

XII.—THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILIES OF HERON AND SWINBURNE.

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There seems little doubt that the baronial family of Wirecestre who held extensive lands in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham in the twelfth century was later represented in the male line by the Swinburnes of West Swinburne and in the female line by the Herons of Hadston and Ford. The evidence is as follows:

WIRECESTRE.

In 1166 Radulf de Wirecestre reported to Henry II that he held in Northumberland in chief one knight's fee of the old feoffment (i.e., created before the death of Henry I), and of this fee Jordan Hairun held a quarter of a knight's fee, Pagan de Wirecestre another quarter, the monks of Tynmouth an eighth part of a fee, and William son of Adam a third part.¹

This barony consisted of the widely scattered manors of Little Benton, par. Longbenton,² West Swinburne and Colwell, par. Chollerton,³ Hadston, chap. Chevington⁴ and West Chirton and Flatworth, par. Tynemouth.⁵ In the return of the same date by Hugh, bishop of Durham, Radulf de Wirecestre held in the territory of St. Cuthbert (co. Durham) one knight's fee. He also held lands in Allertonshire in Yorks, the bishop of Durham being his overlord.

¹ HN. iii, III, p. 304.

² See NCH. XIII, p. 414.

³ See NCH. IV, p. 273.

⁴ See NCH. V, p. 406.

⁵ See NCH. VIII, p. 336.

William, bishop of Durham, between 1143 and 1152, issued a confirmation of the agreement made between the monks of Rievaulx and Anchetil de Wirecestre and Radulf his son, touching East Cowton, Yorks.⁶ Wirecestre is now Worcester, and was sometimes latinized in documents as Wigornia. Asketil is an Old Norse name, being a compound of *áss*, a heathen god, and *ketal*, a cauldron. Both OE *Oskytel* and ON *Asketel* were common in England before the Norman Conquest and are found in various forms as late as the thirteenth century. In the main, however, they were superseded by the Norman forms *Ansketil*, *Anketil* and *Anketin*.⁷ There is no reason to doubt that Anchetil de Wirecestre was of Norman or French extraction.

For some time after the Norman Conquest, William I had permitted native earls to govern both Yorkshire and Northumberland, the present county of Durham being then part of Northumberland. Amongst the local men from the north of England who came in to the Conqueror in the early days of 1067 was Copsi who had acted as lieutenant for earl Tosti during the ten years, 1055-1065; he had the earldom of all Northumbria. Copsi was duly appointed earl of Northumbria and arrived in the north to take up his appointment in February 1067; five weeks later he was killed by Osulf, the representative of the old native family who had held the earldom before the Danish invasion. From then on the earldom of Yorkshire was suppressed, although Northumberland remained in the hands of native rulers. For this reason alone, Northumberland has no place in Domesday Book. Thenceforth Yorkshire was administered by sheriffs appointed by the Crown, and all these sheriffs were of Norman or French extraction. It was necessary that the sheriff should be the social and territorial equal of the strongest of the barons. In 1130 Bertram, son of Ansketil de Bulmer, was sheriff and remained in office until his death

⁶ Farrer, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, II, p. 291, No. 957.

⁷ Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, 2nd edit., p. 32.

in 1166. He held a small barony in Yorkshire and in the return made on his behalf in 1166, Aschetin son of Gospatric held of him one knight's fee of the old feoffment. Aschetin son of Gospatric also held the manor of Brawby in Yorkshire as tenant of the prior and convent of Hexham, and in Scotland he held Lilliesleaf and Whitton in Roxburghshire which later became the barony of Riddell. Aschetin was indifferently known as "de Brawby", "de Habton", or "de Riddle" from his various lands in Yorkshire, and became ancestor of the Riddells of Riddell. With a father named Gospatric, this Aschetin was undoubtedly of native extraction, and had no doubt taken his name from his overlord. The name became in fact very popular in Yorkshire throughout the twelfth century.

