

THE DE LANCASTERS OF WESTMORLAND: LESSER-KNOWN BRANCHES, AND THE ORIGIN OF THE DE LANCASTERS OF HOWGILL

by Andrew Lancaster¹

ABSTRACT

By his own admission Ragg's 1910 paper *De Lancaster* could not complete a full study of all the de Lancasters in medieval Westmorland. The article proposes that several lines which he left incompletely explained might be connected in unexpected ways. One suggestion concerns Jordan de Lancaster, born in the 12th century. In addition, the doubts Ragg raised about the de Lancasters of Howgill lead the author to question explanations of their origins that are widely accepted.

Foundations (2007) 2 (4): 241-252

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Jordan de Lancaster

Ragg (1910) removed all reasonable doubt concerning the origins of the de Lancaster family of Sockbridge in Westmorland. A series of charters confirmed that their founder was Gilbert de Lancaster, born in the 12th century. This Gilbert was the son of William de Lancaster II, and the brother of Helwise de Lancaster, William's daughter and legitimate heir. Ragg's study of other documents established a clear line of descent from this Gilbert de Lancaster to the later and better-known Christopher de Lancaster of Sockbridge in the 14th century.

As Ragg stated (p.396), the existence of Gilbert, son of William de Lancaster II, had in fact been asserted for some time before Ragg's more conclusive paper. As I shall discuss further below, he appears as witness in many of his father's charters, and Ragg admitted to having made an error in ignoring the evidence. However, Ragg omits to mention that Gilbert was often accompanied by another of William's sons named Jordan, who is specified in some cases to be Gilbert's brother.

Ragg does not appear to have pursued this question as far as he could, as it seems that he was diverted from including this Jordan in his account because of evidence that William de Lancaster II clearly had a brother named Jordan². This Jordan is mentioned in a benefaction by his father William de Lancaster I, to St Mary de Pré of Leicester (Farrer, 1902). However the wording of the benefaction seems to imply that he died young. We should therefore briefly consider two other documents that may have further influenced Ragg's omission.

In the *Illustrative Documents* collected in Farrer & Curwen (1924, pp.377-397) document XVI, concerns a grant by "*Willelmus de Lancastria*" and has as witnesses "*Willelmo de Lancastria filio meo*", and later, "*Gilberto filio Willelmi, Jordano fratre suo*". While the text seems to describe Gilbert and Jordan as sons of William de Lancaster II, it might perhaps be interpreted otherwise because the document is a grant which

¹ Andrew Lancaster is the coordinator of the Lancaster surname DNA project.
<http://users.skynet.be/lancaster/index.htm>

² See Ragg (1910, p.420) and also the family tree attached to the article, facing p.494.

appears to have happened in the 1160s, seemingly much earlier than other records mentioning the sons of William de Lancaster II.

However, as both Farrer and Lee Washington (1942, p.60) explain, this document, or at least the list of witnesses, is corrupt, and includes an impossible combination of individuals, apart from the de Lancasters. It possibly combined an original grant from the 1160s with a confirmation made by heirs in the following decades. What is most important for us is that Jordan is called Gilbert's brother. There appears to be no reason to believe that a mixing of two witness lists, or any other expected form of corruption, would be the cause of this description.

Another charter whereby William de Lancaster II granted Levens to Norman de Hieland, ancestor of the de Redman family, has amongst the witnesses two names in succession: "*Jurdano; Gilberto fratre suo*" (Greenwood, 1905). Note that neither are given any description and might not be Lancasters. Unaccountably, Ragg (p.420) cites this charter as an indication that Jordan de Lancaster mentioned in the benefaction to St. Mary de Pré may have had sons named Jordan and Gilbert. Ragg's interpretation does not seem reconcilable with the text of the charter itself, despite its vagueness.

Most importantly, whatever the evidence that William de Lancaster II may have had *brothers* named Gilbert and Jordan who lived to adulthood, from other documents it is much more clear that William de Lancaster II had *sons* named Gilbert and Jordan. For example, in Farrer's *Illustrative Documents* we find document IX mentions "*Jordano filio domini, Giliberto filio domini*" and is dated to 1184; document XVII mentions "*Jordano filio domini, Gilberto filio domini*" and is dated to 1170-1184. In these cases William de Lancaster I was not present or even alive, and the lord (*dominus*) whose grants were being witnessed can only be William de Lancaster II.

