

REMARKS ON A BATTLE-ABBEY ROLL OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, FROM THE COLLEC- TIONS OF WILLIAM OF WORCESTER.

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The subject of the Roll of Battle Abbey can hardly ever be said to be thoroughly exhausted, and anything of authenticity relating to it must still be interesting to the Antiquarian world, especially to the members of the Sussex Archæological Society.

The paper by the late Rev^d. Joseph Hunter, F.S.A., on the "so-called" Rolls of Battle Abbey, read at the Society's meeting in July, 1852,¹ *omits all distinct mention* of the above Roll, which in the 15th century was given to William of Worcester; although he seems to refer to it.² This Chronicler was born A.D. 1415; his Collections, dedicated to King Edward IVth (among the Lambeth MSS.), will be found in "Letters and Papers illustrative of the reign of Hen. VIth," of whose times he is a very reliable authority. Whether this was the actual Roll which was shown to Leland when he visited the Abbey of Battle, is a point open to discussion. From the date of Leland's writing, we are ourselves inclined to think that it was. Hearne, who has given this list (in the "Liber Niger Scaccarii"), from the Collections of W. of Worcester, has his doubts on this point, but it is probable from the date of the Tetrastich which heads it, that the Roll must have existed in the preceding century, and this would make it considerably antecedent to Leland's visit. It was, however, undoubtedly the list from which in after

¹ 6 S.A.C., p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

times both Holinshead and Stowe compiled their own Rolls.

Leland, it would seem, had license given him to visit the libraries of the different Cathedrals, Abbeys, and Priories in the year 1533, and in July, 1536 [28 H. VIII.], he commenced his "Itinerary." He died in 1552, his illness previous to that time having obliged him to suspend his literary labours.

The *true* Roll of Battle Abbey would, of course, have been the list which was taken down before the embarkation of the host at St. Valéry, had such been preserved, to which both Thierry ["Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre" i. 317], and the "Chronique de Normandie" [p. 236-237] allude, and which, it is said, William of Normandy had called over after his victory at Hastings, in order to ascertain his losses in the battle. "Au lever du jour (says Thierry) Guillaume rangea ses troupes, et fit faire l'appel de tous les hommes qui avaient passé la mer à sa suite, *d'après le rôle* qu'on en avait dressé avant le départ, au port de Saint-Valéry."

Wace's Chronicle gives the earliest list extant of Duke William's followers. Du Chesne gives two lists at the end of his "Scriptores Normanniæ" [pp. 1023-1026], of which one is from Brompton's Chronicle, and altogether there are about ten lists; but although these various rolls differ, which is naturally much against their authenticity, the list in question of William of Worcester, at one time in Battle Abbey, is the earliest after those above recorded.

On reference to the transcript of Worcester's Roll by Hearne (in Vol. 2 of his "Liber Niger Scaccarii"), and the particulars adduced by him, it is manifest that Mr. Hunter was in error when he asserted that Holinshead, in 1577, was the first writer who claimed for any of the many rolls the title of *the* Roll of Battle Abbey. Holinshead's list made its first appearance in the year named, considerably later than the roll given to W. of Worcester; and Stowe, whom Mr. Hunter places next on his list, produced his roll some years later again than Holinshead. The Tetrastich, which heads it, proves at

any rate the probable date at which Worcester's list was copied, and in the absence of the actual original Roll, if there ever was one, the list, under consideration, of William of Worcester is in many respects deserving of credit, and it is brought before the Society in order that it may take the precedence which assuredly belongs to it. The opinion of Hearne is that it was "undoubtedly copied from some noted register of Battle Abbey, from which register the Tetrastich, which heads it, was, in all probability, also taken, but whether in actual connection with the list of names is not apparent." "I certainly do not consider," continues Hearne, "that the names were taken from the well-known roll of which Leland made use, and which clearly differs from this register, as in fact it does also from that given by John Stowe, but whatever the register may have been, it was certainly a most worthy monument of antiquity, and the time-honoured names it enrolls deserve to be cherished by all interested in antiquity." "Therefore," he concludes, "Perlege lector, et attende!"³

Wilhelmi Wyrcester *Ανεκδοτα* quædam alia historica.

Dicitur à bello *Bellum* locus hic, quia bello
 Angligenæ victi sunthîc, in morte relictî
 Martiris in Christo festo cecidere Calixti,
 Et tunc præteritos numerus præsens notat
 annos. } CCCLIII⁴

Cognomina conquæstorum Angliæ cum Domino Wilhelmo, Duce Normanniæ, conquæstore Angliæ.

