

A Tournament at Peveril Castle

Peveril Castle was built around 1086 and granted to William Peveril (or Puerel) who was William the Conqueror's illegitimate son.

William Peveril had a son, also called William and two daughters. The younger, Mellette (also known as Milletta or Mallett), was by far the more beautiful of the two sisters. She stated that she would only marry a knight who was handsome and courteous and distinguished for his prowess in battle. She also said: "I care little for riches and, I might add, the only true wealth is to have what the heart longs for".

William sent a proclamation far and wide which declared that "All brave knights who wished to tourney for love should come to Peveril of the Peak on Michaelmas [29 September]. The knight who shall perform the best shall win the hand of Mellette of Blanchtour" [Whittington Castle in Shropshire, Mellette's home]. The winning knight would also become the Lord and Master of Blanchtour and have all the feudal rights of that domain.

Amongst the knights who came to the contest were Aeneas, son of Malcolm, King of Scotland; the Prince Gwynedd of Wales; the Baron of Burgoyne; and Guarine de Metz of Normandy. The day of the tournament arrived and accompanied by the ladies of the Castle, Mellette went to the top of the tower where they could have the best view of the contest.

Guarine fought all the contestants and was declared to be the winner. Mellette agreed to take him as her husband. They approached the Bishop who duly married them. William Peveril gave a great feast in their honour. When the feast was over, Guarine and Mellette travelled to Blanchtour where they lived for forty years "in great joy". They had a son whom they named Fulk Fitz Guarine. Fulk Fitz Guarine, in due course, had a son whom he called Fulk Fitz Warine.

In 1175, William Peveril, Mellette's brother, tried to poison Ranulph, Earl of Chester. He was disinherited and fled to Lenton Priory in Leicestershire where he became a monk.

William, still a monk, later joined up with Fulk Fitz Warine (his sister Mellette's grandson) and a band of followers. They robbed the carts that brought supplies to Peveril Castle, where King Henry was often a visitor.

In a sense, Fulk Fitz Warine and William Peveril were the original Robin Hood and Friar Tuck!