A Critique and Comparison of 'Companion Rolls of the Conquest', some known as 'Battle Abbey Rolls'

The Companion Rolls for William the Conqueror have fascinated historians, heralds, designers of heraldic blazons and genealogists since they were first produced. Compilers of family histories use them to try to find the elusive ancestor who fought with William at the Battle of Hastings. Ever since 1066 families have been proud to boast, often on very flimsy evidence, that that their ancestors 'came over with the Conqueror'.

The lists have taken on mythical proportions, possibly encouraged by the event descriptively imagined by M. A. Lower "*The Conqueror, having called to his presence a clerk who, previously to the departure of the armament from St. Valery, had written down the names of the chief men of the army, he caused him to read the roll to ascertain who had fallen, and who had survived; and Bishop Odo sang mass for the souls that were departed*.'

If that document ever existed and the original or an exact copy of the original pre-departure roll had been held at Battle Abbey it would have been a true roll – but the various lists now available are of subsequent date, and have suffered from much repetition, errors of transcription, duplication of names and are accused of egotistical insertions and monkish manipulation.

So just who did fight side by side with William? The definite list is painfully short. The list below comes from GH White in 'Cokayne's Complete Peerage' Revised edition, vol. 12, postscript to Appendix L, pp.47-48: 'Companions of the Conqueror': also see G H White's 'Companions of the Conqueror' in Genealogist Magazine Vol VI (1932) pp51-53.

> Robert de Beaumont, later 1st Earl of Leicester (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Eustace, Count of Boulogne, aka. Eustace II (Source: William of Poitiers)
> William, Count of Évreux (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Geoffrey, Count of Mortagne & Lord of Nogent, later Count of Perche (Source: William of Poitiers)
> William fitz Osbern, later 1st Earl of Hereford (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Aimeri, Viscount of Thouars a.k.a. Aimery IV (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Walter Giffard, Lord of Longueville (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Hugh de Montfort, Lord of Montfort-sur-Risle (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Ralph de Tosny, Lord of Conches a.k.a. Raoul II (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Hugh de Grandmesnil (Source: William of Poitiers)
> William de Warenne, later 1st Earl of Surrey (Source: William of Poitiers)
> William Malet, Lord of Graville (Source: William of Poitiers)
> Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, later Earl of Kent (Source: Bayeux Tapestry)
> Turstin fitz Rolf a.k.a. Turstin fitz Rou and Turstin le Blanc, (Source: Orderic Vitalis)
> Engenulf de L'Aigle (Source: Orderic Vitalis)

Five additional names were agreed upon by both David Douglas and Geoffrey White and are also from the *Complete Peerage XII-1,* Appendix L.

Geoffrey de Mowbray, Bishop of Coutances (Source: William of Poitiers)
Robert, Count of Mortain (Source: The Bayeux Tapestry)
Wadard. Believed to be a follower of the Bishop of Bayeux (Source: The Bayeux Tapestry)
Vital. Believed to be a follower of the Bishop of Bayeux (Source: The Bayeux Tapestry)
Goubert d'Auffay, Seigneur of Auffay (Source: Orderic Vitalis)

J. F. A. Mason in the *English Historical Review* adds one additional name:
Humphrey of Tilleul-en-Auge (Source: Orderic Vitalis)
TOTAL 21

David Douglas also published the list below in 'History' Vol. xxviii, 1943 (pp. 129-147), but from comments elsewhere he clearly had some differences with Mason and White about these. (See the Genealogists Magazine Vol. 9, 1943 [pp417-424])

Robert de Vitot.
Gerelmus de Panileuse.
Robert fitz Ernis.
Roger, son of Turold.
Turstin, son of Rou.
Erchembald, son of Erchembald the Vicomte.
TOTAL 27

To these Douglas later added a list of those witnessing Norman charters under circumstances which Douglas considered rendered them *most probable* that they accompanied the expedition *(Author note: this of course do not make them definite companions even if they were closely involved with its planning or aftermath)*:

Gerald the Seneschal (grandfather of William de Roumare).
Rodulf the Chamberlain (? de Tancarville).
Hugh d'Ivry, the Pincerna.
Richard fitz Gilbert (de Clare).
Pons

plus four more names – of those who witnessed Duke William's charter made at Caen on 17 June 1066 (Gall. Christ. XI, Instr. col. 59), who were, Douglas thought, *most probably* at Hastings. *'Gallia Christiana',* is a listing and collection of brief histories related to all the Catholic dioceses and abbeys of France from early times *(Author note: this of course also does not make them definite companions either as the invasion took place three months after the date of the charter)*:

Richard the Vicomte of the Avranchin (father of Hugh Lupus).
Ranulf the Vicomte of the Bessin.
Ralf Tesson.
Fulk d'Aunou.

Differences between modern historians are not so surprising given the vigorous debates that have taken place in academic circles about the events surrounding the conquest. But what of the older Rolls?

