

## The Bourton Family and their Lords in the Twelfth-Century Midlands.

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Domesday Book records that in 1086 the vill of Bourton-on-Dunsmore (Warks) and Ibstock (Leics) belonged to Count Robert of Meulan, a Norman magnate whose extensive cross channel estates included a substantial number of holdings in Warwickshire.<sup>1</sup> The Count's tenant at both places was Ingenwulf, about whom we know little more than the fact of his tenure, and that his name is English. He is presumably one and the same as the Ingenwulf who jointly held land of the Count at two other places in Warwickshire, Wilnecote and Seckington.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear from Domesday Book whether Ingenwulf had held these lands before the Conquest. No mention of previous ownership is made in respect of Ibstock, whilst at Bourton the statement that that Leofwine held the manor in 1066 seems to refer to the Count's interest rather than Ingenwulf's. However continuity of tenure by an English tenant would not be exceptional for the Dunsmore area in which Bourton was located. The extended Arden family, descendants of Æthelwine, a Pre-Conquest sheriff of Warwickshire and brother of Leofwine, still had substantial property holdings in north-east Warwickshire a century later.<sup>3</sup> Amongst the Arden tenants c.1166 was Henry of Rugby, the grandson of the Edwulf who held neighbouring Rugby (Warwicks) in 1086 and another Warwickshire manor before 1066.<sup>4</sup>

In the mid-twelfth century Bourton and Ibstock were held by Robert of Bourton. That this Robert was related to the Ingenwulf of 1086 in some way seems certain as he had a brother called Ingenwulf, but the exact connection is not clear.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that "R. de *Bortona*" who witnessed a charter of the earl of Warwick in 1123 was the Robert of Bourton<sup>6</sup> who granted land to religious houses in 1145 and 1160.<sup>7</sup> It seems unlikely that the latter was the son of the Domesday Ingenwulf but Robert's mother Agnes, who was also alive in 1160 could perhaps have been his daughter.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, the "R." of 1123 could have been the son of the Domesday Ingenwulf, and the Robert of 1145 and 1160 his grandson. Whatever the precise connection, the evidence suggests hybrid or native ancestry. Robert of Bourton's son Richard, who was of age in 1145, was generally styled Richard of Ibstock, and married one Matilda.<sup>9</sup> He had a sister, Margaret, who became a nun a.1160.<sup>10</sup> Richard died sometime before 1189 and was succeeded in turn by his sons William and Henry. The former died before 1199 and latter after 1208.<sup>11</sup> There was a third brother Walter, who witnessed one of William's charters, but Henry's heirs were his three sons-in-law.<sup>12</sup>

In 1088 the Count of Meulan's Warwickshire lands, including those held by Ingenwulf, were assigned to the Count's younger brother, Henry, newly created earl of Warwick. Earl Henry died in 1119 and was succeeded by his son Roger. "R" of Bourton's appearance as witness to Roger, earl of Warwick's charter in 1123 suggests that he was a direct tenant of the earl, as his predecessor Ingenwulf had been of the Count of Meulan. This situation changed two years later when Geoffrey de Clinton was granted lordship of fourteen knight's fees worth of lands within the honor of Warwick, including the manors of Bourton and Ibstock. Geoffrey was a *curialis* set up as a counterpoint to Earl Roger's predominant position in Warwickshire by King Henry I. In addition to being endowed at the expense of

the earl, Geoffrey was appointed sheriff of Warwickshire and Leicestershire and granted royal demesne land at Kenilworth where he built a castle and a priory. Earl Roger resented this erosion of his local dominance and in 1136, when both King Henry and Geoffrey were safely dead, he embarked upon a military campaign designed to recover his lost lands and authority. The relatives and followers of Geoffrey's young heir, Geoffrey II, withdrew into the safety of Kenilworth Castle and defied the earl. Roger was unable to prosecute a siege and was forced into a settlement whereby his young daughter was betrothed to Geoffrey II. Through this *conventio* the Clinton mesne lordship within the earldom was secured for a further generation.<sup>13</sup>

