

## EARL RANULF II AND LANCASHIRE

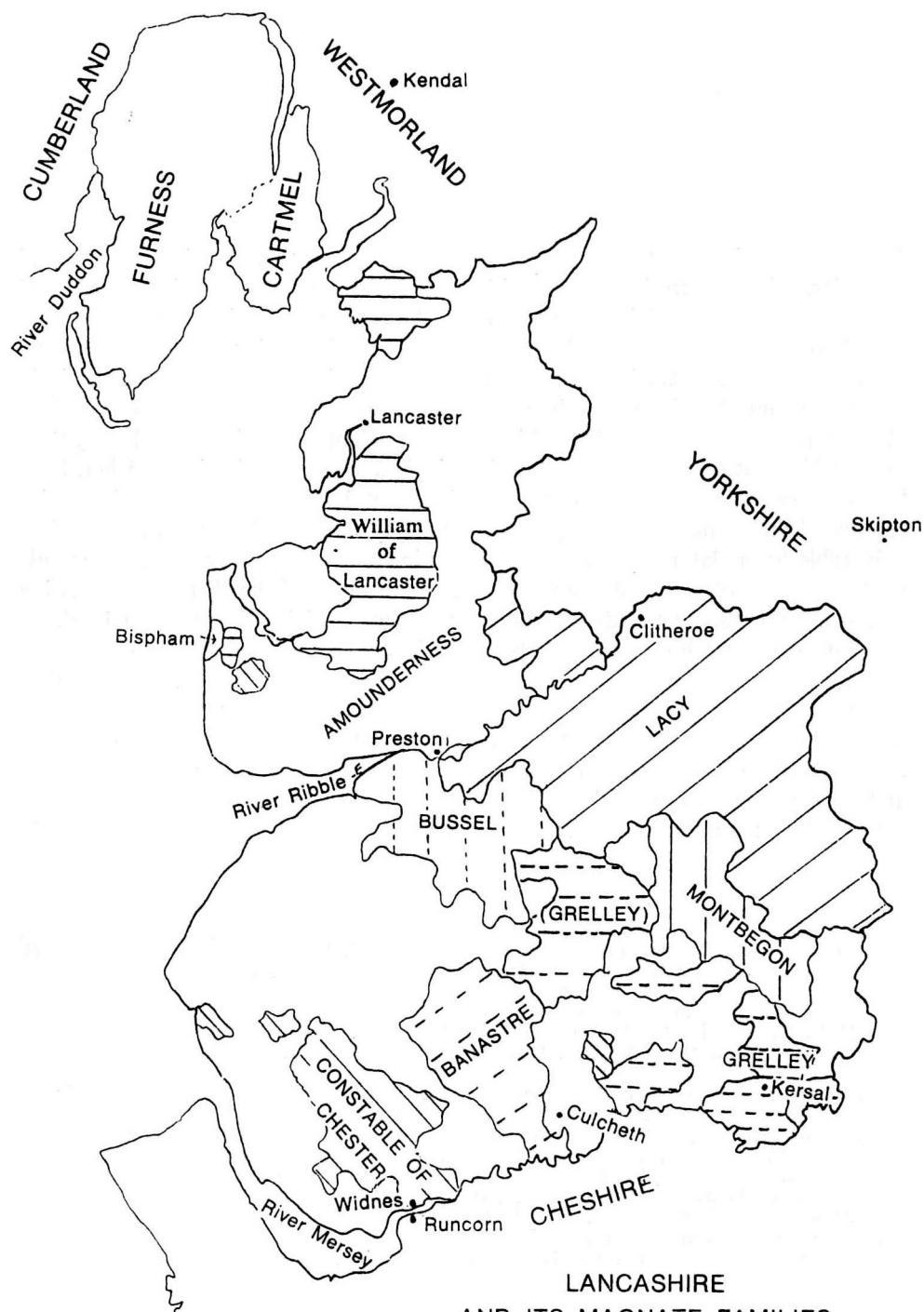
by Judith Green

The familiar picture of King Stephen's reign is that of a breakdown of royal authority, with powerful magnates able and willing to step into the breach and extend their spheres of influence. One of the greatest of all the magnates was Ranulf II earl of Chester, who had great estates both in England and in Normandy. We cannot be sure what his views were about the claims to the throne respectively of Stephen and Matilda, but as the price of his support he exacted huge concessions of land from Stephen and from Matilda's son Henry, and in general sought to expand his estates at the expense of his neighbours.<sup>1</sup> Lancashire in 1135 had been for some years in the possession of Stephen, but it was remote from the major centres of his concerns as king, or as duke of Normandy, and was therefore vulnerable to predatory neighbours. The first incursions into Lancashire were made by King David of Scotland, who used the opportunity of the disputed succession to the English throne to advance his own territorial claims in northern England. The fate of Lancashire during Stephen's reign is the subject of this paper. The evidence is mainly in the form of charters, and as these are difficult to date precisely, differing views have been expressed by historians such as W. Farrer, J. Tait, H. A. Cronne, and G. W. S. Barrow.<sup>2</sup> The publication of all the charters issued by Ranulf II in *The Charters of the Earldom of Chester c. 1071-1237* now makes it possible to date the relevant documents more accurately and thus to throw light on a difficult historical problem.<sup>3</sup> It will be suggested here that David