Ansketil de Wirecestre first appears in written records when he witnessed a notification by Ranulf Flambard, bishop of Durham, 1099-1128, of a grant of land called "Hewic" (perhaps Howick in Northumberland) to St. Cuthbert and the convent of the church of Durham.⁸ In the Pipe Roll for 1130/31 he rendered an account of 70s. 8d. for the corrody of the king of Scots going to visit the king of England, the payment being apparently in respect of the travelling expenses through the bishopric of Durham.⁹ In 1144 the succession to the bishopric of Durham led to a great deal of violence and intrigue. David, king of Scots, whose son Henry held the earldom of Northumberland, put forward as candidate his chancellor, William Cumin, in opposition to William de St. Barbara, the nominee of king Stephen. Eventually Cumin withdrew his claim and a treaty was made between him and bishop William. In spite of the treaty, acts of violence continued. One such episode is recorded by the anonymous continuator of Symeon's *History of the Church of Durham*, who describes how Hugh son of Pinton, the bishop's steward, ignoring the treaty of settlement, "seduced one of the bishop's barons called Aschetin de Wirece" and induced him to accompany him to Durham on the pretence

⁸ Raine, *North Durham*, p. 74 n.

⁹ *Cal. Doc. Scot.*, vol. I, p. 4.

that he wished to discuss with him some questions arising out of the treaty already mentioned; he caused him to be arrested on his arrival, although he had previously pledged himself that he should suffer no injury. "And so he was put in chains and cast into prison, and kept there until he should be ransomed."¹⁰ William Cumin had previously been archdeacon of Worcester¹¹ and it is not impossible that Ansketil had been one of his followers. Cumin held the temporalities of the see of Durham from 1141 to 1144 and during that time distributed land very freely.¹²

As Aschet de Wirecestre he was a witness to a grant of land by Laurence, prior of Durham, 1149-53.¹³ Mention has already been made of the agreement by the monks of Rievaulx with Anchetil de Wirecestre and Radulph his son. Between 1176 and 1186, Henry II confirmed to the canons of Guisborough Priory gifts made to them of Trimdon and Langdale by Asketil de Wygorn and Radulph his son.¹⁴

Another member of the family may have been Osb(ern) de Wiric(estre) who witnessed 1133-1140 a grant by Geoffrey, bishop of Durham, to the monks of St. Cuthbert of Durham of three bovates in Grimesthorpe (now Woodhall, Yorks).¹⁵

The Northumbrian barony of the Wirecestres had been created by Henry I (1100-1135) so that it had probably been bestowed on Asketil de Wirecestre; no doubt it was a reward for services rendered, perhaps on the Borders. He died about the middle of the century and was succeeded by his son Radulf, who 1153-1157 occurs as a witness to two deeds of Hugh, bishop of Durham, one a confirmation to the monks of Rievaulx of the land of Crosby in Allertonshire for 60s. rent, the other a quit claim of Crosby which had been given to Rievaulx by Geoffrey de Otrington and Adam his brother.

¹⁰ Church Historians of England, vol. III, pt. ii, p. 727.

¹¹ Le Neve, iii, 73.

¹² Contin. Sim. Dur. I, p. 146.

¹³ AA 4, vol. III, Greenwell Deeds No. 3.

¹⁴ Farrer, Early Yorkshire Charters, vol. II, p. 30, No. 673.

¹⁵ Id., p. 322, No. 998.

Jordan Hairun, who will be referred to later, also witnessed both these deeds.¹⁶ A grant c. 1160-1170 by Walter Ingram to the monks of Rievaulx of lands in Heslerton, is witnessed by Radulf de Wirecestre and Jordan Hairun.¹⁷

