

Not the hereditary constables of Dover castle

There seems to be some malign force radiating from Dover castle which induces even sensible people to start talking nonsense. That thought has occurred to me often; it occurred to me again when I read a passage in Statham's "History of the castle, town, and port of Dover" (1899) which compresses more errors into a smaller space than I would have believed to be possible.

According to Statham, a certain John de Fenes (or Fiennes) was constable of Dover castle in the reign of William the Conqueror. Who was he?

He was the third son of Eustache, Earl of Boulogne, by Alice, daughter of Silvesse, Lady of Ardres. He was a brother of Conan de Fenes who in 1012 was Earl of Boulogne; and Eustache of Boulogne, therefore, whose name is so closely connected with Dover, was his father (Statham 1899, p 311).

Not one of these statements is right. Eustache lord of Fiennes was not the same person as Eustache count of Boulogne. His wife Adele (not "Alice") was not the daughter of "Silvesse": she was the daughter of Adele de Selnesse. Conon lord of Fiennes was never count of Boulogne, neither in 1112 (not "1012") nor at any other time. "John de Fenes" was neither the brother of Conon nor the son of any Eustache. He was nobody's brother or son, because he did not exist. He is an imaginary character: his only parent was the person who dreamed him up.

I doubt whether much of this confusion was Statham's fault. He was copying from earlier books which he thought could be relied on, just as the authors of those books had copied from still earlier books. Statham was a long way down the line. It had taken three hundred years of scholarly effort -- good scholarship, bad scholarship, good scholarship abused and perverted -- to achieve this high density of error.

The lords of Fiennes

The genealogy of the lords of Fiennes was first worked out by Duchesne (1631, pp 85--6), partly from the information supplied by a chronicler named Lambert (who was interested chiefly in Guînes and Ardres, only incidentally in Fiennes), and partly from such documents as he had been able to find in the archives of local monasteries.

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Eustache <a>
  |
Conon <b> — ..... <c>
last occ 1112
  |
Eustache II <d> — Roger — Anselme — Guillaume
le Vieil
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Eustache III <e> — Enguerran <f> — Gislebert — Raoul
 killed in the
 Holy Land
 |
 Guillaume — Thomas — Eustache <g>
 last occ 1233
 |
 Enguerran II — Baudouin — Michel
 |
 Guillaume II

<a> Eustache, the first known lord of Fiennes, married one of the daughters of Adele de Selnesse: that is why he got mentioned in Lambert's chronicle (chapter 102). (Adele's inheritance went to her son by her second husband, not to her daughters by her first; so Lambert took only a glancing interest in them.) Selnesse ceased to exist when Adele's second husband moved the family home to Ardres. Duchesne was uncertain how to spell the name: Selvesse or Selnesse? Genealogies derived from his (see below) use the spelling Selvesse; but local antiquaries refer to the place as Selnesse. On Godefroy's (1855) map the site of it is marked about 2 km north of Ardres.

 Conon is not mentioned by Lambert: his existence was proved by documents seen by Duchesne, including three that were dated 1099, 1107 and 1112 respectively. (His wife's name was Gilla: she was identified by Haigneré (1882, p 198), from a document unknown to Duchesne.)

<c> The existence of this nameless brother -- husband of Adelis, father of Conon and Warin -- was inferred by Duchesne from another charter, in which Conon lord of Fiennes was identified as the "avunculus" of Adelis's sons. If that word was being used in a strict sense (but perhaps it was not), Conon was their father's brother. Conon (the nephew) got murdered; his brother Warin became a benefactor to the priory of Le West and the hostel of the abbey of Andres (Haigneré 1882, pp 102--3).

<d> Eustache II, called "the old man" (to distinguish him from his son), was the founder of the abbey of Beaulieu (about 2.5 km west of Fiennes): that is why he and his descendants were mentioned by Lambert (chapter 40). His three brothers were identified by Duchesne.

<e> Eustache III, the eldest son, was married but died without issue.

<f> Enguerran, the second son, married Sibilla de Tingry (see below).

<g> Lambert stops here, with this list of Enguerran's sons; the rest was all added by Duchesne.

