

ART. IV.—*Odard vicecomes*. By W. PERCY HEDLEY,
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IN the early 12th century one of the prominent men in the north of England was Odard vicecomes, who is called by Simeon of Durham sheriff of the Northumbrians (*vicecomes Northymbrensiūm*) and elsewhere termed sheriff of Bamburgh (*vicecomite de Babenburch*). References to him occur in connection with Northumberland between 1118 and 1130. About the same time in Cumberland an Odard vicecomes was an important man in local affairs, but the district of which he was sheriff is nowhere mentioned. For well over 100 years historians have debated as to whether these two Odards were one and the same person.

Odard of Bamburgh founded a family which held the barony of Embleton in Northumberland until 1245. Odard of Cumberland was ancestor of a family that held in capite the manor of Wigton in Cumberland until 1315.

Former writers have generally considered the problem of Odard vicecomes either from the Northumberland point of view or from that of Cumberland without combining the two. At least one writer seems deliberately to have selected only those facts which fitted in with his preconceived ideas.

The principal writers on this subject have been:

- 1675. William DUGDALE. *The Baronage of England* i 634.
- 1847. ANON. Introduction to the Pipe Rolls of the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham. Published by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.
- 1858. Charles Henry HARTSHORNE. *Feudal and Military Antiquities of Northumberland* ii.
- 1858. John HODGSON HINDE. *A History of Northumberland*. Part i. General History.
- 1895. Edward BATESON. editor — *A History of Northumberland* ii.

- 1897. J. E. PRESCOTT. The Register of the Priory of Wetheral.
- 1901. J. Horace ROUND. Studies in Peerage and Family History.
- 1902. James WILSON. Some Extinct Cumberland Families. I. The Wigtons in the *Ancestor*, no. iii.
- 1902. J. Horace ROUND. *Genealogist* v 25.
- 1905. Sir Archibald C. LAWRIE. Early Scottish Charters.
- 1923. T. H. B. GRAHAM. CW xxiv 29-49.

Dugdale (1675) gives an account of the barons of Embleton without connecting them with Odard vicecomes or with the lords of Wigton. The anonymous writer of the Introduction to the Pipe Rolls of Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham (1847) identifies Odard vicecomes of Cumberland history as the sheriff of Northumberland and as son of Hildred, sheriff of Cumberland. Hartshorne (1858) also identifies the founder of the Embleton family as Odard, sheriff of Northumberland, and states quite bluntly that Odard was son of Hildred, sheriff of Cumberland. Hodgson Hinde (1858) accepts this and further states that Odard had two sons, Adam who succeeded to the "barony" of Wigton and John who had that of Embleton. Round (1901) produces a quite different ancestry for Odard, sheriff of Northumberland. He suggests that he was son of Liulf who had been high reeve of Bamburgh in the early years of Henry I. Bateson (1895) accepts this without hesitation. Prescott (1897) thought that the identification of the Cumberland Odard with the sheriff of Northumberland was very improbable. He was moreover the first to point out that Odard vicecomes and Odard son of Hildred were two distinct persons. Wilson (1902) also states that these two Odards should not be confused, but thinks it doubtful if the Cumberland Odard was identical with the sheriff of Northumberland. Wilson gives an admirable account of the Wigton family but ignores the barons of Embleton as he did not accept that there was any connection between the two families. Lawrie (1905) doubted the

authenticity of the charters which had led Round to believe that Odard, sheriff of Northumberland, was son of Liulf of Bamburgh, but also thought that it was not proved that "Odard vicecomes" was sheriff of Northumberland. Graham (1923) adds nothing new. He does, however, emphasise that the Cumberland Odard was a distinct person from Odard, son of Hildred. In the remainder of his articles there are many inaccuracies.

Later writers in *Archaeologia Aeliana* and in these *Transactions* have repeated statements of earlier writers according to the particular book or article they had selected for their information. A full re-examination is now overdue.

The facts are as follows:

Odard vicecomes (Northumberland).

Odard, sheriff of the Northumbrians, was present at the assembly at York on 13 April 1121 when the claim of the monks of Durham to the church of Tynemouth was under discussion. Between 1119 and 1124 "Odardo, vicecomite de Babenburch" was one of the witnesses to the foundation charter of Selkirk abbey by earl David. A grant by Henry I to the abbot of St. Albans and the monks of Tynemouth of free warren in all their lands in Northumberland is addressed to "Odardo Vicecomiti".

