

The Norman owners of Blechingley Castle: a review

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This review has been stimulated by the re-excitation of Blechingley Castle which produced evidence for an unusual high quality masonry building constructed before 1100, possibly before 1080. It attempts to summarize in a Surrey publication that which is relevant to the early de Clare ownership of Blechingley. The high status of Richard fitz Gilbert's ancestry, his education at the court of the count of Flanders and his relationship to the duke of Normandy are emphasized as explanations for the exceptional nature of the early building. The landholdings in Surrey and Kent and the tenurial positions of Blechingley and Tonbridge are compared. As a consequence of the review, it is argued that Blechingley was probably the first choice of caput of Richard fitz Gilbert and that its status was reduced only after the subsequent acquisition of Tonbridge and Clare. It is speculatively advanced that the earthworks at Blechingley could represent a campaign position of the Norman army in the winter of 1066-7.

Preface

The re-excitation of Blechingley Castle¹ has brought renewed attention to the ownership of the manor and castle in medieval times, not least as part of a need to seek out possible antecedents of Blechingley Castle itself. From soon after the Norman conquest to the death of the last de Clare earl of Gloucester and Hertford on the battlefield at Bannockburn, two-and-a-half centuries later, the castle was held by Richard fitz Gilbert of Bienfaite and Tonbridge and his direct heirs, the de Clare family. Much is known and much has been written about this family – in the last three decades the de Clares have been the subject of an unpublished doctoral thesis, a published volume, and several shorter papers² as well as having featured as a material aspect of many other books, papers and theses. However, the family's connection with Blechingley has not been the prime motivation in such writing since H E Malden's essay in the *Victoria County History of Surrey*³ and Uvedale Lambert's two volume work on Blechingley.⁴

Horace Round's century-old hope that someone would write a comprehensive account of the de Clares and their activities has sadly not yet been realized. Altschul's volume deals mainly with the 13th century and, even for that century, is probably not as full as Round had in mind. In view of the growth of knowledge and the increase in information available since Round's day, such a project could now be beyond the grasp of a single scholar.

The antecedents of Richard fitz Gilbert of Bienfaite and Tonbridge (fig 1)

Richard fitz Gilbert was born before 1035⁵ and died as a monk at the cell of St Neots, c1090.⁶ That he came to England with William of Normandy is well attested. His antecedents are of interest in their own right but known information is outlined here chiefly because of its potential relevance to any consideration of the architectural progenitors of Blechingley Castle.

Richard was the son of Gislebert or Gilbert, count of Brionne, who was murdered during the troubles of Duke William's minority, probably early in 1041⁷ (for Gilbert's comital title, see Appendix 1). During the years preceding the death of Duke Robert I (the Magnificent) in 1035, the formation can be seen of a powerful group of Norman magnates who were specially pledged to Robert's support and Gilbert of Brionne was prominent among these.⁸ A man of apparently unbounded ambition and large possessions, particularly in central Normandy, Gilbert became closely associated with Duke Robert and is found frequently in

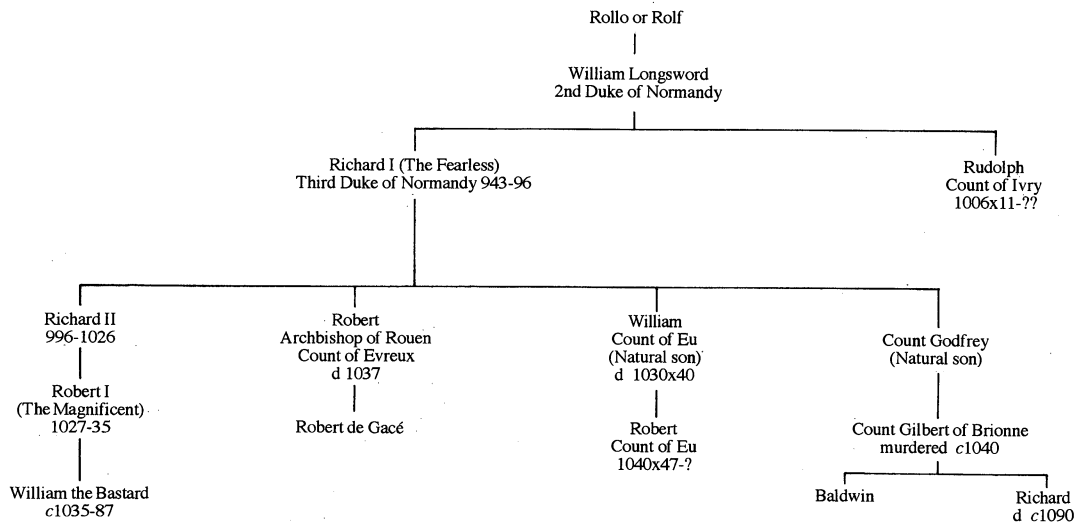


Fig 1 The ancestry of Richard fitz Gilbert. (For the descendants of Count Gilbert of Brionne to five generations, see Ward 1988, 263)

the witness lists of the duke's charters.⁹ In 1039 or, more probably, October 1040,¹⁰ Count Alan of Brittany died suddenly and his place as chief tutor to the infant Duke William was taken by Gilbert of Brionne. Within a few months, however, Gilbert himself had been murdered while out riding: murdered by assassins acting under the orders of Ralph de Gacé, one of the sons of Robert, archbishop of Rouen from 989 to 1037.¹¹ A number of other close supporters of the young duke were also assassinated at this time and the situation was desperate.¹²

Gilbert had been the son of Godfrey, natural son of Richard the Fearless (943-96), third duke of Normandy.¹³ Thus, as they shared a great-grandfather, Richard fitz Gilbert was second cousin by the half blood to William of Normandy. Few, if any, Norman families could show earlier origin than the numerous descendants of the progeny of Richard the Fearless.

Another of Richard the Fearless's natural sons was William, count of Eu. After the death of William, probably between 1030 and 1040, his countess, Lesceline, and her sons were ejected from Eu, and this is thought to have been the work of Gilbert of Brionne. We are told that, before his assassination, Count Gilbert held the county of Eu 'for a little while' as his father had done before him.¹⁴ Gilbert was alive on 1 October 1040, but was assassinated soon afterwards as part of the power struggle around the young duke.¹⁵ At some subsequent date before 1047, Robert, the eldest son of Count William, succeeded to his father's county of Eu.¹⁶

On the assassination of Gilbert, his young sons, Richard and Baldwin, were taken by their guardians to the safety of the court of Count Baldwin V of Flanders¹⁷ – in 1050 Flanders included the modern Pas-de-Calais and was only separated from Normandy by the county of Ponthieu. Its court was centred at Bruges¹⁸ but was peripatetic and probably also had a stronghold at Ghent by this time – the surviving but much-restored castle at Ghent has a stone donjon of c1180 and may incorporate earlier work.¹⁹

The counts of Flanders were members of the contemporary high nobility of Europe. Baldwin IV had been for a short time at the court of Duke Robert I.²⁰ Baldwin V, who had succeeded in 1035, was probably the foremost prince of northern France and was certainly a man of great ability. In the 1070s William of Poitiers, the Conqueror's biographer, wrote that Baldwin V, 'marquis' of Flanders, who ruled in the marches of France and Germany, was not only descended from the counts of the *Morini*, later known as Flemish, but also from the kings of the two neighbouring countries, and was related to the nobility of Constantinople.²¹ He

was a vassal (*miles*) of the Roman empire and a statesman of the greatest influence.²² Adela, his countess, was the daughter of Robert II (the Pious) of France and Constance, daughter of William, count of Toulouse. Among her brothers were Henry I, king of France (1031-60), and Robert I, duke of Burgundy (1032-75).²³ This was the background against which Richard and Baldwin fitz Gilbert were being raised.

Like the lords of Anjou and Normandy, Baldwin of Flanders was engaged in consolidating his territories and expanding his frontiers.²⁴ In particular, he benefitted from the enmity between Godfrey of Lorraine and the Emperor Henry III to carve out sections of Lorraine for himself. The counts of Flanders were powerful, independent princes who formed alliances with their royal neighbours and troubled little about their allegiance to the king of France. Henry III – ‘der Schwartz’, Emperor of the West – died in 1056 and Godfrey of Lorraine died in 1060. Henry I of France and Geoffrey of Anjou also died in 1060 and Baldwin of Flanders ruled the royal domain as regent of France on behalf of the boy-king Philip I,²⁵ which implies that Baldwin and the members of his court (including the sons of Gilbert of Brionne) would have been familiar with (and probably frequently at) the major centres of France by this date. A late childhood and early manhood spent at such a court must have been an impressive start in life and doubtless had much to do with Richard fitz Gilbert’s later success. He would also have become familiar with the leading architecture of the time in north-west Europe.

A list of places in France and the Low Countries mentioned in the text is given in Appendix 2 and illustrates the geographical range of the connections of Richard and Baldwin and their ancestors.