The genealogy reported by Lucas (1730) is derived, with proper acknowledgment, from Duchesne (1631), but carried forward as far as the late fourteenth century, when the male line came to an end. I come back to that below; for the moment, Duchesne is telling us more than enough.

Sibilla de Tingry

Prior to Enguerran I, the lords of Fiennes had no recorded connection with England. Their overlords the counts of Boulogne possessed a huge estate across the channel; their neighbours the counts of Guînes owned some property there too, including the

helpful part in facilitating the transfer of power -- a part rewarded both by Stephan's son, Willelm count of Boulogne, who gave him the manor of Martock in Somerset, and by the new king, who gave him the manor of Wendover in Buckinghamshire.

This grant of Wendover generated an entry in the exchequer roll, in the account of the sheriff of Bucks and Beds, under the heading "Terrae datae" (lands which had formerly belonged to the king but had now been given away). That entry gets carried forwards from one roll to the next until 1184; in the next roll Pharamus's name is replaced by that of his son-in-law, Ingelram de Fiennes (GREx 1185:130, cf 1184:112). Presumably the rest of Sibilla's inheritance passed into Ingelram's hands at the same time.

It did not stay there long. According to Lambert, Ingelram travelled to the Holy Land with Philip count of Flanders. Once there, he made a charge against the Saracens from which he did not return, and was never seen again. Lambert, as he usually is, is vague about the date (count Philip made two visits to the Holy Land), but -- a fact not mentioned, perhaps overlooked, by Dugdale -- Ingelram's name shows up in the list of crusader casualties reported by Roger de Hoveden under the year 1190 ("Ingeram de Fenes, killed", ed Savile 1596, fo 390v, ed Stubbs 1870, p 88). So presumably he met his death at the siege of Acre in 1190.

It took some time, and cost some money, before Sibilla could get possession of her English lands, but she did eventually succeed. She survived her husband by many years -- she was still alive in 1219 (Haigneré 1882, p 400) -- but never got married again. From 1206 onwards, she began giving up her lands in England in favour of her eldest son; and her name disappears from the English records after 1208.

The lords of Fiennes and Tingry

From Ingelram onwards, the descent of the lordship of Fiennes is reasonably well recorded on both sides of the channel. The English evidence was worked out in detail by Dugdale (1676, pp 243--4), the French evidence by Lucas (1730, pp 168--70). (This latter book has a history of its own which may need a few words of explanation, at least for English readers. It was originally compiled by Pierre Guibours (1625--1694), alias Père Anselme de la Vierge Marie (or de Sainte-Marie), and published in two volumes at Paris in 1674, under the title "Histoire de la maison royale de France, et des grands officiers de la couronne". (Both volumes are available through <http://gallica.bnf.fr>.) A second edition (which I have not seen) was published in 1712; it carried the title "Histoire généalogique et chronologique de la maison royale de France, des grands officiers de la couronne et de la maison du roi". The third edition, greatly expanded, was published in nine volumes in 1726--33. (All nine volumes are available through gallica.) Much of the research which went into this edition was done by François Baffard (1655--1726), alias Père Ange de Sainte-Rosalie; when he died, the edition was seen through the press by Paul Lucas (1683--1759), alias Père Simplicien.)

One of Ingelram's descendants earned himself a place in this book by serving for a time as one of the "great officers of the crown". Robert de Fiennes (last occ 1381) was constable of France from 1356 (when he was appointed by the king) till 1370 (when he resigned). In the first edition he gets only a four-line entry (vol 2, p 36). In the third edition he gets a much longer entry (vol 6, pp 166--7); and that is followed by an even longer digression, "Genealogie de la maison de Fiennes" (pp 167--78). The early part of this genealogy is taken from Duchesne (1631); there are only a few alterations, not all of which are changes for the better. (For example, "Adelle de Selvesse" did not succeed her mother as "dame d'Ardres".) From Enguerrand onwards, all the way down to Robert de Fiennes, the last of his line (pp 168--70), the genealogy is mostly or altogether new. It is based on French evidence alone: there is no reference to any English documents, nor to Dugdale's book.

