

ART. VII.—*The De Asmunderlaws of Furness and Cumberland.* By JOSEPH SKELTON.

IT was during my investigations of the Cumberland Osmunderlaws that an article on the Furness family was suggested to me by the late lamented Mr. W. G. Collingwood as a necessary contribution to our *Transactions* (these *Transactions* N.S. xvi).

The suggestion appealed to me as one worthy of attention in a practical way, with the result that I am now able to throw more light on the relationship between the two and venture to offer my contribution as a tribute to my late dear wife, who was a direct descendant of William and Frances Osmunderlaw of Dubmill and Langrigg Hall.

The de Asmunderlaws appear in Furness in the late 12th century. There was a family in Yorkshire at the same period, but the one was clearly distinct from the other. The Yorkshire family name ended in various forms, as lac, lae, leia and lege (the g in the latter was unvoiced and more like our "y." The Anglo-Saxon way of writing the Danish Swein was Swegen (pronounced Sweyen), and these differ from the group ending in -law, which belongs to Furness and Cumberland.

The Yorkshire form is given in Domesday Book, 11th century, as Asmundrelac. (these *Trans.* N.S. xvi).

Asmunder was probably a Viking who originally stubbed or owned the lea or meadow; a later generation would take their name from the place (Anglo-Saxon-Osmund) as Asmunderley. Another form in Yorkshire was at Asmundrebi (Yorkshire Domesday Book), Asmunds Farm.

It is impossible for a family to have the same territorial claim whose name was *Osmunderlai*, *-ley* or *-lac*, as one named *Asmunderlaw*, which means something different; though both became *Osmotherley* in later times.

There was also a person in Furness called *Asmund*, of Viking stock, who lived or was buried (or both) at *Asmund's low*, or "hillock," in the language of the 11th century (part Norse and part Anglian) *Asmunder-hlaw* (*Asmunder* being the genitive case in the Norse grammar).

The relationship of the Furness *Asmunderlaws* with the important family of *de Boyvill*, lords of *Millom*, has been definitely established from evidence given in the charters of religious houses, in which their names often occur, both as witnesses and as grantors of land.

Godard de Boyvill appears as the progenitor of the family because of his territorial claim, and he was a feudal lord of much consequence.

That he was upon intimate terms with *William de Meschin*, who was overlord of *Coupland*, an area extending from the river *Derwent* to the *Sands of Duddon*, is borne out by the fact that his name is given as one of the principal benefactors to *St. Bees Priory* which *Priory de Meschin* founded.

Godard may have been one of those warriors who accompanied *de Meschin* gallantly fighting their way to the northern parts of the kingdom after their arrival in England with the Conqueror, when some intimate attachment would perhaps secretly and mysteriously exist between the two.

It is traditionally held that the *de Boyvills* were by some means closely allied to a high feudal authority in *Cumberland*. The ties of relationship would be the most intimate and binding.

When it is remembered they were granted exceptional privileges within their manor, beyond more than ordinary

limits of feudal tenure, the tradition may hold some degree of truth.

The freedom of serfs under their jurisdiction was limited to the prerogative of the lord who had the power to execute by hanging any who exceeded the rights of manor rule according to his eccentric or prejudiced ideas of what constituted a felon, a power which very few could claim.

A serf would be so branded for some slight misdemeanour as to be marked as a criminal, a view generally held by the feudal lord of the period.

Millom had been allotted by partition to the posterity of Cicely de Romeley by de Meschin, her husband. Godard had proved his ability to rule according to feudal dignity and prowess, as he has been described as "steward" over the lordship, when the Lady "gave and fully confirmed" the grant to Godard's son, Arthur, and his grandson, Henry, who were henceforth known as Lords of the Manor.

The extent of territory included in the lordship may be judged when it is remembered that six parishes and several manors made it the largest in the Barony of Coupland.

It was natural to suppose that Godard would not fail to support handsomely de Meschin as founder of St. Bees Priory. By giving two whole parishes with the churches and parsonage houses he not only made himself and his posterity secure by being on good terms with the lords of the castle, but he would most likely feel content in mind from having given of his best in the hope of finding some reward in a future life.

Godard's son, Arthur, succeeded as Lord of Millom (Mr. Wilson, *St. Bees*, p. 87).

Then follows Arthur's son, Henry, lord of Millom, with whose family, the last of the de Boyvills of Millom in the male line, the Furness Asmunderlaws were united by marriage.

A person of importance in Furness in the 12th century,

who must not be overlooked was one Bevin, Beivn or Beovn, of the old Norse stock, whose son, Gamel, gave land in Asmunderlaw to the Priory of Conishead about the end of the 12th century (*West Furness Ed.*, 1822, p. 250).

Gamel was also territorially associated with Henry de Redman, (*Furness Coucher I*, p. 509), who married the niece of William de Asmunderlaw.

These territorial claims, in which the de Asmunderlaws were largely interested, almost compel one to accept Gamel as having close relationship with William, son of Waldeve, who owned Torver and Tatham (*Ibid.* II, pp. 74-77, 533-4; *St. Bees Reg.*, pp. 299-434).

