

ART. IV.—*A Twelfth Century Cumberland Surname.*
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THE object of a genealogist is to discover and state the truth. But when it comes to investigating the remote origins of local families it is often almost impossible to do this with certainty. Very often all that can be said is that it is possible, or probable, that a descent suggested is the true one. But if the truth is ever to be discovered, it can only be by such suggestions being put forward for criticism by those qualified.

This paper puts forward such a theory about the origin of one of the oldest of our local surnames by suggesting that the view accepted by all local historians that the family of Bueth, the 11th century Lord of Gilsland, became extinct in the male line at the end of the 12th century, is possibly a mistaken one, and that his race and surname may still survive in Cumberland in the changed form of Bouch. But it is not suggested that this is a proved fact, merely that there is sufficient evidence that this may be so for the theory to be presented for the consideration of this Society.

It seems probable that the Bueth family sprang from early Gallgael, or Viking ancestors who intermarried originally with Gaels* and at a then comparatively recent period emigrated from Ireland and the Isles of Scotland to the Cumbrian Fells. Bueth himself would be contemporary with the Conqueror, but the tract of Country lying between the river Line and the Eastern

I am indebted to Mr. F. J. Field, the author of the *Armorial of Cumberland* for much help and encouragement without which I would never have ventured to publish a theory, so contrary to accepted tradition but I am alone responsible for the theory and its presentation.

* W. G. Collingwood, *Trans.*, N.S., ii, 243.

Fells and extending towards the Eden valley, over which he held sway,* was not part of the English Kingdom, and if Bueth acknowledged any overlord, it would have been the Scotch King. According to Denton, he built the castle which bears his name, but as there had been a Roman station on the site, all he did probably was to take advantage of the great fosse at the north-eastern corner of the station and by building two cross ditches enclose a squared corner, within which he built a timber castle.†

He was succeeded by his son Gilles, who was a juror at the inquisition held in 1120-1 by David, Earl of Cumbria concerning church lands (Register of the Church of Glasgow, Bannatyne Club, No. 77, vol. I, p. 5), and probably lived and died in possession of his hereditary estates, despite the fact that they were included in the barony given by Henry I to Ranulf Meschin. It seems uncertain, whether he lived at Bewcastle, because according to Denton (*Accompt*, p. 139), "the ancient capitall mansion house of Gilsland was at a place in Irthington parish called the Castlestead, where is as yet to be seen the ruins of the castle where Gill. fil. Bueth dwelt," and the late Mr. J. F. Curwen wrote, "It is generally believed that the residence of the Lords of Gilsland stood upon the Mote at Irthington village."‡ Probably, however, this was a second stronghold built to enable him to retain his hold upon the district around and keep out the representative of the English King. The legend recounted by Denton (*Accompt*, p. 120) that he was slain at a friendly meeting by Hubert de Vallibus is not accepted as historical fact.

His successor, Buethbarn, that is Bueth the younger, was possibly his son; he was certainly one of the family.

* T. H. B. Graham, *Trans.*, n.s., xvi, 40.

† J. F. Curwen, *Trans.*, n.s., xxii, 186.

‡ *Trans.*, n.s., xii, 182.

He gave the advowson of the church at Nether Denton to the Priory of Lanercost, sometime after its foundation in 1169. He hoped no doubt that Henry II would allow him to continue in his Lordship, but the king appointed a Norman, Hubert de Vallibus, as his Over Lord.

Buethbarn was succeeded by his son Robert, who speaks of "my father Buethbarn" in a charter in the Lanercost Register (*xiii*, 26). In 1173-4, William the Lion of Scotland invaded England, and Robert, probably hoping to recover his lordship, sided with him against Henry II. For this act of rebellion, he was fined one mark for being with the king's enemies (*Pipe Rolls*, 1177). He confirmed his father's grant to Lanercost (*Reg.* III, 2) and himself gave some land and the advowson of Nether Denton to the Priory of Wetheral,* and about 1177-8 confirmed to that priory the land which his father had given.†

Robert was the last male Bueth to hold the lands in Bewcastle and Nether Denton, and was succeeded there by the Denton's through the marriage of one of his sisters with Robert, son of Anketin, otherwise Robert de Denton.

In the above account of the Bueth family its members have been referred to by that name, of which Archdeacon Prescott stated‡ "Bueth seems to be the family name." But in actual fact there appears to be no certainty as to what really was the name. Mr. Collingwood suggests it was "probably the Gaelic Buidh, modern Boyd, i.e., yellow haired."§ But Mr. Sedgefield does not seem to agree with this, as he states "I can find no other instances of such a personal name." (*Place-Names of Cumberland*, p. 13). Certainly the variations in the spelling of the name in contemporary documents are considerable.