<sup>1</sup> There is at present no survey of the life of Ranulf II which takes full account of the charter evidence. The entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (by J. H. Round) and in *Complete Peerage*, by G. E. C., revised edn., V. Gibbs, H. A. Doubleday, G. H. White (13 vols. in 12, London, 1910-59), III, pp. 166-7, and the article by H. A. Cronne, 'Ranulf de Gernons, Earl of Chester', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XX (1937), pp. 103-34 must be used with care. An important contribution was made by R. H. C. Davis, 'King Stephen and the Earl of Chester', *E.H.R.*, LXXV (1960), pp. 654-60. See also G. White, 'King Stephen, Duke Henry and Ranulf de Gernons, Earl of Chester', *E.H.R.* XCI (1976), pp. 555-65.

<sup>2</sup> W. Farrer, *Lancashire Pipe Rolls* (hereafter cited as *L.P.R.*) (Liverpool, 1902), pp. ix-xii; and the same author's remarks in *Victoria County History, Lancashire* (hereafter cited as *V.C.H. Lancs.*), I, pp. 291-5; W. Farrer, *Records Relating to the Barony of Kendale*, ed. J. F. Curwen, 3 vols., Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Record Series, IV-VI (1923-6), pp. iv-vi; J. Tait, *Mediaeval Manchester and the Beginnings of Lancashire* (Manchester, 1904), pp. 151-97; H. A. Cronne, 'The Honour of Lancaster in Stephen's Reign', *E.H.R.*, L (1935), pp. 670-81; G. W. S. Barrow, 'King David I and the Honour of Lancaster', *E.H.R.* LXX (1955), pp. 85-9.

<sup>3</sup> I should like to thank Dr. P. McNiven for allowing me to see the typescript of this volume in advance of publication.



LANCASHIRE  
AND ITS MAGNATE FAMILIES  
IN THE EARLY TWELFTH CENTURY

probably took over the north in the late 1130s; that Ranulf held the south from 1146 if not before, and was ceded the north also in 1149, holding both areas until his death in 1153.

The region termed Lancashire above was not in 1135 a fully-fledged county: it comprised two distinct regions. The southern part, 'between Ribble and Mersey' as it was called in Domesday Book and the 1130 pipe roll, had been taken into the earldom of Mercia in the tenth century and was part of the bishopric of Chester. That north of the Ribble as far as the Duddon had been part of the pre-Conquest earldom of Northumbria and belonged to the archdiocese of York. After the Conquest both regions, together with Furness and Cartmel in south-west Cumbria, passed to Roger the Poitevin, third surviving son of the Conqueror's lieutenant, Roger of Montgomery.<sup>4</sup> Roger the Poitevin's estates were reorganized and enlarged after 1086 until he held virtually the whole of the later county of Lancashire.<sup>5</sup>

Roger almost certainly established his headquarters at Lancaster, and may well have been responsible for building a castle.<sup>6</sup> Before 1094 he founded there a priory affiliated to Shrewsbury abbey, itself a daughter house of Sées, and he had begun to distribute lands to his followers, including Albert Grelley,<sup>7</sup> Roger de Montbegon,<sup>8</sup> and Payn de Vilers.<sup>9</sup> Roger shared in his family's downfall in 1102; he retired to his wife's estates in Poitou, and although he was in England in 1109 he does not seem to have kept his estates there.<sup>10</sup> It was probably in or around 1113 that Henry I granted Roger's estates to Stephen of Blois.<sup>11</sup> Stephen received vast estates on both sides of the Channel from his uncle, yet it was in Lancashire that he chose

<sup>4</sup> For Roger see R. Schofield, 'Roger of Poitou', *T.H.S.L.C.*, CXVII (1965), pp. 185-90; V. Chandler, 'The Last of the Montgomerys: Roger the Poitevin and Arnulf', *Historical Research*, LXII (1989), pp. 1-14; for an important insight see C. P. Lewis, 'The King and Eye: A Study in Anglo-Norman Politics', *E.H.R.*, CIV (1989), pp. 569-87.

<sup>5</sup> In 1086 Roger was described as having held (past tense) the land between Ribble and Mersey, *Domesday Book*, I, pp. 269b-270; and in the survey of Yorkshire his estates appurtenant to Preston and Beetham are entered, *ibid.*, pp. 301b, 332b. By the time he issued a charter for Lancaster priory his estates in the north had been increased, Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 292-5.

<sup>6</sup> For a brief description, *V.C.H. Lancs.*, II, pp. 528-9.

<sup>7</sup> Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 289-96; for the family, *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, pp. 326-34.

