

THE EXPLOITS OF TWO DORSET KNIGHTS AT THE BATTLE OF LEWES AND ON THE FINE ROLL

By **Huw Ridgeway** [January 2012]

It is always interesting to have independent confirmation of those who were present at the Battle of Lewes, May 14th 1264. The Chroniclers tend to be interested only in the great and good, the earls and barons. But what information can be gleaned about lesser men who participated in this historic battle, the knights? The Fine Roll for 1263-4 provides us with just that. On 21st July it records an extraordinary grant: two Dorset knights, Robert Fitz Payn and William de Goviz, were excused payment of relief as two-thirds co-heirs of the Dorset Baron Alfred (IV) of Lincoln '*pro laudabili servicio que Regi impenderunt et pro dampnis que sustinuerunt in servicio Regis apud Lewes in conflictu ibidem*' (for the praiseworthy service which they rendered to the king, and for the losses they sustained in the king's service at Lewes in the battle there).¹ Later on, the Fine Roll has more on other knights who took part in the battle: it records relief on Jewish debts for Walter Maureward who was with Roger de Huntingfield 'at Lewes' and a similar concession to Gervase de Bestenour whom John de la Haye, one of Montfort's trustiest lieutenants, testified 'before the whole Council' had been 'at Lewes'.²

But it is the Dorset knights who are the focus of the present investigation. Who were they, and what had they done to merit such a notable concession, worth a handsome 50 marks (£33) each, a huge and welcome additional sum for men of their social circumstances? On the face of it, the case is simple enough: both had been summoned by the king in March 1264 to muster with his forces at Oxford prior to an onslaught on his Montfortian enemies in April.³ Both may well have fought for the king at Lewes and distinguished themselves in his service somehow in the battle. It would indeed be interesting to know what great and notable deeds of chivalry they had accomplished. Of course, the Chroniclers have nothing to say about them. The wording of the Fine Rolls hints that they were caught up in the thick of the fray, perhaps when Montfort's right attacked the king's division as it struggled up the difficult sloping terrain of the Hides and Winterbourne Hollow⁴ (ironically, the Dorset Barony both were to inherit was called 'Winterbourne St Martin').⁵ The fighting here was so fierce that several knights were even killed and Henry himself was lucky not to have been injured, having two horses killed under him. Perhaps the 'losses' suffered by Goviz and FitzPayn were wounds, or loss of their own valuable horses. This must have been a traumatic couple of hours for this pair- or perhaps the adventure of a lifetime! Hitherto, they had been almost completely obscure provincials with no known military experience whatsoever.⁶

¹ *CFR, 1263-1264*, no. 147 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_061.html). The third co-heir was their aunt Audrey (*Albreda*), Alfred's sister.

² *CFR, 1264-1265*, nos. 197-8, 208, 215, 216a, 216b, 216c (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_062.html).

³ *CR, 1261-4*, p377-8,381. These summonses to muster were sent to dozens of knights: while obviously main Montfortians were omitted, the lists are, however, more speculative than partisan and, indeed, include a number of knights who sooner or later turned out to be rebels.

⁴ D. A. Carpenter, *The Battles of Lewes and Evesham* (Keele, 1987), p.33

⁵ I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1960), p.99.

⁶ There is no evidence whatsoever of Goviz taking part in campaigns of the 1240s -1260s before Lewes. FitzPayn, admittedly, went over to Gascony in the Queen's entourage in 1254 (*CPR, 1247-58*, p.376) arriving in June, but this was clearly too late in the campaign to do much fighting, if any, since the last siege-La Reole-ended in the town's surrender in August (J. R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge, 1994), p.124

Closer examination allows them to emerge for us only a little more from the mists of deepest Dorset. They were from some of the most prominent families of the area, with holdings scattered across Dorset and neighbouring counties. They were very prosperous knights; it is impossible to calculate their wealth exactly but, with a handful of manors each, they may (by the roughest estimate) have topped £50-70 p.a.⁷ FitzPayn was certainly much the richer, already a minor baron in his own right, aged about forty by the battle of Lewes.⁸ He (and his wife) -perhaps after experiencing a period of royal wardship- had in their youth for a short while even served modestly in the outer fringes of Henry III's court from 1245, but only to retire back to the obscurity of Dorset ten years later.⁹ Goviz, perhaps about the same age, had an entirely local career, hailing from a well-established knightly family with branches in both Somerset and Dorset.¹⁰ He had inherited from his father a huge debt to the Crown of £500 which, since the mid-1250s, he had been allowed to pay off at the rate of £5 p.a.¹¹ Now with the death of their uncle, Alfred of Lincoln, another minor baron, on 8th June 1264, just after the battle of Lewes, both Goviz and FitzPayn were to experience a further improvement in their fortunes, becoming heirs of one of Dorset's handful of richest men.¹²

