

THE TURVILLES AND THE CASTLE OF WESTON TURVILLE

R. P. HAGERTY

The castle of Weston Turville is here put in its historical context.

Unlike the great majority of motte and bailey castles, which find no mention in extant documents, the castle at Weston Turville figures in two, both of the twelfth century.

The first is a charter recording the grant by Geoffrey de Turville of one hide of his demesne land in Weston, with all its appurtenances in land and meadow, to John of The Lee. For this, John and his heirs were to keep post for Geoffrey in his castle of Weston for 40 days in time of war, with war-horse and pack-horse, and for three weeks in time of peace. Geoffrey was making this grant to John because he had surrendered to him the land of The Lee which Geoffrey had then given to Missenden Abbey.¹ The year of this grant is open to argument but was probably 1145.² The requirement to bring horses implies that castle guard meant more than just sitting down within the castle.

The second is the Pipe Roll of 20 Henry II (1173/74) which records payment, by the King's writ, by the Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire of the sum of 59s.6d. to the custodian who had kept the castle of Weston, formerly held by Geoffrey de Turville, before its destruction.³ This Geoffrey was the son of the first Geoffrey.

According to Domesday Book, Weston was held under Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, by one Roger who also held lands in a number of other places in Buckinghamshire. Weston itself accounted for 20 hides⁴ and was, apparently, Roger's principal manor.

In 1088, Odo was dispossessed of his English lands after failing in armed rebellion against William Rufus.⁵ What happened to Roger and his holdings is not recorded. Very probably he

continued to hold them directly of the King until, at some date unknown, the overlordship of Weston and other holdings was transferred to Robert de Beaumont, Count of Meulan, who was a close advisor to both William Rufus and Henry I, and built up the honour of Leicester during the reign of the latter.⁶ However, the earliest extant record that the Turville lands in Buckinghamshire were held of this honour is in the Pipe Roll 2 Richard I (1190) when William de Turville *de feodo comitis Leg'cr'* paid £1.10s.0d. for the Scutage of Wales.⁷ This William was the son of the second Geoffrey.

Robert de Beaumont died in 1118 and was succeeded by his twin fourteen-year-old sons, Waleran becoming Count of Meulan and Robert le Bossu Earl of Leicester. The first Geoffrey de Turville's earliest appearance in surviving English records is as a witness to the foundation charter of Luffield Priory by Robert of Leicester.⁸ From its wording, the charter was drawn up while Waleran and Robert were minors under tutelage, namely within a year or two after 1118. The 'traditional' date of 1124 is certainly too late since by September 1123 at least three of the principal witnesses, Waleran, his steward and tutor Morin of Le Pin, and Geoffrey, were in Normandy plotting rebellion.⁹ The position in which Geoffrey's name appears among the witnesses indicates that he was a not unimportant adherent of the Beaumont house; he probably derived his suffix from the village of Tourville-sur-Pont Audemer in Normandy, a mile or so south of Pont Audemer on the Risle, cradle and stronghold of the Beaumonts.¹⁰

The rebellion in Normandy against Henry I, in which Waleran took a leading role despite having been brought up at the court, was on

behalf of William Clito, son of the Conqueror's son Duke Robert, Henry's elder brother. During March 1124, when Waleran was on his way back to his base of Beaumont-le-Roger,¹¹ on the River Risle, from a successful expedition to relieve his castle at Vatteville-la-Rue,¹² his force was defeated by a royal force at Bourgt  roulde and Waleran himself and a large number of his knights were captured. After Easter, Henry sat in judgement at Rouen on the rebels who had been apprehended. Waleran and other leaders were confined in dungeons and their lands taken over by the king.

Two of the knights, Geoffrey de Turville and Odard of Le Pin (probably Morin's son), were blinded, despite protest from Charles, Count of Flanders. 'My lord king', he said, 'you are doing something contrary to our customs in punishing by mutilation knights captured in war in the service of their lord.' Henry defended his decision, saying 'My lord count, what I do is just, . . . Geoffrey and Odard with their lords' consent became my liege men, and they broke faith with me when they deliberately committed treason; therefore they deserve punishment by death or mutilation . . .'.¹³ Obviously, Henry was maintaining the precedent established in England (as distinct from his continental possessions) by William the Conqueror at the assembly in Salisbury in 1086 when 'all landholders who were of any account throughout England, no matter whose vassals they might be, did him homage and became his men and swore him oaths of allegiance that they would be faithful to him against all other men'.¹⁴ That only two knights of those held in custody were singled out for punishment for treason must mean that only they two held lands in England for which they had sworn fealty to Henry. The evidence is that Geoffrey was an adherent and landholder of the Beaumonts—in England as well as in Normandy.

