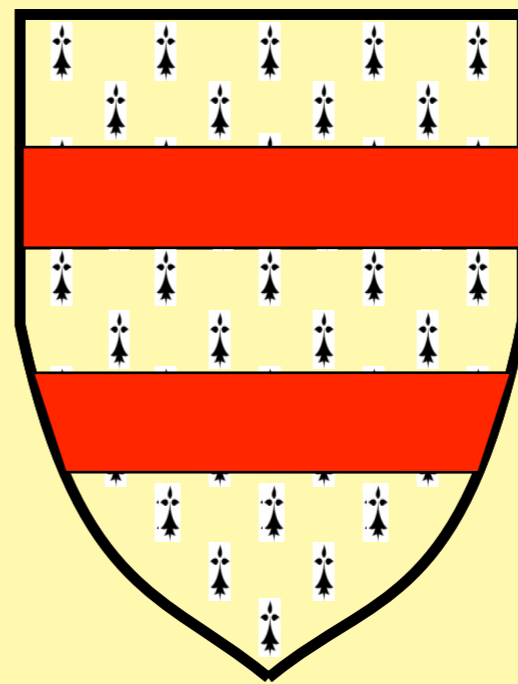
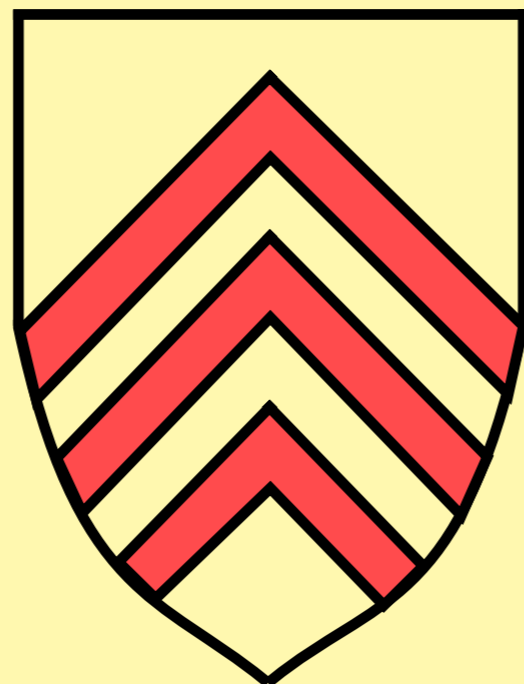


# *A PROMISE OF GLORY*



The Origins of the De Nogent Family  
and their Nugent Descendants  
from 0940 to Today

Francis Nugent Dixon  
(Some parts of this work are © Copyright 2014)

## Acknowledgements

This is usually the place where the author provides an interminable list of the people who were important in the writing of their book.

My acknowledgements will be short and sweet.

Sometime in the early 1950's, as a young boy in my grandparents house in a quiet suburb of Liverpool, I was sitting on the floor in front of my grandfather's chair. His name was **George Frederick Nugent**, born in Dublin in 1865, and he had once been a well travelled journalist. I remember him telling me that one day I should visit France (he found the French nation worthy of discovery), and also surmised that the Nugent family had origins in France. He suggested that I should learn French, as it was a fascinating and powerful literary language. All that he said that day was stored (uselessly, so I thought) in some corner of my developing mind, and was then promptly supplanted by more immediate concerns.

Years later, I went on a pot-holing expedition to the South of France, and ended up marrying a pretty French girl, which eventually led me to a professional career in Paris. I never returned to England, except to visit family and friends.

Nearly fifty years later, now retired, I can look back on more than ten years of my life, during which I have spend the better part of my waking hours researching the Nugent Family.

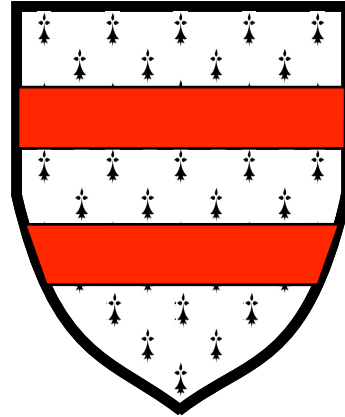
So, thanks go to my grandfather, **George Frederick Nugent**, who sowed the first seeds, and was surely responsible for some of the genes which have given me the patience and the force to plough through the tons and tons of information concerning Nugent history, in order to present you with my results, a fascinating story of a famous family covering more than a thousand years of history, marrying into the royalty of several countries in Europe, and providing men from Members of Parliament to Commanders of the Fleet (of the Royal Navy), from gold prospectors to Earls. In a thousand years of French, English and Irish history, a Nugent was somewhere close by.

Thanks also go to **Ms. Kathleen Thompson**, who wrote a fascinating book, "*Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - The County of the Perche, 1000-1226*". To my knowledge, she is one of the rare writers to narrate the early years of the De Nogent Family in English, and which represents just a tiny fragment of Medieval History. I found her book invaluable in my research. But, more important, when she pointed out that **ROTRou**, the name of many of the heads of the De Nogent family, has two roots, **ROT** meaning "Red or Glorious", and **TROU** meaning "promise", she was in effect handing me on a plate, the title of my book "***A Promise of Glory***". Thank you, indeed !

If you are a Nugent, living a normal life somewhere in the world (there are Nugents on four continents), you may be interested to know where your family came from. I have traced the blood lines of the Nugent family as far back as Charlemagne (742-814), King of the Franks and founder of the Holy Roman Empire. Not "Pie in the Sky", but solid research

You have every reason to be proud of your heritage.

Francis Nugent Dixon (Carnac, Brittany - January 2015)



# BOOK ONE

France  
(0940-1066)

# **A PROMISE OF GLORY**

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## Introduction to the Nugent Saga

If you are a Nugent, or a direct descendant of a Nugent, you have every reason to be proud of your heritage. You may be totally unaware of your distant family roots, and will probably be pleasantly surprised to learn the truth. More than a thousand years ago, in a small province of northern France, about 140 km. South-West of Paris, a relatively insignificant, minor but noble family rose to princely power. This metamorphosis did not take place overnight. By judicious marriages, associations and orientations, both religious and administrative, and by military prowess, the various branches of the family left an indelible mark. Through more than 200 years of upheaval in a country where the different power factions battled with each other, the "De Nogent" family emerged. When you examine their early history, you will immediately understand the significance of the concept "Being in the right place at the right time".

Eventually, the family was to become so powerful that it became an inherent enemy to the crowns of England and France. Its status and influence was then undermined in order to enhance the power of the throne. Kathleen Thompson, in her book "Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France", designates this situation as "the harnessing of localized power to royal purposes". After the invasion of England by William the Conqueror, a branch of the family took root in England, and some time later, moved on to Ireland. We can trace the family down through more than a thousand years of history, and across several countries. Originally called "De Nogent", because this was where they hailed from in France, the family name eventually evolved to "Nugent", in Ireland in the 15th Century !

Initially controlling their domains in France by means of armed forces, the family continually maintained its influence by applying more acceptable means within the growing democracies. Throughout the centuries, descendants of the Nugent family have been found in all spheres, from Artists to Poets, from Judges to Princes, from Doctors to Members of Parliament, from distinguished soldiers to Prime Ministers. The family branches in France, England and Ireland gained and lost power, land and status, as throughout the troubled centuries, they fought for, and against, the Kings of England and France.

Unfortunately for us, little information was committed to writing in the early days of the 10th century, at the time that the De Nogent family appeared on the historical scene. The early years of the family are shrouded in uncertainty, as few written traces of their existence are available to this day. Before the 12th Century, many of the nobles were illiterate, and any records were kept by the clergy, in Latin, the written language of that time. The early De Nogent family was certainly not of sufficient importance to merit any clerical records. Such records as have been recovered from this period are extremely valuable to the genealogist. The reason for the availability of such information is clear, as only the clergy could register these events in written form. They can show a notarial or commital act, such as a donation to the Church, or the foundation of a monastery. Such records can be likened to switching on a light at various moments of history, and noting the identities of those present. We look to the secondary figures present at such moments, hovering in the shadows of those primarily concerned, when a chance reference becomes of major importance to us in our quest. Early records concerning the "De Nogent" family only show the presence of our ancestors as witnesses to certain events, but not as

important participants. Most valuable to us then, are the dates of any such acts, and the names of those present. With so little information, we must try and piece together the lives of the early members of the family. We will find no birth or death dates of these secondary figures, at most may we glean from the acts, names of fathers or sons. The scribes of this time could not comprehend the importance, of each word of such acts, sometimes a brilliant flash of information for us, many centuries later. It is in such notorial acts that we see for the first time, the names of our forebears, present as witnesses to important events. Even with such valuable information as available in these records, the origins of many minor noble families is hard to place, in the 9th and 10th centuries, a troubled period where the future of kings and countries were being decided, as if by the throw of a dice. In these times, one of the first problems to haunt the genealogist was the inability to specify correct names, and to associate these names to precise dates. From there, we must try to evaluate the immediate relations, fathers and sons, of the persons mentioned. Finally, we must try to position each person of our family in a historical position, with birth, marriage and death dates, so that we can correctly build a family tree. A formidable task, indeed !

If we look at naming conventions and social conditions of the time, our task appears doomed from the start. The same forenames were often passed down from fathers to sons, or from mothers to daughters. Family names were not often forthcoming, as only important families would have such appendages, defining more often than not, the places from whence they came. Generations could be as little as 15 years, as death in child labour, illness, murder, crusades, etc. accounted for many, before their time. Boys became men at the age of 15 or 16, and were sacrificed on the altar of family feuds, social disruption and war. Lifetimes of 40 years were above average, and anybody who lasted until 60 was an exception. Conflicting birth and death dates exist for the same person, assuming, of course, that he was important enough to even figure in historical references of the day. As a result, dates of birth and death are very often marked "ABT" (about) by our historians, if they are suggested at all. Many people had several names, and several titles throughout their lives. It is not uncommon to find references of a woman who was married first to one member of a family, and later, to another member, due to an untimely death, and the imperious necessity to maintain the lands and titles within the same family. Many marriages were consanguine, and were usually "arranged" at a very early age (even as early as 5 and 6 years old), for reasons of land, power, treaties of peace between warring families, etc. Many of the young women died in child labour, and were "replaced" within a very short period. A woman whose husband died (naturally or not), could be married off to someone she did not even know, as soon as the acceptable period of mourning had been accomplished. A noble could have several marriages, and many illegitimate children. Marriages where the husband (of noble blood) was a mere boy, and the wife already a woman (sometimes a widow with children), were common. It is not surprising, then, that the establishment of family trees during this period were clouded with uncertainty. In such a male-dominant society, at this period, the names of the wives were doubtful or even unknown. Unless a person was of royal blood, much crucial information is simply absent. In the case of the De Nogent family, association with royal blood began in 1103, when Rotrou II (known now as "The Great") married Mathilda FitzHenry, the daughter of Henry I, King of England. From this moment on, it becomes easier to follow the descendants of the family.

In the light of these restrictions, we may consider ourselves fortunate to be able to reconstruct the early descendancy of our family. Others were not so lucky. In this troubled environment, there are often question marks hanging over parts of the family

tree which cannot be resolved. Throughout the centuries, genealogists of renown have stumbled and faltered over certain "hypotheses" concerning ours and other families. In a future chapter, we will present the different segments of the early family tree, and discuss the merits of each. The outcome, however, is sure. The De Nogent family, even through moments where certain names and dates are clouded with uncertainty, have spanned more than a thousand years of history, and often contributed to its making. However, although we can now trace the blood line of the family as far back as Charlemagne, King of the Franks, and probably even further, the object of this book is limited to presenting the De Nogent family, as it emerged from the shadows of the 10th century.

This is the story of a dynasty in the making. A minor noble family, through several marriages, frequent armed conquests and judicious "arrangements", expanded into the extremely powerful "House of Rotrou". We herald the birth of this powerful dynasty which controlled the county of Perche for several generations, gradually associating Alençon, Mortagne, Nogent, Gallardon, Bellême, Domfront, and Châteaudun into a power group almost as important as that controlled by the Kings of France. Thus the family becomes important enough to marry into royalty, become "cousins" of kings, and follow these kings into several centuries of the history of England, Ireland and France.

As with many local potentates in France over this troubled period, the family, its wealth, and its power was eventually reduced to nothing by successive English and French Kings, as they painfully united their countries. In 1226, when the family produced no male heir, the land and titles were forfeited to the French crown. Greedy English kings confiscated the lands of the French family in England, even when they were attributed by previous far-seeing forebears. The English descendants of the family finally moved on to Ireland, where, over the next centuries, they left their mark in a country practically reduced to the level of slavery by successive Kings and Queens of England. Nugents were thrown into prison and even hanged, some were attainted because of their acts against the Crown, some lost their entire fortune, and then regained it as they were "forgiven", but they subsisted through more than 800 years of troubled times in Ireland. In an attempt to escape the hardships imposed upon the Irish, some emigrated to Canada in the early 17th century. Some Nugents came to live in England, became Lords, Members of Parliament, and Judges, trying to keep a watchful eye on their possessions in Ireland. Many Irish were forced to flee to the United States during the potato famines of the 19th century. Others went to Australia and New Zealand, in search of new hope and a new life. Descendants of the Nugent family are to be found all over the world.

The Nugent family thus has a proud heritage, and can be followed though more than a thousand years of success and failure, power and poverty, fame and misfortune.

This is just a part of their story.

Carnac, Brittany - December, 2014

## Prologue - 10th Century France

The tenth century marks the beginning of the Medieval Warm Period, a time of unusually warm climate in the North Atlantic region.

While some Vikings were establishing themselves in Britain and Ireland, another group did the same in the coastal region of France, around the mouth of the river Seine. In effect, the Vikings in this region allowed themselves to be bought off by the King of France. These Vikings had quite a bit of leverage. Beginning in 896 they had sailed up the Seine and laid siege to Paris several times and were constantly expanding the area they pillaged. The French kings, even Charlemagne, were unable to stop the plundering. When the French noted the increasing number of Viking settlements along the coast, they feared the worst. But the Vikings were wearying of the raids. French defenses were becoming more effective and Viking losses were increasing. So a deal was struck in 912. The French would recognize the Viking possessions of the land they had already settled (plus a bit more) and make the Viking leader, one Rollo, a French noble. In return, the Viking duke would convert to Christianity, acknowledge the French king as his overlord and, protect France against wilder Vikings. Thus was born Normandy.

The Treaty of St. Clair-sur-Epte establishes the Duchy of Normandy. Rollo the Viking (Gange-Rolv Ragnvaldsson, or Hrolf the Ganger) becomes France's first duc d'Orléans as the Scandinavian Norsemen extend their domination over the Franks. Now aged about 51, Rollo will be baptized next year, taking the name Robert, and will acquire large parts of what later will be called Normandy.

Rollo died at Rouen at about 85 years old, having been France's first duc d'Orléans. He turned over governance of his dukedom 4 years previously to his son William I Longsword, then about 38, who had married Sprota de Bretagne and become 2nd duke of Normandy.

### **931 A.D.: political events**

Hugh of Provence cedes Provence to Burgundy's Rudolf II in return for Rudolf's renunciation of all claims to Italy (year approximate; see 926 A.D.). He makes his son Lothair II co-ruler of Provence.

### **936 - 954 A.D.: political events**

Rudolf I of Burgundy dies in mid-January at Auxerre, France, after a 24-year reign in which he ruled Italy from 922 to 926 and united Burgundy. He is succeeded as king of France by a 14-year-old son of the late Charles III (the Simple), whose second wife, Eadgifu, was a daughter of England's Edward I (she fled with the boy to Wessex after the imprisonment of Charles in 922). A nephew of the late Danish leader Aethelstan (Guthrum), the boy is chosen king by the 39-year-old count of Paris Hugh the Great, whose father, Robert, was killed at Soissons in 923. He is consecrated at Laon June 19 and will reign until 954 as Louis IV d'Outremer (from Overseas)

The main rival to the Carolingian kings in Francia Occidentalis is the family of Robert the Strong. Count of extensive territories around the Loire, he plays a leading part in the struggle against the Normans. His son, Eudes, adds Paris to his feudal domains and defends it successfully in 885-6 against a Norman siege.



When the west Frankish king dies in 888, the nobles elect Eudes in his place instead of a member of the Carolingian dynasty. Subsequently the crown returns to Carolingian monarchs, but by the mid-10th century they rule only with the support of the descendants of Robert the Strong. One of them, Hugh the Great, exemplifies the nature of a great nobleman's power base.

Part of Hugh's strength derives directly from his feudal lands; he is count of Paris, with large territories between the Seine and the Loire. He also acquires a title of romantic resonance, capable of inspiring a special kind of loyalty; from 937 he is called 'Duke of the Franks'. And he has useful brothers-in-law; his first wife is sister of an Anglo-Saxon king of England, his second is sister of the emperor Otto I.

More surprisingly, Hugh is the lay abbot of at least four great monasteries, bringing him considerable wealth and a voice in the vast network of Benedictines. This astonishing portfolio, as early as the 10th century, reveals the peculiar blend of secular and religious power in European feudalism.

At different periods Hugh supports and opposes the Carolingian dynasty in the west Frankish kingdom, depending on where he considers the best interest of his own family to lie. When he dies in 956, succeeded by three sons, he has considerably extended his territory around Paris and has secured the Duchy of Burgundy for his descendants.

### **954 A.D.: political events**

France's Louis IV dies September 10 at age 33 and is succeeded by his 13-year-old son Lothair, who will reign until 986, initially under the guardianship of Hugh the Great, count of Paris, and later under his maternal uncle Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne.

Lothair finds his closest enemies to be across the border in Normandy. The warring Normans, directly descended from an even more violent Viking tribe, harass peaceful merchants and farmers across the border into l'Île de France. He summons the Count of Blois and Chartres, a certain Thibault, to take the problem in hand. The solutions applied to the Kings problems at this time are far-reaching in the eventual emergence of the House of Rotrou.

### **956 A.D.: political events**

Hugh the Great, count of Paris, declares himself effective master of Burgundy in mid-April but dies at Dourdan June 17 at age 59 (approximate). He is succeeded by his 18-year-old son Hugh Capet, who is recognized with some reluctance as Duke of the Franks by his cousin Lothair IV, King of the Franks.

### **967 A.D.: political events**

Lothair IV of the Franks dies March 2 at age 44, after a 32-year reign and is succeeded by his 19-year-old son, who will reign briefly as Louis V (le Fainéant), embroiling the Carolingians with Adalberon, Archbishop of Reims, and Hugh Capet.

Emma, Queen of Franks was the queen consort. She was married to Lothaire, King of the Franks. Mother of King Louis V of the Franks, After his death, Hugh Capet succeeded to the throne, ending the Carolingian dynasty and beginning the Capetian.

## 986 A.D.: political events

LOUIS V. (967-987), King of France, succeeded his father Lothair in March 986 at the age of nineteen, and finally embroiled the Carolingian dynasty with Hugh Capet and Adalberon, archbishop of Reims. From the absence of any important event in his one year's reign the medieval chroniclers designated him by the words "qui nihil fecit," i.e. "le Faineant" or "he who did nothing." He married Adelaide, sister of Geoffrey Grisegonelle, count of Anjou, but had no issue. His heir by blood was Charles, Duke of Lower Lorraine, son of Louis IV, but the defection of the bishops and the treason of Adalberon (Ascelinus), bishop of Laon, assured the success of Hugh Capet.

## 987 A.D.: political events

France's Louis V dies in May, and it is alleged that his mother, Emma, poisoned him. His death at age 20 ends the Carolingian dynasty founded by Charlemagne in 800, and the Capetian dynasty that will rule until 1328 comes to power. The archbishop of Reims declares that the Frankish monarchy is elective rather than hereditary, denies the claims of the late King's uncle Charles, duke of Lower Lorraine, and engineers the election of his friend Hugh. His nickname, because of the *capa* or 'cape' which he wears, is Hugh Capet.

## 996 A.D. : political events

France's Hugh Capet dies at Paris October 14 at age 58 and is succeeded by his son, Robert, who will reign until 1031 as Robert II.

The acquisitions of the second Duke of Normandy, William I (Longsword; 927–942), were threatened when he was murdered by Arnulf I of Flanders in 942. It was only in the reign of his son Richard I (942–996) that something like administrative continuity based on succession to fiscal domains and control of the church was achieved. The dukes (as they then came to be styled) allied with the ascendant duke Hugh Capet, had little to lose from the latter's accession to the kingship in 987.

The choice of Hugh Capet as king in 987 is the moment at which the western half of the empire of the Franks unmistakably becomes France. The Capetian dynasty will last until 1328. The monarchy asserts its new power over feudal lords.

In the beginning, the Capetians only ruled the area around Paris and Orleans. They soon progressed with reuniting other parts of the kingdom and took over many parts of what today is known as France. The Capetians found the royal château which remains a favourite residence of the kings of France until the Renaissance.

About the middle of the 10th century, the name of Thibault I is recorded as the Count of Blois. He was the founder of a family which remained in power until 1230. Blois became the most important town in the region. The first stone castle was built to protect the town dates back to that period. An independent bastion surrounded the castle, and followed the line of the headland on which it was erected. The numerous medieval remains still exist.

In the influential sphere of the House of Blois and Chartres, and especially the House of Châteaudun, a previously unknown "**Rotrocus**" has already made his appearance ..... We will call him Rotrou I.

You are now ready for the beginning of the story concerning the De Nogent dynasty.

## **Feudal Rules and Privileges during the early Middle Ages**

This document has been inspired from excerpts of the book "Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes", written in 1838 by Jean Lebrun (Abbé Fret <sup>1</sup>). It recounts the relationship between the different levels of society in the feudal period of the early Middle Ages, especially those between lords and their vassals. Additionally, it clarifies the relationship between lords and vassals of the Perche, specifically, between those which interest us most, between Rotrou de Nogent and Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres, and between Yves de Bellême and William, Duke of Normandy. It also gives an explanation of the appearance of middle nobility of several centuries. Because of favours bestowed upon them by local nobility, usually for services rendered, vassals rose firstly to the lower level of nobility by becoming "lords" of a town or other minute dominions. They would usually retain it at the pleasure of their senior lord. However, the visibility of these new lords allowed them access to a higher level of society, which could consolidate their new position. Often, the sons of these new "nobles" would access the titles of their father, upon his death, and so hereditary passing of their titles could become the norm.

Studying successive generations of the Rotrou Family in the Perche, between about 950 up to today is a perfect example of this potential. Rotrou de Nogent was rewarded for his fidelity to Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres, and then to his son Eudes. In his new position of Lord (Seigneur) of Nogent, Rotrous daughter married into the family of the Viscounts of Châteaudun, and by a quirk of fate, the male descendants became themselves Viscounts of Châteaudun, and later (self-attributed) Counts in their own right. After allying themselves with William, Duke of Normandy, in his Conquest of England, the family thus had close access to English/French royalty, and a marriage of a daughter of Henry I to a "De Nogent" Count, finally brought the family into the spheres of royalty. Over the next Centuries, following the ups and downs of the English and Irish descendants of the family, we now follow a long line of Nugents, favoured by successive Kings of England, and several branches of this expanding family currently hold titles of Lords, Dukes and Earls, as a hereditary right.

We can now look at the customs of the early Middle Ages, which put unknown families on the first rung of the ladder to fame, and allowed them to reach the dizzy heights of royalty.

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<sup>1</sup> Abbé Fret - A parochial priest and historian of the Perche (1800-1843)

## Hereditary Lords and Counts - The Origins of Nobility

After the defeat of the Gaul tribes by the Franks (after 600), all confiscated territory was divided into three types, each of which represented a sort of territorial property :

### 1 - Lands governed by an "Allodial Law"

Allodial lands were the absolute property of their owner, and not subject to any service or acknowledgement to a superior. These lands are held by hereditary right.

### 2 - Lands governed by a "Salic Law"

Salic lands were governed, amongst others, by the rules of succession to the throne of France, preventing among other things, the accession of women to positions of power.

### 3 - Lands governed by a "Tributary Law"

Tributary lands represent those which, after the conquest, were abandoned to their original owners, under the condition that a tribute or rent was paid to the Frank warriors who had freed the land.

*We will discuss only the lands governed by Salic Law, which covered the lands in and around the territories of the Perche.*

Salic lands were those which fell to the Franks after the Conquest, which the current king often distributed to his companions in arms as a favour, as encouragement, or as a reward, under condition that they did military service<sup>2</sup>, a situation known as *jure beneficii*. This mechanism was very much a "give and take" system. The king could not always maintain his lands at a distance, so he symbolically "gave" certain lands to his favoured subjects, on condition that they should be protected and maintained by the said subject. On a second count, this subject was obliged to provide a certain number of armed men into the service of the king, thus allowing him to maintain an army at little or no cost. The same mechanism could be operated at a lower level. Counts, having received extensive lands from their king, could allocate certain parts of this land (a town, for example) to his own subjects, under the same rules<sup>3</sup>. Such rewards could be revoked by the "donor" at any moment. Originally attributed with no specific duration, these rewards could be later attributed for life, before eventually becoming hereditary titles. This hierarchical mechanism was used also for other reasons, such as recovering taxes, or dispensing justice.

The principal recipients and other servants to whom the sovereigns gave concessions of land and titles, rewarding their military service, were known as

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<sup>2</sup> Normally, the tributary of the reward was obliged to provide a specific number of men and their arms, to their sovereign, who would treat them as his own warriors. The number of soldiers provided and the duration of their service, depended on the importance of the reward (title and/or lands)

<sup>3</sup> Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres was the vassal of King Lothaire, but himself allocated to his vassal Rotrou, the "lordship" of the town of Nogent. Thibaults cost of maintaining troops to the king could thus be offset by the troops he himself received from Rotrou.

Antrustions<sup>4</sup>, that is, volunteers devoted to the service of their king, and who had sworn fidelity, and so had become his "Leude"<sup>5</sup>, his "Fidelis"<sup>6</sup> or "Convive"<sup>7</sup>, terms later known under the name "Vassal"<sup>8</sup>. The Antrustions give to the king an intrinsic force with which he defends himself, his dignity, and who employs this force to the good of the nation.

Kings gave entire provinces under the title of Duchies, regions under the title of Marquisates, towns and their territories under the title of Counties, Baroneries and "Châtellenies"<sup>9</sup>, or finally, a Lordship. The domain was possessed as a reward by a Lord (as an example), exerted upon its inhabitants a governing mechanism inherent to the property, which was the fundamental element of the principal of "Feudality".

The direct sovereign over a number of territories which formed his royal domain, and the vassals who lived there, the king was the absolute head of all the subservient lords, who, within the limits of the feudal law, imposed themselves upon their own vassals with complete independence. They were, in the same way as the king, absolute masters in their domain (known as fiefs), alone apt at recovering taxes and exercising all forms of authority, and, if powerful enough, even allowed to make their own currency<sup>10</sup>.

### **Relationship between a Vassal and his Suzerain<sup>11</sup>**

The absolute sovereign of a number of lands which formed his royal domain, and of his vassals which lived on those lands, the king was the head or suzerain of all the other lords, who, within the feudal laws were themselves suzerains over their own vassals. Dukes, Marquess and Counts carried the titles of Feudal Lords of the Crown, and paid homage only to the king. Whenever a fief became hereditary, the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal followed the law of heredity, the sons being engaged as were their fathers. However, the sons did not become in their turn, vassals of their suzerain, by tacit consent. A special ceremony was held which would confer upon the son, the same rights and the same obligations as those of his father, a ceremony composed of three specific acts, Hommage<sup>12</sup>, a Sermon of Allegiance, and an Investiture.

In spite of the hereditary nature of the fief, the death of a vassal would imply a new ceremony, in order to renew the feudal links between the suzerain and his new vassal. In this ceremony, the vassal would present himself before his future lord, after having saluted him, and then would kneel before him without armour or weapons, and bare-headed, joining his hands, which the lord would take between his, and

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<sup>4</sup> Antrustion : a Franc warrior who declares himself to be a follower of the king.

<sup>5</sup> Aristocracy or privileged class.

<sup>6</sup> Fidelis : Faithful, loyal, devoted, trustworthy, constant.

<sup>7</sup> Convive : table-companion, invited to eat with the sovereign.

<sup>8</sup> Vassal : A person who has entered into mutual obligations with a Lord or Monarch. The obligations often included military support and mutual protection, in exchange for certain privileges, usually including the grant of land held as a fiefdom.

<sup>9</sup> Châtellenie : The smallest unit of administrative power, governed by the master of the chateau.

<sup>10</sup> The later Counts of Perche are reputed to have struck coinage, but little information is available concerning these monies.

<sup>11</sup> Sovereign in this context is not necessarily "King", but any superior or master over his vassals. A little known word in English, "Suzerain" covers this definition.

<sup>12</sup> Tribute.

which signified on behalf of the vassal, subjection and respect, and on behalf of the lord, protection and defence. The homage would be announced thus : "*I become your subject, from this day forward, of my life and my acts, and promise allegiance*"<sup>13</sup> *for the lands that I avow to hold in your name*". The Hommage would be followed by a Sermon, where the vassal would stand with his hands on the Gospel, and pronounce the following words : "*I will be a true and faithful vassal, and will pledge my faith for the lands I hold in your name, with the exception of the respect and faith that I owe to my king, our sovereign, and to his heirs*". The ceremony would end when the vassal kissed the sacred book, and the suzerain would present to the vassal, a symbol of the fief upon which he would exercise control, a branch of a tree, a handful of earth or a sod of grass. The suzerain would then embrace his vassal as a mark of the joint engagement that each contracted with the other.

The feudal custom defined that Hommage could only be paid in the presence of the lord himself, whereas the Sermon of Allegiance could be received, in the absence of the lord, by the lords Seneschal or Bailiff. In the province of the Perche, the custom obliged the suzerain to receive Hommage from the young, when the boys reached the age of 20, and the girls reached the age of 16.

In spite of the customs of this period, often considered today as barbaric, the customs of that time were much respected, although we come to the end of a decadent civilisation, that, even if we can look upon these times as "gallant", we must admit that these customs were, at least illegal, and often close to the level of criminal behaviour. However, any vassal found guilty of adultery or any criminal offence towards the wives or daughters of his suzerain, and to have profited from the innocence and purity of any young virgin, whether it be within the family of the suzerain, or any other, and who was in principal under his protection, would be immediately stripped of his land and titles, and would lose all rights, in the future, to his possessions. Such were some of the more positive elements of an otherwise negative medieval environment.

If a vassal was to find his lord in any danger of falling into enemy hands, he would be obliged to come to his help. seat him back upon his horse, if necessary, and even provide his personal mount, if the suzerain's horse was lost. All of these material obligations were considered to be feudal service, including : military service, legal assistance and, in fact, any other possible assistance. A vassal was obliged, under orders from his suzerain, to follow him in his military expeditions, with a fixed number of armed soldiers, either inside or outside the limits of the feudal territories, the duration of which could be twenty, forty or sixty days, either for defensive or for offensive operations.

If the suzerain was obliged to leave for the Crusades, the vassal was legally obliged to provide a certain sum of money to contribute to the enormous cost of such a voyage.

### **Obligations of the Suzerain towards his Vassal**

A vassal, in acquitting all of his obligations towards his suzerain, was master in his own fief. Not only was his independence total, but he also had rights concerning his

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<sup>13</sup> From the Latin "ligare" - to bind.

suzerain. The reciprocity of rights between the two was such, that, a suzerain could lose all his rights to a vassal, if he was proved to fail to follow the laws of modesty towards the wife or the daughters of his vassal, if, instead of protecting his vassal from any enemies, or if he caused injury to his vassal. If the vassal was denied judgment in his suzerain's court, or if the suzerain did not maintain the vassal in the fief which was his, by right, then the vassal would cease to honour his direct suzerain, and instead pledge homage to the suzerain of the next higher level, looking to his new liege for satisfying the injustice caused.

### **Relations between Vassals of the same Suzerain**

All the vassals being ceded similar territories or fiefs by the same suzerain, were considered equal to each other and were known as "Peers". The only link which united them was the feudal relation that they had with the same suzerain. They each had different business, obligation and rights to their suzerain. Moreover, they were completely independent with respect to each other, they had no business or obligations to each other, except perhaps to be present at the suzerain's celebrations, or to help in rendering justice, or to take part in a military expedition under control of their suzerain, whenever he so required. Outside of these circumstances, they each lived isolated and separate from each other. Nevertheless, due to ambition, pride and other differences, some vassals inevitably came to hate others, and dispute territory and control. These situations required the intervention of the suzerain, who made a judgement and thus ended the quarrel. In between vassals of different suzerains, there was no such judgement and pacification possible, and so under many cases, there could be long-standing animosity, and even protracted war between neighbouring vassals.

In the case of the Family of Rotrou in Nogent, and the Family of Creil in Bellême, their differences were solved after more than 100 years of belligerence, by a change of policy in the Rotrou family. They sided with William<sup>14</sup>, Duke of Normandy in his invasion of England, and were later favoured with an increase in standing (marriage of Henry I's daughter with Rotrou II), and finally recovered the town of Bellême under the auspices of the King of England, after having lost it in battle in 963, many years before. The stature of the family was much enhanced by military prowess, participation in several Crusades, and a clear acumen for climbing the ladder of success. However, the French side of the Bellême family (after Yves de Bellême) was decimated by internal quarrels (including several murders), worthy of the Borgia family. Although the English descendants (by marriage) enjoyed a successful future in the aura of the English kings (William, Henry I, Henry II), the Bellême fief fell into the hands of the Counts of the Perche more by lack of contestants and loss of favour with English Royalty, rather than by efficient military campaigns and judicious planning. As Vicomte de Romanet states in his excellent treaty of the events of this period, the Bellême family were bloodthirsty savages of no stature whatsoever, with respect to the pious Christian family of the Rotrou dynasty who were to leave an indelible trace on the developing society of these times.

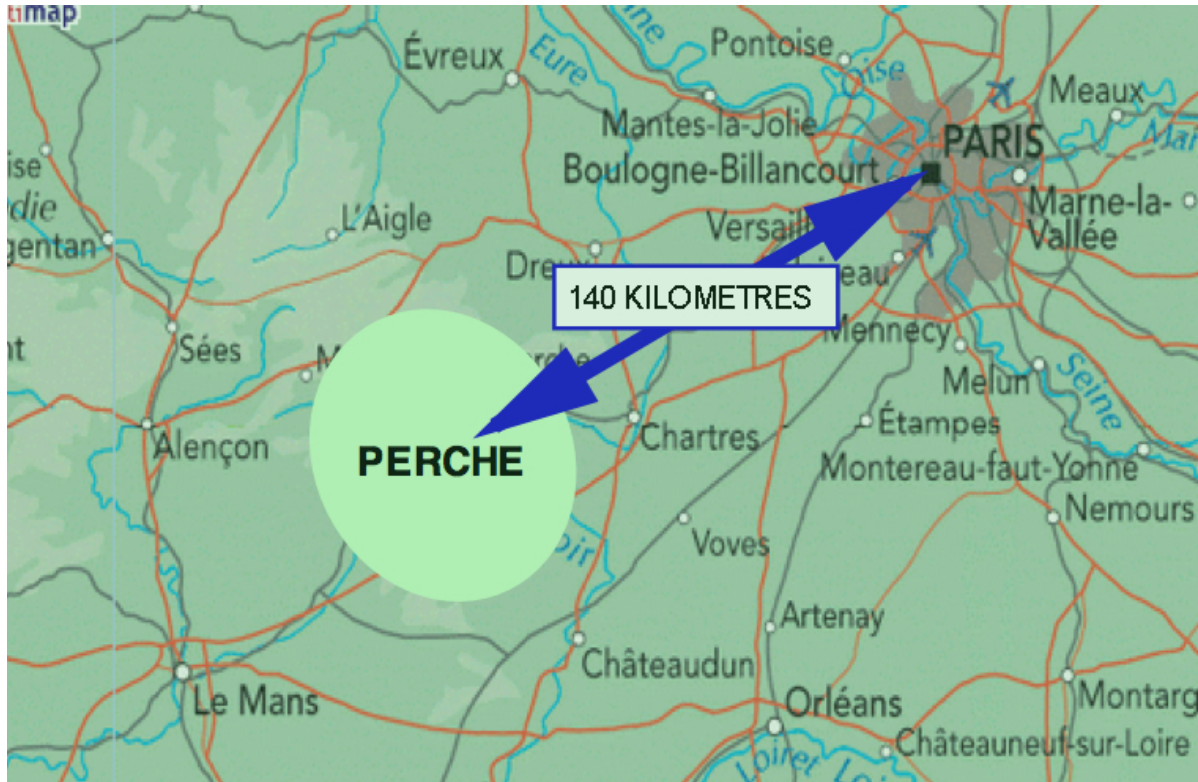
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<sup>14</sup> After his marriage to Adelaide de Bellême, Rotrou II came into contact with Roger de Montgomery (Adelaide's 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin), chief counsellor to William. This relationship flowered into a change of policy by the Rotrou family, and developed progressively from an alliance to friendship. This judicious change was the major reason for the rapidly expanding power of the Rotrou family in the succeeding years.

# A History Of The Perche

The Perche : Its origins, and the creation of the County of the Perche.

## Location of the County of the Perche



Today, the Perche is defined as a former province of western France which extends over the departments of Orne, Eure, Eure-et-Loire and Sarthe, which evolved from the County of the Perche during the French Revolution. The Perche is bounded by Normandy to the North and West, Maine to the South-West, the Vendomois and Dunois to the South and Beauce and Thimerais to the East.

However, this area of France has a long history, and was known as the Perche <sup>1</sup> even before Roman times as an impenetrable and swampy forest area of north-west France (although the country of France did not yet exist at this period). Celtic tribes moved into this area about 700 BC, but they did not control the area, for other tribes (the *Ligures*<sup>2</sup> and the *Ibères*<sup>3</sup>) had been already settled there for some time.

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<sup>1</sup> In Latin at this time - "*Saltus Perticus*".

<sup>2</sup> *Ligures* - one of the three great barbarous tribes of Celtic origin and probably of Indo-European language. Although apparently known in Greece and in Northern Italy, they appear to have adventured as far north as France, together with the *Ibères*.



In 58 A.D. Roman legions decided that possession of the Perche was absolutely necessary in order to conquer and control the areas of Armorique, and the area which would one day become Normandy. Roman occupation *[of these territories]* was not successful without some difficulty, so strong was the resistance of the tribes already occupying this region.

About 285 : Invasions from tribes from the East, across the German border.

About 406 : More barbarian tribes tried to invest the area, amongst which we find the *Suèves*<sup>4</sup> and the *Alains*<sup>5</sup>.

About 420 : Another invasion - that of the *Francs* whose leader was *Childéric* and whose son *Clovis 1st* will ensure the Frankish domination.

Several centuries later (in 845) the Vikings arrived, this time from the North, in true Viking fashion, destroying castles and monasteries, pillaging everything they could find, and causing the local inhabitants to flee in terror. The Carolingian army, used to offensive action, were not very efficient against these mobile bands. Their defences were static, behind trenches and earthen palisades. Thus we find in 853, a certain County of the Corbonais, at Mortagne *[au Perche]*, whose head was the first ancestor of the true Counts of Perche. Corbon was the most ancient town of the Perche. The area had given its name to the Corbonnais, raised to the level of a county, and which included most of the Perche. At the time of the destruction of Corbon in 963, Mortagne inherited the title of chief town of the County.

As the memory of the town of Corbon was forgotten over the years, the town of Mortagne became the most important of the whole area of the Perche, which became large enough to be called a county. The early Routrou family held the title of Counts of Mortagne, and even Counts of Perche (as the Corbonnais eventually became to be known)

Not being able to perpetuate the souvenir of the Corbonnais, by conserving its name, the Perche was progressively used to symbolise the County of Mortagne; the latter was carried for some time by the early Rotrous, who were indifferently entitled Counts of the Perche, or Counts of Mortagne, which, in fact was the same thing.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibères* - Apparently the earliest settlers of the Iberian Peninsula, of pro-Celtic origin, it is not sure whether their penetration reached the north of France. However, their association with the *Ligures* at the times indicated, appear to have some foundation.