This is where the story becomes more complicated. On whose side did these Dorset knights actually fight at the battle of Lewes? Although one cannot lightly set aside the specific statement of the Fine Roll that they fought for the king, closer examination, in fact, suggests that they probably fought for de Montfort. Even in the eighteenth century Rev. John Hutchins, the great Antiquarian Historian of Dorset, stated that they were 'of great use to the Barons at Lewes'; he knew the Fine Roll reference, and indeed may have had access to other documents now lost, but he characteristically failed to cite any other source to support his conclusion.¹³ The most obvious reason for thinking that they were Montfortians is, of course, that their grant dated from July 1264 when, as is well known, Montfort was in power with his hands securely on all machinery of government.¹⁴ It is most unlikely, in the aftermath of Lewes, a bitter battle, that he would willingly reward men who had fought against him two months earlier. The earl's new regime was, moreover,

passim). FitzPayn was also summoned in July 1257 to the royal army mustering at Chester but Henry III's farcical campaign in North Wales of August-September was called off after little or no fighting (J. B. Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd* (Cardiff, 1998), pp.104-5). We can, therefore, safely assume that FitzPayn was also militarily inexperienced.

⁷ S. Painter, *Studies in the History of the English Feudal Barony* (Baltimore, 1943), pp.170-1

⁸ V. Gibbs et al eds., *GEC:Cockayne's Complete Peerage*, (London, 1910-59) v.448-50; Sanders, *Baronies*, p.72.

⁹ *CR*, 1242-7, p.297; *CR*, 1247-51, pp.89, 151, 183, 536, 565; *CR*, 1251-53, p.228; *Charter Rolls 1226-57*, p.336; *Cal. Lib. Rolls 1245-51*, p.60; *Cal. Lib. Rolls 1251-60*, p.87. Fitz Payn was styled 'king's yeoman' in 1245 (*Cal. Lib. Rolls 1240-45*, p.290) and he and his wife, as can be seen, received a series of routine little gifts from the king for the next nine years. His wife was possibly a lady-in-waiting for the Queen.

¹⁰ J. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset, Corrected, Augmented and Improved by W. Shipp and J. W. Hodson with a New Introduction by R. Douch* (new edit., reprint: Dorchester, 1973) ii. 573, 605, 746; iii. 694-704.

¹¹ Payment was gradually reduced from 20 marks p.a. in 1251 to £5 in 1256: *CFR*, 1250-1251, no.890 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_048.html); *CFR*, 1251-1252, nos.473, 486 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_049.html); *CFR* 1253-1254, no.473 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_051.html). Hutchins thought that this debt originated in fines for rebellion against King John: Hutchins, iii.696.

¹² Sanders, p.99; *Cal Inq. Post Mortem Henry III*, no.580. Alfred held six manors spread over Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.

¹³ Hutchins, iv., 328-9.

¹⁴ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, pp.285-8.

in financial straits and any generosity would have to be well-targeted.¹⁵ It is true that examples have recently been discovered of Montfort's gifts in this period to some of Henry III's servants as part of his attempts to maintain the show of royal estate and thereby legitimise his government in the king's name,¹⁶ but it is most unlikely that grants to these Dorset knights come into that category. It is possible that Henry had made a specific request on behalf of the knights which Montfort felt he had to honour. But, again, this is unlikely: we know that royalty could single out for reward the services of individual knights but these were always knights of the royal household.¹⁷ Neither Goviz nor FitzPayn belonged to that charmed circle. Neither was personally well-known to Henry III, if known at all. In fact, the matter of their Montfortianism would seem to be clinched by other evidence: both continued to receive grants from the Earl Simon over the next few months.¹⁸ Goviz and Fitz Payn had indeed most probably fought on the Baronial side at Lewes!

Ten years later, something so irregular granted in 1264 was, inevitably, going to be challenged by royal officers. It was. In 1274, as part of a campaign on behalf of the Crown to raise revenues and collect debts in the County notoriously unpaid since before 1264, John de St Valery, the sheriff of Dorset (himself, ironically enough, a pardoned Montfortian)¹⁹ distrained both knights to pay their relief for the inheritance of Alfred of Lincoln. He was, for his pains, ordered by the Exchequer to respite his demands until Edward I returned because these knights had '*dudum*' (a long while ago) been excused relief by King Henry III.²⁰ That seems to be the end of the matter: nothing more is known of it. It may have helped their cause that both Goviz and FitzPayn had during the Barons' War in the nick of time deserted Montfort to become royalists. They had transferred their allegiance back to the king perhaps in mid-1265: shortly afterwards, for instance, Henry III granted Goviz the lands of an unfortunate Dorset rebel who had not been so lucky;²¹ FitzPayn received a grant from Henry in 1267.²² In 1274, however, our Dorset heroes must have also appealed to the records of central government. How glad they then must have been of the Fine Roll for July 1264 and its ringing (if just conceivably ambiguous) words! After that, both continued in loyal, if unspectacular, service of the Crown.²³

But this still leaves the question of why they were so well-rewarded. Through what channels, and by whose good offices, did they obtain their extraordinary grant? We can only speculate who had been their patron in 1264. Earl Gilbert de Clare, now very much in power alongside Simon de Montfort, is a likely candidate, since he was anxious to build up his own influence in Dorset and he already had connexions with the Goviz clan.²⁴ There is, however, another

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.283.

