

ART. V.—*The Manor of Melmerby*. Part II. By T. H. B. GRAHAM, M.A.

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THE de Wigtons were chief lords of Melmerby. A pedigree and short account of the family are contained in these *Transactions*, N.S. xv., p. 63, where it is assumed that the land given by Henry I. to their ancestor "Odard the sheriff," to hold of the king by service of 26s. 4d. for cornage, was the barony of Wigton. But the assumption runs counter to the express statement of the *Chronicon Cumbriæ**—namely, that Waldeve, son of Gospatric, gave Wigton to Odard the sheriff, and it is significant that, in 1315, Wigton was stated to be holden as of the honour of Cockermouth, by homage, service of 5 marks for cornage, and suit at the court of Cockermouth. It is therefore evident that the land given by Henry to Odard was the barony of Melmerby. In 1212, Adam the second, great-grandson of the sheriff, continued to hold the same fee of the king, by the same service, and it comprised 2½ villis in demesne and one in homage (*Testa de Nevill*).

Adam the second held Melmerby and its pertinents of the king in 1225 (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 9 Henry III., p. 83), and was succeeded by his son Odard the third (*Rot. Fin.*, edit. Roberts, i., 134). The latter died about 1236, and his son, Walter, was born two months after his death (*Cal. inq. p.m.* (undated) Henry III., p. 290). In July, 1238, Walter, bishop of Carlisle, obtained custody of Odard's land and heir and the marriage of Odard's widow, Christina (*Cal. Doc. Scot.*, i., p. 264). In a plea *coram rege*,

* The origin and nature of this *Chronicon* is explained by Dr. Wilson, *St. Bees*, p. xviii.

during the summer of 1258, the sheriff certified that Odard the third held the manor of Melmerby, with its pertinents Stainton-on-Eden, Blakhale and Warwick-on-Eden, value £20 *per annum*, of the king *in capite*, by cornage, and the manor of Wigton, value £15 *per annum*, of William de Fortibus, earl of Albemarle *in capite*, by cornage, and it was proved that the custody of Melmerby, given to the late bishop, had, by successive demises, become vested in John le Franceys, and that the heir, Walter de Wigton, would be 22 years old on August 15th following (*Cal. Doc. Scot.*, i., p. 415). In another plea, twenty years later, there was a verdict that Walter de Wigton then held the manors of Melmerby, Blakhale and Stainton, with the barony of Melmerby, of the king, by service of cornage (*ibid.*, ii., p. 37). He died seised of Melmerby in 1285-6 and was succeeded by his son John aged 22 (*Cal. inq. p.m.*; 14 Edward I., p. 359).

Meanwhile, there is reference to under-tenants. Early in the 13th century, Gerald de Melmerby gave to the monks of Wetheral a bovate of land at Melmerby, to sustain the light of Wetheral church (Prescott, *Wetherhal*, p. 289), and in 1231-9, William, son of Adam de Mora, gave them two bovates at the same place, for the same purpose (*ibid.*, p. 291).

William de Melmerby was juror at an inquisition held in 1250 (*Cal. Doc. Scot.*, i., p. 331). Adam "de Melmerby" was ordained priest, in 1303, with the title of 5 marks, given him by the charter of his father, Walter de Mumby, with the approval of *dominus Gervase*, then rector of Melmerby (*Halton Reg.*, edit. Thompson, i., 185).

John de Wigton died early in 1315. His undertenants at Melmerby were:—Walter de Mumby, holding a carucate, by suit at the court of Melmerby and free farm rent 12d.; Thomas de Richmond, a carucate, by suit of court only; Richard Armstrong, two carucates, rent one penny; Richard de Salkeld, a carucate, rent 12d.;

William de Ro[bert]by, two carucates, rent 40d. ; Agnes de Hilton, a carucate, rent 40d. ; William Mel[merby], six acres, rent 15d. ; Walter, son of William, six acres, rent 15d. ; and de Ainstable, fifteen acres, rent 3s. (*Cal. inq. p.m.*, 8 Edward II., p. 297). On July 8th, 1315, the escheator was ordered to cause the fort of Melmerby, which belonged to John de Wigton, and was then in the king's hand, to be provided with men and victuals and safely guarded (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 9 Edward II., p. 237). In November, 1315, the bishop was ordered to distrain "Geoffrey," parson of Melmerby and executor of John de Wigton, to appear at Westminster, and replied that there was no beneficed clerk of that name in his diocese (*Halton Reg.*, ii., 114). The parson was probably Gervase, mentioned in 1303. On July 24th, 1320, Dionisia's right to dower of Melmerby and her daughter Margaret's right to the inheritance of the same were established (see judgment appended to John de Wigton's inquisition*). In 1332, Dionisia presented Thomas de Berneston to the living, and the inquisition thereupon taken found that she was true patroness, in right of her dower in the manor of Melmerby, and that the last presentation was made by her husband's father Walter de Wigton (Nicolson and Burn). In 1342, Thomas de Blythe, rector of Melmerby, with consent of the patron and ordinary, exchanged the living with John de Mansergh. The patron was Robert Parvyng tenant for life of the manor and advowson, under the settlement of 1337. Robert Parvyng died on August 26th, 1343, and the bishop, in that year, collated Roger de Cromwell by lapse.

In 1346, Robert de Bromfield was presented by Margaret de Wigton, tenant for life in remainder. The said Robert de Bromfield, by his will dated November 17th,

* Margaret's legal interest in Melmerby is noticed by Dr. Magrath in these *Transactions*, n.s. xix, pp. 44, 46, 57, 59 and 61.

1353, gave his body to be buried in the choir of the church (*Test. Karl.*, p. 5). He died soon afterwards, and on December 15th, 1354, Henry de Wakefield was presented as rector by Adam Parvyng (formerly Pacok), tenant in tail under the settlement. Henry de Wakefield, on July 3rd, 1359, exchanged the benefice with William de Pulhowe (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 33 Edward III., p. 234).

Henry and Robert de Threlkeld, holders of the manor and advowson at Adam Parvyng's death, were evidently trustees. In 1389, Geoffrey de Threlkeld was pardoned for having, without licence, acquired from Henry de Threlkeld the manor and advowson in fee simple, and the premises were confirmed to him by letters patent to hold in chief (*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 12 Richard II., p. 37).

Nearly a century later, Humphrey, Lord Dacre, was in possession of a cottage and land at Melmerby, which he held of William de Threlkeld (*Cal. inq. p.m.*, 1 Henry VII., p. 67).

Canon Bower has furnished (these *Transactions*, N.S. ix., p. 11), careful drawings of two grave-slabs at Melmerby. The earlier one is that of an ecclesiastic. The shears, incised upon it, may merely record his admission to the "clerical state" and to the minor orders of the ministry, including that of sub-deacon. The book is either the missal or the gospel. If the latter, it is the emblem of a deacon, whose duty it is to read the gospel at high mass. The chalice is the symbol of a priest who has been ordained to all the orders in succession.

One of the parsons of the fourteenth century was buried with chalice and paten in the churchyard (these *Transactions*, N.S. vii., p. 32). But Robert de Bromfield, rector in 1353, desired burial in the choir, and the slab may be intended to indicate his tomb.

It should be noted that the grave-slab of Hisabela at Croglin (these *Transactions*, O.S. xiv., p. 210) also bears the shears. She had probably been admitted to some

religious order. The later grave-slab at Melmerby shows by its armorial shield that it commemorates one of the de Threlkelds, lords of the manor at the close of the fourteenth century. A third grave-slab is mentioned by Canon Bower. It may have marked the resting-place of one of the de Melmerbys, who were resident freeholders.