Richard fitz Gilbert of Bienfaite and Tonbridge

The fostering of the sons of Count Gilbert for eleven years or thereabouts in the household of the count of Flanders is likely to have led to a degree of closeness between the brothers and Count Baldwin’s daughter Matilda, the cousin and future wife of William of Normandy (born 1027 or 1028,²⁶ duke of Normandy 1035-87). Duke William’s own relations with the household must have been close and, when he married Matilda, he restored Gilbert of Brionne’s sons to Normandy. The date of the marriage is singularly ill recorded but it was celebrated at Eu.²⁷

William granted the lordship of Bienfaite and Orbec (St Martin de Bienfaite and Orbec-en-Auge, close to each other south-west of Bernay) to Richard and that of nearby Meules (Calvados) and Le Sap (Orne) to his brother Baldwin.²⁸ William did not, however, invest either of the sons of Gilbert with either Brionne or Eu or with a comital title. Brionne had reverted to the duke after Count Gilbert had been murdered and his sons had been taken to Flanders.²⁹ The castle of Brionne was granted for a time to Guy of Burgundy, along with Vernon (Eure) and ‘a considerable part of Normandy’. However after Guy’s rebellion in 1047, Duke William had taken Brionne back into his demesne.³⁰ Although Count Gilbert’s descendants later pressed a claim for Brionne, it was never restored to them.³¹

Despite the modesty of his lands in Normandy, and whether or not either his relationship with Matilda or his cousinly relationship with William was at the root of it, Richard fitz Gilbert was certainly held in high favour both before and after the conquest of England.³² It is possible that Richard and his brother Baldwin saw military service for the duke in the decade before 1066. Although the two sons of Gilbert appear last in the list of thirteen named by Orderic Vitalis as standing foremost in the ranks of the laity among William’s followers,³³ his closeness to the Conqueror is undeniable. Richard was then in his prime and is found among the leading vassals consulted by William at Bonneville-sur-Touques before embarking on the invasion of England.³⁴ Richard and Baldwin on their part probably welcomed the invasion because of the prospect it offered of plunder and, more importantly, land: in the event it gave the brothers the opportunity to become powerful and influential and to gain lands that would compensate them for the loss of Brionne. Between the invasion and 1086, Richard was rewarded with estates having, at the time of the Domesday Inquest, an annual value of £873,

which is greater than that of any of the monasteries and all of the bishops except Canterbury and Winchester. It has been calculated that in 1086 Richard was the sixth wealthiest baron in England after the king's half brothers.³⁵ The size of the grants to Richard are a clear indication of the service he was rendering to William.³⁶ In addition, his descendants were to acquire, *inter alia*, the Norfolk lands of Rainald fitz Ivo;³⁷ Ceredigion (Cardigan), given by Henry I;³⁸ and half of the Giffard honour which came to them in 1189 as a delayed result of Richard's marriage.³⁹ William had arranged the marriage of Richard fitz Gilbert to Rohese, daughter of Walter Giffard, originally from Longueville-sur-Scie south of Dieppe and later earl of Buckingham. Her lands in Huntingdon and Hertfordshire – presumably part of a dōwry – became absorbed into the family inheritance.⁴⁰ Richard's brother, Baldwin de Meules, served at the siege of Exeter during the Conqueror's suppression of the citizens' defiance there in 1068. On the city's surrender, a new castle was begun which was handed over to Baldwin who appears in Domesday Book as sheriff of Devon and lord of Okehampton and numerous other estates in Devon, Dorset and Somerset.⁴¹

At the time of Domesday, Richard fitz Gilbert's estate comprised 176 lordships⁴² and extended over many counties. It included 95 manors and thirteen burgages in Suffolk and 38 lordships in Surrey as well as two lordships as tenants-in-chief and several sub-tenancies in Kent, 35 lordships in Essex, three in Cambridgeshire and one each in Wiltshire, Hertfordshire and Devon. Richard's wife is entered as a tenant-in-chief in her own right at Standon, Hertfordshire, and Eynesbury, Huntingdonshire, both being held in demesne.

Dugdale⁴³ 'guessed' that Richard was first rewarded by Benfield or Benefield in eastern Northamptonshire, basing his 'guess' on Richard's style 'de Benefacta'. Manning & Bray⁴⁴ and some later writers followed Dugdale but it was pointed out early in the 19th century⁴⁵ that Dugdale's statement must only have been based on the 'arbitrary similitude of sound' between de Benefacta and Benefield and that there is no evidence that Richard possessed Benefield: the Richard who was tenant-in-chief of Benefield in 1086 was Richard Engaine. Richard fitz Gilbert's style of de Benefacta or Bienfaite came from the estate of that name in Normandy.

From the beginning of William's English reign, Richard fitz Gilbert was clearly a significant figure. He was called *princeps* when witnessing a charter in 1068⁴⁶ and it can be questioned whether his modest land-holding in Normandy alone would have justified such an appellation. Little is known about the arrangements which William made for the governance of England during his frequent and lengthy absences⁴⁷ but, from about 1070 if not before, Richard was certainly a member of William's small *curia* on which he depended for advice – the others being Lanfranc, Odo, Robert of Mortain, Alan of Brittany, Roger of Montgomery and William de Warenne.⁴⁸ This places Richard as one of a very small elite.

Archbishop Lanfranc was in overall charge of the administration of England at the time of the Conqueror's absence in 1075.⁴⁹ At this time, fitz Gilbert was associated with William de Warenne, Geoffrey of Coutances and Odo of Bayeux in putting down a rebellion which was centred on East Anglia and led by Ralph de Gael, earl of Norfolk.⁵⁰ Richard's role at this time shows how much he was trusted by the king and it is likely from the number of writs addressed to him that he was again one of those left in charge of affairs two years later.⁵¹ Fitz Gilbert served in other important capacities for the king and his position at court resulted in his gaining lands worth over twice as much as his brother's.⁵²

Richard fitz Gilbert's son (possibly his eldest son), Roger de Bienfaite, may have been involved in the first rebellion by the Conqueror's eldest son, Count Robert, in 1077-8.⁵³ Orderic Vitalis gives two lists of those involved in the second of which Roger of Bienfaite appears.⁵⁴ Only Robert of Bellême appears in both lists, but the first list is very short. C W David considered that it would be rash to accept that all those included in either list actually supported Count Robert in his first rebellion. In any case, King William appears to have been reconciled to Robert Curthose by 1080.⁵⁵

The first mention of Richard in a possibly Kentish context (as Richard son of Count Gilbert) would seem to be in an undated writ concerning the restitution of Church

lands which was addressed to him among other Kentish landowners (including Lanfranc).⁵⁶ This writ is ascribed to c1071 by Davis. The occurrence of Richard's name in reports of the Penenden plea firmly suggests that he was involved in Kentish affairs by 1072 and may imply that he was a landholder there by that date as Richard Mortimer⁵⁷ urges, but does not – despite what has been claimed – of itself demonstrate that he was known as 'of Tonbridge' at that time, as the reports using this appellation are not contemporary.⁵⁸

In the Domesday folios for Surrey and Kent, Richard is often called Richard de Tonbridge but there is no entry for Tonbridge in Domesday. Du Boulay asserted⁵⁹ that Tonbridge Castle was the principal possession of Richard fitz Gilbert in south-east England in 1086, and this was supported convincingly by Mortimer.⁶⁰ Tonbridge was a castle of considerable strategic importance at the Medway crossing of the road between London and Hastings. However, the way that Richard came by Tonbridge remains obscure: Mortimer cautiously concluded merely that fitz Gilbert acquired Tonbridge by royal permission and with the support of Odo.⁶¹ The date at which Richard acquired Tonbridge is as obscure: Chibnall⁶² states that Richard was in possession by 1075, claiming Mortimer as her authority, but in fact Mortimer was more circumspect.

Tonbridge, its lords and its lowy have been the subject of three important papers⁶³ as well as being discussed by Du Boulay and it would clearly be inappropriate here to go through the arguments. Publishing at the same time as Mortimer, Dr Jennifer Ward convincingly concluded that Tonbridge Castle was established by fitz Gilbert on land usurped from the archbishop of Canterbury (presumably with the connivance of William) and that such usurpation is most unlikely to have occurred after the consecration of Lanfranc in 1070. Lanfranc accepted the archbishopric on the basis of feudal tenancy of his lands from the king⁶⁴ which probably strengthened his ability to assert feudal suzerainty over lands usurped from his predecessor, including those taken with the king's connivance. However, while the greater control likely to have been introduced by Lanfranc can be appreciated, it may be a mistake to assume that this control became effective immediately in every corner of Canterbury's extensive lands. As Dr Ward pointed out,⁶⁵ the silence of the Domesday Book on the subject of Tonbridge would be understandable if, at the time the survey was in progress, Lanfranc had still been pursuing a claim to the overlordship of Tonbridge and a plea were pending between him and fitz Gilbert. The considerations of defence suggest that the initial grant of Tonbridge to Richard was by the Crown and supports an early date for it, but Richard may well have experienced a continuing need to accumulate in the lowy to support the castle. It may have been the eventual recovery of his overlordship by Lanfranc that led to Richard's descendants owing knight service to Canterbury for the lowy by the time of Anselm,⁶⁶ when Gilbert fitz Richard owed service of four knights.⁶⁷

The use of 'de Tonbridge' in Domesday Book demonstrates that the importance of Tonbridge and Richard's connection with it was clearly established by 1086 even if the legality of the tenure was not. The tenancy of Tonbridge was arguably resolved by 1088 as Richard's descendants' possession of the castle and lowy survived its role in the rebellion of Odo in that year.⁶⁸ It is possible that the un-named *castellum* of *Ricardus* noted in the *Domesday Monachorum* entry for Darenth is actually Tonbridge (ie that Tonbridge Castle was located on a detached Wealden pasture (denn) of Darenth).⁶⁹

