

Was Odard, First Lord of Dutton, a Distant Relative of William the Conqueror?

Edward Dutton
University of Oulu

Abstract

According to the Dutton tree researched by antiquarian P. H. Lawson, Odard, first Lord of the Manor of Dutton in Cheshire and progenitor of the noted Gentry family the Duttons of Dutton, was related to William the Conqueror on his mother's and on his father's side. This article reviews the evidence and argues that Odard was not related to the Conqueror on his mother's side. Regarding his father's side, the evidence is perhaps most parsimoniously explained by Odard indeed being a distant relative of the Conqueror's. However this conclusion is only fractionally more persuasive than the opposite one and accordingly there is good reason to seriously doubt it and reserve judgement.¹

Introduction

The anonymous author of the 1901 book *The Duttons of Dutton* remarked that the Cheshire knightly and Gentry family are of particular interest to historians: 'There is a general historical interest in the family history of the Duttons. They have an undoubted historical descent from one of the followers of William the Conqueror . . . and were involved in the contests and convulsions of their time.' He observes that these include, in assorted branches, the Crusades, Agincourt, the Wars of the Roses and the dissolution of the monasteries.²

The male line of the Duttons of Dutton died out in 1614. But it is the founder of the Duttons of Dutton, Odard, first Lord of the Manor of Dutton, whom I wish to focus on in this article. There is an unresolved debate over whether or not he was a relative of William the Conqueror's. Some historians, such as Peter Leycester have argued that we cannot trace the line any further back than Odard, first Lord of the Manor of Dutton³ while others, including reference works such as Burke⁴ and *Magna Britannia*, disagree.⁵ Lawson's pedigree of the Duttons of Dutton charts both a paternal and maternal relationship with the Dukes of Normandy. In this article, I will argue that we can indeed trace the family line beyond Odard according to the sources, but these sources are problematic. I will accordingly argue that Odard was not a relative of the Conqueror's on his mother's side and that the probability of his being directly descended from Malahuc (brother of the 1st Duke of Normandy) on his father's side is only fractionally bigger than the opposite conclusion.

Odard, the St Saveurs and the Jarls of More in Sweden

Odard came to England from Avranches at the time of the Conquest, though no source indicates that he actually fought at the Battle of Hastings. He was mentioned in the *Doomsday Book*. It was recorded in 1665 that 'Odard's sword' was a prized family heirloom. Leycester summarises that according to the Rolls of the Baron of Halton, Odard was one of six brothers: Nigel (Baron of Halton), Geoffrey, Odard, Edard, Horswin and Wlofaith. These six brothers accompanied their

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² *Duttons of Dutton* (1901, vii). See Greene (1989) for a discussion of the role of a Dutton of Dutton in dissolving the monasteries.

³ Leycester (1673).

⁴ Burke (1847).

⁵ Lysons and Lysons (1810).

‘uncle,’ Hugh Lupus (later Earl of Chester), into England, in the train of William the Conqueror, their distant cousin; and on the establishment of Norman power had various estates and honours conferred upon them. Nigel was created Baron of Halton and Constable of Cheshire; Geoffrey was Lord of Stockport; Odard, Lord of Dutton; Edard, Lord of Haselwell; Horswin, Lord of Shrigley; and Wlofaith, a priest.⁶ This is accepted in Lysons and Lysons *Magna Britannia, Vol. II*, which states that Odard is the son of ‘Yvron, Viscount Constantine.’ It is also accepted in Burke⁷ who also states that Hugh Lupus was the brothers’ uncle.⁸

The line from the man who is now normally termed ‘Ivo, Viscount Cotentin’ takes us back to Malahuc, the brother of Rollo the Ganger, 1st Duke of Normandy. This line, that of the St Saveur family, is taken from Turton.⁹ The connection between Rollo, the earlier Norse Jarls and Richard I de St Saveur is found in various sources such as *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*.¹⁰ The line is as follows:

1. Eystein Glymra, Jarl of More (Sweden).

2. Malahuc of More

Brother of Rollo the Ganger, 1st Duke of Normandy.

3. Richard I de St Saveur

Count of Cotentin. 933

4. Niel I de St Saveur

Count of Cotentin.

5. Roger de St Saveur

Count of Cotentin. 947.

6. Niel II, de St Saveur

Count of Cotentin. 1000 – 1045.

7. Ivo, Viscount Cotentin

1020 - 1059. He married Emme (Lupus), ‘Countess of Brittany.’ Father of Odard.

