ILLEGITIMATE PLANTAGENETS IN MEDIEVAL CUMBRIA?

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ABSTRACT

A family of minor landowners during the 13th and 14th centuries in what is now Cumbria bore the surname 'de Cornwall'. This article traces their genealogy and examines the suggestion that they were descended in an illegitimate line from Richard, Earl of Cornwall.

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Producing bastards was no rare occurrence amongst the Plantagenets. Henry I was renowned for "his prowess in fathering illegitimate offspring"[2] – he has been credited with no fewer than 25, although this is almost certainly an exaggeration.[3] King John had seven or more.[4]

Amongst cadets, one of the more prolific begetters seems to have been Richard, Earl of Cornwall (1209-1272), the younger of John's legitimate sons. He was noted during his lifetime for his lasciviousness, being called "a great lecher towards all women of whatever profession or condition"; the result was "at least one and perhaps several" bastards.[5] Oddly, few attempts at tracing this illegitimate issue have been published.[6] Liverpool and Reade refer to Richard's long-standing liaison with his mistress Joan, and state that he had by her "at least two sons, Richard and… Walter, with apparently Sir Lawrence";[7] they also consider the possibility of a fourth, Philip. Unfortunately, no sources are cited for this putative bastard, Sir Laurence. Was he a Cumbrian knight?

Sir Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall: "the Cumbrian Laurence"

A younger contemporary of Earl Richard, Laurence first appears in the historical record towards the middle of the 13th century as a witness to various Cumbrian charters. The exact dates of most of these are unclear, but they come from a series relating to William de Lancaster III (d.1246), and thus a range described as extending from 1220 to 1246 has been applied to them. It is likely that these come from towards the end of de Lancaster's life: the earliest exact date specified within one of the documents is 1246 itself. We can be certain then that Laurence was active by 1246 at the latest.

At that time, Laurence was serving in Lancaster's household. In November 1246 we find a deed in which Lancaster calls him "my knight"[8]; Laurence's knighthood is also

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[2] ODNB, biography by C Warren Hollister.

[3] Alison Weir, Britain's Royal Families (1996), 48-49.

[4] ODNB, biography by John Gillingham.

[5] ODNB, biography by Nicholas Vincent.

[6] The ODNB article satisfied itself with mentioning only his bastard son Richard. Noël Denholm-Young (Richard of Cornwall, 1947) does not provide a detailed analysis of the subject.

[7] 4th Earl of Liverpool & C Reade, The House of Cornewall (1908), 31.

[8] J C Atkinson, ed. The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey, part II. Chetham Society (NS), (1887), 11: 349-350.

made explicit in other documents that he witnessed during this early period of his career, which he subscribed as "Sir Laurence fitz Richard, knight".[9] He was present at Lancaster's deathbed.[10]

Laurence also appears to have had close connections with William de Arundel the younger; he benefited from a grant by Arundel, dated by Farrer to between 1225 and 1250,[11] in which the grantor calls him "dilecto cognato meo Laurencio filio Ricardi". Laurence received his kinsman's estate at Cowperthwaite, for which service of a sparrow hawk and a pair of fur gloves was due annually from Cockersand Abbey, and the service of one Ingelram de Santon at Firbank, together with any rights that Arundel held at Kendal. Probably soon afterwards, as 'Laurence fitz Richard', he gave his interest in the Cowperthwaite property to Cockersand Abbey, in exchange for prayers for his soul and that of William de Lancaster "my lord", thus confirming the identity for us.

It is likely that during the baronial wars of Henry III's reign, Laurence took the losing side since in 1266 his name appears in a list of those granted safe-conduct to attend court for trial, alongside other Cumbrians: Robert and Geoffrey de Tilliol, Richard de Castlecarrock, and Robert de la Fierte.[12]

Like many of Lancaster's retainers, it seems that Laurence had received grants of land from his lord. According to VCH, these included mills and other property in Ulverston, which later formed the manor of Nevill's Hall. These were held by knight's service, together with the payment of yearly rents totalling 31 shillings.[13]

The various documents referred to hitherto all call the Cumbrian knight 'Laurence son of Richard', but they do not provide any information about his father, other than his Christian name. In these Ulverston records, however, Laurence is referred to as 'Laurence de Cornwall'. It is therefore important to ascertain whether this is – as VCH and Farrer concluded – the same man as 'Laurence fitz Richard'. It is particularly worth noting that none of the Ulverston references to him as 'Laurence de Cornwall' is actually contemporary to him; rather they date from the time of his son and grandsons, who certainly used the de Cornwall surname, as we shall see.