These Rolls are clearly lists of named families with single family names and names of origin derived from place and descriptions rather than of individuals (with the exception of the more modern rolls of Dives and Falaise that do name individuals) and are very much larger than the definitive lists above.

Those to be considered here are one derived by the author from a translation of the pages/verses of the Roman de Rou which describe the actual events of the Battle of Hastings , plus those called 'Auchinleck', 'Le Talleur', 'Leland' (two lists, called here I and II), 'Holinshed' and 'Duchesne'. The newer lists are those of 'Dives', to be found on a plaque over the main door of the church of Dives sur Mer, Dives added to by De Magny, and 'Falaise' (a list on a bronze plaque at Falaise, plus later additions made after the plaque was cast)

It is not intended here to go deeply into the details of the provenance of these lists, which in themselves can become very debatable and can in any case be read about from the references, but to merely give the approximate date(s) of publication and to add a few notes, and maybe to attempt some conclusions.

Clearly down the years of copying and fancification considerable variations of spelling have arisen. Also errors can easily be made when reading old scripts particularly in differentiation of lower case m, n, r, u, v, w and of y, g and i, f and s. Some names have clearly been copied from list to list almost phonetically, and phonetically using a French accent. Indeed the author thinks that it is probable that the scribes may sometimes have had apprentice or novice assistants who read the names to them and the scribes then wrote the names as heard, without checking back to the assistant's script! Having copied and tried to accurately cross reference over 3000 names including slightly dissimilar names with various spellings, learning to see the common irregularities and using 'Soundex' like technique the author can also appreciate the tediousness of this task, and with some sympathy notes that the Duchess of Cleveland in her voluminous study comments about Duchesne (or his scribe!) in particular appearing to miss chunks out. She says he becomes 'puzzled as well as weary, and now and again helplessly loses his way in the entangling labyrinth of names'. At least today we have computers and spreadsheets to help.

What us truly amazing is the number of papers that have been published on this subject which vary from the sycophantic and ridiculous to truly erudite ones and the number of manuscripts that abound. A J Bliss made an exhaustive study of the manuscripts and listed 55 manuscripts and books in his paper 'Companions of the Conqueror' and produced a genealogical type comparison of each showing how they 'fed' on each other. And there are almost certainly more than 55!

It is no wonder there is such a myriad of variations of some of the names and inadvertent losses and apparent neologisms to confuse the historian. If only a true original Roll was to be found confusion would have a weaker reign. Sadly if it ever existed it probably was burnt

in the catastrophic fire of 1793 at Cowdray (to whence the Brownes/Montagus had removed it from Battle Abbey).
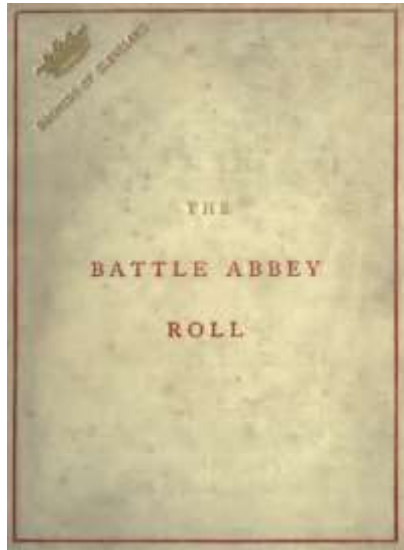
The cover of one of the three volumes of the Duchess of Cleveland's study. Much of the volumes is taken up with the genealogies of the families

As the documents stand one does wonder what true value they have – and this study (and its accompanying alphabetically sorted by family name lists in the appendices) tries to place in context their value so that readers can make up their own minds about this. In 'Family Names and Family History' written by David Hey and published in 2000 Hey gives short shrift to the value of the rolls in genealogy. And J Horace Round in his somewhat excoriating paper of 1901 about the Rolls said, 'We cannot all be of Norman descent.'

ROMAN DE ROU

The '*Roman de Rou'* was, according to its author (Robert?) Wace, commissioned by King Henry II, and was started in the 1160s, 90 years after the Battle of Hastings. Wace informs the reader of the '*Roman de Rou'* that he was born in Jersey.

It mainly covers events from the foundation myth of Normandy up until the Battle of Tinchbrai of 1106 but mentions further events up until 1174. It uses extensive oral and written sources, giving rise to the normal doubts about verity and accuracy. But it may be the first partially useful Roll of those who actually fought at Hastings.

The list of family/place names in the appendixes is taken directly from Burgess' translation pp181-191, poem verses 8013-8920 which cover the events of the Battle of Hastings.

AUCHINLECK (1330-1340)

The Roll of names forms one section (folios 105v-107r) of the whole manuscript. This is the oldest of the surviving rolls and provides after sorting into alphabetical order the key column of names listed in Appendix 1. In Appendix 2 this alpha-sorted list is then used to

compare across the various Rolls to check for the appearance (or not!) of the name in the later Rolls. This is because as the oldest manuscript it is the most likely to have been copied from a pre-cursor, maybe even an original, but it still post-dates the Conquest by some 260 years. This baseline deletes obvious duplicates, but where any doubt persists names are retained.