In 1158 Henry II confirmed a grant of Flatworth, par. Tynemouth, by R(adulf) de Wirecestre to the monks of Tynemouth in free alms.¹⁸ This same year the regular series of Pipe Rolls for Northumberland commence, and in them Radulf de Wirecestre's name appears at fairly regular intervals. In 1161 he paid a scutage of three marks; in 1162 he paid another scutage, this time of one mark; for a donum in 1165 he contributed one mark; in 1170 for a donum to marry the king's daughter he was charged 13s., for half a knight's fee and a third of a fee and a seventh part of a fee of the new feoffment; for the scutage for Ireland in 1172 he was charged 20s., and for another scutage for Ireland in 1173 he paid 19s. 6d. In 1187 there was imposed a "scutage of the knights of Northumberland who did not go with the king in the army of Galway"; nothing is entered in the roll against Radulf de Wirecestre, so perhaps if he was still alive, he served in person. No later mention is made of Radulf de Wirecestre in the Pipe Rolls, but this may be accounted for by the fact that no further scutages were charged until the scutage for Wales in 1190 and in that year the county was transferred to Hugh Puiset, bishop of Durham, and no details are given in the Pipe Rolls of individual payments; the same applies to the scutage for the redemption of king Richard in 1191, and the rolls for 1192 to 1194 inclusive are missing for Northumberland. It is clear therefore that Radulf could have died any time after 1173; he was certainly dead in 1199 in which years the heirs of Radulf de Wirecestre rendered an account for the first scutage of king John, of two marks for the knight's fee which Radulf de Wirecestre had held; this was paid by Jordan Hairun, heir of the said Radulf. It seems fairly certain that Radulf was dead in 1184, in which year

¹⁶ Farrer, II, p. 289, Nos. 952 and 953.

¹⁷ *Id.*, p. 60, No. 713.

¹⁸ NCH. VIII, p. 335 and 335 n.

William son of Pagan rendered account to the sheriff of one mark for the right to the lands of his father against Jordan Hairun; William is evidently the son of that Pagan de Wirecestre who, in 1166, had held a quarter of a knight's fee of Radulf de Wirecestre, and Jordan Hairun seems to be already in possession of the barony.

It is clear from a law suit of 1203 that Jordan Hairun married the heiress of the Wirecestres, presumably Radulf's daughter, and held the barony in her right.¹⁹

HAIRUN.

Jordan Hairun's early career seems to have been a very varied one, and as a young man he was evidently in the service of David, king of Scots. It is likely that he was of Flemish extraction. One of Henry I's Flemish settlers in Pembroke gave his name to Jordanston in Rhos; the exploits of Jordan le flamang in 1174 are related by Jourdain Fantosme. In 1144 he witnessed a charter of king David's granting Lesmahagow to the abbey of Kelso²⁰ and about 1150 he witnessed a grant by Robert, bishop of St. Andrews, of the church of "Lohworuora" to Herbert, bishop of Glasgow.²¹ About 1153-1157 he witnessed a confirmation by Malcolm IV, king of Scots, of the gift of Ranulf de Sules, the king's butler, of a carucate of land in the vale of Liddell to the hospital of St. Peters, York.²² Shortly after this he seems to have been resident in Yorkshire, where perhaps he already held lands in Allertonshire of the bishop of Durham. *Circa* 1150-1157 he witnessed a confirmation by William de Vesci of the gifts made by his father, Eustace son of John, to the nuns of Walton of the church and vill of Walton.²³ Besides witnessing the two charters of Hugh, bishop of Durham, between 1153 and 1157, about the same time he witnessed

¹⁹ Northumberland Pleas, NRS. vol. II, p. 14.

²⁰ Lawrie, Early Scottish Charters, CLXXII.

²¹ Id. ²² Farrer, vol. IX, p. 198, No. 109.

²³ Id., vol. ii, p. 407, No. 1110.

Robert de Lasceles' grant to the monks of Rievaulx of a carucate in Morton Grange.²⁴

Whilst German was prior of Durham (1163-1186) Jordan Hairun witnessed a grant of a carucate of land at Silksworth, co. Durham, by Gaufrid son of Richard to Philip son of Hamund.²⁵ About the same time he is named as a witness to a confirmation by William de Vesci of a grant by Radulf de Caugi to the monks of St. Cuthbert at Durham of the church of St. Maurice at Ellingham, Northumberland.²⁶ The church of Ellingham had originally been given to Durham by Nicholas de Grenville, the gift being made for the souls of himself, his father and mother and his nephew William de Grenville: two of the witnesses were Anshet and Ranulf, nephews of William de Grenville. The unusual combination of names of the two nephews suggests a relationship with the Wirecestres.

