

NOTES ON
THE MANOR OF KNIGHTON, I. OF W.,
AND THE EARLY MANOR LORDS,
A.D. 1066—1343.

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The third volume of the "Papers and Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club" contains an interesting paper, by the Rev. R. G. Davis, entitled:—"Historical Notes on the Manor of Knighton."¹ Since the volume was published, research work at the Record Office has enabled me to trace out, more exhaustively, the history of several of the early manor lords who have held it. The site on which the manor house stood has probably been the same since early Norman times. Chosen at first possibly for the natural advantages it possessed for defence, having an assured water supply, with down pastures for sheep, etc. It was desirable later, from its sunny exposure and sheltered position on the southern slope of Ashey Down. This down is one of a range of chalk hills running through the centre of the island and whose summit is some 400 feet above Ordnance datum.

The views from the plateau on which the ancient manor houses stood must always have been fine, overlooking the fertile valley of Newchurch. A pedestrian may very happily spend half-an-hour in rambling about the wooded slopes, and perchance pondering over the fact that here, for several centuries, was the island home of knightly families whose members in their day and generation played a more or less distinguished part in national, or in local affairs.

¹ Hampshire Field Club Papers, Vol. iii., pp. 295—303.

Sir Henry Englefield, in his classic work, describes the last sixteenth century Jacobean manor house which stood on the site as "the most considerable and beautiful of the ancient mansions of the Island."¹ On purchasing the estate, in 1561, Mr. Anthony Dillington pulled down the house then standing, but incorporated fragments of early work of different dates belonging to it in the new building. Mr. Davis says:—"A square tower of great strength stood at the north-east angle, in whose foundations was a dungeon of considerable depth." This venerable building was ruthlessly razed to the ground in 1820, and indications only of the mossy foundations of the terraces remain to give an idea of its extent. The stone piers of the entrance gates still stand in their original position, and on them can be traced the coat of arms granted to Sir Robert Dillington, in 1599—"gules, a lion salient or." There is a fragment of the stabling fast mouldering to ruin—"sic transit gloria mundi."

"The good knights are dust, their swords are rust,
Their souls are with the Saints, we trust."

The recorded history of the manor commences with the entry in Domesday Book:—"The King holds Chenistone [Knighton] and Done [the Down] in demesne. Eight freemen held them of King Edward as an alod."² The notice brings us in touch with pre-Conquest times. Knighton was not a Crown manor, for the freemen who held it allodially of the Confessor, were, conjecturally, the representatives of the Saxon landholders who had settled on the land centuries before the Normans came.

The record further states that:—"Oda, with 2 freemen, had half a hide, and the fourth part of a virgate,"³ and then gives the names and the extent of the holdings of the other five freemen, adding:—"The land of these 5 (sic) thegns is held by the King (included) in his ferm." It may well be inferred from the foregoing that Oda was not dispossessed of his holding in the Knighton estate. The excerpt is more than

¹ Picturesque Account of the Island, p. 105.

² Vict. County Hist., Vol. i., p. 457.

³ Idem.

usually interesting since it reveals something of one whom we may regard as the earliest of the manor lords of Knighton.

OF ODA OF WINCHESTER AND KNIGHTON.