¹⁶ B. L. Wild, 'A Captive King: Henry III between the Battles of Lewes and Evesham, 1264-5', *Thirteenth Century England XIII*, eds. J. Burton, F. Lachaud and P. Schofield (Woodbridge, 2011), p.41-56.

¹⁷ E.g., H. W. Ridgeway, 'Sir Stephen Bauzan (c. 1210-1257)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁸ *CR*, 1261-64, p. 350; *CR*, 1264-68, p.13; *Charter Rolls 1257-1300*, p.49.

¹⁹ *CPR*, 1258-66, p. 587.

²⁰ TNA E368/47, m.7d; E159/47, m.7.

²¹ *Close Rolls Supplementary*, no.374.

²² *Charter Rolls 1257-1300*, p.85.

²³ C. Moor, *Knights of Edward I* (Harleian Society Publications, 80-84: 1920-32), ii. 50; 131-2.

²⁴ I hope to show this more fully in my forthcoming article 'Dorset in the period of Baronial Reform and Rebellion, 1258-1267'. Goviz was a tenant of the Clares in Dorset (Hutchins, iii.433,430) and his kinsman, Brian de Goviz, became a bachelor of Gilbert de Clare in 1265-67 (E. F. Jacob, *Studies in the Period of Baronial*

possible clue in the very timing of their grant: July 1264. There is evidence to suggest that Goviz and FitzPayn were actually in person at Westminster at the start of July.²⁵ As John Maddicott has recently clarified, this seems to coincide with the end of Montfort's first Parliament, assembling on 22 June and still in session at least on 27th June.²⁶ In order to canvass as much support as possible for the new governmental order that he was imposing on the king, Montfort had, imitating the 1258 reformers, summoned four knightly representatives from each shire to this parliament. Is it possible that Goviz and FitzPayn were two of the delegates from Dorset? In 1264, with only one-third of the thirty or so knights of Dorset prepared to support the Barons' cause and Goviz' kinsman, Brian de Goviz, as Montfort's principal agent, Keeper of the Peace in the County, the field for four knightly delegates was sufficiently narrow to make this more than likely.²⁷ Another clue is that on 12th January 1265, FitzPayn received a grant of deer:²⁸ this seems to coincide with Montfort's celebrated 'model' Parliament meeting late January-early March when, as is well known, he summoned only two knights from every shire.²⁹ The evidence, now already strained to the limit, will take us no farther. But, even if this last piece of speculation is set aside, the significance and motivation of a generous grant to two obscure Dorset knights on the Fine Roll for July 1264 might well be plain to see. Two months after Lewes Simon de Montfort, despite his victory over the king, needed all the support he could gather. As is well known, he had long lost most of the major barons and earls. He now made considerable efforts to woo over the knights, although it is unlikely that he enjoyed a majority of even that constituency: his support was constantly haemorrhaging.³⁰ Elsewhere on the Fine Rolls, apart from the instances cited above, there are indeed dozens of grants to knights during the 1264-65 Montfortian period, most of which involve relief from Jewish debts.³¹ John Maddicott has shown magnificently that Montfort took real pains to woo knights politically in Parliament. It might also be interesting to know how well Montfort, famously described by Stubbs as 'that buccaneering old Gladstone', mastered some other essential Parliamentary skills carried to such notoriety by Sir Robert Walpole in the eighteenth century: those good old-fashioned arts of political management.

Reform and Rebellion, 1258-1267 (Oxford, 1925) p.129; M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore, 1965), p.105-119).

²⁵ This is suggested by a grant of deer to William de Goviz's wife, Lucy, on 8th July 1264 (*CR, 1261-64*, p.350). The original writ dividing the inheritance was on the following 11th July, preceding waiver of relief on 21st (*CFR 1263-1264*, no.137 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_061.html)).

²⁶ J. R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament 924-1327* (Oxford, 2010), pp.255-6.

²⁷ Ridgeway, 'Dorset in the period of Baronial Reform' will discuss the situation in 1264-5. For Brian de Goviz: Jacob, *Studies*, p.230-1; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1258-66*, p.335, 346, 360, 420, 423 etc. Maddicott, (*Simon de Montfort*, p.285) notes that the Keepers of the Peace were to supervise the 'election' of the four knightly delegates.

²⁸ *Close R. 1264-8*, p.13.

²⁹ Maddicott, *Origins of Parliament*, pp.257-8

³⁰ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, p.314 ff.

³¹ *CFR 1263-1264*, m.1-3 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_061.html); *CFR 1264-1265*, m.6-10 (http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_062.html).