There is no evidence that the brief Warwick-Clinton spat affected the Bourton's tenure of their lands. However, the violent dispute between earl Robert I of Leicester, son of Count Robert of Meulan, and earl Rannulf of Chester that ranged over northern Leicestershire from 1141 onwards demonstrably did. Ibstock fell within a 'debatable land' over which the earls and their proxies fought until a pact was agreed between them after 1147. Robert of Bourton and his son Richard fell victim to the lawlessness in this area. In 1145 Robert conceded three carrucates of land in Ibstock, to Garendon Abbey, a Cistercian house founded by the earl of Leicester and situated only a few miles to the north-east of Ibstock.<sup>14</sup> The grant appears to have been made verbally in the presence of Arnold du Bois, the earl of Leicester's steward, in his chamber at Leicester castle, and is recorded in digest form in the Garendon cartulary. The cartulary is quite explicit; the grant was made by way of reimbursement for a loan of thirty marks that the monks had furnished to redeem Robert from captivity. In another grant to Garendon, possibly dating to a little later, Richard gave the monks a further carrucate to reimburse them for the six marks they had provided to secure his own release. It is not absolutely clear who had made Robert and Richard captive. They may have fallen foul of the earl of Leicester, but it seems more likely that they had been seized by the earl of Chester or by the robber baron William de Launay, whose castle was at Ravenstone only a couple of miles north of Ibstock. Whoever the culprit was, Arnold du Bois seems to have brokered the Bourtons release.<sup>15</sup>

Robert had lost a substantial part of his lands in Ibstock. A confirmatory charter of Geoffrey de Clinton II issued before 1147 states that Ibstock was held of him by Robert as one knight's fee, and that one third of the service due from it was remitted.<sup>16</sup> Roger earl of Warwick also confirmed the grant before his death in 1153. Roger's son, earl William quitclaimed his interest a.1166, by which time the monks land's were described as half a knight's fee. Earl William's quitclaim is mentioned in a charter of Abbot Thurstan of Garendon, which notes that land in Warwickshire granted to the monks by earl Roger of Warwick was restored in exchange.<sup>17</sup> The increase in extent from a third of a fee to half a fee was presumably due to the subsequent grant by Robert of a half carrucate so that his brother Ingenwulf might become a monk at the abbey, and the grant of a carrucate made by Richard.<sup>18</sup>

Robert was apparently able to hold onto his other manor at Bourton intact. The only mention of alienation is in a charter of 1160 in which Robert granted twenty acres of inland and a virgate to the nuns of Wroxall (Warks) and his daughter Margaret, presumably so that she should become a nun there. His son, Richard, and his mother, Agnes, confirmed the grant.<sup>19</sup> Wroxall was founded by Hugh fitz Richard, a leading tenant of the earls of

Warwick in the mid-twelfth century. At some point Richard of Ibstock had become Hugh's tenant at Hodnell (Warks) but the only references to the tenancy date to after 1155 when Hodnell was granted to Nuneaton Priory. Hugh's grant of Hodnell to the nunnery records that the manor constituted a knight's fee and that Richard of Ibstock and his wife Matilda were given fifteen marks in cash and rent of 20s. per annum in compensation for surrendering their interest. How Richard had acquired the holding is not recorded but the involvement of his wife in the surrender suggests it was by marriage.<sup>20</sup> Nuneaton was yet another Leicester foundation.<sup>21</sup>

After Robert of Bourton's death, Richard succeeded him. Richard was succeeded in turn by his sons William and Henry. William was a patron of Combe Abbey, to which he granted Blackdown Mill in Lillington (Warks). William's gift explicitly states that it was made with the consent of 'his lord', Bertran de Verdun, which dates it to 1174-90.<sup>22</sup> There is no other mention of a Bourton interest in the mill or lands in Lillington; but the acknowledgement of Bertran's overlordship is significant. Bertran was the son and heir of Norman de Verdun, who had married a sister of Geoffrey de Clinton II. In 1168 Bertran was appointed sheriff of Warwickshire and Leicestershire, and during the 1173-4 rebellion against Henry II he was one of the leaders of the Royalist forces in the Midlands. The revolt failed and the rebels, who included Earl Robert II of Leicester and Henry de Clinton, son of Geoffrey II, were deprived of their lands. For most of them this was a temporary loss, but Henry was unlucky, and his lands in Warwickshire and Leicestershire subsequently passed to Bertran. The detail of the process is undocumented but it is clear that many former Clinton tenants were rapidly reconciled to their new lord, William of Bourton being but one example.<sup>23</sup> William was married, his wife was called Basilia, but he died childless in the late 1190s.<sup>24</sup> His brother Henry succeeded him and died after 1208. Henry's heirs were the husbands of his daughters, Ada, Matilda and Joanna, who had married respectively, Robert de Garshale, Philip de Ashby, and Robert de Verdun. It is possible that Nicholas de Verdun, as overlord of the Bourton fee had arranged marriages to his own followers. All three men followed Nicholas into rebellion during the Civil War of 1216 and were briefly deprived of their lands as a result.<sup>25</sup>