The Auchinleck Manuscript (NLS Adv MS 19.2.1) is one of the National Library of Scotland's great treasures. Produced in London in the 1330s, it gives a unique insight into the English language and literature of Chaucer's generation. It is named from its first known owner, Lord Auchinleck, a Scottish High Court justice and father of James Boswell, who discovered it in 1740 and donated it to the precursor of the NLS four years later. It is unknown who owned the Roll before this.The Roll's existence does not appear to have been widely known in Victorian times.

Transcription and editing of the manuscript was performed very recently, between September 2000 and August 2001, at the University of Sheffield by Professor David Burnley and Dr Alison Wiggins with the assistance of visiting scholar Professor Kisei Sakemi of the University of Hiroshima.

The study concluded that the Auchinleck Manuscript provides the earliest example of book production in England which was both lay and commercial. Many books were produced in abbeys or by individuals for their own use or for family or community use, but Auchinleck provides evidence of four or five professional scribes collaborating on an essentially commercial venture.
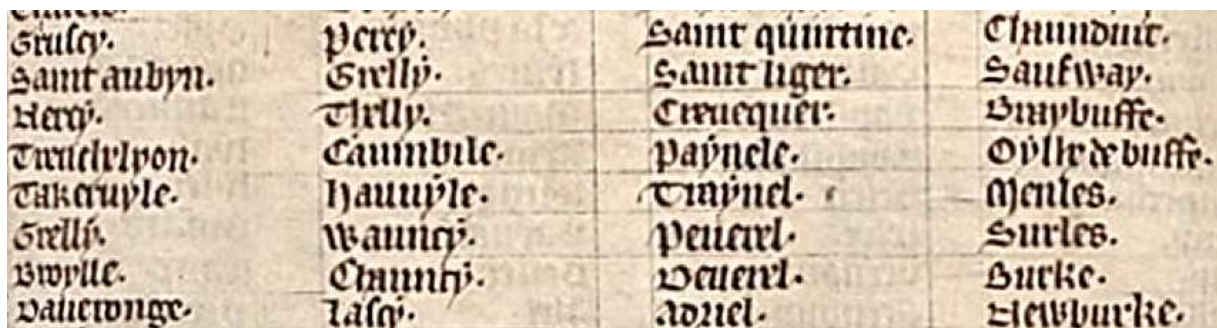
An example from the Roll in the Auchinleck Manuscript.   Names are listed in four columns in no alphabetical order

In this context the nature of the 'Battle Abbey Rolls' and their lists of names has been misunderstood. They are not rolls just of individuals who were 'companions in battle' with William but seem intended to show which Norman (and other) families had origins as supporters, administrators, even fortune seeking immigrants who "came over with the Conqueror," not necessarily in 1066 but in subsequent years.

Auchinleck's Roll was compiled in the early 14th century. It is a list of family surnames, many based on place-names, but clearly influenced by French sounding names, and includes many families of later settlement. It could be called a high value vanity book.

An illustration from the Auchinleck Illuminated Manuscript

National Library of Scotland [No restrictions], via Wikimedia Commons. N*o known copyright restrictions*

LE TALLEUR (1487)

The origin of the names in this list has some commonality with the Roman de Rou, but this is not universal and eleven names only match backwards to Auchinleck. One important one, Fitz Osberne, who is a named and definite companion, only appears in this old roll and that of Dives. A few other names such as Avranches and Mandeville are also in this category! So what and where did le Talleur find access to that eluded the others?

Overall of the relatively short list of 143 unduplicated names there is a match across the lists of 86 names, with no match at all for 57.

LELAND (1533-1536)

There are two Leland lists, from his '*Collectanea*'.

In 1533, King Henry VIII authorized John Leland (1503-1552) to examine and use the libraries of all religious houses in England. He then spent the next few years travelling and visiting the majority of monasteries and abbeys shortly before they were dissolved, compiling lists of significant or unusual books in their libraries. This work continued beyond the dissolution into the early 1540s. During this time he must have visited Battle Abbey and noted the Roll, inscribed on a roll of parchment and believed to have been hung up in the abbey. He will also have visited Jervaulx Abbey and may have seen Brompton's Chronicle, the relevance of which comment will be seen later in this paper.

But as the Duchess of Cleveland writes, 'As time went on, it became more and more an object of ambition to own an ancestor that had come over with the Conqueror; and the monks were always found willing to oblige a liberal patron by inserting his name.' So its value as a potential true record was slowly lost.

Leland's '*Collectanea*' (now in the Bodleian Library, MSS Top. gen. c.1–3; British Library Add. MS 38132) contains Leland's many notes and transcripts from his visits to monastic libraries, including most of his lists, mostly compiled 1533-6. This is therefore the likely dating for

what is called here the Leland I roll. Leland I is a list of names as couplets but these have been separated and all the names alpha-sorted and duplicates deleted for comparison purposes in the appendixes.