Ragg (p.396) was surprised that Gilbert, apparently an illegitimate son, would appear in charters where Helewise de Stuteville, normally presumed to be William de Lancaster II's only wife, also appears. Ragg (p.399) therefore suggested that Gilbert might have been born to Helewise and William prior to their marriage. However, based upon the fact that Gilbert appears in charters from the 1170s, and died around 1220, he must have been born around 1155 at the latest. So it appears that Gilbert cannot be the son of his father's known wife, who was probably born about 1165 and gave birth to the heir of the de Greystokes after her third marriage in the 1200s (Farrer, 1915, p.507). We are therefore confronted with the likelihood that Gilbert (and by extension presumably his brother) was able to rely on his stepmother Helewise with regards to grants. Surely many explanations could be proposed for this, including the less Victorian attitudes of the early Middle Ages³.

In any case, perhaps not having fully considered the matter of Jordan, after changing his mind concerning Gilbert, Ragg's proposed family tree altogether omits Jordan the son of William de Lancaster II, the *brother* of the first Gilbert de Lancaster of Sockbridge. The omission of this Jordan from consideration made later sightings of a son of Jordan seem tantalizing but inexplicable: Ragg (p.419) pointed to evidence from 13th century documents relating to "*20 acres of land and three of meadow in Styrceland*"⁴ for sons of a Jordan de Lancaster named Gilbert. In particular, *Assize Roll 979* mentions the passing of Gilbert son of Jordan at or shortly before 1256.

³ Could their mother have been a relative of Helewise de Stuteville?

⁴ Ragg (p.420) feels that this must be one of the Stricklands in the Kendal Ward of Westmorland. Farrer and Curwen (1923) apparently go further, including these events specifically under "*Strickland Roger*".

From the documents surrounding this event, Ragg could also add two more possible sons of Jordan: Ralf de Schypton (*Feet of Fines*⁵) or Shireburn (*Assize Roll*) on the one hand⁶, and Thomas de Lancaster on the other, who were both apparently seen as potential heirs.

Ragg suggests that these seeming brothers, or perhaps cousins, might be descended somehow from an earlier Jordan known from charters. However, because Ragg assumed that the only definitely known earlier Jordan was a son of William de Lancaster I (not II), Ragg was tentative about this, and presumed that a generation would necessarily be missing in any such account. But for the reasons explained above we know that there was a Jordan who was a contemporary of Gilbert de Lancaster of Sockbridge, who died approximately 1220 according to Ragg, making it at least possible that this son died 36 years later in 1256.

Another son of a Jordan de Lancaster in this generation, perhaps not noticed by Ragg, was Roger de Lancaster, who was mentioned in the *Feet of Fines* for Westmorland (31 Henry III, 1246-1247, no.4) in a case involving a member of the de Strickland family concerning land in "*Stirkeland*"⁷. The de Stricklands derived their name from Great Strickland in Morland, not Strickland Roger or Strickland Ketel in Kendal which were associated with the Sockbridge Lancaster family.

It therefore seems very probable that Jordan de Lancaster, son of William de Lancaster II, had heirs in and around one of the places called Strickland in Westmorland. It is worth remarking that this shows that Jordan's heirs may therefore have maintained a proximity to those of his brother Gilbert, as the Sockbridge Lancasters also held possessions in some of the Stricklands in Westmorland, at least in the Barony of Kendal. Unfortunately the exact evolution of these holdings is difficult to reconstruct.

Walter de Lancaster

As mentioned above, William de Lancaster II's heir was his daughter Helewise de Lancaster. She became wife of Gilbert son of Roger fitz Reinfrid. Next was William de Lancaster III, their son. After the passing away of this William III however, the legitimate line was finished and the Barony of Kendal was split amongst the families of his sisters. Nevertheless, important possessions were passed on to William III's illegitimate brother Roger de Lancaster, who became lord of Rydal. Roger had already been enfeoffed of a part of Barton, Westmorland, including the Head of Martindale Forest (bordering upon the lands of Sir Gilbert de Lancaster of Sockbridge), Fusedale and Swarth Fell.