Oda was not so fortunate with another valuable estate lying in the near neighbourhood—"Ladone [the Down] and Bedingebourne [Bangbourn], gelded for 4 hides, which he held of King Edward as an alod."¹ This estate the Conqueror took charge of, the record stating:—"The King holds it (included) in his ferm." These references to Oda are extremely important as furnishing "one of those rare cases in which an Englishman, who had held land under Edward the Confessor in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was fortunate enough to weather the storm."² In the three neighbouring counties of Hampshire, Berkshire, and Wilts we find the list of "King's thegns" headed by a certain Odo, Ode, or Oda, styled "de Wincestre." The fact that he held land under William's predecessor would not of itself imply his English birth, but when we find that his brother bore the name of "Eldred," we may safely, in spite of his own name (Mr. Round adds in a footnote "Oda, probably, was its true form") assume the fact. And this brother helps us further; for when we find a separate entry at the end of the Sussex Survey: "Terra Odonis et Eldred," the former being styled, in the heading of that Survey "Odo de Wincestre," we cannot doubt that Eldred is the brother of Oda. (Mr. Round states in a footnote "they held two adjoining manors in north-west Sussex, a few miles over the Hampshire border"). "Lastly, if the former was the Ode who had held land in Wimborne before it passed to Queen Matilda, we meet with this Hampshire thegn in four of the counties bordering on his own. In addition to the four Berkshire manors Oda held in 1086, he seems to have received from William a fifth, of which Domesday records that "Hoc manerium dedit Oda de Wincestre."³ He had obtained from Edward freedom from dues on his land at Southampton. "The land of the following in this borough was quit, by the

¹ Vict. County Hist., Vol. I., p. 457.

² *Idem* p. 427.

³ *Idem*.

King's action, in the days of King Edward—"Odo of Winchester".¹ He was dispossessed of a large estate at Chawton in favour of Hugh de Port.² Yet we find him holding in 1086, five other manors, all of which, before the Conquest, had belonged to other Englishmen. He claimed "half a hide in Boarhunt, as against Earl Roger (of Shrewsbury),³ and another hide held by Geoffrey, chamberlain to the King's daughter, in the Hundred of Basingstoke. Odo de Wincestre claims this hide, and says that he had it in (mort)gage for 10 pounds from Alsi, with the permission of King William, and that he is therefore deprived of it unjustly."⁴ "From this," Mr. Round adds, "it would seem that Oda was a man with money at his disposal. The case of these two brothers may serve to illustrate the wealth of information that Domesday can, at times, be made to yield. And that of Oda has a special value as a type of William's practice in depriving even the men who had gained favour in his eyes of the lands they had held under Edward, and granting them, instead, forfeited estates."⁵

How Oda became a freeholder in Knighton, the date of his demise, or if he left any heirs to succeed him, has not been traced.

OF WILLIAM DE MORVILLE.

The next holder of the manor whose name has been transmitted to us is that of William de Morville, an offshoot according to Worsley, "from a considerable family in the county of Cumberland,"⁶ but citing no authority in support of the statement. No evidence is forthcoming as to the reasons for his coming to the Isle of Wight. It is conjectured that he obtained a grant of the manor from the Crown, but no documentary evidence of such grant has been found hitherto. The holding must have been a considerable one, covering the ground between the eastern Yar and Ashey, and in the "Testa de Nevill" is returned as "three knights' fees held of the honour of Carisbrooke."⁷

¹ Vict. County Hist., Vol. i., p. 516. ² Idem p. 482. ³ Idem p. 477.

⁴ Round Vict. C. Hist., Vol. i., p. 502. ⁵ Idem p. 428.

⁶ Worsley's Hist., p. 205. ⁷ Testa de Nevill, Rec. Coin. 240.

William de Morville's name is attached to two island charters, (a) as "Willelmo de Morevilla," to the composition deed between the abbeys of Lyra and Quarr.¹ The date of the deed is given as 1150. (b) as "Will's deMorville" he attested the charter of confirmation granted by Richard (2) de Redvers, earl of Devon, in 1161. Mr. Percy G. Stone gives an earlier date, circa 1155. That his status in the island was influential may be surmised from the circumstance of his attestation to the first charter follows that of Earl Baldwin and his son Richard, and of his having precedence in both deeds, of the representative members of the de Insula, de Estur, and Trenchard families. The date of his death is so far unknown.