Leland I contains quite a few names that appear in Auchinleck, but do not copy through to Holingshed or Duchesne, which suggests that Leland may have had access to the earlier version that the others may not have had and therefore may have ignored if they were only partially copying Leland or something else.

Leland II is entitled *'Un role de ceux queux veignont in Angleterre ovesque roy William le Conquerour*' and gives fifty-eight names, declaring 'Tous ycels seigners desus nome estoient a la retenaunce Monseir de Moion.' Planché in his '*Companions of the Conqueror'* proposed that this is simply a partial transcript of the names given in the '*Roman de Rou'* of the leaders at the Battle of Hastings, from verse 8329 (p185) to v.8920 (p195) in Burgess' translation. The Roman de Rou and Leland 2 lists may be compared side to side in Appendix 2 and the reader may make their own judgement about Planché's conclusion.

The '*Roman de Rou'*, was, according to its author (Robert?) Wace, commissioned by King Henry II, and was started in the 1160s. It mainly covers events from the foundation myth of Normandy up until the Battle of Tinchebrai of 1106 but mentions further events up until 1174. It uses extensive oral and written sources, giving rise to the normal doubts about verity and accuracy. But it may be the first useful Roll of those who actually fought at Hastings
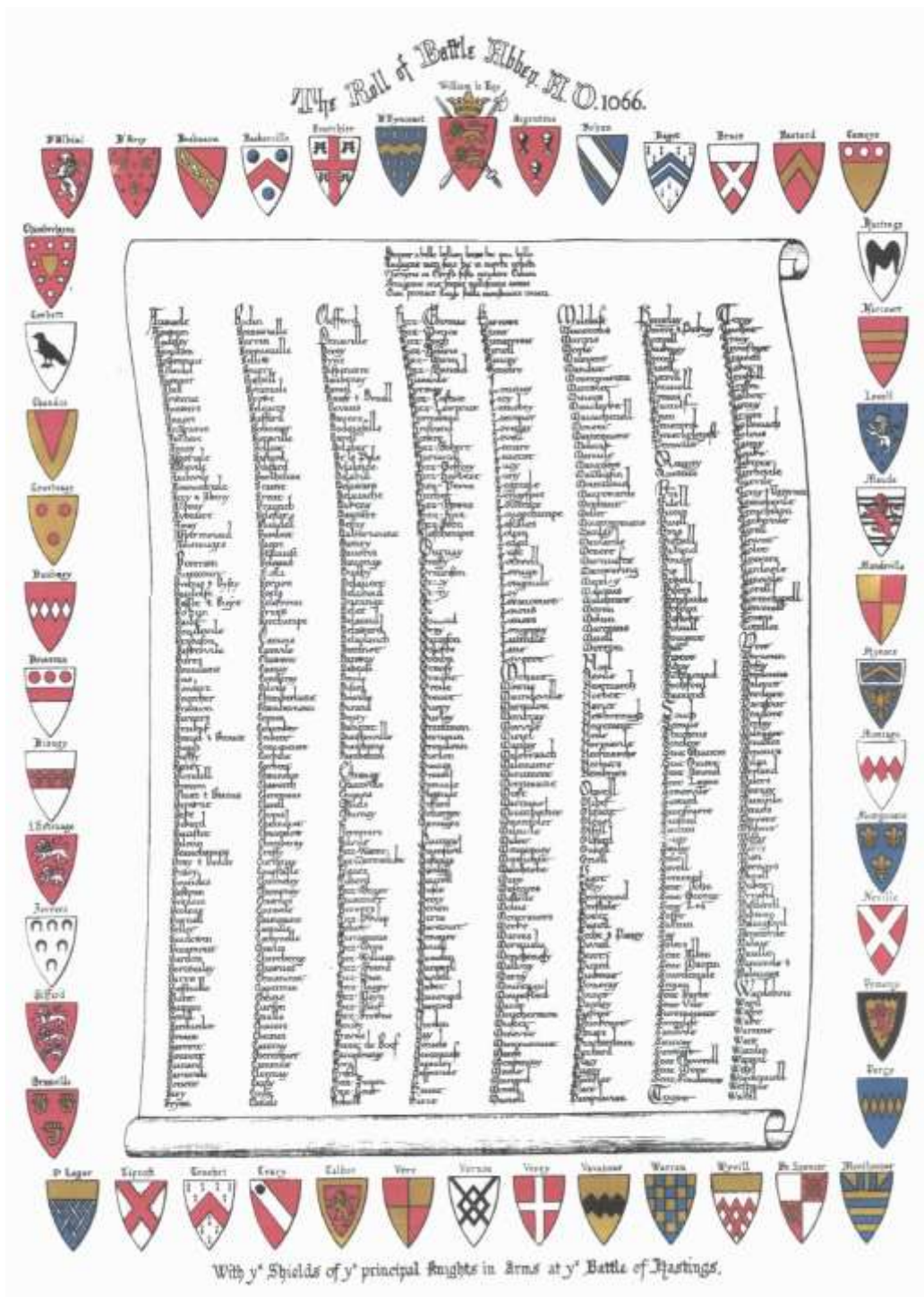
HOLINGSHED (1577)

Raphael Holinshed (circa. 1525-1580) not only produced a Battle Abbey Roll but was used by Shakespeare as a source for some of his plays. His 'Chronicles' were first published in 1577 and printed by Reyner Wolfe who had obtained some of Leland's papers and presumably would have shared them with Holinshed.

