecombe Burnell (a corruption of Bernard), a manor which had descended to him from the Domesday tenant, Tetbald Fitz Bernard. With this endowment the prebend of Holcombe was founded, and it survives (in name, at least) to the present time.³ We gather from a charter of Letitia, widow of this Ralph,⁴ that he died soon after his gift of Holcombe, and Limington descended to his son Richard, who, in the year 1206, by the name of Richard Fitz Ralph Fitz Bernard, pledges to the Chapter of Wells "his Lands and Revenues

(1). *Liber Nig.*, p. 93.

(2). *Ib.* p. 120.

(3). *Wells Index*, p. 11.

(4). *Ib.*

at Limington," as an indemnity against certain claims of his brother William, in respect of the manor of West Hatch, which their father, Ralph, held of the Chapter for his life.¹ Notwithstanding this, we find, 19th Hen. III, that Ralph Fitz Bernard and Hugh de Vivonia had licence to agree on an assize respecting the last presentation to the church of Limington, John de Balun and Auda, his wife (daughter of Fulk Paynel, Lord of Huntspill), and Gundreda de Tudeham, or Tudeham, being amersed because they withdrew (*retraxerunt se*).² This last Ralph could not have been the father of Richard and William, but he may have been their brother, and it yet remains to be cleared up by what title he claimed the advowson instead of Richard.

It is worthy of observation that there was a Ralph Fitz Bernard, who, according to *Testa de Nevill*,³ married in the reign of King John, Alianor, daughter and heiress of Wandregesil de Curcelle, a ward in the King's gift, inheriting from her father one-third part of a knight's fee, at Frome Selwood. Some connection between this Wandregesil and the Limington Lords may be presumed, as, 2nd John, there was litigation between him, or at any rate one of the same name, and Geoffry de St. Martin (the owner, as we shall see, of one-third of Limington), respecting the manor of Fisherton Delamere, Wilts, of which Roger de Curcelle was the Domesday tenant.⁴ If Collinson⁵ is correct in saying, contrary to Mr. Eyton, that the father of Roger, the Domesday tenant of Limington, was Wandril or Wandregesil de Leon, the father of this Alianor may have been his descendant, but her husband could not have been son of the Limington Ralph, if, according to Collinson the Frome Ralph left issue by his wife Alianor only one daughter, Joan (afterwards wife of William Braunche), to

(1). *Wells Index*, p. 11.

(2). *Rot. Fin. Extr.*, vol. i. p. 283.

(3). Pages 161, 167.

(4). *Hutchins's History of Dorset*, 3rd edition, vol. iv. p. 470.

(5). *History of Somerset*, vol. ii. p. 187.

whom, as his heir, Frome descended. It is possible that Joan was heir of her mother, and that Richard, William, and Ralph were his sons by a second wife, Letitia, already mentioned.

Richard Fitz Bernard died seized of this part of Limington early in the reign of Edwd. I, when it descended to John, his son (?) and by Indentures of Fine, 9th Edwd. I, between William de Wylington, plaintiff, and Joan Fitz Bernard, defendant, one messuage, one carucate of land, and 100s. rent in Limington, were conveyed to the said William, in fee, subject as to one-third to the estate in dower of Joan, widow of Richard Fitz Bernard.¹ The Wylingtons were important landowners, not only in Somersetshire, but in Cornwall and Gloucestershire. The above William is assessed (about 12th Edwd. I) in Kirby's *Quest*, for one-third part of the ville of Limington; but he died in the same reign, as, 31st Edwd. I, Gregory de Wylington is recorded to hold "the manor of Limington" of Cecilia de Beauchamp, by the service of half a knight's fee. Gregory died without issue, before 6th Edwd. II, leaving his wife Joan surviving, and Gunnora, wife of Sir Richard de Gyverney, Kt., his niece, who inherited her uncle's part of this manor.² There seems to have been some litigation respecting the large estates of Gregory de Wylington, the nature of which is not very apparent, but the result was that his heiress, Gunnora, made two settlements of them, to the following effect. By Indentures of Fine, 6th Edwd. II, between Richard Gyverney and Gunnora his wife plaintiffs, and John Gyverney defendant, one portion, consisting of one messuage, 40s. rent, and the third part of one carucate of land in Limington, Yewelchestre, Wells, Pyure [Pury], Benhangre [Binegar], Eversey, Eston, and Bridgwater, were settled on the said Richard and Gunnora for their lives; remainder to Thomas,

(1). Somerset Fines, 9th Edwd. I, No. 62.

