

'Free movement' of peoples: Flemings in England

Paper presented at the Leeds International Medieval Congress 2019

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During the second half of the twelfth century, King Henry II of England had established his powers over lands that stretched from Scotland in the north to the border with Aragon in the south. When Henry came to the throne in 1154 he ruled England as king, Normandy and Aquitaine as duke, Maine and Anjou as count. He was also Lord of Ireland through a papal grant in 1155, though some parts were actively secured by England by 1172. He exercised control at different times over Scotland, Wales and the Duchy of Brittany and his reign was an era when we can observe that major movements of peoples were a part of medieval cross-Channel relations. Similar to the waterway between Denmark and Sweden, the Channel was not considered as a boundary but as a path to connect England to the rest of the Anglo-Norman territories.

This paper explores some aspects of the relationship between medieval Flanders and Anglo-Norman England, which intensified, in particular, when William's army also counted Flemish knights at the conquest and occupation of England, as well as in the fight to contain the Anglo-Saxon rebellions. A first section outlines the ties between England and Normandy/Flanders before the Norman Conquest of England. Then the following part discusses the nature of the Anglo-Norman territories, that were further expanded under Henry II, governed by a Duke on one side of the Channel and reigned by the same man as king on the other. In the following two sections we consider the geo-political importance of Flanders to Anglo-Norman England and how the ties were consolidated through land holdings given by William to various Flemish noble families, mainly from the southern and western parts of the 'French' Artesian Flanders. The last part before the conclusion, examines the relationship and ties between Anglo-Norman England and Flanders as reflected in the charters collected in the database *Diplomata Belgica*. An overview will be given of the issues raised by the documents, as well as a brief discussion of documents relating to two specific families, which offers a good illustration of the intricate interaction between noble families in England, Normandy and Flanders, as well as of the kind of family set-up that conditioned junior members of continental land-holding families to seek fortune in England.

Before 1066

The (free) movement of people between the United Kingdom and continental Europe today are conditioned and governed by considerations of political and economic alliances, consolidated in

the arrangements linked to membership of the European Union that allows a certain stake in the economy and societies of fellow member states. During the Anglo-Norman era, political alliances were made and re-made between the various rulers of different peoples, frequently consolidated through marriage alliances.¹ In turn, marriage among the noble classes came with employment opportunities that further encouraged migration.²

The contacts and movements of people between England and Flanders/Normandy were multi-dimensional and pre-dated 1066. In the period preceding the conquest, Baldwin II, Count of Flanders (879-918), married the youngest daughter of Alfred The Great. AElfthryth (877-929), also known as *AElfstrudis*, became Countess consort of Flanders. Her sons were Arnulf I of Flanders (married to Adela of Vermandois) and Adelfolf Count of Bologne. This Flemish and Anglo-Saxon wedding was the first in a series of high-profile marriage during the centuries that followed. In 1002, we find Emma of Normandy, daughter of Richard II Duke of Normandy married to the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred II (978-1016). She was mother to Edward The Confessor (1042-1066). Later that century, William Duke of Normandy (later styled as The Conqueror), married Mathilda of Flanders, daughter of Baldwin V. Her mother Adela was daughter of King Robert II of France and she had herself been linked by her first marriage to the duchy of Normandy by marrying Richard III. At the time of the conquest of England, Baldwin V Count of Flanders was in the remarkable position of having been regent in France since 1060 and until the majority of Philip I, of having married his daughter Matilda to William I, as just mentioned, and his sons into Hainaut and Holland, and his (half-) sister³ (different mothers) allied to the English house of Godwin.

These family alliances went hand-in-hand with other numerous contacts for various reasons, often to do with exiles and taking/granting refuge. In 1013, Emma of Normandy fled to Normandy with her children and Edward remained until 1042 in a mainly Norman exile. On his return to England, Edward brought back a number of Norman customs, such as the sealing of documents, and the seal-keeper and document secretary was described with the Norman-French term of *canceler*.⁴ Hence, long before the succession controversy relating to the English crown Edward and William were acquainted. William had visited England in 1051 as mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles,⁵ although in view of the fact that this was only reported in one of the manuscripts, it has become a moot point whether the visit actually took place.⁶ But there is no doubt that the Normans and the English were, at least on the level of their ruling class, no

¹ Note the link to the 'divorce' terminology currently used in the Brexit process.

² Orderic Vitalis implies that there were some Norman landholding interests in Flanders ("the other Normans who had land in Flanders" *OV*, vol.6, p. 378).

³ Judith of Flanders married Tostig Godwinson (first marriage), who fought and was killed with Harald of Norway at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

⁴ D. Mellinkoff (1963) *The Language of the Law*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., at 60.

⁵ *The Worcester Manuscript*, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius Biv, ff.3-86, [1052].

