

ART. VI.—*The Washingtons of Helton Flecket, Westmorland.* By W. PERCY HEDLEY, M.A., F.S.A., and GEORGE WASHINGTON, M.A., F.S.A.

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IN CW2 lxiv, the authors in an article entitled *The Early Washingtons of Washington, co. Durham*, stated that they hoped to continue the account of the Washington family at a later date. The present article continues the history of the family from the death of sir William de Washington III (1288 x 1290) until the death of the last sir William in 1399 without male heirs.

In the appendix to *The Feoffees of the Cliffords*,¹ the main line of the Washingtons throughout the 14th century has been clearly set out, but the younger sons need further consideration.

William de Wessington III in his father's lifetime, at Hilary term 1258/9, with others had mainperned Roger Bertram of Mitford in a plea of debt by Robert de Stutevill.² He had succeeded his father before Hilary term 1266/7 when he was called to warrant by Marmaduke Basset and Isabel his wife for the dower claim of Juliane, widow of Walter de Wessington II. Juliane was the mother of William III. In 1279 Hawise de Burton and Ivetta her sister, in a plea of land against John son of John de Seleby, appointed as their attorney Robert de Burton or William de Wurssington.³

William is named in a Westmorland lawsuit of 1288.⁴ His connection with Westmorland was through

¹ CW2 xxii 340 n.

² *Cur. Reg.* in *Nd Pleas*, p. 194.

³ *Assize Roll*, Nd, in SS 88, p. 305.

⁴ CW2 viii 256.

his wife, Margaret, daughter of sir John de Morville of Helton Flecket in that county. On the death in 1290 of sir Robert de Morville, John's son and heir, it was found that his heirs were his two sisters, Margaret, widow of sir William de Wessington, and Idonea, wife of sir Robert l'Engleys.⁵ Sir William must have died between 1288 and 1290.

At Michaelmas 1292, at Westmorland assizes, the jury found that Thomas de Helebek, Hugh de Louthier, Richard de Musegrave, William de Hastings, Mathew de Redeman, Alan de Cabergh, Thomas de Pykering, Walter de Wassington and John de Lancaster each have a whole knight's fee and are of full age and are not yet knights; therefore they are all in mercy.⁶ Walter was fined 20s., "because he is not yet a knight".⁷ Because at this time the military and civil duties of a knight were very onerous, many fully qualified for that degree had refrained from taking up the burden. Besides those holding a full knight's fee, Edward I in 1278 had ordered that all persons possessed of 20 librates of land and upwards whether held direct of the Crown or not were to take up the degree of knighthood.

By a deed witnessed by sir Thomas de Hellebek, then sheriff of Westmorland (therefore 1291-93), and others, sir Walter de Wessington, knt, gave all his lands in Helton Flechan and Brampton, Westmorland, to William, his son and heir, who was to render one red rose at the Feast of St John Baptist; remainder to the grantor's brothers, William and John, and with further remainder to the right heirs of the grantor.⁸ In *Quo Warranto* proceedings between May and October 1293 the sheriff and 24 jurors reported that there were various magnates and others within the

⁵ CW2 xix 135.

⁶ *Assize Roll* no. 986, m. 6, Michaelmas 20 E.I.

⁷ *Ibid.*, m. 12.

⁸ *Dodsworth MSS.*, vol. 70, f. 36v.

bishop of Durham's liberties using divers franchises; amongst the others, not among the magnates, is the name of Walter de Wessington who had free warren in his lands within the bishop's liberty.⁹