The main intention of this paper was to describe the nature of the relationship between the Bourton family and their overlords, but the evidence relating to the family also supplies much additional genealogical, ecclesiastical and economic information. There was a cadet branch of the Bourtons who held land of the senior line at Ibstock into the thirteenth century. They were descendants of the Ingenwulf who became a monk at Garendon after 1145. Reginald fitz Ingenwulf granted the abbey a modest six selions of land and some meadow before 1179, and between 1189 and 1198 confirmed the various grants to the abbey made by his uncle and cousin even though his competence to do so seems questionable. He was succeeded by his son, Reginald fitz Reginald.<sup>26</sup> In his confirmatory charter the elder Reginald explicitly describes William of Bourton as his lord. Amongst the witnesses to this deed was Roger, bishop-elect of St Andrews, Chancellor of Scotland and second son of earl Robert III of Leicester. Why this august cleric put his name to this minor document is not obvious, but presumably it demonstrates the value placed upon the grange, later known as Swinfen, which the monks had established on the former Bourton lands at Ibstock. The various confirmation charters refer to both arable land and heath, some of which had been newly brought into cultivation. There is also mention of houses and

bercaries built by the monks.<sup>27</sup> A second grange was built on land within the parish of Ibstock acquired from other beneficiaries, and prior to 1189 the monks had agreed to pay two marks in lieu of tithes to the rector of Ibstock in respect of all their lands there, other than those newly colonised and therefore exempt. By 1219 the payment was 40s and had apparently been so for some time.<sup>28</sup>

The Bourton family probably had the right of presentation to the livings of both Ibstock and Bourton, although the only explicit reference relates to Ibstock a.1219, when Bishop Hugh de Welles and the heirs of Henry of Bourton presented a certain 'H.' as parson. Possibly he was the 'H.' who had been chaplain at Bourton twenty years earlier.<sup>29</sup> A rector called Robert held Ibstock before 1189, and there is mention of a parson called Richard for both Ibstock and Bourton in the 1180s, presumably the same man. His successor at Ibstock was a William.<sup>30</sup> Domesday Book does not record a church at either place, so the date of the creation of the respective parishes is not known. The Bourtons also had an interest in Hodnell church, surrendered to Nuneaton by Richard of Bourton for a pension of 10s.<sup>31</sup>

The case of the Bourtons indicates, unsurprisingly, that during the century following the Conquest tenants were pragmatic in their dealings with their lords – that the *pouvoir* of magnates counted for more than legal niceties and that loyalty was transitory. Overt lordship was imposed only occasionally, and whether the impact was good or bad was essentially down to political circumstances and personalities.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Domesday Book, Warwickshire*, ed. J. Morris (1976), f.240b, *Domesday Book, Leicestershire*, ed. J. Morris (1979), f.237b. *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Stephen & S. See (1885-1903), II, pp. 64-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Domesday Book, Warwickshire*, f.240a.

<sup>3</sup> A. Williams, 'A vicecomital family in Pre-Conquest Warwickshire', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 11 (1989), p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> Henry of Rugby held Rugby (Warks) and Binley (Warks) from Henry of Arden, great-grandson of Æthelwine *temp.* Henry II. Henry's grandfather, whose name is spelt variously as Edwulf, Eddulf, Hadewulf or Hadulf, was Thorkell's tenant in both places in 1086, and was the pre-Conquest tenant of Binley. British Library MS. Vitellius D xviii (=Combe Cartulary), 39a, 40b. *Domesday Book*, 241b, 241c.

<sup>5</sup> K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People I*, (1999), p. 281. This source describes Ingenwulf as the ancestor of the Bourtons.

<sup>6</sup> *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. Sir W. Dugdale and R. Dodsworth (6 vols in 8 parts, 1817-30), VI, p. 1327.

<sup>7</sup> J. Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (4 vols, in 8 parts, 1795-1815), III/2, p. 834. National Archive (PRO), E210/1620 (formerly Ancient Deeds D 1620).

<sup>8</sup> National Archive (PRO), E210/1620.

<sup>9</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, p. 834. *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals*, ed. L. C. Loyd and D. M. Stenton (1950), p. 509. BL MS Additional Charters 48139. BL MS Add. Ch. 48137(A).