* Prescott, *Wetherhal*, 217.

† *Wetherhal*, 196.

‡ *Wetherhal*, 196.

§ N.S., ii, 243.

In the inquisition mentioned above in the Register of Glasgow of 1120-21 it is spelt Boed,* in a charter of Henry II in 1157, Boet,* in the Foundation Charter of Lanercost in 1169, Bueth,* and in Charters in the Register of Wetheral of 1178, Buec, though in one of 1214, it is Bueth.

In the case of the place-name, now called Bewcastle, still more variations are found. The Wetheral Register uses the forms Buchastre, Buchcastre or Buchecastre; and describes the Bueth of that time as Robert filius Buec de Buchecastre. The Charter Rolls use Buchecastre (1290) and Bochecastre (1277). Inquisitions, Buchecastre (1240), Buthecaster (1263) and Buthcaster (1263), and the Close Rolls, Botecastre (1274).†

Taking the name then in its two forms, the following variations are found between 1120 and 1290:—Boed, Boet, Bueth, Buec, Bu, Buch, Buche, Boche, Bothe, Buth and Bote, which seems to justify the assertion that it is very doubtful exactly what sound or meaning lies behind these various forms. The ones that chiefly concern this paper, are Buch, Buche, Boche, which are found in the Wetheral Registers, in Inquisitions and in Charter Rolls; and Buec, which is found only in the Wetheral Register and therefore are not peculiar to one class of documents only or to one short period of history. Since the date covered by these variations is between 1178-1290.

Now the interest of this is that at that time there was in North and West Cumberland a family using Buc, Buch and Buche as a surname. The first person known to be called by this name was Richard Buc or Buche who was a witness to two charters of Cecily, Countess of Albemarle, in the Chartulary of St. Bees. These charters are dated about 1175. The next is Sir Alan Buche, called Fores-

* *Wetherhal*, 196.

† Sedgfield, *Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland*, 13.

tarius,* who was a justice of Assize in 1229-1230,† also a witness to several charters in the Wetheral and Lanercost Registers, and three of whose charters are in the Register of Holm Cultram. From that date the continuity of the name in West Cumberland is clear, though not the actual descent. There was also a branch of the family at Ulvesby (Ousby) from before 1278 to the beginning of the 15th century. This surname of Buc, Buche, Bouche,‡ is a most curious one, which has puzzled those who have tried to account for it. In the 17th century Anthony Bouche, of Cockermouth, who was Sheriff of Cumberland in 1672 and married a Lowther of Ingleton, used arms that were very similar to those of Sir John de Greilly, Captal de Buch, one of the Founder Knights of the Order of the Garter, and apparently assumed the family to be of French origin, and in the 18th century Jonathan Bouch,§ changed his name to Boucher and claimed, without any evidence to support him, that the name was really Bouchier in an abbreviated form.

This paper is an attempt to solve this puzzle by suggesting that the truth may be that the surname variously

* *Wetherhal*, c. 46 and 105.

† *Patent Rolls*.

‡ Throughout this article Bouch is spelt Buche, which was the normal form in 13th century documents. There is no doubt that Buche, Bouche, Bouch are the same name.

Adam Bouche, of Ulvesby, 1300. *Cal. I.P.M.*, vol. 3, 494.

Adam Buche, of Ulvesby, 1304. *Close Rolls*.

Patrick Bouch, of Ulvesby, 1327. *Patent Rolls*.

§ Mr. Boucher's account of the origin of the family is given in these *Transactions*, n.s., xxvii, 118. It seems very improbable that this account has any evidential value whatever, but it is rather curious that Mr. Boucher in writing of his ancestors possessing estates in the Debateable Lands and losing them for rebellion, should have hit, if the theory produced in this paper has any value, on the actual place from which the family really came. It is just possible that Mr. Boucher writing in the middle of the 18th century, before the traditional life of England was destroyed, has in fact preserved a tradition of former importance handed down from a remote past, of which the historical fact is the connection with the Bewcastle area and the loss of position there in the 12th century, but which has confused Bewcastle with the Debateable Lands and foreshortened the rebellion of 1177 to the troubles of the 17th century.

spelt *Buche*, *Bouche*, *Bouch* is in fact *Boet*, *Bueth* or *Buec* in a Normanized form.

