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Thank you, Anne, thank you David, for inviting me here It is a great pleasure to return to the 'land of lost content' after so many years and to be here especially after two years of pandemic conditions and a postponed talk a year ago.

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In February 2000, I published a short piece in *Historical Research* titled "The Origins of English Feudalism? An Episcopal Land-Grant Revisited," where I argued for a fresh look at the nature of the 'feudal debate' and the settlement of England after 1066. Since I was revisiting an article published by V H Galbraith in 1929 in the *English Historical Review* this would make today's talk "An Episcopal land-grant *redux*" perhaps.

I will begin with a summary of the land-grant content in relation to the revolution of 1066; secondly, I will look at the devastating totality of the Conquest manifest in the Domesday Book to place this local agreement into context and finally, looking afresh at the Holme Lacy land-grant to examine how the witness-list can shed light on the baronial communities not only at a local level but how those emotional communities played at a national level throw some light on the transitional period 1087-1095 as power transferred to a new king and a second, rather less loyal, generation of landholders.

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Part One: the land-grant and the 'feudal' debate

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.

Roger was listed as a tenant-in-chief in Domesday Book, holding estates in Shropshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire as well as Herefordshire: 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 county after the king.

At a time when the average income for a Domesday *miles* was about thirty-nine shillings per annum, Roger de Lacy was by those standards very wealthy indeed. Roger's father, Walter, had ridden into battle with William fitzOsbern, first Norman earl of Hereford, and Orderic Vitalis wrote, some sixty years later, that King William set '[fitzOsbern] up in the marches with Walter of Lacy and other proved warriors'.

Bishop Robert of Hereford was a Lotharingian, well travelled and well connected, consecrated in 1079, and probably in England before the Conquest. Robert Losinga was a man to be reckoned with. Educated at Liege, a cosmopolitan centre, he had a strong interest in mathematics and chronology and was a clerk to Edward the Confessor and friend of Wulfstan of Worcester. Thanks to his description about the making of Domesday Book we know the details of the process.

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The grant concerned the manor of 'Hamme', known today as Holme Lacy, a small village five miles south of Hereford, on the south bank of the River Wye. On the same charter as Holme Lacy, there is another agreement between Roger and Robert, in which Robert granted Roger the manor of Onibury in Shropshire for a payment of cash. The latter transaction was quite possibly a record of an earlier agreement. Both grants are rare survivals in written form of land transaction in the reign of William the Conqueror.

We are told by the Holme Lacy grant that Roger's father, Walter, held the same land and, after his death in 1085 (he fell off a ladder whilst inspecting some building works at St. Guthlac's priory, a rather mundane way to die after facing the horrors of war), Roger asked the bishop for it and was given it in return for a promise that he would serve the bishop with two knights, as his father did, wherever the need arose. For the land at

Onibury, however, Roger must pay, for as long as he lives, twenty shillings each year on St. Martin's day, to the bishop. Domesday Book, compiled the following year, records the details of taxable hides, ploughs and villagers in the holding, and says simply that 'Roger de Lacy holds this land under the Bishop'. No details of the conditions by which the land is held are recorded.

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If we conceive baronial society as horizontal, with many various circles of influence and groups, here is just one circle, and this charter is a record of Roger de Lacy's entry into that social group. He pays the bishop an indeterminate cash sum, itself a reflection of his wealth; he approaches the bishop through friends, men of standing and power, and not necessarily vassals or lords - they are just 'friends' ('amicos'), as the grant says. There is no mention in the charter of Roger's becoming the bishop's man: homage, a concept widely known and applied at that time, does not apply to Roger here. He is not the bishop's man, but he is his tenant. Holding land of someone and being their man were two different things. The whole method by which this agreement was reached hints at informal negotiation. How many other land settlements, not written down, were reached by these means?

Only a handful of early documents illustrate the new style of landholding by a foreign military elite, based on Old English custom combined with Norman-style ceremonies of homage.¹ A writ from King William to the English abbot of Bury St Edmunds (in English) commands that the land of the men who died fighting the king at Hastings and who held that land from the abbot is handed over to him.² The writ of c1072 (in Latin) from King William orders the (English) abbot of Evesham to 'bring with you fully equipped those five knights which you owe me in respect of your abbacy which assumes an existing

¹ S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994) fundamentally revised the orthodox views of feudalism of the previous generations.

