

CHAPTER I.

NORMAN ORIGINS

Who were the Albinis and the D'Abitots?

THE Albinis* were a Norman family tracing their pedigree back to Ivar Jarl (Earl) of the Uplanders in Norway; one branch became associated with St. Sauveur in Normandy, and Roger de St. Sauveur, Count of Cotentin,† refounded the monastery of St. Sauveur before the Conquest. Another branch was represented by Niel (or Nigel) Albinus III. de St. Sauveur, who married an illegitimate daughter of Robert of Norway, and sister of the Conqueror; his son, Nigel Albinus, the Conqueror's nephew, attended William to the Conquest of England, and married Amicia Ferrers, whose brother, Henry the Judge, was one of the compilers of Domesday.

Nigel Albinus became Lord of Cainhoe,‡ Beds., and had four manors in Derbyshire of the grant of Henry de Ferrers, his brother-in-law. It is unfortunate that the identity of these four manors is not clear, but it seems established that Catton§ was one of them. If the descent of these four manors, which are frequently referred to as settled on Amicia Ferrers, could be worked out, they should throw much light on Albinus pedigrees.

The name is derived from St. Alban, whose great church still exists at Angers, in Brittany. The Albinis were clearly a powerful and prolific Norman family connected by ties of blood and feudal service with the family of William the Conqueror, who followed their powerful relative to England and received in return large grants and estates. From the Albinis, as the records show, spring the

*See Horace Round *Peerage and Pedigree*, Vol. I., p. 302; *Derb. Arch.*, Vol. XXVII., p. 151; and Pym Yeatman *Feudal History of Derbyshire*, Vol. IV. and Vol. V., pp. 1-116; also *History of the House of Arundel*, by same author. Horace Round severely criticises Pym Yeatman, and only the more generally accepted facts are here given.

†The Cotentin is the low-lying promontory at the northern end of which Cherbourg lies; many towns or villages in this area bear names afterwards famous in England, *cf.*, Cartaret, Harcourt, St. Lo, etc. The St. Sauveur referred to lies in the middle of the Cotentin.

‡The name Cainhoe was brought over by the Albinis from their Normandy estate of that name, to their Beds. estate.

§On this point Round confirms Pym Yeatman; *Derb. Arch.*, Vol. XXVII., p. 164. P.Y., Vol. IV., p. 399.

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great English families of Arundel, Fitzalan and Manners (Albinis of Belvoir).*

Sir Falconer Madan, in his careful and scholarly history of the Gresleys of Drakelowe, while admitting the descent of the Toenis, like that of the Albinis, from Ivar Jarl of the Uplanders, claims, though not very confidently, that in spite of the close similarity of name, the Todenis (Albinis of Belvoir) are a different family from the Toenis (p. 15). The Toenis, who were admittedly the ancestors of the Gresleys, took their name from Tosny or Toeni, a village on the south bank of the Seine above Rouen and near Chateau Gaillard.

Who were the D'Abitots?

Here, at once, emerges the sturdy, almost savage, figure of Urso D'Abitot: amidst much that is shadowy, he stands out a solid historic character.

He was the son of Almericus D'Abitot, Lord of the Town of St. Jean D'Abitot in the canton of Calbosc and arrondissement of Havre, and direct descendant of Tancred of Hautville.

The village of St. Jean D'Abitot is charmingly placed high above the north bank of the Seine, about ten miles up the river from Havre, the road from Havre passing through Harfleur, famous for its capture by Henry V. in the Agincourt expedition in 1415: three or four miles further along the river bank, beyond St. Jean D'Abitot, at the strategic point where the Seine Estuary narrows to form the river channel proper, rises the ruined Castle of Tancarville, originally built by Henry I. of England, see Plate 3.

A well-known antiquary of Havre, M. Alphonse Martin, published before the war a study of the D'Abitot family and of the fine eleventh-century church of St. Jean D'Abitot, with reproductions of the interesting Romanesque mural paintings on the walls of the church and crypt.†

The word "Abitot" itself is of Scandinavian origin, and means The Apple Farm; charmingly reminiscent of the orchards of Normandy.‡

**History of Arundel*, pp. 77, 81, 125. Pym Yeatman also claims that from them are descended the Howards, Freschvilles, Fitzherberts, Gresleys and Abneys; *Feud. Hist. Derb.*, Vol. IV., pp. 174, 400, and Vol. V., pp. 1-32; but Horace Round declares with some scorn that Pym Yeatman "Dislodges Sir Robert Gresley's ancestors to make room for his Albinis"; *Derb. Arch.*, Vol. XXVII., p. 163. See also full pedigree in tabular form, P.Y., Vol. IV., p. 392; and generally Bank's *Dormant Baronage*, Vol. III., pp. 718 and 758.