Now these two names have at any rate this in common: that they are contemporary 12th century surnames. Archdeacon Prescott wrote of *Bueth* as the family-name and *Buethbarn* as one of the family. The pedigree printed below, though it is not a proven pedigree of descent of the persons named, is at least proof of the fact that the name *Buc*, *Buche*, *Bouche*, *Bouch*, was a surname in the strict sense of the term from the middle or end of the 12th century. Surnames, even among the great families, were not in common use until the 13th and 14th centuries, yet here are two families in this remote corner of England—the last to be normanized—using one. It is remarkable, too, that though one of these families was a well known and for a time important one, while the other was not: yet it possessed a surname and a very peculiar surname too. This is a fact which demands explanation, and one which affords perhaps the strongest argument in favour of the theory that *Buche* is the same name as that commonly written as *Bueth*, in that it does explain the simultaneous existence of these two surnames. Because if it was well known that this family of *Buche* was a branch of the *Bueth* family, at once the fact that the scribes spelt *Bewcastle* as *Buchecastre* is explained. The fact is also explained that this comparatively unimportant family had a surname at that very early date, since if these *Buches* were in fact descended from the once powerful family of *Bueth*, it is understandable why they should retain their name so tenaciously, and why other people should identify them by it.

Does the actual name then give any support to this explanation? First let it be noted that it is never found with any prefix of any kind, therefore it can not be a place-name or a nickname, though in any case a nick-

name as a surname at that early period would be improbable. For the same reason it cannot be a trade name. It seems as if it must be the name of some remote ancestor, who must have been a well known person to have given his name to his descendants, as this alone can account for a comparatively unimportant family having a surname at this very early period.

If so, who was this ancestor? It is possible, of course, that his name is not recorded in any document that has come down to us. It is obvious that it is not Sir Alan Buche as Richard was before him. Again it is possible that he may have lived in some other part of England or even been a foreigner. But in that case it is difficult to account for the name surviving in Cumberland. Because in those days when the use of surnames was still a new custom, they would not generally have been assumed by members of a family themselves, but given then by other people, as a means of identification, in just the same way as a boy at school is given a nickname: he does not assume one. But in that case it is a little difficult to suppose a comparatively unimportant family coming into Cumberland and being immediately recognised by the name of an ancestor unknown to the people among whom they were living. It is more natural to suppose that if the family was indeed a new one in the county, its members would have been called after their place of residence, origin, or occupation, or possibly given a nickname. Therefore if, as appears to be almost certain, Buche was the name of some ancestor: it is almost equally certain that that ancestor was a local man, and, in that case, Bueth would certainly supply the conditions noted above. Was he then this ancestor?

Now, it is an undoubted fact that the name of Bueth's castle was written Buche castre. And, as shewn above, this did not happen once but several times, and in different kinds of documents over a period of 120 years. Was this

just a coincidence or mistake on the part of the writers, or can it be said that, because the place-name Bueth Castle became at one time Buche castre, that therefore Bueth could and did become Buche? Now it should be noted that while this was happening to the place-name, the surname of Buche was in existence, and at the beginning of the period the last of the male line of the family of Bueth was still alive, and, at no time was his name a very distant memory. Is it the truth then that the monastic scribes and other writers, nevertheless, took the name of a comparatively obscure family—on this supposition perhaps recently come into the county—and confusing it with the very well known one of Bueth, actually gave this new name of Buche to the castle of the family of Bueth; or that Bueth castle became Buche castre simply because this seemed at the time the right way to spell the name? But in that case Bueth alone could equally well become Buche alone and Bueth have been the ancestor, after whom the Buches were called.

But this possible identification does not rest on this alone. Because, undoubtedly, Sir Alan Buche had some kind of connection with North-East Cumberland. In charters to which he is a witness in the *Wetheral Register* (Numbers 46, 51, 156 and 158), men bearing names from that district such as Castle Carrock, Laversdale Corby, Warwick, Aglionby and Levington are witnesses with him, and in charter 105, he is witness with the sons of Thomas de Multon. Therefore the men, who wrote Bueth castle as Buchecastre, are almost certain to have known that there was a family of the name of Buche in Cumberland, so that it seems easier to believe that there was a connection between the families which the writers knew than that they had given the name of this lesser known family to the castle of the better known.