(It is to be noted, by the way, that a somewhat shortened version of this genealogy found its way into the "Dictionnaire de la noblesse" compiled by François-Alexandre de La Chenaye-Desbois (1699--1784). The first edition (which I have not seen) was published in seven volumes in 1757--65, the second in twelve volumes in 1770--8. A new edition (such books having become fashionable again) was published in nineteen volumes in 1863--6. I do not know whether the "genealogy of the house of Fiennes" was included in the first edition; it certainly occurs in the others (ed 2, vol 6, pp 387--9; ed 3, vol 8, pp 39--43). But in any case there is no point in citing this second-hand source.)

The upshot is that we have two independent reconstructions of the family tree, and this is how they match up:

<i>Dugdale</i> 1676	<i>Lucas</i> 1730
Ingelram de Fienles	Enguerrand lord of Fiennes
William d 1240-1	Guillaume — Thomas — Eustache last occ 1233
Ingelram <a> last occ 1264-5	Enguerrand II — Baudouin — Michel d 1265
William d 1301-2	Guillaume II — Robert <d> — Enguerrand last occ 1292
John <c> last occ 1324-5	Jean — Robert <e> last occ 1340
	Robert — Jeanne <f> — Mahaud constable of France 1356--70 d sp

<a> Dugdale knew that Ingelram had a brother named Baldwin (occ 1252--3).
 Though Dugdale knew that Ingelram had a son named William (occ 1252--3), he seems not to have been sure that his son and his successor were the same person. He also knew that William had a brother named Reginald (occ 1269--70), not mentioned by Lucas.
<c> Dugdale knew of a Robert de Fienles, "contemporary with this John", but was not sure how they were related.
<d> "Robert de Fiennes, seigneur de Huchin ou Heuschin" (p 168).
<e> "Robert de Fiennes, seigneur de Roubecq" (p 169).
<f> On Robert's death the inheritance passed to Jeanne's daughter Mahaud, who was the wife of Guy de Luxembourg, count of Ligny (p 170).

On the English side the story peters out in 1362, when -- the manor of Martock having been confiscated from his father and given to someone else -- Robert de Fiennes tried and failed to recover it.*

* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=117085>

The Fines's of Herstmonceux

Like any successful family, the house of Fiennes left a trail of poor relations -- younger sons, bastard sons, sons of younger sons and bastard sons -- who did occasionally get lucky, but whose usual fate was to disappear into obscurity. Lucas (1730, pp 170--1) has a list of a dozen people who crop up in the French records bearing the surname de Fiennes, but who cannot be connected with the family tree.

In England, there was one family in particular, bearing a similar surname, which attained some prominence in the fifteenth century. Their home was at Herstmonceux in Sussex. At least from the early seventeenth century onwards, this family was said to be descended from the lords of Fiennes. Different spellings of their surname -- Fenis, Fines, Fienes, Fiennes -- are an index of the level of credence attached to this claim.

One member of this family, Richard Fines (d 1483), clawed his way into the peerage, by means of the very dubious (and much disputed) claim that his wife's grandfather's title could descend to a female heir. Whatever the rights of it were, he got himself recognized as Lord Dacre in 1458, and the title then passed to his descendants. The male line failed in 1594. Once again there was a female heir (sister of the late Lord Dacre) with a husband -- Sampson Lennard (d 1615), of Chevening, Kent (of Knole for a time, but only by virtue of a lease which expired in 1603 (Hasted 3:70)) -- who was ready to stand up for her rights. He succeeded as far as his wife was concerned (he never got to call himself Lord Dacre), and the title then passed to her (and his) descendants. The male line failed again in 1715. On this occasion there were two female heirs (daughters of the late Lord Dacre), and the title went into cold storage till one of them died. (Their father had been made earl of Sussex in 1674, but that title died with him. He had been reduced to selling Herstmonceux; after his death his daughters disposed of Chevening (Hasted 3:114).) One daughter (the elder, Barbara) died in 1741, and her sister, Anne, then

became Baroness Dacre. (Her husband at the time, her third, did not get to call himself Lord Dacre.) When she died, in 1755, the title descended to her son (her only son by her first husband), Thomas Barrett-Lennard (d 1786), of Belhus (in Aveley), Essex, 17th Baron Dacre. Anyone who wants more details can find them easily enough -- for example, in a family history (Barrett-Lennard 1908), privately printed, which is now as easily accessible as the works of any best-selling author (a fact which I am, by some margin, old enough to find astonishing).