Eudo de Morville is next found seised of the manorial estate. He was probably the grandson of William. By his marriage with Avicia only daughter and heiress of Richard de Wrokeshale, he acquired large estates in the county of Somerset, temp. King John. (1199-1216). Writing of this alliance Collinson says:—"Of all which lands, including the villages of Bourton and Nailsea, the family of Wrokeshale became possessed soon after the date of the Domesday Record, and in that name it continued till the time of King John, when it came by marriage of the heiress of Richard de Wrokeshale to Eudo de Morville."² Hoare says:—"The family were seated at Wraxall through several generations."³ No further details of Eudo have been traced. His daughter Maud married Matthew de Columbars.⁴ From the following excerpt it may be conjectured that he had a son William to succeed him in his tenure—"6 John (1205) In comitatu Sumerseta Will'o de Morvilla de xx marcas."⁵ But no other confirmatory evidence has been traced.

Ivo de Morville, lord of Bradpole, in Dorset; of Wraxall, in Somerset, and of Knighton, I. of W., was probably a son of the aforesaid William and was certainly the grandson of Eudo. He was the last heir male of the family. At his

¹ Worsley Appendix, No. 51. ² Hist. of Somerset, "Wraxall," pp. 156-8.

³ Hist. of Wilts, Vols. ii.—iii., p. 29. ⁴ Cal. Cl. R., 1279-88, p. 161.

⁵ Hardy's Rotuli de Obl. et Fin., p. 274.

death the estates passed to his only daughter and heiress Elena. The actual date of Eudo's death is not known, but it probably took place before 1256, the date usually assigned. The charter rolls, 37-38 Henry III., give the following entry:—"Libera waren in omnibus terras quas (Rad us de Gorges) habet in presenti in comatatu Dorset."¹ So that presumably Ivo de Morville was then dead. The several island historians name John de Morville as the last heir male, but in each case no confirmatory evidence of the fact is adduced. Worsley, writing in 1781, says:—"The manor of Knighton Gorges was held in the reign of Henry the Third by John de Morville, a younger brother of de Morville's, a considerable family in the county of Cumberland: John de Morville dying in the fortieth year of Henry the Third . . ."² The inquisition of a John de Morville is recorded in the year 1246, showing that he was seised of lands in that county, "31 Henry III., Joh'es de Morvill, no: 32, Burgh'super Sablonés, 8 caruc' terr'. Ayketon, 4 caruc' terr'. Cumb'."³ In reference to this my friend Mr. Hue remarks—"that it is quite possible that the de Morville's, of Knighton and Wraxall, were connected with Cumberland and the north, for the Barony of Burgh-on-Sands in the county named, was for a time in the hands of a branch of the Devon and Somerset Morvilles. A John de Morville—possibly of Knighton—witnesses in Westmoreland in 1258."⁴ Albin in 1795 repeats Worsley's statement, and as late as 1858, Davenport Adams says:—"The manor of Knighton was the property of John de Morville, who died in 1256."

Elena de Morville, the heiress, married Ralph, son of Ivo de Gorges, of Tamworth, co. Warwick. The marriage must have taken place before 1241, both parties being probably under age. This may be conjectured from the following excerpts:—

1241 "Appointment during pleasure of Bartholomew
Jan. 16. Peche and Joan de Gorges to the custody of the
lands of Ralph de Gorges and Ellen his wife.
Writ de intendo to the tenants thereof."⁵

¹ Calend. Rotul. Chart., p. 83. ² Worsley's Hist. p. 205.

³ Calend. Inq. p. m., Vol. i., p. 4. ⁴ Levens' MS., p. 320.

⁵ Cal. Pat. R., 1232-1247, p. 243.

(The Peche family once held three baronies in the 13th and 14th centuries, and Bartholomew was much employed by Henry III. as ambassador in Gascony.)¹

1242 "Mandate to the Archbishop of York and W. Sept. 17. Cantilupe to assign, as soon as possible to Ralph de Gorges, ten pounds yearly of land in escheats, or wards, which the King has granted for the maintenance of him and his wife."²

OF THE "DE GORGES" OF KNIGHTON.