Nevertheless, there is at least one contemporary reference which allows us to connect this name-shift more securely. This is from across the border in north Yorkshire, where a confirmation of a gift of land at Barton to Easby Abbey was made in 1271 by "Laurence son of Richard de Cornwall, knight"; William de Lancaster was at one time lord of Barton.[14]

Sometime between 1272 and 1278 "Laurence fitz Richard, knight" made a gift to Conishead Priory of land at Gascow in the town of Ulverston, with the consent of his son and heir, John. In exchange for this gift, the monks of Conishead were to offer prayers for the souls of William de Lancaster and Agnes his wife, their ancestors and

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9 William Farrer, The Lancashire Pipe Rolls of 31 Henry I and of the Reigns of Henry II, Richard I and King John, and Early Lancashire Charters (1902), 443.

10 William Farrer & J F Curwen, eds., Records Relating to the Barony of Kendale, vol I (1923), 7.

11 William Farrer, The Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey, vol III, part 1. Manchester: Chetham Society, vol.56 (NS), (1905), 972-974.

12 CPR, 1258-1266, p.554; C R Hudleston & R S Boumphrey, Cumberland Families And Heraldry (1978), pp.44 (sub le Brun), 58, 341.

13 Atkinson, op.cit., 350; VCH Lancs 8, sub Ulverston.

14 VCH North Yorkshire, 1: 150.

successors, and also for the soul of Laurence and his wife Helen.[15] This charter provides useful genealogical details about Laurence's own family, as well as confirming the identification, since 'Laurence de Cornwall' of Ulverston is also known to have had a son and heir named John.

The latest dated Cumbrian reference we have to Laurence is probably from 4 June 1273, when he claimed that William de Lindsay - one of William de Lancaster's heirs - should take his homage.[16] He was certainly dead by 1285, when his son John was named in an action relating to a messuage, mill and other land at Ulverston.[17] John obtained judgment in his favour in 1292 in another lawsuit regarding the Ulverston mill; the finding explicitly states that his father Laurence had been enfeoffed by William de Lancaster.[18]

At some point John too was knighted. He is accorded the style of 'knight' in various contemporary documents, including a release by Sir John Hudleston in 1297 in which Sir John de Cornwall appears as a witness.[19] He might be "John de Cornubia, knight" who witnessed a Cumbrian deed in 1282.[20]

Subsequent actions relative to the family's holdings at Ulverston provide much detail about John's marriage and children. He was still living in 1309, when he and his wife Joan entered into a complicated real estate transaction with their son Stephen. 17 messuages, two mills, 10 caracutes of land, 40 acres of meadow, and 12 acres of pasture had been given by John (called "son of Laurence de Cornwall") to Stephen; now Stephen let them back to his parents for life, with remainder to his brother Laurence son of John, and the heirs of his body, failing which they were to revert to his father's right heirs.[21] Stephen was acting as a feoffee in this business, and was evidently not his father's heir. By 1312 John was dead, since Joan was then named as his widow.[22]

The younger Laurence was probably acting on his own account as early as 1309. In that year, "Laurence son of John de Cornwall" and Catherine Pentek, widow of Sir Robert Gifford of Lanowmere-in-St-Kew, Cornwall, were involved in a lawsuit over a quantity of tin valued at £3.[23] This is the only evidence I have found that the Ulverston family likely had a substantive connection with Cornwall.

There was also a holding in Somerset, which may have descended from Laurence fitz Richard. In June 1316 "Laurence son of John de Cornubia" sold a messuage, 100 acres of land, five acres of meadow, eight acres of pasture, and a quarter part of a mill at Hinton by Mudford Terry, for 100 marks of silver.[24] This follows an acknowledgement

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15 HMSO, Charters of the Duchy of Lancaster (1875), 193, #285; PRO DL 25/564.