From the returns made by the tenants in chief in 1166 we know the extent of the lands then held by Jordan Hairun; in Yorkshire he held a ninth part of a knight's fee of Gilbert Hansard and in Northumberland he held of Radulf de Wirecestre a quarter of a fee which can be identified as the vill of Hadston. On succeeding to the Wirecestre baronies in Durham and Northumberland he put himself into rather a peculiar position when he gave the vill of West Chirton, Nhb., to Gilbert Hansard. Hansard was Hairun's overlord in Yorkshire, whilst in Northumberland the positions were reversed; in Durham also Hansard held the vill of Chilton as under-tenant of Hairun.

About 1178-1181 Jordan Hairun witnessed a confirmation by William Ingram to the monks of Rievaulx of the gift by Walter Ingram his father of lands in Welbury and Arncliffe.²⁷

Hairun was dead in 1191 when his son and heir Radulf is charged 40s. in the Pipe Roll, apparently for relief of his

²⁴ *Id.*, p. 70, No. 727.

²⁵ *Feod. Prior Dun.* in *SS.*, vol. 58, p. 125 n.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 101 n.

²⁷ *Farrer*, vol. II, p. 62, No. 716.

lands, and 10s. for a recognition. The debt of 40s. was carried forward to 1195. By the following year Radulf also was dead and Jordan Hairun his brother and heir rendered account to the sheriff of 40m. for having his lands which were in the hands of the king. From now on the younger Jordan appears with unfailing regularity in the Pipe Rolls until 1233. He is a regular witness to charters of the prior and convent of Durham, in the later ones being described as "dominus", probably signifying that he had received knighthood. In 1201 began a series of disputes between Hairun and Gilbert Hansard, the latter claiming that Hairun would not take his homage for the vill of Chilton. Hairun's answer was "that he ought not to take homage for that land, because it was the heritage of his mother, and not of his father, and if his father gave it to Gilbert's father, he gave it wrongfully, because he neither ought nor could, as he was only the guardian of his mother's heritage"; the justices decided "that Jurdan should take Gilbert's homage, saving his right and quarrel, and he took his homage before the justices".²⁸ In 1220 they again had recourse to the law when Hairun claimed against Hansard three carucates in Chirton; this was settled at Easter Term 1221 when Hansard gave one mark for licence to make an agreement with Hairun.²⁹

In 1212 Jordan Hairun reported to the king that he held his (Northumbrian) barony in chief of the lord king by the service of one knight; and all his antecessors had held by the same service from the time of the first king Henry who enfeoffed them, and of the feoffments is nothing given by marriage or alms or any other way whereby the lord king has less to his service.³⁰

Another return, which can probably be dated to 1235, records that Jordan Hayrun holds in chief of the lord king by the service of one knight's fee, Hadston, Colwell, West

²⁸ Nhb. Pleas, NRS. vol. II, p. 14.

²⁹ Id., p. 65.

³⁰ NCH. V, p. 407 n.; HN. iii, I, p. 234; Testa de Nevill, p. 329b.

Swinburn, Little Benton, West Chirton and Flatworth of the old feoffment.³¹

From this Jordan Hairun were descended all the later Herons of Northumberland.

SWINBURNE.

We have seen that *circa* 1160-1170 Radulf de Wirecestre, Pagan de Wirecestre and Jordan Hairun appear together as witnesses and that in 1166 Pagan de Wirecestre held a quarter of a knight's fee in the Northumbrian barony held in chief by Radulf de Wirecestre. His holding can clearly be identified as the manor of West Swinburne. From the dispute between William son of Pagan and Jordan Hairun in 1184 it can be presumed that the former was the male heir of the Wirecestres, although Hairun by marrying the daughter and heiress of Radulf de Wirecestre had succeeded to the barony. Pagan was undoubtedly a very close relative of Radulf's, probably his brother. Many other examples can be quoted where a younger son was given a subordinate fee in his father's barony. His service in 1166 was of the "new feoffment", i.e., created since the death of Henry I in 1135.

Whilst the Pipe Rolls can provide an almost complete account of the devolution of lands held in chief of the king, they are of much less value for sub-tenants in the baronies. Consequently the descendants of Pagan de Wirecestre are much more difficult to follow than those of Jordan Hairun. It is safe to identify William son of Pagan with the W. de Wyrecestre who witnessed an undated charter of Radulf de Gunewarton, Jordan (de) Harrun also being a witness;³² the charter can be dated before *circa* 1210 when Eva, widow of Radulf de Gunewarton, gave lands in Frosterley, co. Durham, to her younger son Thomas.³³

In 1240 West Swinburne was held by John de Wirecestre of William Heron by a quarter of a knight's fee of the old

³¹ Testa de Nevill.