<sup>8</sup> The charter of Roger of Montbegon and Sezilia his wife for the abbey of Sées included 'all the tithe of their demesne between Ribble and Mersey'. This was calendared from a cartulary of Sées by J. H. Round, *Calendar of Documents Preserved in Fance*, I: *A.D. 918-1206*, p. 236. Roger the Poitevin's charter (preserved in the same cartulary and calendared by Round, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-7) included a confirmation of the gifts of Roger and Sezilia not mentioned in the version of Roger's charter in B.L., Harley MS. 3764, f. 1, a cartulary of Lancaster priory. The latter text was printed by Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 289-90, and in *Materials for the History of Lancaster Priory*, ed. W. O. Roper, 2 vols., Chetham Society, new series, XXVI, XXXI (1892, 1894), XXVI, pp. 8-12. For the Montbegon family see *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, pp. 319-26.

<sup>9</sup> Payn de Vilers witnessed Roger's charter for Lancaster; Farrer, *L.P.R.*, p. 290. For the family see *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, pp. 337-49. The Bussel family was also probably established by Roger, as Warin Bussel held land in Lancashire before 1102; Farrer, *L.P.R.*, p. 382. Geoffrey Bussel and Albert his brother witnessed Roger's foundation charter for Lancaster; for the family see *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, pp. 335-6.

<sup>10</sup> Roger occurs as a witness to Henry I's charter recognising the foundation of the diocese of Ely: *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066-1154* (hereafter *R.R.A.N.*), 4 vols., ed. H. W. C. Davis and others (Oxford, 1913-1969), II, no. 919.

<sup>11</sup> See below, n. 41.

to establish his first major religious foundation. In 1123 he founded an abbey at Tulketh near Preston, a daughter house of Savigny near Mortain in Normandy.<sup>12</sup> Soon the site was changed to Furness, and eventually the abbey became one of the most powerful houses in the north. Stephen thus had a direct personal interest in the region before his accession to the throne and the outbreak of civil war.

For Ranulf as for other magnates, Stephen's seizure of the throne presented a dilemma. Stephen was the crowned king, but we can be almost certain that Ranulf had taken the oath of fealty to Matilda, Henry's heir-designate, in 1127 or 1131.<sup>13</sup> If Ranulf was tempted to adhere to Matilda, the swift actions of her uncle, King David, must soon have dissuaded him. As soon as David heard of the old king's death he crossed the border and seized the strongholds of Carlisle, Wark, Alnwick, Norham, and Newcastle.<sup>14</sup> Carlisle was the key to Cumbria, which the Scots had probably controlled until Rufus's expedition of 1092. Either Rufus or Henry I had established Ranulf II's father, Ranulf Meschin, at Carlisle, but the elder Ranulf had been persuaded to hand it back after succeeding to the earldom of Chester in 1120 or 1121. From the 1120s David clearly intended to recover Cumbria for the Scots, though he did not invade during the lifetime of Henry I. Ranulf II became earl of Chester in 1129, and had not been able to persuade Henry I to give back Carlisle. He could hope to be more favourably treated by Stephen. He attended Stephen's court therefore at Easter 1136,<sup>15</sup> but later in the same year had to stand by whilst Stephen accepted the Scottish takeover of Carlisle. Scottish overlordship of Cumbria was far from nominal, and most of the major families by one means or another came under Scottish influence.<sup>16</sup> With a firm base in Cumbria, David could look towards the south for further gains.

The first clear evidence that David had moved into Lancashire comes in two charters which David issued confirming the monks of Shrewsbury in possession of their Lancashire estates. One of these was phrased generally, was addressed 'to all his men of the honour of Lancaster', and was issued at 'Culch'.<sup>17</sup> The other specifically confirmed the monks in their possession of the church of Kirkham

<sup>12</sup> Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 301-3.

<sup>13</sup> Ranulf may have taken the oath in 1127, though he had not succeeded to the earldom of Chester at that time. He was present at the council of Northampton in 1131, when there was a second opportunity: *R.R.A.N.*, II, no. 1715; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, ed. and trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford, 1955), pp. 3-10.

<sup>14</sup> Richard of Hexham, 'De Gestis Regis Stephani et de Bello Standardi' in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, 4 vols., Rolls Series (London, 1884-9) III, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, III, no. 271.

<sup>16</sup> Cumbria comprised only a handful of lordships, see G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Pattern of Lordship and Feudal Settlement in Cumbria', *Journal of Medieval History*, I (1975), pp. 117-38. Egremont passed by marriage to William FitzDuncan, David's nephew, who later inherited Papcastle from Alan son of Waldeve: I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 115, 142, 134. Westmorland consisted of only two lordships, both of which passed to Hugh de Morville, a man who spent many years in David's service and became his constable: Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, p. 73. Finally, Ranulf Engaine who married the heiress to Burgh by Sands may have been a member of one of the Engaine families which entered David's service: Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 23; Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, p. 98 n.