In the inquisitions after the death of William de Lancaster III in 1246 (Farrer, 1903) Roger was shown to have been enfeoffed of 200 acres of land in Patterdale (also in Barton, and probably including Grisedale and Deepdale) worth 4 pounds yearly, one mill worth 60s., herbage and pannage worth 14s. yearly, and "*the farm of free tenants to the value of 18s. 10d.*" He also became the holder of all the forest of Westmorland. Later, he would become the keeper of all the King's forest north of the River Trent. He

⁵ Farrer and Curwen (1923 under "Strickland Roger") cite *Feet of Fine*, file 4, n. 29.

⁶ This is an uncertain suggestion. The documents clearly have errors, and so the original intention of the text has to be guessed at. In any case Ralph and Thomas seem to be close relatives of Gilbert, and do not appear to be known members of the Sockbridge de Lancaster family that held land in Strickland Roger.

⁷ Lee Washington (1942, fn 17, p.29).

also maintained a strong connection to Lancashire, and was sheriff of Lancaster for a while and keeper of the honour of Lancaster before it was passed to Edmund Crouchback – a member of the royal family.

Also in the 1246 package of enfeoffment, came the service of Gilbert de Lancaster and Walter de Lancaster, each of whom held one tenth of a knight's fee. Gilbert is presumably Gilbert de Lancaster of Sockbridge, the second of that name, or perhaps it was Gilbert the son of Jordan who is mentioned above as having held land in Strickland Roger⁸. But who was Walter?

Curwen (1932) cites an earlier Kirkby Kendal charter (1209-1212) of Gilbert son of Roger fitz Reinfrid where a Walter de Lancaster is a witness. Other witnesses included Gilbert de Lancaster and various members of the court of the Baron of Kendal. This Walter was therefore apparently born in the 12th century and, if it were the same Walter in 1246, then he must have been in the next generation after Gilbert and Jordan the sons of William de Lancaster II, and elderly in 1246. Alternatively, there may have been two generations of Walters.

Ragg adds later observations of a son of Walter de Lancaster named Robert: in 1277 in a case against his overlord Roger de Lancaster of Rydal, half-brother of William de Lancaster III; and in 1291 either a Walter or a Robert (Ragg does not make clear which), son of Walter, was a security for one Isabel de Lancaster's payment to have custody of her son. Then, Ragg writes (p.417):

In 1292 Robert, son of Walter he is called, tried to recover from the abbot of Shap 10 acres of land in Milneburne, which he stated Robert de Veteripont had handed over to the abbey while he was under age and in Robert's custody by reason of his father's death, but the jury found for the Abbot (Assize Roll 987).

Milneburne in this case is Milburn, a part of Kirkby Thore in Westmorland, which happens to contain Howgill castle. If Robert's father Walter had only recently died in 1292, then he can not have been the witness of 1209-1212, but his father may have been of that generation. We can add that a William son of Thomas son of Walter de Lancaster was plaintiff in Lancaster in 1292 (Farrer & Brownbill, 1914).

Ragg goes on (p.418) to speculate that this de Lancaster family of Milburn, is also the origin of the later Lancaster family of Brampton, known from around 1400. His account is reasonable, though tentative, given the lack of definite evidence. Perhaps a stronger case could be made that they descend from an heir of Christopher de Lancaster of Sockbridge. In 1407 John de Lancaster of Brampton held the manor of Strickland of Roger which had been held only 2 years before by Joana, the widow of Christopher. Two years later, in 1409, John de Lancaster of Brampton was joined by William de Lancaster of Hartsop as a tenant there⁹.

The arms of the Brampton Lancasters appear to be the same as those of the Sockbridge Lancasters. Many of the Westmorland de Lancasters, of various branches, bore arms. There are inconsistencies in records about what differences they had, and at the same time they are all similar. The basic pattern is argent, 2 bars gules, and a

⁸ Perhaps both Gilberts appear. Also enfeoffed by the dying William III was a Gilbert the constable who was enfeoffed of Whitwell and is apparently constable of Kirkby Kendal. Farrer & Curwen (1923 *'Selside and Whitwell'* pp.239-50) seems to believe he is also a de Lancaster. "*Gilberto de Loncastra senescallo de Kendala*" appears in a charter about 1197-98 (Farrer & Curwen, 1924, Illustrative Document XIX), but this must have been the first Gilbert of Sockbridge, in an earlier generation.