(2). Ass. Rolls Div. Cos. 6th Edward II, n. 2, 5 a.

son of Godfrey de Sowe, in tail; remainder to the right heirs of the said Gunnora; and by another fine of even date between the same parties, one messuage, two carucates of land, twenty-seven acres of pasture, and £6 rent, in the same places, were settled on the said Richard and Gunnora, and the heirs of their bodies; remainder to William, son of John Warre, in tail; remainder to the right heirs of the said Gunnora. To both these fines, John (son of John la Warre) and Henry de Woolavington put in their claims.¹

Little is known of the De Gyverneys. They sprang originally, no doubt, from some place of that name in Normandy—probably Gyverny, near Vernon, the church of which was endowed in 1052 with “La Couture du Prè de Giverny;”² but we have only fragmentary notices of them in England, as possessing lands in the marsh district of Somersetshire.

Amongst the Wells Cathedral charters are two relating to this family. One is a charter dated the third year after the translation of St. Thomas,—that is, A.D. 1175,—whereby Gilbert Gule and Christina his wife, gave to the church of Wells all the land which her father, Thomas de Bolonia, held in North Curry;³ and the other is a grant without date (No. 73), whereby Thomas de Gyverney, son and heir of Roger de Gyverney the second, grants to Edward the Dean and Chapter of Wells land in the manor of North Curry, which belonged to Christina, daughter of Thomas de Bolonia, his great grandfather. The pointed oval seal appended to this grant bears an eight-leaved rosetta between two trefoils, with the legend “s. THOME DE GIVERNI.” The Dean was Edward de la Knoll, who held that dignity from 1256 to 1284. No. 74 is a duplicate of No. 73, and No. 75 the like, but with different witnesses—one being Sir Philip de Cantelo, Kt.⁴ We cannot trace the

(1). *Somerset Fines*, 6th Edwd. II, Nos. 127, 128; see also, *Fines Div. Cos.*, 6th Edwd. II, Nos. 80, 81.

(2). Dawson Turner's *Tour in Normandy*, vol. ii.

(3). *Liber Albus*, vol. i. p. 12.

(4). See *Index*, pp. 6, 156, 297.

exact connection between the parties to these deeds and Sir Richard de Gyverney. He was the son of Gilbert Gyverney and Mabel, his wife, and was three times married, which we learn from the record in the Bishop's Register at Wells, of his foundation in the year 1329 (2nd Edwd. III) of a chantry in the church of Limington. The chaplain was enjoined to pray for the souls of him, the said Richard, and Maud, his wife; and of Gilbert Gyverney and Mabel Gyverney, father and mother of the said Richard; and of Lord Philip de Columbers and Eleanor, his wife; and of Gunnora, formerly wife of the said Sir Richard; and of Margaret, also formerly his wife; and of Henry Power and Maud, his wife.¹

The chantry chapel forming the north transept, with its unique, high-pitched stone roof, is a very interesting feature in the church. In it are the monuments which were described at our visit there, but the only historical information we have respecting them is Leland's account, in the reign of Henry VIII. He says in his *Itinerary*,² "From Ivelcestre to Limington Village about one mile; one Iuuerney was owner of this Towne and Lordship, he lyith richely buried yn a fair Chapelle on the North side of the Paroche Church of Limington. Ther lyith at the feete of Iuuerney a woman vaylid in a low Tumbe with an Image of Stone. Ther lyith also in the South Arch of the same Chapelle a Gintleman and his Wife, I think also of the Iuuerneys. There is a Cantuarie Prest of the Chapelle. Iuuerney dwellid as sum think in the farme at the North Est side of the Chirch. Iuuerney's Landes cam by Heires Generale to the Bonevilles of Devonshire. There was but one of the Bonevilles that was a Baron, and that was Syr Wyllyam Boneville, whose sonne married the Heire General of the Lord Harington; and Cecil, his Heire General, was married to Thomas the Lord Marquise of Dorset." Leland does not notice the arms on the shield of

(1). Collinson's *Somerset*, vol. iii. p. 218.

(2). Vol. ii. p. 91.

Sir Richard Gyverney's effigy. They are a bend between six escallops—which were borne also by the Foljambes of the north.