At the Court of King's Bench at Michaelmas 1294, Peter de Tadcastre by his attorney placed himself on the fourth day against Walter de Wessington, Thomas, John and William his brothers, William Hare, Hamo son of Robert le Gardiner, William de Camwell, William de Kendale and Thomas son of John de Helton in a plea of trespass. They did not come and the sheriff was ordered to attach them. The sheriff declared that the said Peter was not found to prosecute the plea and he had done nothing about the matter. Because the aforesaid Peter had given as pledges for the prosecution of his claim to the king, Richard de Bretteville of co. Sussex and Peter de Tadcaster of Beswick, Yorks., the sheriff was ordered to attach them that they may be before the king in the octave of Hilary.¹⁰ At Hilary term the following year, Walter de Wessington and John de Wessington had been attached but the others could not be found. At Easter term Walter was fined one mark and John five shillings, but the others were not found.¹¹ At Michaelmas 1295 it was reported that the sheriff had done nothing nor sent the writ.¹² The proceedings then seem to have been dropped. The interest in this long drawn out case is the reference to Walter's three brothers, Thomas, John and William, to whom we shall return later.

The assize taken before Henry de Sutton and Adam de Middleton, justices assigned to take assize in the county of Westmorland on Monday in the Feast of St Lucy the Virgin in the 34th year (1305/6) of the reign

⁹ SS 162, pp. 38-9.

¹⁰ K.B. 27/142/8d.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 143/1, 144/9d.

¹² *Ibid.*, 146/11d.

of king Edward son of king Henry, came to enquire if Robert le Engleys and Idonea his wife, John and William sons of the same Robert and Idonea, Walter de Wessington and Alice his wife, William son of the same Walter, John Morole and Henry Daudesone unjustly disseised Thomas de Hollebek of his common of pasture in Helton Flechan which belongs to his free tenement in Askham. Hollebek complained that they had disseised him of his right to common in 100 acres of wood and 1,000 acres of moor and pasture with all manner of beasts at all times of the year. The jurors found that Hollebek was seised of common of pasture in 20 acres of wood and 100 acres of moor and pasture and had been disseised of these rights.¹³ Thomas de Hollebek was still in dispute with Robert le Engleys and Idonea his wife about common of pasture in Helton Fletham in 1310, and the king's treasurer and chamberlain were commanded to examine the rolls of the assize of 34 Edward I (1305/6).

This is the only known reference to sir Walter de Wessington's wife Alice. Their son William must have just come of age, for in 1305 the justices gave permission to either Robert de Wessington or John de Wessington to act on behalf of William, son and heir apparent of Walter de Wessington and who is under age, in a plea of novel disseisin versus the said Walter and Alice, and versus Robert l'Angleys and his wife Idonea.¹⁴

On 7 August 1306, *monsieur Wauter de Wessington chivaler* was appointed (with others) to conduct the bishops of St Andrews and Glasgow and the abbot of Scone from Newcastle to their imprisonment in London. The clerics had been adherents of Robert Bruce and only their cloth saved their lives. Fifteen other adherents of Bruce had been hanged at New-

¹³ *Covary Rege Roll*, KB. 27/202, m. 35).

¹⁴ *Assize Roll*, Wmd., no. 991, m. 3d.

castle only three days earlier. Wessington was no doubt chosen for this task because he was a knight of the bishop of Durham's household. Between 1308 and 1317 sir Walter witnesses a number of deeds relating to Durham.¹⁵

Sir Walter de Wessington died in 1318 or shortly afterwards. His wife Alice had died in sir Walter's lifetime and he had married again. His widow Dyonisia was living in 1349.

Sir Walter's heir was his son William. The latter quitclaimed to William son of Simon de Brampton all the tenements which Brampton held of him for life. The deed is undated but it is witnessed by Henry de Warthecop as sheriff, and he held that office 1314-1320 and 1323-1324. In 1329 William was plaintiff in a suit about the manor of Colpitts, par. Slaley, Northumberland.¹⁶

In the duke of Norfolk's muniments is a grant by William de Wessington, knight, of all his manor of Helton Flechan to William de Norton (chaplain); given at Washington. 13 June 1346; Witnessed by Thomas de Musgrave, Gilbert de Culwen, Hugh de Louder, Thomas Lengleys, knights, Robert Lengleys, Henry de Cundale, John Boteler, and others. Attached to the grant is sir William de Wessington's seal — (argent) two bars (gules) in chief three molets (gules). This is the earliest known example of the Washington arms, for sir William's father, sir Walter, used a lion passant. The charges of two bars and three molets are the same as borne by the Durham family of Amundeville. Early seals used by both families bear the device of a lion passant, and it has been suggested that the "similarity of device and arms points to the common origin of the two families".¹⁷ One branch of the Amundevilles held a tenancy by knight service of the

¹⁵ *AA4* iii, nos. 115, 122, 124, 131; *SS* 58, pp. 185 n., 188 n.