⁹ Farrer & Curwen (1923) under "*Strickland Roger*" and "*Kirkby in Kendale (1353-1450)*".

canton of the second. Nevertheless it seems very clear that in the red canton, Sockbridge and Brampton consistently had a *mullet* (star) of either white or gold in the place of the *lion passant guardant* (Papworth, 1874, p.20; Burke, 1884; Hunter Blair, 1932, pp.151 & 162) or the *cinquefoil* (Greenstreet, 1876 & 1877; and Foster 1902). Both of these symbols were apparently associated with de Lancaster family descended from Helewise de Lancaster and her husband Gilbert son of Roger fitz Reinfrid. And they are also associated with the later family of John de Lancaster of Howgill¹⁰, who took over Rydal and Loughrigg from them.

John de Lancaster of Howgill

As mentioned above, William de Lancaster III passed on important Westmorland possessions to his illegitimate brother Roger de Lancaster, who, as Ragg mentions, presumably had no de Lancaster blood at all¹¹. Indeed, he became the overlord of various de Lancasters, including those of Sockbridge, who descended from a natural son of William de Lancaster II. So though greatly diminished in importance after this transfer to an illegitimate heir, the line of Gilbert fitz Reinfrid continued to be very important, not only in Westmorland.

Roger de Lancaster of Rydal became a magnate of considerable importance and, along with his wife Phillipa de Bolebec, he passed on an impressive inheritance to his son John, Lord de Lancaster of Grisedale, and was the last keeper of the honour of Lancaster¹² who was not a member of the royal family of England. Roger also took over the historical de Lancaster holding of Rydal, from his half-brother's heir Margaret de Brus, wife of Robert de Ros¹³.

John de Lancaster his son was in turn was also an important man. He was banneret of King Edward I during his famous wars with Scotland, and in the time of Edward II he was probably also the same John de Lancaster who was one of the major administrators of the lands forfeited after the rebellion of Thomas Plantagenet. He died about 1334, in the reign of Edward III.

Ragg raises the excellent question (p.424) of why John, Lord de Lancaster of Grisedale did not seem to have a clear heir. The question is perceptive because John clearly had a brother, Roger, who predeceased John in 1328, and he also passed Rydal on to a fellow de Lancaster, John de Lancaster of Howgill, often assumed to be a son of the said Roger. These facts, in their seeming normalcy, have perhaps drawn attention away from the fact that, as Ragg points out, the inquisitions after John's

¹⁰ For the cinquefoil associated with a Richmond branch of Lancasters, as well as with Hartsop, a manor associated with the Sockbridge Lancasters, see Papworth (1874, p.21). Note though that Ragg (p.494) wondered if the Howgill family could somehow also have had a branch in Hartsop, at least much later, due to a Howgill concord of 1425 which names a William de Lancaster of Hartsop as a potential heir. Certainly by 1471 Hartsop had split into "Nether" and "Over" parts, both held by Lancaster families, as shown by a deed recounted in the manuscript of Sandford (1924, p.78). It should be mentioned that the Lancaster arms are a well-known example of a coat of arms, variants of which seems to have been positively encouraged amongst families allied only by marriage. As a recent example see Armstrong (2000).

¹¹ Ragg suggests that his mother may have been a de Stuteville.

¹² However see Close Rolls, 1 Edward III, 23 April, 1327, Stamford, which implies that his son John was still thought of this way also see the de Lancaster entry in Nicolas (1825, p.360).

¹³ Ragg also shows that this Margaret's granddaughter, Margaret de Ros, married one of the Sockbridge de Lancasters (Ragg charter XXXI.).

death (1334) are unusual in their lack of remarks about who was the next of kin of John, Lord de Lancaster (apart from his brother Roger, concerning whom no heirs are ever mentioned). Indeed, the possessions that were scattered amongst non Lancasters, presumably a mixture of distant relatives and purchasers, are not less important than the ones he gave to his one nominated Lancaster successor. Most strikingly of all, Barton did not go to John de Lancaster of Howgill.¹⁴

Ragg therefore suggests that we should doubt that John's brothers were legitimate, thus taking them out of contention for the possessions that came from John's maternal family the de Bollebecs.¹⁵ But if they were at least sons of Roger of Rydal, this does not explain Barton. Ragg also accepted the common assertion that John of Howgill must be a nephew, and indeed a son of Roger, John's brother. The present author questions this. I can find no evidence of what is commonly asserted: either that John of Howgill is a nephew or close relative of John of Grisedale, or that his possession of Milburn was something which had come down to him from Roger or John de Lancaster of Rydal, or from any member of that family.