² *EHD*, ii, p.940

arrangement.³ Early English abbots were no strangers to military service (Abbot Wulfsige of Ramsey died at Ashingdon) and the English warriors certainly had landed status of their own, according to an early eleventh century manuscript, a thegn possessed five hides of land of his own, 'a bell and a castle-gate, church and kitchen, a seat and special office in the king's hall.'⁴ A writ of Edward the Confessor (1045-58) confirms the land in Dorset of his housecarl Urk.⁵ The 'Rights and ranks of people' (1040s) gives us very detailed description of the social ranks of mid-eleventh century English society, from thegns to bee-keepers (who are female) and to sowers and slaves.⁶ The thegn is entitled to his book-right (land protected by charter) and should contribute three things in respect of his land: armed service, repairing fortresses and bridge-work (ie. the *trinoda necessitas* which we have seen existed since the late eighth century) plus other duties such as equipping and guarding the coastal ships, guarding the lord, military watch, almsgiving and church dues.

The language changes within a generation as we move into a new culture from 'public' to 'private' lordship based around personal loyalty to the lord who in turned owed that service to the king following 1066.

Only three such agreements from the reign of the Conqueror exist today and one of them is the Holme Lacy grant.

An enfeoffment of a knight by the abbot of Westminster in c1083, shows how William Baynard was to have a farm in the township of Westminster for life by the service of one knight in place of the thegn Wulfric Bordewayte.⁷ Another 'enfeoffment' on the land of Bury St Edmunds (1066-87) describes how Peter, a knight of the king, will become the 'feudal man' of the abbot by performing the ceremony of homage.⁸ The Bury charter can

³ *EHD*, ii, p.895.

⁴ *EHD*, i, p.468.

⁵ *EHD*, ii, p.839.

⁶ *EHD*, ii, pp.813-816.

⁷ *EHD*, ii, p.895.

⁸ *EHD*, ii, pp.896-897.

be dated only to 1066 x 1087, that is, to the entire reign of William I, unlike the more precisely dated Holme Lacy grant, and where the Holme Lacy grant is an original, the Bury document is preserved only in late fourteenth-century manuscripts.

The barony of the archbishop of Canterbury (1093) included over sixty holders of knight's fees, and as we would expect most are Norman-French names but there are some English names, too – Wulfsige, Wulfnoth, Æthelwine – but only a tiny minority.⁹ The status of these knights was relatively lowly, with an annual income of around £2, which in Domesday society placed them in the ranks of the 'parish gentry'.¹⁰ That this system was neither a system or indeed even effective is shown in a writ of Henry I (c1100-1117) which demands that the 'barons' of Abingdon abbey perform castle guard at Windsor as Abbot Faritius commands, since it appeared that 'you do not obey his order as you ought to.'¹¹

The third document of lordship is the Holme Lacy grant, an original which can be dated exactly.

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The extant copy shown here is probably the Bishop's; Roger's copy was perhaps kept at Gloucester Abbey, where his brother was abbot (Galbraith). The copy came to the Scudamores when they acquired a portion of HL by marriage in the 14th and fully in 1581.

Several points arise out of the fact that only three private charters of enfeoffment survive from the reign of the Conqueror. One, it may be that all other such transactions have perished in the passing of time; two, agreements such as these may not usually have been

⁹ *EHD*, ii, pp.898-899.

¹⁰ S. Harvey, 'The knight and the knight's fee in England,' *P&P* 49 (1970), p.21; Baxter & Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society,' pp.356-7.

¹¹ *EHD*, ii, p.921.

written down; and three, the agreement of knight service recorded in the Holme Lacy charter may in fact have been an extraordinary agreement.

