ADDENDUM TO ‘THE SKEFFINGTONS OF SKEFFINGTON’

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The above article notes that ‘Richard Basset, justiciar of England’ was the tenant-in-chief of a fee in Skeffington at the time of the Leicestershire Survey (c.1130), to which ‘no further reference...has so far come to light’. It then goes on to mention various references to what appears to be another fee there, the earliest describing ‘the serjeanty which was of Baldwin de Skeffington, for which he ought to carry the writs of the king in England’ in 1250.1

Slade’s later edition of the Leicestershire Survey includes the information, from a then recently discovered Basset family roll, that Basset held his fee in Skeffington ‘from the king by finding a man-at-arms’.2 Armour-bearer, squire or household servant would be a more accurate translation of the Latin word armiger than ‘man-at-arms’.3

Slade also mentions that there is a note ‘in another hand’ at the end of the paragraph relating to Skeffington and Loddington on the same roll, which states: ‘which Warin Ridel held by providing for the justiciar a messenger to go through the whole of England’.4

Presumably because it follows straight after Loddington, Slade assumes that the note relates to Basset’s fee there; however, the service described is strikingly similar to that of the serjeanty in Skeffington, which Kimball describes as ‘the only one of its kind not confined within the limits of a county or a hundred’.5 I therefore believe that the note relates instead to the serjeanty in Skeffington, and that this and Basset’s armiger fee there are the same.

The serjeanty was held in 1198 by David de Skeffington (missed by the article).6 It seems likely that he was the ‘David son of Geoffrey’, who appears to have succeeded his father in Skeffington by 1166/67 (also missed in the article),7 and also that this Geoffrey was the Geoffrey de Skeffington who is noticed by the article as the earliest member of the family on record, in 1164/65.8

2 Skillington and Farnham, ‘Skeffingtons’, at pp. 74–5.
7 Book of Fees, part 1, p. 9.
8 Pipe Roll 13 Henry II.
9 Skillington and Farnham, ‘Skeffingtons’, at p. 77.
Ridel could well have held the serjeanty immediately before this Geoffrey (a favourite Ridel name of the time in England), and it is possible that he was his father. Indeed, if Ridel is the Warin referred to in the Skeffington field-name ‘Warinisholm’ – in existence since at least the thirteenth century – it is also possible that he settled in the village and dropped his original surname to become the first of ‘the Skeffingtons of Skeffington’.

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