<sup>17</sup> Farrer, *L.P.R.*, p. 274.

and of land at Bispham, and was issued at the 'new castle of Culchet'.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of these two charters Cronne argued that in the 1140s King David held the whole of Lancashire, because he identified Bispham and 'Culchet' with places south of the Ribble.<sup>19</sup> Barrow has demonstrated, however, that the second charter was probably issued in 1141 because of the attestation of Jordan the Chancellor, and he pointed out that the Bispham in question was near Blackpool.<sup>20</sup> The charters could still be used as evidence that David had moved south of the Ribble in 1141 if Cronne's suggestion that Culchet is to be identified with Culcheth in West Derby hundred is correct, but a more likely identification is Culgaith near Penrith.<sup>21</sup>

Whether or not he crossed the river Ribble, David had evidently arrived in north Lancashire by 1141, and there are grounds for thinking he may have taken over several years earlier, for Scottish troops are known to have attacked Clitheroe in 1138.<sup>22</sup> The then lord of Clitheroe was Ilbert de Lacy, a supporter of Stephen.<sup>23</sup> His lands were ravaged by David's nephew, William fitz Duncan, probably in possession by marriage of nearby Skipton and the honour of Egremont in Cumbria.<sup>24</sup>

Crucial to the control of north Lancashire were control of Lancaster castle and the submission of the local aristocracy. The former could well have been in the custody of William of Lancaster whose name, already ascribed to him in Stephen's charter for Furness of 1136, indicates a close link with the place.<sup>25</sup> William's father was Gilbert; his mother Godith may have come from a family already settled in

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Cronne, 'Honour of Lancaster', pp. 675-6.

<sup>20</sup> Barrow, 'King David and the Honour of Lancaster', p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> *The Place Names of Cumberland*, ed. A. M. Armstrong and others, English Place Name Society, XX, XXI, XXII (Cambridge, 1950-2), XX, pp. 184-5. This was the identification proposed by Farrer, *L.P.R.*, *corrigenda*, p. vi, cf. p. 275 for his earlier nomination of Kelso. There appears to have been no major fortification at Culgaith itself, but Penrith lies only some six miles to the west. Cronne pointed out that Culcheth in West Derby similarly lacks major fortifications, but is close to Newton in Makerfield: 'Honour of Lancaster', p. 671. Another possibility which does not appear to have been considered before but which would make sense is Tulketh near Preston. Tulketh was the first location for the abbey of Furness, and the site of a castle, see *V.C.H. Lancs.*, II, pp. 536-7.

<sup>22</sup> John of Hexham in Symeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols., Rolls Series (London, 1882-5), II, p. 306.

<sup>23</sup> W. E. Wightman, *The Lacy Family in England and Normandy 1066-1194* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 73-4.

<sup>24</sup> See above, n. 16. William's marriage must have taken place after 1135. Ranulf Meschin, who held the honour before it passed to his sister Cecily, was living in 1135 but dead by 1140, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, VII, ed. C. T. Clay, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, extra series, V (1947), p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, III, no. 337.

the North-West at the time of the Normans' arrival.<sup>26</sup> By the mid-twelfth century he held land both in Cumbria and north Lancashire. He certainly held the former by 1135 and there is no reason to suppose he did not hold the latter also.<sup>27</sup> If so, he was unlikely to resist Scottish advance into Lancashire once Cumbria had fallen to David. Nor were other local lords likely to offer much resistance. In general these were men of moderate standing rather than national prominence and some, as will be suggested later, probably lived outside the county.

The Scottish advance into Lancashire can hardly have come as welcome news for Earl Ranulf. He had been so angry about the takeover of Carlisle that he tried to capture David's son Henry, returning to the Scottish court in 1140 from the court of King Stephen.<sup>28</sup> It seems as though Ranulf was acting on impulse, as it was said he was inclined to do;<sup>29</sup> perhaps his intention was to hold Henry for ransom to secure the return of Carlisle. In a wider context Ranulf must have been concerned about Scottish southward expansion. David had taken Carlisle in 1136, and was granted Northumberland in 1139; the Scots had historic claims to both as part of the old kingdom of Northumbria, but where would their expansion end? Stephen had already made two major concessions of territory, and in the case of Northumberland it looked as though he had won the war in 1138 only to lose the peace in the following year. Ranulf himself had estates in Yorkshire, a county vulnerable to further Scottish attack. When Archbishop Thurstan of York died in 1140 there were moves afoot to appoint as his successor David's stepson, Waldef, prior of Kirkham.<sup>30</sup> Although these were quashed by Stephen, Scottish influence