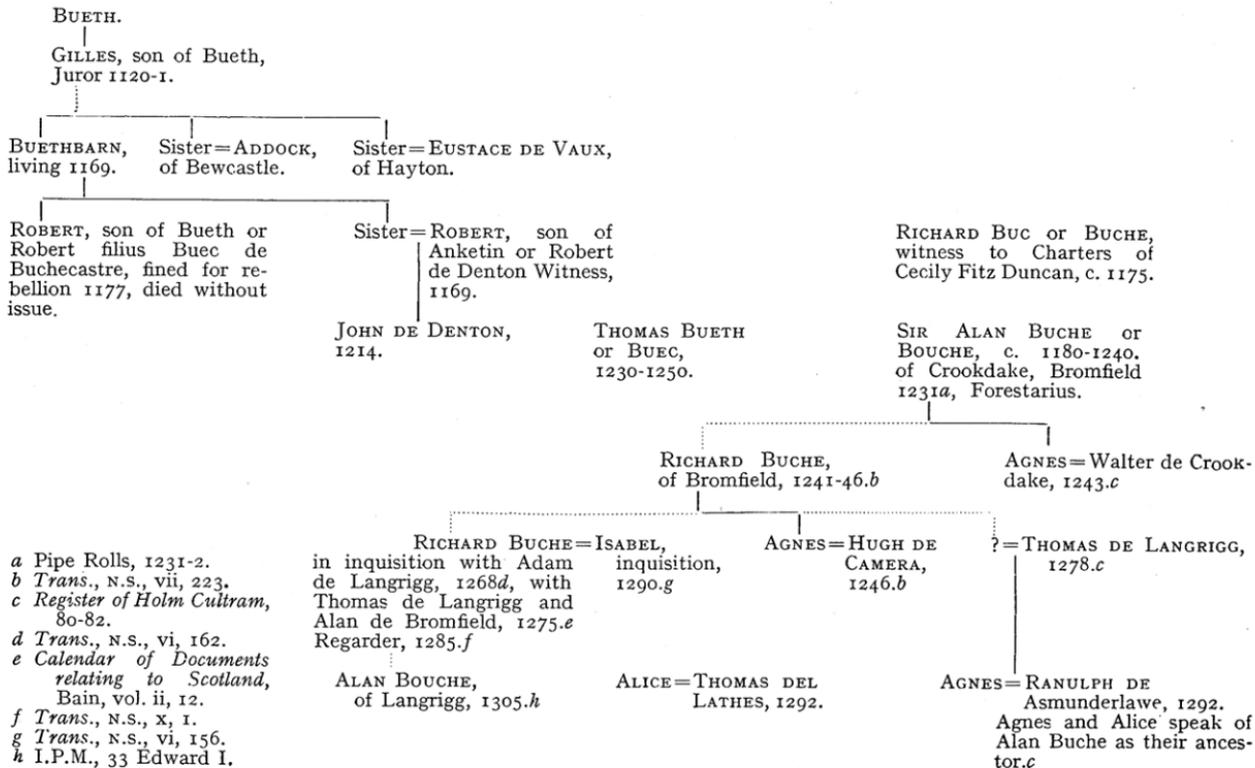
It should also be noted that the Bueth family are known to have been more in sympathy with the Scotch

than the English Kings. Gilles was a witness to a charter of David, son of Malcolm III, and Robert was fined in 1177 for being in rebellion, on the side of William the Lion. It is therefore interesting to find that the first mention of the name Buche is that of the Richard named above, who was a witness to two charters of Cecily, Countess of Albermarle, and a grand-daughter of Duncan II of Scotland.

But, despite all this, it must be acknowledged that this theory is only a theory: that is the conclusive evidence of the name of a known member of the Bueth family being spelt Buche or vice versa is lacking. There is evidence, however, which is not very far removed from this, because there was a Thomas Bueth whose surname is spelt with most of the variations noted above: Buec, Boet, Bueth, Buath and whose date is 1230-1250.* The occurrence of his name also removes two difficulties in the way of this theory: one that the Bueth family was extinct in the male line; his existence proves conclusively that this was not so; the other, that there is no evidence of the Bueth surname ever being used without the prefix "filius."

Therefore when the vagaries of 12th and 13th century spelling are taken into account, it does not seem to be over stating the case, to say that it is quite probable that the surname of Richard Buc and Thomas Buec were in fact the same. And that therefore, it is also probable, that the modern surname Bouch is, in fact, Bueth.

* *Wetherhal*, 346 and 414; *Trans.*, N.S., xx, 68-70.



- a Pipe Rolls, 1231-2.
 b *Trans.*, n.s., vii, 223.
 c *Register of Holm Cultram*, 80-82.
 d *Trans.*, n.s., vi, 162.
 e *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, Bain, vol. ii, 12.
 f *Trans.*, n.s., x, 1.
 g *Trans.*, n.s., vi, 156.
 h I.P.M., 33 Edward I.

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