

ART. IV.—*Early Flemings of Furness*. By COL. W. H. CHIPPINDALL.

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THE earliest Fleming in Furness has been believed to be Michael le Fleming; but the following considerations may tend to modify that belief.

We must begin by considering the relationship of the great lords of Cumberland, Kendal, Lancaster and Chester and their treatment by the Crown at very early dates in English history.

Commencing with Ivo de Taillebois, baron of Kendal, and his wife Lucia: we find that Dr. William Farrer, in his *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Vol. iii, p. 184, gives a charter by Lucy countess of Chester in which she states that she is the widow of Ivo de Taillebois, of Roger fitz Gerold and of Ranulph earl of Chester (see attached pedigree). This agrees with what Peter of Blois says in his continuation of Ingulf's chronicle; and though Peter may have been a forger of charters and have made mendacious claims for the convent of Croyland yet he may be quite reliable when he says that Ivo's widow was soon married to Roger de Roumara the son of Gerold de Roumara. By this second husband she had a son William de Roumara who paid his relief in 1122\* and was therefore born *circa* 1100; hence we may place the death of Ivo de Taillebois at about 1098, and as he died childless the barony of Kendal would escheat to the Crown. Lucy being an heiress would continue to hold her Lincolnshire estates and would have also dower from her late husband's lands. She being wealthy was again married, after the death of her second

\* Round, *Feudal England*, p. 184.

husband Roger fitz Gerold, to Ranulf le Meschin, lord of Cumberland, by whom she had another son Ranulph Gernon born *circa* 1105. These two half brothers figured prominently at Lincoln in king Stephen's reign.

When the *White Ship* went down, on 25 November, 1120, Richard earl of Chester was drowned and Ranulph le Meschin became earl of Chester as he was first counsin and next of kin; but the king deprived him of the lordship of Cumberland which he took into his own hands.

The Honor of Lancaster had been held by Roger of Poitou from 1068, with an interval, until 1102 when he was finally banished and the Honor was taken into the hands of the Crown where it remained until given to Stephen count of Boulogne and Mortain in 1114-16.

It has not been definitely ascertained whether the district of Furness belonged to the barony of Kendal or to the Honor of Lancaster in these early years; but it would be in the king's hand between 1098 (death of Ivo) and 1115 (grant to Stephen) when a part (if not the whole) of Furness must have been included in the new Honor of Lancaster given to Stephen as in 1127 he founded Furness Abbey and in doing so exempted the lands of Michael le Fleming from his grant to the Abbey.

Now Michael le Fleming held his lands in chief; hence they must have been a grant directly made by the Crown and we have seen above that the Crown had these lands in hand between the years 1098 and 1115, therefore the grant must have been made sometime during these seventeen years to Michael or possibly to his father whose name has not been recorded.

Michael de Furness paid his last rent of £10. to the sheriff in 1176-77\* in which year he is supposed to have died leaving a son and heir William who had livery of his lands in 1186† and was therefore born *circa* 1164-5 or some

\* Farrer, *Lancs. Pipe Rolls*, p. 34.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61.



37 years after the first mention of Michael in 1127—of course he might have been the son by a second marriage.

We have seen that the grant of lands in Furness to a Fleming must have been between 1098 and 1115; but taking the latest date and deducting it from 1177 (date of Michael's death) we get an interval of 62 years and as the recipient of the grant would be a tried warrior we may add 30 years for his age at the date of the grant which would make him 92 years old at death if the grant had been made to Michael. This is such an improbable age and the fact that Michael's heir was a minor compel one to assume that the original grant was to Michael's father whose name has not come down but was probably William. Further, the first notice of Michael is in 1127 (Foundation of Furness Abbey) so that if he had just come of age he would have been born *c.* 1106 and at death in 1177 would have been 71 years old which is more likely though a good age for those times.