Eleventh-century laymen of all classes gave and received tenancies, often without any kind of title-deeds, and usually made without any written record by a lord in the presence of his leading tenants. Documents that were written up were therefore fairly exceptional, even before they faced the lottery of surviving to the present day. The Holme Lacy charter is transitional in form. It was a chirograph and chirographs were written in both Latin and Anglo-Saxon in the reign of Edward the Confessor and were the normal species of private deed at least as far back as the early tenth century. There seems to be a strong resemblance between the Anglo-Saxon chirograph and the Anglo-Norman conventio; both constituted an agreement reached between two parties and both were written in duplicate and could then be referred to at a later date to prove or disprove a legal point. The language is that of a narrative and not of a command (as opposed to a writ). The script of the 1085 chirograph is pure Carolingian minuscule, uninfluenced by cursive forms. There is no address included in the charter and it is clear from the use of the past tense that the agreement between Roger de Lacy and Robert Losinga has already been made orally; this is the written record of that transaction. The various terms used to describe the record are perhaps indicative of the transitional nature of the charter, something to which the form also points. The charter is named as a privilegium, and a conventio. This might imply that the agreement made between Bishop Robert and Roger de Lacy was, at the very least, a flexible arrangement in the sense that no fixed formula was adopted for the recording of the arrangement, or at most, a concoction of customs and ideas of little fixed format.

The thousands of land settlements as seen in Domesday Book might then have been agreed orally, or by other means, such as the writ, hence the existence of only three privately written enfeoffments from the reign of William I. Such was the scramble for land following the Conquest that it may be the case that Domesday Book was the first comprehensive legal confirmation of many land settlements, and that Domesday was itself the written record.

A re-examination of the content in addition to the form of the document also raises some questions about the hypothesis of a widespread, heritable system of land held chiefly by knight service in England. Firstly, it is to be noted that the land is not to be held 'in fee'.

The characteristics of a fief would appear to be the right (or claim) to use and manage the land; the right to receive its produce or income; the right to pass it on to heirs; the right to alienate or dispose of it to others; the right to take over property that lacks an owner (the 'reversion') and the right (or claim) to security, that is, the protection of one's title. The granting of a fief on these terms may not necessarily result in the tenant's becoming the lord's vassal by doing him homage. The ties of land-tenure and the ties of personal obligation are thus not always one and the same.

The Holme Lacy grant states unequivocally that if Roger becomes a monk, or dies, neither his mother, wife, sons, brothers nor any kin shall have rights to the land. Instead, the land will be returned to the bishop and the Holy Church. The Holme Lacy grant is not to be held in 'fee': it is a lease, perhaps in the late Anglo-Saxon form, but for one life only, as it was for Roger's father Walter de Lacy. The Onibury grant included in the charter is also to be 'returned without question to the bishop' if Roger dies or becomes a monk. The demand that the Holme Lacy land be a life-lease only is more reminiscent of a benefice than a fief, and that would equate with the naming of the grant as a *privilegium*, akin to the ancient papal privileges. Further to the land at Holme Lacy not being alienable or heritable, it is stated in some detail that the bishop's men of Hampton Bishop (just over the river Wye) and Hereford, should be at liberty to take timber from the wood for the bishop's use as often as it should be needed for fuel or repairing houses. This clause further emphasizes the control the bishop retains over some of the land granted to Roger; a fief would be fully independent.

With the exception of *miles*, none of the words of 'feudalism' exist in the Holme Lacy charter. *Feodum* does not appear, nor homage in any shape or form, or fealty or fief. Roger de Lacy does not become the bishop of Hereford's 'feudal man' and neither do the knights he provides to pay for the land (as far as we know from the document - he is

simply renting land from the Church, using one of several methods of payment, and with limited powers over the property. The knights he provides the bishop with may indeed have been seasoned warriors for the bishop's royal quota, or they may have been individuals whose only attribute was the ability to ride a horse. The terms in the Holme Lacy, Bury and Westminster grants conflict with the most persistent features of tenure by knight service as it was seen in the twelfth century. Both the Bury St. Edmunds and the Westminster charters grant the land for one life only, with varying conditions of service. By Stephen's reign it was accepted that the amount of service be 'certain and definite' and that the land held by knight service should descend to the tenant's heirs. What the three enfeoffments have in common is that none is heritable and neither do they seem to have common customary obligations, such as defined knight service. Other sources concerning the reign of William the Conqueror do not suggest the wholesale introduction of knight service and knightly quotas on a general basis. As we have seen, most striking is the general absence from Domesday Book of any detail on the conditions of the land-holding that it lists, and for the Herefordshire folios in particular, it is worth noting that, of the thirty-six tenants-in-chief in the county, less than half (sixteen) had subinfeudated parts, or all, of their lands to any extent.