†*Étude historique sur Cerlanges et St. Jean D'Abitot*, par Alphonse Martin, Fecamp, Durand et Fils, 1888. Martin puts the date of the erection of the church at 1035. Special thanks are due to M. Logié, the learned and courteous librarian of the Municipal Library at Le Havre, for help in tracing D'Abitot references.

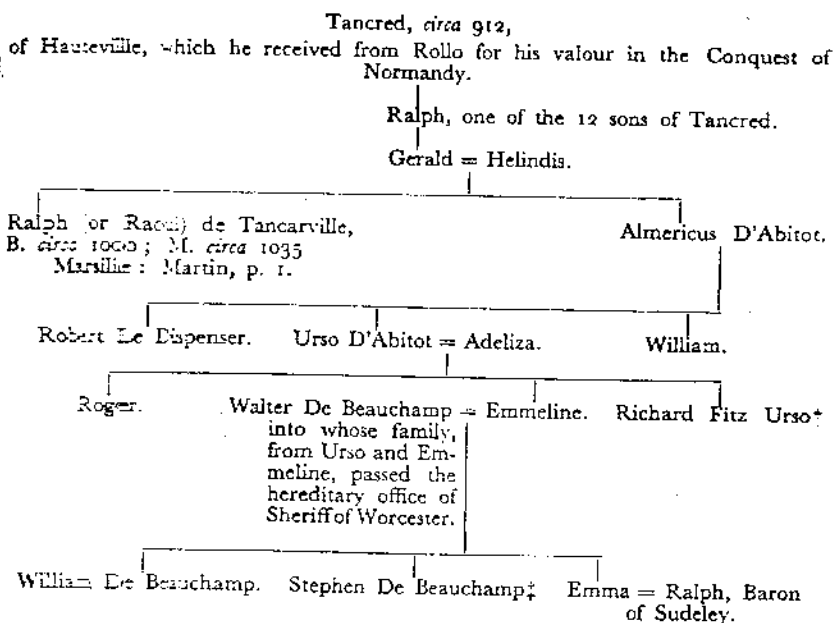
‡Of the two words, ABE-TOT, the first, Abe or Appe, represents Norse *Apal*. Sued. *Apel*, Dan. *Abil*, Eng. *Apple*; cf. Applemont, a village near St. Laurent. Tot is Norse *Topt*, Sued. *Toft*, Lat. *Toftum*, a farm; this typical Viking word occurs frequently as a suffix in Normandy, e.g., Yvetot, Criquetot, Turcot, etc.: see *Les Noms de Lieu d'Origine non Romane en Normandie*, par Charles Joret, Rouen, Imp. Leongy, 5 Rue Basnage, 1913; and *Les Noms de Lieux*, par Albert Dauzat, Paris, Lib. Delagrave, 15 Rue Soufflot.

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Urso had a brother Robert, commonly called Le Dispenser on account of his office as steward to William the Conqueror: and, apparently, another brother, William.

Urso was nephew of Ralph de Tancarville, who was great-grandson of Tancred, one of the companions of Rollo in the Conquest of Normandy. The pedigree is as follows:—*

PEDIGREE No. 1.



Ralph, or Raoul, de Tancarville was, according to Martin, chosen as Guardian of William Duke of Normandy during the latter's minority, about the year 1030, and afterwards he became his Hereditary Chamberlain; hence William's friendship for, and his attachment to, Urso D'Abitot, the nephew of the Chamberlain.

*So Lewis Appilon, *Urso D'Abitot and Castle of Worcester*, Brit. Mus., confirmed generally by Martin *op. cit.*: and see Bank's *Dormant Baronage*, Vol. III., Worcester, pp. 718, 760.

†Urso's son Richard prob. fought at Lincoln 1140: Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, Vol. V., p. 291.