<sup>4</sup> *Suèves* - After migrating from Elba in Italy to the Rhinlands, and then to the Iberic peninsula, the *Suèves* and the *Alains*, try their chance across the borders into France, but are assimilated into the local tribes around 589.

<sup>5</sup> The first mention of the "*Alains*" tribe was due to a 1st Century historian Flavius Josephus ..... "the *Alains* are a tribe of Scythes, emanating from the banks of the Tanais and the swamps of Méotide, that is to say, between the Don and the Sea of Azov (Southern Russia). In 375, date of the "Great Invasions", some of them fled before the Huns, and settled in Germanie. Early in the Vth Century some migrate into the Iberic Peninsula and from there into France, attaining Normandy and Brittany, but leaving little trace on the territory of Gaulle.

## The First Counts of Perche

The Counts of Perche, self named, rather than being given the title, all belonging to the Rotrou Family, find themselves actively involved, not only in all the major events of national history, but also in the history of Europe. They will suffer the birth of Normandy; they will assist, powerless, in the fall of the Carolingians, and will in vain refute the arrival of the Capetien monarchy; they will assist William the Conqueror in his conquest of England, they will cross swords with the Maures in Spain, and the Sarrasins in Palestine; and finally, they will become allies of the royal families of France, Spain and England. For more than a century, the Counts of Perche and their enemies, the Lords of Bellême, will successively pronounce themselves for and against the Kings of France and England, and the Duke of Normandy. This period is also marked by the pious construction of Abbeys, Monasteries, Asylums, and the notification of Cartulary documents (rules, laws and customs), which were monuments of the legislation of that time.

### Rotrou III (The Great) : « a model of chivalry»

The history of Rotrou III is certainly one of the highlights of the Middle Age, one of the richest and the most chivalrous. Rotrou III, son of Geoffrey III, *[self-styled]* Count of Perche *[Numbering systems may vary - Many refer to him as Rotrou II, son of Geoffrey II]* undertook long and perilous campaigns whose object was simply "Faith, Glory and Prestige". He was quoted by Chateaubriand as a model of chivalry. We owe him the foundation of the Abbey of Thiron, as well as the establishment of the Order of Saint Benoit at Corbion (Moutier au Perche). Although a vassal of the King of France, because of his marriage with *[Mathilda]* the daughter of the King of England, he supported the latter in his combats with his own sovereign.

From the time of Rotrou IV, who administered the County of the Perche under the reign of Louis VII (the Young) and Philippe Auguste, and up to the last of the Rotrou family *[Guillaume 1226]*, the Counts of Perche, in harmony with their alliance with the French crown, will exclusively occupy themselves with the interests of this royal house.

*[When the last of the male line of the Rotrou family had no male heir, the lands were forfeit to the French Crown by the law of Reversion]. Blanche de Castille became Countesse of Perche* <sup>6</sup>.

The *[French]* King Louis IX, having received the County *[of the Perche]* from his mother, ceded it as a privilege to one of his children. This system, whereby the King gives to a close relative, honours and feudal fees, while conserving real authority, was used in the Perche until the French Revolution. The County of the Perche, called Le Grand Perche, included the lands of Bellême, Mortagne and Nogent *[-le-Rotrou]*. As for the five Baronys of the south, they became the "Perche Gouet".

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<sup>6</sup> Blanche de Castille was a distant cousin of Geoffrey III de Mortagne, 1st Count of Perche (through Julienne de Perche, Margaret de l'Aigle Rotrou, Alfonso VIII de Castille)

## Historical Landmarks

1114 : Creation of the County of the Perche.

1226 : The Country became a possession of the French crown. Part of the County was removed to create the County of Alençon.

After 1325, both counties were held by a member of the House of Valois.

1525 : The last Duke of Alençon dies, and the Perche returns to the Crown.

1450 : End of the Hundred Years War in the Perche. A period of reconstruction and development of the manors.

1558 : Drafting of "*La Coutume du Perche*" [*the Customs of the Perche*] (a series of laws of the County).

1634-1662 : Many Percherons immigrated to Canada to work on the estates of the St. Lawrence River. Today, most French Canadians have some ancestors who came from the Perche.

1791 : Division of the Perche into 4 departments :

Eure et Loir (28)

Orne (61)

Sarthe (72)

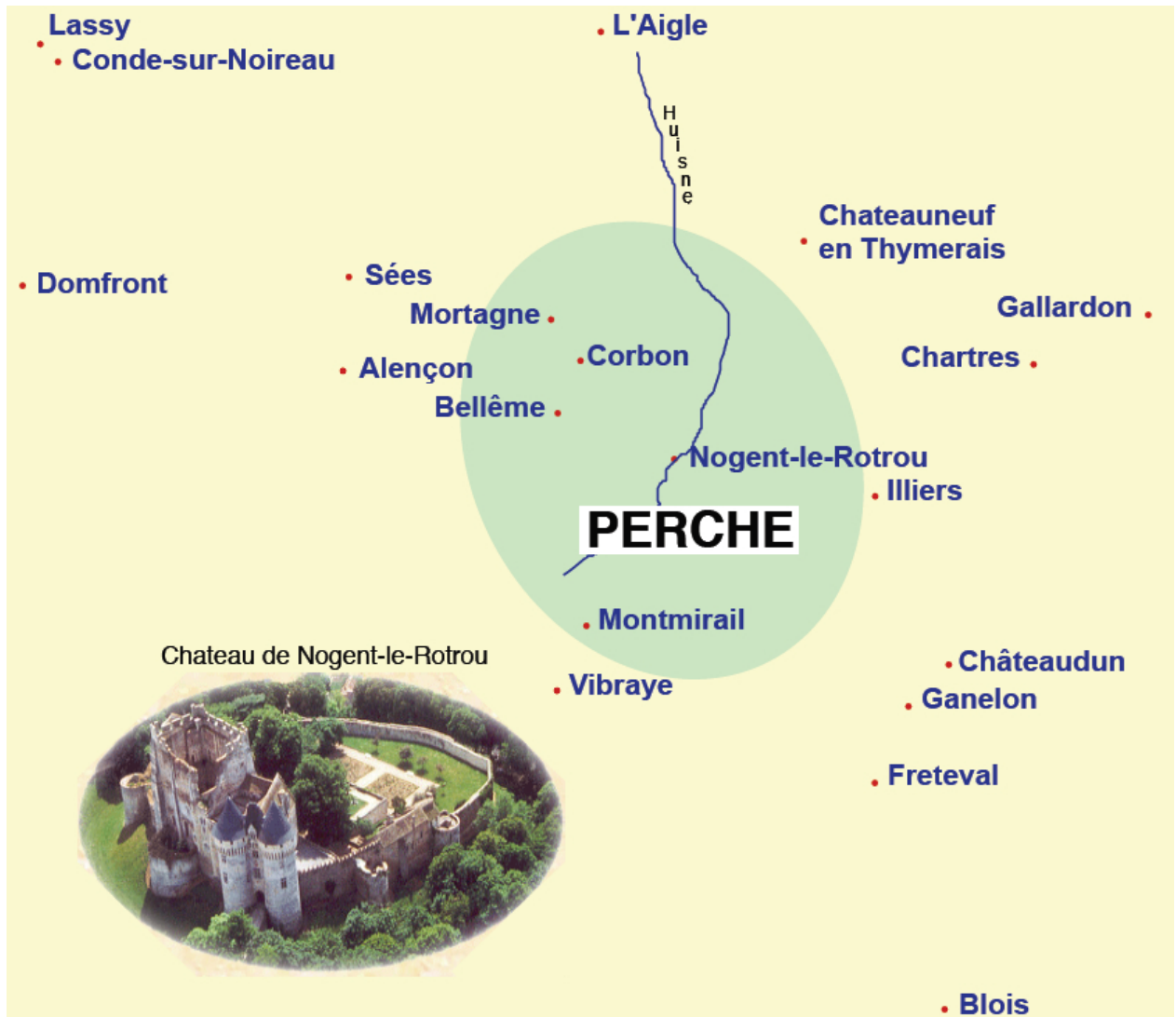
Loir et Cher (41)

*[This is not an exact division. Each of these four departments contain territories external to the 'The Perche']*.

In spite of this fragmentation, the Percheron Identity is alive to this day, magnified by the glorious history and singularity of this territory.

The *Fédération des Amis du Perche* expresses, since 1947, the desire of the Percheron inhabitants, to preserve a patrimonial and cultural identity, confirmed since 1998 by the creation of the Regional Park of the Perche.

## Towns referred to in the History of the Rotrou Family



## First appearance of the Rotrou Family

Neustria, or "Neptrocus" appears in Latin chronicles of historical description, and the Francian Kingdom covers the north-west of existing France, and which has as a capital, Soissons.

This term appears during the VIIth Century, used by the monk *Jonas de Bobbio*, to define the kingdom to the west, after the "sharing out" of these territories between the Merovingian Kings.

Mentioned for the last time in the Treaty of *Saint-Clair-sur-Epte* in 911, when an ill-defined territory was ceded to the Viking Rollo, which was eventually to constitute "**Northmannie**" or "**Normandy**", the terme Neustria would disappear with the Carolingian Dynasty, and the emergence of the principalities of Anjou, Maine, Blois and Orleans.

It may have been by chance that our distant ancestor Rotrocus (we know him as Rotrou), stepped into the limelight from the shadows of the Xth Century. It may also have been inevitable that this young, and no doubt ambitious soldier rose through the ranks to become commander of one of the armies of Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres. Whatever the reasons for the appearance of this future House of Rotrou, certain wheels had been set into motion in the middle of this century which would allow him and his descendants to gain recognition, marry firstly into noble families, and finally into royalty. After much research, I have been able to build a justifiable account of the very first days of the Rotrou dynasty, as we will come to know it, which eventually spanned more than 10 centuries, across France, England and Ireland, and counting Lords, Viscounts, Earls, and even Kings in its family line.

### The Very Beginning

We must start, if you will, in the uncertain and changing moments of the Xth century, around 950, when the fragmented countries of Europe were slowly but surely moving to national unity. Many of the European countries were simply a conglomerate of micro-kingdoms, or at best, a mixture of power factions dominating by force, a weak and passive serfdom.

Taking a cursory look around France at this time, we cannot remain silent about the "reorganisation" which was slowly taking place in an awakening environment. To refer to one, but nevertheless vitally important "event", which certainly influenced the course of affairs in France, we will turn our interest to what had happened in Northern Europe in recent times.

In 911, Charles the Simple, King of France defeated the Viking leader Rollo, and forced him to sign the treaty of *Saint-Clair-sur-Apte*, whereby Rollo would become his vassal, and also convert to Christianity. For these concessions, Rollo was given land around Rouen, the heart of which would soon become the Duchy of Normandy. On hindsight, this would appear to be an invitation to the wolf to come and dine with the sheep. The Vikings were certainly not known for their peace-loving attitude towards others. Charles could not possibly perceive of the consequences of this treaty, on the future of France and England for centuries to come. The Vikings were here to stay !

Without a doubt, the influence of a certain King Othon upon coming events in France, cannot be ignored. Otton I, known as "Othon the Great" was born in Walhausen in Saxe in 912. He became King of Germanie and Oriental France <sup>1</sup>, after the death of Henry 1st in 936. He reigned for nearly 40 years, during which he was known for his vision and prestige, by his political management, by his military successes, and by his many administrative reforms. He is considered as the true founder of the Roman/Germanic Saint Empire. His influence upon French "affairs" is without contest, as he stabilised the western boundary with Germany.

On the 10th of August, 955, Othon wins near Augsburg, a victory over the Hungarians, which will finally liberate France, Italy and Germany, of their insistent invasions. The changes that took place in the state of the population, concerning the art of war, had already put a stop to the ravages of the Normans and the Sarrasins, but those of the Hungarians had lasted for much longer. The year before, they had already breached the eastern boundaries of France, and were threatening them once more until Othon defied them. These lightly clad horsemen, accustomed to a simple life because of the nomadic Sarmate that they crossed during their rapid incursions, found pittance in the countryside of Europe, whilst being incapable of overcoming a castle stronghold. Their impudence and lack of planning pushed them forever forward, with no thought of retreat. Their defeat in 955 rapidly brought them to heel.

It is during the second half of the 10th Century that the situation in France becomes much clearer. The eastern boundaries of France become more stable, as the Hungarian incursions cease. However, the ambitions of the Dukes of an expanding Normandy prove to be more and more serious, causing the King of France to make a drastic and dramatic decision. We may say that the kingdom of France saw one of its major problems replaced by another.

Lothaire succeeded his father Louis IV to the throne of France, at the age of 13, in the year 954. At this time, because of the stability of the countries frontiers, the main occupations of France were the wars with vassals within the kingdom, especially the Dukes of Normandy. Lothaire was strongly influenced by Thibault I, known as "the Trickster", Count of Blois and Chartres, who was the motor of all the intrigues and the local wars, and who troubled the tranquility of Neustria and France. Thibault paid homage to the young King Lothaire, who was seduced by the ruses and dishonest tactics of his vassal, but nourished high ambitions, far in excess of his weak position as King. Thibault acquired a great influence over this young king, and became, for him, a dangerous counsellor. Lothaire could only turn his ambitions towards Normandy, encouraged by Thibault, who also had a vested interest in the region.

The current Duke of Normandy, Richard-the-Fearless, grandson of the Viking Rollon, had been kept under strict house arrest some years before, by the previous king of France, Louis IV, who had seized Normandy several years previously, in an attempt to quell the belligerent attitudes of these Viking settlers. Richard had escaped in 944 with the help of faithful allies, including Ives de Creil <sup>2</sup>. From this moment on, he was on his guard against any treachery from the French King and his followers. At two distinct times, Lothaire, together with Thibault, laid plans to ambush Richard, with the object of taking him prisoner. It probably came as no surprise to Richard when Thibault, with his forces split into at least two armies, invaded the territories of

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<sup>1</sup> The western part of future Germany, bordered by the Rhine.

<sup>2</sup> This is the first time we hear of Ives, future Lord of the House of Bellême, and who would soon be handsomely rewarded for his efforts.

Normandy in 963. The army lead by Thibault overcame the town of Evreux, but as they retired, they were pursued by the Dukes forces, who then pillaged the Chartrain<sup>3</sup> and the Dunois<sup>4</sup>, and defeated the French forces at Ermendreville<sup>5</sup>, "where the massacre was so terrible, that 640 soldiers were killed and nearly all the others wounded, before fleeing into the surrounding forest". The second army commander, a certain Rotrou, failed in his attempts to quell the Normans, and was forced to cede the town of Bellême, which, according to some historical sources, he had held previously<sup>6</sup>.

Although he had gained an unequivocal victory over Lothaire and Thibault, Richard feared a protracted war, because many of the French lords were his enemies, and could be convinced by Lothaire to take up arms against him. He turned to Harald, King of Denmark, who had already come to his assistance twenty years before. Harald sent Richard an army of Norman pagans who, under Richard's command, sailed up the River Seine, leaving havoc and desolation in their path.

J.C.L. Sismondi, in his book "Histoire des Français (1821) (in French) quotes :

*"Men and women alike were enchained and taken prisoner, villages were pillaged, towns were ravaged, castles were demolished, and the lands were reduced to nothing, and in all the dominions of Count Thibault, there was not even a dog left to bark against the enemy".*

The local bishops hastened to meet at Laon, and sent messengers to Richard, begging him to put an end to the misfortunes and griefs of their Christian flock. Count Thibault, fearing that he would be abandoned by his ally the King, chose, on his own behalf, to make peace with the Normans, and offered to return the town of Evreux that he had captured. Lothaire, Richard and Thibault met at Givalde<sup>7</sup>, and all Richards demands were met, and peace was reestablished with the Normans. Thibault, in his war against the Normans, showed how he had become known as the Trickster, for, in this local war, he had taken control of the Château de Couci, and land which belonged to the Archbishop of Reims. The new archbishop Odalric promptly excommunicated Thibault, to force him to return his ill-gotten gains. Thibault thus was obliged to submit to the authority of the Church, and returned all that he had usurped, to their rightful owners. Thibault would be hard-pressed to recover his prestige after his recent down-turns. However, to think that Thibault had played his last trump cards, was to consider his potential far too lightly.

Thibault quickly recovered his senses and his political acumen. He suggested to Lothaire that it would be a good idea to set up fortifications just south of the current

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<sup>3</sup> Chartrain - A geographical area around the city of Chartres, including Chartres Métropole, Pays Courvallois, Vallées de Maintenon, Les Vallées, Val Drouette, Val de Voise, Val de l'Eure, Orée de Chartres, Pays de Combray, Bois Gueslin.

<sup>4</sup> Dunois - A geographical area of 53 townships of about 920 km<sup>2</sup>, centred approximately around the city of Châteaudun, covering Arrou to the West, Villiers-Saint-Ouen to the East, Vitray-en-Beauce to the North, and Array to the South.

<sup>5</sup> Ermendreville, now disappeared, was somewhere in the outskirts of the town of Rouen.

<sup>6</sup> Rotrou is purported, in many documents as "having lost control" of Bellême. If this is true, then he must obviously have "held it" at some previous time. Would this explain why Rotrou was known as the Count of Perche, even before becoming known in the year 963 ?

<sup>7</sup> Givalde, like Ermendreville, no longer exists. I cannot determine its location.

border of Normandy, to prevent any future incursions of their "troublesome neighbours". As this did not impinge upon the treaty of peace with the Duke of Normandy, Lothaire took an active part in this venture.

Many documents concerning medieval France locate the Perche as part of Normandy. As a result, some historians refer to the Rotrou family as "of Norman origin". However, the Perche was a clearly defined county south of the Normandy border, and we will not hesitate to stress the fact that the Rotrou Family was certainly not of Norman origin<sup>8</sup>. In this County of the Perche, the tiny, but geographically strategic<sup>9</sup> village of Nogent-le-Châtel<sup>10</sup> was chosen as a base for these fortifications, and Thibault, made an effort to pacify his trusted army commander Rotrou, and to pay him back for his loss of control of the town of Bellême, by naming him as Lord of this growing settlement. This was just the beginning of the rise to fame of the future House of Rotrou. Due to the influence of Thibault over another of his vassals, the Viscount of Châteaudun, the daughter of Rotrou would soon marry into the Châteaudun family, and their son would, by chance, become Viscount of Châteaudun. The House of Rotrou is slowly climbing the ladder of notoriety which will culminate with marriage into royalty.

Olivier Romanet de Beaune (the Vicomte de Romanet) builds a scanty background for Rotrou de Nogent, in his book, in French, "Géographie du Perche et Chronologie de ses Comptes" (1890), and quotes several of his sources.

....."*Des Murs*<sup>11</sup> makes reference to a charter of 963 relative to the foundation of the Priory of Bonneval, where a witness to the signature, a certain Rotrou, is cited. This Rotrou is probably the same as the one referenced in six charters of the Cartulary of Saint-Père, the first of which is dated the 5th February 978, and the last, suggested as being before 996. In the early documents, he is referred to as a simple witness whose name is Rotrocus (Rotrou). In the last, he is now known as Rotrou de Nogent (Rotroco de Nogiomo) who makes a donation of land at Thivars, and who is known as a knight and vassal of Odo (Eudes), Count of Chartres. We may thus conclude that this Rotrou was Lord of Nogent-le-Rotrou and the surrounding territories, and that he held this domain on behalf of the Count of Chartres.

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<sup>8</sup> Lucien Musset in his book "Annales de Normandie - Volume 12, Page 204" clearly states this. "En dépit du découpage départemental, le Perche n'a jamais appartenu à la Normandie" - *In spite of [later] border redefinitions, the Perche was never part of Normandy.*

<sup>9</sup> Nogent was situated at natural crossroads between neighbouring towns, and provided considerable financial benefits in tithes and tolls. Situated on the extreme edge of the high ground, in a bend of the river Huisne, the Château of St. Jean overlooks 5 valleys, the roads to Le Mans, Chartres and Châteaudun, and, as such, is a natural access to Normandy, Maine and L'Ile de France.

<sup>10</sup> On the river Huisne, Nogent was first built on a hill where a chateau had originally existed. This town, destroyed earlier by the Normans, was initially called Nogent-le-Châtel. Rotrou I, Count of Perche, rebuilt it at the base of the hill, and so it took the name that it holds today, Nogent-le-Rotrou. The largest town of the Greater-Perche, once reputed to be the principal town of the County, was divided into two distinct towns, Nogent-le-Châtel and Nogent-Saint-Denis, both belonging to the Counts of Perche, of the House of Rotrou. Geoffrey, one of the Lords, ceded the lordship of Saint-Denis to the Benedictine Monks, of the Cluny Order, a fine building whose priory alone was worth 14,000 pounds of rent, and which served only Nogent-le-Châtel. These two towns, by mutual expansion, became linked, and form today a considerable town, large enough to contest the title of capital of Mortagne.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Oeillet des Murs - "Histoires des Comptes de Perche" - 1856 (Page 108).



*Rouillard<sup>12</sup> tells us that this domain had been assigned to Rotrou at about 980 by Odo, who had thus ceded it to "one of his most trusted and faithful knights". Another historian, Ozeray<sup>13</sup> indicates that Odo, Count of Chartres, ceded part of his lands (the Abbey of Saint-Père) to one of his knights named Rotroldus.*

And so, even if all agree that the fortifications of Thivars would later become known as Nogent-le-Rotrou, the date of this venture would seem to have taken place between 970 and 980, and not immediately after the debacle of 963.

*Both Odolant-Desnos<sup>14</sup> and Wace<sup>15</sup> agree about the cession of the domain of Nogent-le-Rotrou, and also refer to Rotrou as being "Count of Perche".....*

And so Rotrou makes a timid but remarked entry into history in these troubled times. He will be seen discretely as a witness to several cartulary acts of Thibault, and later those of Lieutegarde (Thibaults' widow), and then Odo (Thibaults' son), up to his death in the closing years of the Xth century. Nogent-le-Châtel will one day become known as Nogent-le-Rotrou, proof of the mark left upon this town by the succeeding members of the family.

Few documents were left to history from Rotrou's own hand. Geoffrey Koziol, in his book "Begging Pardon and Favour - Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France", sheds a little light upon the first known of the Rotrou dynasty :

*"Another example from the same year is offered by **Rotrocus**, a vassal of the Counts of Blois. A man on the rise, he had been entrusted with the protection of [the County of] the Perche by his Counts, and would soon marry his daughter to the Viscount of Chateaudun<sup>16</sup>. Much later, his descendants would become Counts of the pagus<sup>17</sup>. But in 999, he was still only a proud man with great ambitions :*

*" Rotrocus seculari miliciæ deditus et Odonis comitis fidelitati"*

*I, Rotrocus, given to worldly knighthood, and devoted in fidelity to Count Odo".....*

The first of the House of Rotrou was indeed proud and ambitious. He set the pace that was to be followed by his descendants, during the next eight centuries, starting in France, and moving on to England, then Ireland. Through a thousand years, the descendants of this, our first known ancestor, would leave their mark wherever they set foot.

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<sup>12</sup> Sebastien Rouillard - "Parthenie, ou l'Histoire de l'Eglise de Chartres" - 1609.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Ozeray - "Histoire du Pays de Chartrain" - 1856.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre-Joseph Odolent-Desnos - "Mémoires Historiques de la ville d'Alençon" - 1787.

<sup>15</sup> Wace - "Roman du Rou" - 1174

<sup>16</sup> It is, in fact, not sure that Melisende, Rotrou's daughter, married the current Viscount of Chateaudun (Hugh II). She probably married Geoffrey, Hughs brother, or possibly even another little known cousin, Foulques. Whatever, into the family did she come !

<sup>17</sup> Pagus - territory, area defined by clear boundaries, district, community, loosely associated to the English "Shire", or a Swiss "Canton", possibly a "County", as we know it today.

## Origins of the Nugent Family

Contrary to many references (often copied without verification), the Nugent family, or more precisely the "De Nogent" family did not stem from Normandy. In the area of the PERCHE, about 140 km. South West of Paris, just below the border of Normandy, a minor noble family was first remarked by historians in a typical manner, that of basking in the light of more noble, even royal, families. In the darkness of the second half of the 10th century, few families were of sufficient importance to be cited in documents of this time. Emerging out of this darkness, we hear of the existence of a certain Rotrou, whose origins are unknown. Certain historians believed him to be a direct descendant of Yves de Creil (father of Yves de Bellême), while others have placed him as a "fidelis" (giving allegiance to) of a certain Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres. We are left to speculate about the real roots of this, the earliest known reference to this famous family.

### **Origin 1 - Cited in official Perche Internet sites, and many historical documents.**

Thibault "the Trickster", Count of Blois & Chartres was ordered by the King of France (Lothaire IV) to set up a garrison close to the Normandy border to keep an eye on their "troublesome neighbours". The exact date of this enterprise is not known, but it is now estimated to be just after 975 <sup>1</sup>. It had become necessary to halt eventual incursions made by the Normans, particularly those of Duke Richard I and Richard II, into the plains accessing L'Île de France and Paris. Thibault delegated this responsibility to a certain Rotroldus, or Rotrou, who (research tells us) was from a minor noble family in the Perche. Rotroldus built the first earth and timber fortifications or "*motte*", in a well-situated position on the left bank of the river Huisne. It is suggested that the site chosen had previously been occupied by a castle, which had been destroyed by the Danes. These fortifications encouraged the growth of a settlement which years later became known as Nogent-le-Rotrou (*Novogentium Rotroci* or "Rotrou's New Town"). Subsequent sons of the Rotrou family extended the original fortifications, making the castle similar to that which we can see today. The "Rotrou" family were apparently rewarded by a marriage into the House of Châteaudun (about 985), later becoming Viscounts of Châteaudun, and began to extend their power and control of the area around Nogent-le-Rotrou. Limited in their expansion to the East (encountering resistance from their own lords, the Counts of Blois), they turned to the North-West, and slowly but surely conquered and invested Corbon, Mortagne, and finally Bellême. The development of this power faction was conducted by several generations of the Rotrou family, over a period of nearly 200 years.

### **Origin 2 - Cited by certain historians**

In a translation from the French, of the introduction to the Rotrou family, O.E. Des Murs (*Histoire des Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous - 1856*) sheds a little light :

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<sup>1</sup> Although some sources insist upon an earlier date for the Nogent fortifications, recent detailed reading of French documents (De Romanet, et alia) can now allow us to place the foundation of Nogent-le-Rotrou between 975 and 980, rather than immediately after the debacle of 963.

(Pages 63-64)

*"We come now to the true genealogical origins of Rotrou and of his direct descendants. Most authors, as we have seen, do not agree on the true year of appearance, and of the descendancy of the Rotrou family, or rather, the majority agree to begin at about 1004, with Geoffrey I. It is however difficult to admit that because we cannot positively identify a living Rotrou at the time of King Lothaire, about 965, known as Count of Perche and Bellême by WACE, as Count of Corbonnais by BENOIT, and appearing in no less than 6 official acts of Sainte-Pierre de Chartres at distinct times in 978, 985, 986, 988 and 991, in the company of Countess Leutgarde, the widow of Thibault-the-Trickster. To be sure, although these acts certify the existence of a certain Count of Perche whose name was Rotrou, we cannot be silent about this knowledge under the pretext that we ignore who was his father, or whether indeed he had any children. That we have difficulty in establishing the affiliation from Rotrou to Geoffrey I, we cannot deny....."*

Des Murs considers that Orderic Vitalis (and another later historian, Bry de la Clergerie) is totally in error when he claims that Rotrou is a cousin of Robert de Bellême, and thus a descendant of the Talvas family, and that furthermore Guérin [*de Domfront*] was the great-great grandfather of Rotrou III, Count of Perche. He insists that it would be an insult to the memory of the House of Rotrou to associate it with "such barbarous, monstrous, dishonorable and depraved" individuals such as those of the Talvas (Bellême) family. Des Murs continues :

*..... "Between 943 and 978, was a time of extreme struggles between the King of France, Lothaire, supported by Thibault-the-Trickster, and the Normans, governed by Richard 1st, Duke of Normandy. [At a date estimated at 963,] Lothaire encouraged Thibault to attack Normandy. Thibault assembled a powerful army in two parts, one of which was commanded by a certain Rotrou, who attacked Sées, while Thibault, at the head of the second army attacked and took Evreux. However, Richard [with the help of Danish mercenaries], not only repulsed these attacks, but counter-attacked and pillaged all in his path, nearly up to the gates of Paris, before retiring. Rotrou, the right-hand man of Thibault, was obliged to support the down-turn of the fortunes of Thibault, and as a result of this disastrous campaign, was obliged to cede Bellême, which fell into the hands of Richard." <sup>2</sup> .....*

*".....to recompense Rotrou for his losses, and to reward him for his services, Thibault ceded to him Nogent-le Châtel (which much later became known as Nogent-le Rotrou), under the auspices of the County of Chartres, but obliged to do military service, thus obtaining a forward post, totally devoted to preserving the lands from all possible attacks from Normandy."*

Although we cannot refute the possibility that the Rotrou family and the Bellême family were related in some way, the flagrant hostility shown between the two houses over a prolonged period, seems to deny this. Several marriages between the two Houses are certainly posterior to the first references to Rotrou, already at war for many years, but perhaps destined to pacify the long-standing animosity between the two families. It is certainly through these later blood lines that some historians

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<sup>2</sup> *It would seem obvious that, if Rotrou lost the town of Bellême, then he must have held it previously .... Thus, certain references to Rotrou having had the title "Count of Perche", would seem to be justified .....*

connect the house of Rotrou with that of Bellême, although the time-lines can easily be shown to be incoherent. It is strange that many French historical documents clearly separate the House of Rotrou from that of Bellême, while only one, clearly partisan, concludes that Rotrou descends from the House of Bellême. A document written around 1853 by a reputable historian and genealogist (Edmund Burke) supports this concept and has propagated it, certainly through the Internet and many associated Nugent sites. However, the two contesting theories do in no way contradict any of the other the facts concerning the House of Rotrou that are to be found in other documents of this site. We leave the reader to choose his own solution.

After Thibault's loss of Bellême in 963, Richard "awarded" the town to Yves de Creil, with the instructions that he should defend it against all attacks. Yves was a master archer, and a competent builder of attack and defence mechanisms (catapults, etc.). He had also been instrumental in freeing Richard from house-arrest, after he had been defeated in a battle against the King of France, some years earlier. Yves was thanked for his good work by the attribution of the Lordship of Bellême, which would remain in the family for several generations. However, as a vassal of Richard, Yves had obligations, and following the rules applied at the time could equally be dispossessed of Bellême, if he did not satisfy his liege.

We can surmise that Rotrou was Count of [a large part of] the Perche up to 963, and from then on, although dispossessed of Bellême, continued to use the title of Count of Perche. If Rotrou's immediate descendants did not justify the title of Count of Perche, they were, without contest, Counts of the Corbonnais [*Mortagne*], which included more than half of the Perche. The Rotrou dynasty must now wait until 1150 before it officially recovers the Bellémois. It is obvious, that from a very early date, the House of Rotrou and the House of Bellême were unreconcilable enemies.

We must be a little sceptical about the origins of Rotrou that are implied here. Many historians write about the building of the Perche during this time, and about the [*self*] attribution of the title "Count of Perche" by Geoffrey III de Mortagne in about 1100. The historian O. E. des Murs suggests that our first known Rotrou was already Count of Perche during the second half of the 10th century, and that he was forced to cede a part of the Perche, specifically Bellême, after the disastrous campaign of 963/964. Confusion arises here as to the real Lord of Bellême. Yves de Bellême is clearly noted as having existed, but not necessarily noble, as a "Seigneur" should be. We must question the level of control over Bellême that Rotrou maintained, if any, before he apparently "lost" it about 963. He is noted as being Thibault's "head of armies". We are left to wonder why such a powerful Lord, with such a large domain as "the Perche", was practically unknown at this time, and that we have to content ourselves with vague references to Rotrou during this period. We also must be suspicious of attributions of the title Count of Perche at this time. Rotrou was clearly defined as being a vassal [*fidelis*], though highly trusted, of Thibault, Count of Blois & Chartres. The later marriage of his daughter Melisende into the House of Châteaudun<sup>3</sup> was clearly a promotion, or at the very least, a "Thank You" for services rendered, and his long-standing devotion. In this light, we must surmise that Rotrou, although he was reputed to have "lost" the town of Bellême in the war with the Normans, his "control" of this town must have been through the auspices of the Count of Blois. Unknown as he was, in the latter half of the Xth century, the title of Count of Perche would thus

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<sup>3</sup> This is just one of the possibilities of the early De Nogent descent (see - Melisende Hypotheses)

seem a little premature, unless, of course some deeper truth has escaped us, or has been hidden through the passage of time !

However, we are sure that Rotrou existed at this period :

*"... that in an act dated the 23rd year of the reign of King Lothaire [which would place us in the year 963], relative to the foundation of the Monastery of Bonneval, there is a mention of several donations made several years before, one by the Viscount Geoffrey, recently deceased, to "buy back" his soul, and that of his wife Hermengarde, another by the son of the aforesaid Viscount, named Hughes. The first document carries the signatures of King Lothaire, Count Eudes, that of Count Geoffrey, and a certain Rotrou."*

We are, however, left with the mystery of the rank, the importance and the early descendancy of this Rotrou, except to admit that he must have been of some importance, to be a signatory on this charter. We can assume that he is parallel to the family of the Viscounts of Châteaudun, and that his family had no marriage ties [as yet] with these Viscounts. At this moment in our presentation of the family of Rotrou, we will not yet investigate his descendancy. We will see in a later chapter that there are several hypotheses concerning the "family tree", and that certain questions remain unanswered [even today] about who was the father of who, and their indisputable names, without wishing to complicate the issue by giving dates of birth and death to those members of the early family. However, it suffices to say here that the documents cited above agree with the hypothesis of the Rotrou descendancy established by Vicomte de Romanet in his book of 1902.

It is now commonly believed that the Rotrou family were originally associated with the Viscounts of Châteaudun, possibly being minor nobles who were rewarded for their faithfulness, by marriage into the Châteaudun family. Most historians agree that the Rotrou family truly appear in history about the year 1004. Although known in the history books of their own country as "the House of Rotrou", their descendants, when they left France, were given the appendage "De Nogent", simply to indicate their origin.

Another famous historian (Edmund Burke), author and compiler in the 19th century of some of the most important books concerning British Peerage seems to have been responsible for what we consider to be a major error concerning the Nugent lineage. In several of his works, he cites the origins of the family as being from the House of Bellême (specifically Evas [Yves] de Bellême, around the year 930). Burke may well have been convinced by a book written in 1620 by Bry de la Clergerie, Laywer at Bellême, and an obvious partisan of the House of Bellême. However these theories were clearly refuted by a later work by the Vicomte de Romanet, who trashes all such suggestions concerning Rotrou's origins. In fact, although there did exist a **later** marriage with a daughter of the House of Bellême, and there is thus a direct [female] line back to Evas de Bellême, the De Nogent origins were much more clearly associated with the House of Châteaudun. For many years, over several generations, the Rotrou family continually showed antagonism to the Bellême family, with frequent attempts to take control of the Bellême strongholds. To be precise, for more than a century (1000-1100), the animosity between the House of Châteaudun and the House of Bellême was declared in the form of open war. In their attempts at expansion, the House of Châteaudun descendants (Geoffrey II, Rotrou II, Geoffrey III and Rotrou III) attempted to overcome the House of Bellême, and incorporate it into

their expanding empire. In 1043, Rotrou II married Adelaide of Bellême as part of the plans to expand, but the control of the Bellême estates was certainly not forthcoming. The decision by Rotrou II to switch allegiance from the King of France, and to take sides with the Duke of Normandy was an extremely judicious decision. When William invaded England in 1066, many knights went with him, including several brothers of the Rotrou family. As a result, the new King of England, and his immediate descendants allowed the House of Rotrou to expand into a powerful dynasty. Descendants of the Rotrou family declared themselves to be "Counts of Perche" for many years, before actually gaining control of Bellême, although Bellême was an integral part of the Perche. The only descendant of the De Nogent family who has Bellême in his name is Fulke de Bellême [*and this itself is disputable*], one of the sons of the afore-mentioned Rotrou III. As Fulke is commonly believed to be the beginning of the branch which became the "Nugents" (his children settled in England), it is highly likely that the Bellême appendage to his name was made at the very end of his life, possibly after the Siege of Remalard in 1078. Apart from this, there appears to be no logical reason for the association of this Fulke to the town of Bellême. It was William the Conqueror's son Henry who symbolically attributed the House of Bellême to Rotrou III (*The Great*) in the early years of the 12th century (1114), allowing him control of the estates, but retaining the Castle of Bellême for himself. And it was not until 1158 that Bellême was finally conceded to Rotrou IV, thus bringing the Rotrou dynasty to the height of its power.

So in about the year 963, did the French side of the Rotrou family step out of the darkness and into the limelight, relinquishing it nearly 200 years later, as they played their cards and lost, against a developing French nation.

The affairs of the Rotrou family in England had suffered a similar fate, as Thomas, the Vth Count of Perche, was killed at Lincoln, in an attempt to maintain his lands in England and bolster the diminishing prestige of the House of Rotrou.

It is salutary to note that the family grew from nothing to a major power faction under the auspices of the French and English royalty, and were then reduced to nothing by the same mechanisms, several centuries later. Happily, descendants of the family who have settled in England, although they retire into the shadows for more than a hundred years, reappear with brilliance when they accompany King Henry II to Ireland in 1171.

## Rotrou de Nogent

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to piece together minute fragments of information, in order to make a story. It is like possessing only a handful of the 1000 pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, in order to establish a picture. Imagine how it becomes even more difficult, if, in the best of faith, somebody adds to the pile of pieces, some from another picture. We must try and insert these pieces into a picture where they do not belong, and possibly, we may make some of them fit, thus producing an even more confusing situation. With the family which we will call "De Nogent", who emerged from the shadows, into the light of the Xth century, the situation is identical. In order to have any chance of constructing the truth about the first ancestors of our illustrious family, we must be patient, diligent and ruthless. Imagine, for a moment, our research into members of the family in the XIIth century. The family has prospered, married into royalty, become famous ! They donate to charities of the era, and these donations are carefully noted for posterity. Nobility, even if they cannot read or write, surrounds itself with scribes of one form or another, either counting on the clergy to note their benefaction, or associating themselves with "Sénéchals" <sup>1</sup>, who as well as administrating his lords domain, noted all important events. These Sénéchals gave an aura of respectability and legal proof (this is called Cartulary evidence) to the major events of the life of such nobility.

However, the first evidence of a minor family, as it becomes known in the IXth and Xth centuries is another problem. Nobody is there to record their appearance, their lives, and the impact they leave on the environment of their time. For the "De Nogent" family, we must examine minutely all possible information, and classify it into three areas :

1 - Information which comes from documentary proof, written at the time the event actually took place. Historians, such as Orderic Vitalis (1075-1143), who were alive during this foggy period, noted the major events of the time, especially if it centred around senior nobility, or of royalty. However, to merit a mention in the annals of such historians, newcomers had to clearly impinge upon the nobility and royalty of that period. This documentary proof can also come for what can loosely described as "The Church", where the only people who knew how to read and write were to be found. This Cartulary Evidence is essential to us in our quest, supposing, of course, that the newcomers were pious enough to make donations of some kind, or that they were close enough to nobility to merit a mention in the official charters of the time.

2 - Information which comes from historians from a later period. The historians of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries have provided us with valuable information. They could inspect documentary proof from a period which was not too distant, and leave a written trace of what they found, for future generations. Authors such as René

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<sup>1</sup> Originally defined as being responsible for the supervision of a noble household, a sénéschals functions often developed into ensuring administrative functions for all important events concerning his master. Sometimes, he was also responsible for military decisions, although later, this task was attributed to a new function, held by a maréchal

Courtin (c1570-c1635), Bry de la Clergerie (1590-1659) come into this category, although the latter appears to copy wholesale from the book by René Courtin. However, we must be careful not to allow too much credence to these historians, as they too, were referring to the obscurity of the Xth century, and could easily be tempted into inferring events which can not be proved. Some even let their partisan attitude overwhelm the available cartulary facts.