¹⁶ *de Banco Roll*, R. 279, m. 175 in *AA3* vi 45.

¹⁷ *AA3* vi 166.

bishop of Durham in Witton le Wear and several other places; another branch acquired a knight's fee as a tenancy in chief in the wapentake of Sadberge which was purchased by Hugh, bishop of Durham from king Richard I.

On Thursday in Easter week, 23 Edward III (1349), sir William, son of Walter de Wessington, quitclaimed his lands of Brampton, Westmorland, to Nicholas de Leyborne and Joan his wife.¹⁸ Dodsworth shows a drawing of sir William's seal which again has the bars and molets. Dodsworth also mentions entailed lands (not named) being settled on sir William de Wessington and his wife Katherine, together with the reversion of other lands held in dower by Dionysia, widow of sir Walter de Wessington.¹⁹ This Dionysia was evidently sir Walter's second wife.

At Trinity term 1357 William son of Roger de Blaykeston by William de Helton his attorney, demands versus Ranulf fitz John of Spennythorne and Elizabeth his wife, half of Helton Flechan which Walter de Wessington gave to William de Wessington and Alice, his wife, and which ought to descend to William de Blaykeston aforesaid, as the son and heir of Roger de Blaykeston and his wife Christiana, daughter of William and Alice de Wessington. The said Ranulf and Elizabeth call on sir William de Wessington, *chivaler*, to be produced as a witness for them.²⁰ Evidently sir William de Wessington was twice married; first to Alice, by whom he had a daughter Christiana, wife of Roger de Blaykeston, and secondly to Katherine who gave him a son and heir, William, born in 1343.

An inquisition *post-mortem* held at Durham on 10 May 1367 found that William de Wessington had held the manor and vill of Washington by a free rent of

¹⁸ *Dodsworth MSS.*, vol. 70, f. 30.

¹⁹ Vol. 118, f. 110v.

²⁰ *de Banco Roll.*

£4 a year; one-third of the manor he held jointly with his wife Katherine; he had licence in 1359 to settle the manor on himself, his wife Katherine and his own right heirs. His son and heir William was then aged 24.²¹

Like his father, the last sir William fought in the wars of the period. On 10 June 1369 "sir Wm, son and heir of Wm de Wessyngton, senior, knt" received royal letters of protection as about to go beyond seas with the duke of Lancaster;²² and it is noted in 1373 that sir William was beyond seas with sir Henry de Percy.²³ Froissart records that a sir William Warrichon was present at the battle of Otterburn in 1388 and was taken prisoner by the Scots. The names of many of the persons mentioned by Froissart in his account of the battle are so disguised with erroneous spelling that Warrichon is probably a mistake for Washington.²⁴ Hollingshead reckons sir William Wauchlut amongst those of the English taken prisoner. Buchanan, who evidently borrowed from Froissart, mentions sir William Valsincon as one of those who on foot maintained the fight vigorously both before and after the capture of sir Henry Percy.

On 18 April 1376 sir William de Wessyngtone covenanted with William de Blakestone of Blakiston, co. Durham, that he would make feoffment to Blakestone and the heirs of his body of eight marks from land of Wessyngton's heritage in the bishopric, saving to himself and his heirs by default of legitimate issue the reversion of such feoffment. On his part, Blakestone was to assure to Wessyngtone half the manor of Helton Fletham and Brampton in Westmorland and the third part of the manor of Washington with appurtenances, saving the reversion to himself of the said lands in

²¹ *Deputy Keeper's Report*, vol. xlv, p. 276.