In fact, John of Howgill is described in at least two places as a son of Robert de Lancaster¹⁶, his first mention in a 1314 patent roll discussed further below, and his mention in the Close Rolls after John of Grisedale's death (8 Edward III, 8 November 1334, Newcastle upon Tyne). Could it possibly be that John of Grisedale had no legitimate nephews, and that he passed on his Lancaster inheritances to another Lancaster, perhaps a distant relative? Of course, the Sockbridge Lancasters would then be a possibility but there is no sign of a link. Therefore the fact that there might have been another line, perhaps near Strickland Major, and descended from Jordan de Lancaster, is interesting.

It should be mentioned here that Farrer (1906) seemed to believe that Robert, the father of John of Howgill might have been an older brother of John of Grisedale who

¹⁴ In the Ullswater area, it appears possible that Glencoyne, and maybe Deepdale, were passed on somehow to John de Lancaster of Howgill's family. In any case they eventually came to possess them, and Roger de Lancaster of Rydal as well as his son John de Lancaster of Grisedale had possessed them.

¹⁵ If there were illegitimate children in this family, it might explain something else. A John de Lancaster married Margery Molyneux around 1313 and founded the Lancasters of Rainhill. His family bore the same arms as John of Grisedale and his father Roger, and are often thought to be related somehow (Farrer & Brownbill, 1907). It has been difficult to imagine how they could be related without being easier to identify. Apart from possible brothers, John of Grisedale himself may have had children who lived to adulthood. Ragg (p.422) mentions a seeming daughter named Agnes. Also National Archives document DL 25/565 mentions "*John de Lancastre, son and heir of Sir John de Lancastre*", granting his right of land in Torver (Ulverston) to Conishead Priory. This is dated by the National Archives as 1290-1320. The prior however is named as William, which might be the William Fleming who is referred to by Farrer & Brownbill (1908) as being known from 1308 and 1318. Either way, part of Ulverston was certainly a possession of John of Grisedale and no other de Lancaster in this period.

¹⁶ A will, which might possibly be his, was made in 1353/4 and gives his father's name as Roger (Ferguson, 1893). It should be noted that the editor of those wills thinks that this John is not a member of the de Lancaster family, because he is described as "*Johannes filius Rogeri quondam de Lancastre*". Nevertheless his wife's name is correct, and one of the executors is William de Lancastre, the name of the son of John of Howgill. The mentions of Grasmere and a chapel to St Cuthbert in Milburn are also very suggestive. It appears that transcribers, including modern ones, have problems distinguishing Robert and Roger in these texts. Curwen (1932) transcribed the patent roll entry concerning John of Howgill's pardon with "Roger" while both the printed calendar and Farrer (1906) give "Robert". The FMG has checked the Patent Roll at Kew, and confirmed it clearly states "Robert".

had predeceased their father. Farrer says that in 1283, before the death of Roger of Rydal, an inquest found a Robert holding Witherslack and Barton, possessions which would later be passed on from Roger to John. If this Robert is not just a copyist's error for "Roger", then this is perhaps a possible explanation for the parentage of John de Lancaster of Howgill, but it seems surprising that neither of these possessions were passed on to John of Howgill. Barton would go to the heirs of Ranulph d'Acre, while Witherslack would go to the heirs of John de Cancefield.