⁶ D.C. Douglas (1953) 'Edward the Confessor, Duke William of Normandy, and the English succession', *English Historical Review* LXVIII, 526-545 ; T.J. Oleson (1957) 'Edward the Confessor's promise of the throne to Duke William of Normandy', *English Historical Review* LXXII, 221-228.

strangers to each other before 1066. Emma had also taken refuge in Flanders for a short period between 1036 and 1040, where she was joined by her son Harthacnut. But while Flanders was a destination for some exiled Anglo-Saxons, it appears to have been more of a temporary stop on the way to elsewhere. In general, Count Baldwin V (1035-67) of Flanders did not hesitate to grant refuge to Scandinavian and English exiles and pretenders and he even offered some direct support by lending ships and allowing for the recruitment of Flemish soldiers.⁷ Besides these incidents of refuge, there is, both before and after the Conquest, very little migration from England to Flanders.

For the period before the conquest, there is only incidental evidence for migration from Flanders to England. Such migration tended to evolve around commercial ties and ecclesiastical establishments and monasteries or due to marriages among the noble classes. The Flemish ecclesiastical institutions offered a repository of theological and literary learning that Flemish monks brought to England. The monastery of St. Pieter's of Ghent had long-standing links with Anglo-Saxon England and Grimbold of St. Bertin also paid an important role in that respect.⁸ But by the time, William Duke of Normandy was crowned King of England on Christmas day 1066, he had brought with him peoples of various origins, some of whom he rewarded with land in England for their military support at Hastings or for crushing subsequent Anglo-Saxon rebellions. Flemings represented a non-negligible group by the time the Yorkshire Alfred of Beverley wrote in his chronicle in c. 1143: "There presently live in Britain five peoples ... to these can be added in our time a sixth nation, that is the Flemish..."⁹

The Conquest

There has been much debate about whether these 'Anglo-Norman' territories can be considered as an empire or *regnum*,¹⁰ governed by a Duke on one side of the Channel and reigned by the same man as king on the other. Have these lands been brought together in a cross-Channel political unit governed by a common aristocratic class, as John Le Patourel argued?¹¹ When Duke William was crowned king in Westminster Abbey, he did not see himself as an invader but rather as the rightful successor to the English throne, not set on dismantling the structures of English society, but to operate through them if appropriate.¹² He let himself be acclaimed in French by the Normans and in English by the local population and vowed to the French and the English to

⁷ E. van Houts (1999) 'Hereward and Flanders', *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol.28, 201-223, at 209-13.

⁸ Monks from St. Peter's : helped with composition of the English monastic order Regularis Concordia; Grimbold of St. Bertin: assisted King Alfred the Great's translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, anonymous author of the *Encomium Emma Reginae*; Monk Folcard of St. Bertin, d. after 1085): appointed as acting abbot of Thorney in Cambridgeshire; Monk Goscelin of St. Bertin.

⁹ Alfred of Beverley *Aluredi Beverlacensis Annales, sive Historia de Gestis Regum Britanniae*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1716), 10.

¹⁰ C.W. Hollister (1976) Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum, *Speculum*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 202-242.

¹¹ J. Le Patourel (1976) *The Norman Empire*, Oxford : The Clarendon Press.

¹² An interesting exception to this is the imposition of political feudalism by the invading Normans and with it the import of Norman-French feudal vocabulary. Though Susan Reynolds has argued that it could not have been the Normans who imported feudalism to England; in her opinion feudalism was a later development (*Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*, Oxford: OUP, 1994). This is an ongoing debate!

uphold the law as it had been under Edward the Confessor.¹³ Yet, from his behaviour it is interesting to note that, at times, he was less interested in a union of Normandy and England and saw his power over the latter more as an opportunity to exploit its resources. The transfer of wealth to Normandy through royal taxation and in order to finance the wars there, as well as the massive dispossession of Anglo-Saxon lands to be granted subsequently to William's followers are just two illustrations of something with certain characteristics of colonisation. Following the Treaty of Abernethy (1072) in which Malcolm III of Scotland recognised William as his feudal overlord, William only made four more visits to England, which amounted to 40 months spent in his kingdom, compared to 130 months in Normandy.¹⁴ In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles it is said that before leaving England for Normandy, "he did as he was accustomed - obtained much money from his men where he might have any claim, whether with justice or otherwise?"¹⁵

Moreover, the Anglo-Norman territories can not be said to have been governed by a 'single, homogeneous feudal aristocracy'.¹⁶ The members of the continental nobility who had been rewarded with land by the conqueror did not necessarily systematically organise close cross-Channel political links and landed interests so as to form that 'one homogeneous, aristocratic community'.¹⁷ Second and third post-1066 generations had married locally, so the angle with which they maintained their interests were conditioned by local affiliations rather than from a cross-Channel Anglo-Norman perception.¹⁸

Considering the Anglo-Norman lands as part of one empire also implies some integration of English and Norman customs and laws. It is likely that cross-Channel influences enabled some transfer of customs, laws and institutions. There were basic similarities in the system of courts, writs, actions and recognition that were at the heart of Henry II's common law.¹⁹ Descriptions in law-books were produced in both England and Normandy: *Glanvil* (1187-89),²⁰ a treatise on the legal forms and procedure in the king's court, and the *Le Très Ancien Coutumier de Normandie*

¹³ "Will'm kyng gret [...] and ealle tha burhwaru binnan Londone Frenscisce and Englisce freondlice. and ic kyde eow that ic wylle that get beon eallra thaera laga weorde the gyt waeran on Eadwerdes daege kynges [...]" Charter of William I to the City of London, in: W. Stubbs (1913) *Select charters and other illustrations of English constitutional history*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, at pp. 82-83.