Part Two: the Domesday settlement, the totality of Conquest and the 'post-feudal' debate

I would like to turn from the local to the global aspects that brought about the very existence of this land-grant and its details of military service, namely, the totality of the Norman Conquest itself, Domesday Book and what has perhaps moved on to a 'post-feudal' discussion.

The battles of 1066 had destroyed the House of Godwin and many fighting troops of the Old English fyrd but William was crowned in the old way and initially retained English clerks, clergy and nobles at his court.

The rebellions across England between 1068-75 changed this initial policy of 'reaching out' to the English dramatically and irrevocably. Those years saw revolts crushed one by

one across the West Country, the Welsh borders, East Anglia and most brutally, in Yorkshire, where tens of thousands died in a devastating and brutal campaign not seen since the Viking Great Army penetrated central England in the 860s. The *Chronicle* says that King William ‘wholly ravaged and laid waste the shire,’ much elaborated upon by eleventh century writers but the resulting in famine and depopulation is illustrated in Domesday Book in 1086, where the value of Yorkshire had fallen by two thirds from 1066.¹² This was no longer a repeat of Cnut’s rule after 1016: this was a military occupation in a foreign land with little or no pretence to legitimate authority. Norman troops ate and slept together in operational units, patrolling the hostile land, garrisoned in hastily built castles (by the conquered people) of the type we see in the Bayeux Tapestry, constructed at Hastings soon after William’s landing in 1066.¹³ In the words of Tacitus: ‘Robbery, slaughter and plunder they falsely name empire; they make a desert, and they call it peace.’¹⁴

If the English elites, leaderless and disunited though they were, still believed the exiled prince (Edgar) would return one day as both Æthelred and Edward the Confessor did, then they thought wrong. The rebellions provoked what we might call a ‘shock doctrine’ on England which was far more than a military campaign of violence, it was nothing short of a cultural conquest.

This was to be an entirely new England, the old buildings pulled down and replaced with new castles and churches, personnel and language of government replaced (Old English would disappear from the written record for three hundred years) - and finally, the land itself re-allocated to a tiny group of foreigners in what was the most comprehensive elite takeover in English history (8% of the land held in 1086 was held by English people, and

¹² ASC D p.204; S. Baxter & C. P. Lewis, ‘Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society, 1066-1086,’ *Anglo-Norman Studies* 46 (2017), p.386.

¹³ ASC D, p.199; *Bayeux Tapestry*, pl.49-50. If William landed on 28th September and the battle was fought on 14th October, this castle was constructed in a week or so.

¹⁴ Tacitus, *Agricola* 30; It is possible that William knew of *Agricola*, but it is not until the fifteenth century that it became widely known: R. H. Martin, ‘From manuscript to print,’ in A. Woodman (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* (CUP 2010), p.245.

handful of English churchmen remained in office) a legacy that is very much with us in twenty-first century England.¹⁵ The mailed and spurred boot of the Norman lord remained firmly on the neck of the conquered Englishman. Reigns were dated in charters, letters, and statutes high and low as 'after the conquest' for five hundred years, a permanent reminder of the Norman Conquest in the national consciousness and at every level, even the most local (for example, in the Stratford-on-Avon Guild accounts concerning the endowment of the grammar school in 1482, dated 'the 22nd year of King Edward IV *after the conquest*').

All the new cathedrals but Worcester were built by bishops of continental origin, five were on new sites, at the centre of reorganised dioceses. New senior clergy replaced the natives, the traditional liturgy rejected, and English saints repurposed, though not completely rejected; early twelfth century writers depicted the last years of the English church as a time of decline and corruption.¹⁶

All land was now in lordship, dependent on personal and tenure and no tenure without service.¹⁷ Tenancies now descended unfragmented to a single male heir which meant that the material bonding of the old kin-group was dissolved. New practices of inheritance and a new law governing tenure, devolution and descent of landed property were established, a break with the English past, which we might call a revolution, though 'transformation' might be a better way of looking at it, as Professor Stephen Baxter and Chris Lewis recently propose.¹⁸ All land was held, directly or indirectly, of the king, and all fealties ascended to him, principles sealed in Domesday Book and the Salisbury Oath of 1086; William combined the authority of an old English monarchy with a feudal lordship clear cut because it had been imposed amidst conquest.