3 - Information which comes from more recent historians. The XVIIIth and XIXth centuries provided us with a flurry of historians and genealogists, eager to develop family histories back into the middle ages. Such authors as M.O. des Meurs, the Vicomte de Romanet (1859-1936), and others, who were closely associated with the Perche, were examples of historians of that time <sup>2</sup>. The much renowned John Burke, famous for his treatises concerning Peerage and Landed Gentry, have brought the middle ages directly into today's dining rooms.

4 - Information which comes from today's genealogists and historians. A new science called prosopography <sup>3</sup> has allowed minute but associated fragments of history to be collected into electronic data-bases, and analysed. Such people as Katharine Keats-Rohan, Kathleen Thompson, who apparently wrote her thesis on the County of the Perche, and Christian Settiani, of the Sorbonne, whose documents concerning the Viscounts of Châteaudun are vitally important to us, have made their analyses, and left their conclusions about the emerging families of the IXth to XIIth centuries. We can say with some truth that the more modern genealogists have been more ruthless in their analyses, setting aside previous partisan judgements, and focussing only on the cartulary evidence which is available. These analyses can leave gaping holes in the lives of the studied individuals, but the results of their studies can rarely be contested, because they are based upon official documents of the period.

5 - Lastly, the wealth of information that can be found on the Internet, building family trees of varied dimensions, and sometimes of doubtful content, completes our informational data bases. Unfortunately, it is here that the errors can propagate to the furthest ends of the earth, as a completely erroneous piece of information, often a date, sometimes a name, even an event, can be copied "willy-nilly", from one site to another, without the slightest effort to investigate the source of information, or its veracity. One such document, to be found on nearly all the Nugent sites, asserts that de Nugent family were of Norman descent, and that they can be traced back to Evas de Bellême, a powerful Baron of the Xth century. Where did this information initially come from ?

The first strong assertions that the Nugents are of Norman descent appear in a book called " Histoire des Pays et Comté du Perche ....." by Bry de la Clergerie, around

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<sup>2</sup> To help us in our arguments concerning the origins of the De Nogent family, we refer to translations of parts of the book by [O.E. Des Murs](#).

<sup>3</sup> In the words of prosopographer [Katherine Keats-Rohan](#), "prosopography is about what the analysis of the sum of data about many individuals can tell us about the different types of connection between them, and hence about how they operated within and upon the institutions—social, political, legal, economic, intellectual—of their time."



1620. Bry was from the region of Bellême, and strongly suggested that the Rotrou family descended directly from the Bellêmois family. This information was propagated by John Burke, a much respected genealogist, in his book "Peerage and Baronetage", around 1862. This information has been cut and pasted, without any research, into the many Nugent Internet sites on-line today.

It does not take much effort, nor much research, to discover that some important information is completely false, and yet is taken on face value by many of today's amateur "genealogists".

### **So - Where is the truth ?**

The most important fact we know about the first known ancestor of the Nugents, a certain Rotrou, is that we don't know much about him at all ! In order to build a picture of this little known person, as he appears in the middle of the IXth Century, and to confer upon him the title of "First Of The House Of Rotrou", we must glean our information from several limited sources.

### **What we NOW know as false**

In our conjectures about our first known Rotrou, we are not restricted to defining who he was, but allow ourselves to clarify who he certainly was not, as a certain number of inexactitudes are known to exist concerning the Rotrou family.

We may begin with one of the greatest genealogists of our time, John Burke (1814-1892). Burke clearly suggested that the Rotrou dynasty was descended from Yves de Creil, ancestor of the House of Bellême. We will treat the history of Yves de Creil in a separate document. It is obvious that Burke consulted books and other documents concerning the County of the Perche. However, he seems to have been seduced by the explanations of Bry-de-la-Clergerie, who consistently associates the Rotrou family with the House of Bellême. Bry was not a genealogist, but a mere lawyer, who lived in Bellême, and who contradicts himself often in his book " Histoire des Pays et Comté du Perche .....". Most historians agree that Bry-de-la-Clergerie unashamedly plagiarized a book by René Courtin, which unfortunately had little visibility. M.O. des Meurs, in a book written at about the same time, "Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous", considers that it is an insult to associate the villainous Bellême family, whose members more often died violent deaths (on a par with the "de Medicis" family), with the pious and noble House of Rotrou. We will not harbour upon these conflicting documents, but limit ourselves to evidence which can be proved.

## What we NOW know as true

In about 963, The Count of Blois and Chartres, Thibault (920-978) waged war upon Richard 1st, Duke of Normandy, whose armies continually pillaged across the border of Normandy <sup>4</sup>, into the fertile plains of l'Île de France. The early Dukes of Normandy were direct descendants of the Vikings, and their attitude towards others had always been bellicious. In an effort to halt these incursions, Thibault, with the benediction of Lothaire, King of France, attacked and took Evreux, and entrusted one of his military commanders, a certain Rotrou (Rotroldus), hitherto unknown to history, to attack Sées. Rotrou succeeded in this task, but was globally defeated, and forced to cede the town of Bellême <sup>5</sup>. Also in 963, Rotrou is cited as a witness to the foundation of the Priory of Bonneval, showing that he has some importance. Although little known at this time, Rotrou has sometimes been defined as the Count of Perche (although we have no indication as to how he gained the title). We have absolutely no information concerning his wife, not even her name. We are left to ponder upon the possible links between Rotrou and the Lords of Mortagne (Herve and Fulke), previously known as Corbon, and inheriting the title of Counts of Perche. Although he was forced to cede Bellême in the war against Robert I (indicating that at some time Bellême formed part of his domain), Rotrou continued to be referred to as the Count of Perche, indicating that the Bellémois was never considered to be part of the Perche. Some time after the debacle against the Normans, Thibault ordered Rotrou to build fortified positions in the developing town of Nogent-le-Châtel (later to become Nogent-le-Rotrou), to keep an eye on the "troublesome neighbours, the Normans". We know that Thibault died in 978, and that he was succeeded by his son Eudes. We know also that Rotrou was a witness to Thibault's widow, Liegarde, in at least 5 cartulary acts, in 978, 985, 986, 988, and 991. This clearly defines Rotrou as a senior and trusted "*fidelis*", or "*faithful*". Before 996, Rotrou himself (named as *Rotroco de Nogiarno*) makes a donation to the church of land at Thivars. In the act, Rotrou describes himself as knight and vassal of Eudes, Count of Chartres, the son of Thibault <sup>6</sup>. This act infers that the town of Nogent had already been ceded to Rotrou, either by Thibault, or his son, as a reward for his loyalty to the House of Chartres <sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> It must be admitted that, at this time, there was no clearly defined border of Normandy to the south, as the Dukes clearly had their eyes set upon expansion. We will have to wait until 1204 for the boundaries of Normandy to be solidly defined.

<sup>5</sup> History is uncertain about the jurisdiction of Bellême in this period. Rotrou was supposed to have lost control of Bellême in the wars of 963-4, but we also know that Yves de Creil (930-1005) became Lord of Bellême. Apparently, Yves was nominated Lord of Bellême by Richard I, Duke of Normandy, **after** Rotrou lost it. "*Yves was known as a Kings Archer (Balistraris Regis), but in fact was among the Kings chosen few, and was considered as an engineer, a "builder" of machines. Thus Yves, of relatively low birth was raised to higher levels as a result of his art, by Richard .....*"

<sup>6</sup> "But in 999 he was still only a proud man with great ambitions : "I, Rotroco, given to worldly knighthood and devoted in fidelity to Count Odo" ..... ("Begging Pardon and Favour" - The Sublimity of Knighthood - Page 257, by Geoffrey Koziol).

<sup>7</sup> The Viscount de Romanet gives us several explanations : Sebastien Rouilliard indicates that the lands of Nogent will be ceded to Rotrou by Eudes I, in 980, lands which he had confiscated from the domains of Saint-Martin-du-Val. Michel Jean Ozeray indicates that Eudes I cedes part of the territories of the Abbey de St. Pere to a certain knight Rotroldus. However, the date is agreed. Why did the Count of Chartres wait until 980 to reward Rotrou ?

That he should appear in those acts gives more credibility to his station. An inferior noble would never appear in such acts, and their mere existence serve to announce the strong links that associated Rotrou with the House of Blois and Chartres. Rotrou, as a result of these links, received a probable "Thank You" for services rendered, when Rotrou's daughter, Melisende, married a younger brother of Hughes, the Viscount of Châteaudun (it may have been Geoffrey [963-1005]), or even a lesser known brother Fulkes, whose house already had strong connections with that of Blois and Chartres.<sup>8</sup> We also know that a member of the Rotrou family, in the form of Geoffrey II of Mortagne, subsequently became Viscount of Châteaudun, thus supporting our proposition. Historians who were dubious about the accession of the Rotrou family to such a position questioned the lineage of Rotrou, supposing that he was of an inferior, or at least minor noble family. The subsequent events that allowed his lineage to become Viscounts of Châteaudun obviously plead for a more senior position of Rotrou, and much more privileged links with the House of Châteaudun, through the auspices of the Counts of Blois and Chartres.

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The conflicting evidence of two different dates of birth for Melisende (965 and 991), prompts us to assume with some degree of certainty, that there were two Melisendes, and that they were probably mother and daughter.

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This is all we know about our first Rotrou de Nogent, a competent soldier, ambitious, loyal, pious, who laid the foundations of our Nugent family. We will hesitate to call him Rotrou I, a sobriquet added by future historians. However, he is without contest, the first of the famous "House of Rotrou".

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*"Yves de Bellême rendered an important service to the young prince Richard, first named, third duke of Normandy; this service being the origin of his [future] power and good fortune".*

As a youth, Richard had been kidnapped by King Louis IV of France<sup>9</sup>, with the object of confiscating his heritage. Yves suggested a subterfuge whereby the child pretended to be ill, to the point of dying.

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*He [Yves] was later granted this Lordship [Bellême] by the generosity of Duke Richard, who ... remembered the service that Yves had rendered during his captivity. As well as the Bellêmois, Richard also gave to Yves, Alençon and its lands ... the town of Séez .... on condition that he paid homage, and that he should ensure the security of his [Richards] lands.*

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*Some historians propose that, to recompense Rotrou for his losses, and to reward him for his services, Thibault ceded to him Nogent-le-Châtel (later Nogent-le Rotrou), under the auspices of the County of Chartres, but obliged to do military service, thus obtaining a forward post totally devoted to preserving the lands from all possible attacks from Normandy.*

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<sup>9</sup> In order to curb the bellicious pretensions of the Normans, the French King had found no other way to prevent this, than to kidnap the young Duke, and to keep him in restraint. The Dukes supporters found a way to free the imprisoned youth. History will show that the Kings of France would regret their policies towards the Norman Dukes. In 911, King Charles had signed a peace treaty with the Viking chief Rollo, allocating him enormous territories in the north of Neustria. This may be associated with the concept of letting the fox into the hen-house ..... !

## The First Rotrou de Nogent

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to piece together minute fragments of information, in order to make a story. It is like possessing only a handful of the 1000 pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, in order to establish a picture. Imagine how it becomes even more difficult, if, in the best of faith, somebody adds to the pile of pieces, some from another picture. We must try and insert these pieces into a picture where they do not belong, and possibly, we may make some of them fit, thus producing an even more confusing situation. With the family which we will call "De Nogent", who emerged from the shadows, into the light of the Xth century, the situation is identical. In order to have any chance of constructing the truth about the first ancestors of our illustrious family, we must be patient, diligent and ruthless. Imagine, for a moment, our research into members of the family in the XIIth century. The family has prospered, married into royalty, become famous ! They donate to charities of the era, and these donations are carefully noted for posterity. Nobility, even if they cannot read or write, surrounds itself with scribes of one form or another, either counting on the clergy to note their benefaction, or associating themselves with "Sénéchals" <sup>1</sup>, who as well as administrating his lords domain, noted all important events. These Sénéchals gave an aura of respectability and legal proof (this is called Cartulary evidence) to the major events of the life of such nobility.

However, the first evidence of a minor family, as it becomes known in the IXth and Xth centuries is another problem. Nobody is there to record their appearance, their lives, and the impact they leave on the environment of their time. For the "De Nogent" family, we must examine minutely all possible information, and classify it into three areas :

1 - Information which comes from documentary proof, written at the time the event actually took place. Historians, such as Orderic Vitalis (1075-1143), who were alive during this foggy period, noted the major events of the time, especially if it centred around senior nobility, or of royalty. However, to merit a mention in the annals of such historians, newcomers had to clearly impinge upon the nobility and royalty of that period. This documentary proof can also come for what can loosely described as "The Church", where the only people who knew how to read and write were to be found. This Cartulary Evidence is essential to us in our quest, supposing, of course, that the newcomers were pious enough to make donations of some kind, or that they were close enough to nobility to merit a mention in the official charters of the time.

2 - Information which comes from historians from a later period. The historians of the XVIth and XVIIth centuries have provided us with valuable information. They could inspect documentary proof from a period which was not too distant, and leave a written trace of what they found, for future generations. Authors such as René

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<sup>1</sup> Originally defined as being responsible for the supervision of a noble household, a sénéschals functions often developed into ensuring administrative functions for all important events concerning his master. Sometimes, he was also responsible for military decisions, although later, this task was attributed to a new function, held by a maréchal

Courtin (c1570-c1635), Bry de la Clergerie (1590-1659) come into this category, although the latter appears to copy wholesale from the book by René Courtin. However, we must be careful not to allow too much credence to these historians, as they too, were referring to the obscurity of the Xth century, and could easily be tempted into inferring events which can not be proved. Some even let their partisan attitude overwhelm the available cartulary facts.

3 - Information which comes from more recent historians. The XVIIIth and XIXth centuries provided us with a flurry of historians and genealogists, eager to develop family histories back into the middle ages. Such authors as M.O. des Meurs, the Vicomte de Romanet (1859-1936), and others, who were closely associated with the Perche, were examples of historians of that time <sup>2</sup>. The much renowned John Burke, famous for his treatises concerning Peerage and Landed Gentry, have brought the middle ages directly into today's dining rooms.

4 - Information which comes from today's genealogists and historians. A new science called prosopography <sup>3</sup> has allowed minute but associated fragments of history to be collected into electronic data-bases, and analysed. Such people as Katharine Keats-Rohan, Kathleen Thompson, who apparently wrote her thesis on the County of the Perche, and Christian Settiani, of the Sorbonne, whose documents concerning the Viscounts of Châteaudun are vitally important to us, have made their analyses, and left their conclusions about the emerging families of the IXth to XIIth centuries. We can say with some truth that the more modern genealogists have been more ruthless in their analyses, setting aside previous partisan judgements, and focussing only on the cartulary evidence which is available. These analyses can leave gaping holes in the lives of the studied individuals, but the results of their studies can rarely be contested, because they are based upon official documents of the period.

5 - Lastly, the wealth of information that can be found on the Internet, building family trees of varied dimensions, and sometimes of doubtful content, completes our informational data bases. Unfortunately, it is here that the errors can propagate to the furthest ends of the earth, as a completely erroneous piece of information, often a date, sometimes a name, even an event, can be copied "willy-nilly", from one site to another, without the slightest effort to investigate the source of information, or its veracity. One such document, to be found on nearly all the Nugent sites, asserts that de Nugent family were of Norman descent, and that they can be traced back to Evas de Bellême, a powerful Baron of the Xth century. Where did this information initially come from ?

The first strong assertions that the Nugents are of Norman descent appear in a book called " Histoire des Pays et Comté du Perche ....." by Bry de la Clergerie, around

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<sup>2</sup> To help us in our arguments concerning the origins of the De Nogent family, we refer to translations of parts of the book by [O.E. Des Murs](#).

<sup>3</sup> In the words of prosopographer [Katherine Keats-Rohan](#), "prosopography is about what the analysis of the sum of data about many individuals can tell us about the different types of connection between them, and hence about how they operated within and upon the institutions—social, political, legal, economic, intellectual—of their time."



1620. Bry was from the region of Bellême, and strongly suggested that the Rotrou family descended directly from the Bellêmois family. This information was propagated by John Burke, a much respected genealogist, in his book "Peerage and Baronetage", around 1862. This information has been cut and pasted, without any research, into the many Nugent Internet sites on-line today.

It does not take much effort, nor much research, to discover that some important information is completely false, and yet is taken on face value by many of today's amateur "genealogists".

### **So - Where is the truth ?**

The most important fact we know about the first known ancestor of the Nugents, a certain Rotrou, is that we don't know much about him at all ! In order to build a picture of this little known person, as he appears in the middle of the IXth Century, and to confer upon him the title of "First Of The House Of Rotrou", we must glean our information from several limited sources.

### **What we NOW know as false**

In our conjectures about our first known Rotrou, we are not restricted to defining who he was, but allow ourselves to clarify who he certainly was not, as a certain number of inexactitudes are known to exist concerning the Rotrou family.

We may begin with one of the greatest genealogists of our time, John Burke (1814-1892). Burke clearly suggested that the Rotrou dynasty was descended from Yves de Creil, ancestor of the House of Bellême. We will treat the history of Yves de Creil in a separate document. It is obvious that Burke consulted books and other documents concerning the County of the Perche. However, he seems to have been seduced by the explanations of Bry-de-la-Clergerie, who consistently associates the Rotrou family with the House of Bellême. Bry was not a genealogist, but a mere lawyer, who lived in Bellême, and who contradicts himself often in his book " Histoire des Pays et Comté du Perche .....". Most historians agree that Bry-de-la-Clergerie unashamedly plagiarized a book by René Courtin, which unfortunately had little visibility. M.O. des Meurs, in a book written at about the same time, "Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous", considers that it is an insult to associate the villainous Bellême family, whose members more often died violent deaths (on a par with the "de Medicis" family), with the pious and noble House of Rotrou. We will not harbour upon these conflicting documents, but limit ourselves to evidence which can be proved.

## What we NOW know as true

In about 963, The Count of Blois and Chartres, Thibault (920-978) waged war upon Richard 1st, Duke of Normandy, whose armies continually pillaged across the border of Normandy <sup>4</sup>, into the fertile plains of l'Île de France. The early Dukes of Normandy were direct descendants of the Vikings, and their attitude towards others had always been bellicious. In an effort to halt these incursions, Thibault, with the benediction of Lothaire, King of France, attacked and took Evreux, and entrusted one of his military commanders, a certain Rotrou (Rotroldus), hitherto unknown to history, to attack Sées. Rotrou succeeded in this task, but was globally defeated, and forced to cede the town of Bellême <sup>5</sup>. Also in 963, Rotrou is cited as a witness to the foundation of the Priory of Bonneval, showing that he has some importance. Although little known at this time, Rotrou has sometimes been defined as the Count of Perche (although we have no indication as to how he gained the title). We have absolutely no information concerning his wife, not even her name. We are left to ponder upon the possible links between Rotrou and the Lords of Mortagne (Herve and Fulke), previously known as Corbon, and inheriting the title of Counts of Perche. Although he was forced to cede Bellême in the war against Robert I (indicating that at some time Bellême formed part of his domain), Rotrou continued to be referred to as the Count of Perche, indicating that the Bellémois was never considered to be part of the Perche. Some time after the debacle against the Normans, Thibault ordered Rotrou to build fortified positions in the developing town of Nogent-le-Châtel (later to become Nogent-le-Rotrou), to keep an eye on the "troublesome neighbours, the Normans". We know that Thibault died in 978, and that he was succeeded by his son Eudes. We know also that Rotrou was a witness to Thibault's widow, Liegarde, in at least 5 cartulary acts, in 978, 985, 986, 988, and 991. This clearly defines Rotrou as a senior and trusted "*fidelis*", or "*faithful*". Before 996, Rotrou himself (named as *Rotroco de Nogiarno*) makes a donation to the church of land at Thivars. In the act, Rotrou describes himself as knight and vassal of Eudes, Count of Chartres, the son of Thibault <sup>6</sup>. This act infers that the town of Nogent had already been ceded to Rotrou, either by Thibault, or his son, as a reward for his loyalty to the House of Chartres <sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> It must be admitted that, at this time, there was no clearly defined border of Normandy to the south, as the Dukes clearly had their eyes set upon expansion. We will have to wait until 1204 for the boundaries of Normandy to be solidly defined.

<sup>5</sup> History is uncertain about the jurisdiction of Bellême in this period. Rotrou was supposed to have lost control of Bellême in the wars of 963-4, but we also know that Yves de Creil (930-1005) became Lord of Bellême. Apparently, Yves was nominated Lord of Bellême by Richard I, Duke of Normandy, **after** Rotrou lost it. "*Yves was known as a Kings Archer (Balistraris Regis), but in fact was among the Kings chosen few, and was considered as an engineer, a "builder" of machines. Thus Yves, of relatively low birth was raised to higher levels as a result of his art, by Richard .....*"

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*The child pretended to be ill, as counselled by Yves ... Osmond and those who cared for him feared for his life, such that the news was widely circulated ... and all the guards left the child alone, Osmond .... took the child with him [on horseback] , and fled from the town.*

*.... il [Yves] obtint dans la suite cette seigneurie [Bellême] par la generosité du Duc Richard, qui .... se rappela le service qu'Yves lui avait rendu durant sa captivité. En outre du Bellêmois, Richard donna encore à Yves, Alençon et ses terres .... la ville de Séez ..... à la charge de lui faire hommage, et de veiller de ce côté à la sureté de ses états.*

*He [Yves] was later granted this Lordship [Bellême] by the generosity of Duke Richard, who ... remembered the service that Yves had rendered during his captivity. As well as the Bellêmois, Richard also gave to Yves, Alençon and its lands ... the town of Séez .... on condition that he paid homage, and that he should ensure the security of his [Richards] lands.*

#### **4 - M. O. Des Murs - Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous (1856)**

This is a translation from the French - Page 106 :

*Some historians propose that, to recompense Rotrou for his losses, and to reward him for his services, Thibault ceded to him Nogent-le-Châtel (later Nogent-le Rotrou), under the auspices of the County of Chartres, but obliged to do military service, thus obtaining a forward post totally devoted to preserving the lands from all possible attacks from Normandy.*

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<sup>9</sup> In order to curb the bellicious pretensions of the Normans, the French King had found no other way to prevent this, than to kidnap the young Duke, and to keep him in restraint. The Dukes supporters found a way to free the imprisoned youth. History will show that the Kings of France would regret their policies towards the Norman Dukes. In 911, King Charles had signed a peace treaty with the Viking chief Rollo, allocating him enormous territories in the north of Neustria. This may be associated with the concept of letting the fox into the hen-house ..... !

## The Mélisende Hypotheses (The Enigma of Mélisende)

This chapter could have been entitled "The Enigma of Mélisende", and could lead the reader to believe that the only subject covered concerns this woman who was a key element of the House of Châteaudun at the end of the 10th century, and also a vital element of the emerging House of Rotrou, and yet who remains, to this day, much of an enigma. However, although we will attempt to clarify the genealogy of one of the most important early members of this family, we inevitably reach into some of the more tenuous and uncertain moments of this period. Our Mélisende clearly existed, but there are several possibilities concerning her connection with the House of Rotrou.

### Introduction

During the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, few people could read or write. Minor families or lineages had no way to record births, marriages and deaths within their families, and had probably more important things to do. Only forenames were given to each person when they were born, and imagination was sorely lacking in the attribution of these names. The children were often given the name of their mother or father. The names were used orally, and whenever, at a later date, these names may have been transcribed, the spelling was not necessarily precise. The invasion of England by William the Conqueror has done nothing to simplify the reconstruction of family events, as there were often English and French variants of the forenames used, and this problem is compounded by the fact that Latin was the only written source of information. As examples, the many Viscounts of Châteaudun are often called Geoffrey, although the Latin name used was Gausfred. The name Rotroldus, or Rotrou was given through several generations of the Perche family, but the Latin name used in documents of that time was Rotrocius.

Genealogists have discussed at length, the rise and fall of the several illustrious families in "The County of The Perche" between the 10th and the 12th centuries. It will suffice to say that this area of France harboured many of the key players in the power struggles ending in French unification. A cursory glance at the available written works will immediately uncover the obstacles encountered in the establishment of the lineage of the families concerned. The instantaneous availability of many Internet documents that discuss this period does nothing to clarify the situation, in fact, sometimes it only adds to the confusion. We are left with the idea "We know how it all ended, but we are not quite sure how it began".

"*The descent of the baronry <sup>1</sup> is obscure .....*" is only one of the understatements to be found in documents concerning this period of history.

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<sup>1</sup> This must surely refer to the Baronry of Delvin, County Westmeath, in Ireland, from 1200 to 1400, although we feel that the baronry of Ireland is fraught with much less uncertainty than the De Nogent period in England between 1066 and 1172.

While trying to fit a certain Mélisende de Châteaudun into this fascinating period in history, we will have to satisfy ourselves with uncertain dates, inconsistent names, unknown places, all this through a haze of Latin. Information will come from many different sources, and will be fragmentary to say the least ! We will raise questions that have uncertain answers, or no answer at all. When we reach the end of this chapter, we will have our finished jigsaw puzzle, but we will be missing several pieces, and even more frustrating, we will have pieces which don't belong to this picture at all. To make matters worse, we will have pieces which surely belong, but unfortunately, don't quite seem to fit !

From the several hypotheses developed concerning the House of Châteaudun, The House of Rotrou, the House of Bellême, and other major and minor actors of this period, and their interpenetration, I will leave you to choose the one you find the most convincing.

## Investigating the Uncertain

We know that a certain Mélisende de Châteaudun existed, and we know that she formed a small, though important part in the descent of the House of Rotrou. Who she was, and how she got her name (title) is not clear. She was born about either about 960 or 991 and died about 1035<sup>2</sup>.

In the various reconstructions that are given below, we attempt to clarify the following :

- 1 Who were the parents of " Mélisende " ?
- 2 Who did she marry ? (see the last section of this document)
- 3 How did she get the sobriquet "De Châteaudun " ?
- 4 Who were her children ?

If we can answer all the above questions, we will know how Mélisende fits into the family of the House of Rotrou. There are several possible reconstructions of the Family Tree, inserting the Mélisende in various places, and associating her directly or indirectly with the Rotrou family. We must first base our conjecture on information that we can be sure of :

- 1 A certain Viscount Geoffrey of Châteaudun and his wife Hermengarde had several sons,
- 2 One of these sons apparently married a certain Mélisende, probably the daughter of a certain Rotrou de Nogent.

Within the different reconstructions, we must always return to the the principal question which imposes itself : Why was Mélisende referred to as "de Châteaudun ". There are several possibilities :

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that we have reasonably clear evidence of two different dates of birth for Mélisende, gives weight to our final evaluation showing that there were not one but two women named Mélisende.



- 1 She was the daughter of a Viscount of Châteaudun. If she had a brother, he would inherit the title. If the brother died before Mélisende, she could then inherit the title and pass it to her husband, although this is unlikely, as it would normally go to one of their sons, or to another male of the family.
- 2 She married into the House of Châteaudun, perhaps even the Viscount, and thus her descendants were potential Viscounts,
- 3 She was given the "de Châteaudun " sobriquet much later, by historians or genealogists, either because she was a daughter of the House of Châteaudun, or that she married a Viscount of Châteaudun,
- 4 There were several persons called Mélisende, one of which was a Mélisende de Châteaudun.

However, before we concentrate on Mélisende, we have another discrepancy at the same period.

There are several hypotheses concerning the descent of the viscomptal title within the House of Châteaudun. Each of these hypotheses is quoted from a reputable genealogist or historian. We will also include that of the Internet site FranceBalade, which appears to be a serious and knowledgable Internet source.

Title	Settipani FranceBalade	De Romanet	Thompson	De	Murs
					Rampo
1 <sup>st</sup> Viscount	not specified	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	???	Geoffrey
2 <sup>nd</sup> Viscount	Geoffrey	Hughes	Hughes	Geoffrey	Hughes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Viscount	Hughes	Geoffrey	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes
4 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey
5 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes
6 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II

Some historians suggest that Generation 1 and Generation 2 did not both exist (most generations had sons called Geoffrey and Hughes, causing potential confusion), and in fact represent only one generation. If we merge G1 and G2, we may possibly satisfy our quest for truth. Appearing in the midst of this turmoil, appeared a certain Mélisende. Was she the daughter of our first forbear, Rotrou, or was she the daughter of an early Viscount of Châteaudun?

All historical sources, however, agree that the second half of the Xth Century is clouded with uncertainty. Kathleen Thompson <sup>3</sup> freely admits that valid data concerning minor nobility at this time was difficult to find, but that knowledge concerning the descent of the Rotrou Family was better than most.

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<sup>3</sup> Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - The County of the Perche (1000-1226).

Certain sources say that Mélisendes' father was Hughes de Châteaudun 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount (about 960-989).

- 1 - Vicomte De Romanet (1900)
- 2 - Kathleen Thompson (2002)
- 3 - FranceBalade (<http://www.francebalade.com/chartres/ctdunois.htm>)

Certain genealogists say it was Geoffrey de Châteaudun 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount (about 935-969)

- 1 - OE de Murs (1856)
- 2 - Christian Settiani (1999)

And finally, a strong current of thought suggests that Mélisende was the daughter of Rotrou, the commander of one of the armies of Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres.

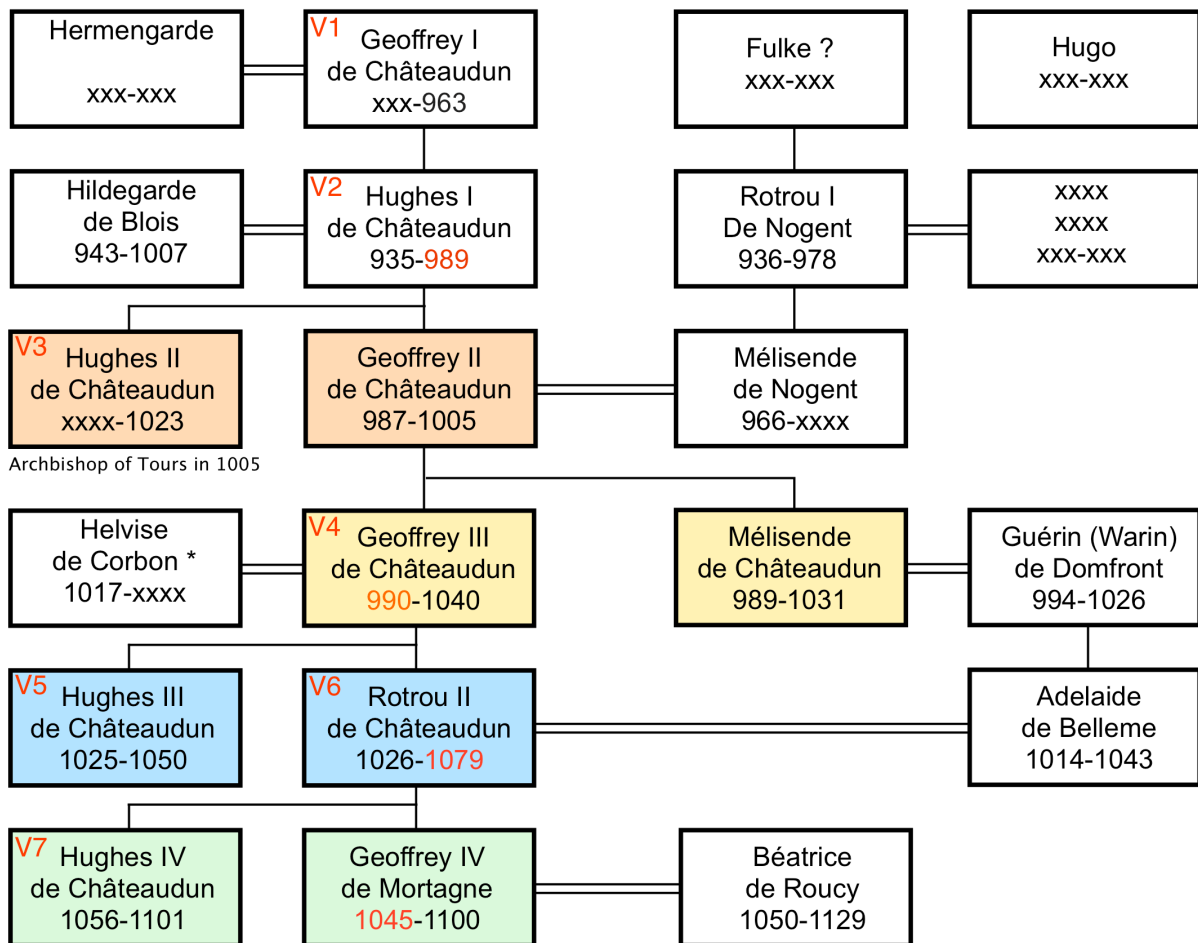
More recent studies suggest that Mélisende married a certain Fulke (Foulques) <sup>4</sup>, and that it may have been Fulke de Mortagne. If this is true, we must ask how Mélisendes son Geoffrey became Viscount of Châteaudun. It now seems possible that Mélisende married Fulke, a little known brother (or close relative) of Hughes, the current Viscount, and that all Hughes brothers died before he did, which could explain how Geoffrey, son of Mélisende, became Viscount.

As another complication, we are unsure of the names of the first counts of Châteaudun. And so we present the various hypotheses, pointing out the "fors" and "againsts". And we shall also try and fit Mélisende into our hypotheses, inasmuch as it is possible.

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<sup>4</sup> M.O. des Murs - Histoire des Comtes du Perche page 119 - quoting another historian H. Dallier "... ne pouvant détruire ou contester l'existence de Mélisende, comme mère de notre Geoffrey II, à mieux de lui donner pour mari un Foulques, à peu pres inconnu ....."

## De Romanet's Hypothesis



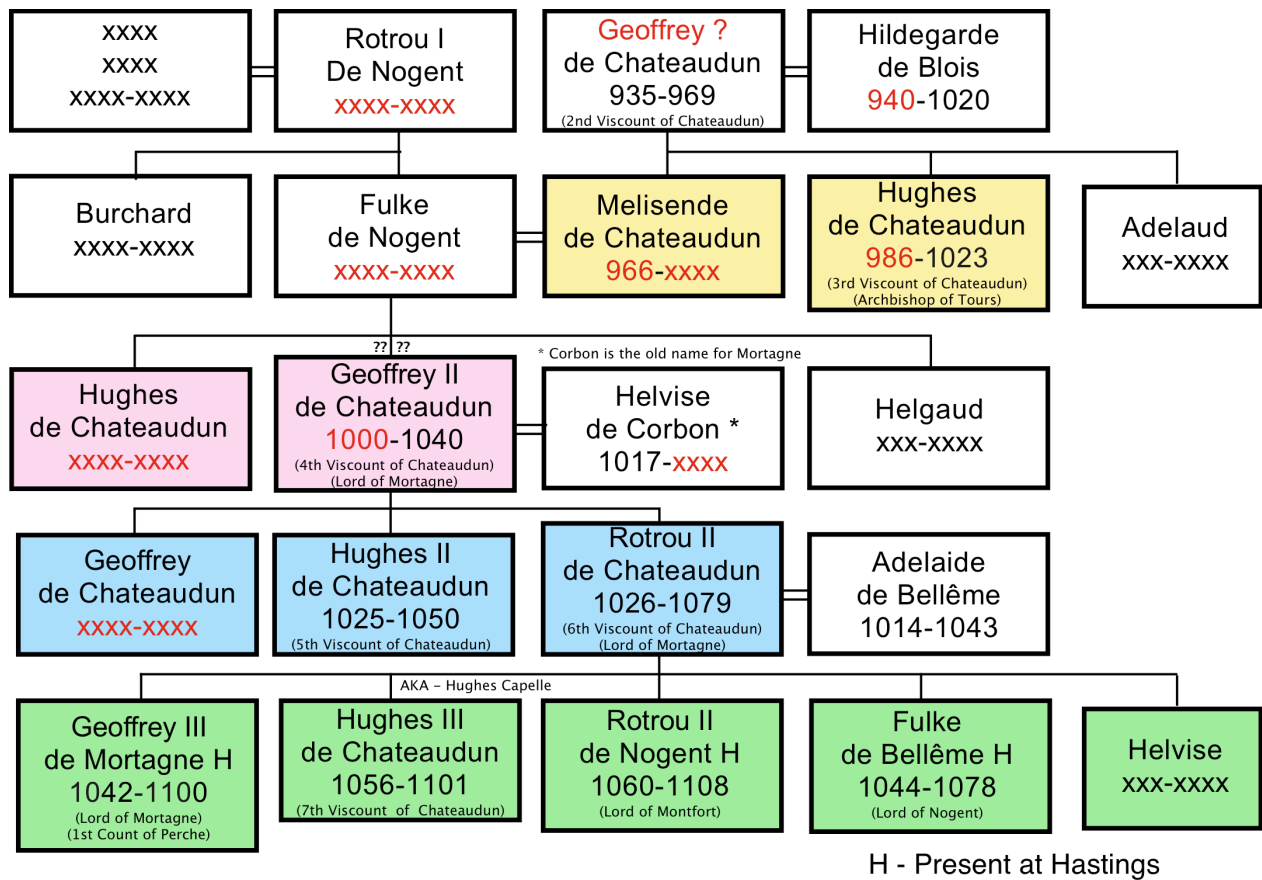
\* Corbon is the old name for Mortagne. Recent research shows that Helvise was, in fact Helvise de Pithiviers.  
 VX is the Viscount reference number

This diagram presents the theory that there were two distinct "Mélisendes", shows the second as being Mélisende de Châteaudun, daughter of the first Mélisende (Mélisende de Rotrou). This first Mélisende married the brother of the Viscount of Châteaudun (Geoffrey ?), and their son inherited the title when his uncle became Archbishop of Tours in 1005.

It also shows that Rotrou II married his "Cousin" Adelaide, because Mélisende de Châteaudun was his aunt.

NOTE : The numbers (II, III, etc.) given to Rotrou, Hughes and Geoffrey were given later, to eliminate confusion. They never had these numbers in their lifetime. Moreover, many documents differ in the attribution of these numbers, especially for the Geoffrey's and the Hughes.