The present author also finds no sign that John of Grisedale passed on any sort of connection to his father's other earliest known possessions within Barton, granted before Roger's half-brother's impending death: the forests of Martindale in Barton defined in charter VII in Ragg. Nor do we see him passing on possession of the chase in Grisedale in Patterdale (in the far west of the old parish of Barton), which had apparently been important to Roger and John.¹⁷

Based upon the fact that we do not know anything about John's wife Annora, Ragg suggests that the recipients of Witherslack and Barton must have been close relatives of hers. However even in this case, it is difficult to imagine why the possessions of Robert de Lancaster of Barton and Witherslack would not have gone to his son should he have survived to become the main heir of the family.

de Lancasters in and around Milburn and Knaresborough

The first clear mention of a connection between a de Lancaster and Howgill specifically, is one of the first mentions of John de Lancaster of Howgill himself, while John of Grisedale was still in his prime. In the Patent Rolls of 8 Edward II, 24 September (1314, York), John son of Robert de Lancastre of Holegille was pardoned for the death of John de Helton.

Howgill is in what would become the parish of Milburn, in the larger area known as Kirkby Thore. The ancient roots of the de Lancasters are somewhat mysterious, and this has led to many speculations that attempt to explain de Lancaster origins in ways that are compatible with later links to places and families. Milburn is no exception. For example, Washington (1961) claimed that the de Lancasters took over Milburn from the House of Dunbar, showing that they must be descended from them. This assertion would require long discussion to do it justice, but it does not give us a strong enough foundation to work on for our present purposes.

It is remarkable that the earliest *clear* mention of a connection between Milburn and a de Lancaster appears to be precisely one of the records that Ragg did not have time to consider further – that concerning Robert de Lancaster, son of Walter, who claimed that he had unjustly lost title to land in Milburn (see above). Equally interesting, Ragg went on to connect this Robert to other later records including one concerning a dispute with John de Helton in Murton. Robert de Lancaster appears to have been an important freeholder under Richard de Musgrave in Murton. This Robert is even

¹⁷ In a *De Banco Roll* plea of 1283 cited in Farrer & Curwen (1923) under Kentmere, John's father Roger mentions his free chace at Grisedale and Kentmere. John, as a young Lord, was referred to as "*Johannes le Lancastre dns de Grisdale*" when signing the 1301 "*Baron's Letter*" to the Pope, and also in parliamentary sessions in the years 1296/7 and 1309 (Greenstreet, 1876 & 1877). Later in life he was apparently sometimes referred as John, Lord de Lancaster of Stanstead, referring to an Essex possession from his mother's de Bolebec family, where he may indeed have been buried (See Farrer and Curwen, 1924 under "*Witherslack*", and also <http://www.themcs.org/churches/Stansted%20Mountfitchet%20St%20Marys.html>). Stanstead was also not passed on to John of Howgill.

known to have had a son John, who also went to court concerning a claimed transgression against a Helton around 1312.¹⁸

Robert de Lancaster's 1292 claim within Milburn was very specific in claiming that Robert de Veteripont had granted land there to the Abbey of Shap while Robert de Lancaster was a minor. This grant clearly went ahead, but it seems very few if any people have noticed that this document, pointed out by Ragg, makes it quite clear that the land in question, Milburn Grange, seems to have had a strong claim on it from a de Lancaster family¹⁹ before Robert de Veteripont. This implies that this particular de Lancaster family was heir to the de Stutevilles, who are better known as the holders of Milburn before Robert de Veteripont and the transaction with Shap. What's more, this case would be entirely consistent with a scenario wherein despite this loss of a part manor, these Lancasters maintained a presence in Milburn. Milburn Grange is to this day on the same hillside as Howgill, with Howgill lying between Milburn and Milburn Grange.

There is a well-known connection between the de Stutevilles and the de Lancasters as follows. Helewise de Stuteville married William de Lancaster II. As discussed above, despite the seeming illegitimacy of Gilbert and Jordan, William's sons, Ragg showed (to his surprise) that Helewise probably approved of Gilbert's inheritances, and presumably this logic can be extended to his brother Jordan.

At least according to secondary sources,²⁰ King John originally granted the forest of Milburne to William de Stuteville who was a close relative of this Helewise.

There is another link however, where the Stuteville-Lancaster connection seems not to have been noticed previously. William de Stuteville, apparently the same one, was lord of Knaresborough in Yorkshire, having been granted this in 1175 by King Henry II (Farrer, 1914, pp.390-3). About 1175-1186 "*Jordano de Loncastría*" also witnesses a Yorkshire charter of William de Stuteville concerning the church of (South or Kirk) Stainley (Farrer, 1914, p.393). There is also a 13th century grant from Yorkshire where the first witnesses are "*Dom William de Stuteuilla and Robert his son, Henry parson of Cnaresburg, Jordan de Lancastr' then constable of Cnaresburg*."²¹ This appears to show that Jordan, the other son of William de Lancaster II, did not disappear without making his own mark on the world, and this in turn makes it all the more likely that the sons of Jordan from Strickland, discussed above, were his.