<sup>26</sup> William referred to his father Gilbert and mother Godith in his charter for Leicester abbey: Farrer, *L.P.R.*, p. 390. William died between 1166 and 1170, so he could have been a son of a Norman established by Roger the Poitevin. Gilbert's wife Godith may have been a daughter of Ketel. Ketel son of Eldred was a benefactor of St. Bees, founded in 1120, to which he gave the churches of Morland, 'Brounfeld' and Workington: *Register of the Priory of St. Bees*, ed. J. Wilson, Surtees Society, CXXVI (1915), pp. 233-4. Ketel's land in Kirkby (Kendal) passed to William of Lancaster: *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, II, p. 442, no. 22. Genealogies of the family were composed at Cockersand Priory and St. Mary's York, *The Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey*, ed. W. Farrer, 7 vols., Chetham Society, XXXVIII-XL, XLIII, LVI-LVII, LXIV (1898-1909), II, pp. 305-8. According to these, William was the son of Gilbert, grandson of Ketel, great-grandson of Eldred, and great-great-grandson of Ivo Taillebois. Ivo was the first husband of 'Countess' Lucy and there is no evidence that he had a son named Eldred. The evidence is discussed by G. Washington, 'The Parentage of William of Lancaster, Lord of Kendal', *Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, new series, LXII (1962), pp. 95-100.

<sup>27</sup> In 1136 Stephen's charter to Furness confirmed William's gift of Muncaster in Cumbria. In addition William's gift of land at 'Swartahof' (? Swartha Brow) to St. Bees was confirmed by William Meschin (d. 1135): *Register of St. Bees*, pp. 30-5. William held land in north Lancashire by 1156 for he gave land at Cockerham to Leicester abbey in a charter issued between 1153 and 1156: Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 391-2. On p. 8 Farrer suggested that William had been enfeoffed by William of Blois of a knight's fee at Warton and Garstang, but no charter of enfeoffment survives and William of Lancaster could well have been established earlier in view of his connexions with local families, see preceding note. The estates of the family in the thirteenth century are listed in *Book of Fees* (3 vols., London, 1920-31), I, p. 206.

<sup>28</sup> John of Hexham in Symeon of Durham, *Opera omnia*, II, 306.

<sup>29</sup> Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. T. Arnold, Rolls Series (London, 1879), p. 272.

<sup>30</sup> Jocelin of Furness, 'Life of Waldef', *Acta Sanctorum*, 3 August, p. 257a.



was boosted in another region when in 1141 David's chancellor, William Cumin, intruded himself into the see of Durham.<sup>31</sup>

Ranulf certainly regarded Carlisle as a lost portion of his patrimony. The terms on which his father had held Carlisle are not known, but the latter's establishment of his relatives in Cumbrian lordships suggests he dealt with it as if he held in chief of the crown: he gave Egremont to his brother William Meschin,<sup>32</sup> Burgh by Sands to his brother-in-law Robert de Trivers,<sup>33</sup> and Kirklington to Richer de Boivill, who came from Ranulf's estates in Normandy.<sup>34</sup> Ranulf Meschin had surrendered Carlisle probably shortly after he succeeded to the earldom of Chester in 1120 or 1121. Surrenders and exchanges were not unknown after the Conquest, but how far Ranulf II felt bound by his father's action is open to question.

Just as galling to Ranulf must have been the further advance of the Scots into Lancashire, for he believed his father had a right to the lands previously held by Roger the Poitevin. In 1149 Ranulf issued a charter for Evesham abbey confirming the monks in their possession of Howick in the parish of Penwortham, as they had held it in the time of Earl Roger the Poitevin and Earl Ranulf his father.<sup>35</sup> Farrer was dismissive of Ranulf's claim that his father had held any part of Lancashire:<sup>36</sup> 'it is most certain that he (Ranulf) never held any interest in either the county or honor, nor ever made so preposterous a claim, seeing that Stephen's title to that honor was unimpeachable'. Tait was more cautious, however, as was Professor Barraclough in his notes on this charter, and they were right to be so.<sup>37</sup> A further sign that Ranulf saw himself as the legitimate successor to Roger the Poitevin is to be found in the charter issued by Stephen, probably in 1146, which made several grants to Ranulf including the lands of Roger the Poitevin and the two parts of Lancashire.<sup>38</sup>

Nothing is known of the fate of Roger's lands between his downfall in 1102, and their appearance in Stephen's hands by 1116 at the latest when he was in possession of the Lincolnshire estates.<sup>39</sup> It is not known when Stephen of Blois joined his uncle's court; it may not have been much before 1113 when his presence there is first mentioned.<sup>40</sup> There are grounds for thinking that he received the

<sup>31</sup> On this episode see A. Young, *William Cumin: Border Politics and the Bishopric of Durham 1141-1144*, University of York Borthwick Paper, no. 57.

<sup>32</sup> Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, p. 176.

<sup>35</sup> *C.E.C.*, no. 90.

<sup>36</sup> *L.P.R.*, pp. 319-20.

<sup>37</sup> Tait, *Mediaeval Manchester*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>38</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, III, no. 178.

<sup>39</sup> Roger's Lincolnshire estates were in Stephen's possession by the time of the Lindsey Survey; for the text see *The Lincolnshire Domesday and the Lindsey Survey*, ed. C. W. Foster and T. Longley, Lincoln Record Society, XIX (1921), pp. 237-60; for the view that the survey dates from 1115 or 1116, T. Foulds, 'The Lindsey Survey and an unknown precept of King Henry I', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, LIX (1986), pp. 212-15.

