

## Antecessor Noster: The Parentage of Countess Lucy Made Plain.

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A lot of ink has flowed on the subject, but there can be no doubt that the ‘mysterious’ Countess Lucy of Chester was William Malet’s thrice-married granddaughter, the daughter of Robert Malet’s sister and Turolde the Sheriff of Lincoln (dead by 1079).<sup>1</sup> The suggestion was first made by R. Kirk in 1888.<sup>2</sup> As N. Sumner has more recently observed: ‘This account has the merit of explaining why the lordship of Spalding and other places in Lincolnshire were held after Ivo’s death not by Beatrice, his direct heir and the daughter of his marriage to Lucy,<sup>3</sup> but by the later husbands of Lucy, Roger fitz Gerold and Ranulph Meschines.’<sup>4</sup> It is clear from her charters that Lucy was an heiress; as was to be expected, her estates passed to the sons of her second and third marriages. Kirk’s work was based upon conjecture, and contained a number of errors. The question of Lucy’s parentage has therefore remained open. Nevertheless, there is proof that Kirk was right.

A spurious charter of Crowland Abbey made Turolde of Bucknall (the Sheriff) the founder of the priory of Spalding as a cell of Crowland. It also called Turolde brother of Godiva countess of Mercia, but subsequently described Godiva’s son Earl Algar as Turolde’s *cognatus* (cousin).<sup>5</sup> A *genealogia fundatoris* of Coventry Abbey made Lucy a daughter of Earl Algar and sister and heiress of earls Edwin and Morcar.<sup>6</sup> The Peterborough Chronicle and the Pseudo-Ingulf’s Chronicle of Crowland both made Lucy the daughter of Algar and niece or great-niece of Turolde.<sup>7</sup> We know that William Malet was half-English, so these traditions probably boil down to a relationship between Countess Godiva and William’s English mother.

In 1153 a charter [RRAN iii, 180] of the future Henry II for Lucy’s son Ranulf II of Chester referred to her uncles Robert Malet and Alan of Lincoln. Alan of Lincoln was the successor, and almost certainly the son, of Domesday’s Alfred of Lincoln. Chronologically, it is most unlikely that Alan was Lucy’s uncle. It was probably another of Alfred’s sons whom Domesday described as Alfred *nepos* [nephew or grandson] of Turolde, then holding a fee which was certainly thereafter held with the rest of the senior Alfred’s fee by his heir Alan. Domesday provides a further indication that Alfred senior married another of William Malet’s daughters when it names a William as Alfred’s predecessor in two of his manors.<sup>8</sup> Other parts of each of these manors (Linwood and Rothwell) were held in 1086 by Durand Malet, who was probably William’s son. It seems that Henry’s charter can be explained by seeing a scribe, perhaps in search of rhetorical balance, commit the error of ascribing two uncles to Lucy, instead of a niece (Lucy) and a nephew (Alan of Lincoln) to Robert Malet, who was uncle to both.

Turolde is evidenced in Domesday Book as a benefactor of Crowland Abbey, to which he gave a parcel of land at Bucknall.<sup>9</sup> The abbey also held land at Spalding that had probably been granted to it by Earl Algar and there is evidence to suggest that Turolde the Sheriff gave further land there to the abbey of St Nicholas, Angers, before 1079.<sup>10</sup> Lucy and her first husband Ivo Taillebois subsequently founded, or perhaps re-founded, a priory at Spalding subject to St

Nicholas, Angers. A revealing phrase from the Register of Spalding Priory reads: ‘mortuo quia dicto Thoraldo relicta sibi herede Lucia predicta’ [at his death Tuold left an heir, the aforesaid Lucy].<sup>11</sup> The word *heres*, ‘heir’, was often used of the child who was to inherit his/her father’s property. Lucy later confirmed the gifts of all three of her husbands: ‘pro redempcione anime patris mei et matris mee et dominorum meorum et parentum meorum’ [for the souls of my father and mother, my husbands and my (other) relatives].<sup>12</sup> The association of the priory with such a small group of people and the description of Lucy as *heres* of Tuold strongly hint at Lucy’s parentage. But we can go further still.