¹⁵ Baxter & Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society,' p.371.

¹⁶ Lewis, 'Audacity and Ambition in Early Norman England,' p.29.

¹⁷ See J. Hudson, *Land, Law and Lordship in Anglo-Norman England* (OUP, 1994), pp.16-62.

¹⁸ Holt, *Colonial England 1066-1215* p.xiii; S. Baxter & C. P. Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society, 1066-1086,' *Anglo-Norman Studies* 46 (2017), p.403. Baxter & Lewis' recent conclusions are of great significance.

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The Domesday survey was launched at a meeting of the King's assembly in Gloucester at Christmas, 1085, where the king had 'much thought and very deep discussion' (*deope spæce*) with his advisors: this description from the *Chronicle* was written in Old English probably by a monk or cleric based in London or Westminster serving at the royal court:¹⁹

Small wonder that it came to be known as Domesday Book (first mentioned as such in the *Dialogue of the Exchequer* c1176). There is no doubt in the mind of this Englishman that it was a record of conquest. The hides, shires and dues were all units and measurements of the late Early English state: the difference was that it was now all owned by a foreign elite which the survey confirmed in writing; and if it was written down, then it must be true. Landholders were required to attend the Domesday survey on pain of forfeiture, jurors did so on pain of fine and that most of the Englishmen who attended the survey would have been compelled to witness and confirm on oath the loss of their patrimony and social status. Of the thousands of English landholders who lost their lands, one voice lone cries out for all dispossessed Englishmen: Æthelric of Marsh Gibbon (Buckinghamshire) told the commissioners that he held four hides freely in 1066 but now held them 'at farm' from William fitzAnsculf, 'in heaviness and misery'.²⁰

Our very own Bishop Robert Losinga famously called it a *descriptio* and specifically notes how 'the land was vexed with much violence arising from the collection of the royal taxes.'²¹ Two successive great gelds of 72 pence on each hide of land were taken in 1084-5 and 1085-6, involving the transportation to Winchester of over 2 million pennies.²² The councils held in Gloucester in late 1085 would have been a sort of 'tax parliament' since both meetings consented to the levying of resources for military spending.²³

¹⁹ ASC E p.216; Baxter, 'The Making of Domesday Book and the Languages of Lordship,' p.275.

²⁰ DB Buckinghamshire, folio 148v.

²¹ EHD, ii, no.198.

²² Lewis, 'Audacity and Ambition in Early Norman England,' p.42.

²³ Maddicott, 'Responses to the Threat of Invasion, 1085,' *EHR*, cxvii 498 (2007), p.997.

There are around 6,500 vills in Domesday and over 60,000 witnesses participating in the survey as priests, reeves, *villani*, and jurors and this extensive public participation was intentional, to draw a line under 20 years of upheaval and to validate the radically transformed landholding structure of England.²⁴

The most powerful man in England in 1086 was William I. William I held land in every shire except Cheshire and Shropshire; he was the wealthiest in 23 shires. In 1086 the royal demesne was worth £17,800, 23% of the total; fourteen landholders held 26%, thus almost half of the kingdom's wealth was in the hands of 15 individuals.²⁵ Overall, 90% of the landed wealth of England belonged to 150 people and within that group there was a clear hierarchy: the king and the five wealthiest tenants-in-chief (including his two half-brothers) controlled 38% of the kingdom's landed wealth and the other 52% by around 140 lords.²⁶

Conquest and colonization destroyed the upper ranks of the English landed society so that by 1086 about 8% of the landed wealth remained in native hands; and that landed wealth became sharply concentrated from 37,000 landholders in 1066 into the hands of 1,150 new tenants-in-chief holding newly cast estates; the great majority were Norman, but many were from Flanders, Brittany, Picardy and other parts of northern France; just thirteen were English.