Ralph de Gorges. According to Wiffen³ the family of de Gorges derived their surname from a hamlet in Lower Normandy, a few miles from Carentan, and Ralph was seventh in descent from his ancestor Ranulph, who came over from Normandy at the time of the Conquest. Following the notices entered on the Patent Rolls a period of ten years elapse before any further allusion to Ralph is found in the public records. That he was actively engaged during the interregnum may be surmised from the following notice:—

1253 "Protection for the following going with the King to Gascony, for so long as they are in his service in those parts with the King (inter alia) Ralph de Gorges."⁴

In the Charter Rolls, 37-8, Henry III., "a grant of free warren to Ralph de Gorges in his demesne lands, which he has at present in Dorset," is entered.⁵ The next reference is found in an escheat, a few years later, 40 Henry III. (1255), the translation being as follows:—

"No. 39. Ralph de Kanc'. Concerning an escheat. The mill of Bradpole with the messuage and other appurtenances thereof, was given to the aforesaid Ralph as a freehold marriage portion with Christina, daughter of Ivo de Morville, by the same Ivo de Morville, her father. Christina herself was his illegitimate daughter, and thereafter the same Christina had, by the aforesaid Ralph, one son, who died

¹ Burrows' "Brocas Family," p. 361. ² Cal. Pat. R., 1232-1247, p. 323.

³ Russell Memoirs, Vol. i., p. 136. ⁴ Cal. Pal. R., 1247-1253, p. 231.

⁵ Calend. Rot. Chart, 1253-4, p. 82.

under age. And afterwards the aforesaid Christina died and the aforesaid Ralph continued to hold the aforesaid mill, &c., according to the law of England. At length there arose a dispute touching the aforesaid mill, between the aforesaid Ralph and one Ralph de Gorges who had taken to wife Helen, daughter and sole heir of the aforesaid Ivo de Morville, etc."¹

An enquiry touching the dispute was held, and :—" The jurors declare that the mill of Bradpole, with the messuage and other appurtenances, was given to Ralph de Kanc' as a free marriage portion with Christina, the daughter of Ivo de Morville, who was illegitimate, and paid half a mark into the King's exchequer at Westminster. And Ralph de Gorges who had taken (to wife) Elena, daughter and only surviving heir of the aforesaid Ivo de Morville, came and received homage from his free men."²

Dugdale says :—" Upon the expedition made into Wales in the 41 Henry III. (1257); Ralph de Gorges was summoned to perform military service, and to be at Bristol well fitted with Horse and Arms within the octave of St. Peter ad Vincula."³ At the enquiry held, for the counties of Dorset and Somerset, the jurors say that :—"Ralph de Gorges holds 3 knight's fees in Magna Luditon which pertain to the honour of Chiveton."⁴ Two years later the particulars of a grant are entered :—" 1262, July 12. Grant to Ralph de Gorges of 40 marks a year at the exchequer until the King provide for him more bountifully in wards and escheats. And this letter has been signed with the little seal."⁵ An inquisition held in 1263 in the Isle of Wight " as to the rights and liberties pertaining to the Castle of Caresbroc the jurors return that Ralph de Gorges holds 3 knights' fees by service."⁶ Collinson, in his history, says :—" Sir Ralph was a knight and a great warrior, being one of those attendant on the King in the year 1263, when he was ' blocked up ' in the city of Bristol by the disaffected citizens."⁷ He was shortly

¹ Roberts' Calend. Genal. p. 71. ² Inquisitions, p.m., Vol. ii., p. 54.

³ Baronage of England, Vols. ii.-iii., p. 55. ⁴ Calend. Inq., Vol. ii., p. 55.

⁵ Cal. Pat. R., 1258-1266, p. 224. ⁶ Add MS., 24,789, p. 201, Br. Mus.