¹⁴ D. Bates (1989) Normandy and England after 1066, *The English Historical Review*, vol.104, no. 413, 851-880, at 872.

¹⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, M. Swanton (ed./transl. 2000), London: Phoenix Press, 'E', 1086.

¹⁶ C.W. Hollister (1976) 'Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman *regnum*', *Speculum*, li, 202-242, at. 209.

¹⁷ Le Patourel (1976) at 195.

¹⁸ J. Green (1984) 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', in J.C. Holt & J. Gillingham (eds.) *War and Government in the Middle Ages : Essays in the Honour of J.O. Prestwich*, Woodbridge, 47-61 ; J. Green (1989) 'King Henry I and the aristocracy of Normandy', *Actes du iiiie congrès nation, al des sociétés savantes*, Paris, 161-173 ; D.Bates (1989) at 858-860.

¹⁹ R.C. van Caenegem (1988) *The Birth of the Common Law*, Cambridge : CUP, at 57-59.

²⁰ *Tractatus de legibus et consuetudinibus regni Anglie* (Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Kingdom of England) attributed to Ranulf de Glanvil (died 1190), reproduction of 1604 printed edition can be found on HeinOnline (www.heinonline.org).

(1200-45),²¹ collection of customary law, including the description of the Norman writs. But, on both sides of the Channel, it was more a process of active development, each primarily grounded in its own local evolution, rather than an attempt to assimilate the two.²² The timings and terminology was different, although similarity in the latter did not necessarily mean that the concepts described were the same. Bates²³ gives the example of *geldum* in the Norman Charters, which need not necessarily indicate that geld was levied in post-1066 Normandy. As mentioned previously, political feudalism brought to England by the Normans created a system of personal and tenurial relationships of lordships and vassalage hitherto unknown in England. Yet, even in that area, it cannot be a question of a total break with the past²⁴ nor a complete alignment of how things evolved. While in England inheritance developed around the concept of primogeniture, it was guided by the principle of *parage* in Normandy.²⁵

While there is no doubt that England and Normandy lived a certain *rapprochement* and a parallel development of some institutions under one same ruler, it can not be question of this being one empire or kingdom nor of one overarching political and social unit or identity.

After the Conquest

Having expanded from Normandy into England, it was of geo-political and strategic importance to control the coastal perimeter surrounding England by expanding their influences in Flanders. After all, it is the southern Low Countries that is the part of continental Europe closest to the British Isles. In this sense, it is like a stepping stone between England and Normandy. This specific geographical proximity also means that Flanders occupies a central position in the Anglo-Norman world. Its importance was further enhanced by its closeness to territories belonging to the kings of France and Germany. This ‘triangular’ interaction was also conditioned, at times, by the attempts of intervention of the royal dynasty in Paris.²⁶

Although William disappropriated the land of practically the entire Anglo-Saxon nobility, he did not see himself as an invader and, as mentioned above, he pledged continuity in upholding the laws of Edward the Confessor. It is generally believed that the conquering army of 1066 included Flemish knights, yet there is little direct evidence to support the involvement, for example, of Count Baldwin V himself. William of Malmesbury’s description - often cited as providing evidence for Baldwin’s involvement – is rather general and was written much later, hence, it may be of

²¹ *Le Très Ancien Coutumier de Normandie*, textes critiques/publiés E-J Tardif (Rouen: A. Lestringant; Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1881-1903); digital edition at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (www.gallica.bnf.fr).

²² D. Bates (1989), at 873-876.

²³ D. Bates (1989), at 874-875.

²⁴ Examples the for discussion about the continuity or not pre- and post-1066 : C. Warren Hollister (1961) *The Norman Conquest and the Genesis of English Feudalism*, *The American Historical Review*, vol.66, Nr.3, 641-663; (1963) *Two Comments on the Problem of Continuity in Anglo-Norman Feudalism*, *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol.16, No.1, 104-113.

²⁵ J.C. Holt (1983) *Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England : II. Notions of Patrimony*, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol.33, 193-220.

²⁶ E. Oksanen (2012) *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, Cambridge: CUP, at 3-6.

questionable reliability.²⁷ However, indirect evidence puts Flemish lords, such as Eustace of Boulogne, Gerbod the Fleming and Gilbert of Ghent by the conqueror's side at Hastings. Incidentally, it has been suggested²⁸ that Gilbert of Ghent owned land in the north of England before the Conquest, which is conceivable in view of his family links with St. Pieter's of Ghent that, in turn, had connections to Anglo-Saxon England. The fact that he was related to the comital house of Flanders and, hence, to the Conqueror's wife Matilda must have enhanced his social position. This is also a good illustration of how a link between Flanders-Normandy-England can enable a nobleman to exploit the various connections to obtain land, office and royal sponsorship.