King William was the ultimate source of all tenure as well as profit. The net value of the royal demesne doubled from 1066 (£8,230) to 1086 (£16,273). The whole structure of Domesday Book created an elaborate legal fiction of the Norman Conquest, that of William as the legitimate successor to Edward the Confessor.²⁷ In doing so it established a new, post-Conquest landed society with immense power centred around the king not seen before. This was no import from Normandy and did not arise from pre-Conquest England either; it was a unique consequence of 1066.

²⁴ Baxter, 'The Making of Domesday Book and the Languages of Lordship,' p.287.

²⁵ Baxter & Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society,' p.378.

²⁶ Baxter & Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society,' p.380.

²⁷ Baxter, 'The Making of Domesday Book and the Languages of Lordship,' p.292.

In 1086, all land was either the king's own land or held by tenants-in-chief, their estates called 'honours' or 'fiefs.' Lordship over land in 1086 was far more extensive than it had been in 1066, held either immediately or mediately from the king and so it was comprehensive. Domesday Book was designed and made on the presumption that every honour could at any time fall under royal control which we shall see, was the case in Herefordshire and the Welsh frontier.²⁸

The Norman military juggernaut rolled on. A great meeting was convened at Salisbury at Lammas in 1086, to include the king's councillors, and 'all the people occupying land who were of any account over all England,' and 'all submitted to him and were his men and swore him loyal oaths that they would be loyal to him against all other men.'²⁹ The Oath of Salisbury performed on 1st August, 1086, was part of the Domesday survey and the emergency planning arising from the threat of invasion. Which had only just receded.³⁰ It was at Old Sarum that the ancient earthwork ramparts were filled with a citadel complex of castle and cathedral in a classic re-purposing of space for the purpose of commemoration and symbolism. In some ways, the oath at Salisbury was essentially part of the ancient Old English custom of oath-taking and allegiance.³¹ The people present at the oath were not Old English though and relationship with the new monarchy was very different; it may only have been the 150 greatest tenants-in-chief who held 90% of England's wealth and who would fit into the newly built nave to swear the oath.

Part Three: the land-grant and national politics

The totality of the Norman Conquest is essential to remember now that we return to the land-grant where I would now like to focus on the extensive witness-list and look at how this provides crucial evidence of what we might now call an 'emotional community' which was to play out on the national stage in 1088 and 1095.

²⁸ Baxter & Lewis, 'Domesday Book and the transformation of English landed society,' p.367.

²⁹ ASC E, p.217.

³⁰ Maddicott, 'Responses to the Threat of Invasion, 1085,' p.996.

³¹ Wormald, '*Engla Lond*,' p.7

But first let us recall that Herefordshire was a major strategic power-base; we have already seen this with Wllm FitzOsbern & Isle of Wight and Earl Roger de Montgomery; if not quite the keys to England then Herefordshire certainly a lynch-pin of power in the post-1066 settlement and indeed the game of thrones that followed the death of the Conqueror in 1087.

Since power was transferred wholesale to a small minority after 1066 the issue now becomes one of how will that balance of power be maintained amongst the new elite?

A decade before the land-grant of 1085, Herefordshire had already made a name for itself for all the wrong reasons. The English revolts of 1068-71 ended with a rather odd coda for in 1075 earl Roger of Hereford, son of the great William fitzOsbern, took part in a rebellion against William I, which appears to be have been conceived after too many beers at a wedding party with his brother-in-law, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

“That bride-ale was the death of many men”

Earl Roger was banished, and the earldom of Hereford never restored. But it was a foretaste of the future; the second generation of the new elite rebelling against their own king rather than native rebels. (The last English earl, Waltheof, was unfortunate collateral damage, executed in 1076, a clear distinction between the treatment of the English and the French).

This left something of a power vacuum on the Welsh frontier and explains the prominence of the Lacy family and Earl Roger’s pre-eminence in the region.

Earl Roger Hugh, his son Everard, his other son; the countess, Sheriff Warin (married to the Earl’s niece), Osbert son of Richard, Drew son of Pons, Gerard de Tournai, William Malbedan [Malbank] Gilbert, constable of Earl Roger.

