

Holme Lacy *redux*

An episcopal land-grant revisited

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*The Origins of English Feudalism? An Episcopal Land-Grant Revisited**

Abstract

The debate over whether English feudalism developed immediately after the Norman Conquest or early in the twelfth century is still very much alive. The wealth of information contained in Domesday Book actually tells little of the nature of land-holding. Only three private land-grants survive from the reign of the Conqueror. One, the 1085 grant from Bishop Losinga of Hereford to Roger de Lacy, was the subject of a celebrated article by V. H. Galbraith in 1929, in which he argued that the grant was a prime example of the new feudalism developing in the wake of the Conquest. However, recent writings have challenged that traditional view. This article re-examines the grant in the light of those new views and assigns it a rather different significance.

THE LAND-GRANT in question is a grant of land in Herefordshire, to be held by knight service, made between Robert Losinga, bishop of Hereford, and Roger de Lacy, in 1085, the year before Domesday Book was compiled.¹ Roger was listed as a tenant-in-chief in Domesday Book, holding estates in Shropshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire as well as Herefordshire;² he was a wealthy and powerful man in 1085. The annual value of his lands listed in Domesday was £325 in the whole of England and £129 in Herefordshire, making him the richest layman in the

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¹ Public Record Office, C 115 G31/4095 (Chancery Masters Exhibits, Duchess of Norfolk, Scudamore Deeds). Printed with facsimiles in V. H. Galbraith, 'An episcopal land-grant of 1085', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, xlv (1929), 353–72, and in *English Episcopal Acts VII: Hereford, 1079–1234*, ed. J. Barrow (Oxford, 1993), no. 2, pp. 1–2; translated in *English Historical Documents*, ii, ed. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway (2nd edn., 1981), no. 221, pp. 962–3.

² All Domesday Book references are to the Phillimore edition, general editor J. Morris (London and Chichester, 1978–86) and are for Herefordshire (1983), unless otherwise stated. Lacy lands: Salop, 252b (Onibury) and 256b–256d; Worcs., 176c; Glos., 167d–168a; Oxon., 161a–b, lands in Earl William's [fitzOsbern] territory; Berks., 62c; Herefs., 184a–185b. See C. P. Lewis, 'The Norman settlement of Herefordshire under William I', in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vii (1985), 195–213; and for a thorough survey of the Lacy family, W. E. Wightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy, 1066–1194* (Oxford, 1966).

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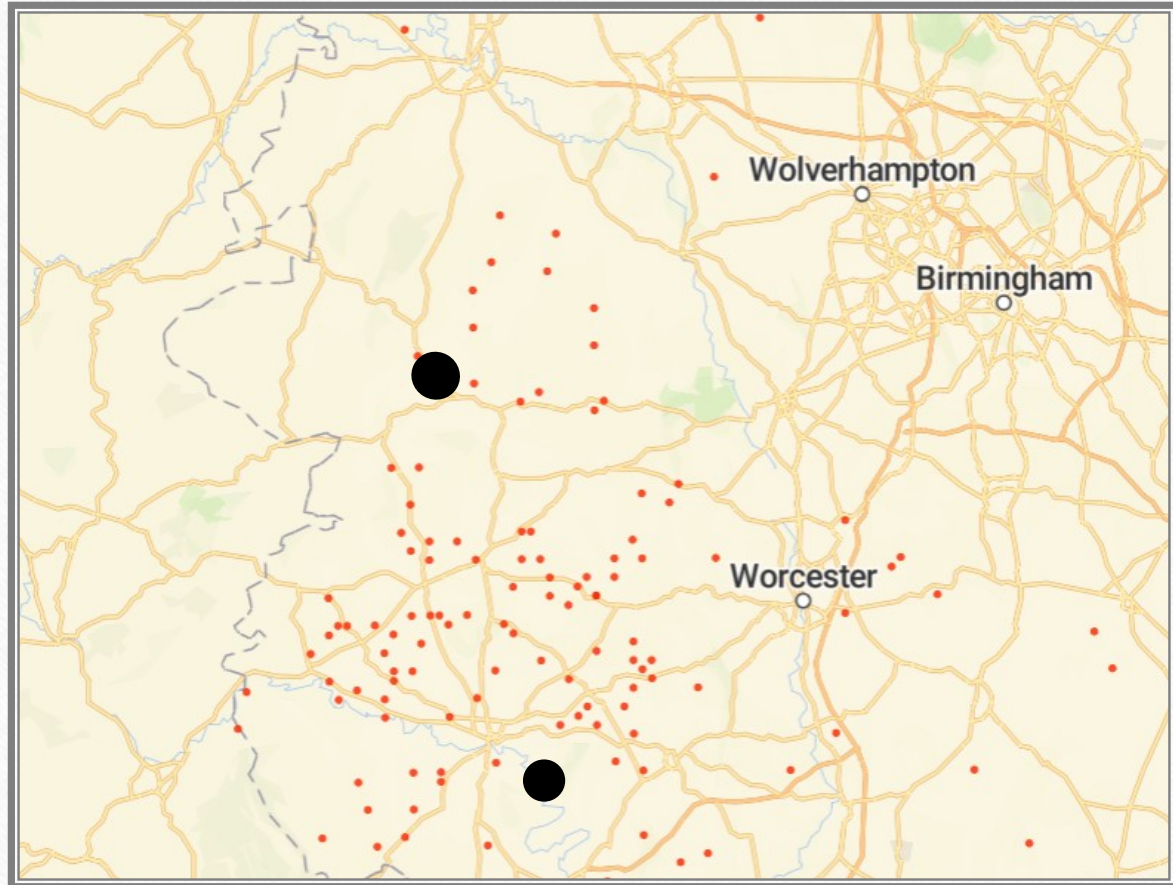
An Episcopal Land-Grant of 1085