16 John Parker, A Calendar of the Lancashire Assize Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, London, part I, 1 Edward I, p.127; VCH Lancashire 8, p.251, n 43 seems incorrectly to date this event to 1274, although it is possible that the reference is to a subsequent hearing on the same case. The printed calendar of the Lancashire Assize Rolls makes it clear that the initial hearing was on 4 June 1273.

17 VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 44.

18 VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 45.

19 HMSO, op.cit., p.168, #62.

20 Lancashire Record Office, Hornby Catholic Mission Papers, RCHY 3/1/1.

21 William Farrer, ed., Lancashire Fines, part II, 1308-1377 (1903), 2.

22 VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 46.

23 PRO, C 241/63/117.

24 Emanuel Green, Pedes Finium, Commonly Called Feet of Fines, for the County of Somerset, 1 Edward II to 20 Edward III (1898), p.58, #69.

by Laurence three months earlier that he owed £100 to Muleburn, who had been granted permission to levy against Laurence's chattels and lands in Lancashire in default of payment.[25]

In 1319 Laurence's mother, "Joan late the wife of John son of Laurence de Cornwall", released her rights in a quarter part of the manor of Hinton by Mudford Terry to William de Muleburn and in other lands "of the said Laurence and Laurence".[26] (It is this latter reference that suggests that the properties had formerly belonged to Laurence fitz Richard.)

Meanwhile, an indenture of 1317 shows that Laurence son of John Cornwall disposed of a life interest in his Ulverston water mill to Edmund and Constance Nevill. Perhaps Laurence was having money troubles in 1316-1317. This lease was converted six years later into an outright disposal of "all his lands, tenements and mills in Ulverston" to the same couple.[27] This transaction spawned a further series of legal cases following Laurence's death. His granddaughter and heir, Alina wife of Peter de Caterall, sued in 1347 for the recovery of the Ulverston estates. She stated that she was the only child of Laurence's son Edward, deceased.[28] The defendants counter-alleged that Laurence had not been the heir of John de Cornwall, who had an elder son, Mauger de Cornwall. The court heard that the original transaction of 1309 was a sham, and Alina's case failed.[29]

By then, of course, Laurence the younger was also dead. We have the testimony of his widow, another Joan, in 1332, when she claimed dower in the Ulverston estates. She denied that her husband was then living in Paris, stating that he had died in Florence and been buried in the church of the Blessed Mary there.[30]

Additionally, Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall is said to have had a daughter Sibyl, who became the wife of Sir John Hudleston of Millom and by him had various issue.[31] Primary evidence for this assertion seems lacking – indeed, the well-referenced pedigree of Hudleston by Cowper simply states that "John de Hudleston married (unidentified)."[32] An indication that this identification may nevertheless be correct appears in the Yorkshire feet of fines for 1279, where John de Hudleston and Sibyl his wife enfeoffed Richard de Hudleston of 2 carucates of land in Barton, to be held of John and Sibyl and the heirs of Sibyl for a rent of a pair of white gloves each year.[33] Clearly this grant was made out of Sibyl's inheritance at Barton.

The late Cumbrian historian C. Roy Hudleston muddies this water a little by saying of Laurence fitz Richard: "I know that he was also called Lawrence de Kirkby from Kirkby Irelath

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25 CCR, 1313-1318, p.329, dated 22 March 1316.

26 PRO, E 326/4130.

27 H I Anderton, "The Manor of Bardsea," Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 12 (NS) (1912): 231.

28 This contradicts the statement that "Laurence did not have heirs of his body", Atkinson, op.cit., 350 #CCX

29 Atkinson, op.cit., 352-361.

30 VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 47.

31 Peter Townsend, ed., Burke's Landed Gentry, 18th Edn., vol 2 (1965), 326.

32 H S Cowper, "Millom Castle and the Hudlestons," Transactions of the Cumbria and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society 24 (NS) (1924): 200.