<sup>10</sup> National Archive (PRO), E210/1620.

<sup>11</sup> BL MS Add. Ch. 48141. Nichols, *Leics*, 833.

<sup>12</sup> BL Add. Ch. 48139. *The Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill* (3 vols, London, 1921-30), 507, 520.

<sup>13</sup> D. Crouch, 'Geoffrey de Clinton and Roger Earl of Warwick: New Men and Magnates in the Reign of Henry I', *BIHR*, 55 (1982), pp. 113-24.

<sup>14</sup> D. Postles, 'Defensores astabimus: Garendon Abbey and its early benefactors', in B. Thompson, ed. *Monasteries and Society in Medieval England* (Harlaxton Medieval Studies 1999), pp. 107-8.

<sup>15</sup> E. King, 'Mountsorrel and its region in King Stephen's reign', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 44 (1980), pp. 1-10. D. Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century*, (1982), pp. 80-1.

<sup>16</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, p. 805.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, *Beauchamp Cartulary*, Pipe Roll Society, New Series, 43, (1980), 286.

<sup>18</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, p. 834.

<sup>19</sup> R. Dace, 'The Foundation and Endowment of Wroxall Priory', *Warwickshire History*, 8/3 (1991), pp. 75-9. National Archive (PRO), E210/1620.

<sup>20</sup> BL MS Add. Ch. 48137(A). BL MS Add. Ch. 48139.

<sup>21</sup> D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses England and Wales* (1971), p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> BL MS Vitellius D xviii (Combe Cartulary), f.55b.

<sup>23</sup> R. Dace, 'Bertran de Verdun: royal service, land and family in the late twelfth century', *Medieval Prosopography*, 20 (1999), pp. 75-93.

<sup>24</sup> BL MS Add. Ch. 48139.

<sup>25</sup> *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. T.D. Hardy, Record Commission (2 vols 1835), p. 311.

<sup>26</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, p. 834.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 806. *DNB*, xvii, 111.

<sup>28</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, p. 819. The chapelries of Donnington-le-Heath and Hunscombe, neither of which formed part of the Bourton manor, paid 12d to the parson of Ibstock in 1219. *Roll of Hugh de Welles*, ed. W. Phillimore & F. Davis, Canterbury and York Society (3 vols, 1907-9), I, p. 247.

<sup>29</sup> *Hugh de Welles*, I, p. 247. BL MS Add. Ch. 48139.

<sup>30</sup> Nichols, *Leics*, pp. 806, 819. BL MS Add. Ch. 21458. BL MS Add. Ch. 48139.

<sup>31</sup> BL MS Add. Ch. 48141. The church at Hodnell did not survive the depopulation of the vill in the later medieval period.

Figure 1: - The Bourton Family Tree c.1086-c.1215

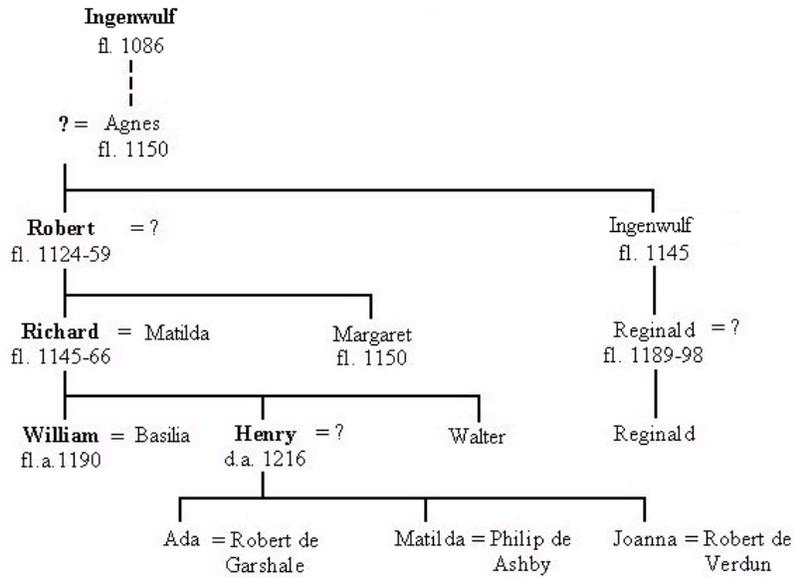


Figure 2: - The Bourton Holdings c.1190