Any view of the Normans which simply sees them as warlike, acquisitive and immersed in territorial interests would be one-sided. They coupled with their secular ambitions a strong religious sense that grew stronger with age. This is seen in its most extreme form in the case of those Norman veterans of the invasion who survived to the 1080s or beyond, of whom Richard fitz Gilbert was typical. After a life of martial and political activity, he ended his days in a monastery, as did many of his contemporaries. It was even more characteristic for lords, knights and freemen to make grants of land, churches or tithes to monasteries and such gifts were naturally encouraged by the Church.⁷⁰

Richard de Bienfaite's holdings in Surrey					
In Chief	Occupant TRE	Hides TRE	Tenant 1086	Value 1086	
19.1	Chivington	Alnoth	20	Demesne & sub	£10
19.2	Blechingley	Alfheah, Alwin, Alnoth	10	Demesne & sub	£12 & 73s 4d
19.3	Chelsham 1	Wulfward	10	Watteville	£8
19.4	Tandridge	Thorbern	10	Salie's wife	£11
19.5	Tillingdon 1	Alnoth	10	Salie's wife	£6 pays £7
19.6	[Warlingham]	Azor	14	Watteville	£8
19.7	Chelsham 2	Toki	10	Watteville	£7
19.8	Farleigh	Tovi	6	Watteville	60s
19.9	Woldingham	Wulfstan	8	John	£4
19.10	Tooting (Bec)	Starker	11	Abbey of Bec	100s
19.11	Streatham	Harding	5	Abbey of Bec	60s
19.12	Chipstead	Wulfnoth	15	Wm, nephew of Walkelin	£6
19.13	Worth*	Oswald	1/2	Siward	20s
19.14	Buckland	Alnoth	5	John	100s
19.15	Beddington	Azor	25	Watteville	£10
19.16	Woodmansterne	Azor	15	Demesne	£8
19.17	Walton on Hill	Alwin, Leofelm, Colman	15	John	£8
19.18	Un-named	Aelmer	1	Demesne	6s 9d
19.19	Mickleham	Oswald	5	Oswald	£6
19.20	Tolworth 1	Alwin	5	Picot	60s
19.21	Long Ditton	Aelmer	5	Picot	50s
19.22	Immerworth (Ember CRT)	Edwin & another	1/2	Picot	5s
19.23	Malden	Harding	8	Watteville	£6 12s
19.24	Chessington	Harding	5	Watteville	70s
19.25	In Malden		1	Watteville in dispute	Exempt
19.26	Walton Leigh	Harding	6	Demesne	£14
19.27	Apps	Abbot of Chertsey	6	Demesne in dispute	£4
19.28	In Apps	Villager,	1/2	Picot	
	In Apps	Aelmer	1/2	Picot	5s
	In Apps	Aelmer	1/2	Picot	12s
19.29	East Molesey 1	Aelfric	3 1/2	John	60s
19.30	East Molesey 2	Wulfward	1	John	5s
19.31	East Molesey 3	Toki	6 1/2	Roger d'Abernon	70s
19.32	Stoke D'Abernon 1	Bricsti	15	Demesne	£4
19.33	Stoke D'Abernon 2	Otho	5	Demesne	20s
19.34	Dirtham 1	Aelmer	1 1/2	Salie's wife	30s
19.35	Driteham 2	Alfric/Chertsey	1 1/2	In dispute with Chertsey	40s
19.36	Albury	Azor	4	Roger d'Abernon	£9
19.37	East(?) Shalford	Two brothers	4	Watteville	£20
19.38	Tolworth 2	Edmar	5	Ralph	60s
19.39	Thorncroft	Cola	19 1/2?	Demesne	60s + 40s?
	West Betchworth	Various	6	Demesne?	
19.40			2	Abbot of Westminster	
19.41	Mideham 1	Saeman	1	Saeman	20s
19.42	Mideham 2	Godwin	1 virgate	Godwin	30d
19.43			2	Wm son of Ansculf	
19.44	Effingham	Azor part	6	Oswald	£6
19.45	Ockham	Aelmer	9	Demesne	100s
19.46	Ockley	Aelmer	1	Ralph	70s
19.47	East Betchworth	Cola	6	Demesne	£8
19.48	Hartshurst (Arseste)	Aelmer	2	Demesne	45s

*In Mersham? The usual view that this unremarkable half-hide represents Worth in Sussex with its minster church and soon-to-be documented southerly links, seems hardly tenable.

Possible Sub-tenancies

Banstead*	Alnoth	29	Of Odo	£8
Fetcham*	Bicga	8 1/2	Of Odo	60s
In Wallington	Countryman	1 virgate in 1086	Of king	10s
In Dorking	Edric	1 hide in 1086	Of king	20s
In Wotton (sub infeu)	Earl Harold	1 hide in 1086	Of Oswald	10s

* Held by Richard but not necessarily Richard of Tonbridge

Richard's Surrey holdings

Although the Clare family became better known in the 12th century for their activities in Wales and Ireland, their English lands – largely consolidated by the time of the Domesday Survey – provided their permanent landed wealth. These lands comprised the honour of Clare, mainly situated in Suffolk and Essex and worth £591 3s 6d in 1086, and lands in Surrey and Kent, together worth £349 6s 6d.⁷¹ Ward has argued that Richard acquired his lands in Kent and Surrey shortly after 1066 and that his lands in Essex and Suffolk were obtained later.⁷²

Richard fitz Gilbert founded the great family which was beginning even during his lifetime to take its name from its Suffolk honour of Clare.⁷³ The Conqueror's grant of land in Surrey⁷⁴ must have actually named the individual manors Richard was to have since they had been held by a large number of men in the time of King Edward (table 1). The situation in East Anglia was apparently simpler and there Richard had one very great predecessor, one Wihtgar.⁷⁵ It may be this factor which led to the Suffolk lands being seen as a coherent honour and to the family taking its name from Clare.

At the time of the Domesday Survey, Richard was the most extensive landholder in Surrey after the king.⁷⁶ As Malden pointed out,⁷⁷ the Surrey estates of which Richard was tenant-in-chief fall into two fairly compact groups of manors – the award of lands in compact blocks is a pattern which has been demonstrated on a number of lay fees.⁷⁸ One group reached from Stoke d'Abernon and Effingham in the middle of the county to Woldingham, Chelsham and Tandridge near the Kent border and not far from Richard's Kentish lordships and tenancies. He had another distinct group in Emleybridge and Kingston hundreds from Walton Leigh to Malden. The first group lay on each side of the two Roman roads which traversed Surrey from London to the Sussex border – Stane Street and the road through Godstone.

In 1086, Richard's Surrey holdings were worth approximately £240.⁷⁹ However, the individual Surrey manors were not particularly valuable. The most valuable manors were enfeoffed [East] Shalford, worth £20; demesne Walton-on-Thames, £14; with partly demesne Blechingley and Chivington and enfeoffed Tandridge and Beddington each at between £10 and £12. Contiguous Blechingley and Chivington were together worth more than Shalford but both estates had been partly enfeoffed. Of Blechingley's ten hides in the time of King Edward (TRE), six were held in 1086 by three tenants and were valued at 73s 4d against Richard's four at £12. Chivington was the larger and more heavily taxed estate, being rated at double the number of hides, both TRE (20 hides) and in 1086 (6 hides). However, in 1086 Chivington was only worth £10, little less than Blechingley's four demesne hides. Chivington, which included present-day Horne, was later merged with Blechingley and is today represented by a single farm name.⁸⁰

The enfeoffment of Shalford, Richard's richest single Surrey manor, to de Watteville is unusual: Richard retained most valuable manors in his own hands although he sometimes, as with Blechingley and Chivington, sub-infeudated small portions. It is likely that, in granting out his lands, Richard turned primarily to men whom he had known before the Conquest. These men would have been bound to him by common interests and the establishment of a closely integrated group of vassals was essential, not only to administer the estates but also to ensure Norman survival in the early years.

Richard's sub-tenants included men from the neighbourhood of Bienfaite and Orbec (south-west of Bernay), his two possessions before 1066. Roger d'Abernon, for example, who was given estates in Molesey and Albury in Surrey and Freston in Suffolk plus, possibly, a half-hide in Chivington, may have been Richard's vassal: he came from Abernon or Abenon, a village close to Orbec.⁸¹ His descendant and namesake still held lands called Abernuin in Normandy in 1200 when, by licence of King John, he exchanged them with William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, for a manor in Duxford, Cambridgeshire.⁸²

Table 1 (opposite) Richard de Bienfaite's holdings in Surrey, from the Domesday Book valuations of 1086 and the time of King Edward (TRE: *Tempore Regis Edwardi*)

At the time of the Domesday Inquest, there were two manors of *Molesham*, both held of Richard. One was held by John, possibly the John who held Woldingham and Walton-on-the-Hill of Richard, and who may have been a member of the family of Danmartin or Dammartin.⁸³ The other manor of *Molesham* was held by Roger d'Abernon. Both manors were probably parts of what was afterwards Molesey Prior. Unless the two manors were amalgamated under Richard in the hands of the d'Abernons or under tenants, the estate held by John disappears altogether.⁸⁴ (The d'Abernon family did not acquire the manor that bears their name until later.)