Holinshed's Roll is the largest of the group, but it contains a fair number of duplicates and many additional names not in any other list. Eliminating duplicates reduces the list by just under 20%. Name endings often differ, but this is probably due to naming conventions at different times. On a few occasions there are direct French-English translations e.g. 'neuf' to 'new'.

The firste volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande.

Published 1577. British Library G.6006-7. Public Domain

However the duchess defends this list as she says that many of these names can be found in the Black Book of the Exchequer ('*Liber Niger Scaccarii*') of Henry II (r.1154-1189) and from other monastic cartularies and the Domesday Book. The author has made no attempt to corroborate this claim as it would entail a huge amount of work. For comparison with the Domesday Book we have some indirect connection via the later lists of Dives and Falaise to compare with as they have extensively used Domesday to scour for names.

A version of Holingshed's Roll as sold in Battle Museum of Local History. It is clearly modern. There are about 800 names. In Appendix 1 this number is reduced to under 650 by removal of duplicates.

DUCHESNE (1619)

André Duchesne (1584 – 1640) produced a Roll shorter than Holingshed's in his '*Historiae Normannorum*' of 1619, and at first glance it appears much like a shorten version, with some names seen in Auckinleck and Hollingshed omitted. It does however contain names not seen in Holinshed's, but only once duplicates a name found in Auchinleck alone. Although new names and duplicates of these and of Holinshed's names do appear some large swathes have numerous names missing giving the appearances of a somewhat rushed or botched job. The Duchess of Cleveland was not impressed.

The author can only spot one name in this list that corresponds with a name in Auchinleck that is not on the Leland or Holinshed lists. But the Duchesne roll does contain a number of names that appear solely in its list and are not confirmed by any of its precursor lists or later lists. These must be quoted with added circumspection as they are dubious.

DIVES and DIVES with DE MAGNY additions

The Roll of Dives is the 1862 Roll made by Léopold Delisle in anticipation of the 800th anniversary of William the Conqueror's original departure of his invasion fleet from Dives-sur-Mer. William's perhaps unintended destination after leaving Dives on or about 13 September 1066 was to be St Valery sur Somme where he was forced to wait for a favourable wind before finally departing for Pevensey and Hastings on the other side of the English Channel on 27 or 28 September from about 1500 in mid-afternoon.

 '*… At the foot of the hillside, at the mouth of the River Dives, Duke William gathered together the fleet that was to transport his powerful armed forces towards the English coast… after having camped for a month on these banks before embarking…*'

The list is interesting and contains 485 full names or 473 family names. In Appendix 1 Sheet 2 the full names are listed but elsewhere only the family names without duplications are listed alphabetically to enable list comparisons.

A report on the inauguration of Roll of Dives can be found in '*The Vicissitudes of Families, third series*', by Sir Bernard Burke, second edition, Longmans, London, 1863. This stated that the compilation of a Roll of William's Companions, in the Church of Dives-sur-Mer, was inaugurated on 17 August 1862 with a plaque being fixed inside the Church of Notre Dame, above the main entrance. Before this an international academic meeting led by Monsieur de Caumont, chairman of the Société Française d'Archéologie, with the approval of the Bishop of Bayeux; Monsieur Renier, Vicar of Dives; Count Foucher de Careil, member of the Conseil General; Monsieur Arnet, and the Mayor of Dives had compiled a list of 485 names. The results were from the research of Léopold Delisle, who unfortunately left no records of his sources.

Burke clearly notes that the Roll of Dives differs in intent from that of Battle Abbey. It was compiled from the names of those who were enablers and assemblers at Dives as well as those who followed on and helped William conquer all of England.

Léopold Delisle. Public Domain image from Wikipedia

Edouard, Compte de Magny added 51 names to the list when writing the '*Nobiliaire de Normandie*' (published only a few months later in December 1862), so it appears that he may have had access to the list before it was installed at Dives. He comments that his list is not always in accord with that of the Société Française d'Archéologie installed at Dives. On closer inspection it appears that he only adds twenty or so names once variations of spelling etc. are taken into account. The two lists – the original of Dives and de Magny's additions have been ordered in alphabetical family name order for comparison in Appendix 2.