The effigy of a "woman vaylid," near to that of Sir Richard, is a distinct tomb, and was, we presume, erected by him in his life-time to his wife Gunnora, by whom he acquired the Limington estate. The other two paired effigies are supposed by Collinson to be those of Gilbert and Mabel Gyverney, Sir Richard's father and mother; but we doubt this, as his family had no connection with Limington until his marriage with his second wife. It is more probable that they represent Henry Power and Matilda, his wife—especially if, as it is said, she was a sister of Sir Richard. Henry Power may have resided at Limington, as he represented the county of Somerset in Parliament, 6th Edwd. III.

In 1st Edwd. III, the Gyverney one-third of the manor had devolved (by some title independent of the fines) on John le Warre, who sold it, subject to the life interest of Sir Richard for £200, to the above-named Henry Power, and it was conveyed as "the manor of Limington," to the said Henry and Matilda, his wife, and the heirs of the said Henry.¹ In a subsequent fine² it is called a moiety only of the manor; and, 20th Edwd. III, Henry Power is assessed for half a fee in Limington, which Gregory de Wylington formerly held there.³ On the marriage of his daughter, Joan, with William Shareshull, jun. (son, probably, of the justice itinerant of that name), Henry Power settled this part on her—reserving only a life interest—and died 35th Edwd. III, leaving the said Joan, his daughter and heiress, aged 28.⁴ Shareshull sold it to Sir William Bonville of Shute, Devon, a great landowner in these parts, and father of the Lord Bonville mentioned by Leland, who was already the owner of another one-third.

(1). Somerset Fines, 1st Edwd. III, No. 2.)

(2). *Ib.*, 14th Edwd. III, No. 97.

(3). *Book of Aids.*

(4). Inq. P.M., 35th Edwd. III, 2nd Nos., No. 35.

This was sometimes described as the manor of Limington Tudenham, from its former owners, and belonged, in the reign of Henry III, to John de Tudenham (of Todenham in the county of Suffolk), who, in Kirby's *Quest*, is assessed for it. He was lord also of the manor of Churchstanton, Devon. It continued in his family until the reign of Edward III, when Sir Robert de Tudenham sold it to Sir William D'Aumarle, Lord of Woodbury, Devon, and West Chinnock in this county.¹ 36th Edwd. III, upon the death of Sir William D'Aumarle—his only son dying the same year, without issue—it descended to his daughters (as heirs of their brother) Margaret, wife of Sir William Bonville, and Elizabeth, wife of John Maltravers, by whom it was entailed on the issue of Margaret, and so came through the Bonvilles to the Marquis of Dorset, as stated by Collinson.²

The remaining one-third part appears to have been still held in demesne as part of the barony in the time of William Malet, who granted it to Godfrey de St. Martin. Godfrey or Geoffry de St. Martin flourished in the reign of Richard I, and was one of the witnesses to a charter of William [Fitz Patrick], Earl of Salisbury, confirming the endowment of the Priory of Bradenstoke, Wilts, to which he himself became a subsequent benefactor: for by charter without date, he, Geoffry de St. Martin, for the salvation of himself and Constance, his wife, grants in perpetual alms to the Priory of Bradenstoke, that land of his in Limington, which William Malet had granted to him for his homage, and this grant was confirmed by Jordan de St. Martin, brother of the said Geoffry, and also by Hugh de Vivonia, the successor by the King's grant of William Malet. Subsequently, the customary suit of Court for this land, due at the Lord's Court at Dundene (Compton Dunden, near Somerton, the seat of the Beauchamps), was released by

(1). Plac. Cor. Reg., 15th Edwd. III; Close Rolls, 28th Edwd. III.

(2). Inq. P.M., 36th Edwd. III, pt. i. No. 3; Somerset Fines, 42nd Edwd. III, No. 30.

William de Fortibus and John de Beauchamp and Cecilia, his wife.¹ 8th Edwd. I, the Priory was defeated in a *quo warranto* for withdrawing the service of one-third of the tything of Limington from the Hundred of Stone,² and was assessed for one-third of Limington in Kirby's *Quest* a few years after. After the dissolution of monasteries this part was granted, 38th Henry VIII, to Richard Savage and George Strangwaies, to hold by the service of one-fortieth part of a knight's fee.

- (1). Bradenstoke Cartulary, Cott. MS., Vitell A. xi.
- (2). Ass. Rolls, Somerset, 8th Edwd. I.