In addition, through the maternal line, Richard II, 4th Duke of Normandy (a direct descendent of Rollo) had a younger child Godfrey, 1st Count of Eu (962 – after 1023).¹¹ He was illegitimate.¹² His son William, 2nd Count of Eu, had a daughter, Hedwige, who married Geoffrey, Count of Brittany, apparently the brother of Hugh Lupus. Their daughter Emma married Ivo (the father of Odard).¹³ The ‘Dutton of Burland’ entry in Burke’s *Dictionary of the Landed Gentry* states that Odard was the ‘eldest heir male of William, Earl of Eu.’¹⁴ I have found no other source which states this.

⁶ This is summarised in Cope (1871). See also Burke (1826), ‘Warburton.’

⁷ Burke (1847),

⁸ Burke (1847, 1509).

⁹ Turton (1928).

¹⁰ Houts (1995).

¹¹ These should not be confused with the later Counts of Eu. They begin with William Bouchier (1386 – 1420). See Ruvigny (1910, 227).

¹² See MacKenzie (1896).

¹³ This information is taken from Lawson’s (1968?) pedigree. Lawson was a fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries.

¹⁴ Burke (1858, 329).

Odard, Hugh Lupus, and the Sceptics

Odard's relationship with the St Saveurs is based on his being Nigel of Halton's brother, as stated on the Rolls. However, Sir Peter Leycester argues that this is in doubt because the Latin in the Rolls can be interpreted to mean that Nigel came 'with five brothers,' implying that he was not one of them: 'Whether those live Brethren aforenamed, were Brethren to Nigel, is a doubt; for then methinks he should have said *Quinque Fratres sui*: whereas he says only, *cum isto Nigello Venerunt quinque Fratres*, and so names them.'¹⁵ In *Duttons of Dutton* it is noted that Leycester married into the Dutton family and would probably have been biased in wanting it to have the royal lineage which the relationship to Nigel of Halton would have given it, so he cannot be argued to have wilfully misunderstood the Latin.¹⁶

That said, the 'modern editor' of Ormerod¹⁷ dismisses Leycester's objection as grammatical nitpicking, insisting that the record had no occasion to mention the five brothers unless they were Nigel's brothers.¹⁸ Although we can never really know, this appears to be a not unreasonable rejoinder if we look at the full entry:

'Cum Hugone comite venit quidam nobilis nomine Nigellus; et cum isto Nigello venerunt quinque fratres; videlicet, Hudarus, Edardus, Wolmerus, Horsewine et Wolfaith: dictus vero comes Cestriae dedit praefato Nigello baroniam de Halton, ad quam pertinent novem feodo militum, et dimidium, et quinta pars unius, feodi nomine constabularii Cestriae, et fecit eum marshallum sum &c.'¹⁹

Why would these brothers be mentioned if they were not Nigel's brothers? Otherwise, they are mentioned *a propos* of nothing.²⁰ I have shown the above quote to two academic experts in Latin and both have informed me that there are two ways to interpret it.²¹ Firstly, that the brothers are Nigel's and secondly that they are brothers but not of his. From this perspective, Leycester – in stating what he thinks the roll should have said if they were Nigel's brothers – seems too dismissive.

The anonymous author of *Duttons of Dutton* also questions the relationship between Nigel and the brothers by noting that only Odard, amongst the brothers, was given any substantial lands, and even these were not huge, whereas Nigel was given more land; and also that Nigel's coat of arms and the Dutton coat of arms look very different. However, I would argue that the latter is really speculation and the author concedes this noting that 'coat armour is not supposed to have been in hereditary use before the Crusades' but 'it may be supposed' that brothers would have similar arms.²² There is no reason to make such a presupposition during the time period in question. Indeed, Clark,²³ for example, stresses that heraldry did not even become 'methodised' until the Crusades.²⁴

¹⁵ Leycester (1673).

¹⁶ *Duttons of Dutton* (1901, 2).

¹⁷ Ormerod (1819).

¹⁸ Quoted in *Duttons of Dutton*, (1901, 2).

¹⁹ Quoted in Banks (1807, 200).

²⁰ Another method for solving this riddle would be to examine the Latin of the time – which, in this case, may have, perhaps, been influenced by elements of Norman French – as it was used compared to what was meant by it. But only an early Medieval linguistics researcher would have collected this kind of information and so, presumably, it is lost to us.

²¹ Correspondence: Sironen (May 2012) and Pitkäranta (May 2012). The latter is an expert specifically in Medieval Latin.

²² *Duttons of Dutton*, 2.

²³ Clark (1854, 6).

²⁴ A series of nine Crusades occurred between 1095 and 1291 to reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims. For a detailed study see Asbridge (2011).