There is no record that Robert le Bossu, Earl of Leicester, had remained other than loyal to Henry. Five years later, in 1129, Waleran was freed and Henry and he 'became as good friends as they had previously been foes'.¹⁴

As for Geoffrey de Turville, the Pipe Roll

31Henry I (1130) records that he was pardoned for Danegeld in respect of lands in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Warwickshire.¹⁵ The largest assessment was in Bucks and the amount of £4.8s.6d. suggests substantial holdings, such as those held by Roger at the time of Domesday. In V.C.H. *Bucks*, it is suggested that Geoffrey I had married a daughter of Roger.¹⁶ The evidence is not clear. During a lawsuit brought by Herbert de Bolebec against William de Turville claiming lands in Weston, Penn and Taplow, first mentioned in 1200,¹⁷ Herbert claimed in 1212¹⁸ by reason of descent from Isabel, daughter of Roger. William in rebuttal did not appear unambiguously to claim to be descended from Roger by virtue of having married a daughter; his rebuttal appeared to be based on possession. Herbert's claim stated that Roger had been in possession at the time of the death of Henry I which, if correct, would mean that these lands were not those in Bucks mentioned in this Pipe Roll. The earliest document definitely placing Geoffrey at Weston is the charter of 1145 in the Missenden Cartulary.

Both Waleran and Robert le Bossu were for many years prominent as partisans of Stephen. On Henry Plantagenet's accession to the throne in 1154, Robert became one of his principal supporters, and was justiciar from 1155. Dying in 1168, he was succeeded as Earl of Leicester by his son, Robert   s Blanchesmains. Not as faithful as his father, the son became involved, in 1172/73, in a conspiracy to overthrow Henry II, ostensibly on behalf of Henry's son, Henry the Young King.¹⁹ There was fighting throughout the Angevin empire, in Normandy, Poitou, and Brittany as well as in England. Robert, after being driven out of his Norman castles, led an invasion force from the continent. He landed at Walton in Suffolk in September 1173 and made towards his castle at Leicester, to be defeated and captured near Bury St Edmunds. His lands were taken into the hands of the King. This rebellion was certainly the context of the dismantling of the castle of Weston recorded in the Pipe Roll for 1173/74.

We thus have documentary evidence that the

castle was in existence by 1145, in the time of the first Geoffrey de Turville—he who had been blinded. We have no such evidence as to when or in what phases the castle was constructed, whether it originated in the time of the Domesday tenant, Roger, to be strengthened by Geoffrey I during the troubled years of

Stephen, or whether it was first built at that time. We have also the record of the razing of the castle in 1173/74, no doubt by order of the King, subsequent to the rebellion of Robert ès Blanchemains—the *guerra Leicestriae* of the exchequer records.

REFERENCES

1. J. G. Jenkins (ed.), *Cartulary of Missenden Abbey Part 1*, Bucks Record Society Vol. 1 (1938) 220.
2. J. G. Jenkins (ed.), *Cartulary of Missenden Abbey Part 3*, Bucks Record Society Vol. 12 (1962) 219.
3. *Pipe Roll 20 Henry II*, PRS Vol. 21 (1896) 82.
4. J. Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book, Buckinghamshire*, Phillimore (1978), Entries under Roger.
5. G. N. Garmonsway (trans.), *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Dent (1954). Entry for 1087 (*recte* 1088).
6. M. Chibnall (trans.), *Orderic Vitalis*, Clarendon Press Vol. 6 (1978) 18–19. For the Beaumonts generally see Chibnall above and G. E. Cockayne, *Complete Peerage*, St Catherine's Press (1929) Vol. 7, 520 ff.
7. D. M. Stenton (ed.), *Pipe Roll 2 Richard I*, PRS n.s. Vol. 1 (1925) 144.
8. G. R. Elvey (ed.), *Luffield Priory Charters. Part 1*, Bucks Record Society & Northants Record Society Vol. 15 (1968) 15 f.
9. For this rebellion and its aftermath as described here see Orderic Vitalis, Chibnall, *op. cit.*, 328, 334, 346 ff.
10. At Pont Audemer, the Impasse du Châtel climbing up the ridge which dominates the town from the right bank of the river points to the location of the ancient castle. A Roman road, still in use in parts, coming from Lisieux, crossed the river here and, a dozen miles further on, passed through Vatteville-la-Rue.
11. The castle probably stood on the ridge above the town of Beaumont-le-Roger in the present commune of Beaumont-la-ville.
12. The castle of Vatteville when captured by Henry was razed. The motte and the earthworks of the bailey both now display remains of stone walls alleged to be 15th-cent. The remains of the tower on the motte appear rather to be of 12th-cent. stonework.
13. G. N. Garmonsway, *op. cit.*, entry for 1086.
14. *Ibid.*, entry for 1129.
15. *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, RC (1833) 46, 85, 102, 108.
16. V.C.H. *Bucks*, II, 365.
17. *Curia Regis Rolls*, RC Vol. I (1922) 370.
18. *Curia Regis Rolls*, RC Vol. VI (1932) 285.
19. A. L. Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, Clarendon Press (1954) 333 ff.