⁷ History of Somerset, p. 156.

afterwards "made governor of Shirebourne and Exeter Castles and in the following year was given the manor of Porstoke."¹

Grave anxiety as to an invasion of the Isle of Wight by the French caused the King, in 1267, "to appoint our beloved and faithful servants Matthew de Columbars, Ralph de Gorges, and others . . . to well and truly guard the aforesaid island."² He executed the office of sheriff for Devonshire as "fermor" of it, in 1266-7, after which, "in the year 1270, he was signed with the Cross, in order for his journey to the Holy Land, where he attended and shared with Prince Edward the glories of the expedition."³ Prior to his departure he obtained a grant of a weekly market at Tormerton—"1270, July 14, Grant to Ralph de Gorges, 'the elder,' king's yeoman, and his heirs of a weekly market, &c."⁴ In an earlier roll, 52 Hen. III., p. 41; the term "valettus Regis" is given. It was often used at an early date with that of "esquire," or of "serviens," at the same time. Whether the "valettus" or the "serviens" was the next rank under an "esquire" is by no means clear, but the two offices are sometimes used interchangeably of the same person. At a later date "valettus" is often translated "groom," or "yeoman." Sir Harris Nicolas, in reference to the poet Chaucer, who was also "valettus" to Edward III., before he became an esquire, tells us that it was a situation filled by gentlemen, the duties of which consisted in an attendance on the royal person. A scrutiny of the wardrobe accounts shows that the distinctions (in the upper ranks) were those of knights, esquires, and the lower kinds of valet. In the third year of Edward the Third, John Brocas appears in the 6th class of esquires; from the sixth to the eleventh of the same reign he is "serviens Regis," "cher valettus," and even when Master-of-the-Horse, he is, until he becomes a knight, more often "valettus" than anything else.

¹ Calend. Rotul. Patent, pp. 39-41. ² Pat. R. 51, Henry III., m.gd.

³ Hoare, History of Wilts, Vols. ii. and iii., p. 29.

⁴ Cal. Ch. R. 54 Hen. III., Vol. ii., p. 148.

Shortly after his return from the Crusade, Ralph de Gorges died, leaving his wife and three others, executors of his will, as set forth in the following excerpt from the Fine Rolls :—

“ 56 Henry III., 18 Aug. Because the exors of Ralph de Gorges have made security with the King by Elena de Gorges, Ralph de Gorges-de Almere, William de Dun, and Walter of Rumbridge, for the debts, if any, the aforesaid Ralph de Gorges, deceased, owed to the King in the day in which he died, to be paid into the King's treasury. It is commanded to Master Richard de Clifford, escheator, &c., that he allow the aforesaid exors of the will, touching the goods taken into the King's hands to have free administration, etc.”¹

By his marriage he left two sons, Ralph who succeeded and John, to whom reference is made in the Patent Rolls at the time of his mother's demise :—“ 1291, Feb. 5. Grant to John, son of Elena de Gorges, for the services of the said Elena to the King and late Queen in the custody of their children, of a suitable marriage when one falls in.”²

The Lady Elena survived her husband many years and references to her appear in the Rolls from time to time, as for instance in the List of Liberties claimed by the Countess Isabella de Fortibus, lady of the Isle of Wight, and allowed by the King's Justices Itinerant :—

“ 8 Edward I., the Lady Elena de Gorges is returned holding three knights' fees for the manor of Knighton.”³

Dying in 1291, the royal mandate to take possession of her lands, is dated—“ February 18th, 20 Edward I. De terris capiendis in manum Regis. Quia Elena de Gorges que de Rex tenuit in capite-diem clausit extremum, &c.”⁴ The inquisition p.m. was held the same year and the return is as follows :—

“ 20 Edward I. (1291), no. 33, Elena de Gorges. Knyzteton maner' in Insula Vecta, 'Sutht'. Bradpole maner' extent, &c. (and others in Dorset).”⁵

¹ E. Rotulo Finium, 56 Hen. III. ² Cal. Pat. R. 1281-1292, p. 422.