¹⁸ Ragg cites *Assize Roll* 993.

¹⁹ According to a letter in the *Register & Records of Holm Cultram* (Grainger & Collingwood, 1929) from Pope Alexander [III] to Everard, abbot of the monastery of St. Mary of Holm, "*the grange of Millebronna*", had been granted to them by "*Gilbert*". This might be relevant but as the editors state:

A grange at some place called Milburn they had before 1175 (no. 269) but it is not clear where this place was; it would be merely a guess to suggest that it was the Milburn in Westmorland afterwards held by Shap, but we have seen that their possessions were sometimes exchanged or otherwise alienated. It was in 1179 that Waldeve f. Gamel granted them land at Kirkby thore (no. 157) and there they established the grange of Hale and acquired more land in the thirteenth century (nos. 166-168, 172, 173, 174b).

²⁰ For example: http://www.stevebulman.f9.co.uk/cumbria/kirkbythore_f.html, www.fivenine.co.uk/local_history_notebook/A%20Tour%20in%20Westmorland/chapter_5.htm and http://www.edenlinks.co.uk/EASTWARD/KIRKBY_T/KIRKBY_HISTORY.HTM.

²¹ According to its online catalogues, for example at <http://www.a2a.org.uk>, and <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, the Yorkshire Archaeological Society holds this document (reference MD335/4/1/8), which comes from a collection amassed by antiquarian H L Bradfer-Lawrence.

Hugh de Morville, who had held the castle before William de Stuteville married Helewise de Stuteville, widow of William de Lancaster II. The same Hugh is said to be the leader of the group of knights who killed Saint Thomas Becket, though Farrer (1914, p.390, fn 2) points out that the castle had already been forfeited by de Morville before that time. In turn, after the death of Hugh de Morville about 1203 Helewise married William de Greystoke. Their son Thomas later became a ward, just like Robert the son of Walter de Lancaster, of Robert de Veteripont, the sheriff of Westmorland (Farrer, 1915, p.507). Indeed Thomas was married to a Veteripont, and perhaps Robert son of Walter was married off by Veteripont also, perhaps to the daughter of an ally from the area.

Conclusion and areas for further research

Figure 1 summarises the propositions discussed in this article. By following up the leads of Reverend Ragg it has been possible to suggest connections between many of them. We now see indications that a "side" branch of the de Lancasters may actually have ended up back in the centre of de Lancaster affairs after several generations where they are not easy to trace.

So far I have built up a case arguing:

1. A connection between John de Lancaster of Howgill, in Milburn, and Robert de Lancaster, son of Walter, who had a claim on holdings in Milburn. Both Robert and John, his apparent son, participated in a feud against the Helton family.
2. A possible connection, not yet explained, between Robert's father Walter de Lancaster and William de Lancaster II, perhaps through one of the illegitimate sons of the latter, Gilbert or Jordan. Jordan and Walter both seem to have had a link with the de Stuteville family, into which William de Lancaster II's widow was born.
3. We also saw that Jordan, son of William de Lancaster II, apparently had sons in one of the places named Strickland in Westmorland – but probably Strickland Major, not far from Howgill, rather than Strickland Ketel or Strickland Roger, which are more associated with the Sockbridge Lancasters.
4. There was a Walter de Lancaster who was an adult in 1209-1212, and another sighting is in 1246, both within the circle of the de Lancasters of Kendal.

However:

- In this account there may still be one or two generations missing between the sons of William de Lancaster II, who were both probably dead by about 1220, and Walter de Lancaster the father of Robert who may have died not long before 1292.
- There is also a gap in the account concerning the Lancasters of Brampton, the nature of whose link to the Howgill and Sockbridge de Lancasters, may have much do with the case in hand.
- The history of possession of the various places called Strickland in Westmorland during the 12th to 14th century would also undoubtedly be helpful, if it were better known.