This charter cannot be later than 1118 as it is witnessed by Robert, count of Meulan, who died in that year.¹ Prior Richard of Hexham calls him "Hudard Vicecomite". In 1130 "Odardo vic(ecomes)" was pardoned 15/- for danegeld.

Henry I by a charter, which is assigned by Round on good grounds to the year 1133, rendered and conceded to "Willelmo filio Udardi de Baenburg" all the lands of his father which he held of the king in capite on the day when he was alive and dead. The lands were to be held by the same service as his father had held. Two of the witnesses were Eustace son of John and Walter Espec.²

¹ *Monasticon* i 242.

² Ancient charters, Pipe Roll Society's Publications, p. 33, in NCH ii 12 n.

King Stephen confirmed his predecessor's ratification to William son of Odard of all the lands of his father, namely a carucate of land in Bamburgh, a carucate of land in Corbridge and the lands of "Burnulfeston" and "Chine-wallia".³

William, during his lifetime, had given to the prior and convent of Durham, his nief Arkil de Matefin with all his substance. "Adam vicecomes Northumbrie", who describes himself as brother and heir of William, confirmed the grant to Durham for the souls of his brother and his heirs and for his own soul and those of his heirs. The confirmation was with the consent of his brothers John and Ernald; Adam's seal is attached to the grant.⁴

Adam vicecomes witnessed c. 1141 two deeds of Henry, earl of Northumberland,⁵ and he was one of the witnesses to the foundation charter of Alnwick abbey made in 1147 by Eustace son of John, baron of Alnwick.⁶

It appears from a lawsuit at Easter 1243 that Odard vicecomes held lands in Cartington, in the parish of Rothbury, Northumberland, and gave half a carucate of land there to Robert Frebern in free marriage with his daughter Gumilda.⁷ John son of Odard occurs in the Pipe Rolls between 1161 and 1182, and in 1166 he reported that of the three knight's fees that he held of the king, William son of Adam held half a fee, Albert held half a fee and Ernulf and Aelard held another half fee. These knights all held of the new feoffment, in other words, they had been enfeoffed since the accession of Henry II in 1154.

Elsewhere John son of Odard is called "Viscont" or "vicecomes"; though he had the name without the office of sheriff. "Ernald, brother of John vicecomes" occurs in the Pipe Rolls for 1170 and 1171.

John son of Odard's successor occurs as John son of

³ Duchy of Lancaster, Royal Charters, Roll A, no. 11 in NCH ii 12 n.

⁴ Dur. Treas. Cart. Misc. no. 6895 in NCH ii 12 n.

⁵ Lawrie, *Early Scottish Charters* cxxx and cxxxi.

⁶ Tate, *History of Alnwick* ii, Appendix p. viii.

⁷ Northumberland Pleas, NRS ii 136.

John son of Odard in the Pipe Rolls for 1199 and 1201, as John le Vescunte between 1201 and 1206 and as John vicecomes in 1210, 1211 and 1213. In the return made in 1212 of all lands held in capite, it was reported that "Johannes vicecomes" held the barony of Embleton which had been enfeoffed by Henry I; he also held 6 bovates of land in Bamburgh which had been granted to John son of Odard by Henry II.⁸

John son of John son of Odard was dead in 1219 when his son and heir John vicecomes was charged £100 for relief of the lands held of the king in barony. In 1242 John le Viscount held a moiety of the manor of Cartington from Roger son of Ralph for one-eighth of a knight's fee.⁹ In 1243 he was called to warrant by Richard Frebern about the lands in Cartington which had been granted to Robert Frebern by Odard, great-grandfather of John le Viscunte, in marriage with his daughter Gumilda.¹⁰

This third John was dead in 1245 when the *inq. p.m.* of "Johannes le Viscunte" found that his daughter Rameta, wife of Everard Teutonicus, was his heir.

Everard Teutonicus was dead in 1250 and his widow paid 100 marks to marry whom she pleased. She married for her second husband Hereward de Marisco, and in 1255 they conveyed the barony of Embleton to Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, in exchange for lands in Hampshire and Dorsetshire. The exchange was formally ratified by the Crown on 8 July 1256.¹¹

Odard vicecomes (Cumberland).

In the return made in 1212 of those lands in Cumberland held in capite of the crown, it was reported that "Adam filius Odardi tenet terram suam de domino rege per cornagium, reddendo annuatim de cornagio 26/4d. Rex Henricus, avus patris domini regis, dedit Odardo

⁸ *Book of Fees*.

⁹ NCH xv 370.

¹⁰ Northumberland Pleas, NRS ii 136.