Both Waldeve and his son, William, possessed territorial rights in Ulverston, in which neighbourhood Asmunderlaw was situated, the present name being Osmotherley. (*West.*, p. 252).

Waldeve was the son of Edmund (*St. Bees*, pp. 307, 295*n*), and grandson of Etheyn, who owned Tatham.

William sold Torver to his nephew, Roger de Heaton, son of his brother, Augustine. Augustine acquired Heaton, 1160-80, and died before or about 1189.

Augustine is mentioned in a grant to him by Roger, son of Orm, 1160-80, of a moiety of Heaton, by which he became de Heaton.

Roger de Heaton, who owned Mesham, Grimsargh, etc. (Mr. Farrer, *Lancs. Pipe Rolls*, 371). died about 1204, leaving a son, Roger, ob. 1262.

Adam d' Avranches, also brother of William de Asmunderlaw, was dean of Kirkham, near Preston, and Lancaster, c. 1180-1208 (*Ibid.*), and married his daughter to Henry de Redman, whose posterity were known as the de Redmans, of Levens.

Richard de Tatham died, leaving a son, William, as owner of Tatham, 1212-30, from whom the de Tathams descended.

William f. Waldeve acquired land in Cumberland by his

marriage with Aliz de Boyvill, daughter of Henry, Lord of Millom (*Furness Coucher*, II, p. 554), 1183-1216.

Two sons were born of this marriage, Henry and William, the latter dying without issue (Mr. Farrer and Foster's *Visitation*, 64; these *Trans.*, N.S. xxvi, p. 136).

William de Asmunderlaw and his two sons were witnesses to several charters of Furness and Cumberland, as were relatives of the same period.

Henry de Boyvill, Lord of Millom, had also a daughter, Gunhild, who was married to Henry f. William, and died without issue, and two sons, William and Adam (*Holm Cultram Reg.*, p. 30-31).

William succeeded as Lord of Millom about 1200, and married Avice, or Alice, daughter of Richard, son of Roger de Woodplumpton, Lancashire, and died without issue, c. 1229. (Mr. Wilson's *St. Bees Reg.*, 57*n*).

He gave the church of Holy Trinity to the monks of Furness and was succeeded by his brother, Adam, who died about 1250, leaving a daughter, Joan, as heiress, who became the wife of Sir John de Huddleston, from whom the Huddlestons, of Millom, descended.

Henry de Asmunderlaw, son of William and Aliz. c. 1200-20, married Clarice. A grandson, William, claimed land in Warton as heir of his grandmother, Clarice de Asmunderlaw. (*V.C.H. Lancs.*, vol. VIII, p. 163).

A son of Henry and Clarice whose name was William, was in South Cumberland, 1230-60 (*St. Bees*, 299; and *Pipe Rolls, Cumberland*), and, with his son above, is frequently mentioned, giving land in Ulverston to Conishead (the Rectory and church of Ulverston was appropriated to the priory of Conishead by the founder, William de Lancaster), as witnessing Furness and Cumberland charters and in Pipe Rolls, 1253-60, fined for non-attendance at Cumberland Courts, which proves that he was a Cumberland landowner. This is significant as he was living at the same time as Ranulph de Asmunderlaw,

who married Agnes, daughter and co-heiress of Thomas de Langrigg, but was probably old and unable to travel by that date.

We now arrive at a period when the evidence of monastic charters reveals that the Furness and Cumberland Asmunderlaws were of one family.

The next in succession, William, son of William de Asmunderlaw, c. 1291-1325, appears in Conishead, Guisness and John f. Roger de Lancaster charters in Furness and South Cumberland (*Furness Coucher* II, 528-9, 262; *Coucher* I, 524).

This William was no doubt the one who held 1/12th part of the manor of Waverton, Cumberland, 1295-1315, whose descendants were still in possession in the 16th century (these *Trans.*, N.S. xvi).

Very near relatives of William were Lawrence de Asmunderlaw, 1334-42, whose name is given in a deed of Christiana (*Inq. p.m.*, of Lonsdale, etc.), John de Asmunderlaw, 1358 (*Inq. p.m.*, John de Coupland) and Ivan de Asmunderlaw 1404-9 (Beck's *Annals of Furness*, 282, etc.).

The William who witnessed the Conishead Charters and who was holding part of the manor of Waverton forms the link between the Furness and Cumberland Osmunderlaws.

Along with Ranulph de Asmunderlaw the two establish the Cumberland Osmunderlaws.

From this time down to the 16th and 17th centuries the family became numerous and important landowners in Holm Cultram and were closely associated with the monks of the Abbey. (*Holm Cultram Reg.*; *Inq. p.m.*, John de Derwentwater; these *Trans.* N.S. xvi, p. 169).

The Furness Asmunderlaws no longer had territorial interests in Furness and South Cumberland.

The attached genealogical table completes the link between the two sections. More light may reveal the correct position of certain members in the table who still remain doubtful.

DE ASMUNDERLAW OF FURNESS.
(Argent, a fess sable, in chief, three martlets of the last).