<sup>40</sup> *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. Chibnall (6 vols., Oxford, 1969-71), VI, p. 174.

honour of Eye in or around 1113.<sup>41</sup> Eye had been held for a time by Roger the Poitevin, so it is reasonable to suppose Stephen received Roger's northern estates at the same time.<sup>42</sup> It was by no means impossible that Ranulf Meschin was put in charge of Roger's northern estates, which lay to the south of the lordship of Carlisle, at some period between 1102 and 1113.<sup>43</sup> If he was, it is possible that the terms of Ranulf's tenure were not clearly defined: the king may have seen this as a temporary custody, and Ranulf may have believed, or have hoped, that custody would become an outright grant.

Moreover, the interests of the earldom of Chester did not end at the Mersey, for one of the most important tenants, the lord of Halton, held land at Widnes. The tenure may have been granted by Roger the Poitevin, or even have predated Roger's arrival in the north.<sup>44</sup> William fitz Nigel, who held Halton in 1086, also seems to have acquired land at Staining in Amounderness before 1115, for he gave land there to the priory he founded at Runcorn in Cheshire.<sup>45</sup>

It is just possible that Ranulf moved into south Lancashire at some date before 1146, as he could not afford to ignore what he must have regarded as Scottish aggression. Nevertheless, between 1140 and 1146 he was heavily committed elsewhere. We have seen how initially he supported Stephen because his interests directly conflicted with those of King David, a leading advocate on behalf of Matilda. By the close of 1140, however, Ranulf had had enough of supporting Stephen, and with his half-brother William of Roumare, fortified the castle of Lincoln against the king. In the battle that followed, Stephen was captured; for a time Matilda's party was in the ascendant, but then its fortunes turned again. After the Angevin retreat from Winchester Ranulf made overtures to Stephen, but was not formally reconciled until late in 1145 or early in 1146. For about five years, therefore, he was in revolt; his activities in those years must be pieced together from charters and chronicles: he was evidently fighting in Yorkshire and in the Midlands.<sup>46</sup> There is no sign that Lancashire was high on his agenda at the time, though we should note that in 1143 or 1144 he made a grant of land to Henry de Lacy who by this time had succeeded his brother as lord of Pontefract and Clitheroe. As Professor Barraclough noted, the grant looks like an attempt to win over Henry, a supporter of Stephen, to the Angevins.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps Ranulf also had the security of east Lancashire in mind.

<sup>41</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, II, no. 932 n.: a charter of Hervey of Léon for Eye states that Henry I held Eye for seven years and that Stephen held it for twenty-two years. This charter survives only in a late transcript.

<sup>42</sup> For Eye see, Lewis, 'The King and Eye', pp. 569-87.

<sup>43</sup> Note, however, that Henry I converted Robert de Lacy's tenure of Bowland (held of Roger the Poitevin) into a tenancy in chief, *R.R.A.N.*, II, no. 611. For the possibility that Henry also granted estates in Lancashire to William Peverel, see below n. 52.

<sup>44</sup> *Domesday Book*, I, p. 269b; cf. *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, p. 280.

<sup>45</sup> *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, p. 298.

<sup>46</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K. R. Potter, 2nd edn. with introduction and notes by R. H. C. Davis (Oxford, 1976), pp. 166-8; John of Hexham in Symeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, II, p. 315. For Ranulf in the midlands, *C.E.C.*, nos. 50-3, 57, 72, 74-5.

<sup>47</sup> *C.E.C.*, no. 69.



When Ranulf did come to terms with Stephen, he received a number of grants from the latter, including the lands of Roger the Poitevin (except the Lincolnshire fief of Roger de Montbegon), and an hereditary grant of the honour of Lancaster and all the land between Ribble and Mersey.<sup>48</sup> As far as is known the honour of Lancaster if not south Lancashire was in David's hands in 1146; but now Ranulf was entitled to take over the whole if he could.

Ranulf issued four charters dealing with the land between Ribble and Mersey.<sup>49</sup> One, for Evesham abbey, has already been mentioned and is datable to 1149. Two were for Shrewsbury abbey and one for Lenton priory in Nottinghamshire. The dating of these three depends on witness lists. The earliest date assigned to one of the Shrewsbury charters (no. 63) is 1140; more probably it was issued in 1146/7, and number 64 in 1147/8; both are confirmations of earlier gifts. If the three were issued at the same time, it is tempting to suggest a date of about 1147, that is, soon after Ranulf's takeover of the land between Ribble and Mersey.