Richard's lesser Surrey tenants are hard to place but Ralph, Salie and Picot⁸⁵ may have been vassals in Normandy. Picot is probably Picot de Friardel, in the neighbourhood of Orbec and Bienfaite.⁸⁶ Picot's sub-tenancies are exceptionally tightly grouped and the name occurs more than once in the parish of Horley later in the Middle Ages. William, nephew of Bishop Walkelin, need have had no Normandy connection with Richard and may have been enfeoffed to help Richard's relationship with the bishop: William held the great manor of Farnham from his uncle and Richard retained a wood (Wealden denn?) of Chipstead in his own hands. Siward (tenant of Worth) is unknown. Robert de Watteville,⁸⁷ Richard's leading vassal (seven holdings in Surrey – Shalford, Beddington, Chelsham (two TRE estates), Chessington, Farleigh and [Warlingham] – plus Hempstead in Essex), came from Vatteville, on the south bank of the Seine opposite Wandrille, 23km west of Rouen, 30km north of Brionne and 50km from Bienfaite.

Dr Ward pointed out⁸⁸ that the balance of Richard fitz Gilbert's demesne and sub-infeudated lands in Kent and Surrey in 1086 suggests they were organized together as a separate lordship. Mortimer went further and saw all the Surrey lands of the de Clares as part of a 'Tonbridge block' comparable with Hugh de Montfort's lands around Saltwood, the rapes of Sussex or the Isle of Wight.⁸⁹ In the late 13th century lands in Surrey were described as belonging to the honour of Tonbridge and this term probably symbolizes their distinctiveness at an earlier date.⁹⁰

According to the Domesday Book, Richard fitz Gilbert retained all his Kentish estates in demesne and his vassals were rewarded from his land in Surrey. The demesne estates in Kent were worth £109 12s 5d but the Surrey demesnes only amounted to £78 1s 9d. In Surrey the lands granted to vassals were valued at £160 12s 4d.⁹¹ Hence, when Surrey and Kent are taken together, about half the land had been granted to sub-tenants by 1086, a proportion which was not excessive when compared with other baronial estates.⁹² Mortimer, however, has cast doubt on the Domesday Book account of Richard's Kentish lands: 'The neatness and completeness of the distinction between Kent and Surrey looks more like the workings of DB than of an estate: there are enough odd features in the entries covering Tonbridge for the complete absence of specified tenant holdings to be dismissed as yet another [one]'.⁹³

Dr Ward seems⁹⁴ to regard the acquisition by Richard of his properties in Surrey and Kent as a single operation and to argue that the reduction in geld assessments on Richard's lands in Surrey are evidence that he obtained his Kentish lands soon after the Conquest because 'the fall in value of many of the manors was largely due to William's march from Hastings to London and to the accompanying devastation by which the Normans doubtless hoped to hasten the submission of the English'. We can note the apparent inconsistency but Dr Ward continues: 'It is not clear how far the devastation accounted for the reduction in assessments . . . it is equally possible that William's followers extorted from him a remission of their geld obligations in the early years of the conquest'.⁹⁵ It may be thought that on this occasion Dr Ward's arguments lack her usual clarity and ignore the differences in tenure by which Richard himself held his various lands in the South-East. It could be more reasonable to see Richard's core holding in the South-East to have been those lands held in chief – ie his Surrey estates plus his two Kentish tenancies-in-chief (Yalding and [East] Barming) – with his sub-tenancies subsequently aggregated in order to support the castle at Tonbridge. The time interval between the acquisition of his Surrey holdings and the Kentish tenancies may have been quite short.

From 15th century evidence, we know that much of the lowy of Tonbridge was held by castleguard, rents in kind and as fractional knights' fees and Mortimer considers that the first, at least, may represent a very early arrangement.⁹⁶

Less than a quarter (by value) of the Kentish lands were held in chief, however, and some sub-tenanted lands were held by usurpation⁹⁷ – it is hardly surprising that lands acquired in such a way, for whatever purpose, were kept in hand. By 1086, Kent was the only county where Richard held most of his land of lords other than the king himself. Be that as it may, Mortimer has proposed that the 51% figure for enfeoffed land in the South-East is probably an underestimate.⁹⁸

Richard's Kentish tenancies seem to have been assembled with some effort: the usurpations may have been for a particular purpose – possibly to sustain Tonbridge Castle. By contrast, the Surrey lands, despite their large number of previous holders, suggest a post-Conquest reward. It can safely be assumed that Richard acquired some, and possibly all, of his Surrey lands immediately after the Conquest but that his Kentish sub-tenancies took longer – but not necessarily much longer – to accumulate. As has been argued, usurpation of Canterbury lands, in particular, is unlikely to have occurred much, if at all, after 1070.

The feudal structure of Richard's Surrey lands was mainly complete by 1086 in contrast to those in the honour of Clare where the situation was extremely fluid to 1135 and even beyond⁹⁹ and Dr Ward suggests that this may also be evidence that Richard received his Kent and Surrey lands soon after 1066 while the Suffolk lands may have been received later, possibly as a result of the circumstances of 1075 to which reference has already been made. (Clare Castle, like Tonbridge, is first documented c1090).

Richard's successors granted only a few of their demesne manors in Surrey to vassals in the next 50 years. Stoke, a rare exception, was given to the d'Abernon family some time before 1140.¹⁰⁰ Much of the enfeoffed land was in the hands of a few major tenants, some of whom held land also of the honour of Clare. Robert Watteville, with holdings in seven villas, stands well above the rest but Dr Ward's research has failed to disclose much about the feudal obligations of the vassals of the de Clares. Doubtless some performed military service and all probably owed castleguard. Shalford (*Schaldeford* alias *Schadeford*) owed 2s a year for the guard of Tonbridge Castle at the end of the 13th century.¹⁰¹ It is not known when the military tenants performed suit of court in the 12th century, although a century later Surrey vassals attended the court at Blechingley.¹⁰² There is no indication of a separate hierarchy of officials on the Kent and Surrey lands before the administration became more bureaucratic in the 13th century.

On many honours in the late 11th century, the vassals can be divided into those responsible for a substantial amount of military service – those answering for a service of from one to three knights – and the professional soldiers responsible for one knight or less, having small holdings in one or more villages.¹⁰³ Robert de Watteville possessed lands in Essex as well as Surrey in 1086 and his lands in both counties were entered in the 1166 *Carta* as nine knights' fees.¹⁰⁴

Although the Surrey manors were sometimes described in the 12th century as part of the honour of Clare, there are strong indications that they were usually regarded as distinct. As Dr Ward reports,¹⁰⁵ the Surrey vassals held aloof from the activities of those in Suffolk: only three made grants to the Clare family's priory of Stoke-by-Clare from their lands in Kent or Surrey, and it can hardly be without significance that each of these had estates in Suffolk and Essex.

The Clare *Carta* of 1166 lists the Surrey fees separately from those for Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk and Ward suggests¹⁰⁶ that the vassals probably owed castleguard to Tonbridge rather than to Clare.

The Clare *Carta* for Surrey listed about 44 knights' fees: a few of these, such as Gervase of Cornhill's fee at Langham, Essex, lay north of the Thames, but most were situated in Surrey with a few in Kent. Most men held between one and four such fees, for example Ingelram d'Abernon held four, but nearly half the fees were in the hands of two men: Robert de Watteville who held nine and William de Danmartin (who is not mentioned in 1086 but who

may be a descendant of Richard's tenant John) with 11½.¹⁰⁷ William de Danmartin was the head of a family later to achieve importance in Surrey – in 1166 William of Danmartin held 11½ knights' fees in Surrey and his brother Stephen was steward under successively Earls Gilbert and Roger.¹⁰⁸

The de Clare lands had clearly, if surprisingly, escaped confiscation following the rebellion of 1088 but the hostile attitude of fitz Gilbert and his family may have encouraged William Rufus to endow William de Warenne, one of the few of the great nobility of the Conquest who had adhered to him, with the earldom of Surrey in 1088 or 1089. With the earldom, de Warenne appears to have received the lands at Reigate and elsewhere in Surrey that had been held by the dowager Queen Edith. By granting this honour to de Warenne, Rufus planted a strong rival with a more reliably loyal attitude to himself as a counterpoise to the de Clares in the county.

Earlier, as has been indicated, de Warenne and fitz Gilbert had worked together. The division between fitz Gilbert and de Warenne seems to have arisen out of the disputes that arose between the Conqueror's sons from 1077 onward concerning the succession to the English Crown, and the de Clares continued to oppose Rufus after his succession.¹⁰⁹ Gilbert fitz Richard may have been concerned in the events surrounding the death of William Rufus but he soon deeply involved himself in the affairs of the Welsh Marches.

Blechingley Castle

The excavations in the 1980s have shown that the unusual and substantial masonry building at Blechingley Castle was erected before c1100, possibly well before.¹¹⁰ The surrounding earthworks are themselves of uncertain date but presumably predate the building. The building was itself not defensive but closely parallels that built, probably before 1085, by the de Warennes at Castle Acre, Norfolk,¹¹¹ and also that at Walmer Manor House, Kent.¹¹²

The building at Castle Acre was called a 'country house' by Coad & Streeten but Michael Thompson has attempted to introduce the term 'thin-walled proto-keep' for this and similar structures.¹¹³ It would seem to the present writer that, although the structures at Castle Acre and Blechingley were probably seen as *donjons* by their owners, they lacked the defensive nature normally associated with the word 'keep' and the term proposed by Thompson is inappropriate. 'Pseudo-keep' might be satisfactory but, in view of their likely ancestry and subsequent parallels,¹¹⁴ there seems little reason against accepting the description 'country house' for these buildings.