‡Morant, *Essex*, Vol. II., p. 119, states that lands at Fairstead, near Coggeshall, in Witham Hundred, and Commerce (i.e., Lammars, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 268) were held by Stephen de Beauchamp, who married Isolda, daughter of Robert Earl Ferrers: and see Chap. V.

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Urso D'Abitot probably figured in the great battle* and, like other Norman barons, received after the Conquest numerous manors, especially in Worcestershire. In 1071 the Conqueror created Urso Vicecomes de Wigorn, Governor of the City of Worcester and Constable of the Castle.

Members of the D'Abitot family remained on the seigneurie in France down to the end of the fourteenth century, while the Counts of Tancarville appear to have held lands there till the Revolution.

It is worth mentioning that the great Norman family of de Ferrers, who at the Conquest received large grants of manors in Derbyshire, and who figure constantly in these pages, were associated with the D'Abitots in Normandy, and as Counts of Longueville held land at Abitot.†

What is the connection of the D'Abitots with the Albinis?

Pym Yeatman is emphatic but unconvincing that the D'Abitots were closely connected with the great Norman Earl, Roger de Montgomery, near kinsman of the Conqueror, Normannus ex Normannis, who himself was of the Almini clan. In one place this antiquary suggests that Urso was brother of Roger Montgomery, in another that he was his son.‡ No definite proof appears to be forthcoming of either relationship, but assuming that the Albinis, the Toenis and Tancred, the founder of the D'Abitots, are all descended, as seems probable, from Ivar Jarl of the Uplanders, they were at any rate of the same stock. Roger de Poictou, Pictavensis, whose name is of importance in connection with South Lancashire, was a son of Roger Montgomery.§

The D'Abitot family in England.

The history of the descendants of Urso and of his brother Robert Le Dispenser, in England, seems never to have been fully worked out.

*See M. E. De Magny *Nobiliaire de Normandie*, 1862, in Havre Municipal Library, at p. 2. In the Church of Dives, near Caen, a modern list of the 450 Normans, etc., who followed William includes the name of Ours D'Abitot; and see *Hist. Generale de Normandie*, by Gabriel de Mouton, Rouen, 1531, Havre Municipal Library, p. 39.

†Martin, p. 42, and below, Chap. II.; and see references given by Lechaudé D'Anisy *Recherches sur le Domesday*, Vol. I., p. 46, in Brit. Mus., to D'Abitots in various charters.

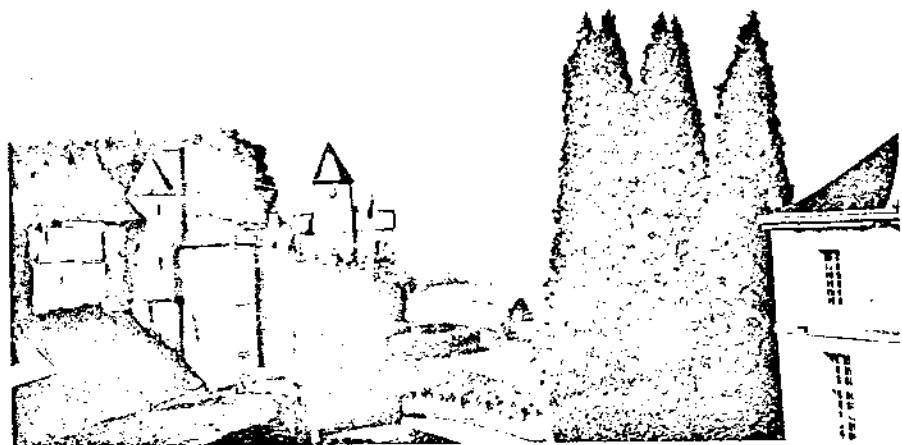
‡*Feudal Derbyshire*, Vol. IV., p. 163, and *House of Arundel*, pp. 37, 149; he also states that Tancred de Hauteville was related to the Albinis, *House of Arundel*, p. 119.

§For Roger Montgomery's sons, see Francis Barrage *Coll. Works*, 1919, *Normans*, Vol. III., pp. 113-5; also Vol. I., p. 387 and Vol. II., p. 272, for Tancred. The Hautvilles were a numerous clan of the ally and kin of Rollo and related to most of the great Norman families; see pedigree of Tancred and the Hautvilles mainly as conquerors in Apulia and Sicily; *op. cit.*, Vol. IV., p. 303 and Table XXVIII. at end. For Roger Montgomery, see *Ordericus Vitalis*, Vol. II., p. 396.