The second criticism can be answered with an understanding of how William the Conqueror distributed land. From 1066 onwards, he rewarded his chief followers – as assessed by their contribution to the Battle of Hastings and quelling the many subsequent Saxon insurrections – with land which was, in effect, stolen from the original Saxon lords. William also wanted to reward lesser followers, leading him to develop increasingly duplicitous means to expropriate land from Saxons. But, of course, this means that those who made a lesser contribution either had smaller estates from the king or held their land from one of the king's followers, of whom they were in turn a follower.²⁵ Historians emphasise that the central means of being granted land from William was absolute loyalty in helping him, often in very difficult circumstances, to conquer the whole of England, and especially the more rebellious northern England.²⁶ The fortunes of Hugh Lupus, Odard's uncle and William's nephew or uncle (according to older secondary sources)²⁷, exemplify this system. Having performed very successfully for William, Lupus was granted the 'Palatinate' of Cheshire as his own *de facto* kingdom, even able to put people on trial for treason.²⁸ Lupus' achievements were substantial and, in particular, he successfully subdued rebellions from Wales. Lupus then granted land to his own followers or 'barons',²⁹ including Odard whom, it has been argued, was his nephew. So, we can see why Odard's grant of land was relatively small and was from Lupus rather than from the king. The king rewarded only those who served him gallantly during the process of the Conquest. It is perfectly conceivable that Odard and his brothers arrived later, as followers of their uncle, and so did not fit into this category.

Hugh Lupus himself may have parcelled out land to his relatives simply because they were his relatives but, once more, it seems likely that military success would be further rewarded. Nigel of Halton, who got the most land, is described as having 'consummate skill as a commander, and great bravery as a soldier.'³⁰ But the records do not describe the other brothers as having had such qualities of character, which might explain why they were less handsomely rewarded.

Moreover, Odard's descendent Sir Hugh Dutton (1276 – 1326), who was 9th Lord of Dutton, was Steward of Halton. There is evidence that there was a habit of appointing kinsmen as stewards during this period. Indeed, Carpenter, in an analysis of a family in late Medieval England, discusses 'John Darrell of Kent, steward and kinsman to the Archbishop of Canterbury.'³¹ Count William of Eu was defeated in a duel in Salisbury in 1096 and his 'steward and kinsman' is referred to.³² Indeed, the author of *Duttons of Dutton* suggests that Odard may have named his son after Hugh Lupus.³³ If he did do this, he would have been, I suggest, more likely so to do if Hugh Lupus was a relative.

For all these reasons, I think there is a reasonable case for maintaining, based on this evidence, that we can connect Odard to the Counts of Cotentin and ultimately the ancestors of the Dukes of Normandy on his father's side and the Dukes of Normandy on his mother's. The criticisms of the view that Odard is related to Nigel of Halton can be answered. Even the *Duttons of Dutton* author

²⁵ E.g. Roscoe (1846, 203).

²⁶ E.g. Lappenberg (1862, 137).

²⁷ Burke (1847, 1509) states that William is Odard's 'great uncle' while Lupus is Odard's 'uncle.' The article in the *Saturday Review* (see below) quotes the belief that Lupus was William the Conqueror's uncle.

²⁸ Lappenberg, 138.

²⁹ Mortimer (1852, 88),

³⁰ Mortimer, 96.

³¹ Carpenter (1995, 194).

³² Crouch (2002, 149).

³³ *Duttons of Dutton*, 4.

concedes that the question is ‘too much obscured by antiquity’³⁴ to ever be satisfactorily determined. But there is still a fundamental problem.

Foundational Problems

What is the actual evidence that Nigel was the son of Ivo? Hansall quotes Sir Peter Leycester as saying that ‘if we may believe Peacham’ then Nigel is the son of Ivo, Viscount Cotentin.³⁵ Seemingly on this basis alone, reference works such as *Magna Britannia*, *Burke* and the Cheshire Visitations simply accept this as a fact. Accordingly, in accepting pedigrees by eminent families, these reference works, historically at least, seem to have been not inconsiderably reliant on trust. The other suggested evidence is that the arms of Nigel of Halton and Odard’s brother Wolfaith are very similar, meaning that it is assumed that they inherited arms from the same father.³⁶ But this is not especially sound evidence because, as we have seen, coat armour was not hereditary or systematised at this time. Beaumont, in his history of Halton, also notes that the only source for the connection appears to be ‘Peacham’s *Complete Gentleman*.’³⁷ Peacham writes that Nigel was the son of ‘Ivon, Viscount Constantine’ and his wife Emma of ‘Bretagne.’ He describes Nigel as a ‘cousin’ of Hugh Lupus. However, he provides no citation whatsoever.³⁸ By the criterion of multiple attestation this would be unconvincing even as a primary source, and it is a secondary source and, at that, one written almost seven hundred years after the events it describes.