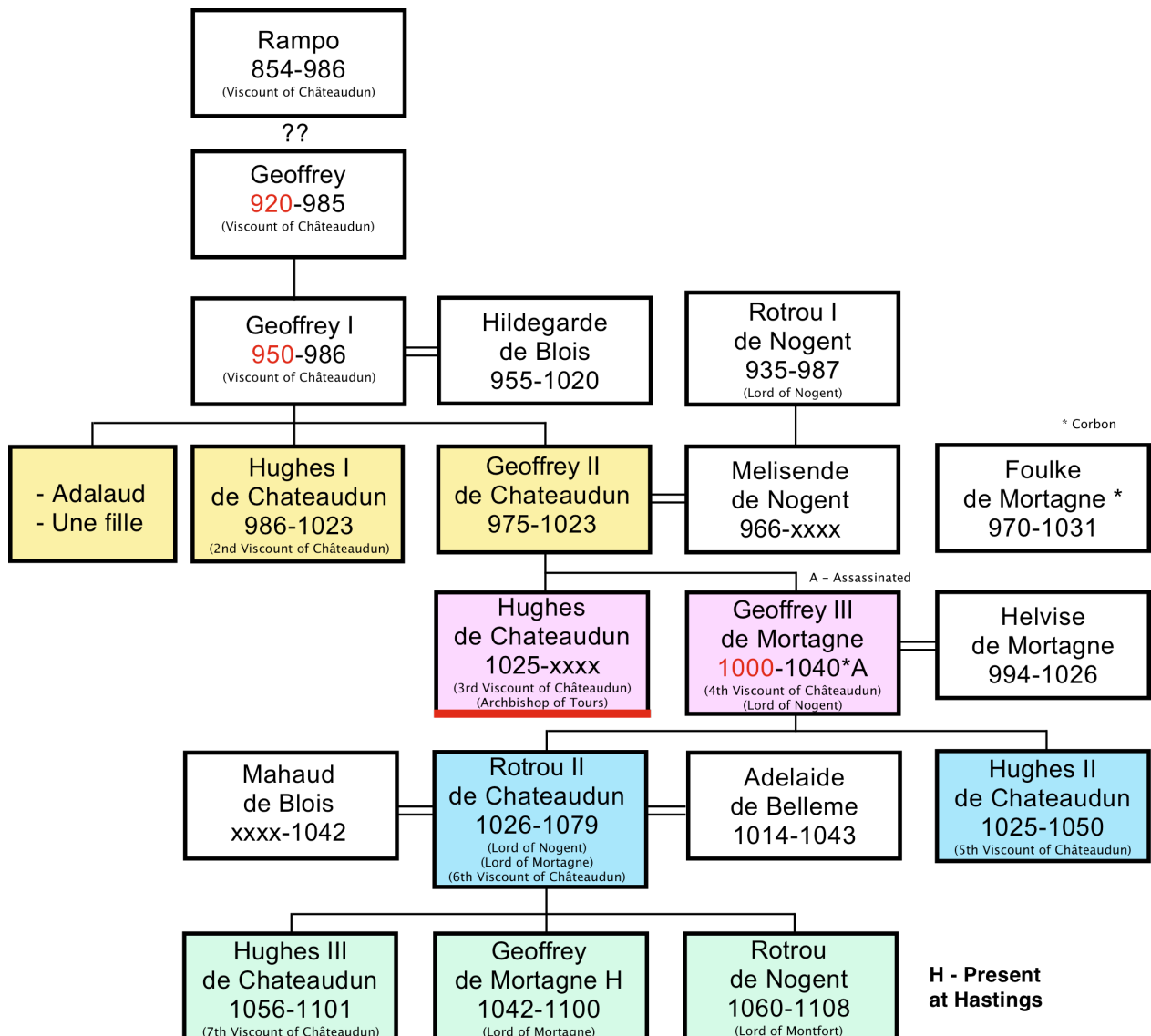
## OE Des Murs Hypothesis



A totally different reconstruction by the historian OE. Des Murs presents several problems. He defines only one Mélisende, when we know that there are several possible birth dates for Mélisende. He also quotes the son of Fulke<sup>5</sup> de Nogent (who marries Mélisende de Châteaudun) as having a son Geoffrey, who becomes Viscount of Châteaudun, a promotion extremely unlikely, to say the least. However, he does propose the idea of a Foulkes who marries a Mélisende, a concept which will appear under different auspices, in another hypothesis. However, there is no explanation of how Mélisende can also marry Guérin de Domfront, a complete generation later ! Christian Settiani also considers that it is exaggerated to consider that Geoffrey II is the son of Foulkes de Nogent, and also that Geoffrey would seem to have risen to the title of Viscount of Châteaudun rather rapidly. However, the early deaths of all the other possible candidates would make this possible. Did Hildegarde de Blois marry Hugh de Châteaudun or Geoffrey de Châteaudun ? This construction raises more questions than it provides answers.

<sup>5</sup> Fulke has been written with several variants - Foulke, Fulquois

## FranceBalade Hypothesis



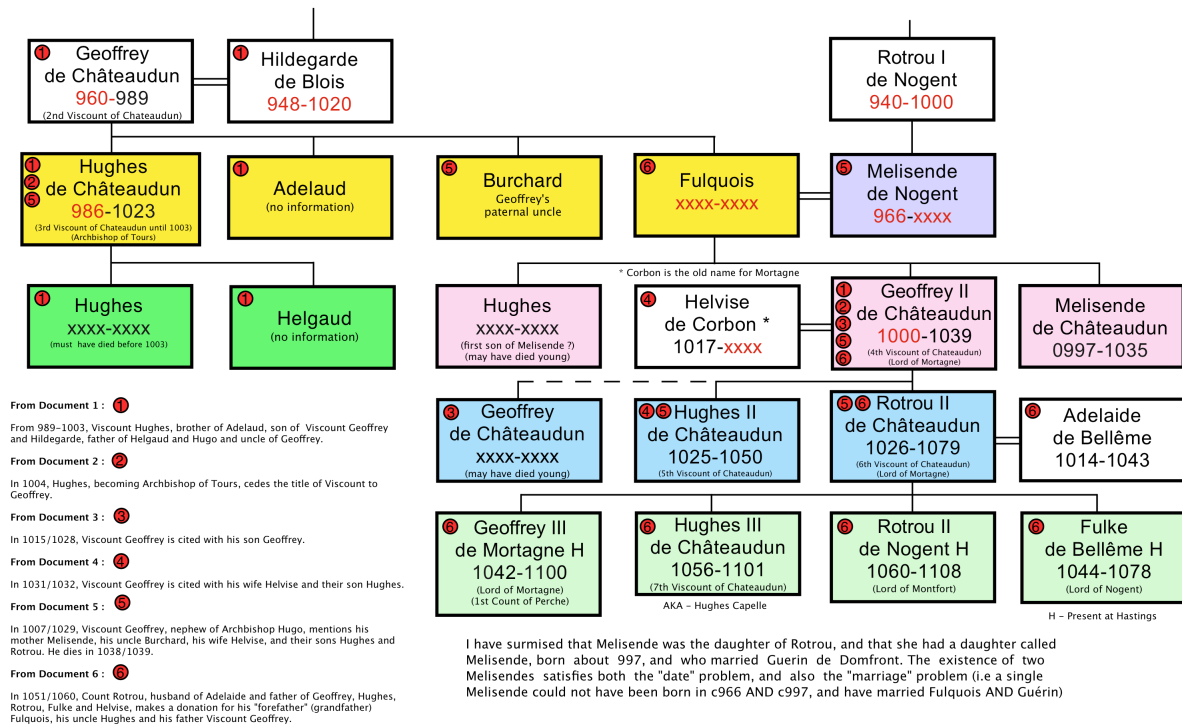
Here we see for the second time, a Mélisende who is the daughter of Rotrou de Nogent, who marries into the House of Châteaudun. This enticing concept clearly opens the way for an acceptable proposition: how the De Nogent and the de Châteaudun families were united, and how a De Nogent descendant became Viscount of Châteaudun. Another variation of this hypothesis is that Mélisende married, not Geoffrey de Châteaudun, but an unknown brother Fulke (see below). The birth dates above have been extrapolated, as the FranceBalade Internet site :

(<http://www.francebalade.com/chartres/ctdunois.htm>)

shows only the dates of accession to the Viscounty of Châteaudun.



## What We Are Sure Of From 6 Cartulary Documents Determined by Christian Settipani



After studying the different hypotheses, several of them extrapolations without proof, others partisan decisions with no foundation, it is immensely gratifying to contemplate the evaluations made by Christian Settipani (Université de la Sorbonne), from six cartulary documents drawn up at the precise time of events which took place over a period of about 100 years (five generations). This evidence cannot be refuted. When there is a lack of data, Settipani hazards intelligent guesses, but never overestimates their fragility. We cannot guarantee from his evaluations, the identity of the person who married Mélisende de Nogent. However, Settipani's evaluation agrees with the FranceBalade variation, that Mélisende marries an unknown relative of the Viscount of Châteaudun <sup>6</sup>, a certain Fulke. We are sure of Mélisendes' existence, but not the name of her father, although we are reasonably sure that it was the original (by which we mean, the first known) Rotrou de Nogent. Neither can we associate a brother Hughes, or a sister Mélisende de Châteaudun <sup>7</sup>, to our fourth Viscount of

<sup>6</sup> Although Settipani finally concludes : .... "En conséquence, on peut penser que Fulcois était un ascendant plus lointain de Rotrocus, le mot *avus* étant pris ici avec le sens étendu d'aïeul, ancêtre, et non seulement grand-père". "As a result, we could consider that Fulcois was a more distant member in the family of Rotrocus, the word *avus* (grandfather) being considered more in the sense ancestor, rather than grandfather".....

Finally, after taking a quick glance at the Settipani diagram above, we could easily accept that the position of Fulcois be raised by one generation to make him a brother of Geoffrey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount, and that this would bring the birth dates of Mélisende and her father more correctly into line.

<sup>7</sup> ..... Although in the corresponding time frame, we have many references concerning a "Melisende de Châteaudun" who married Guérin (Warin) de Domfront. It seems perfectly acceptable to place this Mélisende as a descendant (probably a daughter) of Mélisende de Nogent.

Châteaudun, Geoffrey. But Settapani seems to know when to stop in his evaluations. Can we be satisfied with his results, even if we agree that there are some vital pieces of the jig-saw that are still missing ? Settapani's evaluations strengthen the idea that the De Nogent family is rewarded for their long standing relationship with the House of Blois, whose influence over the House of Châteaudun could certainly encourage such a marriage between our Mélisende and a member of the House of Châteaudun.

After ploughing through literally thousands of pages of Internet information, on dozens of sites, I was so disheartened with the fact that no birth or death dates of our De Nogent ancestors coincided, and that few of our amateur genealogists agreed on even the simplest of information, that I began to disbelieve practically all the information that I came across, until Mr. Settapani put me back on track, and helped me find the patience to continue in my research.

## **How did Geoffrey II become Viscount ?**

As if we did not have enough problems concerning the early descent of the Rotrou family, there remains another problem which is compounded with the enigma of Mélisende.

Documentary evidence, scarce though it may be, has shown that Mélisende was very probably the daughter of Rotrou de Nogent. We know that Mélisende's son Geoffrey became Viscount of Châteaudun, but we are left to speculate about the way in which this was possible. There is no way that the son of Rotrou could aspire to the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, as there is no proof of blood or marriage ties with the House of Châteaudun at this time. We are left with the compelling suggestion that Geoffrey could become Viscount because of his father's ties to that family. Documents concerning Mélisende's husband are conflicting, indicating that it could have been the current Viscount of Châteaudun, although we are not sure if it was Hugh or his brother Geoffrey. Possibly, Geoffrey became Viscount when his brother rescinded the title in 1005<sup>8</sup>, but died very soon after, leaving no direct descendant. Information is scanty concerning the early Viscounts, and only becomes uncontested when we reach the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. but seem to indicate that it was a certain Fulke (or Foulquois), but information is incomplete and does not clarify the identity of this man.

There are several possibilities, which can be gleaned from the limited charters of the time.

1 – Fulke was Lord of Mortagne, and his uncle was Hervé II, also Lord before him. Although Fulke's wife is not known, he was reputed to have had a daughter Helvise (or Heloise), and that she married Geoffrey II de Châteaudun, thus passing him the title of Lord of Mortagne. This solves the problem of how the title Lord of Mortagne came into the Châteaudun family, but certainly not how the Châteaudun title came into the family of Rotrou.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman\\_Catholic\\_Archdiocese\\_of\\_Tours#1000-1300](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Tours#1000-1300) indicates that Hugh was Archbishop from 1008.



Recent research (Keats-Rohan, Settapani<sup>9</sup> et alia) insists that Geoffrey II married a certain Heloise de Pithiviers, and thus the title of Lord of Mortagne could not come to Geoffrey II in the way supposed above. In addition to this question, if Mélisende married Fulke de Mortagne, we must ask ourselves, how is it possible that her son Geoffrey II became Viscount of Châteaudun, as there are no direct blood ties. Settapani supposes that Fulke was a member of the Châteaudun family, without specifying how.

2 – Fulke could have been a little known relative (possibly brother) of Hugh II of Châteaudun, Viscount until he became Archbishop of Tours in 1005, and rescinded his title. As it seems that the Hugh's brother (Geoffrey) died relatively young, although he may have held the title of Viscount for a very short time, there was no direct line of descent to the title of Viscount, and so it fell to Geoffrey II, who was the son-in-law of the previous Viscount. It must be made clear that apart from a supposition that Fulke was Hugh's brother, there is little information concerning his existence. If he married Mélisende about 989, he may have been in his late 30's. Had he married into the House of Châteaudun at an earlier date, and Mélisende was his second wife ? A charter of 1051 by Rotrou II mentioning a certain Fulke as his « avus » (usually grandfather), confirms the existence of Fulke, and his relation to Mélisende, but still does not define his origins<sup>10</sup>. Geoffrey II, although making reference to his mother Mélisende, never mentions his father at all in the few charters concerning him, which is a little strange, although Fulke may have died earlier. Rotrou mentions his grandfather as Count, but does not specify over which territory. As Rotrou was clearly Count of Mortagne, it is assumed that his grandfather was also Count of Mortagne, which leads us back to the problem in (1), above.

3 - There is a third possibility, largely discounted because of recent research. Could Mélisende be a sister of Hughes, Viscount of Châteaudun ? Early research postulated that this Mélisende married Rotrou de Nogent, and so their son Geoffrey could eventually become Viscount when Hughes rescinded his title in 1003 (if no other successors were alive). This theory imagined that Mélisende lived to a ripe old age, married Rotrou when she was young, and later married Warin (Guerin) de Domfront, many years later, which would seem rather unlikely. As it seems likely that Mélisende de Nogent and Mélisende de Châteaudun both existed, it is easy to propose two different Mélisendes, defining the second as being the daughter of the first, and locating them both in the appropriate time frames. Mélisende de Nogent would then be the daughter of Rotrou and her marriage into the Châteaudun family could be shown as a « thank you » to the Rotrou family for services rendered. Whoever Mélisende married, it was probably unforeseen that her son would become Viscount, when all possible contenders were already dead (Hugh had two sons who died young, and Hughes brother Geoffrey apparently died at the same time as Hugh became Archbishop). Mélisende de Châteaudun would then be Geoffrey II's sister, and the time frame for her to marry Warin de Domfront would be satisfied.

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Settapani – Prosopon Newsletter, 1999 – Les Vicomtes de Châteaudun et leurs Alliés

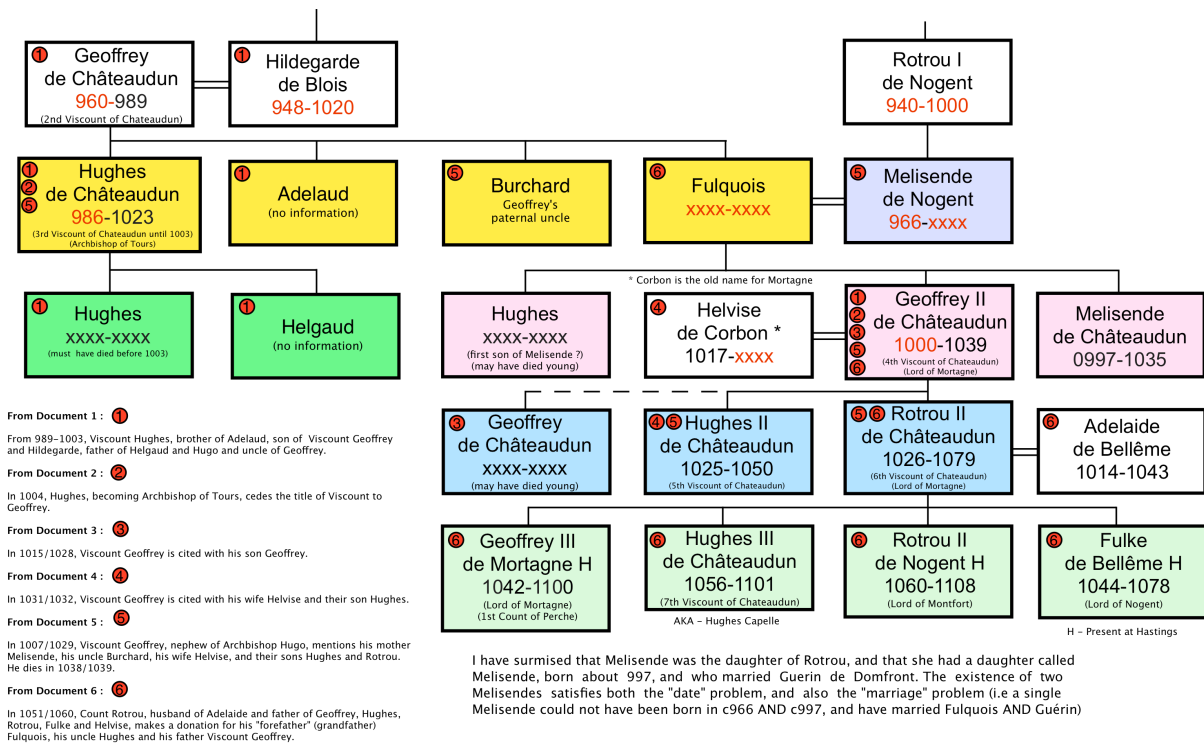
<sup>10</sup> Stewart Baldwins research into segments of the Rotrou Family (not his main interest) are extremely rigorous, and suggest all possible relationships of the family at this time, without any partisan attitude. For details, consult the Internet Site <http://sbaldw.home.mindspring.com/hproject/prov> (specifically sections concerning Mélisende, Fulcois, Geoffrey I and Geoffrey II)

A final historical note can be added here. Mélisende and Fulke had another son, Hughes de Perche, who by his marriage to Beatrix de Gatinais had a son, Geoffrey de Ferreol. This would make Fulke the root of the Plantagenat <sup>11</sup> line of the future.

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<sup>11</sup> House of Plantagenet - the name given to the dynasty of the 14 Kings of England that ruled for the 331 years from 1154 until 1485.

# Foulquois (Fulke) de Mortagne



As if we didn't have enough problems with the origins and descent of Mélisende (de Nogent or de Châteaudun ?), we find that we have another problem ! Who did Mélisende marry ? This supplementary problem only serves to underline the lack of information during this period of the Xth Century, before the family warrants a place in history. Before we begin to discuss Mélisende, we must look for a possible father for her children who will satisfy the cartulary documents which we will discover in the years that follow this uncertain period. We will investigate the possible candidates.

As with Mélisende, we can raise questions, and suggest possible solutions, but if we reason with the cartulary documents available at this time, an acceptable solution is possible. However, this solution will also raise a final problem, which we will discuss later.

While digging into the early life of the Rotrou family, we find convincing evidence of the existence of two Mélisendes, probably mother and daughter. While trying to piece together the tiny pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, we soon come across inconsistencies in certain dates and names. Rotrou's daughter Mélisende <sup>1</sup> clearly marries into the House of Châteaudun. At first, it seemed that she married the current Viscount, Hugh II, but conflicting information soon showed that she may have married Hughes brother, apparently a certain Geoffrey, or even another relative of the Châteaudun family. At

<sup>1</sup> We must admit that no conclusive evidence shows Rotrou as the father of Melisende. However, we have datelines, different names and some level of logic to define Rotrou as Melisende's (1) father, and Melisende's (2) father to be one of the House of Chateaudun, probably the daughter of Melisende (1).

some times she is referred to as Mélisende de Nogent, and at others, she is Mélisende de Châteaudun. She may of course have been attributed the sobriquet "de Châteaudun", after her marriage into this family. However, we soon find two serious flaws in our determination of this part of the family tree. Mélisende appears to have two names (de Nogent and de Châteaudun), two approximate dates of birth (around 960, and around 990), and two different husbands: a Châteaudun relative. and Warin (Guérin) de Domfront. The date of her death is quoted by all as being about 1035, a ripe old age for women of these times, and her marriage somewhere about 980, and also 1005.

Viscount de Romanet proposes a perfectly acceptable solution to these discrepancies : that there were in fact two distinct Mélisendes, and that they were most probably mother and daughter. Christian Settiani, in his precise study of cartulary documents of this era, while not being able to place Mélisende, leaves ample place for two such named women. And so it is this proposition that I show in one of the diagrams of the chapter "The Mélisende Hypotheses". But we have not yet cleared up the mystery concerning the marriage of the first Mélisende (de Nogent). Several documents have proposed that she married, not the current Viscount of Châteaudun, Hugh, nor his brother Geoffrey, but a blood relative of the Châteaudun family, and that this was a certain Foulquois (Fulke) de Mortagne. Settiani clearly places Foulquois as Mélisendes husband, and defines him to be Lord of Mortagne, for his father (uncle ?, grandfather ?), Hervé, certainly was. This raises a problem, because Foulquois was either close relative of the Viscount of Châteaudun, or else our prognostics are false. Perhaps was Foulquois a Châteaudun brother, but also Lord of Mortagne from his "forebear" Hervé. Perhaps he was a cousin/uncle/other blood relative? Several elements of information can be found for this little-known Foulquois. If we suppose that his "forebear", a certain Hervé was also Lord of Mortagne, we may ask why Foulquois was so undefined within the brothers of the House of Châteaudun. If Foulquois married Mélisende de Nogent, he must have been a close Châteaudun relative for the Viscountancy of Châteaudun to fall to Mélisendes son Geoffrey II. However, the fact that he was also Lord of Mortagne, could also explain how this title passed to Geoffrey, Mélisendes son, and also how the vague title of Count of Perche was propagated to the descendants of Rotrou, as Mortagne apparently used to be known as Corbon, and that Corbon covered a substantial part of the Perche, at one time. The plot thickens, for most of this reasoning is subject to conjecture. Finally, if Foulquois was a little-known Châteaudun relation, he would have been born about 950 and must have died about the same time as Geoffrey (about 1004), which will explain why he never became Viscount of Châteaudun. Mélisendes son Geoffrey could then become Viscount, as the only living male within the family, which may explain how the Rotrou family acceded so rapidly to the title of Viscount. However, Dr. Katharine Keats-Rohan <sup>2</sup> suggests that the father of Foulquois was Hervé II, Lord of Mortagne, which obviously means that Fulquois was not a little-known brother of the Viscount of Châteaudun. We are then left to ask how the son of Mélisende de Nogent could attain the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, if no direct blood-line exists. It may be then that Hervé was effectively, either an uncle or possibly even a grandfather. The cartulary documents

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Katharine Keats-Rohan, is a history researcher, specialising in prosopography. Collaborating with Christian Settiani, she is widely regarded as one of the founders of modern prosopographical and network analysis research.

of this period, although Christian Settipani has extracted the maximum information from them, will not allow us to go further in a subjective reasoning.

Our quest for the truth does not stop here. As a final adjustment to our family diagram, we must also question the marriage of Geoffrey II, the new Viscount with a certain "Helvise". Some documents define this Helvise as being Helvise de Mortagne (Mortagne once having the name of Corbon). However, Settipani and Keats-Rohan now estimate that Geoffrey married a certain Helvise, but that she was the daughter of Rainard, Lord of Pithiviers, and that her husband Geoffrey became Lord of Mortagne from his "forebear" Foulquois, and not from his father-in-law, as was previously supposed. We then have a satisfactory explanation of the passage of the Mortagne title to the Rotrou family, rather than through the little defined wife of Geoffrey II. We must be glad that Geoffrey's wife was another Helvise, and not the daughter of Foulquois de Mortagne, because that would mean that Geoffrey married his sister !

The existence of Foulquois in our modified family diagram does however provide some problems, principally concerning the place where he fits in to the descent of the Viscounts of Châteaudun. Foulquois' father could not have been Hervé, Count of Mortagne, and Keats-Rohan would prefer to place Hervé as a grandfather. The relationship between Hervé and the early Viscounts of Dunois and Châteaudun cannot be defined, although they must have been close. The title of Lords of Mortagne from Hervé to Foulquois would explain the passing of the title to Geoffrey II, with the notion that Mortagne was the centre of a region called the Corbonais, and that the lords of the Corbonais, ruling over a substantial part of the Perche, were cited as being Counts of Perche. The attribution of that title to the descendants of the early Rotrou would then seem acceptable.

And so we compound the Mélisende Hypothesis with that of the Foulquois Hypothesis, apparently two closely related (by marriage) members of this House of Rotrou in the making. There remains only a closer study concerning the husband of Mélisende.

### **Who was Mélisendes Husband ?**

( or : How did Geoffrey II become Viscount ?)

We have suggested, by evaluating from limited documents, scarce though they may be, that Mélisende was very probably the daughter of Rotrou de Nogent. We are sure that Mélisendes son Geoffrey became Viscount of Châteaudun, but we are left to speculate about the way in which this was possible. There seems to be no way that the grandson of Rotrou could aspire to the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, as there is no convincing proof of blood or marriage ties with the House of Châteaudun at this time. We are left with the compelling suggestion that Geoffrey could become Viscount because of his fathers ties to that family. Documents concerning Mélisendes husband are conflicting, indicating that it could possibly have been the current Viscount of Chateadun, although we are not sure if it was another family

member. Hugh, most probably the Viscount of this period <sup>3</sup> was apparently married to an unknown wife (not Mélisende), and had at least one son, Helgaud. Mélisendes son, Geoffrey could only become Viscount when Hugh rescinded the title in 1003/4, on condition that there was no direct descendant. Information from this period concerning the early Viscounts is scanty, and only becomes uncontested when we reach the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. but seems to indicate that it was a certain Foulquois (or Fulke) who married Mélisende, but information is incomplete and certainly does not clarify his affiliation.

In the light of extremely limited concrete evidence concerning the descent of the title of Viscount of Châteaudun to Geoffrey II, we must examine the possible options :

1 – Mélisende was a sister of the Viscount of Châteaudun, and married Rotrou de Nogent, and thus Geoffrey was Rotrous son. Mélisende was born around 966, when Rotrou was already about 25. At this time, we do not know where Rotrou lived. As the domain of Nogent was probably not conferred to Rotrou before 979, Rotrou and (unknown) wife and daughter Mélisende probably did not live in Nogent. The most likely home would have been Mortagne. Mélisende's son Geoffrey would be born about 990 when Rotrou was at least 50 years old. However, this assumption would seem rather doubtful, as a Mélisende marriage to a much younger Warin would seem unlikely, to say the least. Mélisende would also marry Warin de Domfront in about 1010, after the death of Rotrou, when she was about 45. This tenuous concept must be discounted because the time-lines would not permit it, and in fact strengthens the theory that there were two distinct Mélisendes. Imagination appears to have been scarce at this time, and there was a plethora of Hughs, Geoffreys, Heloises, Foulquois ... and why not Mélisendes ?

2 - Foulquois was possibly a little known relative of Geoffrey, Viscount of Châteaudun and Hildegarde de Blois <sup>4</sup>. Hildegarde de Blois has also been given the name Hildegarde de Mortagne. In about 980, Foulquois inherits the title of Count of Mortagne from his uncle (?) Hervé II. Foulquois must have died just before Hughes ceded the title of Viscount when he became Archbishop of Tours (1003/1004). Otherwise, he could have become the next Viscount. The title would then fall to his son.

However, we also have a slightly modified alternative :

3 - A certain Foulquois was Lord of Mortagne at this time, and his father is supposed to have been Hervé II, also Lord of Mortagne before him. If Foulquois married Mélisende de Nogent, this would explain how the title of Lord of Mortagne came into the Rotrou family, but certainly not how the Châteaudun title came into the family of Rotrou. We may then be obliged to consider that Foulquois was a blood relative of the Châteaudun Viscount. Settipani suggests some link, but Foulquois could not be a brother, if his father was identified as Herve II. The Corbonais (the old name for the

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<sup>3</sup> Combining the scarcity of information, and the numerous Hughs and Geoffreys of this time leaves us unsure as to who was Viscount, and when.

<sup>4</sup> This would confirm the theory that the generation Hildegarde de Blois - Hugh de Châteaudun did not exist, and that Hildegarde was in fact married to Geoffrey, Viscount Châteaudun. However, the connection between Hildegarde and the House of Mortagne is tenuous.

Mortagne) domain was close, and geographically formed part of the Perche. It is not unlikely that Mortagne had blood ties with Châteaudun (giving more credence to [2], above). In this case, the titles of Lord of Mortagne and Viscount of Châteaudun could both fall to Foulquois's descendant.

Recent research (Keats-Rohan, Settiani <sup>5</sup> et alia) insists that Geoffrey II married a certain Heloise de Pithiviers, and thus the title of Lord of Mortagne could not come to Geoffrey II in this way. In addition to this question, if Mélisende married Foulquois de Mortagne, we must ask ourselves, how is it possible that her son Geoffrey II became Viscount of Châteaudun, unless there were close blood ties. Settiani also, is left no option but to suppose that Foulquois was a member of the Châteaudun family, without specifying how.

The title of Viscount de Châteaudun became open when Hugh II of Châteaudun rescinded his title upon becoming Archbishop of Tours in 1003/4. As it seems that Hugh's brother (*Geoffrey*) died relatively young (although he may have held the title of Viscount for a very short time), there was apparently no direct line of descent to the title of Viscount, and so it fell to Geoffrey II, who would (in our supposition) thus have been the nephew of the previous Viscount. It must be made clear that apart from a theory that Foulquois was a member of the Châteaudun family, there is little information concerning his existence. If he married Mélisende about 989, he would have been in his late 30's. Had he married into the House of Châteaudun at an earlier date, and thus was Mélisende's second wife? A charter of 1051 by Rotrou II mentioning a certain Foulquois as his « *avus* » (usually grandfather), confirms the existence of Foulquois, and his relation to Mélisende, but still does not define his origins <sup>6</sup>. Geoffrey II, although making reference to his mother Mélisende, never mentions his father at all, in the few charters concerning him, which is a little strange, but strengthening the idea that Foulquois may have died earlier. Rotrou II mentions his grandfather as Count, but does not specify over which territory. As Rotrou was clearly Count of Mortagne, it is assumed that his grandfather was also Count of Mortagne before him.

Thus it seems likely that Mélisende de Nogent and Mélisende de Châteaudun both existed, it is easy to propose two different Mélisendes, defining the second as being the daughter of the first, and locating them both in the appropriate time frames. However, there is also a possibility that Mélisende de Châteaudun was the daughter of Hugh, Viscount of Châteaudun, and so the two Mélisendes were cousins. Mélisende de Nogent would be the daughter of Rotrou and her marriage into the Châteaudun family could be shown as a « thank you » to the Rotrou family for services rendered. Whoever Mélisende married, it was probably unforeseen that her son would become Viscount. Hugh is reputed to have had a brother called Alo, but he may have been illegitimate, and discounted from the succession. Hugh also had a son Helgaud who was probably too young to become Viscount. Hugh's brother Geoffrey apparently died at about the same time as Hugh became Archbishop. Mélisende's son Geoffrey then appears to be the only candidate, allowing a

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<sup>5</sup> Christian Settiani – Prosopon Newsletter, 1999 – Les Vicomtes de Châteaudun et leurs Alliés

<sup>6</sup> Stewart Balwins research into segments of the Rotrou Family (not his main interest) are extremely rigorous, and quoting all possible relationships of the family at this time (including Settiani's deductions), without any partisan attitude. We are left to choose our own solution.

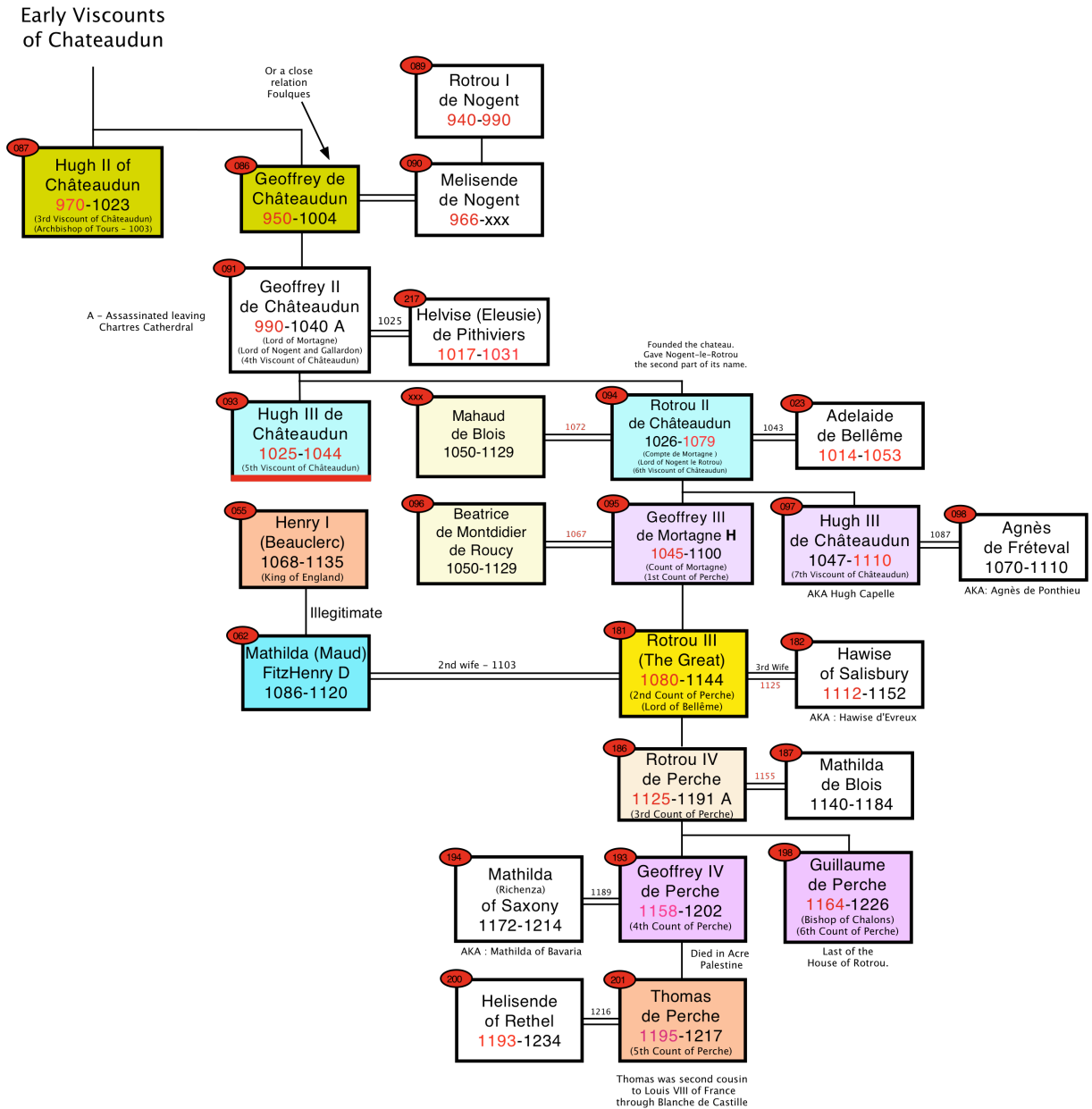
descendant of the Rotrou family to be unexpectedly propelled to a higher level of nobility. Mélisende de Châteaudun was then either Geoffrey II's sister or his niece by marriage, and the time-frame for her to marry Warin de Domfront would be satisfied.

A final historical note can be added here. Mélisende and husband (whoever it was) had another son, Hughes de Perche, who by his marriage to Beatrix de Gatinais had a son Geoffrey de Férreol. This would make Foulquois the root of the Plantagenate line of the future.



# Viscounts and Counts

## (The House of Rotrou in France)



Although open to discussion, and within the limits of all the available documents, the above diagram could represent a fair and logical description of the descent of the early Rotrou family, the Viscounts of Châteaudun and the Counts of Perche, between the 10th and the 12th centuries. Not all of the family members are included in this diagram.

Some of the areas in this descendance are open to speculation, but the results of my research overcome many of the inconsistencies which are found in the other hypotheses.

*The notes found in this document make references to certain books written by historians or genealogists, concerning the History of the Perche. A list of these authors, and their works, may be found in the Bibliography, at the end of this document.*

*The attached diagram is but a small fragment of the "House of Rotrou", a relatively minor noble family which rose "from obscure origins to princely power"<sup>1</sup> during the 10th to 12th centuries. Some of the dates here are approximate, and are marked in red, and must be taken with caution. Numbers have been added to the different members of the family, as the name Geoffrey, Hugh and Rotrou were used in abundance. However, these numbers were probably not used in their time, and historians sometimes have conflicting numbering systems. As an example, the Rotrous may be numbered from the first known (Rotrou I, Rotrou II, etc.), but many historians have numbered them from the second (Rotrou, Rotrou I, etc). Dates, even approximate, are often quoted in the first occurrence of the name, to eliminate confusion.*

The long list of Viscounts and Counts descended from the Rotrou Family origins covers nearly 200 years. During this period, the power of the Rotrou dynasty, which began from apparently limited resources, continues to increase. However, the beginnings of this long climb to fame began certainly by chance. Most historians agree that our first Rotrou (940-1000) had no titles when he appears on the scene in 963. He was most probably of inferior nobility, a vassal, although highly trusted, of Thibault The Trickster, Count of Blois and Chartres (and later his son Eudes I). Certain references showing that he was Count of Perche before 963, and that he lost control of the town of Bellême in a war against the Normans, are possibly true<sup>2</sup>. That he was given control of the domain of Nogent about the year 980, either by Thibault or Eudes is certainly not in doubt. In 996, he is referred to as "Rotroco de Nogiamo" (Rotrou de Nogent), and appears to have gained greatly in reputation. Rotrou's daughter Melisende<sup>3</sup> was chosen to marry one of the "members" of the Châteaudun family, probably as a "Thank You" for services rendered to the House of Châteaudun and the House of Blois. We are not quite sure who it was, either Geoffrey (963-1005) or maybe even a lesser known relation Foulques, of whom nothing is known. We are not even sure how a lesser family such as the Rotrous were allowed into the inner circle of nobility, unless, of course, the Rotrou descendants had ties to the House of Châteaudun that we are unaware of. Rotrou, the first of the family that comes to our attention, had served

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<sup>1</sup> Direct quote from the front jacket of Kathleen Thompson's book - Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - County of the Perche (1000-1226).

<sup>2</sup> That he lost control of the town of Bellême is not contested. However, several historical sources already define Rotrou as "Count of Perche". Chronicles of the time (Wace, Trouvère Benoit), confirm this eventuality. At best, he may have been "Lord", for he was certainly not senior to the Viscounts of Châteaudun

<sup>3</sup> Although M.O. Des Murs - Histoire des Comtes du Perche Page 37 suggests that Rotrou marries Mélisende de Châteaudun, most historians (De Romanet, etc.) agree that it was probably Rotrou's daughter Mélisende who married into the House of Châteaudun. The confusion between Mélisende de Nogent and Mélisende de Châteaudun can only be explained if there were two Mélisendes (mother and daughter) !

the House of Blois for some time. Because the House of Châteaudun was itself subservient to the House of Blois, and Rotrou was in great favour with Thibault, we may imagine that some strings were pulled to allow the Rotrou family access into the House of Châteaudun, although it was certainly inconceivable at this time to suppose that Mélisendes son would soon become Viscount. The apparent renown of Rotrou, steeped in mystery even today, must come from his family in the county of the Perche, who were reputed to be Counts, although we have no proof concerning this theory.

In this document, you will find thumbnail sketches of the members of the De Nogent family who became Viscounts of Châteaudun or Counts of Perche. Other members of the family will be treated in separate documents.

## **Yves de Bellême**

The reader must be surprised to find here a section on a member of the Bellême family. Throughout our history of our Rotrou family, we have insisted that the two families were not (to our knowledge) connected, and that moreover they were enemies for more than 100 years during the 10th and 11th centuries. However, until such time as the two families were associated by several peace-making marriages <sup>4</sup>, the Bellême family were an important part of the Rotrou history, if only because the two families were sworn enemies.

Due to the fact that the early members of the Bellême family were not noble, very little was known about them. They are supposed to have originated in a small town to the north of Paris, called Creil. Apparently, there were two Yves de Creil (father and son), although some historians suggest that they were one and the same person. The Yves de Creil that we know of appeared on the scene in 942, when his actions helped save the life of Richard, Duke of Normandy <sup>5</sup> who had been captured by King Louis IV of France. Louis' objective was to rid himself of the Duke, and take control of Normandy. Through a ruse, Yves helped in the escape of Duke Robert, and would later be handsomely rewarded for his act.

Yves was known for his talents as "balistarius", a rather vague title which covered the field of archery, the building of war machines such as Balistas, etc. It appears that Yves became a vital part of the Norman military strategy, and developed as a master of attack and defence mechanisms for the Duke. In 963, when the town of Bellême was taken in battle by the Normans, as a gesture for services rendered, Yves de Creil was named Lord of Bellême, and he and his descendants moved one step up the ladder of fame. Some historians and genealogists quote him as being a powerful Norman Baron, which is a three-time falsehood <sup>6</sup>. However, he and his descendants bathed in an aura of power and respectability from this period onwards. As Rotrou apparently lost control of the town of Bellême, he and Yves,

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<sup>4</sup> The marriages did not suffice to bring the families together. Only Henry II, King of England could bring the Belleme family to heel, and many years would pass before this was possible.

<sup>5</sup> Richard was the grandson of the Viking Rollo, who had been attributed Neustria (Normandy) by the treaty of Saint-Clair-Sur-Epte in 911.