Bastard, Baignard, Brassard, &c.

Morelle, Martelle, Painelle, &c.

Toret, Tainet, Butet, &c.

³ Tetrastichon istud è Registro aliquo insigni abbatiæ de Bello-Loco procul dubio descripsit Wyrcestrii amicus. E quo Registro &c., cognomina ipsa, è Tetrasticho sejuncta, exscripsisse etiam puto. Nec tamen judicari, è Rotulâ tantopere decantatâ, fuisse desumpta, quam plane ab isto, qualicumque demum Registro, diversam fuisse è Lelando constat, qui sane ipse Rotula usus est. Id quod et è Johanne Stoveo pariter est notandum. Sed quocumque fuerit

Registrum, monumentum certe antiquitatis admodum fuerit venerandum, dignissimaque sunt hæc ex eodem cognomina, quæ ab antiquitatis studiosis ob oculos habeantur. Itaque perlege lector, et attende.

⁴ Prælium de Bello-Loco contigit A.D. MLXVI. Adeo ut tetrastichon scriptum fuerit A.D. MCCCCXIX, sive anno septimo Henrici V., quo tempore quadrimulus duntaxat esset Wycestrius, utpote in lucem editus A.D. MCCCCXV.

Luci, Laci, Limeci, &c.

Mornele, Saccheville, Berneville, &c.

Lungchampe, Feskampe, Beauchampe, &c.

Bigood, Bagot, Talbot, &c.

Zetche, Camage, &c.

[It is needless to reproduce the names; it will be sufficient to observe that they are arranged according to their terminal syllable, and the list forms part of the Chronicle of William of Worcester from the unique MS. in Herald's College (xlviij, fo. 21)].

The date of the Tetrastich heading the foregoing list is explained in the foot-note below. The anniversary day of the battle of Hastings, A.D. 1066, was the Feast of S^t. Calixtus, so that inasmuch as 353 years had elapsed since the date of the battle, the date [1419, or the 7th year of Henry V.], at which period Worcester was a boy only four years old, fixes the date of these lines, the literal version of which is:—

This place is called *Battle* from a battle, because
in battle here,

The English were conquered; they fell left in
death

On the Feast of Calixtus, Martyr in Christ.

From that time this present number marks the
years that have passed.

Thus: 1066 Date of Battle of Hastings.

353 Years since that date elapsed,

—————
A.D. 1419 Date of Tetrastich.

} 353

The Roll has this endorsement:—

“To my most welebeloved and trusty frend William Wor-
cetre,” which a subsequent hand explains as occurring
—“On the backside of the Paper which had been sent
to William Worcetre.”

With regard to the different Rolls purporting to give
the names of the Duke of Normandy's followers, the fact
that some few are omitted (*ex. gr.* the name of Warene

or Garenne, of whose presence both at Hastings and at the Conquest we have "undoubted evidence, without naming more),⁵ whilst others are introduced of whom no record exists for two or three centuries later, has been thought to cast much doubt upon their authenticity. These instances, however, upon investigation are in reality less numerous than is generally pretended, and it may fairly be assumed that, in a genealogical point of view, wherever the name which occurs in the Battle Abbey lists can be identified with that epoch by some coeval or contemporary record, the strongest proof is furnished both of its antiquity, and of its probable right to figure on the Roll in question.

The error seems to lie in the assumption that the Rolls, as we find them, are the names of those who actually *fought* with the Conqueror at Hastings. whereas, whilst many may have taken, and did take, part with him in that important battle, many are simply the names of those who followed in his train, or gradually came over at that time. On this point Stowe almost says as much, and thus expresses himself:—"Here followeth the sirnames of the chief noblemen and gentlemen which came into England with William the Conquerour, according as I found them set down in a very auncient Role, which Role I received of Maister Thomas Scriven, Esquire, in whose handes it remayned at the publication of this Booke."

Wace, the earliest Chronicler of the list, confesses the omission of many names, and his inability to give them all:—

“ Ne sai nommer toz les barons,
 Ne de toz dire les sornoms,
 De Normandie et de Bretagne
 Que li Dus out en sa compaignie,
 Mult out Mansels et Anjevins,
 Et Toarceis et Pettevins.”

[Roman de Rou].

⁵ Wace describes his appearance before the battle:—

“ De Garenes i vint Willeme
 Mult li sist bien el chief li helme.”
 [Roman de Rou, p. 194, Malet].