That the de Clares established a major, non-military, masonry building within strong earthworks on high ground at Blechingley and also built a church on the boundary of the manors of Blechingley and Chivington¹¹⁵ suggests that the choice of Blechingley as their Surrey *caput* was made early and that it was the intention from the outset to manage Blechingley and Chivington as a single estate. The nascent arrangements for centralization at Blechingley in the 11th century seem to indicate a stage in estate organization that pre-dates the establishment of Tonbridge as the fitz Gilbert *caput* for Surrey and Kent.

Blechingley Castle stood on land held in chief and was at once defensible by nature of its surrounding defences and domestic by the design of its main building. The administrative importance of Blechingley is indicated by the fact that the Surrey vassals of the de Clares still attended court at Blechingley in the 13th century.¹¹⁶ According to arguments already rehearsed, Tonbridge would initially have been a military holding with an insecure tenure. Until the tenure of Tonbridge Castle was secure, the holdings in Surrey and Kent would have required an administrative centre of their own on land of good title. Indeed, if fitz Gilbert acquired his tenancies-in-chief in Surrey and Kent immediately after the Conquest, was given (or took) responsibility for Tonbridge Castle by 1070, but did not acquire his Suffolk lands until around 1075, his first English *caput* would have been sited on one of his tenancies-in-chief in the South-East. It can be argued that this was Blechingley.

By the time the tenure of Tonbridge was secure, ie around 1088, the Suffolk lands had

been acquired and a preference for Clare had developed, and it would have been too late for Tonbridge to become the family's *caput*. The exceptional masonry building at Blechingley cannot be placed archaeologically with more precision than between 1066 and 1100 but it may be thought that a date before 1088 is more than likely and a date before c1075 probable. Tonbridge, with its prestigious motte and, later, fine gatehouse, was undoubtedly the family's South-Eastern stronghold in the 12th and 13th centuries but, in the first decade or two after the Conquest, it was Blechingley that was given the status symbol of a masonry building. If Ward and Mortimer are right and the lands of Wihtgar were acquired in or after 1075, and the tenure of Tonbridge and the usurped sub-tenancies really were insecure before the 1080s, then Blechingley emerges as the initial *caput* of Richard fitz Gilbert's holdings in England. The construction of an exceptional 'country house' would be quite in keeping with his high but rising status. That Richard was assiduously and successfully seeking the rewards of royal service has been made very clear in Dr Ward's latest study.¹¹⁷

Blechingley had been three estates before the Conquest and had been unified into a single manor – a procedure not uncharacteristic of Richard's approach to his lands¹¹⁸ and which presaged the amalgamation of Blechingley and adjacent Chivington. The minor infeudations established in Blechingley and Chivington by 1086 may have been in connection with the need to staff the administrative centre or even garrison Blechingley Castle, but they hardly amounted to a knight's fee.¹¹⁹

The choice of Blechingley may have been influenced by the events of the Conquest itself. The Domesday Book folios for Surrey show considerable reductions in geld assessment on many estates but not on all. Surrey was not affected by the subsequent troubles of William's reign, so the waste cannot well have been much later than the period of the actual Conquest. Similar reductions are found in Kent, Hants and Berkshire and a century ago Baring advanced the thesis that the fall in value of many manors was largely due to William's circuitous march from Hastings to London and to the devastation which accompanied the Norman army's need to live off the land.¹²⁰

Baring and Malden traced the course of the Norman army through Kent and, after the failure to cross London Bridge, out of Surrey into Hampshire. In eastern Surrey devaluation is widespread and Baring and Malden suggested that here William's army divided into two parties. While one section approached Southwark for the unsuccessful attempt on easily defensible London Bridge, the other stayed further south, possibly in the vicinity of the Holmesdale. The 'reserve' party would have required a defensible camp site.

The ringwork at Blechingley Castle was of dump-rampart construction lacking any revetment, the simplest and fastest method of creating an earthwork fortification. It can readily be assumed that it predates the building within it which, it has already been argued, may well have been under construction before 1075 or even before 1070. The construction date of the earthwork must therefore be very close to the Conquest itself and the interesting speculation arises that the ringwork at Blechingley may have been created in October-November 1066 to enclose William's 'reserve division' while his main army was engaged in the abortive assault on London Bridge. This speculation is incapable of proof but it can be noted that the earthworks at Blechingley are quite different from the motte-and-bailey castles at Tonbridge and Clare which are similar to each other.

On this speculation, when Richard received the grant of his Surrey estates, there would have been already in existence a strong earthwork at Blechingley in which to place his *caput*. It can even be further speculated that Richard may have been granted lands in Surrey rather than elsewhere in recognition of services with the 'reserve division'.

It must be stressed that there is no direct documentary evidence for the date of Surrey land grants, for the construction of the castle, or for the construction of Blechingley church – only archaeology and inference. Archaeology cannot provide precise dates and inference can be treacherous. It is clear, however, that Blechingley was later the principal Surrey manor of the de Clares. Walton-on-Thames is seen by Mortimer as an important de Clare 'staging post' on journeys between Tonbridge and Suffolk, and Blechingley could have originally been the

terminus of such journeys and, afterwards, have fulfilled a similar function to Walton-on-Thames.¹²¹ Mortimer postulates a progress – Tonbridge, Walton-on-Thames, Harefield (Middlesex), Standon (Hertfordshire), Clare – but Tonbridge, Blechingley (where courts were held), Walton, Standon, Clare would be equally valid (especially in view of the number of Surrey manors about which there could have been business to conduct). Standon was the property of Rohese Giffard.

The descendants of Richard fitz Gilbert

There was probably little doubt even in 1086 that Clare would become the main family centre and Clare, rather than Tonbridge, became the family name early in the 12th century. The wealth and importance of Clare became even more marked when the Norfolk estates of Rainald, son of Ivo, worth about £115 in 1086, were added to the honour, probably in the reign of Henry I.¹²²

On the death of Richard fitz Gilbert in about 1090, his lands in Normandy and England were divided between his two eldest sons, as was common practice among tenants-in-chief. Thus the fiefs of Bienfaite and Orbec passed to Roger fitz Richard, who may therefore have been the eldest son. Gilbert I inherited the extensive honours of Clare and Tonbridge.¹²³ Richard's other three sons were not provided for on the family lands – Walter and Robert had to make their own fortune as knights while Richard fitz Richard became a monk of Bec, a monastery which received several grants of lands and tithes from the family.¹²⁴

Although Gilbert fitz Richard found himself at odds with William Rufus and had once supported Robert Curthose and Bishop Odo,¹²⁵ it is said that he and other members of the family in England enjoyed greater favour under Henry I. The murder hypothesis – involving a plot between Henry I and the de Clare family – is widely known¹²⁶ and it was suggested by Round,¹²⁷ among others, that Henry's largesse stemmed from the fact that Walter Tirel, count of Poix and the husband of Richard fitz Gilbert's daughter Adelize, shot the arrow which slew Rufus. It has been claimed that Gilbert and Roger fitz Richard, brothers of Adelize, were present at Brockenhurst when the king was killed and Richard, the monkish brother, was within a few days selected by Henry I to be abbot of Ely. Moreover, Henry is said to have given the see of Winchester, as his first act, to William Giffard, as Adelize's uncle and another member of the same family circle,¹²⁸ but he was also Rufus's chancellor and due for a bishopric. Proof of a definite connection between the death of Rufus and Henry's favour to the de Clares is lacking and there is no certainty that Gilbert and Roger were at Brockenhurst. All that can be said with certainty is that the wealth and status of the family increased during Henry's reign,¹²⁹ although perhaps not as excessively as Round proposed.

Hollister has mounted powerful arguments for considering William's death to have been a genuine accident and correcting Round, Parker and Brooke. The largesse supposedly enjoyed by the de Clares under Henry melts away under Hollister's analysis to become no more than might be expected by a baronial family who were, at this time, not even assiduous in their attendance at court. Moreover, Walter Tirel may well not have shot the fatal arrow. Professor Barlow, in his monograph on William Rufus, has provided a detailed and accessible discussion of the whole affair.¹³⁰

Much of what is known about the descendants of Richard fitz Gilbert – and it is a considerable body of information – has been set out by Michael Altschul. The de Clare interests seem to have lain chiefly in Suffolk and Essex and, as a result of advantageous marriages, also in Norfolk and Hertfordshire – from whence came their first earldom.¹³¹ But later their over-riding interest was in the Welsh marches which gave them their second earldom and their lordship of Glamorgan and Morgannwg. A grandson of Richard fitz Gilbert I became earl of Pembroke and founded a cadet branch. His son, Richard Strongbow, conquered part of Ireland and became lord of Leinster. One-fifth of this lordship, the county of Kilkenny, came to Richard de Clare, earl of Gloucester, as his share of the Marshal inheritance. William Marshal married Strongbow's daughter and inherited his lands in 1189.

By 1130, five members of the Clare family were ranked among the tenants-in-chief of the Crown with most of their lands being situated in England and Wales. Gilbert fitz Richard I married Adeliza, daughter of Hugh, count of Clermont.¹³² Gilbert I, in turn, was succeeded by his son Richard fitz Gilbert II, elder brother of the Gilbert who became earl of Pembroke in 1138. Richard fitz Gilbert II acquired lands in Lincoln and Northampton by marrying Adeliz or Alice, sister of Ranulf des Gernons, earl of Chester,¹³³ and eventually died in 1136. As Gilbert II, his eldest son, created earl of Hertford (probably in 1138), died unmarried in 1151 or 1152, the estates and title passed to his brother Roger, who married Maud, daughter and heiress of the Norfolk baron James de Hilary, and died in 1173. The de Clares proved themselves adept at marrying heiresses.