<sup>6</sup> He was not powerful, he was not Norman, and he was not a Baron. See Chapter 14 - Bellême or not Bellême ?

and descendants of both families became irreconcilable enemies <sup>7</sup>. Bellême would return to the house of Rotrou many years later. By this time, the de Nogent descendants of the Rotrou family had become Counts of a (nearly) united Perche, and the descendants of the Bellême family had nearly destroyed themselves in an internal war of murder and treachery.

## The Early Viscounts of Chateaudun

Historical information concerning the Viscounts of Châteaudun is certainly better than for the early House of Rotrou. The chain of command, so to speak with respect to nobility in France in the early Xth Century was spread over three levels ; the King himself, the Counts at the second level, and at the lowest level, the Viscounts. Any information lower than the Viscounts was not of sufficient importance to "hit the news". For this reason we are lucky to dispose of minimum data concerning the house of Rotrou at this time. Kathleen Thompson in her book dedicated to the history of the Perche <sup>8</sup>, and especially the House of Rotrou quite clearly states her case. Information concerning the nobility of France at this period was limited, but for the County of the Perche and the Rotrou family, "it was better than most".

Because the Rotrou Family were first linked and eventually merged into the House of Châteaudun, it may be a good idea to indicate the early Châteaudun Viscounts, before Mélisende apparently married into their family.

The early history of the family is clouded with uncertainty for several reasons. The early Xth century lacks historical data, even for the noble families. Most of these Viscounts were named Geoffrey or Hughes, and confusion is understandable. Finally, the wives of two Viscounts, named Hermengarde and Hildegarde may have been one and the same person.

There are several hypotheses concerning the descent of the viscomptal title within the House of Châteaudun. Each of these hypotheses is quoted from a reputable genealogist or historian. We will also include FranceBalade, which appears to be a serious and knowledgable Internet source.

Title	Settipani	De Romanet	Thompson	De Murs	FranceBalade
1 <sup>st</sup> Viscount	not specified	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	???	Rampo Geoffrey
2 <sup>nd</sup> Viscount	Geoffrey	Hughes	Hughes	Geoffrey	Hughes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Viscount	Hughes	Geoffrey	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes
4 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey	Geoffrey
5 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes	Hughes
6 <sup>th</sup> Viscount	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II	Rotrou II

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<sup>7</sup> M.O. Des Murs - Histoire des Comtes du Perche Page 106 - "mais on comprend que dès ce moment, cette maison et celle des Rotrous ou de Mortagne soient devenues ennemies irréconciliables"

<sup>8</sup> Yet another direct quote from the introduction in Kathleen Thompsons book.

Confusing, to say the least, but at least we all agree from Viscount No. 3 onwards. Historians note that the beginning of the XIth century provided more substantial and correct data, especially when the Rotrou family married into the House of Châteaudun.

## **Geoffrey II de Châteaudun (990-1040)**

The early references to the Rotrou family, in which Geoffrey de Mortagne forms an important part, can be found in the middle of the 10th century, when a certain Rotrou was known to have seconded Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres, in his efforts to support the King of France, Lothaire. Because of the scarcity of valid information available at this time, we have two possible scenarios :

Viscount de Romanet suggests that Rotrou had a son and successor called Geoffrey, in about the year 987, and that Geoffrey became Count of Mortagne. Geoffrey married Mélisende, daughter of Hughes and Hildegarde of Châteaudun. However, he also suggests another possibility : that Mélisende was the daughter of Rotrou, Lord of Nogent, and that she married into the House of Châteaudun. Her son Geoffrey, became Viscount of Châteaudun. These two scenarios both give the same result, although scenario two leaves doubt as to Mélisende's husband <sup>9</sup>. However M. Chevrard, Mayor of Chartres (1811), and other authors quote Geoffrey as having the double name of Geoffrey-Rotrou, which would seem to indicate a family connection with Rotrou (either his mother, and/or his grandfather).

Other historians have also studied the way in which Mélisende's son Geoffrey became Viscount, and also suggested that Mélisende was the daughter of Rotrou. The most plausible scenario is that Mélisende marries Geoffrey de Châteaudun (963-1005), or was it a little known relation Foulques ? Although no proof has been found in historical documents concerning this marriage, it was probably in return for the building of the fortifications of the future town of Nogent-le-Rotrou, and their long-standing support to the House of Blois. Geoffrey (or Foulques) never held the title of Viscount of Châteaudun, which would have gone to the elder brother Hugh II. Hugh II is Viscount of Châteaudun at about this time, but gives up the title when he becomes Archbishop of Tours in 1003. Normally, the title would have passed to one of his brothers, or even to one of his sons, but for some reason (perhaps the early deaths of Geoffrey and Foulques, and the absence of a legitimate son), the title of Viscount passes to Melisende's son, Geoffrey II (990-1040), who will also hold the title of Lord of Nogent-le-Rotrou and Gallardon. This is most certainly a chance occurrence, as nothing would suggest that Rotrou's grandson would be so fortunate as to become Viscount, if there were two Châteaudun brothers in the direct line (unless they died earlier). Geoffrey is the first of the House of Rotrou to hold the title of Viscount of Châteaudun. From this moment, the House of Rotrou is on the first rung of a ladder which will take them into fame and fortune.

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<sup>9</sup> We will study the possibilities concerning Mélisende's husband in another chapter. However, we acknowledge the fact that the title "de Mortagne" is associated with the descendants. Where could this title come from, unless it was from Mélisende's husband ?

However, when Geoffrey succeeded to the title of Viscount in 1003, he must have cast a rueful eye on the lamentable state of his affairs. Bellême had been lost years before by his grandfather Rotrou, and in a long dispute against the Robert II, the King of France, his father had lost control over a part of Mortagne, and finally the fortress of Gallardon had been destroyed. Luckily, Geoffrey benefitted from disputes between the King of France and his vassals, and also from a protracted state of war between Herbert, Count of Le Mans and the House of Bellême. He calmly went about rebuilding the castle of Gallardon and sent packing Guillaume de St. Prest who had been invested there by King Robert. Fulbert, the Bishop of Chartres reacted violently to Geoffrey's new ventures with the only arm that he possessed. He caused Geoffrey to be excommunicated, a sanction which would normally bring to heel the most troublesome subjects. Geoffrey's reaction was equally swift, violent and unprecedented. He invaded the Bishop's lands, burning Ermenonville, Bailleu and Fresnay, while others profited from the situation by also invading the bishop's lands and burning all in their path. Decidedly, the Bishop was not appreciated by his flock ! Outraged by these events, Bishop Fulbert sought help from Eudes, Count of Chartres who ignored him completely. Geoffrey must have been confident that he could count on Eudes because of the long ties between the House of Rotrou and the Counts of Blois. Finally, even pleas to the King himself and to Richard, Duke of Normandy went unanswered, Fulbert had to back down, while recovering face, signing a charter where Geoffrey gave lands and chattels back to the Church. The excommunication was lifted, and Geoffrey quietly carried on with his plans to rebuild his birthright. Not only did he rebuild the existing fortresses, but he partially encroached on new territories by building a new one at Illiers [les-Combray]. But however much the Rotrou family coveted the Perche-Gout, the only tangible results to their incursions seem to have been this Château at Illiers <sup>10</sup>.

Geoffrey I marries a certain Helvise (1010-1031) around 1025. O. E. des Murs informs us that she is of unknown family, but defines her of the Mortagne family <sup>11</sup>. Geoffrey has three sons, Geoffrey (1026-1028), who dies an infant, Hugh III (1025-1050), and Rotrou I (1026-1079). Hugh III is the elder brother, but dies young, and Rotrou will inherit the title of Viscount of Châteaudun. In 1030, Geoffrey begins the foundations of the wonderful Monastery of St. Denis de Nogent. This work is of such importance, that his son Rotrou III will complete the monastery. Geoffrey was not bothered by Eudes, Robert or even Duke Richard, who died in 1027.

Geoffrey is relatively absent from the news until 1040. He enters Chartres Cathedral for an unknown ceremony, without his arms as was the custom of the day, and when he leaves, he is treacherously assassinated by unknown factions, although he was known to have enemies in Chartres, probably as a result of his protracted feud with Bishop Fulbert. It is left to the Abbé le Forestier to close the book on the long drawn-out disagreements between Geoffrey and Fulbert. He

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<sup>10</sup> The walls which protected this tiny town have disappeared long ago, and of its ancient château, there remain but few recognizable traces.

<sup>11</sup> We now know that she was Helvise de Pithivier, with no relation to the family of Mortagne.

wrote - "Had Fulbert lived long enough he would have recognised that Geoffrey was one of the most significant donators to the Church".

Known as "an able strategist", Geoffrey was assassinated quite young (1040), but rebuilt the Rotrou reputation which had suffered much in previous generations. Not only was he intelligent in war (he fought his enemies on THEIR ground), he was a wise and knowledgeable leader to his people, and on his death left a powerful domain to his sons.

### **Hughes II de Châteaudun (1025-1044)**

Hugh II is the elder son of Geoffrey, and according to certain historians, becomes Viscount of Châteaudun. However his mark upon the viscounty of Châteaudun was negligible, and he dies a few years later. M. O. des Murs even suggests that Hugh died before his father Geoffrey, and that the title of Viscount passed directly to the second son Rotrou II <sup>12</sup>. At some later date, Rotrou II indicates that he had succeeded his father directly, which would show that Hugh had in fact died before his father, as M. O. des Murs has informed us. Hugh is purported to have married a certain Adèle (Adila), although we have no information about this marriage, and there is no indication that Hugh had any children.

### **Rotrou II de Châteaudun (1026-1079)**

Hughes' younger brother Rotrou II inherits the title of Lord of Mortagne, Lord of Nogent, and Viscount of Châteaudun. Rotrou can only be 14 or 15 when his father dies, but he is surrounded by faithful followers of his father, who ensure that he is well versed in the arts of warfare.

Rotrou II marries Adelaide (Adeliza) de Bellême (1014-1053), probably an arrangement made by Ivo, Bishop of Sées, Adelaide's uncle. The Rotrou family and the Bellême family had been practically in a continuous state of war for many years, and this marriage could have been an effort to appease the animosity between the two families. In fact, it most certainly did not. However, Rotrou finds that he has common interests with Roger de Montgommery, the husband of his wife's cousin, Mabel, and with him, wages several unsuccessful campaigns into the territory of Perche-Gouet. It is probable that Roger was the intermediary between Rotrou and Guillaume, the Duke of Normandy, who, before attempting to invade England in 1066, made alliances with the major Lords of the area, including Rotrou in order to rally them to his cause. This was a major change of policy of the House of Rotrou, which had always treated the Normans as enemies. Rotrou's son Geoffrey de Mortagne will eventually accompany Guillaume's army to England.

In the middle of the XIth century, the home of the Rotrou family was still known as Nogent-le-Châtel, but very soon, with the rising importance of the family, will become known as Nogent-le-Rotrou, a name which it holds to this day. Rotrou marries about 1043, still a young man, and his wife according to an approximate date of birth would seem to have been about 10 years older than him. Rotrou and Adeliza (Adelaide de Bellême) have at least five sons, Geoffrey III de Mortagne (1045-1100) who inherits the title of Lord of Mortagne, and Hugh III (1047-1110)

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<sup>12</sup> M.O. Des Murs - Histoire des Comtes de Perche : De la Famille des Rotrous - 1856 (p.162)

who will have the title of Viscount of Châteaudun. The other sons, Rotrou, Foulques and Guérin are left without interest <sup>13</sup>, and several of the brothers go to England with Geoffrey. Of a daughter Helvise, and two other brothers, Jéréemie and Robert, we have no information at all. The marriage with Adelaide may seem to have been a strange turn of events, because the animosity between the two families was still predominant. It is believed that the marriage was arranged by Yves de Belleme, bishop of Sees, probably in the hope of reducing the "friction" between the two families. Apparently, this was not the case, but two events transpired from this marriage. Rotrou was brought into contact with Roger de Montgommery, his new cousin by marriage, who was a faithful ally of William, Duke of Normandy. Rotrou eventually readjusted his alliances in favour of the Norman Duke, and several of his sons accompanied William to England in the Conquest of England. The second event is of a historical nature. Certain genealogists later noted that Guérin de Domfront, the father of Adelaide was the great-grandfather (by marriage, of course) of Rotrou III, Count of Perche, and by this pretext, define the House of Bellême as being the root of the House of Rotrou <sup>14</sup>.

After the Conquest, in which Rotrou apparently took no part whatsoever, his son Rotrou returns to France and later marries into the Montfort family. Guérin leaves no trace after 1076, and Foulques (Fulquois), who has several sons who settle in England, is not seen after 1078. We are left to consider the possibility of the other sons, and a daughter, being illegitimate. The descendants of Foulques will go to Ireland nearly a hundred years later, and establish the long line of Nugents.

Relations with the new King of England appear to have improved immensely when Rotrou is actually paid a subsidy <sup>15</sup> by Guillaume when they both take part in the siege of Remalard in 1078. This situation clearly shows the ascending power of the House of Rotrou, and considerably enhances Rotrous' status, but it will be left to his descendants to profit from this "rapprochement", as Rotrou dies suddenly in 1079. His estates are divided between Geoffrey and Hugh, which, on hindsight, may be considered as an error, as the power of the House of Rotrou could easily suffer from fragmentation of the power that Rotrou has built with a certain business acumen. However, there are two major titles available for the two eldest sons.

### **Geoffrey III de Mortagne - 1st Count of Perche (1045-1100)**

Geoffrey III, young and vigorous (he would be less than 21 at the time of the Battle of Hastings) , accompanies William "the Bastard" (Duke of Normandy) on his conquest of England in 1066, a rather surprising turn of events. This appears to be the period of changing alliances, as the House of Rotrou has been as constant war with the Normans for more than 100 years. Two of his brothers, Rotrou and

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<sup>13</sup> K Thompson - Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - County of the Perche (1000-1226) (P.45)

<sup>14</sup> Bry de la Clergerie - "Histoire des pays et Comte du Perche ...." perpetrates this idea, clearly false, probably because of his partisan attitude towards his native town, Bellême.

<sup>15</sup> Practically unheard of, as the King of England actually pays one of his vassals to side with him, to help solve his burgeoning problems in France.



Foulques, appear to have accompanied him <sup>16</sup>. Little information is available about what happened in England concerning the Rotrou family, after the Conquest, but we will build a reasonable picture in another document.

Geoffrey III helped William with money and troops, and apparently did not stay in England for very long. It is likely that he returned to his titles and his lands in France quite soon after the Conquest (1066), with suitable financial rewards. William himself returned to France six months after the battle of Hastings, and Geoffrey was apparently with him. It must be remembered that the Norman Conquest did not subdue the whole of England and Wales overnight. It took until about 1076 to finalize the Conquest. Geoffrey II supposedly was richly rewarded by William, however, no traces of land were apparent in the Domesday book (1086) <sup>17</sup>, compiled under orders of William, and the most complete record of wealth attribution ever to be made in England. It is probable that Geoffrey was paid in booty from the early part of the Conquest in Southern England during 1066-1077. The Rotrou family at that period apparently had easy access to liquid cash, and this probably came from tolls on the roads through Nogent-le-Rotrou and also the rewards from the Conquest.

Throughout his life, Geoffrey slowly but surely builds up the reputation of the House of Rotrou. He appears to shun the potential of the new power brought upon by Guillaume (many flock to stand in line for handouts), and concentrates on his titles and lands in France. Probably the most important indication of his increasing power is shown by his marriage to Beatrix de Montdidier de Roucy, from a family far away from the seat of power of the House of Rotrou, which shows the increasing notoriety of the Rotrou family. Felicia de Roucy, Beatrix's sister later marries Sancho Ramirez, King of Aragon, possibly opening, even at this early date, communications with high-born Spanish families. Geoffreys monastic patronage was to leave its mark in his lifes work, and he is also called upon to arbitrate local disputes, proof of his growing reputation. For reasons not clearly known, Geoffrey and Gilbert de l'Aigle became somewhat enemies. Geoffrey adroitly offers the hand of his daughter Julienne to Gilbert, and the two families were from this day, friends and allies. Although Geoffrey will not live to see it, the daughter of this union, Margaret de l'Aigle will marry Garcia Ramirez, King of Navarre, consolidating connections to Spain that Rotrou III, Geoffreys son will exploit to the full some years later. Geoffreys other daughters all marry into well-known families. Mathilde marries Raymond I de Turenne <sup>18</sup>, Maude marries Robert

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<sup>16</sup> Their presence at the Conquest goes completely unnoticed, as Geoffrey is the only one quoted in official documents of the day. However, some of the De Nogent family stay in England, and settle there for more than 100 years, before moving on to Ireland.

<sup>17</sup> Orderic Vitalis speaks about the great rewards lavished upon Geoffrey, but no trace of land in England is evident, when the Domesday book is completed in 1086. Either Geoffrey rapidly liquidated his assets in England, or else benefits from more "liquid" rewards, for his participation in the Conquest. Of the presence of Geoffrey's brothers in the Conquest, there is no trace. We must note however, that the Domesday book does not include data from London and Winchester, where Geoffrey was reputed to have held land.

<sup>18</sup> Mathilde's great grand-daughter, Isabelle de Taillefer, will marry John Lackland, King of England, many years later.

de Lacy, strengthening ties with the de Lacy family, and Marguerite marries Henry de Beaumont, the Earl of Warwick. Geoffrey apparently begins to define himself Count of Perche at this early date, which is rather unjustified, as Belleme will not be recovered by the Rotrou family for some time. He also demonstrates his power by minting money, although it is used only by the upper classes. Few of these coins exist today.

Geoffrey sees his son Rotrou off to the Crusades, but falls ill and dies in late 1099 or early 1100, after putting his affairs in order, and leaving his wife Beatrix to keep an eye on her sons estates <sup>19</sup>. Without a doubt, Geoffrey and his son Rotrou III will greatly expand the power and reputation of the House of Rotrou, reaching into royal families of three countries, England, Spain and Sicily.

### **Rotrou III (The Great) 2nd Count of Perche (1078-1144)**

Whatever number assigned to him, this Rotrou was given the sobriquet "The Great", and appears to have amply deserved it. His exact date of birth is unknown <sup>20</sup>, but he was present in Spain to aid his Uncle Sanchez in his war against the Moors (1093-1094), and he appears to have been about 16 years old. He participates in the First Crusade (1096-1099) where he distinguishes himself with his bravery. According to the "Chanson d'Antioch" <sup>21</sup>, Rotrou is noted as being one of the first to succeed in breaching the wall, and taking the city. Some of his soldiers had contracted leprosy in these foreign lands, and Rotrou opens a Leprosy House to ensure that they were cared for. This gesture was one of the many acts of generosity, piety and nobility that he was to show throughout his life.

In an early marriage, he has a daughter Beatrix, but nothing is known about this first wife, which probably ends with her early death. In 1100 he becomes the successor to his father Geoffrey. For some time he sides with Robert, the Duke of Normandy, loses a battle against Robert de Bellême, and changes his alliance, this time to side with Henry I of England. Showing all the signs of a man of progress, and a builder to a better level of civilisation, he was certainly a man in advance of his time. He began to try and raise the serfs of his domains from the total abjection that they suffered with respect to free men. So taken with such pacifist occupations, Rotrou was not present at the important battle of Tinchebrai (1106), where for the first time, the majority of knights were obliged to dismount and fight on firm ground. Henry, King of England captured Robert, Duke of Normandy, and carried him off to England where he later died in captivity. Robert de Belleme barely escaped with his life. During this period, however, the relationship between Rotrou and Henry was building into a firm friendship, and

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<sup>19</sup> The laws of the period guarantee the state of "non-belligerence" to anybody who goes to the Crusades, thus Rotrous' lands and titles are considered safe.

<sup>20</sup> Estimations of his date of birth range from 1075 to 1089. However, When Rotrous father (Geoffrey II) died, he was too young to become Count, and his new step-father, Robert I de Dreux, was nominated interim Count of Perche. This must place Rotrous birth close to 1080 (he was less than 18 when his father died in 1100)

<sup>21</sup> A poem about the seige of Antioch in 1098, where the story of the Crusade is told in 9000 verses.

Rotrou was certainly relieved of constant friction with the house of Belleme. He marries Mathilda, the illegitimate daughter of Henry <sup>22</sup>, and from this moment, he will become an ally and a close friend of Henry. Rotrou meets Bernard de Cluny, and develops a deep veneration for this monk. He cedes to Bernard of Cluny, an Oratory <sup>23</sup>, at Arcisse, near to Nogent. As Bernard wishes to found a monastery,, Rotrou cedes a domain at Tyron, and contributes to the building of a simple chapel, which will become widely known in the future as the Abbey of Tyron. In 1111, Rotrou takes up arms against the King of France, the Count of Anjou and the Lord of Bellême. He is captured, and the town of Mortagne-au-Perche is totally destroyed. However, contrary to accounts by several historians, he is only under House Arrest, and explains his feelings and his situation in two long letters which have been passed down to us today. He is released when King Henry captures Robert of Bellême in November of 1112. Bellême falls into the hands of Henry, who cedes it to Rotrou, while keeping control of the castle. As soon as he is freed by Henry, Rotrou immediately returns to Spain, supporting Alphonse King of Aragon who is facing local revolutionaries, but is obliged to return home in haste when the Perche is threatened by Guillaume III of Perche-Gouet. When local problems are solved, in 1115 he returns to Spain for a long period, to help Alphonse recover the Kingdom of Navarre. Rotrou is now openly known as Count of Perche, although, like his father before him, the title was prematurely self-attributed, before gaining control of Bellême. Alphonse wisely divides up the town into three distinct areas, Musselman, Jewish and Catholic, each with its own customs and jurisdiction. Tudela lives for many years in relative calm and the highly respected Rotrou is given the lordship of the town.

In November, 1120, Rotrou's wife Mathilda is drowned in the sinking of the White Ship, together with several hundred high-ranking nobles. Rotrou swears that he will never marry again, but in 1125, without a male heir, he changes his mind, and marries the high-born Hawise of Salisbury, thus bringing into his control considerable lands in England. They will have two sons, Rotrou IV and Geoffrey, and so the family succession is assured. In 1130, he returns to Spain where after several battles he is attested as ruler of Tudela, showing the importance of his

In 1135, King Henry dies, with his faithful ally Rotrou at his bedside. Henry's nephew Stephen manages to secure the throne of England in detriment to Mathilda, Henry's daughter. Rotrou, because of his powerful position, now may choose his alliances freely, and decide to support Stephen, possibly weighing the advantage of maintaining his estates in England. However, he eventually sides with Count Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, husband of Mathilda. He participates in the siege of Rouen, even though he is probably close to sixty years old. Rotrou dies soon after the siege, possibly as a result of being wounded.

Rotrou leaves the County of the Perche at the height of its power, a stable financial situation from his estates in England, and a reputation as a formidable

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<sup>22</sup> For his new wife's dowry, he receives two manors in Wiltshire, Aldebourne and Wanborough. Thus begins the building of considerable wealth in England, held by the family until the death of the last Count of Perche in 1226.

<sup>23</sup> "Oratoire" in French can be translated literally as an Oratory. However, it can also be a wayside shrine.

warrior, both from his battles in France and Spain, and his successes in the Crusades. His links with the English monarchy confer upon him a reputation that the family will benefit from for several generations.

### **Rotrou IV 3rd Count of Perche (1125-1191)**

The relations between the House of Rotrou and the House of Blois have dissipated over the past generations, mainly because of the rise in power of the Rotrou family, and their new affiliations with royalty. The marriage of Rotrou IV to Mathilda de Blois, daughter of Count Thibault, renews ties with the family that were largely responsible for the initial ascension of the Rotrou family. It also shows a restructuring of the links between the important families of the area, against threats from outside. In 1158, Rotrou finally recovers complete control of Bellême that has only been partially given to the family in 1114. His marriage to Mathilda, bolsters his reputation in many new ventures, but his alliance with the King of France brings him into conflict with Henry II of England, which is rather unfortunate, for Rotrou's estates in England are threatened. Rotrou later appears to have practiced a double policy of playing to both the English and French kings. From about 1170, Rotrou's relations with the English court become more dense. Rotrou's brother Geoffrey is certainly a part of this close relationship, for he is often in the company of King Henry. Geoffrey also seems to have taken in hand the estates of the family in England, until his death in 1180. During all these years, Rotrou continues in the family practice of substantial donations to religious houses, perhaps made possible by the financial resources of the English estates.

Henry dies in 1189, and his successor Richard (the Lion-Heart) immediately begins to make plans for his participation in the Third Crusade. Rotrou and his eldest son Geoffrey are profoundly associated with this project, and leave for the Crusades late in 1190, arriving in Acre with King Philip of France, in April 1191. Little is known about how Rotrou dies, but it is likely that he is wounded during the siege of Acre, and dies some time later.

### **Geoffrey IV de Perche - 4th Count of Perche (1158-1202)**

Geoffrey is the eldest of five brothers. The accession of Richard to the throne of England is followed almost immediately by the marriage of Geoffrey to Mathilda of Saxony, Richard's niece in 1189. This situation consolidates even more substantially, the relationship between the House of Rotrou and the English Crown, and brings into the House of Rotrou, the considerable wealth of Mathilda's estates in England. Geoffrey participates in the Third Crusade at the same time as his father. He revises his position in his alliance with Richard of England (perhaps an error). He is in a difficult position Richard is captured and held prisoner by the Holy Roman Emperor. Affairs stagnate for some time, suggesting that Geoffrey realign his alliances, which he does. Unfortunately, Richard, when he was released, showed his displeasure of Geoffrey, by confiscating his lands in England. Richard's displeasure was oriented towards Geoffrey, and not to his wife Mathilda<sup>24</sup>. The availability of the English estates are becoming a vital factor in the

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<sup>24</sup> K. Thompson - Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - County of the Perche (1000-1226) (P.118). Richard's displeasure is short-lived. He needs allies, and so he forgives Geoffrey, and re-estates his land in England.

future choices of the Rotrou family. They bring into the Rotrou coffers, a valuable contribution to the financial situation of the House of Rotrou. Any mistakes in alliances are immediately sanctioned in the pipe-rolls<sup>25</sup> of the English state. Geoffrey was obliged to tread carefully in order to maintain his lands in France and England.

The political situation was changing the rules of the game. The French state was becoming more powerful, and had to be considered. The English state had interests in both France and England, and English monarchs did not hesitate to play their alliances against cessations to any "allies" (obviously of Norman descent or affiliation). Situations could change in the twinkling of an eye, as the House of Rotrou was to find out. The political acumen of the descendants of the original Rotrou was pushed to its limit in this troubled period. Any mistakes concerning their alliances could be fatal.

However, Geoffrey continues in the family manner to make religious benefactions, arbitrate in family disputes and authorise property transfers<sup>26</sup>. The death of King Richard in 1199 promotes confusion, and incites new alliances, but Geoffreys estates in England appear protected in the pipe-rolls, implying an immediate alliance between King John and Geoffrey. Geoffrey was present several times in Johns court over the next few years, and John increased the subsidies to Geoffrey concerning the English estates, suggesting a perfect agreement between the two. After 1200, the call to the fourth crusade by Pope Innocent III is heard by Geoffrey, but during the preparations for the departure, Geoffrey is suddenly taken ill, and dies in March, 1202. His son Thomas will become Count of Perche, in an environment full of danger for the House of Rotrou, terminating in its disappearance within the next twenty years.

### **Thomas de Perche - 5th Count of Perche (1194-1217)**

Thomas is only seven when his father dies, and it is his mother Mathilda who takes the affairs of the Perche in hand. However, after a suitable mourning period she marries again, to Enguerrand III de Coucy, one of the most ambitious counts of the time. Enguerrand theoretically becomes Count of Perche because of his marriage, but Thomas seems to have had no desire to wait until the traditional age of 20 to take in hand the affairs of his father. From the death of her husband, Mathilda, together with her son, makes many contributions to religious orders. Although Thomas was mentioned only as a witness to his mothers early donations, he began to assert his authority when he was barely sixteen. From such an early age, Thomas will commit himself to the hazards of war, without doubting that, from the start, however glorious his exploits will be, they only signal

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<sup>25</sup> Pipe-Roll - A collection of financial records maintained by the English Exchequer, showing the debts and disbursements owed to the Crown. A study of the Pipe-Roll documents of this time clarifies the level of "pleasure" or "displeasure" held by the Crown towards the nobles of all nationalities who held lands in England, and who used all possible means to stay in the King's favour. Because the English King also had power in France, some estates in France were also in the balance.

<sup>26</sup> K. Thompson - Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - County of the Perche (1000-1226) (P.124)

his early death <sup>27</sup>. Although young, he was chivalrous, and answered the call of the King of France in his rivalry with the Kings of England and Germany. The battle of Bouvines, in which Thomas and his vassals participated was important in more ways than one. The English and the German armies were defeated, and as a result the young French state was enhanced by confirming sovereignty over Brittany and Normandy. King John returned to England, and was obliged to sign the Magna Carta, the basic establishment of English Common Law.

After the death of his mother, Thomas continues, now in his own name, to make generous donations to religious houses. He follows King Louis to England, and is killed at the siege of Lincoln, on May 12th, 1217 <sup>28</sup>. The direct line of descent of the Counts of Perche is terminated, and the House of Rotrou (in France) is doomed to extinction. Certain historians ascertain that Thomas was married to a certain Helisende de Rethel, and that a son, also called Thomas existed. However, it is the uncle of Thomas, Guillaume, who becomes Count of Perche.

### Thomas de Perche and Chartres Cathedral

The relations between the house of Blois and Chartres and the House of Rotrou have always been very close. The first Count of Blois and Chartres, Thibault the Trickster, designated Rotrou, the first of our House of Rotrou, to build fortifications at the small town of Nogent-le Châtel, beginning the long line of the House of Rotrou.

To celebrate this long friendship, Count Thomas offers a panel in the window of Chartres Cathedral to Count Theobald VI of Chartres. This window was given in commemoration of his gift of a piece of land planted with grape vines, to a religious establishment at the request of Count Thomas.




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<sup>27</sup> M.O. Des Murs - Histoire des Comtes de Perche : De la Famille des Rotrous - 1856 (P.566) - "Il ne se doutait pas que son début, si glorieux qu'il pût être, serait pour lui le signal d'une mort anticipée."

<sup>28</sup> As a result of a fatal error of strategy, Thomas' group of soldiers is surrounded, and Thomas is killed, probably by Guillaume le Maréchal, by a lance thrust which pierces his visor.

## Guillaume de Perche - 6th Count of Perche (1164-1226)

Guillaume de Perche is one of the four sons of Rotrou, 3rd Count of Perche. His elder brother Geoffrey (1158-1202) becomes Count of Perche on the death of his father Rotrou III in 1191. Geoffreys' son Thomas naturally becomes Count of Perche upon the death of his father, and no one could suppose at this moment that the House of Rotrou is doomed. Thomas, ordered to set siege to Lincoln by the Louis, King of France who at the same time is setting siege to Dover, is killed at Lincoln in 1217. Guillaume, his uncle, is a man of the cloth (Bishop of Chalons-sur-Saône), and is abruptly brought into news when his nephew Thomas is killed. History seems to have ignored the illegitimate son of Thomas who apparently lived in London, and endows the title of Count of Perche to a man that can not possibly propagate it. Guillaume dies in 1226, and as he has no descendants, leaves the King of France (Louis IX) to apply the Law of Reversion, and to confiscate the lands and titles of this powerful family. Louis allocates the title of Countess of Perche to his mother, Blanche de Castille, which may seem a little out of line, unless we consider that Blanche was the cousin of John Lackland, King of England, who married Isabelle de Taillefer, who was a distant cousin of Thomas. The county of the Perche stays in the family, although the connection is, to say the least, very tenuous.

And so, after nearly 300 years of glory, the French House of Rotrou fades into the darkness. We are left with with several major family lines, the first in France, as Rotrou de Montfort establishes a descendance which will eventually reach Winston Churchill and Diana Spencer <sup>29</sup>, and the second which will settle in England for nearly a century, before going to Ireland and starting the Nugent line as we know it today. This line will descend across the centuries, to today's British monarchy <sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> We have two totally independent lines of descent to the Spencer-Churchill family, the first from Isabelle de Taillefer (1186-1246), and the second from Rotrou de Montfort (1048-1108).

<sup>30</sup> An Irish line will give us Mabel Nugent (1575-1610) which will descend through the Wellesley family (Duke of Wellington (1769-1852), and down to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth ..... and William, the future King of England !

## Appendix

List of works referenced in my thumbnail sketches of the Viscounts and Counts of the Rotrou Family :

- 1 - M. O. Des Murs  
Histoire des Comtes de Perche : De la Famille des Rotrous - 1856
- 2 - Vicomte de Romanet  
Géographie du Perche et Chronologie de ses Comtes - 1902
- 3 - Kathleen Thompson  
Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France : County of the Perche (1000-1226) - 2002
- 4 - Orderic Vitalis  
An English monk of Saint-Evroult in Normandy, a historian who in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, left one of the fullest and most graphic accounts of Anglo-Norman society in his own day. His works have been translated by Marjorie Chibnall.

In addition, I must include a vital document contained in a *Prosopon*<sup>31</sup> Newsletter of 1999 by Christian Settipani. He analyses the limited cartulary documents available in the 10th to 12th centuries, concerning the Viscounts of Châteaudun.

- 5 - Les Vicomtes de Châteaudun et leurs Alliés – Christian Settipani – 1999.

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<sup>31</sup> *Prosopon* – The Journal of Prosopography – edited by K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, Oxford University. Prosopography is an investigation of the common characteristics of a historical group, whose individual biographies may be largely untraceable, and is clearly established as an important approach in historical research.



## The House of Rotrou and the Crusades

Many of the members of the House of Rotrou were known for their religious benefactions. In fact, especially for the early members, it is the trace of the cartulary documents concerning these benefactions, that we can examine, and glean so much about the family. There is however another reason for which the males of the House of Rotrou were so well known and so highly respected. Several of them participated in the different crusades, and distinguished themselves through their acts of bravery. The House of Rotrou paid a heavy tribute, as several of them died in different battles in the Holy Land.

The decision of making a trip to the Holy Land to participate in the Crusades, was called "Taking the Cross".

The Crusades were a series of religiously sanctioned military campaigns waged by much of Latin Christian Europe, particularly the Franks of France and the Holy Roman Empire. The specific crusades to restore Christian control of the Holy Land were fought over a period of nearly 200 years, between 1095 and 1291. The Crusades originally had the goal of recapturing Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim rule. The Crusades had far-reaching political, economic, and social impacts, some of which have lasted into contemporary times.

In 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade with the object of restoring access by Christians to holy places in and around Jerusalem. In the struggle to gain control of the Holy Land, there were six more major crusades, the last one in ended in 1291 with the fall of the city of Acre. The Church decided to make no more attempts to recover the Holy Land.

First Crusade	1095-1100
Second Crusade	1147–1149
Third Crusade	1187–1192
Fourth Crusade	1202–1204
Albigensian Crusade	
Children's Crusade	
Fifth Crusade	1217–1221
Sixth Crusade	1228–1229
Seventh Crusade	1248–1254
Eighth Crusade	1270
Ninth Crusade	1271–1272



## **First Crusade (1095-1100)**

In March 1095 at the Council of Piacenza, ambassadors sent by Byzantine Emperor Alexius I called for help with defending his empire against the Seljuk Turks. Later that year, at the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called upon all Christians to join a war against the Turks, promising those who died in the endeavor would receive immediate remission of their sins.

Following abortive popular crusades in early 1096, the official crusader armies set off from France and Italy on the papally-ordained date of 15 August 1096. The armies journeyed eastward by land toward Constantinople, a force estimated at nearly 100,000, where they received a luke-warm welcome from the Byzantine Emperor. Pledging to restore lost territories to the empire, the Crusaders were supplied and transported to Anatolia where they laid siege to Seljuk-occupied Nicaea. The city fell on 19 June 1097. The Crusader armies fought further battles against the Turks, facing grave deprivation of both food and water in their summer crossing of Anatolia. The lengthy Siege of Antioch began in October 1097 and endured until June of 1098.

Rotrou III had first accompanied his uncle Ebles II, Count of Roucy, to Spain, to combat the Moors, with another uncle, Sanchez I, King of Aragon. He then took part in the First Crusade, under the orders of Robert Courteheuse. He illustrated himself at the battle of Antioch, and then at the conquest of Jerusalem.

A large Muslim relief army under Kerbogha immediately besieged the victorious Crusaders within Antioch. Bohemund of Taranto led a successful break-out and defeat of Kerbogha's army on the 28th of June. The starving crusader army marched south, moving from town to town along the coast, finally reaching the walls of Jerusalem on 7 June 1099 with only a fraction of their original forces. The city of Jerusalem was finally captured on July 15, 1099. The Crusaders massacred all Jewish and Moslem civilians and destroyed all the mosques, end then the entire city.

## **Second Crusade (1147–1149)**

After a period of relative peace in which Christians and Muslims co-existed in the Holy Land, Muslims conquered the town of Edessa. A new crusade was called for by various preachers, most notably by Bernard of Clairvaux. French and South German armies, under the Kings Louis VII and Conrad III respectively, marched to Jerusalem in 1147 but failed to win any major victories, launching a failed pre-emptive siege of Damascus, an independent city that would soon fall into the hands of Nur ad-Din, the main enemy of the Crusaders. On the other side of the Mediterranean, however, the Second Crusade met with great success as a group of Northern European Crusaders stopped in Portugal, allied with the Portuguese King, Afonso I of Portugal, and retook Lisbon from the Muslims in 1147. A detachment from this group of crusaders helped Count Raymond Berenguer IV of Barcelona conquer the city of Tortosa the following year. In the Holy Land by 1150, both the kings of France and Germany had returned to their countries without any result. No members of the House of Rotrou took part in the Second Crusade.

## Third Crusade (1187–1192)

In 1187, Saladin, Sultan of Egypt, conquered Jerusalem after nearly a century under Christian rule, following the Battle of Hattin. After the Christians surrendered the city, Saladin spared the civilians and for the most part left churches and shrines untouched to be able to collect ransom money from the Franks. Several thousand apparently were not redeemed and probably were sold into slavery. On hearing the news of the loss of Jerusalem, Pope Urban II had a heart attack and died. However, Saladin is remembered respectfully in both European and Islamic sources as a man who "always stuck to his promise and was loyal." The reports of Saladin's victories shocked Europe. Pope Gregory VIII called for a crusade, which was led by several of Europe's most important leaders: Philip II of France, Richard I of England (aka Richard the Lionheart), and Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor, who died en route. Rotrou III accompanied Richard to the Holy Land. Before their arrival in the Holy Land, Richard captured the island of Cyprus from the Byzantines in 1191. Cyprus would serve as a Crusader base for centuries to come, and would remain in Western European hands until the Ottoman Empire conquered the island from Venice in 1571. After a long siege, Richard the Lionheart recaptured the city of Acre and took the entire Muslim garrison under captivity, which was executed after a series of failed negotiations. Rotrou IV was fatally injured and died under the walls of Saint Jean D'Acre <sup>1</sup>. Philip left, in 1191, after the Crusaders had recaptured Acre from the Muslims. The Crusader army headed south along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They defeated the Muslims near Arsuf, recaptured the port city of Jaffa, and were in sight of Jerusalem. However, Richard did not believe he would be able to hold Jerusalem once it was captured, as the majority of Crusaders would then return to Europe, and the crusade ended without the taking of Jerusalem. Richard left the following year after negotiating a treaty with Saladin. The treaty allowed unarmed Christian pilgrims to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land (Jerusalem), while it remained under Muslim control.

## The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204)

The Fourth Crusade was initiated in 1202 by Pope Innocent III, with the intention of invading the Holy Land through Egypt. Geoffroy IV, Count of Perche died in 1202 at Soissons while he was preparing for the Crusade <sup>2</sup>. Because the Crusaders lacked the funds to pay for the fleet and provisions that they had contracted from the Venetians, Doge Enrico Dandolo enlisted the crusaders to restore the Christian city of Zara (Zadar) to obedience. Because they subsequently lacked provisions and time

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<sup>1</sup> Rotrou was not the only one of his generation to die in the Holy Land. Although not involved in a crusade, Rotrou's brother Stephen, Bishop of Palermo had died in Jerusalem in 1169.