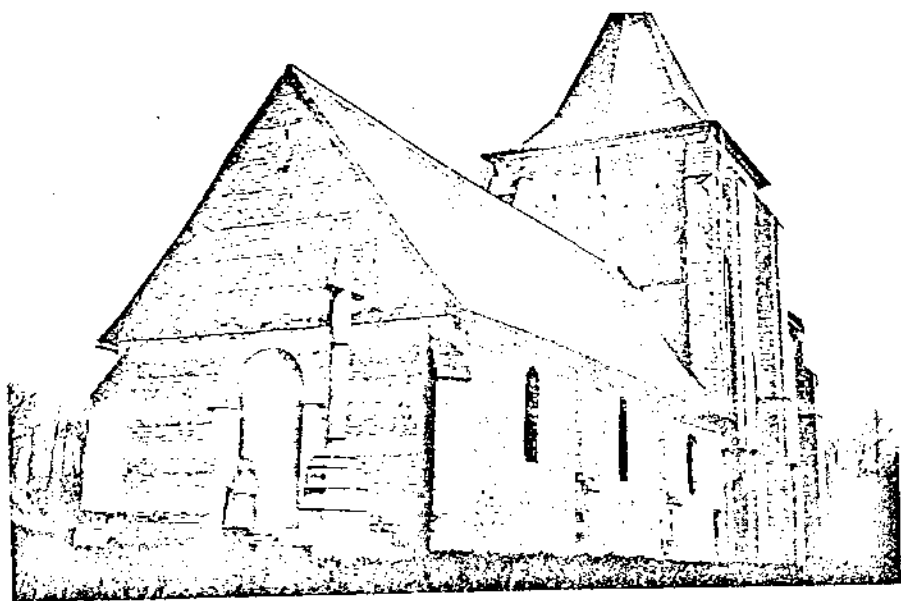


PLATE 2.

Arms of Barlow of Middlethorpe, Co. Yorks., granted to Thomas Barlow, 1691.
See Chap. IX., *Arms*.



(i.)



(ii.)

PLATE 3.

(i.) Tancarville Castle, Normandy, showing corner of modern chateau to right, and River Seine in the distance.

(ii.) Church of St. Jean D'Abitot, Normandy.

From photographs by the author.

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Thomas Habington, in his *Survey of Worcestershire*, temp. James I., gives a list of some thirty or forty manors held by Urso in the county of Worcester* alone, and also of the manors held by Robert in the same county.

Three villages, namely Crombe (now the seat of the Coventry family), Ridmarley and Hyndlip, were closely connected with the family, two actually bearing the name of Dabitote : and Habington, speaking of the family, says that they were :—†

"In the Raygne of the towne (two) Williams Highe Shyreefes & choyse Lordes of this Shyre and theyre offyce & inheritance after devolved to the Lordes Beauchamp and Earles of Warwick. . . . Thys family of Dabetote descendinge from Robert Dabetote Lord Steward of the Conqueror's House and brother of Urso Dabetote before mentioned rysinge in three severall branches and all out of one tree weare seated in as many Manors in thys shyre

The one in Rydmarley which of hym is surnamed Rydmarley Dabetote)

The other heere (Croome Dabetote)

The last in Hyndlyp :

and although they myght have greater landes, or other younger spraves issewing from these, yet these were of principal note. . . . But families have theyre peryodes or by daughters and coheyes are translated into houses of other surnames and so Crome Dabitote became after of the landes of Clare of Kidderminster."‡

One of the earliest references to Urso in England is in the famous charter of 1093, a copy of which is still among muniments at Lincoln, by which William Rufus gave to :—

"The Church of St. Mary at Lincoln, to Robert Bishop of the same Church, and to all his successors, for ever for the good of the souls of my Father and Mother, the church of Ockinton (? Eckington) and the Church of Chesterfield and the church of Ashbourn and the church of Mansfield and the chapels which are on the Berewites adjoining the same four Manors ;" §

and to this deed the great barons and ecclesiastics, such as the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Durham, William Peveril, and finally Urso de Abetot himself, were witnesses.