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The extensive witness list to the Holme Lacy charter are as important as the details drawn up in the charter and provide valuable evidence for the composition of three baronial households; nine have been identified as Lacy tenants or followers. There were forty-two witnesses included for the Holme Lacy grant, including Earl Roger of Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury, Earl Roger's sons, his wife, his sheriff, constable and men of baronial status from his household, followed by the bishop's clerks and men and Roger's clerks and men, some of whom included tenants-in-chief.

Roger of Montgomery was the only Norman to give his name to a county in the UK; he related to duke William, present at Domfront in 1048. Granted west Sussex in 1067, Shropshire in 1070/1; along with William fitzOsbern (Herefordshire and Isle of Wight) also related to the duke, the only two to hold such a dual position. He was made an earl by 1074.

They were frontier lords in Normandy and became so in England, on the Welsh frontier this time.

This is a large assembly on the Holme Lacy witness list, including some powerful men: were they witnessing an agreement of extraordinary quality? For the Onibury grant, the bishop and Roger de Lacy's men, plus three others, witnessed the grant but Earl Roger and his household did not; it could be that the knight service requested by the bishop for the Holme Lacy lands was extraordinary enough to warrant the presence of Earl Roger de Montgomery to witness that grant. What we must ask is why those witnesses are present at Holme Lacy and why not others, like the great Ralph de Tosny, with lands worth £233 in England, or Ralph de Mortimer, with £300. The great earl of Shrewsbury and his son and heir attended - why? Why would Roger de Montgomery come (presumably) to Hereford, or Gloucester, for the lease of some land not even in his earldom, unless to witness the admission of Walter de Lacy's son to baronial circles; and perhaps to convene with other tenants-in-chief, such as Drogo and Osbern, and of course

the bishop, whose itinerary shows that he was rarely at the king's court. Roger de Montgomery witnessed the Holme Lacy grant because it was an extraordinary agreement, which was commemorated in writing, and duplicated as proof; the people he brought, and the other witnesses, were men of quality and stature, and their connections with one another tell us a good deal about the nature of the land-holders the charter was dealing with. The witness list for the second grant, the land at Onibury, does not include Earl Roger and his household, but it adds Ansfrid de Cormeilles who is not on the Holme Lacy list, indicating that the two grants were made at different times, but written up on one charter. Ansfrid had married Walter de Lacy's niece and was a tenant-in-chief in Herefordshire, ranked above Herman de Dreux and Drogo fitz Pons; as he was from Cormeilles, the burial place of William fitzOsbern, it is reasonable to assume that he was originally fitzOsbern's man.

The witnesses in 1085 were living participants, confirming, agreeing to and counselling the protagonists of the transactions; they 'stand' witness to an event, echoing the claims of Anglo-Saxon witnesses, where bishops 'strengthen' and 'acquiesce' a grant. Using Domesday to supplement the witness-list, we can see that Roger de Lacy's men included *barones*, in that some had powers and responsibility of their own. The nine identified men in Roger's group included pre-Conquest settlers, a tenant-in-chief, a possible relative in marriage to Walter de Lacy, men associated with castles (a mark of baronial status) and two landless - but certainly not worthless - household men. Without Domesday Book we would not know who they were, but without the Holme Lacy grant and witnesses, we would not know whom Roger de Lacy favoured most, or that he in turn was patronized by the earl of Shrewsbury or that the bishop included his brother and archdeacon along with the butler in his household.

In 1085, Roger de Lacy was in an enviable position. Unlike many of his peers, he had inherited from his father and the acquisition had become the patrimony, but in 1095 he gambled away his inheritance, having already rebelled against William Rufus in 1088.

With him in 1088 were Earl Roger de Montgomery, his sons Hugh, Roger de Poitou and Arnulf. Other rebel barons from the Welsh March included Osbern fitzRichard, his son-in-law Bernard Neufmarche and Ralph Mortimer, lord of Wigmore; Earl Roger, his son Hugh and Osbern fitzRichard were all on the 1085 witness list. It was probably the continuing Montgomery association with Duke Robert that influenced the involvement of Roger de Lacy and the other border barons in rebellion in 1088 and 1095, and it was that association that led ultimately to the destruction of the Montgomeries in England and Normandy by Henry I.