Flemish Land in England

An invaluable source that shows Flemish landholdings in England is the Domesday Book. A number of tenants-in-chief of apparently Flemish origin are men that were handsomely compensated by William I with land-holdings in England for having either fought in the 1066 battle or for having helped him to secure his power by putting down the lingering Anglo-Saxon resistance in 1068-70. As mentioned before, this is as such not based on hard evidence, but is a plausible presumption.

As reported in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles,²⁹ the Domesday Book³⁰ was a survey commissioned by William I in 1085 and designed to discover the resources and taxable values of all the boroughs and manors in England. This was needed in order for the King to know what resources were available in his fight against Danish threats of invasions. The first draft was completed in August 1086 and contained records for 13,418 settlements in the English counties south of the rivers Ribble and Tees, which was the border with Scotland at that time. The survey was executed within a year of its commission. Domesday is a detailed statements of estates held by the king and by his tenants and it also records the resources that came with those lands. The information was recorded in relation to three moments of time:

- at the time of Edward The Confessor (early 1066),
- when William The Conqueror gave it (1066 or later),
- at the time of the survey (1086).

The diachronic structure of the information means that it reveals the history of the gradual and sometimes violent dispossession of the Anglo-Saxons by the Norman conquerors. But it is also a kind of 'feudal' statement, recording the identities of the tenants-in-chief who held the lands directly from the crown, and who were the tenants and under tenants. It also records which manors rightfully belonged to which estates.

²⁷ The Anglo-Norman historian William of Malmesbury wrote : « the elder Baldwin ... had given energetic help to William on his expedition into England, with wise counsel in which he abounded and with reinforcement of knights. » (*Gesta Regnum*, p. 728).

²⁸ *Gesta Herewardi*, pp. 180, 187-188

²⁹ (*E*) 1085.

³⁰ The original Domesday Book is kept in a specially made chest at The National Archives in Kew, London. It can be explored digitally via various weblinks. A

Most Domesday Flemish tenants-in-chief came from the southern and western parts of the 'French' Artesian Flanders. From the northern 'Flemish' Flanders, we can only find Gilbert of Ghent and the Abbey of St. Pieter's, retaining its manor of Lewisham (Kent) that was in its possession since 1016. Some established themselves permanently, some of them continued to hold land in the county of Flanders, other had 'disappeared' from the sources before the century was out. Newly conquered England, seen through the eyes of the aristocratic families, was the land of new opportunities.³¹ The emerging emphasis on primogeniture (more so in Flanders than in Normandy) meant that well-trained and equipped warrior aristocrats were able to seek patrons and opportunities elsewhere. They freed themselves from duties and obligations at home and made acquisitions of new property as part of a network of well-connected aristocratic family.³²

Robert George³³ has suggested that the extent of the Flemish contribution to the Conquest can be extrapolated by studying the Domesday Book. First of all, this reveals the extent and geographical distribution of the lands held by the Flemish and, secondly, it will make it possible to ascertain the approximate worth of the estates in question. However, it must be stressed that the information for 1086 provided by the Domesday Book is limited to that specific moment in time. It lists the information for the estates, tenements and holdings of Flemings at the time of the inquest. Not included are lands originally granted to and held by Flemings but subsequently subinfeudated before the inquest.

Many of the figures that follow were drawn from Eljas Oksanen's excellent book on *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World*.³⁴ Of the approximately 9,500 estates recorded for 1086, some 760 were controlled by tenants-in-chief from the southern Low Countries, representing 8%, a small but not insignificant percentage. Approximately 4.4% (or £3,200) of the total recorded Domesday wealth of £72,000 was held by these tenants-in-chief from the southern Low Countries. It represents some 1100 main landholders, but there were some 6000 under-tenants holding land from a tenant-in-chief.

There was considerable disparities in wealth among the newcomers from the southern Low Countries. Countess Judith and Eustace and Ida of Boulogne controlled together more landed wealth than the rest put together:

Countess Judith:	£ 690
E & I of Boulogne:	£ 940 & £ 30 15s
Gilbert of Ghent:	£ 425

³¹ G. Duby (1964) *Au XIIe siècle : Les jeunes dans la société aristocratique, Annales : Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 19, 835-46.

³² E. Oksanen (2012) *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, Cambridge: CUP, at 199-200.

³³ R. George (1926) *The contribution of Flanders to the Conquest of England 1065-1086, Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 1, fasc. 1, 81-99, at 88

³⁴ E. Oksanen (2012) in particular Chapter 6: *Flemish Immigration to England*, at 178-218.