²² Rymer, *Foedera*, vol. 3, pt. 2.

²³ *de Banco Roll*, Wmd., Trinity 47 Edw. III, m. 260d.

²⁴ *Oeuvres de Froissart*, 1869, tome 13, p. 227.

default of the body of the said Wessyngtone. On the completion of the deed Wessyngtone was to pay £20 to Blakestone.²⁵ By a deed of the same date as the foregoing, Blakestone confirmed to Wessyngtone an annual rent of £20 from Blakestone's lands in the bishopric of Durham.²⁶

In fact, sir William de Wessington had legitimate issue. By his wife Alina, whose parentage is unknown, he had an only daughter and heiress, Elinor. The widow, Alina, married secondly, before 1404, Percival de Lindley, sheriff of Durham.

The inquisition *post-mortem* on William de Wessyngton was held at Chester-le-Street, co. Durham, in 1399. At his death he held the manor of Washington and lands in Medomsley and Thornley, co. Durham.²⁷ No heir is given in the inquisition but it is known that his heir was his daughter, Eleanor, wife of sir William Tempest of Studley Royal, Yorks. In 1415 sir William Tempest and his wife Eleanor, claimed one half of the manors of Helton Flechan and Brampton against William Lancaster and his wife Elizabeth.²⁸

For the Tempests see E. Blanche Tempest in *Northern Genealogist*, part 1, p. 5, January 1895.

It is now necessary to consider the three younger sons, Thomas, John and William, of sir William de Wessington III (d. 1288 x 1290). Sir William must have been of age by 1259 when he had a plea of debt in the *curia regis*, and it is more than likely that he was by then a married man with children. The eldest son, Walter, was of full age in 1292 but there is no reason to suppose that he had just recently attained his majority. It can be presumed that the three younger sons were grown men by 1294 when they were charged with trespass. On Monday after St Nicholas

²⁵ AA4 iii, no. 239.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 240.

²⁷ *Deputy Keeper's Report*, vol. xlv.

²⁸ *de Banco Rolls*, no. 614, 2 Henry V, 1415, m. 220, Wmd.

1303 Walter de Wessyngton and Thomas de Wessyngton witness a deed at Newcastle whereby Margaret, widow of Hugh de la Vale quitclaims to Walter de Stirkeland her right in lands and tenements at Stainton in Kendal which William de Stirkeland gave to William de Stirkeland, her first husband, and to her in free marriage.²⁹ Thomas de Wessyngton is presumably Walter de Wessyngton's uncle.

Alice, late wife of John del Lyth, in 1293 demised for seven years to John de Wessington and Godyth his wife, certain tenements (? in Strickland Ketel) which she held of William son of John de Stirkland.³⁰ This John de Wessington was probably another of the younger sons of sir William III.

In 1327 the king committed to his *valettus*, William de Wessyngton, custody of the king's manor of Wark in Tynedale. William was no doubt the other younger son of sir William III. He died *s.p.* before 8 August 1327 leaving a widow, Elizabeth (de Thweng).

In the first quarter of the 14th century Robert de Wessington and a John de Wessington were prominent in Westmorland. They must have been about of an age, for Robert was married in 1292 and John a few years later. Robert's wife was Joan, sister of sir Walter de Strickland, and with her he acquired the estate of Carnforth in Warton, Lancs.

Gilbert de Brunolvesheved (Burneside) granted to John de Wessington in free marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of the grantor, the lands and tenements which Richard, son of Northman, and John de Graryge held of the grantor in Askethwayt (Asthwaite), Croke (Crook) and Styrkland Ketel (Strickland Ketel), to hold to them and their issue.³¹ The late William Farrer suggested a date of "about 1260" for this grant.³²

²⁹ Original at Sizergh quoted in *Records of Kendale*, ii 192.