³² NCH. IV, p. 303 n.

³³ Id., p. 325 n.

feoffment.³⁴ In 1297/8 Edward I gave an *inspeximus* or charter of confirmation to the prior and convent of Hexham; included in the possessions that were then confirmed to them, they held the homage of the heirs of Nicholas de West-Swyneburne and the service of three shillings a year for the chantry of the chapel of West Swinburn that had been given to Hexham in the time of Henry III by John de Wirecestre in free, pure and perpetual alms.³⁵ John de Wirecestre had also given them an acre of land in the fields of West Swinburn.³⁶ A near relative may have been Gilbert de Wirecestre who gave to Hexham 2 tofts, 3½ acres of land, and common of pasture for 15 cattle, 60 sheep and 2 horses in Little Bavington.³⁷

By 1255 the owner of West Swinburn was called John de Swyneburne, who in that year, at the instance of Margaret, queen of Scotland, had freedom from assizes, juries, etc., and from being made sheriff or coroner.³⁸ This exemption apparently only applied to service under the king of Scotland, who at that time held the lordship of Tyndale from the king of England. At the assizes held at Newcastle in 1255, John de Swyneburne was a juror;³⁹ Adam son of William de Hedley had a suit against him for a tenement in Stamfordham⁴⁰ and he is named as a pledge in two other suits.⁴¹ At the inquisition taken after the death of William Hairun in 1257 the manor of West Swinburn was then held by John de Swyneburne.⁴² It seems quite certain that the surname of Wirecestre had been discarded between 1240 and 1255 in favour of the local territorial name of Swyneburne. Mention has already been made that the chantry of the chapel of West Swinburn was held by Hexham priory in 1297/8 of the heirs of Nicholas de Swyneburne and had been given to the priory by John de Wirecestre in the reign of Henry III. Nicholas was eldest son and heir of John de Swyneburne who held in 1257, the same lands as John de Wirecestre had held

³⁴ HN. iii, I, p. 203.

³⁵ SS. 46, p. 116.

³⁶ Id., p. 112.

³⁷ Id.

³⁸ Pat. 52, H.III.m.20 in SS.88, p. 155 n.

³⁹ SS. 88, p. 128.

⁴⁰ Id., p. 155.

⁴¹ Id., pp. 171, 177.

⁴² HN. iii, p. 65.

in 1240. Besides his eldest son Nicholas, John de Swyneburne had two younger sons, Alan and William.

Nicholas de Swyneburne died in 1279 leaving three daughters as his coheireesses, and in 1340 Sir John de Fysheburn, a descendant of the eldest daughter, sold West Swinburne to William de Acton; from the Actons it passed by marriage to the Widdringtons and remained in that family until on 20 August 1678 William, lord Widdrington, sold it to Thomas Riddell of Fenham, ancestor of the present owner, Mr. J. C. W. Riddell. Thomas Riddell of Gateshead and Newcastle registered his pedigree at the visitation for the county of Durham taken by Richard St. George, Norroy King of Arms, in 1615. He claimed descent from Dukentinus de Riddell, a mis-reading for Anchetinus de Ridale; this is Aschetin son of Gospatric, who has already been noted as the ancestor of the Scottish baronial family of Riddell.⁴³ In fact the Riddells of Gateshead and Newcastle, later of West Swinburn, derive from John de Ridsdale, sheriff of Newcastle in 1478, and the name is from Redesdale in Northumberland, and not from Ridale in Yorkshire. Nicholas' brother Alan purchased the manor of Capheaton from Thomas de Fenwick in 1274 and having no children settled it on his brother William and his heirs. William, apparently the youngest son of John de Swyneburne, acquired the manor of Chollerton from Gilbert de Umfraville in 1269, and his descendants are still the owners of Capheaton and Chollerton.

⁴³ Foster, Durham Visitation Pedigrees.