Arnulf of Hesdin:	£ 330
Walter of Douai:	£ 240
Drogo of Beuvière:	£ 185
Walter the Fleming:	£ 101 ³⁵

It is interesting to observe the geographical distribution of the Flemish holdings. The bulk of the Flemish settlements form a crescent shape open towards the north-east with the top starting in south-eastern Yorkshire, moving through Lincolnshire, the Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire from where it curves east-east towards Essex, where most of Count Eustace II of Boulogne's estates lie. From the mid-point of the crescent in Northamptonshire/Bedfordshire, there is also a trail of Flemish landholdings roughly towards the border of Somerset and Devon in the south-western part of England. Arnulf of Hesdin and Walter of Douai are the tenants-in-chief who hold most of those estates. No estates of great value, can be found in the south-east where the Norman elite had consolidated their landholdings between 1066 and 1068. The majority of the Flemish newcomers in the north-east appeared from 1069-70, which corresponds to the period when the Norman conquerors began to reinforce their presence in the outlying provinces. It may well indicate that these estates were transferred following the local revolts of 1068 and 1070 against William and that the rebellious Anglo-Saxon lords were dispossessed as punishment, while the King's supporters were provided with reward and patronage. This chronology may further suggest that the Flemish were more active during the period following the conquest rather than at the Battle of Hastings itself. The King had turned to Flanders and to his wife's family for support in securing the outlying regions and consolidating his grip on England. This arrangement was the forerunner of the later Anglo-Flemish political agreements (Anglo-Flemish Treaties).

The geographical distribution of Flemish landholdings may also be linked to geographical factors. The region from the Wash (Northern Norfolk) through East Midlands to Lincolnshire enjoyed good communications with the southern Low Countries due to the extensive coastlines and river systems and its geographical proximity to Flanders. This is where the majority of the great international fairs were founded during the 12th century. After this surge of Flemish immigration in the late 1060s/early 1070, relatively few Flemish aristocratic families established themselves in England over the following century. The sort of mass transfer of property as happened under William would not recur. Immigration into England after that was conditioned by commerce, diplomacy and demands of military service.

There is another interesting chapter in the history of Flemish settlements in the British Isles, which relates to the Flemish communities in Wales. This is a very different story and one that is relatively well-documented. These settlement were created by Henry I in the period between 1107 and 1111, most likely in 1108. It also coincided with a cooling of relations between the king

³⁵ E. Oksanen (2012) at 188.

and Count Robert II of Flanders. By then, the Flemings in question were first- or second generation immigrants who, according to Malmesbury were 'lying low in England in such numbers as actually to seem a burden on the realm itself; and so he collected them all together' and sent them to the far corner of the Welsh province³⁶ where they were too far to present any kind of threat to his authority. By forcing these settlements, Henry was actually hoping to kill two birds with one stone: he was 'simultaneously purging his kingdom and putting a brake on his headstrong and barbarous enemies', i.e. the Welsh who were in constant revolt.³⁷ In fact, the Flemings operated in the region as a military power in their own right at least until 1220 and the community survived remarkably well, Flemish was said to have been in use in the area until the end of the 16th c.³⁸

Cross-Channel exchanges in the Diplomata Belgica

Beyond land tenure as rewards for individual leaders or kin groups, there was agreement on the higher level between the king and the count. The initial land tenure arrangement was the basis for the later arrangement of money fiefs between England and Flanders. This was consolidated in the Treaty of Dover of 1101 between Henry I and Robert I, according to which the Count of Flanders will on request provide annually 1000 soldiers to the King of England for fighting in England, Normandy or Maine in return for a yearly retainer of £ 500. Oksanen contends that money fiefs and land tenure, along with their practical management and organisation, provided the institutionalised foundation and mechanics for conducting and maintaining Anglo-Flemish relations at the highest levels. It gives us some insight into how the ruling classes functioned in the context the Anglo-Norman territories and Flanders.³⁹

For a better understanding of the nature and extent of the cross-Channel interactions and exchanges, the Diplomata Belgica (DiBE)⁴⁰ was searched for documents that showed any links to England. This database offers a critical survey of all the diplomatic sources, edited or still unpublished, and issued by both natural persons and legal bodies from the medieval Southern Low Countries. It contains almost 35,000 charters and deeds in Latin, Old-French, Middle Dutch and Middle High German, almost 19,000 full text transcriptions and almost 5,000 photographs of original Charters for the period up to 1250. From this data base some 1198 documents were selected that featured England in one way or another. The bulk of the selection (1036 docs.) related to the period 1201-1250, which covers the reigns of King John and King Henry III. Most documents were written in Latin, only thirteen were in French and one in Dutch. This reflects

³⁶ Mainly to Pembrokeshire, around the town of Haverfordwest and Carmarthenshire.

³⁷ W. of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum : The History of the English Kings*, ed. & trans. R. Thomson et al., Oxford : OMT, at 726

³⁸ L. Toorians (1990) 'Wizo Flandriensis and the Flemish Settlement in Pembrokeshire', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 20, 99-118, at 112-117.

³⁹ Oksanen (2012) at 82-83.