33 F H Slingsby, "Feet of Fines for the County of York, 1272-1300," Yorkshire Archaeological Society (Record Series) 121 (1956): 40.

in Lancs (just across the channel from Millom)."[34] He also relates that amongst the heraldry preserved at Hutton John, an ancient seat of the Hudleston family, was a shield containing the arms of the Kirkby family ("argent, two bars gules, on a canton of the last a cross moline or"),[35] which he connects with Laurence de Cornwall. I am unaware of any primary identification of Laurence fitz Richard with "Laurence de Kirkby Ireleth", although there are some secondary sources, the earliest dating from 1835.[36]

From the documents cited above, the following stemma can be constructed:

1. Richard; father of:

2. Sir Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall, of Ulverston, Cumbria, fl.1246-1273; married Helen. Father of:

3a. Sir John de Cornwall, of Ulverston, fl.1278-1308; married Joan, living in 1319. Father of:

4a. Mauger de Cornwall, fl.1304-1309; married Idonea.[37]

4b. Stephen de Cornwall, fl.1309.

4c. Laurence de Cornwall, of Ulverston and Hinton-by-Mudford Terry, Somerset; fl.1309; dead by 1332; died at Florence; married Joan, living in 1332. Father of:

5. Edward de Cornwall, dead by 1347. Father of:

6. Alina de Cornwall, living 1347; dead by 1364; married Peter de Caterall.

3b. ?Sibyl de Cornwall, living in 1343; married by 1279 Sir John de Hudleston; left issue.

One final trace of Laurence's descendants occurs in 1364, when Richard, son of Peter de Caterall, sued John de Nevill as heir of Laurence son of John son of Laurence de Cornwall at Ulverston.[38] It seems that attempt to recover the properties failed too. If the identification of Sibyl as Laurence's daughter is correct, then a descent to the present day exists through the Hudleston family.

Sir Laurence fitz Richard - "the Cornish Laurence": the same man or another?

As well as these predominantly northern documents, there are a number of other references which may well relate to the same individual, but where the connection is less clear. These are from Cornwall and Devon.

In the earliest dated instance (1242), we find mention of "Laurencio filio Ricardi" amongst the witnesses to the gift of a property at Crediton, Devon, by William

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[34] letter from C Roy Hudleston, cited by Annette Hudleston Harwood in a letter to the author, 6 February 2006.

[35] C R Hudleston & R S Boumphrey, Cumberland Families and Heraldry (1978), 191-192.

[36] John Burke, A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland, vol II (1835), 582: "Sybel, daughter of Laurence, son of Richard de Kirkbie".

[37] VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 46.

[38] VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 48.

Briwerre (Bishop of Exeter, 1224-1244).[39] This Cornish Laurence appears towards the end of a list of individuals; one of those higher on the list is described as "milite", but Laurence is not, indicating that he was not then a knight.[40] This is confirmed by the Close Rolls, which state that the sheriff of Cornwall excused Laurence son of Richard from having to take knighthood in that year.[41] The next witness to the 1242 deed was "Johanne filio Andree" (John son of Andrew); he was, we shall see, probably this Laurence's nephew.

Sometime before 1245, the Cornish Laurence was granted "the custody of all the lands that Andrew fitz Richard held of (the Bishop of Exeter), together with the advowson of the churches of St Columb Minor and Lanherne, and the marriage of the heirs".[42] It must have been shortly after this grant that the marriage of John, son of Andrew fitz Richard, was organised. He wed Margery, daughter (and eventual heiress) of Richard fitz John of Connerton, and had an estate at 'Walcomb' settled on him in free marriage. One of the witnesses to this document was "Sir Laurence son of Richard".[43]

According to fines from 1244, the Cornish Laurence was involved in the sale of ploughland in St Agnes, Scilly, to one John de Lydford (17 April)[44] and in the marriage settlement of Mirabel, wife of Thomas de Lancels (5 June).[45] In published transcript of the latter document, Mirabel is called his niece; it is likely that she was the daughter of Andrew fitz Richard, who in that case would thus be the (?elder) brother of Laurence fitz Richard.