I

THE document printed below¹ is a record of two separate arrangements between Robert, bishop of Hereford, and Roger de Lacy. The first of these is the grant of Hamme (Holme Lacy), co. Hereford, for life in return for the service of two knights: the second is the grant of Onibury, co. Salop, for an annual rent of 20s. They are a part of the process of sub-infeudation after the Conquest which, by thousands of similar transactions, gave rise to the complicated tenurial system revealed by the *Book of Fees* and the *Inquisitions post mortem*. The real difficulty is to decide how far these Lacy enfeoffments are typical of the general process; and the more normal they can be shown to be, the surer will be the conclusions we can draw from them. For their very early date—and this is their supreme interest—makes them an almost unique piece of positive evidence about a movement otherwise known to us only by documents of the next generation.

Some broad questions are raised by this document: in particular the assumption that the fee (*feudum*) was hereditary from the moment of the Conquest, is challenged by the grant of Holme Lacy as a mere life tenancy. In France the hereditary fee was so fully developed by 1066 that it was natural to suppose English feudalism was equally hereditary from the Conquest. But so far as mesne tenants on church lands are concerned it seems likely that in some of the church baronies, notably Worcester and Hereford, the hereditary fee was slowly evolved anew in England. Even in France the life benefice was still not uncommon. Flach has pointed

*Map showing Roger de Lacy's Domesday holdings in
Herefordshire, Shropshire and into Worcestershire
(Holme Lacy and Onibury circled)*