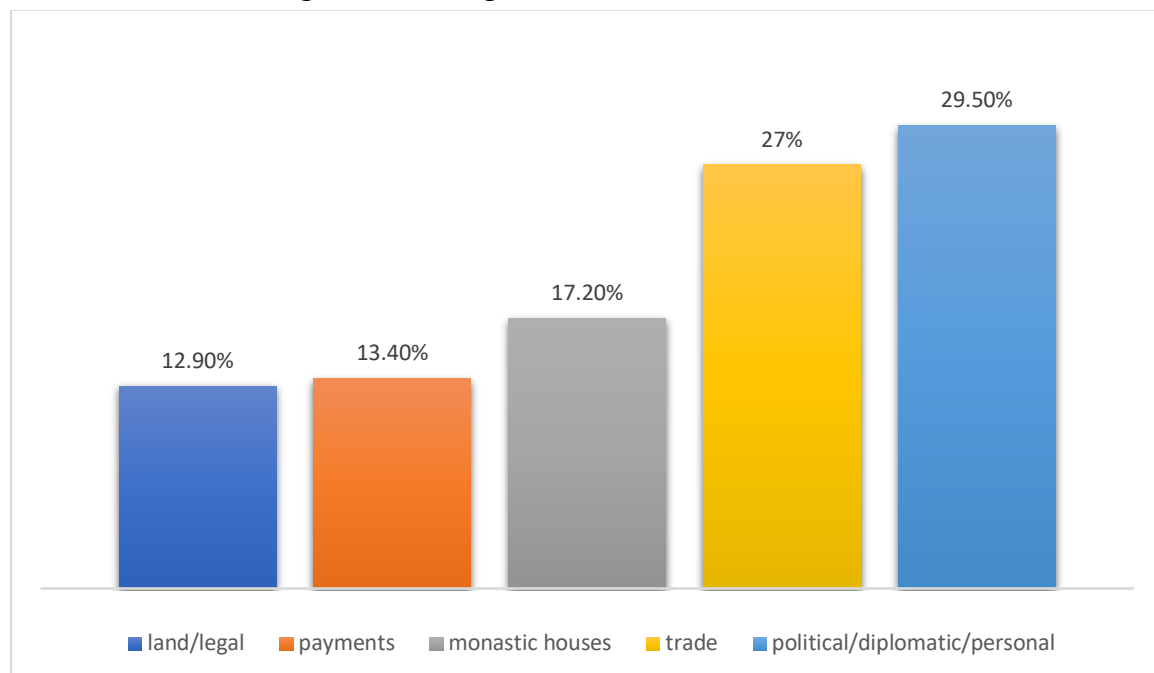
⁴⁰ *Diplomata Belgica: The Diplomatic Sources from the Medieval Southern Low Countries*, www.diplomata-belgica.be

almost exactly the proportions of the language distribution among the documents of the entire database.

As far as the objects of the documents are concerned, we find that matters relating to trade and to political/diplomatic or personal issues are the purposes of over half the documents. The selected documents have been grouped together into five categories, though inevitably, there is some overlap between the categories:

land/legal (12,9%%)	- giving/(re-)granting/conceding land, fiefs or rights - litigation (except religious houses)
payments (13,4%)	- in money and in kind - demands for reparation or compensation (except religious houses)
religious houses (17,2%)	- donations in money and in kind, including land
trade (27%)	- safe passage for trade - freedom of trade - requisitions of vessels and cargo - embargos
political/diplomatic personal (29.5%)	- agreements, grants - homage - request for military support - appointments (including ecclesiastical appointments) - purchases for king (cloth, clothes etc.) - miscellaneous instructions - personal messages

The distribution among the five categories is as follows:



Classification of documents relating to England in the DiBE

Almost 30% of the documents were loosely grouped together as dealing with political, diplomatic or personal matters. A large majority was issued and/or authored by either King John or King Henry III. Many dealt with guaranteeing free/safe passage or authorising travel, some included providing vessels or arranging transportation for travel. Others are requests for fighting men and/or equipment/arms. There are a number of documents that deal with more personal matters, such as expressing thanks and gratitude, sending good wishes, offering or seeking prayers, some contain lists of purchases to be made on behalf of the king for items of clothing in wool and silk or cloth for specific confection by the royal tailor. A great number of documents deal with agreements and treaties made between rulers and persons of power. The actual texts of the agreements/treatise were included in the category of texts relating to land/legal but any communication concerning such agreements were included here. For example, a charter issued by King John (scholarly dated May 1212) and addressed to the Count of Flanders, informs the latter that following the advice the king has received from the Count of Boulogne, Rainald of Dammartin, he wishes to conclude a treaty of alliance and friendship and asks the Count of Flanders to send his representatives so that an agreement can be worked out.⁴¹ In a diploma (scholarly dated March 1220), King Henry III declares having concluded a truce of four years with the King of France Philip II Augustus.⁴² Also included in this category of documents are promises of protection by the king and homage rendered to him. In a diploma dated April 1206, for example, King John informs his chancellor Richard of Cornhill that he has received the homage of the Count of Guines, in relation to the lands that his father, Baldwin had owned in England.⁴³

The second most important category of documents relate to matters of trade (27%). These documents are less diverse in comparison to those described above. They tend to deal mainly with safe passage and freedom to trade, as well as requisitions or seizure and restitution of vessels and cargo and the imposition/lifting of taxes. To that extent, such matters of trade represent the most important share of issues that govern the cross-channel interaction as represented in the *Diplomata Belgica* database.