The plaque at Dives   From http://www.rgcrompton.info/d/1066dives_roll1.jpg

FALAISE

The Falaise Roll appeared in order to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the birth of William the Conqueror, which was apparently celebrated at Hastings, Bayeux, Falaise and Caen during June and July of 1927. It is not actually known if 1027 was his birth year. William 'the Bastard' was born at Falaise in 1027, 1028 or 1029 – there is no birth record, and calculation of his birth year varies according to other recorded life events, e.g. his recorded age at the departure of his father to Jerusalem (seven or eight in 1035) and the record in '*De Obitu Willelmi*' which states that at September 1087 he was 59.

During the birthday ceremonies an international committee called the 'Comité Guillaume le Conquerant' was set up with presidents d'honneur: Henry Chéron, a French senator for Calvados 1913-1936 and a former minister of agriculture; Jackson Crispin, a member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Lord Eustace Percy, British MP for Hastings 1921-1937 who was President of the Board of Education 1924-29, becoming in 1953 Baron Percy of Newcastle, of Etchingham in the County of Sussex ; Général Gouraud, military governor of Paris; and A. Bussiere, préfect of Calvados; with M. Macary a teacher at Falaise College as secretary plus 16 other members. The objective was to form a list of those companions of William present at the Battle of Hastings including those who could be strongly assumed to be there even though there was no documented evidence. We are told that all the relevant texts and charters were searched, and use was made of existing rolls 'with care and discrimination'.

Eventually a bronze tablet inscribed with 315 individual names was installed in the chapel of Falaise castle in 1931. However 92 formally accepted names were not ready in time to be included.

(L) Henry Chéron https://www.senat.fr/senateur-3eme-republique/cheron_henry0337r3.html
(R) Eustace Sutherland Campbell Percy, Baron Percy of Newcastle
NPG Number x84478 © National Portrait Gallery, London

At the end of all this Falaise was selected as the seat of a new order – the 'Chevaliers de Hastings'. This must have been a short lived order as no records of it can be found today.

All 407 names are included in the appendixes, full names in Appendix 1 Sheet 2 but duplicate family names have been deleted and the lists created in alphabetical family name order in Appendix 1 Sheet 1 to allow comparison with family names from all the lists in Appendix 2 and with the definitive list of p1 and 2 above, and also the lists of Roman de Rou, Dives and Falaise in Appendix 3.

It should be noted that the Falaise list did not meet with wide acclaim in the United Kingdom and was discussed critically but with circumspection by the Society of Genealogists in 1932. The paper about this meeting is reprinted in Camp's book, which also contains reprints of further useful articles and in addition closely and comprehensively analyses eight rolls including all those above except Auchinleck's.

Camp used a numbering system to identify in which lists the 3000 or names appear, almost the same number as in this paper. On inspection of these, similar scatterings and non-consistency between all eight lists are as apparent as they are in this study. Camp's name lists include that from Brompton's Chronicle where there are name couplets similar in appearance to but differing from those of Leland I (above) It is prefaced in old French for which the author has made a liberal translation: *'You who want to know the names of the lords of the sea that came with the conqueror, William Bastard of great strength, I give you here their surnames as I found them written. Of necessity some proper names are not there, because they made changes here and there: Like Edmunde to Edwarde; Baldwyn to Barnard; Godwyne to Goddard; Elys to Edwyn, and therefore soon all other names, for as much as if they must elevate the sound of their surnames which have not been continuously altered. You when writing (them down) at present listen, yes, your eyes see them.'* So even the author was uncertain of the former names of those on his list! And it may be that the couplets are alternative names for the same person – and some obscure names at that. It was printed in 1652 but ascribed to 1436 with 244 names – or rather possibly alternative names for 122 individuals! Leland may have seen this list on his pre-Dissolution travels at Jervaulx Abbey, where Joannes Brompton was abbot from 1436-64. If so it may have confused him. For completeness this list may be seen as a photocopy in Appendix 5, but it is not used in the analysis.

Camp also copied Guillaume de Talleur's list of 154 names printed in 1615 but ascribed to 1487 (both this and Brompton's list post-dated the Auchinleck list) and a list of 315 names in 'The Origins of some Anglo-Norman Families' by LC Loyd and published as Harleian Society Vol. 103 in 1951. The last is very clearly a list of families who benefitted hugely from the Conquest and may still do so today, but it is not a list of 'Companions', therefore the names on this have not been included in the numbers. But it was a fine piece of work and it usefully locates the geographical origins of some early Anglo-Norman families in Normandy and this data will later be revisited in the analysis.

Above and right: The Falaise Plaque   From http://douglyn.co.uk/normandy/falaise.htm

ANALYSIS AND COMPARISONS

The lists studied contain over 3000 names in total. This total is from ten lists of varying length and contains many duplicates both between lists and from within lists with some names also duplicated because of spelling variations. There are also large numbers of singletons, with no match between lists. The total numbers of names are similar to the numbers compared by Camp.

When fully compared (Appendix 4) there are no less than 1407 different names shared over the lists, with significant numbers (722, 51%) only being represented once. The maximum number of times a single name (or a variant of it) appears is 10.