The 1088 plot was hatched between Bishop Odo, Eustace of Boulogne, Rbt de Belleme [Earl Roger's son]– ASC the main source –

Easter 1088 – by July Robert had abandoned his plan to invade

“In this year this country was very much disturbed and filled with great treachery, so that the most powerful Frenchmen who were in this country intended to betray their lord the king and to have as king his brother Robert, who was count of Normandy. At the head of this plot was Bishop Odo, with Bishop Geoffrey, and Bishop William of Durham....”

“...Earl Roger was also in this conspiracy, and a very great number of people with them, all Frenchmen, and this conspiracy was plotted during Lent. As soon as Easter was reached, they marched and ravaged and burned and laid waste the king's demesnes, and they ruined the lands of all those men who were in allegiance to the king. And each of them went to his castle and manned it and provisioned it as best he could. Bishop Geoffrey and Robert de Mowbray went to Bristol and ravaged it and carried the plunder to the castle, and then went out of the castle and ravaged Bath and all the surrounding area, and laid waste all the district of Berkeley. Those who were the chief men of Hereford and all the shire with them and the men of Shropshire with a large force from Wales came and ravaged and burned Worcestershire until they came to Worcester itself, and intended to burn the town and plunder the monastery and get the king's castle by force into their hands. Seeing these things the reverend Bishop Wulfstan was much distressed in mind because the castle had been committed to him

to hold; nevertheless, the members of his household marched out with a few men from the castle and, through God's mercy and the bishop's merits, killed and captured five hundred men and routed all the rest..."

The king fought back and Odo was captured, the rebellion quashed in Kent. Earl Roger's three sons (including Hugh, listed on the 1085 grant as a witness) were all in Rochester Castle, Earl Roger apparently in his castle at Arundel awaiting news from Count Robert. Bernard of Neufmarche, Roger de Lacy and Ralf de Mortemer with the men of earl Roger, led the attack on the towns of Hereford and Worcester (according to John of Worcester, early 12th).

6 of the 10 wealthiest magnates in England favoured rebellion and Duke Robert, only three stood by the king.

Earl Roger's part – ambiguous, hedging his bets? With the king's forces at Rochester, secretly helping his sons, backing both horses?

By July the invasion was abandoned, King William was lenient to the rebels on account of their years of service, experience and old age. Earl Roger appears on the witness list to a charter in late summer of 1088, suggesting reconciliation with the new king. The list includes rebels and loyalists.

1095 earl Hugh lost his earldom and was killed in 1098; with Henry I's accession to the throne, not Duke Robert, they were out of favour and fell from power in 1102 (Hugh's brother, Earl Robert de Belleme, exiled and eventually imprisoned for life). The Montgomery family was finished.

The post Conquest kings had none of the impotence of Edward the Confessor. The totality of the Conquest put vast holdings at their disposal. A second generation of young Turks known to one another by kinship, marriage and territory attempted create a new narrative but failed.

The Lacy family though, continued to flourish through Walter's collateral descent, and continued to hold

The earldoms of Hereford, East Anglia and Northumbria fell in 1075; Hugh de Montgomery and Roger de Lacy, both involved with the 1085 grant, lost their lands after the revolt of 1095, along with Robert, earl of Northumbria.

Conclusion

THE *familia* of kings and earls was all important in post-Conquest England, perhaps the single most important element in the whole political system. This was centred on the baronial household, which is the gathering we see on the witness-lists on the Holme Lacy charter, actively making that certainty. The social composition was lateral rather than conical, with many groups and circles of influence. There are 'barons', ministerial, honorial or familial, there are 'men', and there are 'friends': they may be one or all of those three; they may be knights or clerics, earls or lords; they may hold either land or office or both. There are some with many estates, others with few; there are some with one lord, others with several; and there are some who are tenants-in-chief and sub-tenants in the same county. This was not a feudal system, but rather a 'feudal labyrinth', intertwining lords and lands, counties and kingdoms.

The Holme Lacy land-grant of 1085, allows us, through a glass darkly, a view of Anglo-Norman baronial society in uncharted waters at the very moment an acquisition became a patrimony, a generation after Hastings and on the eve of Domesday.

It also shines a light onto the networks and alliances existing on the Welsh borders that played out on the national stage, and how the elite community attached to one small Herefordshire village were prime movers in attempting to change the course of post-Conquest English history.

Thank you.