³⁰ *Cal. Ancient Deeds A. 8795* in *Records of Kendale*, i 277.

³¹ *Dodsworth MSS.* 142, Hoghton's evidences n. 28.

³² *V.C.H. Lancs.*, vol. 8 (1914), p. 163 n.

Later he amended the date to 1300-1315.³³ A full transcript of the charter in the Dodsworth MSS. in the Bodleian shows that the witnesses to the grant are sir Matthew de Redman, sir Roger de Burton, sir Thomas de Pykering, knights, Walter de Strykeland, Baldwin de Schepesheved, Hugh de Thornburgh, Thomas Collan and Henry de Guy. A study of the dates of some of these witnesses enables us more closely to date the grant.

Matthew de Redman is a witness to deeds of 1286 and 1292 in which he is not described as a knight,³⁴ but he was a knight in 1297.³⁵ The grant must therefore be after 1292. It was before 1299, for in that year protection was granted to Walter de Stirkeland, knight, going into Scotland in the king's service with Marmaduke de Twenge.³⁶

Not only were Robert de Wessington and John de Wessington about of an age, but they must have been closely related to the senior line of Wessington of Helton Flecket. In 1305 the justices of assize gave permission to either Robert de Wessington or John de Wessington to act on behalf of William, the son and heir apparent of Walter de Wessington and who is under age, in a plea of *novel disseisin* versus the said Walter de Wessington and his wife Alice, and versus Robert l'Engleys and his wife Idonea.³⁷ From this it would seem that Robert and John were, after the young heir's father, his next of kin. Robert died shortly before 18 August 1324 and John was alive on 20 July 1331 when the sheriff of Westmorland gave orders to cause a coroner for that county to be elected in place of John de Wessington, who is insufficiently qualified.³⁸

³³ *Records of Kendale*, i 279.

³⁴ *Kendale*, i 135, 136.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37; *Cal. Pat. R.* 1299, p. 456.

³⁷ *Assize Roll*, Wmd., 33 E.T. 1305 no. 99, m. 3d.

³⁸ *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1330-33, p. 256.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Robert and John were cousins of William de Wessington IV. William was perhaps somewhat younger than his "cousins".

There is no definite proof that Robert and John de Wessington were in fact cousins of William de Wessington IV, but all the available evidence points in that direction. The evidence is as follows:

1. Sir William de Wessington III, who married the Morville heiress, was of full age by 1258/9 and could have had children at that date.
2. It is known that he had an eldest son and heir, Walter, and three younger sons, Thomas, John and William. All the sons could have been grown men in 1294.
3. John de Wessington had a wife, Godyth, living in 1293 and was probably one of the younger sons of sir William de Wessington III.
4. John de Wessington who married Elizabeth de Brunolvesheved between 1292 and 1298 is unlikely to be John who had a wife Godyth in 1293.
5. In 1305 Robert de Wessington or John de Wessington was to act on behalf of William, son and heir apparent of Walter de Wessington and then under age. Robert's known dates are 1292-1324 and he died before 18 August 1324. John's dates are 1310-1331. They were therefore contemporary with William de Wessington IV 1305-1329.
6. The presumption is that Robert and John were brothers because they were married within a few years of each other, are regularly mentioned together and were prominent at the same time.
7. Of the three younger sons of sir William de Wessington III, it is known that John was

married. If he had sons, surely it is likely that they would be called Robert and John after the last two Morvilles, John's uncle and grandfather.

There are many references both in state papers and local muniments to John de Wessington and his "brother" Robert.