¹¹ NCH ii 16-17.

vicecomiti, antecessori predicti Ade, predictam terram per predictum servitium."¹² These lands given by Henry I to Odard the sheriff are those normally referred to by Cumberland historians as the "barony" of Wigton, but as they were held by cornage, the term barony, which applied to lands held by knight service, is not strictly accurate.

Odard the sheriff who is described as "antecessor" of Adam son of Odard living in 1212, first appears in Cumberland history before 1130 when Henry I notified Walter Espec, Eustace son of John, and Odard the sheriff, that he had given the lands of Gamelsby and Glassanby to Hildred de Karleolio and Odard his son. This charter was produced in a lawsuit at Easter Term 1210 as evidence about the ownership of the two villis of Gamelsby and Glassonby.¹³

The date of Henry I's charter must have been before 1130-1 as in that year Hildret and Odardo his son rendered account of 40/- for the grant of land of Gamel son of Ber', i.e. Gamelsby.¹⁴ It is quite evident from the Pipe Roll of 1130-1 that Odard the sheriff is a distinct person from Odard son of Hildred. Whilst Hildret renders account of both the old and the new farm of Carlisle, Odard the sheriff renders account of the old rent for the pleas of Carlisle pertaining to the sheriffdom; he also was charged £10 for the pleas of Carlisle of the past year, 55/- for the small pleas and 4 marks silver of the other pleas of W. Espec and Eustace son of John.

The next owner on record of the lands of Wigton is Odard son of Adam. He was probably a grandson of Odard the sheriff, although there is no documentary proof of this. The sheriff is described as his "antecessor" but not as his grandfather. Odard son of Adam occurs in the Pipe Rolls between 1181 and 1204. Although only tenants by knight's service were liable to scutage, king John

¹² *Book of Fees*, Part i (1198-1242), Cumberland 1212.

¹³ *Coram Rege*, 11 John, no. 41, m. 9 in *Cal. Doc. Scot.* i.

¹⁴ Pipe Roll, Cumb. 1130-1 in *Cal. Doc. Scot.* i 4.

levied it on those in Cumberland who held by a cornage rent. Odard was thus charged in 1201 the sum of 100/- for the first scutage, and 5 marks for the fourth scutage in 1204. He was dead in 1209 when his son Adam son of Odard rendered account of 80 marks for having his father's lands with the appurtenances which ought to descend to him by inheritance. In 1210 Reginald son of Adam de Carduil was charged 40 marks for having to wife Milisent widow of Odard son of Adam.

In the inquest of fees made in 1212 Adam claimed to hold his lands as heir of Odard the sheriff. He was the first of the family to adopt the territorial name of Wyggeton afterwards borne by his descendants.

Adam de Wyggeton was dead in 1225 when his son Odard did homage for the land he held in chief and paid 10 marks for his relief.

This Odard, the third of the name to hold the lands of Wigton died in 1238 and in the following year Walter, bishop of Carlisle, paid 200 marks to have the custody and marriage of the heirs of Odard.¹⁵

Graham carelessly says that the bishop of Carlisle had the custody of Walter, son and heir of Odard, and Wilson states that the custody was of the heir, not heirs.

At his death Odard left a widow Christine and a son Adam about two years of age; two months after his death a posthumous second son Walter was born. The eldest son Adam while still a boy was married to Isabel daughter and heiress of Odinel de Ford by his wife Cicely one of the three co-heiresses of the Muschamp barony of Wooler in Northumberland.

At Michaelmas 1251 Isabel is referred to as widow of Adam de Wyggeton¹⁶ and she herself died s.p. in 1254 at the age of 15.¹⁷ The younger son Walter came of age in 1257, the sheriff in June 1258 certifying that he would be 22 years of age on 15 August next.¹⁸ He died in 1286

¹⁵ Pipe Roll, 23 H. III, no. 83, m. 12d.

¹⁶ Nd. Pleas, NRS ii, no. 511.

¹⁷ *Cal. Doc. Scot.* i 1978.

¹⁸ *Coram Rege* Roll 42 and 43 H. III no. 106.

and was succeeded by John his son and heir, then aged 22. Sir John de Wyggeton was the last heir male of his family and died in 1315 leaving an only daughter and heiress Margaret, whose succession to her father's estates was long disputed, her father and mother having been separated and later divorced. In 1320 the bishop of London issued a certificate of her legitimacy and she obtained possession. Although married four times Margaret died childless in 1348 and her land escheated. Her four husbands had been John de Crokedayk, John de Denum, John de Gernon and John de Weston.

Conclusions.