The category of documents relating to payments (13,4%) include all sorts of payments in kind and in money, as well as demands for reparation and compensation. However, payments involving religious houses were brought together in a category devoted to documents that deal specifically with religious houses (17,2%) and in which these usually appear as beneficiaries. Of the 206 documents in that category (religious houses), 15% dealt with payments in the large sense, including exemptions from payments such as tonlieu or rent. Some 57% of the documents deal with donations, endowments, gifts and grants, usually in land. The rest of the documents in this category are concerned with a variety of issues, such as offering authoritative protection of

⁴¹ Charter DiBE ID 14728

⁴² Diploma DiBE ID 16306

⁴³ Diploma DiBE ID 13862

land and possessions, patronage, decisions relating to the celebration of mass, the consecration of cemeteries, baptismal fonts, restitution of alter etc.

The fifth category of documents groups together all instruments that grant, give, concede and confirm donations and grants relating to land and fiefs, except those involving religious houses, discussed in the previous paragraph. We can see from the statistics relating to the different categories documents as shown above that instruments relating to land represent the smallest category. Judging from the data collected in the *Diplomata Belgica*, issues relating to land tenure in the wide sense did not represent the most frequent point of contact in this early period of interaction between Anglo-Norman England and Flanders. Trade was then and would remain for a considerable period of time (though evolving in different directions), the main reason for Anglo-Norman and Flemish relations.

The story told by the documents dealing with land in the DiBe is somewhat patchy. There is little evidence for very early charters relating to Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman land dealings with Flemings. A number of pre-conquest charters mention the donations AElfthryth (*AElfstrudis*) supposedly made in 918 to the Abbey of St. Pieters of Ghent of lands situated in Lewisham, Greenwich and Woolwich. She was the daughter of Alfred The Great and wife to Baldwin II of Flanders. However, it has been argued that this donation could never have happened, as AElfthryth did not own the lands in question.⁴⁴ The authenticity of the original charter, supposedly dated 11 September 918⁴⁵ and of subsequent documents confirming the gift by King Edgar,⁴⁶ by Edward The Confessor⁴⁷ and by William The Conqueror⁴⁸ has been questioned.⁴⁹ However, in 1086 the possession of these estates by the Abbey of St. Pieters Ghent is confirmed in the Domesday Book.⁵⁰

No other documents relating to early Anglo-Norman land dealings with Flanders can be found in the DiBE, with the exception of those relating to religious houses. This is also reflected in the collection of charters of William The Conqueror edited by David Bates.⁵¹ The post-conquest land grab by the Normans who handed some of it to loyal Flemings left little comprehensive written evidence for us to follow for the period between 1066 and 1086. By that time, some Flemings has already come and gone. Drogo de la Beuvrière was granted Holderness by King William, but the following year Drogo fled England after the death (murder?) of his wife. Gilbert of Gant also returned to Flanders in 1175. Gerbod The Fleming, who was briefly Earl of Chester, appears to

⁴⁴ P. Grierson (1941) *The Relations between England and Flanders before the Norman Conquest*, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 23, 71-112, at 86-87.

⁴⁵ DiBE ID 535.

⁴⁶ Dated 964, DiBE ID 555.

⁴⁷ Dated 1016, DiBE ID 585; dated 1044, DiBE ID 605.

⁴⁸ Dated 1081, DiBE ID 652.

⁴⁹ D. Bates (1998) *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum. The Acta of William I (1066-1087)*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, at 498-499.

⁵⁰ Domesday Book, Folio xxx

⁵¹ D. Bates (1998).

have left England in 1071 and details of his years of holding land in Cheshire are not recorded in the Domesday Book. Instead it is Hugh d'Avranches, created Earl of Chester in 1071 (second creation), who is mentioned as possessing Chester and large parts of the county of Cheshire. There is a reference that when Earl Hugh 'received' the City of Chester 'it had been greatly wasted.'⁵² Gerbod The Fleming came himself from the Oosterzele-Scheldewindeke family who were hereditary advocates of Saint Bertin at Saint Omer. His sister Gundrada (d. 1085) married William I of Warenne and his brother Frederick was killed by the Fenland rebel Hereward and the vast estates he held in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk were passed onto his sister Gundrada and brother-in-law William I of Warenne.⁵³ The three siblings represented the junior branch of the family, as their eldest brother Arnulf II of Oosterzele inherited the family estates in Flanders. This is a typical illustration for the intricate interaction between families of influence in England, Normandy and Flanders, as well as for the kind of family set-up that conditioned junior members of land-holding families to seek fortune in England.⁵⁴