This deed is important ; it may contain the first mention of Eckington, a place which is to figure later as a centre of interest

**Survey*, Vol. I., pp. 105, 106. Habington was involved in the Gunpowder Plot, but was allowed to escape punishment on condition of retiring to his Worcestershire estate, and there he wrote his *Survey* of the county. Hindlip passed in 1563 to the Habingtons, and was in possession of Thomas Habington himself at the time of the Gunpowder Plot ; *V. H. Wores.*, Vol. III., p. 399. Croome did not come into the possession of the Coventry family till 1592.

†*Op. cit.*, Vol. I., p. 176.

‡Habington wrote about 1630. For references to the Todeney and Dispensers, see *Survey*, Vol. I., p. 536. Habington notes rather mournfully that "These Dabitotes . . . are in our age vanished as beeing our auncientest gentillmen synce the Conquest they now scarce appeare in our county ;" *op. cit.*, Vol. II., pp. 265-6.

§The deed is given in Pym Yeatman's *Chesterfield Records*, p. 123 ; and see Lincoln Record Society, Vol. XXVII., *Registrum Antiq. of Lincoln Cathedral*, by C. W. Forster, 1931, p. 17 ; this gives the first church not as Eckington but as Orston in Notts ; Urso also appears in other Lincoln deeds, see pp. 15, 18, etc. ; as do Henry de Ferrers, p. 17, and William and Nigel Albini or Aubigny, pp. 20, 34, 46, etc.

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for the Barlow family, while the connection between these Derbyshire churches and Lincolnshire is continued half a century or so later, when Hasculus Musard, d. *circa* 1137, gave Barlow to the monastery at Louth Park.*

Urso himself had a distinguished career† from the Battle of Senlac to about 1118, when he was laid peacefully to rest in Worcester Cathedral. A sad despoiler of the Church on occasions, he came under the ban of the Archbishop of York, and the jingle :—

“ Hightest thou, Urse?
Have thou God’s curse ”

is often quoted by chroniclers. But in spite of that, he found peaceful burial in the cathedral of the town and county he had somewhat mercilessly scourged.‡

In the reign of Henry I., 1100-1135, Urso’s son, Roger,§ dared to lay hands on a servant of the King, and was in consequence deprived of his lands, which the King then granted to Walter de Beauchamp, who had married Roger’s sister Emmeline.

The *Victoria History of Worcestershire* gives an account from contemporary records of the D’Abitot family and their holdings in the county after Urso’s death, especially in connection with the three villages or manors mentioned by Habington, namely, Crombe D’Abitot,|| Hindlip,¶ and Ridmarley D’Abitot,** which apparently were respectively centres of three branches of the family. All three villages were in the Oswaldslow Hundred, and lie towards the south-west side of the county, near the banks of the Severn and Avon, Ridmarley being close to the Gloucestershire border.

Tradition has it that the Derbyshire D’Abitots sprang either from Robert le Dispenser or from a junior branch of the Worcestershire D’Abitots, and the author devoted considerable labour to examining this claim; but thanks to the researches of the Revd. S. P. H. Statham (see Pedigree below) it now appears probable that the Derbyshire D’Abitots trace descent directly from the great Urso himself.

**Pegge Coll.*, Vol. IV., p. 203. It was probably on this separation from Staveley that the Chapel of St. Laurence was erected at Barlow by the Monastery of Louth Park.

†In 1074, in the rebellion of the Earls of Hereford and Norfolk, Urso D’Abitot, in co-operation with Wulstan Bishop of Worcester, did yeoman service for the King by preventing the Earl of Hereford from the Severn.

‡The authority for the burial of Urso D’Abitot in Worcester Cathedral where later King John lay is :—“The laborious journey and search of John Leyland for English antiquities presented to Hen. VIII. in the 37th year of his Reign,” cited by Appleton. See also Freeman’s *Norman Conquest*, Vol. IV., p. 175.

§Note the names Roger and Robert appearing thus early: the Albinis of Cainhoe habitually named the eldest son and heir Robert.

||*V. H. Wores.*, Vol. III., pp. 313-4, and *Tacts de Nevill* there cited.

¶*Op. cit.*, III., p. 398.

***Op. cit.*, III., p. 483.