In 1249 the Cornish Laurence is recorded as having given a ferling of land at Wildland in Crediton to the Hospital of St Laurence in that town.[46] To this a further 4 acres at Roleston in Morchard Bishop were added by grant in 1269.[47] In exchange, the Master and Brethren "received Laurence and his heirs into all benefits and orisons which henceforth should be made in the Hospital for ever". He also held land at 'Orcherd' in 1252, when an order was given to establish the boundary between his property and that of Muriel de Boulay in 'Brictestowe'.[48]

We see details of the Cornish Laurence's own family in a fine from 1256. He and his wife, Joan, were involved in the division of property that she and her sister had inherited from their father, Henry de Tregunnel, a landowner in St Columb Minor.[49]

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39 ODNB, biography by Frank Barlow.

40 Francis Hingeston-Randolph, The Registers of Walter Bronescombe and Peter Quivil, Bishops of Exeter (1889), 5.

41 National Archives at www.a2a.org, note to document AR/1/103 from the Cornwall Record Office; see also CFR, 1237-1242, p.429.

42 Cornwall Record Office, Arundell of Lanherne papers, AR/1/108, dated 1226-1244.

43 Cornwall Record Office, Arundell of Lanherne papers, AR/1/103, dated to c.1240.

44 J H Rowe, ed., Cornwall Feet of Fines, vol I, Richard I – Edward III, 1195-1377 (1914), 53, #109.

45 O J Reichel, ed., Devon Feet of Fines, vol I, Richard I – Henry III, 1196-1272 (1912), 199, #393.

46 Reichel, op.cit., 254-5, #505.

47 Reichel, op.cit., 363, #703.

48 CFR, 1251-1253, p.262; she was the daughter of one William fitz Richard – see CRR, 14-17 Henry III, p.62 #319.

49 Rowe, op.cit., 85-86, #167.

It seems that this Laurence died in about 1278, when the Bishop of Exeter confirmed permission for him to be buried in the chapel of St Laurence at Crediton.[50]

Are these two men – the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall and the Cornish Laurence fitz Richard – one and the same? Certainly they appear to have been close contemporaries, the Cumbrian references dating from 1246 to 1273, and those from Devon and Cornwall from 1242 to 1278. Both were knights. Interestingly, both were connected to men named Arundell.

As we have seen, one William de Arundell the younger conveyed property in Cumbria to Laurence fitz Richard, his kinsman, between 1225 and 1250. We know that this was Laurence of Cumbria, since he named his lord, William de Lancaster, in a subsequent grant of the same estate. Meanwhile, in about 1251 the Cornish Laurence fitz Richard confirmed a grant of the vill of Treloy in St Columb Minor by William de Arundell to Remfrey de Arundell, founder of the branch of that family who settled at Lanherne.[51] The coincidence is intriguing.

There are differences too, however. The Cumbrian man was a knight by 1246 at the latest; his Cornish counterpart declined knighthood in 1242, and the earliest dated reference I have seen to his having been knighted dates from 1276, when as patron of Lanivet, Cornwall, he appointed Odo de Arundell as rector there.[52] The Cumbrian names his wife as Helen, while we know the Cornishman married Joan de Tregunnel.

On the other hand, these difficulties are not insurmountable, since one man may have married twice, and the lack of a reference to a knighthood does not necessarily mean that none existed at the time.

It is also worth noting that the name Laurence was probably not as unusual at the time as it might seem today. Laurence of Rome (d.258) was a popular saint, some 228 pre-Reformation churches having been dedicated to him in England alone, and his feast-day was regularly used for dating purposes. Additionally, there was an English saint of the same name, a 7th century archbishop of Canterbury.[53] This latter fact (an English saint) may account for an increased use of the name in England by the time of Henry III – only one Laurence is named in Domesday.[54]

We can even find other contemporary Laurence fitz Richards. One of this name ("Laurencius filius Ricardi") was another Cumbrian, also known as Laurence de Stainall, son of Richard fitz Siward; he confirmed grants to Cockersand Abbey in the period 1235-1260[55], but appears to have been a much older man than the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall.