³ Worsley Appendix No. 30. ⁴ Excerpta e Rol. Fin. m. 12, Rec. Off.

⁵ Calend. Inq. p.m. (1906) p. 109, Rec. Com.

A later reference—page 199, is made with this addenda—
 “Radulphus de Gorges est filius et proximus hæres dictæ
 Elenæ, defunctæ, et est ætatis triginta sex annorum et
 amplius.”

NOTES, RE—“THE ARMS OF THE ‘GORGES’ AND
 ‘MORVILLE’ FAMILIES.”

The arms of the “Gorges” family were
 originally the whirlpool coat. Foster—
 “Some Feudal Coats of Arms,” p. 113,
 “Gorges, Raffe de (Hen. III. Roll) bore,
 argent, a gorge azure.”

“DE GORGES.”



“DE MORVILLE.”



The lozengy coat, ‘or
 and azure’ was adopt-
 ed probably in conse-
 quence of their heir-
 ship to Morville, who
 in their turn probably adopted it from
 de Wrokeshalle. The lozengy coat was
 borne by Raffe de Gorges at the siege
 of Caerlaverock, A.D. 1300.

“There more than once the new-dubbed Knight—
 Sir Ralph de Gorges I saw, hemmed round,
 And by the press, and by the flight
 Of stones, as often beat to ground :
 For to recede was what his ire
 And pride too nobly scorned to do,—
 He had his harness and attire
 All mascalpy of gold and blue.”

NICHOLAS'S “Siege of Caerlaverock.”

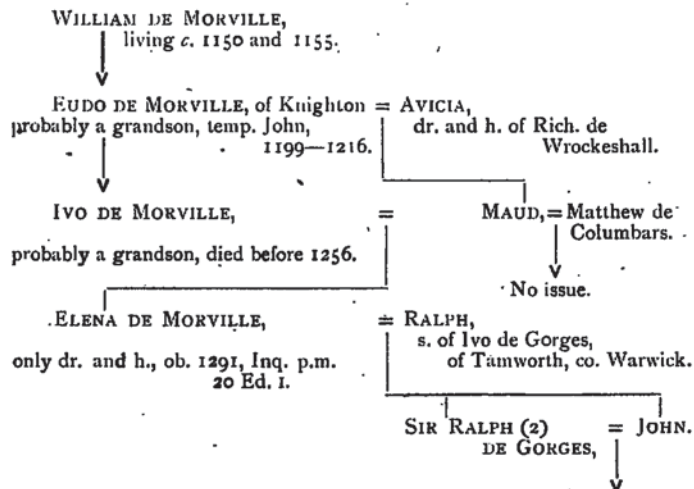
The lozengy coat was assumed by Theobald (Russel)
 Gorges, as son of Eleanor, sister and co-heir of the last
 Ralph de Gorges of Knighton. His right to bear it was
 challenged,—21 Edward I., circa 1347–8—says Burke,—*vide*¹
 a dispute between him and Warburton of Cheshire for
 bearing those (Gorges) arms, but the latter established his
 right thereto in the court of the Earl Marshal, Henry, earl

¹ Extinct Peerage.

of Lancaster, and Gorges had assigned him "a chevron gules, on the lozengy or and azure, for difference," which his posterity bore for some time, until they again resumed their ancient and hereditary coat—"argent a gorges," or, a "whirlpool azure." "Att a Parliament holden att Westminster, 2 Edward II," the coat of "Raffe Gorgis" is entered "Lozengy or and azure." Mr. Thomas Jenyn's "Booke of Armes" enters it thus, "Rauf de Gorges—Sausegé d'argent et d'azure."



A SKETCH PEDIGREE SHOWING THE RELATION OF THE
"MORVILLE" AND "GORGES" FAMILIES.



(To be continued.)