It might be argued that Nigel was almost certainly descended from a Norman noble and, as it is Ivo who is recorded by Peacham the most parsimonious explanation is that Peacham is simply recording an oral tradition. Indeed, Peacham’s book was, when it was published, well-received and meant as work of academic philosophy.³⁹ However, the use of false pedigrees in this period is hardly unknown, so more evidence is required to sway us.⁴⁰ But, that said, false claims to nobility especially infuriated Peacham⁴¹ so we might have expected him to be especially careful about the ancestry of the Haltons. And using the criterion of embarrassment, it might be argued that, if the Haltons were conveying an untruth, they would surely have selected a more eminent ancestor.

THE
COMPLEAT
GENTLEMAN.

Fashioning him absolut, in the most necessary and commendable Qualities concerning Minde or Body, that may be required in a Noble Gentleman.

WHEREVNTO IS ANNEXED A Description of the order of a Maine Battaile or Fitched Field, eight severall wayes: with the Art of Linnage and other Additions newly Enlarged.

BY

Henry Peacham Master of Arts: Sometime of Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge.

No videtur scripsit *institit in olim,*

LONDON,
Printed for Francis Choyffable, and are to bee sold at his shoppe in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Crane. 1634.

However, it can be countered that Ivo was indeed eminent, and repelled an attempted invasion by Ethelred the Unready (Lived 968 – 1016), a king who seems to have been far better known historically than he is now.⁴² Perhaps there is a case for arguing that acceptance that Ivo is Nigel’s father involves one assumption fewer than rejection, but this would, even so, render the probability that Ivo is Odard’s father only a fraction higher than the probability that he is not. On such evidence, it would beholden us to, accordingly, remain very open-minded to the possibility that he is not.

³⁴ *Duttons of Dutton*, 2.

³⁵ Hansall (1819, 411).

³⁶ Nichols (1874, 255).

³⁷ Beaumont (1873).

³⁸ Peacham (1634, 195).

³⁹ Peacham (Introduction by Gordon, 1907).

⁴⁰ Richmond (2000, 83) looks at a number of examples of fake pedigrees in the fifteenth century.

⁴¹ Peacham (Introduction by Gordon 1907).

⁴² Beaumont (1873). For a biography of Ethelred the Unready, see Williams (2003).

Odard's Mother's Line

For Nigel, and thus Odard's mother to be descended from the Dukes of Normandy, Hugh Lupus must also be so because he is the brothers' uncle. But we have evidence of an alternative pedigree for Lupus which has nothing to do with the Dukes of Normandy or the Counts of Brittany. He was the son of Richard of Goz.⁴³ Indeed, the anonymous writer of an 1867 article in *The Saturday Review* noted the naivety with which 'Sir Bernard Burke' seemed to accept these mythologies posing as pedigrees at face value when presented by eminent families and he equally notes the naivety of the heralds in the same regard. The Grosvenors, he noted, claimed to be descended from Lupus, who was an 'uncle' of the Conqueror. In addition, it is noteworthy that when Sir Peter Leycester asked Sir George Warburton, a descendent of Odard, for proof that Odard was related to Hugh Lupus, Warburton apparently denied him access to his family papers.⁴⁴ Accordingly, we have good reason to be very cautious of sources such as *Burke* and *Magna Britannia*. There is a kind of Dutton mythology which has been accepted even by very eminent reference works.

Conclusion

Based on the sources, it seems reasonable to argue that Odard was related to the Conqueror on both sides of his family. However, the sources themselves are problematic. The relationship to the Conqueror via Hugh Lupus can be very seriously questioned to the point of it being reasonable to dismiss it. The source regarding the relationship between Nigel of Halton and the St Saveurs cannot be simply contradicted but it is clearly problematic that it is simply one secondary source. In addition, we must remember Leycester's assertion that the Warburtons were secretive regarding their evidence. Following Ockham's razor, there may be a case for arguing that the simpler explanation is that Nigel was indeed the son of Ivo. But, mindful of the unconvincing singular secondary source, this is only fractionally more probable than not. Accordingly, a very open mind should be kept to the possibility that we simply cannot know the parentage of Odard.

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CORRESPONDENCE

- Pitkäranta, Dr Reijo. May 2012. Reader in Latin, Helsinki University, Finland.
- Sironen, Dr Timo. May 2012. Reader in Latin. Oulu University, Finland.