Because of Richard Fines's successful bid for the title of Lord Dacre, Dugdale had to say something about this family. But it seems to me that he says as little as possible about their antecedents. He was willing to believe that this Sussex family (whose name he spells "Fenys", once "de Fenys") were descended from the lords of Fiennes (whose name he spells "de Fienles"), but he does not even try to trace out the connection. After completing his account of the French family (the lords of the manor of Wendover), he jumps ahead to Richard Fines's grandfather -- "A descendent of this Family, was Sir William de Fenys, Knight" (Dugdale 1676, p 244) -- and then works backward from him -- "viz. Son of William (Son of John) and Joane his Wife, third Sister and Coheir to William de Say" -- for two generations only. In the next paragraph, speaking of William's son Roger, he refers parenthetically to the acquisition of Herstmonceux -- "(which Lordship first came to this Family, by the Marriage of John, his great Grandfather, with the Heir Female of Monceaux)" -- but declines to make himself responsible for that statement. The note in the margin says "Camd. Britan. in Surrey": this is Camden's account of the matter, not his. (The passage referred to is in Camden 1610, p 316 (under Sussex, not under Surrey). It is worth noting, by the way, that Dugdale was using the English edition of the Britannia: the statement he cites is not to be found in the Latin edition (1607).)

Whether Dugdale was aware of it or not, the Lennard family had in their possession a copy of a detailed genealogy of the Fines's drawn up by William Camden and Richard St George. (That is, it dates from around the time when Sampson Lennard was pursuing his wife's claim to the barony.) This particular copy (possibly there were others) is first heard of in 1755: Lord Dacre showed it to Arthur Collins, the compiler of a guide to the peerage (see below), who cited it in the next edition of his book (Collins 1756, vol 4, p 338). (Collins spelt the name "Fienes".) At some date he also showed it to Egerton Brydges, who made use of this evidence in writing the account of the family of Fines which was eventually included in his new edition of Collins's Peerage. (Brydges's spelling oscillates capriciously between "Fynes" and "Fiennes".) This is the genealogy constructed by Camden and St George, as it was reported by Brydges (1812, vol 6, pp 562--6).

|
Ingelram
d 1264-5

|
William — Giles

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d 1301-2      occ 1288-9
|
|            |
|            | John
|            | d 1331-2
|            | |
|            | | John
|            | | d 1351-2
|            | | |
|            | | | John — William
|            | | | d sp      d 1360-1
|            | | | |
|            | | | | John — William
|            | | | | d sp      d 1401-2 "3 Hen IV"
|            | | | | 1378-9   |
|            | | | |         | Roger — James
|            | | | |         | | lord Say and Sele
|            | | | |         | | Richard
|            | | | |         | | lord Dacre
|            | | | |         |

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Brydges was (as far as I know) the first person who tried to correlate the English evidence, as he found it reported by Camden and St George, with the French evidence, as he found it reported by Lucas (1730) -- the book which he refers to as "Pere Anselm". The results were disconcerting. At some of the points where the two genealogies ought to have coincided, they contradicted one another. According to Camden and St George, Ingelram's wife (who survived him) was named Isabella; according to Lucas, Ingelram's wife, name unknown, was a daughter of Jacques lord of Condé; though this Jacques did have a daughter named Isabella, she was, as far as Brydges could work out, married to somebody else at the time, not to Ingelram de Fynes. Then again, according to Camden and St George, the ancestor of the Sussex Fynes's, Giles de Fiennes, was the second son of Ingelram de Fiennes; according to Lucas, Ingelram had three sons, William, Robert and Ingelram. Brydges (p 563) persuaded himself that "Enguerrand", the third son according to Lucas, might be a misreading of "Egidius" (i.e. Giles), the second son according to Camden and St George; but only a desperate man could have thought of believing that. What the truth may be I do not know. Possibly Camden and St George were right in every respect. But no one should think of relying on a genealogy worked out in the early seventeenth century without verifying every link.

Imaginary Fienes's

So far, we have been dealing with first-rate scholarship (and so far there has been no mention of Dover castle). It is not to be supposed that Duchesne or Dugdale were infallible, but nobody will doubt their seriousness. Even Brydges, unscrupulous in his private affairs, was trying to abide by scholarly standards here -- was aiming to prove that he could do better than Dugdale. Now the downward spiral begins.