In their initial benefaction Ivo and Lucy referred to ‘antecessorum suorum<sup>13</sup> Tuoldi scilicet uxorisque eius regine’ [our ‘ancestors’ Tuold and his wife].<sup>14</sup> The reference to Tuold’s wife indicates that some part of his landholding had come to him through his wife, something also indicated by the occurrence of William Malet amongst those who had held the Domesday lands of Lucy’s first husband Ivo Taillebois before him.<sup>15</sup> The apparently vague Latin words *antecessor* and *predecessor* can both be used to mean something like ‘predecessor’. Each of them conveys a range of very precise meanings in different circumstances. The description of Tuold and his wife as *antecessores* of Ivo and Lucy may be compared to the usage in a charter in the cartulary of Mont-Saint-Michel by which the Angevins Hugh Chalibot and his wife confirmed the grants of her father, who was described as *antecessor noster*.<sup>16</sup> Other examples of this phrase show clearly that it was used by a married man to describe the parent from whom his wife had inherited the property she brought to the marriage. Acting on her own account (normally after her husband’s death), the heiress will often describe herself as the daughter of the parent her husband described as *antecessor noster*. A rare use of the phrase was to indicate the couple’s immediate predecessor, not her father but her brother.<sup>17</sup> In Lucy and Ivo’s case the plurality of their *antecessores*, Tuold and his wife, puts the matter beyond doubt. Lucy’s parents were indeed Tuold the Sheriff and a daughter of William Malet.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 255-6; *Complete Peerage*, ed. G.E.C., 13 vols., (1910-59) vol. vii, App. J, 743-6.

<sup>2</sup> R.E.G. Kirk, ‘The Countess Lucy: Singular or Plural?’, *Genealogist*, n.s. 5, 60-75, 131-44, 153-73.

<sup>3</sup> Beatrice (who bore the name of Robert Malet’s sister) married Ribald, half-brother of Count Alan; *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. W.Dugdale, new edition, 6 vols. (1817-30), iii, 553, no. xx. For their descendants see Rev.H.C. Fitz Herbert, ‘An original pedigree of Tailbois and Neville’, *The Genealogist*, n.s. iii, 31. Clay thought Beatrice was probably illegitimate (see *Early Yorkshire Charters*, v. p.291).

<sup>4</sup> N. Sumner, ‘The Countess Lucy’s Priory? The Early History of Spalding Priory and its Estates’, *Reading Medieval Studies* 13 (1988), 81-103, here, 84.

<sup>5</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum* ii, 118-19.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 192.

<sup>7</sup> See *Complete Peerage*, vii, App. J, 743-6, here 745 and note.

<sup>8</sup> Domesday Book, fol. 357d.

<sup>9</sup> Domesday Book, fol. 346d.

<sup>10</sup> Domesday Book, fol. 346d; see N. Sumner, 'The Countess Lucy's priory?', 83-4 and n.12.

<sup>11</sup> B.M. Add. 35296, fol. 2r.

<sup>12</sup> B.M. Add. 35296, fol. 9r.

<sup>13</sup> *suorum*, 'their' in the Register would have been *nostrorum*, 'our', in the original charter.

<sup>14</sup> B.N. Coll. Anjou-Touraine 3, no. 876 (Saint-Nicholas d'Angers), and B.M. Add. 35296 (Spalding), though both later copies, agree upon this wording.

<sup>15</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ii, p.220, nos. v and viii.

<sup>16</sup> Bibliothèque de la Ville d'Avranches, ms 210, fol. 104<sup>r-v</sup>. I am preparing an edition of this cartulary.

<sup>17</sup> *Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall, 3 vols (Rolls Series, 1896), i, 368.