In 1310 William, prior of Conyngsheved, Richard de Gosefeld, canon of that house, master Adam de Langedale, John de Wassyngton and several others were charged with entering the abbot of Whiteby's chapel of Overton, i.e. Orton, co. Westmorland, carrying away his goods, assaulting his monks, men and servants.³⁹ John witnesses local grants in 1311 and 1316. In 1321 certain justices were appointed as a commission to enquire into the complaint of Walter de Stirkeland that John de Wessyngton, Robert de Wessyngton and others (named) with armed men came to his manor of Sighritheserd (Sizergh) and broke his close and houses and doors and windows of the houses and set fire to the said houses, carried away his goods and Gilbert de Crakhale, his bondman, assaulted his servants and fixed the fingers of some of them into holes of posts with pins and beat others of them.⁴⁰ *Circa* 1320, William son of John de Stirkelande Ketel conveyed to John de Wessington a messuage with a haining called Halleheved with 30 acres of his land in Stirkelande Ketel.⁴¹ It has already been mentioned that John de Wessington was deprived of his office of coroner in 1331.

Two sons of John de Wessington are known. In 1345 Roger de Wessington demised for 30 years at 16s. rent to John de Wessington, his brother, a messuage in the hamlet of Asthauyt, which William, son of Adam formerly held at farm from John de

³⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* 1310, p. 255, in *Records of Kendale*, i 15.

⁴⁰ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* in *Records of Kendale*, i 141.

⁴¹ *Add. MS.* 32109 in *Records of Kendale*, i 280.

Wesington, the grantor's father in the said hamlet in the vill of Stricland Kettyl.⁴²

On 16 July 1366 Joan, late wife of John de Coup-land, complained of John de Wessyngton of Warton and John his son and others (named) that they broke into her parks at Troutbeck, Calgarth and Kirkeby in Kendale and entered her free chace at Kirkeby in Kendale, fished in her several fisheries at Troutbeck and Casterton, felled her trees at the said town of Kirkeby and carried away trees, fish and deer from the parks and chace.⁴³ John de Wessyngton the son, mentioned in this complaint, was pardoned in 1363 for the trespass committed by him in marrying Alina, wife of William of Lancaster, deceased, who held of the king in chief.⁴⁴ From these Washingtons were descended the Washingtons who in the 16th and 17th centuries were settled at Adwick-le-Street in Yorkshire as well as at Shap and Grayrigg.

To return to Robert de Wessington who married Joan, daughter of sir Walter de Strickland. Between 1300 and 1305 he witnesses a grant by William de Stirkeland to Walter his son and heir of lands in various places, named.⁴⁵ Between 1303 and 1313 he witnesses an agreement made between the abbot and convent of St Mary's, York, and sir Walter de Stykeland about a right of way.⁴⁶ In the Westmorland Assize Roll for 1313 it is mentioned that Elizabeth, widow of William de Ros (and since married to John de Lancaster) was accustomed to grant to Robert de Washington an annual rent of 40s., in Strickland Ketel and Howgill, together with a robe suitable for an esquire (*roba competentei pro armigero*) bestowed each Christmas at her castle of Kendal.⁴⁷ Margaret

⁴² *Anc. Deeds* A. 8974 in *Records of Kendale*, i 282.

⁴³ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* in *Records of Kendale*, i 26.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁷ *Assize Roll* no. 993, m. 2, 7 Edw. II.

de Ros, who died in January 1307, had in her lifetime alienated to Robert de Wassington land called Routheworth in the vill of Helsington without the king's licence.⁴⁸ Robert also had a demise of the manor of Helsington with the park from Marmaduke de Thweng, and in 1320 the latter had a licence from the Crown to grant the manor and other lands to his son William.⁴⁹

Robert de Wessington died shortly before 18 August 1324, seised of a moiety of the manor of Carnforth, held jointly with Joan his wife, who survived him, by the feoffment of Walter de Stirkelande to them in tail, to hold of the king as earl of Lancaster, by homage and service of $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. for ward of Lancaster castle and for $\frac{1}{24}$ th of a knight's fee. Robert de Wessington, his son and heir, was aged 28 and more. Robert became the direct ancestor of the later Sulgrave and Virginia Washingtons, and hence of America's first president.

⁴⁸ *Records of Kendale*, 359.

⁴⁹ *Cal. Pat. Rolls* 1320, p. 445, quoted in *Records of Kendale*, 141.