Another Flemish family prominent during the 12th century for their role this time in Anglo-Flemish diplomacy rather than warfare, is the Béthune family based in southern central Flanders. A 1160 *notitia* listed in the DiBE reports that the castellan of Lens gives to Robert V of Béthune (d. 1191) land situated in England to be held in fief from the king of England, and that it had previously been in the possession of Sigar of Chocques, one of the Domesday Book Flemish tenants-in-chief.⁵⁵ In 1191, several charters⁵⁶ show that Robert V of Béthune gave land in Gloucestershire to a certain John of Hazleton, himself brother of Walter, clerk of Robert V of Béthune. John then passed the land onto his son-in-law on the occasion of his marriage to his daughter. The Gloucestershire estates were listed in the Domesday Book as having been held by the Anglo-Saxon Countess Gode and then granted by William The Conqueror to Sigar of Chocques,⁵⁷ from whom it was repossessed by the English crown in the late 1120, probably following William Clito becoming count of Flanders. It ended up in the possession of Robert V of Béthune, who may have been a grandchild of Sigar through his mother.⁵⁸ Robert played an important part in the Anglo-Flemish diplomacy between Count Thierry and King Henry II and he witnessed the 1163 Dover Treaty and barons' charter. He is mentioned as a recipient of baronial money fief awarded by King Henry II in the treaty.⁵⁹ In the late 1170s, Robert was ambassador to England of the count

⁵² Domesday Book, Folio 262V : Cheshire

⁵³ E. van Houts (1999) Hereward and Flanders, *Anglo-Saxon England*, vol.28, 201-223 ; E. van Houts (2003) The Warenne view of the past 1066-1203, *Anglo-Norman Studies*, vol.25, 103-121.

⁵⁴ G. Duby (1964).

⁵⁵ DiBE ID 12531; also in J. De Saint-Genois (1782-1804) *Monuments anciens, essentiellement utiles à la France, aux provinces de Hainaut, Flandre, Brabant, Namur ... et autres pay limitophes de l'Empire: recueille pa le Cte Joseph de Saint-Genois*, [s...l...], I, 1, at 474; for an excellent account of the early ties of the Chocques/Béthune dynasty with Anglo-Norman England, see J.F. Nieuw (2017) *Stratégies seigneuriales anglo-flamandes après 1066. L'honor de Chocques et la famille de Béthune*, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis*, 95, 163-192.

⁵⁶ DiBE ID 35343, 35344, 35346, 35353.

⁵⁷ Domesday Book F 170 : Gloucestershire.

⁵⁸ Oksanen (2012) at 207.

⁵⁹ *Diplomatic Documents Preserved in the Public Records Office*, (ed.) P. Chaplais (London, 1964), no. 4, at 12-13.

of Flanders, he played an important part in diplomatic missions to Henry II and accompanied King Louis VII on pilgrimage to Canterbury and Becket's tomb.

In the following generation, his third son Baldwin of Béthune (d. 1211), Lord of Chocques, became Count of Aumale and Lord of Holderness through his marriage with heiress Hawise. This was arranged by King Richard in 1195. Holderness is an area of the East Riding of Yorkshire and is situated on the north-eastern coast of England. With the Humber to its south, the Hull valley to the west and the North Sea to the East, it was considered an island during the Middle Ages. Before the conquest, the land of Holderness was held by many different freeholders, but from c. 1071 it was granted as one block to the followers the Anglo-Norman kings trusted, with the exception of land held by the church. It first came into the possession of the Fleming Drogo de la Beuvrière, also described in the Domesday Book as Drogo de Bevrere, Bevvaria or Bevreire or Drogo de Helderne or just Drogo. Although Drogo was not related to the counts of Aumale, his village of origin was probably Beuvrière, near Béthune.⁶⁰ A century later, Baldwin maintained his estates in England and was close to both Richard The Lionheart and King John, and in 1197, he was sent as one of his emissary to the German imperial election. Baldwin's daughter Alice, Lady of Chocques, wed the oldest son of William Marshal and second Count of Pembroke. In a diploma dated 1203, King John confirms that Baldwin has promised all his possessions in England to the young couple.⁶¹ In the same generation, Baldwin's nephew Robert VII (d. 1248), was a constable in the English army and close to King John. In a *notitia* issued in 1233 King Henry III confirms Robert VII in the English estates previously held by his father William and his brother Daniel.⁶²

Conclusion

The stories of these two noble Flemish families are typical examples for their involvement in the Norman conquest and occupation. It also illustrates their place in intricate ties and relationships between England, Normandy and Flanders that were to last several generations and gave many of the junior members of land-holding continental families the opportunity to seek their fortune in England. The example of Holderness clearly demonstrates how land is granted, confiscated and re-granted by the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings to those who serve them loyally. Moreover, it shows how continental land-holding in England was an essential element that consolidated the various cross-channel interactions and relationships. Land dealings did not necessarily represent the bulk of the interaction between the Anglo-Normans and the Flemish but it was a continuous underlying thread in relation to Flemish military and diplomatic support afforded to Anglo-Norman England.

⁶⁰ B. English (1979) *The Lords of Holderness 1086-1260*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, at 6 -9.

⁶¹ DiBE ID 13423.

⁶² DiBE ID 35122.