Hoc privilegium Robertus herefordensis. ecclesie episcopus illi et Rogerum filium Waleberii notari precepit de certa qualis nomine hanc et
 que ad illam pertinent que est ecclesia sancte marie genitricis dei et sancti Adelberti martiris. quam etiam predictus episcopus in proprio domino ad uictum
 ecclesie et sui tenebat. Hanc predictus miles uidelicet Rogerus ab episcopo per amicos et per pecunia requisivit. Episcopus uero consilio suorum concessit illi
 eandem terram et conventionem ut duobus militibus seruiet sibi sicut pater ei fecit ubicumque necesse fuerit. necnon et ea conventionem ut
 homines episcopi de hancuna atque de hereforda et qui ad eam pertinent de silua accipiant ligna. solum ad opus episcopi quantum sibi necesse erit ad
 obutendum et ad mansiones restaurandas et porci de eisdem maneribus ex eadem silua pascant. Illi scilicet qui proprii fuerint episcopi et eo insuper
 adhuc tenore si Rogerus monachus efficiat uel moriatur quod neque mater neque uxor neque filii neque fratres neque aliqui parentum suorum de hac terra super
 dicta se intromittant sed episcopus quemcumque erit ad proprium sancte ecclesie et sui absque ulla contradictione qualis tunc fuerit recipiat. Hoc actum est
 anno domini incarnationis millesimo. lxxv. indictione viii. Huius rei testes sunt comes Rogerus et filii eius Hugo et alii filii euerardi et comes
 et uiccomes Warrin. Osbertus filius Ricardi. Progo filius pontii. Gerardus de cornu. Willielmus malbedan. Gislebertus cognatus Rogeri comes. De
 hominibus episcopi Gerardus frater eius. Hamfridus archidiaconus. Ansfridus presbyter. Willielmus. Leuinus. Alfwardus. Saulfus. Aluinus. Lauer. Vdo. Arbalardus. Franco.
 Arnulfus. Edwaldus. Robertus. Goso. Osbertus. Petrus. Ricardus pincerna. De hominibus Rogeri. Clerici. Raulfus. Goffridus. Odo. Geroldus. Lauer. Walterus.
 heribertus de fureis. Ricardus de stantuna. herimannus de dretun. Robertus de bascheuilla. Ricardus de eschevot. Willielmus de dretuna. Raulfus de salcer.
 Nicolaus. Gormundus. Pradelus Rogerus tenet adhuc aliam terram de uictu proprio episcopi scilicet omieberie tali conditione. Quodcumque uixerit unoquoque
 anno infestumque sancti martini. xx. solidos dabit. et probitum suum tunc si monachus efficiat. qualiscumque tunc illa fuerit. ad episcopum absque
 ulla contradictione reddat. Huius rei testes sunt. Ansfridus de cornetis. Edricus de auendloc. alii Edricus dapifer. et omnes superdicti excepto
 Rogero comite et familia sua

C V D C C D A D I I V I M

Size of original 13 1/2 inches x 8 inches

CHARTER OF ROBERT, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, 1085 A.D.

The document
 (1085)

HEREF'SCIRE.

In ~~hamme~~ sunt. vi. hide geld. In dñio sunt. ii. cap.
7 xvi. uilli. 7 p̄tr 7 p̄ postat 7 un francig. 7 iii. buri.
Int om̄s h̄m̄. xx. car 7 dimid. Ibi. i. seruus. 7 ii. ancille.
7 x. ac̄ p̄ra. Silva dimid leuū t̄g. 7 t̄at l̄e.
Ad hoc t̄m̄ par̄t una eccl̄a 7 uocat ~~lad overen~~ 7 ibi sunt
.iii. car. sed n̄ geld t̄ra hui' eccl̄e. p̄tr redd̄. ii. sol inde
hanc t̄rā ten̄ Roger' de lacu sub ep̄o.
Hoc t̄m̄ tenuto herald com̄ iniuste. q̄a. ē deuocau cano
nicor. Rex W. reddid̄ Walterio ep̄o.
T. R. E. uall̄. xc. lib. modo. vii. lib. In ~~Ragetreu~~ h̄o.