<sup>2</sup> Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade (A. J. Andrea) (P.213) - Geoffrey died probably on April 5th. His brother Lord Stephen accepted his cross.

on their vessel lease, the leaders decided to go to Constantinople, where they attempted to place a Byzantine exile on the throne. After a series of misunderstandings and outbreaks of violence, the Crusaders sacked the city in 1204, and established the so-called Latin Empire and a series of other Crusader states throughout the territories of the Greek Byzantine Empire. The Fourth Crusade never even reached the Holy land, due to lack of funds, and internal quarrels. The Crusaders agreed to divert the invasion to Constantinople, and to share the loot to pay for their troubles. As a result of this fiasco, Pope Innocent excommunicated the Crusaders and many were killed at Adrianople, far from their original goal. Stephen of Perche, brother of Geoffrey, Count of Perche, had taken up the cross, but died at Andrianople in April, 1205. This is often seen as the final breaking point of the Great Schism between the Eastern Orthodox Church and (Western) Roman Catholic Church.

In the Perche, the story was told :

*"Thus did the pilgrims make ready in all lands. Alas! A great mischance befell them in the following Lent, before they had started, for another notable chief, Count Geoffrey of Perche, fell sick, and made his will in such fashion that he directed that Stephen, his brother, should have his goods and lead his men in the host. Directly after the death of Geoffrey, Stephen, took up the cross, together with Rotrou of Montfort, Ives of La Jaille, Aimery of Villeroi, Geoffry of Beaumont, and many others whose names were not noted.*

*Of this exchange the pilgrims would willingly have been quit, had God so ordered. Thus did the Count make an end and die; and much evil ensued, for he was a baron high and honoured, and a good knight. Greatly was he mourned throughout all lands.*  
3"

## **Fifth Crusade 1217–1221**

By processions, prayers, and preaching, the Church attempted to launch another crusade, and the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) formulated a plan for the recovery of the Holy Land. In the first phase, a crusading force from Austria and Hungary joined the forces of the King of Jerusalem and the Prince of Antioch to take back Jerusalem. In the second phase, crusader forces achieved a remarkable feat in the capture of Damietta in Egypt in November, 1219, but under the urgent insistence of the papal legate, Pelagius, they then launched a foolhardy attack on Cairo in July of 1221. The crusaders were turned back after their dwindling supplies led to a forced retreat. A night-time attack by the ruler of Egypt, the powerful Ayubid Sultan Al-Kamil, resulted in a great number of crusader losses and eventually in the

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<sup>3</sup> Memoirs or Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade - Geoffrey de Villehardouin , 1150-1213 - translation by Frank T. Marzials.

surrender of the army. Al-Kamil agreed to an eight-year peace agreement with Europe.

Al-Kamil had put a bounty of a Byzantine gold piece for every Christian head brought to him during the war. During 1219, St. Francis of Assisi crossed the battle lines at Damietta in order to speak with Al-Kamil. He and his companion Illuminatus were captured and beaten and brought before the Sultan. St. Bonaventure, in his Major Life of St. Francis, says that the Sultan was impressed by Francis and spent some time with him. Francis was given safe passage and although he was offered many gifts, all he accepted was a horn for calling the faithful to prayer. The Crusaders left Egypt. This act eventually led to the establishment of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

No member of the House of Rotrou participated in the fifth Crusade.

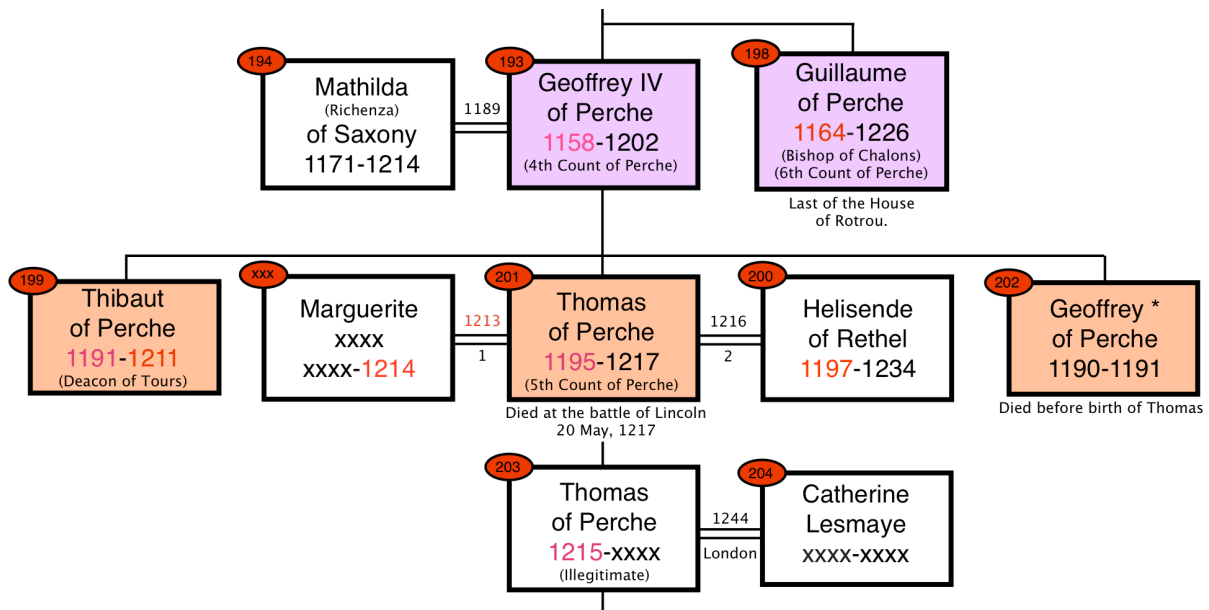
## **Sixth Crusade (1228–1229)**

Emperor Frederick II had repeatedly vowed a crusade but failed to live up to his words, for which he was excommunicated by Pope Gregory IX in 1228. He nonetheless set sail from Brindisi, landed in Palestine, and through diplomacy he achieved unexpected success : Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Bethlehem were delivered to the crusaders for a period of ten years. In 1229 after failing to conquer Egypt, Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire, made a peace treaty with Al-Kamil, the ruler of Egypt. This treaty allowed Christians to rule over most of Jerusalem, while the Muslims were given control of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa mosque. The peace brought about by this treaty lasted for about ten years. Many of the Muslims though were not happy with Al-Kamil for giving up control of Jerusalem and in 1244, following a siege, the Muslims regained control of the city. Rotrou IV de Montfort (1180-1229) perished in this crusade.

So did several members of the Rotrou family take part in several crusades, showing great courage and bravery. Several died either on the way to the Holy Land, or during the sieges of the cities of Palestine.

Although several other half-hearted Crusades were mounted in future years, they were often not immediately directed to freeing Jerusalem but rather to settle internal European affairs.

## The Last Count of Perche



The only thing we can say about the demise of the Perche Dynasty in France, was that it should never have happened. From the moment Guillaume de Perche became Count, the House of Rotrou in France was doomed. The last Count of Perche was in effect, a non-event. Guillaume was declared Count of Perche upon the death of his nephew, simply because there was nobody else. But Guillaume (1164-1226) was Bishop of Chalons and as such, could have no legitimate children. And so, although Thomas de Perche may not have been the last of the House of Rotrou <sup>1</sup>, we can safely say that he died while looking after the affairs of his county, while Guillaume from 1217 until his death in 1226, certainly did nothing in this direction.

After the death of Thomas' father, Geoffrey IV, in 1202, the affairs of the Perche were definitely heading from bad to worse. Geoffreys' widow, Mathilda, did all she could to maintain the properties that she owned in England. She was obliged to pay off a small fortune in fines incurred by her husband, but nevertheless, King John [*Lackland*] had set his eyes on her properties <sup>2</sup>, and slowly but surely over the years, whittled away English interests in the Perche to nothingness. Mathilda died in 1210, and John immediately closed in on Mathildas assets. By 1214, nothing is left of the considerable wealth which successive counts of Perche were able to build in England.

<sup>1</sup> Did Thomas have children, and if so were they illegitimate ? Was there no other option than to declare Guillaume as the future Count of Perche ?

<sup>2</sup> The old saying "Blood is thicker than water" does not seem to have been respected in this case. Although Mathilda was John's niece, he systematically spoiled her of her interests in England.

Historians are unsure about the birth date of Thomas, the son of Geoffrey IV. He becomes Count of Perche after the death of his father, and so must have been born before his brother Thibaud, and before 1202, the that Geoffrey died. He must have been very young, when he set about the difficult task of rebuilding the affairs of the Perche. He supports Prince Louis (future King Louis VIIIth of France), son of Philippe Auguste (Phillipe II, King of France), in his invasion of England in a desperate attempt to conquer the throne. If this enterprise succeeds, the power of the Perche will be re-enstated in full. But Thomas is killed at the battle of Lincoln, on May 20th, 1217, and the House of Rotrou is doomed.

Thomas had been married previously to an unknown Marguerite, who apparently died young. Thomas then married Helisende de Rethel in about 1216. As Thomas' son, also called Thomas was born in about 1215, he would appear to be illegitimate. For this reason, the title of Count of Perche falls upon the only remaining candidate, an uncle of Thomas, Guillaume, Bishop of Chalons. Thomas was certainly very unlucky. Three of his uncles, Henri, Stephen and Rotrou were all dead by 1205, and his two brothers Thibaut and Geoffrey also died young. When Thomas is killed at Lincoln, the only possibility for the next Count of Perche is a "dead-end", a "cul-de-sac". The King of France must be standing in the wings, tickled pink at the idea of picking up the County of the Perche in the not-to-distant future <sup>3</sup>. With both the King of England and the King of France preying on the riches of the Perche heritage, the French side of the Rotrou dynasty is heading directly to oblivion.

And so the French House of Rotrou recedes into the darkness of a troubled European theatre, less than 200 years after its appearance in the second half of the 10th Century. Fortunately (for us) , the secondary line of the family have already left England, and are happily installed in their new lands of Ireland, and their sons will descend down, through even more troubled times, to the present day .....

..... for which we should all be eternally grateful !

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<sup>3</sup> The Law of Reversion allows the King to appropriate all lands and titles when no male heir exists. As Guillaume is over 50 years old at the death of Thomas, the French King, Philip II, may not have to wait too long to take control of the Perche. As it happens, he dies in 1223, and so it is his son Louis VIII who wins the prize.



## The Chateau of St. Jean at Nogent-Le Rotrou



The Chateau of Saint Jean dominates the town of Nogent-le-Rotrou, and is a witness to the glorious past of the town. The Chateau overlooks five valleys, representing the roads between Chartres and Le Mans, and also access to Châteaudun and Bellême. It is thus a crossroads between L'Ile de France, Normandy and Maine. In such a position, it is a strategically placed fortress overlooking the valley of the river Huisne.

The importance of such a site had already been known for some time, as it is supposed to have been the emplacement upon which a Viking fortress had once been built, but later destroyed. In an effort to stop Viking raids on the area north of the rich plains of France, had signed a peace treaty with Rollo, King of the Vikings <sup>1</sup>. In return for peace with the Vikings, Rollo would convert to Christianity, and would receive control over a large area of Northern France, soon to become known as Normandy. Unfortunately, the descendants of Rollo were as much war-mongers as their predecessors, and continually sallied over their border to pillage the plains of l'Ile de France.

In the middle of the tenth Century, in order to prevent the "Norman" invasions south of their border, Thibault, a vassal of the French King Lothaire, and Count of Blois and Chartres, probably under orders from his King, set about installing fortifications close to a small developing town of Nogent-le-Châtel. An army commander of Count Thibault, a faithful and trusted minor lord, whose name was Rotrou was given command of these fortifications.

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<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Saint-Clair-Sur-Epte, in the year 911. Now that the Vikings held an authorized foothold in France, the future French kings would live to regret this treaty.

## 1 - Initial fortifications at the Second Half of the Xth Century

And so will emerge in about 980 <sup>2</sup>, in this small town of Nogent-le-Châtel, the future House of Rotrou, which will dominate the historical and political scene of the area for nearly 200 years. Rotrou builds the beginnings of a fortification, certainly of the form "Motte and Bailey", in wood, apparently upon the site of the previous Viking ruins. The tower and palisade were thus built late in the Xth Century, but the tower and dungeon will be rebuilt in stone some years later, by Geoffrey, grandson of Rotrou. This imposing edifice will later be known as the Chateau of Saint Jean, the home and seat of the Rotrou family, future Counts of Perche. Although the importance of the county of the Perche has mostly been forgotten <sup>3</sup>, as it has no existence in modern times, it was once the theatre of bloodthirsty battles between rivals, Normans in the North and existing powerful Houses to the South, as the Rotrou family established themselves in their new territories, and established their place in French History.

If we follow the history of the Château of St. Jean, built and maintained by the Rotrou family, we can begin to understand the emergence and the power of the Rotrou family, before their eclipse during the early years of the XIII th Century.

The centre of the "Rotrou" domain will become the town of Nogent-le-Rotrou, and their residence, the Château of St. Jean <sup>4</sup>.

## 2 - Consolidating the fortifications at the beginning of XIth Century

Rotrou's successor, Geoffroy III builds around the year 1020, the château "keep" in stone, that we can still admire today. These works show the privilege of important people who can mobilise important financial means to reunite and pay supervisors, carpenters, stone cutters and masons. From this time also, date the small arched bay windows which one can see on the top floor. The keep is established as an advanced defensive position. The battlement walls, indented with protected archer positions, are rounded to eliminate blind spots, and to ensure a more efficient defence. The ditch, which could never hold water because of the height of the chateau, is widened, making this system of defence very efficient, because attacking forces must clearly expose themselves. It is no longer possible to use wooden towers during the attacks, because of the width of the ditch. The keep walls are 3 metres 50 in thickness at their base, 5 metres, if we consider the buttresses. There are three "floors" to the keep, and at each level, the walls lose 50 cm, to allow for the installation of the wooden floors. On the ground floor, and the first floor there is a bearing wall dividing the floors into two rooms of unequal size. No chimneys or windows are provided. However, a well, 47 metres deep, is dug in the access tower. The builders also added a cellar underneath the keep. The ground floor thus served as a store, and because of water and provisions stored

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<sup>2</sup> Apparently, a certain number of years will pass after the debacle of 963 (when Belleme was lost to the Normans), before the possibility of protecting those territories south of the border of Normandy.

<sup>3</sup> Forgotten, except for several dynamic associations - Association Des Amis Du Perche, the Federation Des Amis Du Perche, Les Amis du Perche de l'Orne, and several others.

<sup>4</sup> History does not seem to record the date at which the name St. Jean was attributed to the château, but it was probably much later.

there, permitted the defenders to support a long siege. The upper floors served as living quarters for the Lord and his family. The walls of the keep show signs of numerous modifications. On the North side of the first floor, a door was provided, but today has been walled up. There are traces of chimneys and their smoke stacks. The second and third floors have a chimney and three windows. Primitive latrines exist on the second floor. The third floor shows signs of the level of comfort which existed, even in a medieval fortress of this time. A bathroom apparently existed on this floor, with a draining system through the wall of the keep to the outside. At the summit of this imposing edifice, the roof was flat, probably of wood, and covering an area of 350 square metres, which could be covered with drenched animal skins as a protection against flaming arrows. A sentinal position one metre wide caps the whole edifice, allowing surveillance of the surrounding area from a height of more than 90 metres.

Thus is the architecture of the château modified to suit recent war developments, such as as catapulted stone balls, so that the edifice will not collapse, as it would do with rectangular and square fortresses. It is protected on the west side by natural defenses, and on the east side, a ditch of about 20 meters wide and 7 to 8 metres deep is deployed in a semi-circle which meets at the place where the plateau has a sixty metre overhang above the valley of Huisne. A rectangular building, which no longer exists today is built, butting against the keep. The entrance to the château, protected by its two towers, has, in between, a drawbridge which has long since disappeared. However, we can still see grooves in the stone walls showing the position of the two portcullis which existed at this time.

Until more modern artillery is invented, as long as food rations are plentiful and as long as the defenders are vigilant, this fortress is indeed impregnable.

In 1028, the abbey of Saint-Denis is founded by Geoffroy II, a redoubtable warrior, as a sign of repentance <sup>5</sup>. The foundation charter, drafted in 1031, locates the abbey "between the River Huisne and the stronghold of Nogent". This is the first time that the existence of the château appears in a charter. In 1079, the lords of Nogent take the title of Counts of the Perche. In 1100, Rotrou III [*2<sup>nd</sup> Count of Perche 1083-1144*]] learns of the death of his father, Geoffroy III, First Count of the Perche, while he was taking part in the siege of Jerusalem (1099), during the first crusade.

### **3 - The End of the XIth to the XIIth Century**

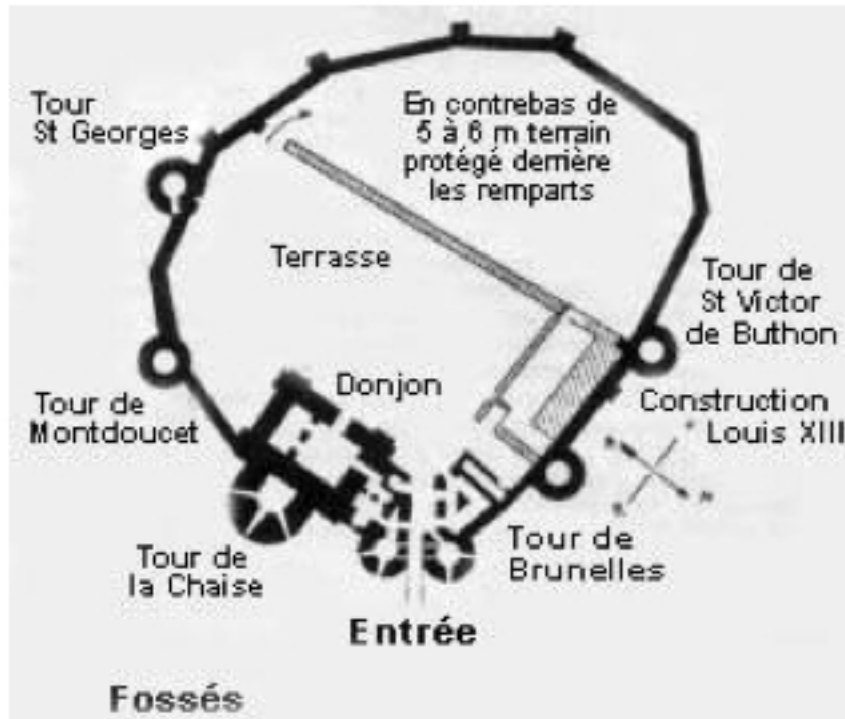
Between the cavalcades and combats, the lords of Nogent live in their château and invest in certain elements of comfort there: creation of twinned windows with their attenuated arches and tympanum with diamond shaped openings <sup>6</sup>. Between 1100 and 1144, Rotrou III, known as "The Great", leaves his homeland of the Perche to go to war with the Arabs, in Spain and the Holy Land. During his brief returns to his native soil, he actively sides with the Duke of Normandy, King of England, a fierce rival of the King of France, supported by Robert "The Devil", lord of Bellême. In 1113, Rotrou is awarded Bellême by Henry 1st (Beauclerc), in reward for his services, with the notable exception

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<sup>5</sup> We have no clear idea of the reason for this "repentance".

<sup>6</sup> See Addendum for explanations and examples of such architecture.

of the chateau at Bellême, that Henry keeps for himself. At his death, Rotrou III leaves a powerful, sovereign and independent county<sup>7</sup>. In the middle of the XIIth century, buttresses are added to reinforce the four corners of the keep, as well as the southern and western faces. Towards the end of the XIIth century, a circular perimeter is added, flanked by seven cylindrical towers, to reinforce the defence of the edifice. Two of the towers flank the main entry. The other five towers are named after the local lords who are to ensure their defence in times of attack.



Between 1144 and 1191, Rotrou IV takes an active part in the conflict which still opposes France and England. In 1191, he is killed under the very walls of Saint Jean d'Acre in Palestine.

#### 4 - The End of the XIIth and the beginning of the XIVth Century

Military architecture changes radically, influenced by [*tactics learned in*] the Middle East, and a body of military engineers is created by Philippe Auguste [*King of France (1180-1223)*]. In 1204, Philippe-Auguste conquers Normandy and confiscates it from John Lackland [*King of England (1199-1216)*]. The county of the Perche loses thus its position of "frontier zone". In 1217, Thomas, 5th Count of Perche, is killed at the battle of Lincoln on May 20, 1217. The Crown Prince Louis VIII, son of Philippe-Auguste, "felt the greatest suffering" [*when hearing the news*]. In 1226, the Perche is united with the crown of France<sup>8</sup>. During the XIIIth and XIVth centuries, no significant modifications are made to the château.

<sup>7</sup> However, unable to subjugate the Perche-Gouet, his domains will never exceed more than half of the County of the Perche.

<sup>8</sup> This is no less than a confiscation, due to the lack of a male heir (Law of Reversion). Subsequent French Kings will successfully use this law to laboriously and painfully expand the French Crown to national unity.

## 5 - The Hundred Year War

The Hundred Year War will reposition the Perche in the centre of Franco-English rivalry and will again give the château of Nogent a defensive role which it has not played any more for several centuries. The Perche, claimed, as well as Normandy, by the kings of England, has to undergo the murderous attacks of the English on several occasions. In 1359, the English seize Nogent as well as the château and on October 24, 1360 by the Treaty of Brétigny, Edward III, King of England [1312-1377], restores the seats of Nogent and Beaumont. In 1424 after the Battle of Verneuil, the Perche passes to the English. In 1427, the château of Nogent is again taken by the French. In 1428, the château, although valiantly defended by the Gascon captain La Pallière, cannot resist the attack conducted by the Count of Salisbury. The attack is carried out especially to the north-eastern corner. A section of the wall yields up to the top of the keep [*this will be called "The English Breach"*], the interior is set ablaze, then abandoned. The Saint-Etienne vault, built in the enclosure of the château in 1122 under Rotrou III, is also destroyed. The 35 metre high dungeon was burned down by Thomas of Salisbury in 1428. In 1447, the English are definitively driven out of the Perche.

## 6 - The End of the XVth to The Beginning of the XVIth Century

It is to the "Young Ladies of Armagnac", known as "*Les Dames de Nogent*", that we can attribute the current aspect of the château<sup>9</sup>, rebuilding of the living quarters above the "Barrel Vault"<sup>10</sup> passage, which now becomes the ground floor, restoring the two entry towers, and increasing their height, heightening of the turns of the entry crowned with decorative machicolations<sup>11</sup>. The "Steps of Saint Jean" connecting the château to the Pâty quarter go back to this time<sup>12</sup>.

## 7 - The XVIth Century

The seigneurie of Nogent-le-Rotrou passes to the family of Bourbon-Condé, who stayed there frequently. The château is the theatre of an ostentatious life. In 1558, is celebrated the new draft of the customs of the Grand-Perche<sup>13</sup>, and in 1566, is celebrated the birth of Charles of Bourbon, future Count de Soissons. The poets of the Pleïade interpret "The Judgement of Paris".

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<sup>9</sup> The "Demoiselles d'Armagnac", Marguerite and Charlotte d'Armagnac, inherit the chateau in 1503. I am unable to determine anything concerning these new owners, apart from their name.

<sup>10</sup> Not too sure about this translation from the French "passage vouté en berceau" ! I need the help of a medieval architect

<sup>11</sup> An opening in the floor of a battlement, for dropping stones on attackers. Later used for decorative effects, and becoming a characteristic of non-military buildings - see Addendum.

<sup>12</sup> These 155 steps, created to facilitate communication between the Chateau and the town below, were built under the auspices of the "Demoiselles d'Armagnac".

<sup>13</sup> The Rotrou family were never able to succeed to a major part of the Perche (Perche-Gouet), which was too powerful to overcome. We have to wait until the XVIth century before the customs of the whole of the County of the Perche are finally drafted. These customs live on today in the pride of this ancient county which today, no longer officially exists.

1568 - These festivals are later followed by bloody sequels during the "Wars of Religion". It is at this period, probably, that the tower of "La Chaise" is razed, to be transformed into a gun position.

## **8 - The XVIIth to the XVIIIth Century**

1624 - The Duke of Sully, Maximilien de Béthune, becomes the new owner of the château. The imposing project which had been considered by the minister of Henri IV - to reverse the old keep of the Counts of Perche to rebuild a traditional residence of style - were not fortunately ever realized. The charming villa in the Louis XIII style is the only vestige of this period. The alley of elms that Sully planted on the external circumference of the enclosure is cut down two centuries later.

1641 - Death of Sully. His sepulture is set in the Hotel Dieu of Nogent and is next to the Notre Dame church.

1779 - The descendants of Sully sell the barony of Nogent to the Count of Orsay who was the last lord of Nogent.

1789-1801 - During the Revolution, the château is transformed into a prison. The Collegiate of St Jean, built in 1094 per Geoffroy IV outside the enclosure of the château, is demolished in 1798.

## **9 - The XIXth and the XXth Centuries**

During these two centuries, the château passes through several hands. The 9th of June 1836, Victor Hugo writes to his wife "We saw and visited Nogent-le-Rotrou, the château which someone wanted to sell to me, six or seven years ago. Nanteuil is drawing a souvenir sketch of it while I write to you. The outside of the château is still very beautiful and superbly dominates an immense horizon of undulating plains. The interior is in a state of total dilapidation".

In 1843, Oeillet Des Murs <sup>14</sup> acquires the château and undertakes much restoration work. The "English Breach" <sup>15</sup> is hidden by a wall containing several windows and decorative machicolations are installed. Several windows are also added to the ground floor. The windows of the home and the towers are enlarged, the floors and ceilings are repaired. Exhausted and partly ruined by so much effort, Oeillet des Murs sells the fortress to Dr. Jousset de Bellesme. In 1885, Historian of the Perche and impassioned archaeologist, this person continues the work undertaken by his predecessor. Several interventions are carried out on the keep, the most visible and discussed being the re-establishment of the notching of the walls of the keep in 1905.

In 1950, damaged by the conflicts of the Second War, the château is bought by the town

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<sup>14</sup> Former lawyer of the Supreme Court of Appeal, Curator of the Library of Nogent-le-Rotrou, Des Murs is the author of a remarkable book - "Histoire des Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous (History of the Counts of Perche and the Rotrou Family)", a precious reference concerning the Lords of the Château St. Jean - 1856.

<sup>15</sup> See Section 6 - The Hundred Year war.

of Nogent-le-Rotrou. Very significant restoration work is then undertaken in order to refit the living quarters of the château as a museum of ethnography <sup>16</sup> and local history and showrooms.

Since 2001, the restoration and the development of the keep and tower of the Chair are ongoing.

## THE CHATEAU AS IT IS TODAY



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<sup>16</sup> Ethnography - A research strategy often used in Social Sciences.









## ADDENDUM

This section is deemed necessary to explain some of the technical terms of architecture used in the main document, especially for the section :

### 4 - The End of the XIth to the XIIth Century

Original documents are, of course, in French. This translation was made, with much difficulty, using the Google translation site and my many dictionaries. I hope it is successful, for I am not an architect !

BAIES GEMINEES (TWINNED WINDOWS)



TYMPAN (TYMPANUM)

A tympanum (plural, tympana) is the semi-circular or triangular decorative wall surface over an entrance bounded by a lintel and arch.



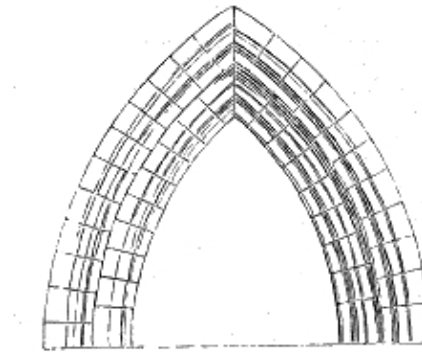
## OCULUS

An oculus (latin: eye) is an opening of a wall or roof, designed to allow the passage of daylight. Usually circular, it may also take other shapes, such as a diamond.



## LANCETTE

An arch



## MACHICOLATIONS

Holes in battlement floors allowing defenders to drop stones on attackers. They can clearly be seen in the following photo. They later become decorative.



# Bellême or not Bellême

## (Taking a Deep Look at Some "Nugent" Documents)

The object of this document is precise, but the outcome of the research which results in this document is for the reader to decide. We will attempt to study the descent of the Rotrou family to clarify the origins of this illustrious House.

The Nugent family is a famous family with more than 10 centuries of history. Their ancestors were powerful lords of France as far back as the 10th century, marrying into royalty, and founding a dynasty which brings us down to the present day. The story, or rather, the stories of individual famous Nugents make fascinating reading, as they were to be found in all walks of life, from poets to gold-hunters, from Members of Parliament to Admirals of the Fleet. Putting together the history of a family even as famous as ours, is a formidable task, and raises several tantalising questions. Where did they originally come from ? Did the family descend from the House of Bellême, or were they associated with the House of Châteaudun ? How did they become of national and even international importance ? Where are their descendants today?

There have been many stories told about both famous and infamous members of the family, as they strove to live in their new-found country of Ireland where they settled towards the end of the 12th Century. It is the early years of the dynasty which are the most difficult to pierce, as they stepped out of the darkness into the limelight in France, in the middle of the 10th Century. Historians and genealogists have tried to put together their history for many hundreds of years. It is not without reason that some documents report "**The origin of this Peerage is obscure.**" and that "**The descent of the barony is obscure**"<sup>1</sup>. We know how the family grew in importance to finally become true Counts of the Perche, in France, in the 12th century, but we would like to establish their roots, as they appeared on the scene in the middle of the 10th Century, more than 250 years earlier.

An awakening of interest in the origins of medieval families took place in the 19th and 20 centuries, as people became curious about their family history. Americans, Canadians, Australians and such, began asking questions about their origins, and tried to follow the trail back to Europe, where they all began, but very quickly came up against a brick wall. Their ancestors usually left their native country, Ireland or England, Italy, Germany, etc., because of poverty, famine or local war situations, and arrived in their new home with only the clothes that they wore. As usual, only the most ardent hunters of information concerning their family could find the time, the energy and the money to track down their origins, assuming, of course, that their family was well enough known to merit attention. Much valuable information, often from ecclesiastic sources, a veritable mine of information became more and more difficult to access, as valuable printed editions of such information went out of print, or were shuffled onto dusty shelves in obscure libraries. The arrival of the Internet as little as 10 years ago, has suddenly made available a wealth of information concerning family origins. More and more historical documents have become available, which were previously out of reach of the amateur genealogist. From the comfort of our home, we can now access information hitherto inaccessible. The

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<sup>1</sup> It is obvious from these declarations that they refer to the De Nogent/Nugent family in Ireland and England after the XII th Century.

recent Google Books project (to name but one) makes available many thousands of books in "pdf" format, some of which have been a precious aid in my research.

Unfortunately, the Internet, although making available all sorts of information to the public, has required that users should become very discriminating in their analysis of the data they come across. As amateur genealogists rushed to create their personal Internet sites, with the story of their family, the Internet has become rife with incomplete and even invalid data, liberally sprinkled with large doses of "wishful thinking". Names, dates and places are often false, family chains spanning hundreds of years, have been compiled willy-nilly, but can easily be rendered invalid, as they are confronted with serious data from more valid sources<sup>2</sup>. I have examined in detail one Internet site which traces the origins of a "fairy-tale" American as he follows his family roots back as far as the Egyptian Pharaohs. With tongue-in-cheek, I have also found similar, albeit not so enormous falsehoods in some of the Nugent Internet sites<sup>3</sup>. Many modern (18th or 19th Century) documents, now available on the Internet, clearly state that the family originates in the north of the Perche, in the House of Bellême, descending from Yves de Creil and Yves de Bellême in the first half of the 10th Century. Cartulary or ecclesiastical documents transcribed in Latin at the time of these events have been examined by modern historians, and can shed partial light upon the history of the families involved. Several documents, composed by reputable historians put Bellême in Normandy, and the House of Rotrou as having Norman origins, proof that they show absolutely no knowledge of medieval French history. Such information appears to have been copied on face value, from very limited document origins. However, other genealogists and historians (often French) give the family a totally different origin, that of the House of Châteaudun, closely associated with the Counts of Blois and Chartres, and with our early De Nogent family, before they eventually became Viscounts and Counts in their own right. Although geographically, the Bellême and the Nogent families have roots that are less than 50 kilometres apart, in the troubled days of the 10th century they have been shown to be declared enemies in a protracted war which lasted several centuries.

Let us examine the following introduction to the origins of the Nugent family. Introductions "very" similar to this can be found in many Nugent Internet sites. We will comment on each part of this introduction. Who is responsible for such data ?

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<sup>2</sup> The first question which comes to mind is "What represents a valid source ?" The answer is simple. Information concerning royalty, senior ecclesiastics, and "upper-crust" noble families usually represent valid sources. Other sources are often suspect, as they are based upon hearsay or wishful thinking. After all, everybody would like to come from a famous family !

<sup>3</sup> Many famous families find their roots in the Xth Century, when documented evidence of their existence became available. The Nugent Family was just one of many, and has merited much research over recent years.

The following extract comes from a document concerning the Nugent family, often found in various forms, on the Internet :

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### ***Nugent Surname History***

*According to family historians, the Nugent's trace their descent from Evas de Belesme, powerful Norman Baron, and Lord of the Castle, lands and tower of Belesme, Normandy, who died in the year 993AD. By his wife Godchilda, he was the father of a son named William. William, Lord of Belesme and Count of Alancon, served under Robert King of France. By his first wife Matilda, he left three sons, Fulke, Robert and William de Belesme. His second wife Adelais gave him another son Warrin de Belesme who became Lord of Damfort, Mortaign and Nogent in Normandy and Viscount of Châteaudun. Warrin died in 1026 leaving issue by his wife Millicent, the daughter and heir of Hugh, Viscount Châteaudun, of a son named Geoffry (or Geoffrey). Geoffry, Viscount Châteaudun, Lord of Montaign, Nogent and Gallardon, married Elvdic, daughter of Odo, Count of Champagne, and had at least two sons, Hugh and Rotron de Nugent, of whom the former died young. Rotron de Nugent (the first of the family so designated), Viscount Châteaudun, married Adeline, daughter of Nigen de Mowbray, of Picardy, and was the father by her of Geoffry, Hugh, Rotron and Fulquois de Nugent. Of these brothers, the first was created Count of Mortaign and Nogent. He commanded a division of the army of William the Conqueror in 1066. Hugh became Viscount of Châteaudun, and Fulquois, who was a follower of the Norman Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings. His sons were Gilbert, Richard, Christopher and John de Nugent, of whom the last three accompanied Sir Hugh de Lacie on his expedition to Ireland in the year 1172.*

### ***Pedigree of the Nugent family***

*by Sir William Betham, the Ulster King of Arms - 1853*

*Genealogy of the pedigree type, written in the form of a table of ancestors, with text in English, was made to order by the duchess Giovanna (Johanna) Riario Sforza, wife to the Austrian count and roman duke, lieutenant marshal Laval Nugent. It is in a hard-cover book, consisting mostly of a schematic outline of the 85 family branches in the male and female line. It begins with Ives de Belesme (995), the Norman founder of the family and an ancestor of Fulco (1066-1090) who had together with his brothers moved to England and was the first to call himself de Nogent (or Nugent) and goes on listing their descendants of both sexes up to the time of Laval (1777-1862).*

*The Nugent family is a branch of the great house of Belesme, being descended from Wulke de Belsame, Lord of Nogent le Rotrou, who accompanied William the Conqueror and fought in the Battle of Hastings, October 14th 1066. The root word from which the name is derived is "gent". In the course of time No-gent became the name of a number of towns ideally situated on the banks of a river, such as Nogent-sur-Seine and Nogent-sur-Marne. Gilbert and Hugh de Nugent, cousins of the Lord of Nogent is Rotrou, founded the name and family in Ireland in the time of Henry II. They settled in Westmeath and the estate remained in the family for many generations.*

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This introduction has been cut and pasted, without the slightest modification, into many Nugent Internet sites which recount the history of "Our Family". Where did this data come from ? Why did amateur genealogists take it on face value ?

Let us begin by identifying one such document, available on the Internet, and linked to from "thenugentfamily.com" site :

<http://www.thenugentfamily.com/allnugents.htm>

This document is entitled "Nugent Surname History" by Marian Keaney. I will quote the first few paragraphs of this document, which has been extensively copied into many other Internet sites, and has been taken on face value as the truth concerning the origins of the Nugent family.

Let us examine just the first few sentences .....

### **Paragraph 1 - Nugent Surname History**

#### **1 - According to family historians ....**

*Who ? Probably Gilles Brie de la Clergerie (1620), followed by J.C.Lyons (1850), Sir William Betham (1853), followed by John Burke (1860)*

#### **2 - the Nugent's trace their descent from Evas de Belesme ....**

*Who said so ? - Gilles Brie de la Clergerie, very pro- Bellême, would seem a likely culprit (see Site Information - Research Documentation - number 001).*

#### **3 - powerful Norman Baron ....**

*Evas (Yves) was a simple crossbow archer, but known for his ability to construct attack and defence mechanisms for the Norman "Motte & Bailey" constructions<sup>4</sup> which could withstand external attack. When Rotrou (sometimes called Rotroldus), army commander of Thibault the Trickster (Count of Blois & Chartres) lost an important battle against the Normans in the northern area of the County of the Perche, in about 963, the town of Bellême was lost<sup>5</sup>. Richard, the Duke of Normandy conferred upon Yves, as a reward for his work<sup>6</sup>, the title of "Lord of Bellême" (Seigneur), to hold the town against all attacks from the Count of Blois, under pain of losing his new job, if he failed. Yves was not powerful, he apparently was not Norman (his mother was the sister of Raoul, Duke of Le Mans, and he was the brother of Sigefroy, Bishop of Le Mans), and he was not a Baron (Baronry can only be conferred by a King), and is a much higher position than a simple "Lord". At best, Yves could be given the title "Lord of the Baronry". However, the descendants of*

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<sup>4</sup> Motte and Bailey Castles and Ringworks © Jeffrey L. Thomas - 2002 <http://www.castlewailes.com/motte.html>

<sup>5</sup> Les Comtes de Perche - <http://www.francebalade.com/maine/ctperche.htm> - A translation from French to English, of part of this internet site, can be found in the Appendix, below. This is about the only truth in this document. If the town of Belleme was "lost", it must have previously "belonged" to the family of Rotrou, which can explain why Rotrou was often referred to as the Count of Perche at this time (963).

<sup>6</sup> A few years earlier, William had been captured by the King of France, and had been put under house arrest, with the object of curbing the Norman sallies over the border. Yves de Creil was instrumental in smuggling William into freedom and back to Normandy.