Furthermore, the surname 'de Cornwall' seems not to have been unique in Ulverston to the known family of Laurence fitz Richard. In 1294 Maud, daughter of Richard de Cornwall, sued Roger de Lancaster's widow in respect of tenements in the town, of which she had been enfeoffed by one William de Cornwall.[56]

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50 Hingeston-Randolph, op.cit., 62, dated 19 April 1278.

51 Cornwall Record Office, Arundell of Lanherne papers, AR/1/29.

52 Hingeston-Randolph, op.cit., 149. The marriage settlement of John fitz Andrew refers to him as Sir Laurence and is said to date to the 1240s - see footnote 43. This means that the Cornish Laurence may have been knighted at a much earlier date than the 1270s.

53 D H Farmer, The Oxford Dictionary of Saints (1992), 288-291.

54 Katherine Keats-Rohan, DP, 289.

55 William Farrer, The Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey, vol I, part 1 (1898), 118.

56 VCH Lancashire 8, sub Ulverston, n 35.

Given the points in which their lives seem to have overlapped, it is tempting to say that the Cumbrian and Cornish Laurences were the same man. However, enough doubt exists to render this identification uncertain. In the absence of conclusive evidence, the jury must remain out on this point.

Paternity

The next question to be asked is the one we began with: was the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall the son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall? Various authorities have tackled this subject before. Rose-Troup declares that the identification of the Cornishman was sure: "he was an illegitimate son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall and King of the Romans".[57] Unfortunately she offers no evidence for this assertion.

C Roy Hudleston, having considered the position of the Ulverston man on the same point, was of a similar opinion,[58] referring to Liverpool and Reade who state that 'Sir Laurence de Cornwall' bore argent, a cross patonce gules with five bezants;[59] an alternative blazon, which they do not reference, was allegedly the same arms as those borne by 'Sir Walter de Cornwall'.

Further details of the armorial bearings of Earl Richard and his issue, according to Moor,[60] are as follows:

- Richard, Earl of Cornwall: argent, a lion rampant, crowned and double queued gules, a border sable bezanty
- Edmund, Earl of Cornwall [legitimate son of the foregoing]: the same arms
- Sir Richard de Cornwall [illegitimate son of Earl Richard]: argent, on a fess sable three bezants
- Sir Geoffrey de Cornwall [said to be another illegitimate son of Earl Richard]: argent, a lion gules crowned or, on a bend sable three molez dor [?mullets or]
- Sir Laurence de Cornwall [relationship not stated]: argent, a cross patee sable bezanty[61]
- Sir Walter de Cornwall ["brother of Edmund, Earl of Cornwall" – i.e. another illegitimate son of Earl Richard]: argent, a cross sable bezanty

The congruence of these various arms indicates a close connection between the individuals named. However, the relationship need not be a blood one. At this early stage in heraldic development it was not unusual for a feudal tenant to adopt armorial bearings that reflected those of his lord. Thus, the Laurence de Cornwall named above, whose arms clearly include several elements of Earl Richard's arms, could for instance have been a retainer from the earl's own county. We can discard this construction in this case though, since identical arms were borne by Sir Walter de

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57 F Rose-Troup, "The Honour of Harberton," Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art 67 (1935): 255-6.

58 C Roy Hudleston to Annette Hudleston Harwood (personal communication).

59 Liverpool & Reade, op.cit. (1908), citing Harl MSS 1386 f 44.

60 Charles Moor, "Knights of Edward I, vol I A to E," Publications of the Harleian Society 80 (1929), 238-40.

61 see also Nicholas Harris Nicolas & Joseph Gwilt, A Roll of Arms of the Reign of Edward the Second (1829), 89, where he is referred to as "Sire Laurence de Cornewayle".

Cornwall, a known illegitimate son of Earl Richard. This strongly suggests that the Sir Laurence de Cornwall who bore 'argent a cross patonce sable bezanty' was also a descendant of the Earl.

