

# THE CASTLE OF LEWES.

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IN the last volume of *Collections* I published a criticism of Mr. Allcroft's theory that the Southover "Mount" was the site of William de Warenne's original castle, and that Southover was at the end of the eleventh century called "Laques." With my criticism was published Mr. Allcroft's reply. The importance of the subject, and the fact that I understand that Mr. Allcroft is propagating his heresy in an otherwise useful popular booklet, must be my excuse for returning to trample on the already scotched snake.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Allcroft now relies almost entirely on the passage from Orderic, of which he was ignorant at the time when he wrote the article that I criticised. This passage—*Corpus vero ejus Cluniacenses monachi, quos Laquis honorifice locavit, in capitulo suo sepelierunt*—he quotes, not 'very diplomatically,' as proving that "when Orderic was alive (until 1141) Laques was still the usual name for what is now Southover." It is odd that Mr. Allcroft, who, I believe, has edited a number of Latin texts, should not see that this locative *Laquis* is conclusive evidence that the nominative was *Laquae* (a latinisation of an English name), and not *Laques*—a form for the existence of which Mr. Allcroft cannot produce a single shred of evidence. That Orderic would have used *Laques* readily enough as an indeclinable noun had it been an actual place-name may be assumed from the parallel passage referring to Battle Abbey: *coenobium Sanctae Trinitatis Senlac, ubi bellum factum est, construxit*. That Orderic "could have no possible 'phonetic weakness' in writing Saxon names of any importance" may be true,—though I do not think he is to be congratulated

on his rendering of Winchelsea as *Vincenesium*—but (apart from the fact that *Laques* was not of any importance, being, according to its inventor, “scarcely known at all outside its immediate environs”) he had a very obvious weakness for latinising names whenever possible. Before leaving Orderic it may be worth pointing out that in another passage (iv., 287), when speaking of the siege of Montmorenci in 1102, he records that—*Ricardus etiam Centurio de Laquis Ierosolymita concidit*, though who this crusading captain was I do not know.

Turning to the evidence of the Domesday survey of Norfolk, on which Mr. Allcroft's theory was originally based, he now says: “I am not called upon to discuss the explanation of the *Domesday* expression, ‘the exchange of Lewes,’ or rather ‘the exchange of Laques,’ which is the much more frequent form. Be the explanation what it may, it is *nihil ad rem*.” First we may notice that “the exchange of Laques” never occurs at all! What does occur is ‘the exchange *de Laquis*,’ or, in translation, “of Laquae.” Next we may note that the explanation is so much *ad rem* that Mr. Allcroft has been logically driven to contradict, and misquote, his previous statement that at the time of the Survey *Laques* “was in effect a mere Saxon field-name, and corresponded to no town, nor even to a village.” He now states that “by 1086 the field-name had grown to be the name of a great castellany to which belonged manors by the score.” So that he is definitely committed to the theory that de Warenne's Rape was the Rape *de Laquis*. Yet in the Sussex portion of the Domesday there are a score of references to the Rape of Lewes, and not a single hint that anyone in Sussex had ever heard it called anything else! Yet if *Laques* had been the name of the castle it would, however insignificant its previous history, almost certainly have become the name of the Rape. Mr. Allcroft goes out of his way to demonstrate this by quoting the example of the castle and alien priory at Chepstow, always known as *Strigul*, adding, “just as the alien priory of

St. Pancras was for many years at Cluny called the Priory of Laques." The impudence of this piece of question-begging fairly takes one's breath away, the sole ground for this wild statement being that Orderic, who wrote of the priory as *Laquae*, once paid a visit to Cluny!

Mr. Allcroft also says: "If *Lewes* and *Laquis* are the same, as my critic maintains, how will he account for the Priory's being called by the style of *Latisaquensis* . . .?" To this I might legitimately retort: "If they are not the same, how does Mr. Allcroft account for it?" The form is certainly a queer bit of latinisation; I had always imagined that it was the adjective of a supposititious title '*de Latis Aquis*,' but a correspondent suggests that it is more probably connected with the classical *latex aquae*. It appears to be peculiar to the twelfth century, possibly to the single year 1121, and may have been the invention of a single perversely ingenious monk. In a volume of *Ancient Charters* (Pipe Roll Society), Mr. Round prints several twelfth century charters connected with Lewes Priory. The two earliest (Nos. 4 and 5), of the dates 1107 and 1118, refer simply "*ad locum Sancti Pancratii*"; one of 1121 (No. 7) details gifts *sancto Pancratio Latisaquensi*, and is said to be *in manu H. Latisaquensis prioris*. Another of 1121 (No. 8) is a confirmation by Archbishop Ralph of gifts bestowed on *Latisaquense monasterium*, and includes the following interesting phrase: "*Habet enim prefatum monasterium in episcopatu Cicestrensi terram que dicitur Suthoure cum burgo et duobus stagnis et tribus molendinis cum insula que proxima est ipsi monasterio cum pratis et in castro juxta se posito habet ecclesias et capellas, viz., S. Johannis et S. Petri et S. Trinitatis et S. Nicholai et S. Andree et Beate Marie et S. Martini et S. Marie de Westota.*" This shows clearly that Southover was already known by that name, and therefore demolishes Mr. Allcroft's contention that "when Orderic was alive (until 1141) Laques was still the usual name for what is now Southover." It is also worth noting that the same Archbishop Ralph, within

a year of this last charter, gives (No. 9) a rent in Pagham to the monks of St. Pancras "*de Lauwis.*" The common-sense conclusion seems to me to be that *Latisaquensis* equates with Lewes and not with *Laques* (=Southover).