*Yves, lived upon the glory of the attribution of Yves to the Lordship of Bellême, for many generations. Many members of the family died sudden deaths (poisoning, decapitation, demise of every sort ), bathing this line of the Bellême family in violence, totally different from the distinct Christian style of the Rotrou family.*

#### **4 - .... tower of Belêsme, Normandy ....**

*Bellême may be in Normandy today, as the boundaries shifted somewhat in the Middle Ages. However, at this period, Bellême certainly was not in Normandy !*

#### **5 - His (Williams) second wife Adelais gave him another son Warrin de Belêsme who became Lord of Damfort, Mortaign and Nogent in Normandy and Viscount of Châteaudun ....**

*Warin (Guérin) de Bellême is known to have married Mélisende (Millicent) of Châteaudun. We do not know how this marriage occurred, as the two families were still in a continuous situation of war, but it was probably an effort to bring together the two families. However, Warin's titles were limited to Lord of Domfront (not Damfort) and Lord of Bellême. The titles of Viscount of Châteaudun and Lord of Nogent could not have been held by Warin, as he died in 1026. Geoffrey II (Warin's brother-in-law) was Viscount of Châteaudun (title gained in 1023 from his uncle Hugh) until his assassination in 1040, and also Lord of Nogent-le-Rotrou (title gained in 1004 from his father Geoffrey). The title of Lord of Mortagne (not Mortaign) was held by Fulquois of Mortagne who died in 1031. Finally, Domfront, Mortagne and Nogent were in the county of the Perche, and not in Normandy !*

#### **6 - Warrin died in 1026 leaving issue by his wife Millicent, the daughter and heir of Hugh ....**

*Millicent (Mélisende) of Châteaudun was not the daughter of Hugh, but possibly the daughter of a certain Fulquois. Was Fulquois a little known relative (cousin ?) of Hugh, or was he Lord of Mortagne, son (grandson ?) of Hervé. Whatever the affiliation, Mélisende could not be the heir to the title of Viscount, and thus pass it on to her husband, simply because she had a brother Geoffrey, who would be the natural heir to his uncle. Thus, her brother, Geoffrey II was the next male in line to become Viscount of Châteaudun. I can find no trace of any male children from the marriage of Mélisende to Warin (Guérin) of Bellême. However, this is the basis of the claims that the Belleme family have for affiliation to the Rotrou family. No information exists to show that the marriage of Mélisende to Warin of Domfront, produced a male descendant.*

#### **7 - of a son named Geoffry (or Geoffrey) ....**

*Based upon available dates, Mélisende of Châteaudun was not the mother of Geoffrey who married Helvise (Eulesie/Eloise), but his **sister**. Helvise was the daughter of Rainard de Pithiviers, not Odo de Champagne. Warin (Guérin) and Mélisende had a daughter, who became known as Adelaide de Bellême. Adelaide married her cousin (by marriage), Rotrou II (he was the son of Mélisende's brother Geoffrey).*

*Many references to Elvdic, daughter of Odo de Champagne are to be found on the Internet, all exact copies, and probably extracted from "Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Barontage of the British Empire" by Sir Bernard Burke, in 1865, which itself is full of incoherent data concerning the Nugent origins. No*

historical and proven references to this information can be found. It is not known where Burke got his information from. It may be from the Betham Document (of which more below).

**8 - and had at least two sons, Hugh and Rotron de Nugent, of whom the former died young ....**

Geoffrey had three sons, Hugh de Châteaudun (1025-1044), Geoffrey (1026-1028, died young), and Rotrou II de Châteaudun (1026-1079). Hugh was the eldest son and became Viscount of Chateaudun. However he died before he was 20, and his brother Rotrou then became Viscount of Châteaudun.

**9 - Rotron de Nugent ....**

Let us get his name right - He was **Rotrou de Nogent** who became Viscount of Châteaudun (a more senior title) upon the death of his brother Hugh in 1044.

**10 - Rotron de married Adeline, daughter of Nigen de Mowbray, of Picardy ....**

For the same reason as (6 - above), this data is absolutely false and has been copied wholesale into many Nugent sites. Nigen (Nigel ?) de Mobrai (1146-1191) lived at least a century after Rotrou. Rotrou is known to have married Adelaide de Bellême (daughter of Warin de Domfront) in about 1043<sup>7</sup>.

**11 - and was the father by her of Geoffry, Hugh, Rotron and Fulquois de Nugent ....**

Rotrou is known to have had many children, several of who may have been illegitimate : Geoffrey, Hugh, Rotrou, Guérin, Helvise, Fulquois, Jeremie and Robert. Only Geoffrey and Hugh inherited titles in France. Their father split his domains between the two elder brothers. All the others were left without interest. The young son Rotrou returned from the Conquest of England bathed in glory, and probably quite rich, and married into the "de Gennes" family, beginning a five generation "Rotrou de Montfort" dynasty which culminates, many generations later, into the Spencer and Churchill families (Winston Churchill, Diana Spencer, mother of the future King of England). Nothing is known about Guérin, Helvise, Jeremie and Robert. Fulquois is known to have initiated the English descendants of the Rotrou family, although little is known about the hundred years that his sons and grandsons spent in England.

**12 - the first was created Count of Mortaign and Nogent ....**

Geoffrey inherited the titles of Lord of Mortagne and Lord of Nogent, and later in life, self-styled himself as the first Count of Perche (although he controlled less than half of the Perche county).

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<sup>7</sup> Although the De Nogent and Bellême families had been in a state of war for many years, the "diplomatic" marriage of Rotrou II de Chateaudun to Adelaide de Bellême did little to reduce the belligerent nature of relations between the two families. However, it is very probable that Rotrou's new cousin by marriage, Robert de Bellême, who was a close follower of William, Duke of Normandy, allowed the development of relations between the two opponents, and certainly permitted more favourable exchanges, resulting in the fact that Rotrous sons eventually accompanied William on his conquest of England in 1066, but as mercenaries, with the promise of great rewards.

**13 - Hugh became Viscount Châteaudun, and Fulquois, who was a follower of the Norman Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings ....**

*This sentence, to be found in most of the "Nugent Origins" Internet sites shows the irresponsibility of the creators of such sites. The sentence contains a major grammatical error, and thus is totally incoherent. And yet it is found on many Nugent sites, proof that the site developers did not even read the data that they copied. I would suggest that in copying the data from the 1865 Burke document (or a similar such document written at about this time <sup>8</sup>), somebody jumped a few lines, and so the error was compounded. The sentence which follows is the ridiculous result of this error.*

**14 - His sons were Gilbert, Richard, Christopher and John de Nugent, of whom the last three accompanied Sir Hugh de Lacie on his expedition to Ireland in the year 1172 ....**

*His (Fulquois') sons were probably Gilbert, John and Hugh, and their dates of birth are unknown, although estimated about 1060-1080. They are obviously confused with Gilberts GRANDCHILDREN, who were part of the military expedition to Ireland. They accompanied Hugh de Lacie (Lacy) who was a Baron <sup>9</sup>, not a "Sir". The expedition to Ireland was in October, 1171, not 1172.*

*So much for the first paragraph !*

**Paragraph 2 - Pedigree of the Nugent Family**

**1 - by Sir William Betham, the Ulster King of Arms - 1853 ....**

*Giovanna (Johanna) Riario Sforza, an Austrian Countess ordered a complete chart of the descendancy of Field-Marshal Laval Nugent, as a wedding gift to her future husband (although it was probably a check to ensure that she was marrying into nobility !). As they were married in 1815, the date of **1853** for the document would appear to be incorrect, although it may have been published at a later date.*

*There appear to be at least three documents which contain imprecise, erroneous and especially unsupported data concerning the origins of the Nugent family :*

*1815 - Sir William Betham - Pedigree of the Nugent Family,  
1853 - Charles Lyons - Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family,  
1865 - Sir Bernard Burke - Peerage and Barontage of the British Empire (P 1168-1171).*

**2 - wife to the Austrian count and roman duke, lieutenant marshal Laval Nugent ....**

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<sup>8</sup> The error appears to have originated in the document by William Skey in 1849.

<sup>9</sup> Barons, a level of peerage just below that of Viscount, imply creation by the sovereign, associated with certain privileges, but including the obligation of certain services to the crown. Barons must pledge loyalty to their sovereign. The term baron in England is restricted to the above rules, whereas the title in France was more a title of courtesy, sometimes self attributed, but nevertheless restricted to noble families.

*Laval Nugent was Irish, born in Ballynacor (near Dublin) in Ireland, on November 3, 1777. His family moved to Austria, because his father joined the Imperial Austrian Army (How ? - Why ?), and found his way into a troubled Europe, towards the end of the 18th century. He joined the Austrian Army in 1793, and quickly rose through the ranks. He spent the winter of 1812-1813 with (his distant cousin) the Duke of Wellington, and from there moved on to Vienna. Laval married Giovanna Riario-Sforza, an Austrian Countess <sup>10</sup>, in Naples, 1815. After the Napoleonic Wars, Laval began to conduct archaeological studies and excavation in his adopted country. He was nominated Field-Marshal in 1849 after a glorious career in the Austrian Army. The life of Laval Nugent is too flamboyant to be defined here as only one paragraph.*

### **3 - Fulke (1066-1090) who had together with his brothers, moved to England ....**

*Let's call him Fulke (or Fulquois). If Fulke was born in 1066, there is little chance that he fought at Hastings in 1066. He was probably born in 1049. There is no proof that Fulke or his brothers settled in England. Fulke was last referenced in 1078 in France. However his sons settled in England, although little information concerning them is available.*

### **4 - The Nugent family is a branch of the great house of Belesme ....**

*We have already covered this unsupported statement !*

### **5 - The root word from which the name is derived is "gent" ....**

*The name Nogent is derived from the Latin "Novogentium" which means "New Settlement". There were many new settlements in France during the 10th and 11th centuries. The new settlement in question was Nogent-ès-Château (or Nogent-le Châtel?), which became known as Nogent-le-Rotrou several generations after the initial installation of the Rotrou family in this town (probably after the stone construction of the Chateau St. Denis, around 1055).*

### **6 - Gilbert and Hugh de Nugent, cousins of the Lord of Nogent is Rotrou, founded the name and family in Ireland ....**

*We will ignore the grammatical error in this sentence which reduces it to the level of rubbish. As there appeared to have been three successive generations of Gilberts, it is not clear here to which Gilbert the author is referring. The Gilbert of the first generation had a brother called Hugh, but here we obviously refer to the sons of Fulquois, who died in England well before the expedition to Ireland in 1171. The Gilbert of the De Nogent family who went to Ireland was of the third generation, great-grandsons of Fulquois. The Rotrou family were certainly not known as "de Nogent" in France. It is likely that the name was associated with them when Fulquois's sons settled in England. The descendants in Ireland were probably known as "de Nogent" until about 1415, when Sir William Nugent (1370-1415), the 9th Baron of Delvin, anglicized the family name to Nugent.*

That is all I have to say about only the first two paragraphs of this introduction to

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<sup>10</sup> It was she who ordered the Pedigree of the Nugent Family from Sir William Betham, as a wedding present to her husband, Lavel Nugent.

Nugent origins that we can find, nearly word for word, in many Internet sites.

However, as my Internet site has offered certain valid suggestions concerning the origins of the Rotrou Family, I see that later paragraphs of the "Keaney" document now have been modified to contain several paragraphs copied "in texto" from my Internet site (i.e. references to Kathleen Thompson and her book). This document is a patchwork of segments of text copied from various, often false sources, with absolutely no effort made to verify the information, or maintain coherence in its contents.

And so, the non-documented claims that the Rotrou Family descended from the Bellême Family seem unfounded. The suggestion that Warin (Guérin) de Domfront, married to Mélisende de Châteaudun, was the father of Geoffrey, Viscount of Châteaudun has no foundation, as the only child from this union was shown to be a girl. Although Geoffrey, in subsequent charters, refers to a Mélisende as his mother, he makes no reference to his father at all. Moreover, the time-line of the persons involved seem to indicate that Warin married a Mélisende, whose mother, also a Mélisende and daughter of Rotrou, had married into the Châteaudun family <sup>11</sup>. At most, Warin would then have been the brother-in-law of Geoffrey, Viscount of Châteaudun

My reference documentation, built over more than ten years, and scrutinized in great detail, in Latin, in French and of course in English, is not to be found here. Whenever possible, I examined the original documents. Under certain circumstances, I was obliged to quote from references to now unobtainable books, which were made in more recent works <sup>12</sup>.

I understand that my perception and my findings, concerning the origins of the Nugent family, may run against the writings of some rather illustrious authors. However, I do not insist, but just present my findings, for you to make your own choice.

Examine my list of referenced documents at my Internet link :

<http://www.nugent.fr/P0304.htm>

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<sup>11</sup> See the chapter concerning Foulquoi de Mortagne.

<sup>12</sup> Several works in French, of which I have copies, were written in the 18th and 19th centuries, and which quote from books written several centuries before, and which exist only in rare book collections, and which to me, are often unobtainable.

## Appendix

Some French documents and Internet sites clarify the situation in the County of the Perche in the middle of the Xth Century.

Extract from the Internet site :

<http://www.francebalade.com/maine/ctperche.htm>

### "Les Comtes de Perche"

#### Rebuilding the County of the Perche at the end of the Xth Century

*A new Count of Perche, **Rotrou**, appears in 960 when Thibault the Trickster, Count of Blois and Chartres, attacks Richard, Duke of Normandy. Thibault has the backing of Lothaire, King of France. However, Thibault's direct sovereign, Hughes Capet, Duke of France, maintains a benevolent neutrality towards Richard.*

*Rotrou was one of the chiefs of Thibault's army, and had been charged with the task of capturing the town of Seez. The Count of Blois captured the town of Evreux, and went on to lay siege to the town of Rouen. The Counts of Maine and Anjou, also allies of Thibault, advanced towards Passais.*

*Richard of Normandy is supported by Yves de Creil (who is the brother of Sigefroy, Bishop of Le Mans). Richards position becomes more and more difficult, until he decides to call for the help of his Danish compatriots. They raise the siege of Rouen, and then continue on through the valley of the River Eure, pillaging and destroying everything in their path. They lay waste to the County of the Perche (especially the town of Corbon, which will never be rebuilt), and then the city of Chartres, and even progress into the territories of Blenois and Dunois.*

*As a result of this war, Thibault must rebuild a buffer territory between his territories and those of the Normans. Some years later, he confides the territory around Nogent [es-Château], together with La Ferriere, Montigny, Monvilliers, Rivray and Montlondon, to Rotrou. Thus, in this manner, the Lordship of Nogent (the centre of the future County of the Perche), and subservient to the Count of Blois and Chartres, is created. These areas had previously belonged to the St. Père Abbey of Chartres, and were a donation to them by Queen Clothilde, the wife of Clovis, King of France.*

*On the opposing side, Yves de Creil receives from Hughes Capet, with the benediction of Richard of Normandy, the region of Bellême, which is thus amputated from the County of the Perche. He also gains control of the area called the Saonois, once part of the County of Maine, and which will in future be the cause of a long conflict. Finally, he recovers Alençon and Domfront, thus building the Lordship of Bellême, which will serve as an equivalent buffer for Normandy, with respect to the Count of Blois.*

*While Yves de Creil builds his castle at Bellême, Rotrou builds his at Nogent.*

This episode in history illustrates the development of feudal developments in this part of France. Firstly, we see the creation of Lordships, in order to defend against enemies, and the expansion of such Lordships to the detriment of others, and which will result in numerous protracted local wars.

**Extract from the book :**

**"Histoire des Comtes de Perche de la Famille des Rotrous"**

**(A History of the Counts of Perche and of the Rotrou Family)**

by M.O. Des Murs (1856).

This excerpt (Pages 098-102) explains how Rotrou 1<sup>er</sup> lost the town of Bellême in battle, and how Yves de Creil gained it.

..... **In French** .....

*"Comme Rotrou était le bras droit du Comte de Chartres, il dut subir ses bonnes et ses mauvaises fortunes. Or, le résultat le plus net de cette dernière et désastreuse campagne, pour le Comte de Perche, fut la perte de son Comté du Bellémois, qui tomba au pouvoir de Richard".*

*"On peut donc dire avec certitude que dès 963, date de la ligue de Thibault avec la Cour de France contre Richard 1er, Rotrou était en pleine possession du Comte du Perche, dont, quoique fief séparé, faisait alors partie Bellême".*

*"Mais il [**le Duc Richard**] conserva la Seigneurie de Bellême dont il avait dépouillé Rotrou, dans cette guerre d'extermination, et en revêtit Yves de Creil, Grand Arbalétrier de France, passé à son service, qui en prit dès lors, pour lui et ses descendants, le titre ou surnom de Bellême, qu'il substitua à celui de Creil".*

..... **And in English** .....

*"As Rotrou was the right-hand man of the Count of Chartres, he was obliged to support the good and the bad times. As such, the net result of this latest and disastrous campaign, for the Count of Perche, was the loss of the County of Bellême, which fell into the hands of Richard".*

*"We can thus say with confidence that as of 963, date at which Thibault joined an alliance with the King of France against Richard 1st, Rotrou was in full possession of the County of the Perche, of which, although in a separate domain, Bellême was an integral part".*

*"But he [**Duke Richard**] kept the Lordship of Bellême that he had divested from Rotrou, in this war of extermination, and gave it to Yves de Creil, master crossbow-archer <sup>13</sup> of France, who had come into his service, and who thus accepted, for himself and his descendants, the title or sobriquet of Bellême, which he substituted in place of Creil".*

Translation FND

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<sup>13</sup> Orderic Vitalis uses the term "*Ivo de Credolio regis balistarius*" more likely to mean an officer in charge of the royal siege train of catapults, ballista, and trebuchet, a much more senior position.

## A Family of Benefactors

In order to understand the situation of the successive members of the Rotrou Family in the troubled years of the Xth, XIth and XIIth Centuries. we must first examine them in their context, that of a Medieval environment, 1000 years after the beginning of Christianity, and still plunged in the secrets and the mysticisms of the Clergy. In these times, the Church was at the height of its power, and extended its control into every corner of daily life, whether it be at the level of the peasants, or at the level of Lords, Barons and Kings. Only the Clergy could read and write. They alone could pierce the cloak of secrecy offered by the Latin Language, and they staunchly withheld any information which could cause them to lose their power <sup>1</sup>.

The concept of the separation of the Church from the State had its awakenings in the beginnings of the XIIth Century. Several centuries would pass before this separation would be complete. To say that the era of the early Rotrou Family was influenced by the clergy would be an understatement. The many donations made by the different members of the family over a period of nearly 200 years were governed by three main rules :

- 1 - The Rotrou family was intensely pious and God-fearing,
- 2 - The influence of the clergy, either by the local Bishops (several members of the family were bishops themselves, and as such, had direct influence), or by interference from higher circles,
- 3 - The Christian faith had already lasted 1000 years, and the church purveyed without shame, the probability of the end of the world, and suggested that all sinners repent,

It was not surprising in early medieval times that the church influenced rich and poor alike. The wrath of the Church fell upon many. Several members of the Rotrou descendants were excommunicated, when they stepped over some unknown boundary, and displeased bishops and even popes. However, little by little, in the developing culture of the XIIth Century, this power of written communication was harnessed to more

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<sup>1</sup> To quote from the New Columbia Encyclopedia : "With the appearance of strong political powers in Europe, particularly the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France, a struggle began between the papacy and the temporal rulers. The principal contention was over investiture, but underlying it was violent disagreement as to the proper distribution of power; theories ranged from the belief that emperor or king, as ruler by divine right, should control church as well as state (a theory known also as caesaropapism) to the belief that the pope, as vicar of God on earth, should have the right of supervision over the state. The centuries-long struggle was highlighted by such bitter clashes as those between Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (1050-1106), between Pope Innocent III (1198-1215) and Frederick II and King Philip II of France (1165-1223), and between Pope Boniface VIII (1235-1303) and King Philip IV (1268-1314) of France.



private means. Barons and Lords began to use the services of scribes, to leave written traces for the future. Important and senior members of aristocracy began to use the services of "senechals" to organize the environment of their lords, to prepare their Charters, and make them available to future generations. Prominent noble families began to ignore and even contest the power of the Church, when it differed from their own plans. The direct influence of the Church was severely diminished, as the people availed themselves of ways to circumvent their power. When historians in the distant future would need to discover the events which took place in the depths of these early medieval moments, they would avail themselves of the Cartulary documents so carefully preserved by their seneschals. If ever such documents had been destroyed, or had been lost in the passage of time, our historians could count on the religious orders, the Monks, the Abbeys, the Priors to recover copies of such vital documents. Sometimes, documents could be copied, and certain passages could be modified or even removed to satisfy local requirements. Some historians have made available fragmented parts of Cartulary documents in order to satisfy their partisan needs.

It is within the limits of such discovered Cartulary documents (or their partisan copies) <sup>2</sup> that we can expose much of the commital decisions concerning donations to charities and the Church, made by our Viscounts and Counts of the period.

The following list details most of the donations made to Church and Charity by members of the Rotrou family over a period of 200 years. In some circumstances, members of the family were witnesses to donations made by lesser nobility. Their presence served to bolster the importance of such donations, and to encourage the Rotrou entourage to become similar benefactors. Such donations to Churches, Abbeys and Priors by the different Viscounts and Counts help to show the immense gap between the pious and God-fearing Rotrou Family, and members of the Talvas Family of Bellême, who spent most of their time plotting against, and killing their own family.

## **ROTROU I**

- 963 Witness to the foundation of the Priory of Bonneval by King Lothaire,
- 978 Witness to a donation made by the Countess of Chartres, Liégarde, to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée,
- 980 Receives a gift from Eudes Ist, Count of Chartres, of land in Thivars. He will later donate this land,

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<sup>2</sup> Originals of some Cartulary documents are no longer available, but some rewritten versions, adapted to the requirement of the day can be found. In a document "Sept Textes pour une Fondation", by Kathleen Thompson, various transcriptions of certain Cartulary documents are dissected. There are many reasons for the differences between the versions, copy errors, deliberate omissions of certain document segments, and even insertions of totally new segments which never existed in the original.

- 985 Witness to a donation made to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, by a certain "Robert" (identity unknown),
- 986 Witness to a donation made to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, by a certain "Lambert" (identity unknown),
- 988 Witness to a donation made to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, by a certain "Vivien" (identity unknown),
- 988-1005 Witness to a donation made to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, of the Metairie des Agneaux (Farmstead of Lambs),
- 988-990 Signs a Carter of donation to the Witness to a donation made to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, of the land at Thivars.

## **GEOFFREY I**

No known donations.

## **GEOFFREY II**

- 1019-1028 Donates to the Abbey of St-Père-en-Vallée, of the rights of a holding given to this monastery by a priest "Herbert",
- 1028 Witness to the Foundation, with King Robert, of the Abbey of Coulombs,
- 1028 Founds the Church of St-Sepulchre de Châteaudun,
- 1028 Rebuilds the Collegial Church of St. Jean, at Nogent-le-Rotrou (at this time, it is probable that Nogent still holds the name Nogent-le-Châtel),
- 1029-1031 Founds the Monastery of St. Denis at Nogent-le-Rotrou.

## **ROTROU II**

- 1040-1066 Terminates the work at the Monastery and the Church of St Denis,
- 1040-1066 Rebuilds the Monastery at Moustier,
- 1040-1066 Witness to a donation made to the Convent of St. Denis, by Guillaume-le-Borgne,
- 1066-1072 Witness of a donation at St. Denis, by Robert de Messesselle,
- 1072-1074 Witness of a donation at St. Denis, of the farm at Raderais, by Guarin,

1075-1077 Present at the consecration of the Church of St. Denis and the eight altars which he adds and installs, with the Abbé Hubert.

### **GEOFFREY III**

- 1080 Confirms and complements the donation of his father to St. Denis,
- 1080 Witness to diverse donations made to the Convent of St. Denis,
- 1080 Present at the donation made at St-Martin-du-Vieux-Bellême, of the Church of St. Léonard, by his brother Hughes de Chateaudun,
- 1091 Founds the Leper House of Chartrage, near to Mortagne,
- 1091 Founds the Leper House of Nogent-le-Rotrou,
- 1093 Referee in another litigation between the Lady Ermengarde and the Abbey of St. Père de Chartres,
- 1093 Resumption of litigation against the Priory of St. Pere.

### **ROTROU III (The Great)**

- 1099 Confirms the donation made by his predecessors, to the Convent of St. Denis,
- 1099 Confirms the donation made in his absence of the Church of Boisvilette,
- 1099 Authorises a donation made by Hervé de Villeret, of half of the Church of Verrière, situated in the stronghold of Lancelin,
- 1099 Increases the donation to the Leper House in Mortagne,
- 1099 Rebuilds the Monastery of Saint-Lomer,
- 1105 Assists at a donation made to the Monks of St-Denis, by Guillaume de Loiscel, of the Church of St-Martin-de Loiscel,
- 1107 Assists at a donation by Thibault du Mêle of Châteaudun, of the Church of St-Pierre de Boisville,
- 1109 Bernard de Cluny requests the authorisation of Rotrou, to establish an Abbey in the County of the Perche,
- 1109 Rotrou makes a donation of the Domain of Arcisses, and then substitutes it for land in the forest of Tyron,

- 1111 Foundation of the Chapel of St Etienne, by Beatrix, in the grounds of the Chateau of Nogent,
- 1112 Grant to Bernard, by Yves, the Bishop of Chartres, of land in the domain of his Church,
- 1112 Grant by Rotrou, of a cemetery in the Abbey of Tyron, and confirmation of this grant by Yves,
- 1112 Witness, with his mother, of a donation to the Monks of St-Denis, by the Priest Garin,
- 1119 Witness to two other donations, to the same community, by Guy de Rochefort and Arnoult de Melbourne,
- 1120 Rotrou initiates a Chapter at St-Etienne,
- 1120 Rotrou founds the Church of Maison-Dieu of Trappe,
- 1122 The Third Charter of Rotrou, in favour of Tyron, concerning Arcisses,
- 1126 Confirmation by Rotrou, of privileges of the Abbey of Marmoutiers, from St-Léonard de Bellême,
- 1127 Witness, before his departure for Spain, of a donation to the Abbey of Tyron, by one of his knights, Robert-Judas,
- 1130 Witness of a donation to Tyron, by Rotrou de Montfort,
- 1139 Founds the Monastery of La Trappe,
- 1139 Makes a donation to the Abbey of Tyron, from the House of his doctor,

## **ROTROU IV**

- 1144 Confirms, with his mother, the donations previously made to the Leper House of Chartrage of Mortagne,
- 1147 Confirms a donation to the Monks of St-Martin-du-Vieux-Bellême,
- 1154 Donation of the Monastery of Moutiers-au-Perche to the Monks of St-Laumer de Corbion,
- 1160 Rotrou confirms all precedent donations to the Monks of St-Denis de Nogent,
- 1160 Several donations to the Maison de Chartrage and the Calende du Corbonnais,
- 1169 Founds the Convent of the Chartreuse du Val-Dieu,

- 1179 Confirms a donation previously made to the Leper House of Nogent-le-Rotrou,
- 1182 Founds the House of Charity of Nogent-le-Rotrou, and establishes a Charter of this foundation,
- 1190 Completes, by a new Charter, the foundation of the Maison-Dieu of Nogent,
- 1190 Confirms a sale to the Lepers of St-Lazare de Nogent,
- 1190 Authorises a sale to the Monks of Ste-Gaubourge,
- 1190 Confirms a sale to the Monks of Vieux-Bellême,
- 1190 Makes a payment to the Chapter of Chartres, concerning the forest at Authou,
- 1190 Donation to the Monks of St-Denis, to the Monks of Tyron and to the Monks of la Pelice,
- 1190 Returning to Macon after the Crusade, he confirms a Charter in favour of the Convent of St-Denis.

## **GEOFFREY IV**

- 1183 Witness of a donation by Thibault, Count of Blois, to the Nuns of Belhomert,
- 1192 Charter of a donation to the Leper House of Nogent,
- 1193 Charter of a donation to the Priory de Chêne-Gallon,
- 1193 Donations to the Maison de Franchart and to the Chartreux du Val-Dieu,
- 1194 Foundation of the Collegiate of St-Jean de Nogent,
- 1194 Confirms, at Bellême, a donation to the Nuns of Marmoutiers,
- 1194 Founds the Priory of St-Laurent de Moulins-la-Marche,
- 1194 Confirms the previous donations made to the Maison de Chartrage,
- 1194 Founds the Chapel de la Loupe,
- 1195 Rebuilds the Maison-Dieu and the Hospital of Mortagne,
- 1195 Charter of a donation to the Church of St-Gervais and St-Protais de Chartres,
- 1197 Charter to the benefit of the Canons of Chartres Cathedral,

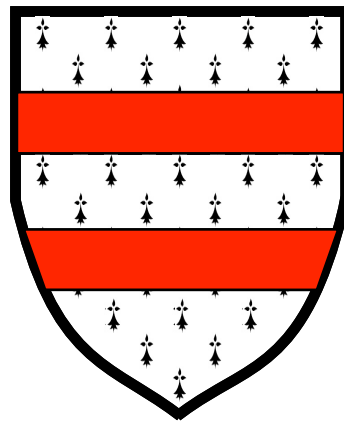
- 1198 Ratifies the donation made by his father, of a luminaire, to the lodge of La Vierge, at Chartres,
- 1198 Witness to a donation made to the Nuns of Belhomert,
- 1201 Finds an anniversary service at the Monastery of Belhomert, and makes a donation,
- 1201 Witness to another donation to the Monastery of Belhombert.

## **THOMAS**

- 1202 Witness to the foundation, by his mother, of the Collegiale Church of Mortagne,
- 1204 Witness to the authorisation, by his mother, for the creation, at Mortagne, of the Order of Redemption of Captives,
- 1213 Assists at the Consecration of the Church of the Monastery of Trappe,
- 1213 Finds the Priory of St-Nicolas of Maison-Maugis,
- 1216 Confirms the donation made to the Collegiale de Toussaint,
- 1216 Donation of a part of the Moulins Grandin,
- 1217 Donation to the Abbey of Clairets of his mills at Grand-Près,

## **GUILLAUME**

- 1217 Confirms a donation made to the Church of St-Jean de l'Ormeau,
- 1217 Confirms, at La Loupe, a donation made to the Monks of Belhombert,
- 1219 Donation of Clergy to the Altar of La Vierge de Chartres,
- 1219 Confirms donations made to Val-Dieu in the Perche, by Rotrou III and Rotrou IV,
- 1219 Renews a charter of Geoffrey IV to the Bourgeois de Marcheville.



# BOOK TWO

England  
(1066-1171)

# **A PROMISE OF GLORY**

## **Book 2 - England**

- 21 - The De Nogents Descendants in England**
- 22 - Events Leading to the Norman Conquest**
- 23 - De Nogent Participation in the Conquest**
- 24 - Geoffrey III de Mortagne**
- 25 - The Enigma of Fulke de Bellême**
- 26 - The House of Montfort le Rotrou**
- 27 - Descendants of De Nogents in England**
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- 29 - The White Ship**



## The De Nogent Descendants and England

England - 1066 !

Chance is but the spin of a coin. It may fall heads or tails. The chances that the House of Rotrou in France should terminate without a male heir in the distant future of 1226 are about even. However, nature's coin often falls on the negative side. The chance that another branch of the House of Rotrou should begin in another country, some time before the extinction of the French House of Rotrou, is not so easy to predict, but we are happy that it did. Otherwise, you would not be reading this document !

In another 150 years, the main branch of the House of Rotrou in France will be extinguished. But another branch of the family is already being created in England.

The House of Rotrou in France is slowly but surely building in power. Rotrou II is changing alliances. Vassals of the Counts of Blois and Chartres, and thus of the Kings of France for more than a hundred years, the House of Rotrou is becoming powerful enough to make its own choices. This change of heart does not take place overnight. The House of Rotrou has been in a constant state of war with the House of Bellême and the Normans, at least since 963, when the city of Bellême was lost to the Normans by Rotrou, the first of our lineage.

When Rotrou I, commander of one of the armies of Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres, attacked the Normans in 963, but lost the battle and was forced to cede the town of Bellême, he could not possibly have foreseen that his descendants would take sides with the Normans in the Conquest of England, just 100 years later. The House of Blois & Chartres and their vassals, the Viscounts of Châteaudun, were subservient to the Kings of France, and as such were continually at war with the bellicious Normans, who were directly descended from the Vikings, and whose favourite past-time appeared to be pillaging their neighbours. The Normans would storm across the border, whenever they felt like it, descend into the rich plains of l'Île de France, ransacking and burning, and then retire behind their border to the safety of their Mottes and Baileys <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Motte & Bailey - . Early Norman castles were of the 'motte and bailey' type. A motte (or castle-mound) is an artificial mound of earth, surrounded by a ditch and fortified by timber walls. A bailey is a fortified enclosure built next to the motte. To the Normans, a castle meant a safe haven from the hostile local population and a protected base from which they could strike at will at those who displeased them. Once an area of land was taken, a fortification of the motte and bailey type was built and manned, holding all within riding distance under their sway. The motte was a fortification which could rapidly be built (of wood) and later improved. A ditch was dug and the earth removed used to make a mound or 'motte'. On the mound, a tower (keep) was raised. On the inside lip of the ditch, a wooden palisade was erected and the enclosure or 'bailey' created was used to house both men and horses. A motte and bailey castle was a disposable item. The Normans frequently abandoned such constructions, whilst those erected at important sites were subsequently replaced by more extensive examples in stone.

There appeared to be no solution to this problem until the King of France, Lothaire, ordered Thibault to take steps to halt the Norman incursions. And so begins the saga of the De Nogent family. Rotrou I, under orders from his liege Thibault, builds a Motte and Bailey of some stature just across the border, at a small developing town called Nogent-le-Châtel<sup>2</sup>. While responsible for the maintenance of these fortifications, the Rotrou family becomes more important, and is allowed to marry into the House of Châteaudun, and will later become Viscounts. Due to the marriage of Rotrou II, to Adelaide de Bellême (probably arranged by Yves de Bellême, the Bishop of Sées), Rotrou has met Roger de Montgommery, husband of Mabel de Bellême. Roger is one of Duke William of Normandy's most trusted men, and brings Rotrou into contact with the future King of England. They are both associated with punitive expeditions into the Perche-Gouet, a part of the Perche which is far too strong to cede to invasion attempts by neighbours, from Nogent or from Bellême. This "rapprochement" also paves the way for William to approach Geoffrey III of Mortagne, in his search for mercenaries to help in his conquest of England. Thus the situation between the House of Rotrou and the Normans changed after a period of a hundred years, from extreme animosity to an association of interest. Williams strategy was very sound. The slow building up of a considerable power block to the south of his borders, by the Counts of Perche, may eventually hinder Williams plans of expansion, and so he judiciously makes peace with them, and implicates them in his glorious future.

When Edward the Confessor, King of England, dies in January, 1066, there are three claimants to the throne, including William, Duke of Normandy. Although Williams claim is by far the most tenuous, and Harold Godwinson is rapidly proclaimed king in accordance with the wishes of Edward<sup>3</sup>, William will not let the matter rest there. He amasses an enormous fleet of ships, and together with a large army of mercenaries, invades England in October 1066. And so the House of Rotrou, in the form of Geoffrey III of Mortagne, Rotrou de Nogent (future Rotrou de Montfort), and Fulke (Foulques) de Nogent (later given the sobriquet Fulke of Bellême), accompanies the troops of William the Conqueror to England, in an armada of more than 600 ships.

After the initial battles, those of the House of Rotrou who have a title and a future in France, return to their country. Fulke, and later his sons, apparently with no such future, will eke out an existence (probably quite comfortable) in England, and begin the long and famous line of the Nugents. It is probable that the family receives its future name at this time, as the descendants of Rotrou II in England are probably referred to as "De Nogent"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The best way to stop the Normans was to use mechanisms of their own invention. A fortification of the "motte/bailey" structure, placed in a strategic position in the north of the Perche, could only hinder the Normans in their sallies across the border. The fortifications of Nogent-le-Châtel, which will one day become known as Nogent-le-Rotrou, are strategically placed on high ground on a bend in the River Huisne.

Early in January, 1066, after the death of King Edward (the Confessor) who apparently had not shown a clear preference for his successor, the *Witenagemot* (assembly of wise men) declared Harold Godwinson as the new king. Harold was crowned at Westminster Abbey on January 6th, 1066.

<sup>4</sup> The fact that the name means absolutely nothing (ie. Nugent is derived from "De Nogent" - "From the New Settlement"), probably escapes the Irish, as our famous family name comes from this rather vague definition, handed down from the 11th century (Shhh ! Don't tell anybody) ! However, many family names from this time have their roots in the most unlikely beginnings.

However, the de Nogent descendants who settle in England are minor members of the family, and Fulke was rarely seen in France. Fulke and his sons and grandsons literally disappear from view. Little trace can be found of them for more than a hundred years. Several historical documents<sup>5</sup> follow the De Nogent family to their demise in France in 1226, A wealth of genealogy references can be found for the principal Irish families, and follow the De Nogent family from the moment that they arrive in Ireland in October 1171.<sup>6</sup> But after many years of research, I have found no documents relating to the De Nogent descendants in England between 1066 and 1171. We are left to ask ourselves how is it that we have the names of all the descendants, and their affiliation, and yet know absolutely nothing more.

The following chapters try to piece together the events concerning the English settlers of the De Nogent family from their arrival in England in 1066, to their departure to Ireland in 1171.

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<sup>5</sup> Well documented books by Bart de Boulais, M. O. Des Murs, Vicomte de Romanet and Kathleen Thompson are but a few of the recommended suggestions.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Burke, William Betham, John Debrett, Edmund Lodge, Mervyn Archdall, George William Collen ..... to name but a few !

## **Events leading to the Norman Conquest (911-1066)**

### **Rollo - 911 - 927**

The long road to the Norman Conquest began many years before 1066. In 911, the French King Charles II (the Simple), tired of Viking harassment on the northern and western coasts of France, decided to make peace with the Viking leader Rollo. Rollo had invaded the north of France years before, and had severely harried the French territories, sometimes sailing up the River Seine as far as Paris, reeking havoc, and laying all to waste in his path. Finally, in July of 911, the Frankish forces managed to defeat Rollo in a battle close to Chartres. Rollo was in a defensive position, and accepted the terms offered to him by Charles, at the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte. He would convert to Christianity, he would protect the northern French coasts from attack by Danish forces. Finally, he would pledge allegiance to the King of France. In return, he received a large segment of land starting at the boundary of the river Epte (a tributary of the Seine), and reaching far to the North, even covering parts of Brittany<sup>1</sup>. This land would soon become known as Normandy. However, if Charles had estimated that now Rollo and his men would settle into their new home, and become peaceful, he was mistaken. The Norsemen frequently crossed the southern boundaries, into French territory, and pillaged and ransacked everywhere they went. They were respected and feared by all, and it soon became obvious that allowing them to settle in Northern France had been an enormous error. After Charles was deposed by Robert in 922, Rollo considered that his oath to the King of France had ended, and so began a period of expansion to the West. In negotiations with French barons he was given Le Mans and Bayeux. But Rollo was not yet satisfied. In 925, the Normans attacked Picardy.

### **William I - 927 - 942 (Longsword)**

William succeeded his father Rollo, and was confronted with a revolt from within. The Normans felt that William had become a little too Gallic, and not strong enough in his support of his own people. He married Luitgarde, daughter of Count Herbert of Vermandois, and from then on became his loyal ally, even though his father had always opposed him. William pledged loyalty to Louis IV, King of France, and the lands that had been pledged to Rollo were confirmed. In 942, William was ambushed and killed by followers of Arnulf, with who he had been in conflict, while at a peace conference.

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<sup>1</sup> At first glance, this may seem a rather high price to pay, rather like ceding your back yard to the enemy. However, the unification of France was still centuries away, and giving such a large chunk of territory to the Vikings did not seem too expensive, especially when they already came and went at their leisure.

## **Richard I - 942 - 996**

Lothaire had been King of France since 954. Under the guidance of Thibault the Trickster, Count of Blois and Chartres, he agreed to attack the Normans on their own ground, and so stop the carnage that had occurred for nearly 50 years. He authorized Thibault to build an army, and to enter Normandy with the idea of stopping the Normans for ever. And so, in 963, two armies, one headed by Thibault, and the other headed by a trusted commander, Rotoldus, invaded Norman territory.

When Rotoldus (Rotrou I), commander of one of the armies of Thibault, Count of Blois and Chartres, attacked the Normans in 963, and was forced to cede the town of Bellême, he could not possibly have foreseen that his descendants would take sides with the Normans in the Conquest of England, just 100 years later. The House of Blois & Chartres and their vassals, the Viscounts of Châteaudun, were subservient to the Kings of France, and as such were continually at war with the bellicious Normans, who were directly descended from the Vikings, and whose favourite past-time appeared to be pillaging their neighbours. The Normans would storm across the border, whenever they felt like it, descend into the rich plains of l'Île de France, ransacking and burning, and then retire behind their border to the safety of their Mottes and Baileys <sup>2</sup>. There appeared to be no solution to this problem until the King of France, Lothaire, ordered Thibault to take steps to halt the Norman incursions. And so begins the saga of the De Nogent family. Rotrou, under orders from his liege Thibault, builds a Motte and Bailey of some stature just across the border, on a high plateau, at a small developing town called Nogent-le-Châtel <sup>3</sup>.