Dugdale said nothing (probably because he knew nothing) about the ancestry of Ingelram de Fienles. Anyone who looked at Duchesne

(1631) or Lucas (1730) would know that there was no mystery about it: Ingelram was the second son of Eustache II lord of Fiennes. Anyone who failed to look at those books (or at some edition of the "Dictionnaire de la noblesse") might think that his descent was an open question.

Somebody did think that, and came up with an answer to the question -- a spurious answer to a non-existent question. As far as I know, it first appeared in print in the 1735 edition of Collins's "Peerage of England" (the first expanded edition of a book originally published in 1709). Collins's account, under the title "Fienes, Viscount Say and Sele", is (to the extent that it overlaps) entirely plagiarized from Dugdale, with the exception of two passages: the first sentence (quoted below), and a paragraph in the middle (Collins 1735, vol 3, pp 15--16) which bridges the gap between the French family and the Sussex family by a shorter route than Camden and St George's. The second edition (1741) does not differ from the first, except that it has footnotes. These footnotes are also all plagiarized from Dugdale, with the exception of two, attached, one each, to the passages just mentioned; from these we discover that both passages were derived "Ex Collect. T. Meller, Gen." (Collins 1741, vol 3, p 286 note a, p 287 note a). (I have not been able to identify this man, but cannot think that the name inspires much confidence.) The third edition (1756) -- the last for which Collins was responsible -- does not differ from the second, except that Collins rewrote the gap-bridging paragraph (Collins 1756, vol 4, pp 338--9) to bring it into line with the genealogy shown to him by Lord Dacre, the same source that was later used by Brydges (see above).

Here is the opening sentence, the first three lines of which are pure fiction:

This antient Family is descended from John Baron of Fienes, Hereditary Constable of Dover-Castle, and Warden of the Cinque Ports, who was Father of James, and he of John, who had Issue Ingelram de Fienes, that was slain at the Battle of Acon, in the Holy Land, Anno 1190, 2 Richard II. He married Sybil de Tyngrie, ... (Collins 1735, vol 3, p 14).

And at that point Collins starts copying, word for word, from Dugdale.

Before they were recruited as ancestors for Ingelram de Fienles, these imaginary Fienes's had an existence of their own. (There were five of them altogether, not just three.) The story goes back a long way. John Leland was aware of it, though only very vaguely, in the 1530s: "Fines a French Man was Gardian or Capitaine [of Dover castle] in King John Dayes, or ever Hubertus de Burgo had it" (ed Hearne 1710--12, vol 7, p 114). The full version was recorded in a fanciful account of the castles in Kent, "Castella in campo Cantiano", written by William Darell, seemingly in the 1560s. Darell is last heard of in 1579, when the privy council ordered him to be had up "for certain horrible offences committed by him" (Acts of the privy council, 1578--80 (1895), p 315),* but (regrettably) his manuscript did not vanish with him.

It was read and cited by Lambard (1576, pp 102--4, 124--5), by William Camden (1586, p 181), by Francis Thin (1587, p 1521). Only Thin had the measure of "parson Dorrell" -- "the corruptor of all things which he tooke in hand". Darell was a charlatan; but he is not to be blamed for inventing the imaginary Fienes's.

* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=1186&sp=3&pg=315>

As it was relayed by Darell (Lambard 1576, pp 102--3, cf Hooper 1786, pp 39--42), the story goes something like this. After his conquest of England, king William needed to find some trustworthy person to take command of Dover castle, and the person he chose was John Fines. He made him hereditary constable of Dover castle (and, what went with that office, hereditary warden of the Five Ports). This John, dying in Normandy in 1084, was succeeded in the constablenesship by his son, James Fines, who died in 1113 and was buried at Folkestone. He was succeeded by his son, John lord Fines (Darell calls him "regulus", the same word that he uses for Lord Cobham), who, because he sided with Matilda, was stripped of the constablenesship and all of his assets by king Stephen. He was replaced by one William Marshal. On the accession of Henry II, William Marshal having abandoned his post and fled into Normandy (not the destination which I would have chosen), Alan Fines, John's son (Darell is explicit on this point, Lambard is not), was restored to his inheritance and to the constablenesship of Dover castle. He died in battle in Normandy in 1182 and was succeeded by his eldest son, James lord Fines ("regulus" again). In the reign of king John, Lord Fines was persuaded to give up the constablenesship, so that Hubert de Burgh could be appointed in his place; and he was the last of the line of hereditary constables. So this is the supposed genealogy of the Fienes's:

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John Fines d 1084
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James Fines d 1113
|
John Fines
|
Alan Fines d 1182
|
James Fines
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In case it still needs to be said, I will say again that John Fines and his descendants are characters out of a work of fiction. There was no dynasty of Fienes's. Except for a few years in the mid fifteenth century, there was no hereditary constablenesship of Dover castle, no hereditary wardenship of the Five Ports. The story is a fantasy from start to finish. Francis Thin suspected as much -- "I doo not suppose anie thing spoken of the Fienes constables of Douer castell to be so firme, as that I would binde anie man to beleue more thereof than he listeth" (Thin 1587, p 1518) -- but Lambard repeated the whole story without querying its veracity. Having infiltrated his book, the imaginary Fienes's began their long march through the historiography of Kent. Wherever one expects to find them, there they are -- in Philipott, in Harris, in Hasted -- jostling for space with people who did

really exist. It did strike John Lyon as odd that none of the Fienes's was ever mentioned by any contemporary chronicler; but on reflection he thought he saw why that might be. "The family of Fienes appears to have excelled much more in private virtues, than in the intrigues of a court, and therefore they have been but little noticed by the historians" (Lyon 1814, p 202). Apparently that was enough to dispel any inklings of doubt he might have felt.

I think it has to be supposed that this story was invented in the middle of the fifteenth century, by some sycophant of Sir James Fienes (d 1450). This James was one of the Sussex Fienes's (uncle of the Richard Fienes who became Lord Dacre in 1458). Until the last few months of his life, he did very well for himself. In 1447 he was made Lord Say and Sele; in the same year he was given the constablership of Dover castle and the wardenship of the Five Ports, not just for himself but also for his heirs. These offices were normally granted "during pleasure" (i.e. until the king changed his mind) or, at most, for life: this was the only occasion when they were ever granted "in fee and heredity". Whoever concocted the story, his motive must have been to gratify James Fienes's vanity by telling him that he -- though only a younger son of a younger branch of the family -- had won back the high offices which had belonged to his remote ancestors for more than a hundred years after the conquest of England. (There is only one other historical fact which this author took into account: he knew, and expected other people to know, that Hubert de Burgh had been constable of Dover castle in the reign of king John.) If the circumstantial evidence does not not convincing enough, it has only to be added that two of the imaginary Fienes's are called James -- an uncommon name in twelfth-century England, but the name of Lord Say and Sele.

In July 1450, James Fienes came to a gruesome end, done to death in Cheapside by the mob. The title of Lord Say and Sele passed to his son William (22 years old at the time); by rights he ought to have inherited the constablership and wardenship as well, but that did not happen. The Duke of Buckingham took over those offices, and William put his seal to a document renouncing any claim to them, on his own and his heirs' behalf. The Fienes's connection with Dover castle was thus broken, and broken for good. The surprising thing is that the imaginary genealogy did not die with the man whom it had been contrived to titillate. Somehow or other, it survived.

It did not just survive. It took root and sprouted new growth. Somebody decided to identify an ancestor for Dugdale's Ingelram de Fienles from among these imaginary Fienes's. By some occult means (presumably some computation of the chronological probabilities) he concluded that Ingelram was (or was most likely to be) a son of the second John Fienes. By 1735 that piece of stupidity had found its way into Collins's "Peerage" (see above). Worse was to come. Somebody decided to identify an ancestor for the first John Fienes from among the lords of Fiennes recorded in one of the French accounts. (In doing this he had to be careful not to notice that Dugdale's Ingelram was the same person as Duchesne's Enguerran.)

He concluded (presumably by similar means) that this John was (or was most likely to be) a son of Eustache I -- a younger brother, therefore, of Conon. After that, it only remained for someone to add the culminating piece of nonsense by confusing Conon's father with Eustache count of Boulogne.