The fourth charter of Ranulf dealing with land in this area purports to be a gift by Ranulf to Lenton priory of land at Kersal, now part of Manchester. This is more likely to have been a confirmation than a gift by Ranulf himself, as Professor Barraclough pointed out. Lenton priory had been founded by William Peverel the elder, whose son was both a consistent supporter of Stephen and an enemy of Earl Ranulf. William was accused of plotting to poison the earl in 1153 and his lands were subsequently confiscated.<sup>50</sup> There was obviously personal antipathy between Ranulf and William, and there may well have been friction between them as neighbours in Cheshire and Derbyshire. The acquisition of Glossop in Longdendale by William, or more probably his father, brought him very close to the boundary of Cheshire.<sup>51</sup> The elder William may also have been given Kersal and other estates in Lancashire by Henry I or Stephen, and he may have given Kersal to Lenton.<sup>52</sup> An alternative, and equally possible suggestion of Professor Barraclough, is that Stephen himself was the donor of Kersal before he lost control of south Lancashire. From the witnesses to the charter Barraclough suggested a date of 1147 or 1148. Perhaps a slightly earlier date is more likely with the political situation in mind: Ranulf had no reason to conciliate Stephen after his imprisonment by the king, nor indeed to show favour to a religious foundation of Stephen's supporter, William Peverel.

Stephen's unexpected arrest and brief imprisonment of Earl Ranulf in 1146, so soon after their rapprochement, was what we would call a preemptive strike.

<sup>48</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, III, no. 178.

<sup>49</sup> *C.E.C.*, nos. 63, 64, 84, 90.

<sup>50</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 236.

<sup>51</sup> In 1086 Longdendale, including Glossop, was listed under the royal demesne, *Domesday Book*, I, p. 273. William Peverel's tenure of Glossop in the reign of Henry I is mentioned in a charter of Henry II for Basingwerk abbey, W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (new edn. 6 vols. in 8, London, 1817-30), V, p. 262.

<sup>52</sup> Estates at Ashton near Preston, Blackrod and two at Marton in Amounderness also passed into the possession of William Peverel, for they were later described as escheat of Peverel, *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, p. 292n. Farrer suggested that they formed the *maritagium* of Avic of Lancaster, *Honors and Knighths' Fees* (3 vols., London, 1923-5), I, p. 202.

Ranulf had come to court to persuade the king to help him mount an expedition against the Welsh; the king's counsellors urged caution lest Stephen exposed himself to danger; they insisted that the earl should restore land he had unjustly taken from the king and give hostages. When Ranulf refused, he was arrested and imprisoned for a short time, then released. Ranulf was never again to rejoin Stephen's side; when he was released he immediately tried to recover lost ground in the Midlands.

The character of the conflict in England was changing by the late 1140s. The principal magnate on the Angevin side, Earl Robert of Gloucester, had died in 1147, and Matilda had handed over leadership of the Angevin cause to her son Henry. He was still very young, so Ranulf was arguably now the most senior magnate opposing the king, and there are signs in the witness lists of his charters that members of the Angevin party were looking to him for leadership.<sup>53</sup> In 1149 Prince Henry went to the court of his uncle David at Carlisle to be knighted, and there they were joined by Earl Ranulf. David could grant title to two pieces of territory Ranulf wanted, Carlisle and north Lancashire. Carlisle was too big a sacrifice for David, but he was prepared to concede north Lancashire. In return for giving up his claim to Carlisle, Ranulf received from David the honour of Lancaster, and with David and Henry planned an attack on York.<sup>54</sup>

The change of lordship may once again be illustrated from a charter. In July 1149, probably on his way home from Carlisle, Ranulf issued a charter for Shrewsbury's priory at Lancaster, the witnesses including William son of Gilbert, that is, William of Lancaster. It is the presence of this man at Lancaster in Ranulf's entourage that indicates he had indeed secured possession of the north of the county.<sup>55</sup>

So far as we know, Ranulf held both parts of Lancashire for the last four years of his life. Early in 1153, a critical year for the Angevin cause, Ranulf's possession of the lands of Roger the Poitevin was confirmed in a charter issued by Prince Henry. The charter made additional, almost reckless, grants of territory, but in practice Henry was spared the necessity of having to abide by them.<sup>56</sup> Ranulf died later in the same year and was buried at Chester; his heir was a minor whose claims could be conveniently overridden. Later in 1153 Henry came to terms with Stephen whereby the latter was to retain the throne for his lifetime, and Henry was to succeed him. Stephen's second eldest surviving son was to receive an ample grant of land. This included Lancashire north and south, which accordingly were held by William of Blois between 1153 and 1159.

Lancashire during Stephen's reign was contested between Ranulf of Chester and David of Scotland, and the final question to be considered here is whether the changes of lordship had much effect on the region? The only recorded fighting in

<sup>53</sup> *C.E.C.*, nos. 84, 85.

<sup>54</sup> John of Hexham in Symeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, II, pp. 322-3.

<sup>55</sup> *C.E.C.*, no. 88.