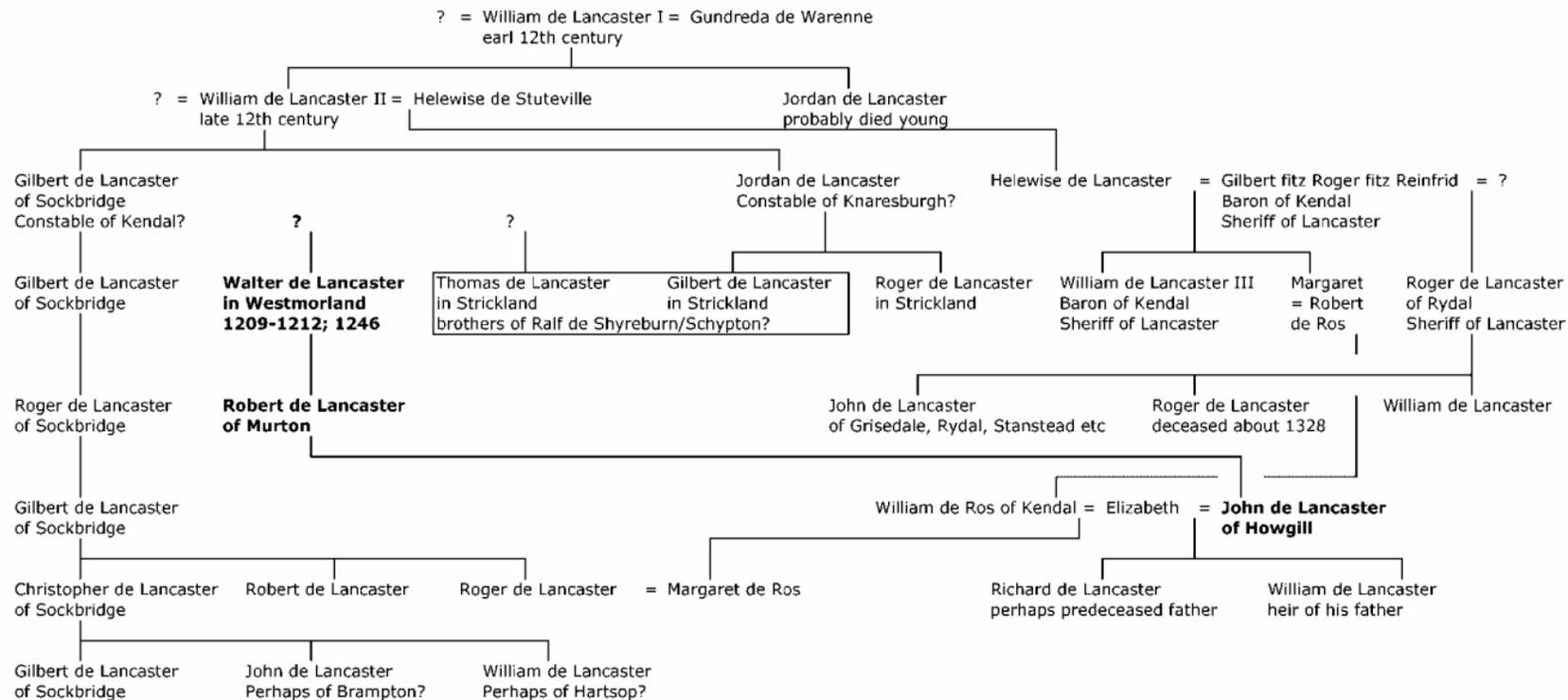


Fig.1 Chart of proposed links between various branches of the de Lancaster family

It is to be hoped that further research into medieval documents can uncover more information. Also, because the main de Lancaster families of Westmorland appear to have survived into modern times as Lancasters, another research strategy which may assist, at least as a cross-reference in conjunction with more traditional methods, is the y-DNA project studying the DNA signatures of male lines using the Lancaster surname.

The hypothesis above, wherein the Lancasters of Howgill, (and Rydal, Deepdale etc) would be in the same male line as the Lancasters of Sockbridge (and Hartsop etc), suggests that we might in the simplest case expect one very dominant y-DNA profile for the Lancaster families of Westmorland.

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