I am not sure whether Statham is to be blamed for making these mistakes, or just for reproducing them; it hardly seems to matter. There is much good stuff in his book: it is not to be judged by this one unhappy paragraph. Statham did not believe everything he read. He omitted the last two imaginary Fines's from his list of constables on the grounds that they were not mentioned in the "Pipe Rolls" (Statham 1899, p 315). (In fact there is no reason why they should be: the constables of Dover castle had no dealings with the exchequer.) He kept the first three (pp 311--13), but remarked that they existed only in tradition, "founded on documentary evidence perhaps" (p 312). After completing his book, Statham saw the page-proofs of a forthcoming book by J. H. Round in which the whole story of the Fines's was "quite discredited" (Statham 1899, p 309, citing Round 1899, pp 278--82). He referred his readers to that book; he did not hold back from publishing his own.

Castle-guard at Dover

As well as its genealogical dimension, the story of the Fines's acquired a constitutional dimension which has not been mentioned yet. As Darell tells the story, it was John Fines, the first hereditary constable, who created the system of castle-guard which we first find documented in the thirteenth century. I am not sure whether Darell invented this part of the story himself, or whether it was in existence before his time; in any case it was through Darell's manuscript that the story got into wider circulation.

Lambard's version of it, paraphrased from Darell (cf Hooper 1786, pp 18--20), goes like this. After being appointed constable of Dover castle and warden of the Five Ports, John Fines

called vnto him eight other worthie knightes, and imparting liberally vnto them, of that whiche he had receiued of the King, bounde them by tenure of their lande receiued of the King, to mainteine one hundreth and twelue souldiours amongst them: whiche number he so diuided by monethes of the yeare, that fiue and twentie were continually to watche and warde within the Castell, for their seuerall stintes of time: and all the rest ready at commaundement, vpon whatsoever necessitie (Lambard 1576, pp 124--5).

Whoever made up this story, it is certainly fiction, because it arises out of a misunderstanding of the written evidence.

There are several surviving copies of a thirteenth-century list of what were called the "wards" of Dover castle. They differ in detail, but the details are irrelevant here. From this list, it is easy to grasp how the castle-guard system worked in the thirteenth century: the information is all to be found in Flight

2010, chapter 9. (I cite this book, not because it is the only book worth mentioning, but because I would rather not repeat myself.) The origins of the system are much harder to get any grip on. There is no contemporary evidence. We can only work backwards from the thirteenth century (when all that was required from anyone was the payment of a castle-guard rent), guessing at the causes from the known effects; and no doubt the system had undergone various adjustments before it settled into the fossilized form in which we find it recorded.

This is my version of the story. At some meeting of the king's court (please do not ask me when), there was a discussion of the measures to be taken for ensuring that Dover castle was always properly defended. It was decided that there ought to be, every month, a garrison of twenty-something knights, and that nine of the king's barons (who were presumably present at this meeting) should be made responsible for supplying them. The baronies varied greatly in size, and the contributions expected from them varied correspondingly; but they were all of equal status, in the sense that they were all top-tier baronies, "held of the king in chief". Each of these barons, returning home, convened a meeting of his own court, explained to his tenants what had been decided, and distributed his share of the load among them. The lord of Ospringe, for example, had agreed that he would find three knights a month. His barony comprised fifteen knight's fees; so he organized his tenants into teams of three knights each. Every month, one of these teams was to travel to Dover, put itself under the constable's command, and remain there for the next four weeks, i.e. until the next team arrived to take its place. Except for the smallest one, each of the "wards" worked to a rota of this kind, the periodicity varying from barony to barony.

(Once the load assigned to him had been shared out among his men, the baron himself had no further responsibility for Dover castle. None whatever. He was not required to build one of the towers, put up his coat of arms on the front of it, keep it in repair, take personal command of it when the castle was about to be attacked. That is all fiction. Of course it might happen on occasion that the king chose one of these barons, or one of these barons' tenants, to serve as constable of Dover castle. The king could choose anyone he pleased. The fact that this man's tenants, or this man himself, paid castle-guard rents at Dover would not affect the decision. It did not qualify him for the job, any more than it disqualified him from it; it was, in a word, irrelevant.)