(1) Round, on the strength of two Swinton charters, identified Odard the sheriff as son of Ligulf de Bebbanburch who had been joint sheriff of Northumberland, with Aluric of Corbridge, in the early years of Henry I. This is accepted in NCH. I. The vill of Swinton "*cum divisis sicut Liulf habuit*" was granted by Edgar, king of Scots, to the prior and convent of Durham. The grant was confirmed by Alexander I, *c.* 1110, by earl David *c.* 1117 and by earl Henry *c.* 1145. The two Swinton charters purport to be grants by David king of Scots *c.* 1135 of the lands of Swinton to "*Arnulfo isti meo milite*" by one deed, and to "*meo militi Hernulfo*" by the other. The lands were conveyed "*per easdum consuetudines per quas Liulfus filius Edulfi et Vdardus filius suos tenuerunt.*"

Lawrie doubted the authenticity of the two Swinton charters and suspected that they were forged by the monks of Durham to support their claims to Swinton church. The lands of Swinton had been confirmed to Durham so often by the Scottish monarchs that one cannot understand why king David should now give them to his knight, Arnulf. Even if the charters are authentic, the identification of Liulf son of Edulf with Liulf of Bamburgh is far-fetched. By 1135 Odard the sheriff was dead. For

many years prior to his death he had been so well known as sheriff of the Northumbrians that it is most improbable that he could now be described merely as son of Liulf son of Edulf. Both Liulf and Edulf are typical English names and there can be no doubt that persons bearing these names were native Englishmen and not Norman-French. If Liulf of Swinton was in fact a real person and had a son called Odard he must have given the name to his son in honour or in imitation of Odard the sheriff. The name Odard is obviously foreign and we can be sure that the sheriff of that name was of Norman-French extraction and that he owed his appointment to Henry I at a time when the latter found himself in a strong enough position in the north of England to dispense with Anglo-Saxon reeves of an older regime.

The two Swinton charters must be dismissed as forgeries.

(2) Odard the sheriff of Northumberland's eldest son and heir was evidently William as he had confirmation of his father's lands in Northumberland. Adam the sheriff was William's brother and heir and it seems probable that he succeeded to the lands of Wigton in Cumberland which had been given to his father Odard. John son of Odard succeeded to his father's lands at Cartington in Northumberland. It seems likely that after the death of his father Odard and before the death of Henry I he obtained a grant of the barony of Embleton. This must have been between 1132 and 1135 which might account for the fact that none of the knights in the barony had been enfeoffed by 1135.

(3) The positions of Hildret and Odard the sheriff in what was then known as the county of Carlisle are very ambiguous. There had been earlier sheriffs of Carlisle as the foundation charter of Wetheral by Ranulf Meschin between 1092 and 1112 is directed to "Richerio vicecomiti Karlioli".¹⁹ Hildret although not specifically termed sheriff acted as such in accounting for the farm of Carlisle.

¹⁹ Wetheral, p. 1.

It might appear that "Odard vicecomes" in accounting for the old rent of pleas of Carlisle "pertaining to the sherifffdom" was, or recently had been, in a similar position. In the Pipe Roll for Northumberland for the same year, "Odard vicecomes" rendered account of the old and new farms for the county, whilst the pleas of Walter Espec and Eustace son of John are accounted for by Hugh son of Odo. This seems to suggest that Hildret was in fact the sheriff of Carlisle, and that Odard although termed "vicecomes" was sheriff of some other shire, i.e. Northumberland. There may have been a close relationship between the two. Perhaps they were brothers?

Walter Espec and Eustace son of John were at this time justiciars for the northern counties.

Any doubt that Odard the sheriff and Odard son of Hildred are different persons is dispelled when they appear together as witnesses to a quitclaim by Hildred de Carleolo of lands and woods to the monks of Wetheral. The witnesses include "Odardus Vicecomes", and "Anschatillus Odardi filius et Odardus filius Hildredi".²⁰

(4) As already stated, Lawrie doubted whether Odard vicecomes was sheriff of Northumberland, but this can be taken as certain. The fact that he was sometimes called "de Babenburch" as well as "vicecomes Northybrensiū" is in itself sufficient proof. The royal castle was always in the 12th century the residence of the sheriff, and he was in right of his office its constable and custodian and collected the king's revenue from the district dependent on the castle.

(5) There can be no reasonable doubt that Odard was the Norman-French sheriff of Northumberland and had his official residence at Bamburgh. Although having some connections with Cumberland he was definitely not sheriff of Carlisle in 1130-1. He was the founder of the two families of Wyggeton of Wigton in Cumberland, and the Viscount family of Embleton in Northumberland.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.