This does not mean, however, that we have therefore established the identity of Laurence fitz Richard de Cornwall of Cumbria, for the simple reason that it is not clear that he is the 'Laurence de Cornwall' referred to in Moor's list. Indeed, the source quoted by Moor is the Parliamentary Roll of Arms, apparently for Westmorland and Lancashire. This dates from the early reign of Edward II, and therefore is too late to be the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard. It could, however, be his grandson and namesake, Laurence de Cornwall, who was then head of the Ulverston family. If these were the arms of the younger Laurence, they would represent a good argument that his grandfather was indeed an illegitimate son of Earl Richard.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to discover what arms, if any, were borne by the Cornish Laurence fitz Richard, or his putative brother Andrew.

Let us now consider those few instances where Laurence fitz Richard and Earl Richard are associated in the historical record.

In 1268, 'Laurence son of Richard' witnessed the confirmation by Earl Richard of a grant.[62] Nothing within the document describes the relationship, if any, between the two men. The following year, Earl Richard exchanged the manor of Calstock for Joan de Oxton's dower in Trematon as part of a series of property transactions related to the Valletort family. Connected with this was a transfer of an interest in the manor of Modbury, in which 'Laurence son of Richard' is said to have submitted a claim.[63] Again, no genealogical relationship between Earl Richard and Laurence is explicit in this record.

Hudleston, referring to the 1271 confirmation of a grant at Barton, north Yorkshire by 'Sir Laurence son of Richard de Cornwall', also drew attention to the fact that Barton had apparently formed part of a transfer of lands in the Honour of Richmond to Earl Richard by Henry III in about 1227,[64] possibly having been influenced by the fact that VCH seems to link the two. This too is suggestive rather than conclusive.

An alternative method for approaching the issue of paternity is by chronological assessment. We know that the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard was active by 1246 at the latest, and was then a knight. This would indicate a birth date of no later than the 1220s. Given that Earl Richard was born in January 1208/9, would this not make him too young to be the Cumbrian Laurence's father? Apparently not: Richard is believed to have fathered his illegitimate son, Philip, as early as this period, probably when he was still a teenager.[65] This son was a cleric by 1248.

Chronological problems do arise, though, when considering the position of the Cornish Laurence fitz Richard. Firstly, we have seen that he probably had a niece married in 1244. Secondly, his likely brother, Andrew fitz Laurence, was active as early as 1226, when he acquired a knight's fee at Morchard Bishop in Devon from the Earl

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62 Cornwall Record Office, Arundell of Lanherne papers, AR/1/842.

63 Rose-Troup, op.cit., 255-256. NB on p.282 she posits her belief that Joan de Oxton (formerly Valletort) was the daughter, rather than the mistress of Earl Richard as is usually stated.

64 VCH North Yorkshire 1, sub Barton.

65 CPapR, vol I, 244.

Marshal.[66] Clearly Andrew could not have been a son of Earl Richard, and thus it follows that the Cornish Laurence was not either.

Accordingly, while it is possible that the Cumbrian Laurence fitz Richard was an illegitimate son of Earl Richard, it seems that the same cannot be said of the Cornish Laurence fitz Richard. Therefore, if the two men were one and the same, the alleged descent from Earl Richard for the Cumbrian Laurence would fail also.

Of course, there must be many other potential candidates for the father of Laurence fitz Richard. One such may be Richard le Botiller, seneschal to William de Lancaster III, by whom he was granted a messuage, 160 acres and half of the mill at Barton by an undated deed.[67]

Conclusion

The allegation that Sir Laurence fitz Richard of Ulverston was an illegitimate son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall is at best a supposition. While there is primary evidence that may be indicative of such a relationship, it is not conclusive. Heraldic evidence that indicates a Sir Laurence de Cornwall of Cumbria was a son or remoter descendant of Earl Richard is not as helpful as it may first seem, since it is not certain that it relates to Laurence of Ulverston or to a known member of his family.

Furthermore, there is a possibility that the Ulverston man should be identified with a contemporary Sir Laurence fitz Richard of Cornwall, who apparently can be excluded as a son of Earl Richard on chronological grounds.

In the absence of definitive evidence either way, the supposition must be considered an unproven theory at best.

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