The largest of these nine baronies (put first in this list for that reason) consisted of the lands (in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent) which in 1086 belonged to Hugo de Montfort. They passed from him to his son, then to his daughter's two successive husbands, then to two more distant relatives (Flight 2010, pp 252--3). The last man to inherit these lands was Henric de Essex: he was dispossessed in 1163, and the entire estate fell back into the hands of the king. After that, the king's officials needed to find a name for this defunct barony, and the name they took to using was "the honour of the constablenesship" (GREx 1168:154, 1169:110--11, 1171:143). Why? Because Hugo de Montfort

had held the office of constable -- the duke's constable while Willelm was duke of Normandy, the king's constable when Willelm became king of England. With Hugo's lands the office descended to his heirs -- "constables of the king of England", as they called themselves. What brought about the disgrace of Henric de Essexe was conduct unbecoming to a constable.

In the twelfth century, people knew what was meant by "the honour of the constablenesship". In course of time, people forgot ... and then misunderstanding was almost bound to follow. It did follow. The constablenesship once held by Hugo de Montfort -- an office in the king's household, a very high office (in military matters the constable outranked everyone except the king), a hereditary office (until it went extinct in 1163) with a vast estate attached to it -- was confused with the constablenesship of a single castle.

Though this error was propagated by Darell, it did not originate with him. Since 1540, it had been on display in a printed act of parliament -- the act by which the remaining castle-guard rents were made payable at the exchequer (32 Henry VIII, c 48). The preamble explains that these rents are due from various lands and tenements, "some of them holden of the constablenesship of the same castel, and others holden seuerally of the honours of Creuecure, Hagenet Fobert and other honours, being membres of the said castel of Douer". The man who drafted this statute was trying to sound knowledgeable, but the more he says, the more he betrays his ignorance. Perhaps it was the printer's fault, not his, that the comma which is needed after "Hagenet" is missing (there was never any such thing as "the honour of Hagenet Fobert"), but clearly he had failed to understand that "the honour of Hagenet" was just another name for "the honour of the constablenesship". The big mistake is there in black and white -- the false notion that "the constablenesship" meant "the constablenesship of the same castel".

After that, the same mistake was repeated again and again, century after century, until the balloon was finally punctured by a few sharp words from Round (1899, pp 280--1).

Pharamus castellan of Dover

I end with a small piece of authentic history -- something which Round did not know about but would have been pleased with if he had.

At some date between 1150 and 1154 (after archbishop Teodbald began using the title "primas", before archdeacon Roger was promoted to the see of York), i.e. within the last few years of the reign of king Stephan, the townsmen of Dover decided (not without some prodding) that they would make a donation to the monks of St Martin's priory. They would give them a one-tenth share of all the fish that they caught (or of the money that they got by selling the fish) -- not just of herrings during the herring season (which is what they had been doing previously), but of every kind of fish, at any time of the year. They wrote (or had written for them) a letter to the archbishop, to inform him of their decision. But they did not send this letter directly to the

archbishop. Instead they put it into the hands of the man who was in command of Dover castle; and he forwarded it to the archbishop, with a covering letter of his own (from which we learn that the townsmen had made their decision in his presence, "in nostra presencia"). Both letters were printed by Saltman (1956, pp 539--41), from the cartulary of Dover priory (Lambeth Palace 241).

Who was the man in command of Dover castle at the time? As we discover from this letter, it was Pharamus de Bologne. (His letter begins: "Sanctissimo patri dei gracia Cantuariensi archiepiscopo Theobaldo ac tocius Britannie primati et apostolice sedis legato, Pharamus castellanus de Dovor' salutem et obedienciam.") When he was first appointed, how long he remained in office, we do not know and are never going to know. More specifically, we do not know whether he was left in command at Dover by Henric II or replaced by someone else. For reasons which I cannot fathom, Round was willing to entertain the thought (an old idea twisted into a new shape) that Wendover might have been given to Pharamus "in compensation" for his surrendering the constablership of Dover (Round 1899, p 282). It is very probably true (see above) that Pharamus had performed some service for which he deserved a reward; but "compensation" is something else. To use that word is to imply that he held the constablership of Dover castle (as he held Wendover from 1157 onwards) hereditarily, "to himself and his heirs". And there is (in my opinion) not the least likelihood of that.

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