Roger's son, Richard (III), increased the family fortune and prestige still further by marrying Amicia, daughter and eventual co-heiress of Earl William of Gloucester, and by acquiring, in 1189 by inheritance, half of the former honour of Giffard. Gilbert III, his son, earl of Gloucester and Hertford, married his cousin Isabel, daughter and eventual co-heiress of the great William Marshal, earl of Pembroke. Upon the death of Gilbert in 1230, the vast estates passed to his son, another Richard (IV), a minor. Richard de Clare IV was married to Meggotta, daughter of Hubert de Burgh, earl of Kent and justiciar of England, who was Richard's guardian. This marriage was performed without the necessary royal authority, while Henry III was flexing his muscles after his long subjection to his own guardians, and helped to bring disgrace to de Burgh and his wife. It ended with the death of Meggotta in 1237. In May 1235, during the period of de Burgh's wardship, the honour of Tonbridge was released to the archbishop of Canterbury.¹³⁴

Richard IV, still a minor, was given Maud, daughter of John de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, as his second wife: as has been pointed out, exalted though the de Clares were in the baronage of the 13th century, they seldom married beneath their own high level. Richard IV, who died in 1262 at the age of 40, and his son, another Gilbert, were deeply and decisively involved in the struggle between the barons and Henry III.¹³⁵

There are very few earlier documentary references to Blechingley Castle. Blechingele is recorded in the *Mappa Mundi* of 1160 by Gervase of Canterbury¹³⁶ and it supplied men at the end of 1170 to watch round Canterbury against the escape of Becket just before his martyrdom.¹³⁷ But that is all until the events of 1264. The account of the de Clares that Altschul unfolds contains little mention of their Surrey estates and one might easily deduce that the family were not interested in their Surrey lands apart from their use as sources of income and, presumably, of soldiers. However, any such impression would be a false one. It is clear that Blechingley received considerable attention from the de Clares: in particular there was the creation of a mesne borough and two substantial deer parks.

Dr Blair has set out the way in which the Domesday vills of Blechingley and Chivington appear to have been merged into one manor and parish, probably at the same unknown date before 1233 that the mesne borough was established and the North Park laid out.¹³⁸ South Park was probably established c1255: the two parks absorbed most of the lands once belonging to Chivington manor apart from that later to become the parish of Horne.

Many of the 13th century earls of Gloucester and Hertford are buried at Tewkesbury. By that century, the de Clares had risen to become the most influential and wealthy family in the realm after the royal house but when the last male heir was killed at Bannockburn, the estates were divided between heiresses.

APPENDIX 1

The comital title of Gilbert of Brionne

The title of count first appears in Normandy associated with men established at Ivry, Eu and Mortain. In the half century before 1066, counts were probably also established at Brionne and perhaps in the Hiesmois.¹³⁹ Rudolph, half brother of Duke Richard I, was probably the first count and assumed the title between 1006 and 1011. He held Ivry on the boundary of Normandy facing the territory of the count of Chartres. Thereafter, several of the sons of Duke Richard were similarly designated, possibly by virtue of their birth but equally possibly in connection with some scheme of defence for the Viking province as a whole. Initially in Normandy the comital style seems to have been personal and not territorial.¹⁴⁰

Robert, son of Duke Richard and archbishop of Rouen from 989 until his death in 1037, was also count of Evreux, as was his son from 1037. William, a natural son of Duke Richard, was made count of Eu between 1012 and 1015. His son Robert was count of Eu by 1047. It is possibly only with Robert, count of Eu, that the proper territorial basis of the title begins.

Robert of Torigny, writing in the late 12th century, tell us that Godfrey, another natural son of Duke Richard and grandfather of Richard fitz Gilbert of Bienfaite, was made a count by c1015 and that Duke Richard II (the Good, 996-1026) gave him Brionne which, after Godfrey's death, passed to his son Gilbert.¹⁴¹ Professor Douglas considered that this statement deserves close attention despite its late origin because, when Torigny was making his interpolations in the *Gesta normannorum ducum*, he was a monk at Bec.¹⁴² Torigny, therefore, was in a good position to have reliable information about the traditions of Bec.

The monastery of le Bec, which is only some 7km from Brionne, was a comparatively humble foundation of 1034 resited in 1040. The foundation was by Herluin, formerly a household knight of Count Gilbert¹⁴³. Gilbert was party to the foundation charter.¹⁴⁴ Bec's traditions were, therefore, likely to contain reliable information about Gilbert and his father. Bec was to rise in a few years to be the most outstanding, influential and famous of all the Norman monasteries. It was to number Lanfranc among its priors and Anselm among its abbots.

In various charters of the time of Dukes Richard II and Robert I (the Magnificent, 1027-35), Gilbert is styled *comes*,¹⁴⁵ but no territorial qualifications appear to have been assigned in the charters to Gilbert's title. The wording of Gilbert Crispin's biography of Herluin, founder of le Bec,¹⁴⁶ is also probably good evidence of Godfrey's comital dignity as Herluin was a vassal of Count Gilbert.¹⁴⁷ In the biography, Gilbert is described as *Gilbertus Brionnensis comes, primi Ricardi Normanniae ducis nepos ex filio consule Godefrido . . .*, which may translate as 'Gilbert, Count of Brionne . . .' but could be rendered 'Gilbert of Brionne, the count . . .'.¹⁴⁸ It can, in either case, be concluded that Godfrey and Gilbert (who possessed Brionne in turn) were counts.

This conclusion leaves open the question whether Godfrey was ever count of Brionne (he was accepted as such by Cokayne).¹⁴⁹ While Gilbert Crispin used the form *Gilbertus Brionnensis comes*, he referred to Godfrey simply as *consule Godefridou*. Orderic Vitalis¹⁵⁰ attributed the following observation to Robert, son of Baldwin of Meules, nephew of Richard of Bienfaite and Tonbridge and great-grandson of Godfrey, soon after 1090:

It is common knowledge in this land that Richard the elder, duke of Normandy, gave Brionne with the whole of the county to his son Godfrey, and that he at his death handed it on in like fashion to his son Gilbert. Then, after Count Gilbert had been brutally assassinated by evil men . . .

Professor Douglas considered¹⁵¹ that it would be unwise to accept this statement at its face value as it is recounted as part of a speech alleged to have been made by one of the parties in a dispute. Nevertheless, although the speech is imaginary – reconstructed by the chronicler to advance his narrative – it presumably represents what Orderic Vitalis understood the descendants of Godfrey to believe. Douglas states that the assertion or belief that the original grant was made by Duke Richard I and not by Richard II is contradicted by Robert of Torigny and also conflicts with the documentary evidence of the charters. Douglas quotes as an example a diploma belonging to the end of Richard I's dukedom, in which Godfrey appears without the comital style¹⁵² and points out that Gilbert is not yet described as count in Richard II's charter for Lisieux.¹⁵³

Altschul attributes¹⁵⁴ Gilbert's comital style to the granting of Eu by his half brother Richard II. William of Jumièges refers to Gilbert as *Ocensis comes*¹⁵⁵ and Robert of Torigny states that the same Gilbert claimed, and for a short while possessed, the county of Eu because it had been held by Godfrey his father.¹⁵⁶ As Douglas points out, however, the subsequent line of the counts of Eu did not descend from Godfrey but from a different illegitimate son of Richard the Fearless, one named William.¹⁵⁷ Douglas concluded that William became count of Eu between 1012 and 1015, after Godfrey's death.¹⁵⁸ Altschul thus appears to be mistaken in attributing Gilbert's style to his possession of Eu and indeed Douglas had actually suggested that Gilbert took his title as a consequence of his importance and added Brionne rather than Eu as the territorial soubriquet.¹⁵⁹

With the accession of Duke Robert in 1026, Count Gilbert became a man of great importance, as is shown by his constant attestation to ducal charters of this period¹⁶⁰ and, after the departure of Duke Robert on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Count Gilbert became one of the guardians of William, the infant heir.¹⁶¹

APPENDIX 2

Places in France and Flanders mentioned in the text

Abernon, Calvados	Ghent (Baldwin of Flanders)
Anjou	Hiesmois, (around Falais)
Bayeux, Calvados (Odo)	Ivry-la-Bataille, Eure (Count Rudolph)
Beaumont, Eure	Le Sap, Orne (Baldwin de Meules)
Bec (nr Brionne), Eure	Lisieux, Calvados
Bernay, Eure	Longueville-sur-Scie, S-M (Giffard family)
Bienfaite (St Martin de Bienfaite nr Bernay), Calvados (Richard)	Lorraine
Bonneville-sur-Touques, Calvados	Mortaine, Manche (Robert, count of)
Brionne, Eure (Counts Godfrey and Gilbert)	Meules or Meulles, Calvados (Baldwin fitz Gilbert)
Bruges, Flanders (Baldwin of)	Orbec (Orbec-en-Auge), Calvados (Richard)
Caen, Calvados	Poix (Walter Tirel, count of)
Chartres, (count of)	Ponthieu (county between Flanders and Normandy)
Conteville (SE of Caen), Calvados (Herluin of)	Pontoise (Tirel)
Dammartin (NE of Paris), Seine-et-Marne (family of)	Rouen, S-M
Eu, S-M (William and Robert, counts of)	Varenne, S-M (Wm de Warenne)
Evreux, Eure (Robert, count of)	Vatteville, S-M (Robert of)
Friardel (nr Bienfaite), Calvados (Picot)	Vernon, Eure (Guy of Burgundy)