So far as it is possible to prove a negative, I think I may claim to have made it clear that no such place-name as *Laques* existed, and that if it had existed it would not have been Southover! With the disappearance of *Laques* goes all the documentary evidence for the identification of the Mount with de Warenne's castle. There remains the circumstantial evidence. On the affirmative side this is summed up by Mr. Allcroft as follows: "There in Southover stands the 'Calvary Mount,' answering in every respect—in situation, in size, and in construction—to the *motte* of an early Norman castle." Here again Mr. Allcroft shows himself a master in the art of begging questions; for he has not established one of his three respects, all of which I had challenged.

To begin with the "construction," I still deny that it satisfies the conditions. Conceding that the bailey might have disappeared, the absence of any trace of a fosse would be fatal to the *motte* theory. At the present time there is no such trace on the surface, and Mr. Allcroft knows how remarkably enduring a feature a ditch is. The question can only be settled beyond dispute by cutting a trench at the foot of the Mount. There is the further point that the section of the Mount, drawn by Mr. Toms, certainly suggests that the winding path was made as part of the original design. Mr. Allcroft has not given his reasons for thinking otherwise. Then as to "size." The inadequacy of the Mount for the castle of a great noble is met by two arguments. The first was that William de Warenne, when he built his Sussex castle, was "a comparatively poor man." On my pointing out that this was untrue, Mr. Allcroft explains that he only meant that he was less wealthy than he afterwards became; which rather deprives the argument of weight. The second

argument is that the Mount died in infancy, while the *mottes* at Arundel and Bramber (with which I had disparagingly compared it) had gone on growing steadily for centuries. Mr. Allcroft pointed triumphantly to the fact that I had declined his newspaper challenge to give the exact dimensions of the Arundel and Bramber *mottes*, c. 1070. Obviously it would only be by cutting a section of the *motte* that one could tell whether it started small and gradually grew or sprang up full grown; till that is done neither Mr. Allcroft nor I can prove our point. But I do not see that Mr. Allcroft gains much by referring me to Mrs. Armitage's appendix on the measurements of baileys.

There remains the question of "situation." I still regard the dominating site of the present castle as more suitable than the Southover site. But Mr. Allcroft says that "it was not so much the rule as the exception for [the Normans] to build their first castles actually within a town. This disposes of the argument that, because Lewes was a very important place in 1066, de Warenne's first castle must have stood on Lewes Hill." It also, apparently, disposes of Mr. Allcroft's original contention that in 1066 the borough of Lewes lay within the earthwork which is now the cemetery of St. John-sub-Castro, as in that case the Castle Hill would have been outside the town. Actually, in fact, the site of the present castle is typical of the sites chosen by the Normans, just outside and commanding the town. He goes on: "I am not myself at all satisfied that Lewes was so very important in 1066. . . . As for the bridge at Cliffe, I have but repeated what has been stated by better men than I; there is no evidence for the existence of any such bridge before 1264. And my critic admits that he knows no better." In denying the importance of Lewes, Mr. Allcroft sets himself up against the evidence of the Domesday Survey, which gives particulars showing that Lewes was the most valuable, or wealthy, town in Sussex, and that it had a population of at least 1500 persons. In the matter of the bridge he is also wrong; so far as I know no men,

better or worse than himself, have ever before asserted that there was no bridge at Cliffe in 1086. The earliest reference to the bridge of which I know is certainly 1264 (though I believe there is documentary evidence of its existence fifty years earlier), and I am not certain that I could find any more references to it for another hundred years or so, but that goes no way at all towards proving that it did not exist at the time of the Conquest, and the circumstantial evidence of probability is strongly in favour of its having done so.

A final point. I commented on the fact that in none of the de Warenne charters to the priory is there any reference to a grant of the original site of the castle. This, 'if he will incline his ear to authority on this point,' Mr. Allcroft may be assured would be a very extraordinary omission if such a site had been included in the grant of Southover. However, he cheerfully retorts: "I have shown that there is record enough; the Earl gives to the monks 'the whole of my demesne land within the island where is situated the monastery,' and this included the Castle. Further particularisation was needless, for, as I have shown, 'the island' meant the peninsula--in those days literally such--wherein now stands Southover." A reference to the passage from the charter of 1121, quoted above, seems to show that it did not. In any case, the site of the castle would not be thrown in casually without mention. But, judging from his next paragraph, Mr. Allcroft has not exactly mastered the subject of charters and chartularies.