Frequency mentioned	Number	Frequency mentioned	Number
1	722	**2**	250
3	175	**4**	113
5	48	**6**	39
7	28	**8**	13
9	8	**10**	4

Table of name frequency. Also see pie chart on the next page
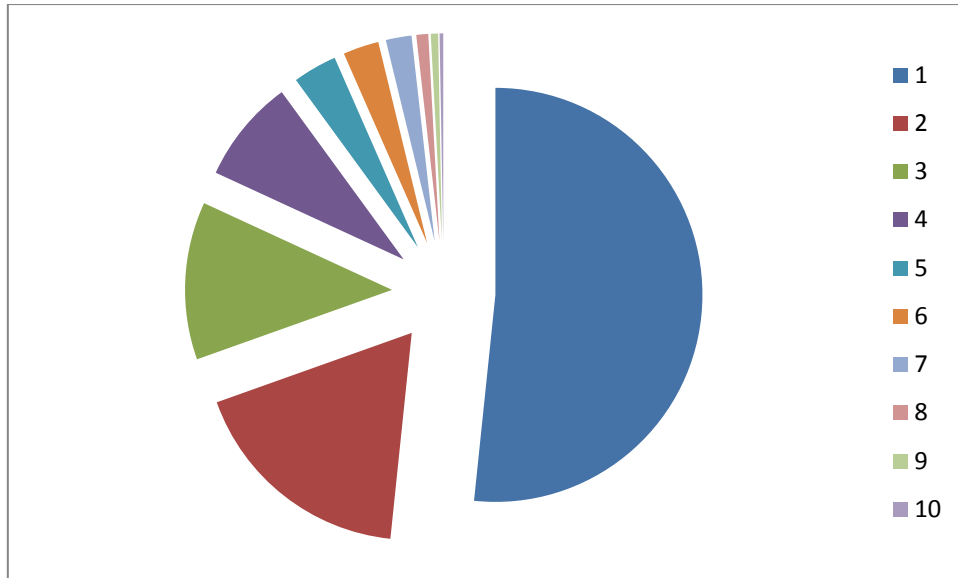
An exploded pie cart of the frequency of a name or its variant being mentioned

The biggest problem with the names was their significant variation in spelling. Clearly the names will have been initially transcribed from old parchment rolls, charters etc. and the initial transcriptions must sometimes have been faulty and even vary in spelling between sources. Subsequent iterations will also have generated faults and indeed some more (hopefully very few) may have been generated accidentally in this study.

An example will help to illustrate this. In the table below are the variations of spelling found for the names, Montague (*Mont agu*), Mowbray (*Montbrai*), Thouars (*Thouars*) and Waterville (*Vatierville*). The original geographic names are in italics (after Loyd)

Mount agu	Montagu	Mountagu	Montagu	Mortagne	Mantaigu	Montaigu		Montaigu	
Monbray	Moubray	Moribray	Moribray	Moubray	Mowbray	Montbray	Montbrai	Montbray	
Tours	Tows	Tauers	Thouars	Thouars	Thaon	Thouars	Thouars	Tours	
Vatteville	Vauuruile	Wanneruyle	Wareuyle	Wamervile	Waterville	Wateuile		Wateruile	Wateuyle

In these examples can be seen the variety of possible confusions between the hand scribed lower case appearance of R, U, V, W and N, a silent H, single and double L, substitution of Y for I and potential confusions between Y and G, S and F. Words have been spelt phonetically as heard by various clerks down the centuries, just as we find names varying in old parish registers. For example 'Ville' can be spelt 'Uyl'….

It is also easy to see how a name like Coursy can quickly become Cussy or Cressy, and Deverelle to become Deuerel or Deuile.

When looking at names in the appendices some words appear subtly different but it becomes slightly clearer after a while when the 'eye' gets tuned in and/or the words are mentally rehearsed with a French accent. Loyd's book is also helpful. Many words which look different must be linked: For example Sanzaver becomes Sein Saviour (Saint Saviour); Peukey, Pinkenie, Picquini, Picvini, Piquiri, Pinkeney and Paiteny must all be the same place;

as must Creuequer, Criketor, Crevecoeur, and Criquetot! Qu and K become confused as both are pronounced as a K in French.

Four appendixes are provided. The first appendix, with two sheets, is a simple alphabetical list of names in each roll. The second appendix is a large alphabetically aligned version of the first, using the Auchinleck list as a 'master', with matches of the same or near identical name highlighted across a row in the same colour. This colouring technique allows easier scanning across the lines and also gives a rapid visual appreciation of the frequency of appearance of a name. The third compares all the lists with the 'definitive list' of 21, plus it has two separate tables showing the direct matches between the Roman de Rou, Dives and Falaise lists. The colours used have no other significance, but it immediately becomes obvious that the columns contain names in cells which are not coloured. These are 'singletons' which have no obvious match in another column, and unfortunately there are quite a lot of them! Red text is used in Appendix 2 to link matches in the Dives and Falaise lists which do not have matches in earlier lists. Appendix 5 has a copy of Brompton's list, which has not been used in this study.