*The Domesday entry for
Hamme (1086)*

Hoc privilegium Robertus herefordensis. ecclesie episcopus illi et Rogerum filium Waleberii notari precepit de certa qualis nomine hanc et
 que ad illa pertinent que est ecclesia sancte marie genitricis dei et sancti adelberti martiris. quam etiam predictus episcopus in proprio domino ad uictum
 ecclesie et sui tenebat. Hanc predictus miles uidelicet Rogerus ab episcopo per amicos et per pecunia requisivit. Episcopus uero consilio suorum concessit illi
 eandem etiam et conventionem ut duobus militibus seruiet sibi sicut pater ei fecit ubicumque necesse fuerit. necnon et ea conventionem ut
 homines episcopi de hantuna atque de hereforda et qui ad ea pertinent de silua accipiant ligna. solum ad opus episcopi quantum sibi necesse erit ad
 edificandum et ad mansiones restaurandas et porci de eisdem maneribus ex eadem silua pascantur. Illi scilicet qui proprii fuerint episcopi et eo insuper
 adhuc tenore. si Rogerus monachus efficiat uel moriatur quod neque mater neque uxor neque filii neque fratres neque aliqui parentum suorum de hac etiam super
 dicta se intromittant. sed episcopus quicumque erit ad predictam sancte ecclesie et sui abique ulla contradictione qualis tunc fuerit recipiat. Hoc actum est
 anno domini incarnationis millesimo. lxxv. indictione viii. Huius rei testes sunt comes Rogerus et filii eius Hugo et alii filii euerardi et comes
 et uiccomes Warren. Osbertus filius Ricardi. Progo filius pontii. Gerardus de cornu. Willielmus malbedan. Gislebertus cognatus Rogeri comes. De
 hominibus episcopi Gerardus frater eius. Hamfridus archidiaconus. Ansfridus presbyter Willielmus. Leuinus. Alfwardus. Saulfus. Aluinus. Laici. Vdo. Arbalardus. Franco.
 Arnulfus. Edwaldus. Robertus. Goso. Osbertus. Petrus. Ricardus pincerna. De hominibus Rogeri. Clerici. Raulfus. Goffridus. Odo. Geroldus. Laici. Walterus.
 heribertus de fureis. Ricardus de stantuna. herimannus de dretun. Robertus de bacheuilla. Ricardus de eschevot. Willielmus de ebrowa. Raulfus de salcer.
 Nicolaus. Gormundus. Prædictus Rogerus tenet adhuc aliam terram de uictu proprio episcopi scilicet omberie tali conditione. Quodcumque uixerit unoquoque
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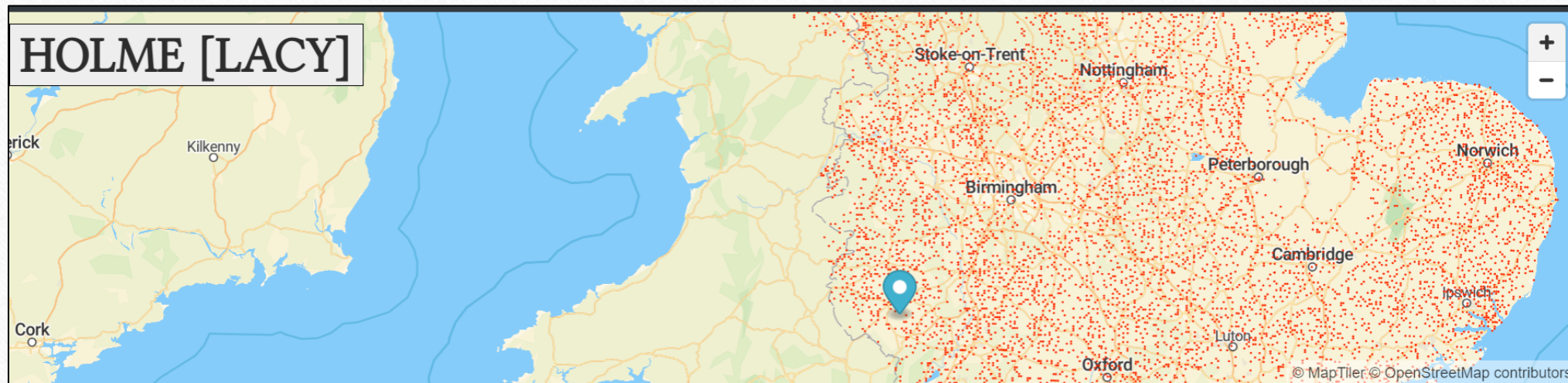
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CHARTER OF ROBERT, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, 1085 A.D.

The document
 (1085)

Domesday Book, Holme Lacy and 'middle' England

(note the very obvious delineation with Wales)



The witness-list

(Earl Roger and Walter's households)

Earl Roger
Hugh, his son
Everard, his other son
The countess
Sheriff Warin
Obsert son of Richard
Drew son of Pons
Gerard de Tournai
William Malbedan [Malbank]
Gilbert, constable of Earl Roger

clerks:
Ralph, Gosfrid Odo Gerold
Laymen:
Walter
Herbert de Furcis
Richard de Stanton
Herman de Drew [Dreux]
Robert de Baskerville
Robert de Esketot [Ectot]
William Devereux [de Evreux]
Ralph de Salcet [le Saussey]
Nicholas Gotmund

Onibury:

Ansfrid de Cormailles [Cormeilles]
Edric de Wenloc [Wenlock]
Another Edric, steward

And all the above, except for the Earl
Roger and his household