<sup>56</sup> *R.R.A.N.*, III, no. 180.

the county was that at Clitheroe in 1138; it is possible there were other conflicts, but if so they were not serious enough to attract attention. The history of the major local families can be sketched in outline at least and the changes of overlordship seem to have left few traces. One possible sign of tension is the exemption of Roger de Montbegon's lands in Lincolnshire from the grant of the lands held by Roger the Poitevin to Ranulf in 1146. Roger de Montbegon was not prepared to accept Ranulf's overlordship in Lincolnshire, and this refusal could have affected their relationship in Lancashire. Some Lancashire families chiefly resided on their estates elsewhere. Farrer suggested the Grelley family probably lived at Tunstead in Norfolk or Sixhills in Lincolnshire.<sup>57</sup> The estates of the Bussel and de Vilers families were also scattered.<sup>58</sup> One possible development was that David and then Ranulf could have tried to consolidate their overlordship in the way that David did in Cumbria, by making sure key lordships were in trusted hands, by marrying heiresses to their own men, or by putting in new overlords. David may also have given men from north-west England land in Scotland, though the evidence for such emigration seems to date from the later twelfth century.<sup>59</sup> The charters of Earl Ranulf do not suggest that he was trying to build up local support by granting Lancashire men land elsewhere, reinforcing the impression Lancashire was not of central importance to him.

One individual whose fortunes were in the ascendant was William of Lancaster. He died between 1166 and 1170, and not only survived the various changes of lordship, but increased his estates and, by two prestigious marriages, the standing of his family. At some date before 1154 his daughter Avice married William Peverel the younger.<sup>60</sup> The circumstances of this marriage are highly interesting: it looks as though it must have occurred before Ranulf's acquisition of north Lancashire in 1149, in view of the enmity between himself and William Peverel. Before 1156 William of Lancaster had himself been provided with a highly-born wife, Gundrada. The marriage was probably arranged by William of Blois, whose

<sup>57</sup> *V.C.H. Lancs.*, I, p. 326.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 335, 337.

<sup>59</sup> *Anglo-Norman Era*, pp. 82, 172, 186-7.

<sup>60</sup> William Peverel and his wife Avice of Lancaster were benefactors of Darley abbey between 1149 and 1154: Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees*, I, p. 147. That Avice was a daughter of William of Lancaster and subsequently married Richard de Morville is indicated by the two following considerations: (1) Richard de Morville later accounted at the exchequer for land he claimed with his wife, a daughter of William of Lancaster: *Pipe Roll 16 Henry II*, p. 53. (2) That Richard's wife was named Avice is demonstrated by his charter for Furness abbey of c. 1177: *The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey*, ed. J. C. Atkinson and J. Brownbill, 2 vols. in 5 parts, Chetham Society, new series, IX, XI, XIV, LXXIV, LXXVI, (1886-1916), LXXVI, pp. 301-2, 304-5.

wife was related to Gundrada.<sup>61</sup> William of Lancaster received a charter of enfeoffment for lands in Kendal and Lonsdale from Roger de Mowbray, who switched his support from Stephen to the Angevin party in 1149 in the hope of recovering land granted to Hugh de Morville. Roger failed to regain the land, but the position of William of Lancaster as the sitting tenant was not affected.<sup>62</sup> By 1158 William had also been installed as the abbey of Furness's tenant in the Furness peninsula, because the rights of William and of the abbey respectively were in dispute and settled in that year.<sup>63</sup> It is not always easy to be sure how far William was being confirmed in estates he already had, particularly in view of his descent from a local family, but his successful survival of the ups and downs of politics in Stephen's reign can be paralleled elsewhere.

Although Lancashire was peripheral to the main theatres of fighting, events in the North-West from the 1130s to the 1150s are of wider significance as part of the process by which the relationship between England and Scotland was being worked out. Lancashire had no local chronicler, and to a great extent our knowledge of the civil war of Stephen's reign at the local level depends on charter evidence. Only by looking closely at dating, witness lists, and the personal interests of the parties involved, can the details of political history be reconstructed.

<sup>61</sup> Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 391-4. Gundrada was probably Gundrada, widow of Roger earl of Warwick, who died in 1153. Farrer, however, believed that this Gundrada 'must have been well advanced in years', and he was more inclined to the belief that William's wife was a daughter and namesake of the countess of Warwick. He pointed out that the list of witnesses to William of Lancaster's charter for Leicester abbey charter begins with William, followed by Gundrada daughter of the countess, whilst amongst the souls prayed for was that of Margaret daughter of the countess, whom Farrer thought could have been a sister of the younger Gundrada. It is worth pointing out, however, that the elder Gundrada may not have been as aged as Farrer thought. Her parents' marriage could not have taken place before June 1118, the date when her mother's first husband, Robert of Meulan died.

<sup>62</sup> *Charters of the Honour of Mowbray 1107-1191*, ed. D. E. Greenway, British Academy Records of Social and Economic History, new series, I, (London, 1972), p. 239. For the suggestion that William's family had held land in Kendal before the arrival of the Normans see above n. 26.

<sup>63</sup> Farrer, *L.P.R.*, pp. 310-12.