The older lists of Roman de Rou, Auchinleck, Le Talleur, Leland , Holinshed and Duchessne can be directly compared in the left hand side of Appendix 2. As noted above the Auchinleck list is used as the master as it is the oldest 'original'. Most of the Auchinleck names match across to other entries, but there is a scattering of singletons in Auchinleck which are not seen in later lists. Leland matches about 50% of the Auchinleck list but there are yet more singletons and blanks. The excessive number of singletons in Holingshed's list is immediately obvious but there are interestingly many more matches than Leland to Auchinleck. This would indicate that as well as Leland's data he may had access to Auchinleck or a copy of it from another source, but where he conjured up the other singletons from is unknown. It has been suggested that many are vanity listings. The Duchessne lists match backwards relatively well but some new singletons appear and there are unexplained large gaps as the Duchess of Cleveland noted.

The Leland 2 list is notably short. It was a listing of the retinue of William de Moion, so it must be expected to be limited. There is some matching to the Roman de Rou listing, but not as much as has been inferred by Planché.

The Roman de Rou list matches well both across the listings. As it, and the works from which it drew, have almost certainly been used as sources for both the older and the newer works this is not surprising. But caution is required – it may have been over-depended upon as it cannot be fully verified.

With respect to the very short definitive listing there is good backwards and forwards matching for the majority, but only good forwards matching for Eudes/Odo, L'Aigle/Laigle, Evreux and Vital (Appendix 3). There is minimal matching for definite companion Guillaume Fitz Osbern to Le Talleur and Dives only. His father's family name was Osbern de Crepon, so Guillaume came from the de Crepon family, descended from Herfast, a brother of Gunnora de Crepon, a great-grandmother of William himself.

Overall the names forward matched to the Dives and Falaise rolls are slightly better matched to the Dives roll than the Falaise roll. A study of the Roman de Rou, Dives and Falaise (see Appendix 3) lists shows a full triple match for 46 names, which also all match backwards to at least one of the older rolls. There are double matches between Dives and Falaise for all of these plus another 105 names, but of these 105 about 50% have no backward compatibility (also see Appendix 3). This is compatible with the known reasons and sources used for these two listings which are supposed to have included many names of those who 'assisted' either before or after the Conquest in preparation for and consolidation of the victory, sometimes many years later.

Of de Magny's 'additions' about half appear to be true additions out of the fifty or so that he suggested. 17 match both backwards to old lists and forward to Falaise, 28 match only backwards to older lists and 11 only forwards to Falaise. 14 are 'singletons', matching to nothing.

Finally it is worth commenting about how the names from the Rolls match to those of some Anglo-Norman family names between 1066 and 1205. These are the names of some of those who settled in England. Of the 315 family names Loyd and his editors list and match to place names in Normandy only 156 match to names derived from Norman place names on any of the Rolls (Appendix 4). Conclusions should not be jumped to about this, but it may reinforce the suggestion that a very good number of Normans 'followed on' after the initial Conquest to settle in England and their names should have no place on a 'Companions' Roll.

CONCLUSIONS

The lists need to be used with extreme caution for genealogical studies. The admitted use of Domesday names to expand the Dives and Falaise rolls begs the question of just how involved in the events of 14 October 1066 were those given land after the Conquest? Surely many would have been just adventurers and opportunists rather than 'empire builders'? Mercenaries had come from far and wide to join William's army, seeking the rewards of war. Many who came to England in 1066 and in the following years and who were not of great importance in Normandy became so in England and would have been anxious to have their names fully associated with the Conquest.

Not every Norman family sent warriors to Hastings. We know that Normandy could be a turbulent, indeed somewhat anarchic, place and that William carefully left Normandy in the good hands of his wife Mathilde and oldest son Robert Curthose with assistance from other trusted nobles, including Roger de Beaumont (Poitiers) and Roger de Montgomery (Ordericus). These 'caretakers' would certainly have received some share of the spoils of England in due course for their diligence. There would also be those who built the boats and piloted them across the Channel, and those left to guard the camp at Hastings and the garrison left to defend the western flank at Pevensey, who could be defined as Companions but did not fight in the battle. There were even some, such as the known companions Auffay and Thouars, who refused English lands offered by William, but were undoubtedly otherwise well rewarded.

Maybe only those names with strong cross listings should be considered as having had any significant involvement in the Norman Conquest – either as a true Companions of William in the invasion and battle, or significantly involved in its preparation back in Normandy – or in the first stages of subduing, colonising and organisation of the new Norman English state after the Battle of Hastings. But even that idea does not run, as some significant names have very few listings.

As Camp and others have pointed out, sometimes in no uncertain terms, there is an inextricable mix of fact with fiction in these rolls and further proof of involvement, certainly more than the mere presence of a family name on a dubious list should be sought to claim a Companion in a family tree – this will be difficult.

Keith Foord, January 2019 ©BDHS

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Appendixes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 may be found as BDHS Collectanea paper no R4.2b which is a single Excel spreadsheet with multiple worksheets