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Turner 1986; 1987, 253-4; in prep (a) and (b). The historic spelling Blechingley is used throughout this paper.
- 2 Ward 1962; Altschul 1965; and, eg, Painter 1961; Mortimer 1980; Ward 1964, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1988
- 3 cf Malden 1900a
- 4 Lambert 1921
- 5 Cokayne 3, 242
- 6 Ward 1981, 430
- 7 Chibnall 1968, 24-5 n 3. Richard fitz Gilbert's mother was said by Granville Leveson-Gower (1871, 201) to have been Harlotte, Herleve or Arlette, mother of Duke William, which would have made them half-brothers. Leveson-Gower was probably following Manning & Bray (1804, 1, 2), who are unlikely to have invented the story. However, the present writer has not been able to establish the basis for the claim which may rest in some simple error and can surely be discounted. The name Herleve was not uncommon in Normandy – Robert, brother of Duke Richard II and archbishop of Rouen, had a wife of that name who was the mother of three sons (Douglas 1964, 33, citing Orderic Vitalis: *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (ed A Le Prévost & L Delisle, 5 vols, Paris 1838-55), 2, 365: ie Chibnall 1972, 84-5). Some time after William's birth, his mother was married to Herluin de Conteville, probably before the death in 1035 of Duke Robert while returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Douglas 1964, 381-2, with refs). Her sons by de Conteville – Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, and Robert, count of Mortain – were fully acknowledged as William's half brothers and were destined to play prominent roles in Normandy and Norman England. Odo and Mortain were both elevated by Duke William.
- 8 Douglas 1964, 34
- 9 *Vita Herluin* (Robinson 1911), 88; Douglas 1964, 34, citing Fauroux, M (ed), 1961 *Recueil des actes des ducs de Normandie (911-1066)*, deeds 64, 65, 67, 70, 80, 85
- 10 Douglas 1964, 40
- 11 *ibid.* For the interesting career of Archbishop Robert, see *ibid.*, 32-40.

- 12 *ibid.*, 40-41
- 13 Douglas 1946, 133. Leveson-Gower (1871, 201) called Gilbert's father Jeffrey.
- 14 Douglas 1946, 139-40, citing Robert of Torigny's interpolations in the *Gesta* (Jumièges (ed Marx), 229)
- 15 Orderic Vitalis (Chibnall 1968, 24-5 and n 3); Douglas 1964, 41
- 16 Douglas 1946, 140
- 17 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 208-9)
- 18 Grierson 1941
- 19 Duyse 1891; Van de Walle 1962, 1964
- 20 Douglas 1964, 35, citing Jumièges (Marx), 104
- 21 Barlow 1983, 9, citing Reuter, T, 1978 *The medieval nobility*, Europe in the Middle Ages, Selected Studies, 14, 6ff
- 22 Barlow 1983, 9, citing Guillaume de Poitiers, *Gesta Guillaume . . .* (ed R Foreville: Les Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Age, Paris 1952), 46ff
- 23 Barlow 1983, 9
- 24 Brooke 1987, 256, citing Ganshof, F-L, 1949 *La Flandre sous les premiers comtes* (3rd edn, Brussels)
- 25 Brooke 1987, 259
- 26 Douglas 1964, 379-82
- 27 *ibid.*, 76; Barlow 1983, 8 n 13. The marriage took place between October 1049 and the end of 1053.
- 28 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 208-9); Cokayne, 3, 242; Altschul 1965, 18
- 29 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 208-9)
- 30 Douglas 1964, 49-51; Chibnall 1973, 208-9 n 1, citing Yver, J, 1955-6 *Le château fort en Normandie jusqu'au milieu du XII^e siècle*, *Bull Soc Antiq de Normandie*, 53, 1955-6 (1957), 49
- 31 For a discussion of attempts by the descendants of Count Gilbert to recover Brionne, see Ward 1988, 265-6. The claim may have failed because the principal bid was not made until the time of King William II with whom the family had a less than close relationship.
- 32 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 210-13)
- 33 Chibnall 1968, 140-41
- 34 Chibnall 1986, 10, citing Guillaume de Poitiers (note 22), 148-51
- 35 Corbett 1926, 511
- 36 Ward 1988
- 37 Possibly not obtained until the reign of Henry I (Ward 1988, 267)
- 38 Henry was not giving away that which was his own and Ceredigion still had to be won and paid for. There were no easy pickings in Dyfed (see Rowlands 1980).
- 39 Altschul 1965, 24; Ward 1988, 265, citing *Cartae Antiquae Rolls 11-20* (ed J Conway Davies, 1957), Pipe Roll Soc, new ser, 33, no 564
- 40 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 210-13, 212 n1). Mortimer (1980, 123) recognizes Standon (Herts) and Eynesbury (Hunts), recorded as possessions of Rohese in DB, as her dowry. That Rohese personally held English lands in 1088 suggests that the marriage took place after 1066. It seems possible that Richard married Rohese not long before 1078 as a letter to Richard from Anselm, written shortly after he became abbot of Bec in that year, says that Richard and his wife showed their love toward God in their grants to the monastery and in their promises of future gifts: they were included daily in the monks' prayers and their generosity would be rewarded in the heavenly kingdom (Ward 1981, 428 citing *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia* (ed F S Schmitt, 1946), 3, 220-21, *ep* 94). Rohese was still alive in 1113 (Ward 1981, 432). Richard's (eldest?) son, Roger of Bienfaite, was old enough to take part in Robert Curthose's 'rebellion' of 1078 (Douglas 1964, 237-8) and his (second?) son, Gilbert of Tonbridge, was old enough to take an active part in the events of 1088, so a previous marriage is implied, although this does not seem to be recognized in any of the published genealogies (eg Ward 1988, 263).
- 41 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ed Whitlock *et al.*, 1969), 146; Orderic (Chibnall 1968, 214-5); Green 1982, *passim*; Chibnall 1986, 16
- 42 Cokayne, 3, 242
- 43 Dugdale 1675-6, 1, 206
- 44 Manning & Bray, 1, xix
- 45 Baker 1822-30, 1, 7
- 46 Davis 1913, no 22
- 47 Stenton 1971, 609-10
- 48 Douglas 1964, 286; Ward 1988
- 49 Douglas 1964, 232
- 50 Orderic (Chibnall 1968, 310-23); Douglas 1964, 231-2; Chibnall 1968, 36. A number of writers have described fitz Gilbert as regent or *justiciar* of England during the Conqueror's absence, jointly with de Warenne (Wadmore 1886, 15; *VCH* Sy, 1, 340; Cokayne, 3, 242; Lambert 1921, 1, 43 – probably all following Orderic Vitalis). However, F West (1966, 8-9) has made it clear that, despite the use of *justiciar* by Orderic, there was no specific title for a lay magnate acting for the Crown at this time – even where, as in the land pleas, *justiciarius* would have been a literal description. Variations in the delegation of royal power argue for the absence of any settled system of regency or formal office. Only later did *justiciar* acquire its technical sense: in the 11th century it only implied *ad hoc* authority.

- 51 Ward 1988, 263-4, citing Davis 1913, nos 50, 100, 102
- 52 Ward 1988, 264
- 53 *VCH Sy*, 1, 340; David 1920, 21-8; Douglas 1964, 237-8
- 54 Chibnall 1968, 358-9; *idem* 1972, 100-103, cf David 1920, 22
- 55 David 1920, 28-30; Stenton 1971, 614
- 56 Davis 1913, no 50, citing: Brady, R, 1685 *History of England*, 1, 191; Bridgelow *Placita Anglo-Normannica*, 4; *idem*, *Feodera*, 1, 3. The reference to Brady appears to be in error.
- 57 Mortimer 1980, 127-8
- 58 Le Patourel 1946, 1948; Bates 1978, esp 14-15. *Anglia Sacra* (ed H Warton 1691), I, 335), also cited by Ward (1980, n 4) would likewise appear not to be a contemporary source.
- 59 Du Boulay 1966, 85-6
- 60 Mortimer 1980, 121
- 61 *ibid*, 127
- 62 Chibnall 1986, 22
- 63 Wadmore 1886; Dumbreck 1958; Ward 1980, correcting much previous work
- 64 Douglas 1944, 63-4
- 65 Ward 1980, 122-3
- 66 *ibid*, 123, following and correcting Neilson 1932, 191; Ward 1980, 127-8, citing Douglas 1944, 63-4, 105. The list of knights in *Domesday Monachorum* is dated by Douglas (1944, 64) to Dec 1093/Oct 1096. Ward (1980, 123) draws attention to the apparent but unprovable parallel between the grant of Tonbridge and that of Saltwood. Saltwood was granted to Hugh de Montford by the Conqueror but was recovered by Lanfranc at the trial of Penenden Heath; in 1086 it was held by Hugh of the archbishop, together with 225 burgesses of Hythe by the service of two knights.
- 67 Douglas 1944, 105
- 68 Barlow 1983, 78-80; Ward 1988, 267. Gilbert fitz Richard was also implicated in the rebellion of 1095 but deserted and informed on the rebels (Orderic (Chibnall 1968, 280-1); Ward 1988, 267).
- 69 Douglas 1944, 88; Du Boulay 1966, 85 n 4; Neilson 1932, 191. Darenth was recorded in Domesday Book as divided between the archbishop (DB I, f 2 (Kent), II.3) and Bishop Odo (DB I, f 6, V.16-17): it is presumably the archbishop's portion that is referred to in *Domesday Monachorum*. (Douglas (1944, 88) dates the portion of the *Domesday Monachorum* in which the Darenth entry appears to c.1100; Neilson (1932, 191) thought that it was a copy of a stage in the compilation of Domesday Book in 1086-7.)
- 70 Ward 1981, 428, 429-30
- 71 Ward 1980, 119 (cf Mortimer 1980, 120-28)
- 72 Ward 1988, 264
- 73 DB 2, f 440 (Suffolk), LXVII.1; Round 1899, 225. But Richard's second(?) son, who inherited his English lands, appears to have been widely known as Gilbert of Tonbridge.
- 74 Discussed illuminatingly by Mortimer (1980, 124-7)
- 75 *ibid*, 128-9
- 76 DB I, ff 34-5 (Surrey), XIX; cf Round 1902, 280
- 77 Malden 1900a, 17-18
- 78 Le Patourel 1969
- 79 DB I, f 34, XIX. The actual calculation is impossible to make with certainty because of the ambiguities in DB. Mortimer (1980, 122) calculated the value as £242 while Ward (1980, 126) had £238 14s 1d – more precise but not necessarily more accurate.
- 80 For the enfeoffment of part of Chivington see Blair 1980, 1982
- 81 Perceval 1871; *VCH Sy*, 1, 314a; Meekings 1980; Ward 1983, 192. The statement by Gerald Cobb (1950, 60-62) that the name probably came from a village on the river Aude, which flows through parts of Picardy, Champaign and Burgundy, can probably be discounted. For the half-hide in Chivington (Bysshe Court in Horne), see Blair 1982.
- 82 Perceval 1871, 54
- 83 *VCH Sy*, 3, 452 n 5; cf *VCH Sy*, 1, 315, 316
- 84 *VCH Sy*, 3, 452. Molesey Prior seems to equate to East Molesey rather than West, but probably included part of both.
- 85 It can be deduced that Salie was a tenant at some stage after 1066 but dead by 1086. The wife of Salie held Tandridge at the time of the Inquest. Picot held [Long] Ditton, Tolworth, two hides at Walton-on-Thames and land in Kingston hundred called *Limeord* (Ember Court?) of Richard in 1086. A Picot still held Tolworth manor in 1291 (*VCH Sy*, 3, 519)
- 86 Mortimer 1980, 136
- 87 The spelling of Watteville used by Wood and Morris (DB) is followed but almost any permutation seems to be acceptable.
- 88 Ward 1980, 119
- 89 Mortimer 1980, 123
- 90 Ward 1980, 126-7, citing *Cal IPM*, 3, 239; *Cal CLR*, 1296-1302, 369; *Cal PR*, 1292-1301, 496
- 91 Ward 1980, 126

- 92 cf Lennard 1959, 50-51
 93 Mortimer 1980, 131-2
 94 Ward 1980, 120-21, citing Baring 1898
 95 Ward 1980, 121, citing: Round, J H, 1888 Danegeld and the finance of Domesday, in *Domesday Studies* (ed P E Dove, 1888-91), 1, 113; Finn, R W 1971 *The Norman Conquest and its effect on the economy 1066-86*, 51
 96 Mortimer 1980, 131, citing Dumbreck 1958, 145
 97 Ward 1980, 121 gives the following values: of the king, in chief £24; of Odo of Bayeux £44 1s 11d; of Cantuar £38 18s 6d; of Rochester £2 12s; total £109 12s 5d
 98 Mortimer 1980, 132
 99 Ward 1983, 192
 100 Meekings 1980, 158. Stoke probably became known as Stoke d'Abernon to distinguish it from the Clare estate of Stoke-by-Clare rather than from Stoke near Guildford.
 101 *Cal IPM*, 3, no 422; Ward 1980, 126-7
 102 Ward 1980, 126-7. For the operation of the de Clare honours see Ward 1983.
 103 Ward 1983, 192, citing Harvey, S, 1970 The knight and the knight's fee in England, *Past and Present*, 49, 3-43 (esp 10-13), rep in *Peasants, knights and heretics* (ed R H Hilton, 1976, Cambridge), 133-73
 104 *Liber Niger Scaccari*, 294-5, giving 2¼ instead of 1¾ fees for Peter of Thalews (Tolworth) and 3 rather than 9 fees for Robert of Watteville; *Red book of the Exchequer*, 1, 405, giving 9 fees for Robert of Watteville (not 11 as stated by Ward 1980, 126 n 31); Ward 1980, 126 n 31, citing PRO: E 198/1/3; Ward 1983, 192. The 1166 Carta, entered in the *Red Book* and in the *Liber Niger*, gives only the name of the vassal and the number of fees held. On the Clare lands, detail has to be filled in from 13th century documents and the inquisition post mortem of 1314. See further Ward 1983, 192-4, notes.
 105 Ward 1980, 119
 106 *ibid*
 107 *ibid*, 126
 108 Ward 1983, 197
 109 Poole 1955, 109. But cf Ward 1983, 267.
 110 Turner 1986
 111 Coad & Streeten 1982, esp 191
 112 Rigold 1969, 215-17. This building has now been dated archaeologically to the late 11th-early 12th century (B J Philp, pers comm)
 113 Thompson 1992
 114 Turner, in prep (b)
 115 Blair 1980, 106-9
 116 *Cal IPM*, 3, no 422
 117 Ward 1988
 118 Mortimer 1980, 132
 119 DB 1, f 34, XIX.1&2; Blair 1980, 1982
 120 Baring 1898. Cf Malden 1900b, 62-4. As already noted, Ward (1980, 121), citing Round and Finn (note 95), tends to discount the effect of devastation on assessment and suggests merely that William's followers may have extorted from him a remission of the geld obligations in the early years of the Conquest.
 121 Mortimer 1980, 132
 122 Ward 1983, 191
 123 Cokayne, 3, 242-3 and note (a); Altschul 1965, 19. Following Altschul, the repetitive family names in the principal line can be counted from their first appearance in England.
 124 Ward 1981, 427-37
 125 Orderic (Chibnall 1973, 208-11); Furley 1871, 1, 227; *VCH Sy*, 1, 340; David 1920, 49-51; Douglas 1944, 40-41; Poole 1955, 100; Stenton 1971, 616; Barlow 1983, 67-79; Ward 1988, 266-8
 126 eg Parker 1912, Brooke 1963, 175-96
 127 Round 1899; *idem*, 1909, 468-79
 128 Round 1909, 472
 129 Round 1899, 223; Ward 1988, 267-8; cf Brooke 1963, 179-80, 186, 189-92
 130 Hollister 1973; Barlow 1983, 419-32; Ward 1988, 267-8, 270-73. For the role of the Clares in the government of Henry I and Stephen, see Ward 1988, 268ff
 131 For the Clare family's generosity to monastic houses, especially Stoke-by-Clare in Suffolk, see Ward 1981
 132 Cokayne, 3, 243; Altschul 1965, 20
 133 Altschul 1965, 21; Sander 1960, 35 n 1 (not p 107 as stated by Altschul), in turn citing Cokayne, 3, 242)
 134 Altschul 1965, 61n, citing *Cal PR*, 1232-47, p 104
 135 Turner, D J, in prep (c)
 136 Gervase of Canterbury (ed Stubbs), 2, 420; Lambert 1921, 1, 39
 137 *ibid* (no source quoted)
 138 Blair 1980, esp 106-9
 139 Douglas 1946, 130
 140 Douglas 1946; *idem* 1964, 25-6

- 141 Douglas 1946, 133, citing Robert of Torigny's interpolations in the *Gesta* (Jumièges (Marx), 288)
- 142 Douglas 1946, 133, citing Jumièges (Marx), xxvii-xxviii
- 143 Porée 1901, 1, 30, citing *Vita Herluin*, 1, 261; Robinson 1911, 2-4
- 144 Dugdale (ed Caley *et al*), 6, 1067; Porée 1901, 1, 39-40
- 145 Douglas 1946, 134
- 146 Robinson 1911, 87
- 147 Douglas 1946, 134. Gilbert Crispin, biographer of Herluin and abbot of Westminster, lived from c1085 to 1117. Confusingly, some sources refer to Gilbert, count of Brionne, as Gilbert Crispin or Crispin, but this name has not been authenticated.
- 148 Robinson 1911, 87
- 149 Cokayne, 3, 242
- 150 Chibnall 1973, 209
- 151 Douglas 1946, 134
- 152 Lemarignier 1937, 293
- 153 Douglas 1946, 134 (without refs)
- 154 Altschul 1965, 17 (incorrectly citing Douglas 1946, 134, 140)
- 155 Douglas 1946, 135, citing Jumièges (Marx), 116
- 156 Douglas, 1946, 135, citing Torigny (Jumièges, 229)
- 157 Douglas 1946, 135, citing Dudo of St Quentin, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* (ed J Lair, Caen, 1865), 289
- 158 Douglas 1946, 135-7
- 159 *ibid*, 140 n 4
- 160 *ibid*, 139
- 161 *ibid*, citing Jumièges (Marx), 155-6

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