## **Richard II - 996 - 1027 (The Good)**

Richard was the eldest son of Richard I. He must be considered different from some of the Normandy Dukes. He was deeply religious, and had much in common with Robert II, King of France. He found himself at war with the English, in the form of Ethelred (the Unready, 968-1016). The Danes continually attacked the English coasts, and often

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<sup>2</sup> Motte - . Early Norman castles were of the 'motte and bailey' type. A motte (or castle-mound) is an artificial mound of earth, surrounded by a ditch and fortified by timber walls. To the Normans, a castle meant a safe haven from the hostile local population and a protected base from which they could strike at will at those who displeased them. Once an area of land was taken, a castle was built and manned, holding all within riding distance under their sway. The motte was a fortification which could rapidly be built (of wood) and later improved. A ditch was dug and the earth removed used to make a mound or 'motte'. On the mound, a tower (keep) was raised. On the inside lip of the ditch, a wooden palisade was erected and the enclosure or 'bailey' created was used to house both men and horses. A motte and bailey castle was a disposable item. The Normans frequently abandoned such constructions, whilst those erected at important sites were subsequently replaced by more extensive examples in stone.

(Geoff Boxell - Domesday & the Normanisation of England)

<sup>3</sup> Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The best way to stop the Normans was to use mechanisms of their own invention. A fortification of the "motte/bailey" structure, placed in a strategic position could only hinder the Normans in their sallies across the border.

sought haven in Normandy. The Normans, remembering their roots, were well disposed to their Danish "cousins", which explained the state of war with the English. In an effort to reduce friction between the two countries, Richard engineered the marriage of his sister Emma with Ethelred, and one of their children was Edward (the Confessor). Much later, when Edward died in 1066, these minimal blood ties with England were to give William II (the Bastard as he was known) a vague excuse to consider himself a potential King of England.

### **Richard III - 1027**

When Richard II died in 1026, his eldest son Richard became king, but suddenly died within the year. His brother Robert was suspected of foul play, but nothing was proved.

### **Robert I - 1027 - 1035 (The Magnificent)**

Robert was the second son of Richard II, and was considered to have been involved in the early demise of his brother Richard. He was much more in line with traditional Viking belligerence, and even assembled an army against his own uncle, Robert, Archbishop of Rouen and Count of Evreux, forcing him into exile. For this he was excommunicated. His cousins Edward and Alfred, sons of his aunt Emma and Athelred, King of England, were living in Normandy, and at one point, Robert actually prepared an invasion of England, on their behalf. However, he decided to postpone his invasion until his return from Jerusalem. He made his illegitimate son William, his heir, and then went on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but died on his return journey.

### **William II - 1035 - 1066 (The Conqueror)**

When William became Duke of Normandy, there were several claimants to the English throne, after the death of Edward the Confessor, including his own tenuous claim. Insisting that Edward had promised the English throne to him, and bypassing all the other claimants, William prepared an invasion of England. With many Viking and other mercenaries, William was able to muster an impressive force, and to defeat Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings, on the October 14, 1066.

### **During this period, over the southern border of Normandy, into the Perche :**

After the loss of Bellême in 963, the developing House of Rotrou was continually at war with the Bellême family, until an attempt at appeasement took place in about 1043, when Rotrou II, Rotrou's great-grandson, Viscount of Châteaudun married Adelaïde de Bellême. This marriage was probably arranged by Yves de Bellême, bishop of Sées (Adelaïde's uncle), with the object of curbing the animosity between the two families. It does not appear to have been successful, but some good finally emerged from this union. Geoffrey III de Mortagne, the son of Rotrou II, found common interests with Roger de Montgommery, his cousin by marriage to Mabel de Bellême. Because of these new

interests, the House of Rotrou eventually changed alliance and sided with William when he invaded England <sup>4</sup>

### **Outside of the borders of the Perche, into the Kingdom of France :**

The increasing power of the Normans were beginning to worry Henry I, King of France. He had already tried several times (1054 and 1057) to invade Normandy, but without success. When Edward the Confessor, King of England, died in January, 1066, there were three claimants to the throne, including William, Duke of Normandy. Although Williams claim was by far the most tenuous, and Harold Godwinson <sup>5</sup> had been proclaimed king in accordance with the wishes of Edward, William decided to take the matter in hand. As his personal army would certainly not stretch to an invasion of England, he resolved to bolster his own means for war with many mercenaries. With promises of much booty, he managed to add to his forces a large number of soldiers from far and wide. William amassed an enormous fleet of ships, and together with his army of mercenaries, invaded England in October 1066. The House of Rotrou, in the form of Geoffrey III of Mortagne, Rotrou de Nogent (future Rotrou de Montfort), and Fulke de Nogent (later given the sobriquet Fulke of Bellême), accompanies the troops of William to England, in an armada of more than 600 ships. Roger de Montgommery <sup>6</sup>, contrary to some stories, who provided a substantial part of the invading fleet, did not in fact accompany the invading army, but was entrusted the control of Normandy by William.

The dice have been thrown. An invasion of England by the Normans, envisaged for some time by several Dukes of Normandy, will finally be successful. The future of England and France will be intricately entwined for many generations. The de Nogent family, although they do not know it, will choose England as a stepping-stone towards their future home in Ireland, more than 100 years later.

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<sup>4</sup> Both sides gained enormously from the alliance. Geoffrey, apart from the possibility of gain in the Conquest, stabilised his northern border, allowing him to concentrate on other ventures. William made a powerful ally south of his border, and, with the help of more mercenaries, increased his chances of success in England.

<sup>5</sup> Harold is the closest of the claimants to the City of London, and makes a hasty dash there to be crowned King, before the others have time to react. William completely ignored this event, and promptly invaded England.

<sup>6</sup> Roger de Montgommery was already an extremely powerful man in his native Normandy and had been a close friend of William since William was a teenager, as he was his cousin. He was present at the Council of Lillebonne in 1066, and agreed to contribute 60 ships to aid the invasion plans of England. He returned with William from Normandy in 1067 and he was summoned to attend Christmas at Gloucester with the king where he was awarded his honours as one of William's most trusted men. It was after King William had held his Christmas Court at Gloucester and awarded Montgomery the Earldom, that he ordered him to build a castle on the Arun to protect the inland reaches.

## De Nogent Participation in the Conquest

The Norman Conquest was successful. William, Duke of Normandy (previously known as the Bastard, but now known as "the Conqueror") has, with the help of many mercenaries from France, Flanders and even Germany, conquered England and has begun a dynasty which is to last for several hundred years. The French and English cultures, families, destinies, will inevitably become intricately entwined. The upper classes and nobles speak French, and the French culture reaches far into the depths of British society. Williams policy of laying to waste all parts of England which questioned his authority is little remembered. *"With grim determination, William's army set about destroying homes and crops, and extinguishing all human and animal life from the Humber to the Wash. Those that avoided violent death, died from exposure or starvation."*<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 20 years later, in 1085, William, anxious to know everything about the lands in England, who occupied them, their value, and all other details, even down to the numbers of livestock, ordered a compilation of all such facts. and the result of this compilation, known as the Domesday book completed in 1086 shows no "rewards" to the De Nogent family for their help in the Conquest. The references by Orderic Vitalis of rich rewards given to Geoffrey III, are thus not visible in this Domesday Book. There is a reference to Geoffrey III de Mortagne, the most important of the three brothers who appear to have assisted William in his venture, but it is believed that Geoffrey spent little time in England, returning to France at the first opportunity, and probably carrying his rewards with him. This would explain why no reference to Geoffrey can be found in the Domesday Book, compiled nearly twenty years after the invasion in 1066. However, the presence of Geoffrey and his brothers at the Battle of Hastings cannot be contested. It is highly probable that Geoffrey was paid in booty confiscated from the English nobles. No lands are shown as being attributed to any of the brothers, as a direct result of their aide given during the Conquest, although we must add, in all fairness, that the Domesday Book is in no way complete. London, Winchester, Northumberland, and Durham are not included in the survey, and unfortunately for us, the descendants of Fulke [*de Nogent*] were reputed to have settled in Winchester. It is also possible that they settled in some of the more unsure<sup>2</sup> parts, such as Wales, or the North-East. However, much later, from the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century for more than a hundred years, the Counts of Perche were to hold visible estates in England<sup>3</sup>, but these estates came as the result of marriages to wealthy brides.

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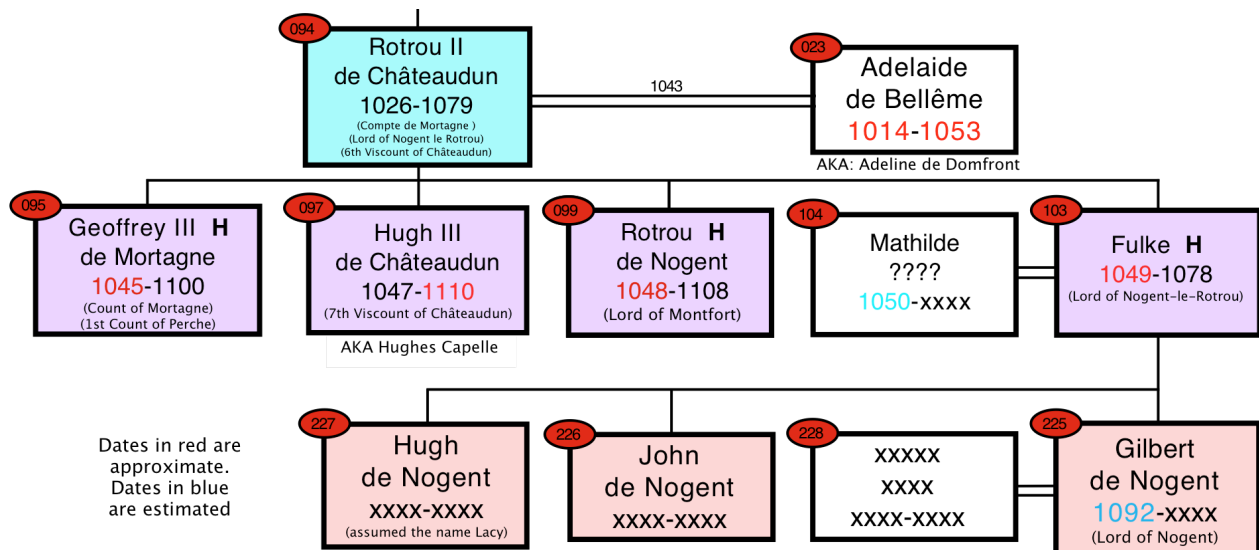
<sup>1</sup> The Effects of the Norman Conquest - Conquest and Resistance - England 1066 to 1088 (Geoff Boxell)

<sup>2</sup> The Conquest was not complete for many years, Wales and the North of England proved to be rather tough nuts to crack. William deliberately placed his most trusted men in the areas that were the most difficult to overcome. However, the rewards for succeeding in their task were commensurate with the difficulties.

<sup>3</sup> "Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France" Chapter 7 (P.164) - The Rotrou Counts and England, 1100-1226. (Kathleen Thompson)



What then do we know about the members of the De Nogent family who went to England with William ?



*In the above diagram, the descendants of Geoffrey and Hugh are not shown, as we endeavour to follow the branch of the family who will eventually go to Ireland.*

Rotrou II had at least four sons, and we can surmise that any others could be illegitimate (or maybe that there were not enough titles to hand out). Two of his sons Geoffrey and Hugh, born to his wife Adelaide de Bellême, were given titles, Geoffrey will become Count of Mortagne, and Hugh will become Viscount of Châteaudun, on the death of their father in 1079. At first, it may appear that title Viscount of Châteaudun is the most important, which would make Hugh the first born, but in fact, the title of Count of Mortagne (once the Corbonnais), has associations with the Perche which cannot be denied. Geoffrey is thus promised the title of Count of Mortagne. Possibly, then, Geoffrey is the first-born ! It is impossible to say more, except that the birth dates of all the sons are not known with precision. Which of the sons is the eldest, which are born to the mother Adelaide, why do Rotrou and Fulke (not counting the others) receive no part of the family heritage ? Let us start our analysis with Geoffrey III, also known as Geoffrey de Mortagne.

### Geoffrey III de Mortagne (1045-1100)

Born about 1045, Geoffrey seems to be the first born of the marriage between his father Rotrou II and Adelaide de Bellême. He was certainly very young when he accompanied his brothers to England, probably near to twenty. He returned to France in great triumph soon after the major battle at Hastings. Leaving William in England, he returned to the Perche, where, crowds lined the route to Nogent to rejoice in the success. Around the time of his return from England, after the Battle of Hastings, he marries Béatrice de Mondidier de Roucy, daughter of Hildouin II, Count of Roucy, whose families lands lie more than 250 km. to the North-East. This is indeed proof of the expanding influence of the De Nogent family, as previous marriages have always been within or close to the

Perche. He will eventually become Count of Mortagne (the most important title), upon the death of his father in 1079. Orderic Vitalis <sup>4</sup> describes him thus :

*"This Count," he tells us, "was magnanimous, handsome, and strong; he feared God, was a devout friend of the Church, a staunch protector of her clergy and the poor. In peace he was gentle and courteous, and of most obliging manners; in war he was powerful and successful, and became formidable to the neighbouring princes who were his enemies. The nobility of his own birth and that of his wife Beatrice [de Montdidier de Roucy] rendered him illustrious above all his compeers, and he had amongst his subjects, warlike barons and brave governors of castles. He gave his daughters in marriage to men of the rank of counts : Mathilde to Raymond de Turenne [Diana Spencer descends from this line of the de Nogent family], Margaret to Henry, Earl of Warwick, and Juliana to Gilbert de l'Aigle, from whom sprung a noble race of handsome children. The glory of Count Geofirey was exalted by such a progeny, and he maintained it by his valour and courage, his wealth, and alliances. Above all, having the fear of God, he feared no man, but marched boldly with a lion's port. Laying claim to the strong Castle of Domfront, which had belonged to his great-grandfather, Warin de Bellême <sup>5</sup>, and other domains as his right, he endeavoured to dispossess his cousin Robert (de Bellême) of them. "*

Geoffrey is cited by many historians, including Orderic Vitalis, as having been rewarded by William with land, after the Conquest of England. However, the Domesday book, terminated in 1086, contains absolutely no reference of such donations, unless of course, they were disposed of by Geoffrey before the writing of the book. In about 1090, Geoffrey, as a result of his successes (his status, his successful marriage, and his military prowess), begins to style himself as Count of Perche. He dies late in 1100, after wisely putting his affairs in order, and ensuring that his son Rotrou III can safely return to his titles and his land, at the end of the current crusade.

*During these troubled times, there appeared to be no rules, and no principles. Even close relations, brothers, cousins, etc. laid their covetous eyes on the lands and titles when the true holder was away. The only limitations to this situation were during a crusade. No land and titles could be appropriated when the "lord" was away on a crusade. It was considered "not done". Apart from this rule, it would appear that there were no holds barred.*

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<sup>4</sup> Orderic Vitalis (1075-1142), an English monk who devoted his life to assembling information concerning the lives of the Normans in Europe (Historia Ecclesiastica - 13 volumes). He was sent to Normandy in 1085, probably by Roger de Montgomery (the Earl of Shrewsbury), and spent the rest of his life there.

<sup>5</sup> Yves de Bellême was certainly his great-grandfather by marriage, but not by parentage. This explains the multitude of references that the Rotrou family were descended from Yves de Bellême, stemming probably from a single source. All of the reputable French Internet sites refer to Rotrou, first seen in 963, as being the earliest known of the male line of the House of Rotrou. Some people don't look further than the end of their nose !

## **Hugh de Châteaudun (1047-1110)**

Here, we will ignore Hugh de Châteaudun, as he had no part in the Norman Conquest, and did not form part of the branch of the family that settled in England. However, as Viscount of Châteaudun, his story is told in Chapter 10.

## **Rotrou de Nogent (1048-1108)**

Rotrou de Nogent seems to have accompanied his brother Geoffrey to England, but we have little proof of this. However, there are references to him "returning from England" after the first successes of the invasion. He probably returned to France with his brother Geoffrey, bathed in an aura of respectability and glory. The De Nogent family are on the road to national and international fame. We know no more about him for about 20 years. Around the year 1090, Geoffrey's daughters will marry into important families, and Rotrou will marry the heiress of Montfort, Lucie de Gennes, daughter of Hughes de Montfort and Agnès de Gennes. The town of Montfort will soon become known as Montfort-le-Rotrou. Four more generations of sons, all called Rotrou will carry the family up to the end of the 13th century, when an only daughter, Jeanne de Montfort will marry into the De Parthenay family. *Diana Spencer and Winston Churchill descend from this line of the de Nogent family.*

## **Fulke (Foulke) de Nogent (1049-1078)**

Unfortunately, the member of the De Nogent family who is the most important to us (as he began the branch who settled in England), is shrouded in mystery. Here again we have no proof that he participated in the battles of the Norman Conquest, and if he did, he must have been little more than 16 years old. We do know that his sons settled in England, but we do not know under which circumstances. We have names of his descendants, and we have information that they went to Ireland and became Counts of Delvin, and the like, but of their history in England, between 1066 and 1171, we have absolutely nothing. I have found a doubtful reference to Fulke having married Mathilda de l'Aigle<sup>6</sup>, but this information is without a doubt false, as Fulke was born around 1049, and Mathilda de l'Aigle, referred to as the daughter of Gilbert de l'Aigle, seems to have been born around 1100, at least a generation out of sync ! There are far too many unsupported hypotheses in some of the Internet sites to take them on face value. However, we do have references to Fulke as having married an unknown "Mathilde".

We are left to question what little information we possess about the De Nogents who settled in England. Whether the Sir William Betham document "Pedigree of the Nugent Family", made to order by the future wife of Lavallin Nugent (Countess [Riario Sforza](#)), provides a source for our information is unknown, as I have not read the document. The document "A Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family"<sup>7</sup> contains totally unsupported data, and it is likely that all other references to this period are based upon this sketch. It may

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<sup>6</sup> Seems totally unfounded.

be recorded as a strange coincidence that both of these documents were apparently produced in 1853. Are they one and the same document ?

However, we may, with a smile, and little malice aforethought, shoot down <sup>8</sup> all documents which quote "... descended .... from the great Norman Baron Yvas de Belleme" .... and which refer to the many towns of Nogent, without specifying that the Nugent family stemmed uniquely from Nogent-le-Rotrou. Several documents insist that the family is of Norman descent, including the document by Marian Keaney, which is unfortunately only one of the many documents that we meet when searching "the Nugent family" on the Internet.

Fulke is sometimes referred to as being Lord of Nogent, but has also been quoted as "de Bellême" <sup>9</sup>. It is known that he spent time in England and in France, and that he had at least three sons, Gilbert, John and Hugh <sup>10</sup>. He probably spent some years ferrying from England to France and back, as was done by a multitude of nobles at that time. However, it is not known whether he settled in England or not. His last known appearance in public which was recorded, was in a donation made by his father, in the Perche, in January 1078. He probably lived a relatively comfortable life until his death, living off the "fat of the land" in England, and the reputation of his family. As we have seen above, the Domesday Book makes no reference to the De Nogent awards in England, possibly because they do not include Winchester in their survey, where the De Nogent descendants are recorded as having settled, or simply because these descendants did not merit a reference.

## **Long-Term repercussions of De Nogent participation in the Conquest**

It is likely that the De Nogent participants to the Conquest came into contact with the De Lacy family, during their time in England. Walter de Lacy and his brother Ilbert <sup>11</sup> were richly rewarded for their support to William, and settled in England. The descendants of the De Nogent family will eventually go to Ireland with Hugh de Lacy <sup>12</sup> and in their turn, receive rich rewards for their participation in this expedition.

As we can see, the members of the family spent time both in England and in France, frequently returning to their "other country" as they saw fit. Certain descendants of the family were born in England, although they appear to have been given names purporting

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to the Chapter "Bellême or not Bellême" in Section 1 of our documents.

<sup>9</sup> There is absolutely no reason for this sobriquet, as Bellême was not destined to return to the Rotrou Family for many years.

<sup>10</sup> We have absolutely no proof in any source, about these sons. It is nevertheless interesting to note the shift in the Christian names at this time. Richards and Gilberts will be often seen in the descendants of Fulke, certainly due to English influence. The names of Hugh and Fulke continue to be used for several generations, before they too, fall into abeyance.

<sup>11</sup> The Conqueror and His Companions - (J.R. Planché, 1874) - Walter De Lacy - "... we find his son and successor, Roger, in possession of ninety-six lordships, sixty-five of which were in Gloucestershire, besides four carucates of land lying within the limits of the Castle of Civia, which King William had bestowed on his father".

<sup>12</sup> The association between the two families appears to be very close, as Gilbert de Nogent, the 1st Baron of Delvin (so nominated by Hugh de Lacy), married Hughs sister, Rosea (no descendants).

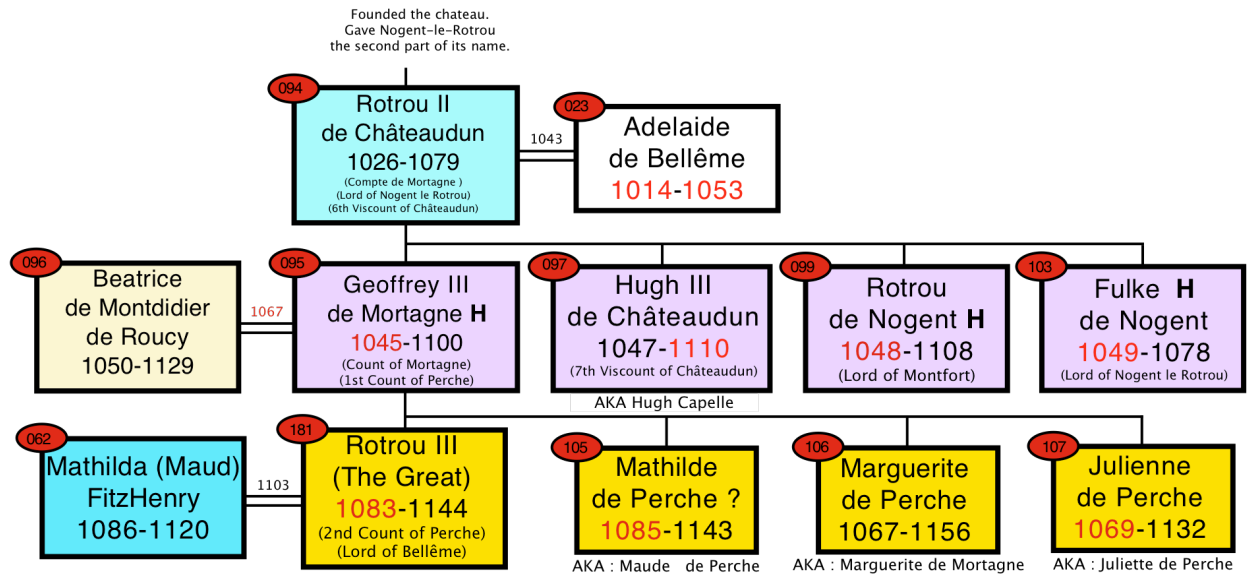
to French domains. Although the Domesday book (1086) only shows a minor reference to Geoffrey III de Mortagne (the first self-declared Count of Perche) as having possessions in England, we know that the family only held such possessions much later, and had more and more difficulty holding on to them, as time went by. Some of the major members of the family (for example Rotrou III the Great), were born in England. Several generations of De Nogents remained in England, probably living in minor luxury, as they benefitted from rewards from the new King of England (William) and later from his son (Henry I - Beauclerc). We have a finite trace of the lands in England held by the Counts of Perche (and family) over a period between 1100 and 1220, but these were not directly associated with the Conquest of England. However, the Rotrou Family now had an international "footprint", and benefits from English interests were the result of future marriages. The bond between the Kings of England and the Counts of Perche strengthened considerably over this period of 100 years years, partly due to the De Nogent participation in several Crusades, and of course because of the marriage of the Kings' daughter to Rotrou III. When Henry I, King of England, dies in Lyons-la-Forêt, in December, 1135, Rotrou III, his faithful vassal and close friend, is by his side <sup>13</sup>.

However, as we have seen, the early years of the other De Nogent descendants in England, are shrouded in mystery, and there is little chance that this veil be lifted.

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<sup>13</sup> "Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France" - Introduction (P.1), (Kathleen Thompson)

## Geoffrey III de Mortagne



It may seem surprising to find the story of Geoffrey III de Mortagne here. Geoffrey has already been covered in the section "Viscounts and Counts" in Book 1. And yet Geoffrey represents what we may consider as a water-shed for the Rotrou Family, certainly as a result of the successful campaign with William the Conqueror. The family widens its horizons, and the children of Geoffrey move into a new dimension of importance. They establish and consolidate links far from the home of Nogent-le-Rotrou. Rotrou III (the Great) will marry into royalty of England. The daughters Mathilde, Marguerite and Maud, marry far afield from their family base. Perhaps the most important is represented by the marriage of Maud de Perche into the de Lacy Family. This may herald a close connection into relations which will invite the future De Nogent sons to accompany Hugh de Lacy to Ireland in 1171.

Rotrou II and Adelaide (Adeliza) de Bellême had at least 4 sons, Geoffrey III de Mortagne (1045-1100) who inherits the title of Lord of Mortagne, Hugh III de Châteaudun (1047-1110), who becomes Viscount, Rotrou (1049-1108), who would later become Rotrou de Montfort, and Fulquois who will be the root of the De Nogent descendants in England. Rotrou is also known for having had one other son and a daughter, who may have been illegitimate <sup>1</sup>. Before the marriage of Rotrou to Adelaide, the two families were sworn enemies, and had been for many years. The tide changes somewhat at this moment, as Geoffrey obviously meets Roger de Montgomery, his cousin by marriage, They may not have become close friends, but Roger certainly opened the communication path between the Rotrou family and the Dukes of Normandy.

<sup>1</sup> As Adelaide probably died about 1053, it is likely that these children were born to an unknown woman.

It is obviously because of this link, that the Rotrou family eventually aligns with the Normans, a judicious decision, as it heralds the intense development of the House of Rotrou.

Geoffrey III accompanies William "the Bastard" (Duke of Normandy) on his conquest of England in 1066. No precise information is available about what happened in England concerning the Rotrou family, after the Conquest, but we can build a reasonable picture.

Orderic Vitalis notes <sup>2</sup>: "Interfuerunt huic praelio.....Goisfredus Rotronis Moritoniae comitis filius .... "

*"Among those who took part in the battle were .... Geoffrey, Son of Rotrou, Count of Mortagne"*

and : "Quoque ..... Goisfredus, Rotronis filius Mauritanienensis aliique comites et optimates quos singillatim nominare nequeo magnos redditus et honores in Anglia receperunt a rege Guillelmo"

*"Likewise .... Geoffrey, son of Rotrou of Mortagne and other earls and magnates too numerous to name received great revenues and fiefs in England from King William."*

Other authors have examined the history of this period. **L. Joseph Fret**, in his works "*Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes*", Volume 1, 2 and 3, gives a comprehensive account of the Rotrou Dynasty, as seen in the 19th Century. He quotes Bry de Clergerie and Rene Courtin <sup>3</sup> in his accounts, while giving his own viewpoint of the development of the Rotrou Dynasty, the beginnings of which are still clouded in uncertainty.

*"Rotrou II (1026-1079), upon his death, leaves the Count of Perche <sup>4</sup>, Geoffrey, his eldest son; Hughes, his second born, who becomes Viscount of Châteaudun; Rotrou, the third son, who will become Lord of Montfort. The documents of this time tell us little of Fulquois, his fourth son <sup>5</sup>, his daughter Helvise. As for his wife, she apparently died before her husband, as she is absent in the Charter of Saint-Denis, where she would obviously have been mentioned, as was the custom of this period. We are without any*

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<sup>2</sup> The Ecclesiastical History of Oderic Vitalis, ISBN 0-19-822204-1 - Volume 1 - Editors Note :*" Orderic here deals with a group of men who were already members of comital families before the Conquest. If Geoffrey, son of Rotrou of Mortagne, Count of Perche, who had fought at Hastings, acquired any lands in England, he had apparently abandoned or exchanged them by 1086, for he was not a tenant-in-chief in the Domesday Book ....."*

<sup>3</sup> Bry de Clergerie is known to have plagiarized the book by Rene Courtin, while favouring the association of the Rotrou Dynasty to that of the Bellême Family, that Vicomte de Romanet shows to be ridiculous.

<sup>4</sup> The attribution of the title of Count of Perche was much exaggerated. At any time during this period, the domains covered by the title "Count of Perche" never covered more than one half of the Perche territory.

<sup>5</sup> Rather inconvenient for us, as Fulquois was the root of the Nugent family in England and Ireland.

*information concerning Rotrou's wife, who is never mentioned in any document of this time. Odolent-Desnos informs us only that her name was Adeline* <sup>6</sup>.

Geoffrey helped William with money and troops, and apparently did go to England for a short time. He was present at the battle of Hastings. However, it is likely that he returned to his titles and his lands in France soon after the crowning ceremony of William in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066. Geoffrey's brothers Rotrou and Fulquois are also reputed to have participated in the conquest, but no trace is mentioned in documents of this period. However, at a later date, Fulquois's sons apparently settled in Winchester. It must be remembered that the Norman Conquest did not subdue the whole of England and Wales overnight. It took until about 1076 to finalize the Conquest. Geoffrey supposedly was richly rewarded by William, however, no traces of land were apparent in the Domesday book (1086), compiled under orders of William, and the most complete record of wealth attribution ever to be made in England. It is probable that Geoffrey was paid in booty from the early part of the Conquest in Southern England during 1066-1067. The Rotrou family at that period apparently had easy access to liquid cash, and this probably came from tolls on the roads through Nogent-le-Rotrou and also the rewards from the Conquest. It is true also that the Domesday Book was not complete, lacking data from London, Winchester, Northumberland and Durham.

Orderic Vitalis is glowing in his praise for Geoffrey. "*This Count,*" he tells us, "*was magnanimous, handsome, and strong; he feared God, was a devout friend of the Church, a staunch protector of her clergy and the poor. In peace he was gentle and courteous, and of most obliging manners; in war he was powerful and successful, and became formidable to the neighbouring princes who were his enemies. The nobility of his own birth and that of his wife Beatrice rendered him illustrious above all his compeers, and he had amongst his subjects warlike barons and brave governors of castles. He gave his daughters in marriage to men of the rank of counts: Margaret to Henry, Earl of Warwick, and Juliana to Gilbert de l'Aigle, from whom sprung a noble race of handsome children. The glory of Count Geofirey was exalted by such a progeny, and he maintained it by his valour and courage, his wealth, and alliances. Above all, having the fear of God, he feared no man* <sup>7</sup>....."

Geoffrey married Béatrice de Montdidier de Roucy in about 1067 and had three daughters (all of who married into senior noble families) and a son, Rotrou III (1083-1144) who married Mathilda, the daughter of Henry I, King of England. This was undoubtedly a belated "Thank You" for services rendered to Henry's father, William the Conqueror. This marriage heralds the success of the Rotrou descendancy, and from this moment, the family has estates in England AND France, and maintains them until the early 13th century. Rotrou III becomes a true Count of Perche, and Lord of Bellême, and his sisters Mathilde, Marguerite and Julienne marry into fame and fortune, and their

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<sup>6</sup> Fret appears to be unaware that this Adeline was Adeline de Bellême, daughter of Guérin de Domfront.

<sup>7</sup> The Conqueror and his Companions - James Robinson Planche - Geoffrey, Son of Rotrou - Page 262



children marry into Spanish and Sicilian royalty. Rotrou III becomes a "confident" and counsellor to Henry I, and is present at Henry's bedside when he dies in November 1135. The title **Lord of Mortagne** is absorbed into the title **Count of Perche**, which title is passed on to the descendants, who will finally forfeit title and lands to the King of France, when the male line of the Rotrou dynasty is extinguished in 1226.

Geoffrey died in 1100, but had time to settle his affairs, and to prepare the way for his son Rotrou, who had taken up the cross, and at this time was in the Holy Land. Rotrou returned from Jerusalem a short time later, "and found his inheritance intact and waiting for him, under the watchful eye of his mother" <sup>8</sup>. Geoffrey was buried in the church of the monastery of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, founded in 1030 by his grandfather, Geoffrey II, and which he richly endowed with lands and other possessions.

Geoffrey had two brothers who seem to have accompanied him to England on the Conquest. One of them, Rotrou de Nogent (1047-1108) apparently returned to France quite soon after the Conquest, and eventually married Lucie de Gennes (1065-xxxx), heiress of Monfort-le-Rotrou, becoming Lord of Monfort. Descendants of the Montfort branch of the Rotrou family married into the De Parthenay family, ancestors of P.M. Winston Churchill and Lady Diana Spencer. Undoubtedly, Rotrou, although now belonging to a wealthy and powerful family, but having no titles of his own, had become rich enough to marry into a family which brought him a title.

Geoffreys second brother was Fulquois, of which we know little. He too is perported to have accompanied his brothers to England. We do not know if he settled in England or not, but his sons apparently did. We have no record of his marriage to a certain Mathilde, but he apparently had three sons, Gilbert, John and Hugh <sup>9</sup>, who appeared to have lived in England, although Fulquois was last seen, as a witness in an official document, in France in 1078. Of John, we have no information, Hugh has been quoted as marrying Emma de Lacy, daughter of Walter de Lacy (1036-1085), but this is probably untrue. Gilbert has three sons, Richard, Gilbert and Fulquois <sup>10</sup>.

Richard, Gilbert and a cousin Hugh accompany Hugh de Lacy to Ireland with Henry II, in 1171, as mercenaries <sup>11</sup>. Hugh de Lacy, as Viceroy to King Henry, and with power to act

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<sup>8</sup> Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - The County of the Perche 1000-1226 - Kathleen Thompson - Chapter 2 - The Perche in the making - Page 52.

<sup>9</sup> We note that the Christian names of the sons have strong English connotations.

<sup>10</sup> This generation of the English descendants of the De Nogent family raises uncertainty and confusion. We have two possibilities of the descent of the family to Sir William Nugent (xxx-1415), 9th Baron of Delvin.

<sup>11</sup> Let us not forget that the Rotrou family carved their future as courageous soldiers and administrators with a sound business acumen. Generations of the family were mercenaries on several occasions, looking for financial rewards. Life in England may not have been satisfactory to these De Nogent descendants. Adventure in Ireland may have been a solution. Results show that the adventure was to become a new life.

as would his liege, rewards his followers by appointing them Barons over confiscated Irish lands.

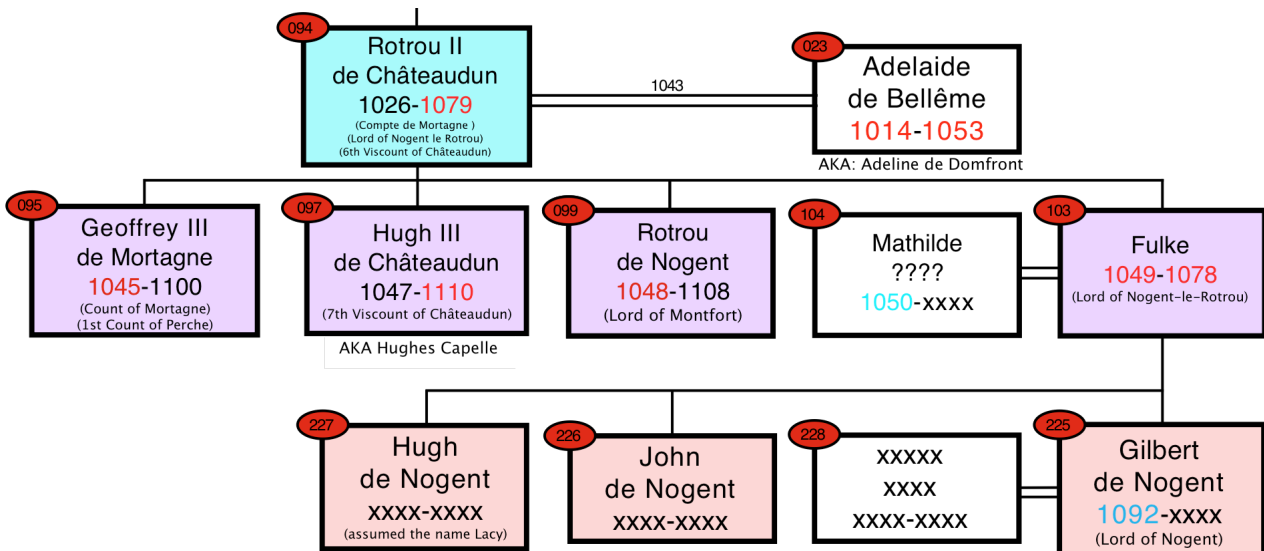
Gilbert, first Baron of Delvin, dies leaving no descent. His brother Richard becomes the second Baron of Delvin. Although the family will lose titles and lands through the marriage of Richards only child, a daughter, to the Tuite family, fate will play a hand in the future to reenstate the Nugent family to their rightful place.

Ireland has become their home.

The De Nogent family will find fortune and a new future in this country.

## The Enigma of Fulke de Bellême

Of all the Rotrou descendants, none are more clouded in mystery than Fulke de Bellême. This is rather unfortunate, as he was the De Nogent (Nugent) ancestor who settled in England, and his descendants ventured to Ireland a century later and established the Nugent family in their new home.



In this document, we will attempt to bring Fulke out of the darkness of the 11th century, where he was practically unknown, and to establish him in his rightful place, as an essential element of the Rotrou family, and more specifically, the forebear of the English (and then the Irish) De Nogents.

His sons may have settled in Winchester - England (according to unconfirmed sources).

There are many questions to be answered to try and elucidate this mystery :

- 1 - Who did Rotrou II marry, when did he marry, and who were his children ?
- 2 - Was Fulke illegitimate ?
- 3 - Why is he sometimes named "Fulke de Bellême" ?
- 4 - Who did he marry ?
- 5 - What proven (dated) traces do we have of Fulke, during his life ?
- 6 - Did he settle in England, and if so, where ?
- 7 - Can we give some valid dates of Birth/Death for Rotrou II's children ?
- 8 - Do we have valid information concerning Fulke's children ?
- 9 - Where did his children settle ?
- 10 - What do we know about the life of Fulke's descendants in England (1066-1171) ?

To many of these questions, we have no answers, proof that the brother of Geoffrey III de Mortagne, who was named Fulke, was not an important member of the family, was left with no heritage by his father Rotrou II, and probably found that he was more welcome in England, than in his native country. We know that Rotrou II married Adelaide de Bellême,

but we do not know if all the children were hers. Fulke was born, certainly in Nogent-le-Rotrou, about 1049, and his last known appearance was in France in 1078, as a witness to a donation by the family. Little is known about Fulke and his brother Guérin, and we could hazard a guess that they were illegitimate. However, Fulke was certainly born before the death of his mother, around 1053, and was moreover cited in a charter by his father, which would seem to show that he was not. The same cannot be said about several siblings (Guerin, Jeremie and Robert, and a sister, Helvise) born at unknown dates, and about who we know nothing at all. Although it is likely that Fulke accompanied his brothers Geoffrey and Rotrou to England at the time of the Conquest, we are not sure whether they actually participated. Fulke seems to have settled in England after the Conquest, but may have basked in the aura of his brothers' triumph. We know that he returned to France occasionally, because he has been cited as a witness in certain cartulary documents, the last of which was 1078. We can only estimate the area that he settled, by noting that the Domesday Book, finished by 1086, makes absolutely no mention of the members of the House of Rotrou. Even the senior member, Geoffrey III of Mortagne, although referenced as participant at least at the battle of Hastings, is cited nowhere in the Domesday Book, proof that either he was paid in cash for his association in the Norman Conquest, or that he liquidated any interests in England before 1086, the date at which the Domesday Book was completed.

We do know however that it was standard practice by the French nobles, to take frequent trips from England to France and back to England. Some of them who had benefitted enormously from their participation in the Conquest, were confronted with the same problem, holding on tightly to their domains in England and France, at the same time. It was necessary to make a trip to the "other side of the Channel", to ensure that there was no danger of forfeiture, or attacks from bellicious neighbours. In a future document, we will describe the catastrophe that occurred when a ship containing 350 people of the highest English and French nobility foundered off the coast of Barfleur, with all lives lost, including the future King of England<sup>1</sup>.

We have no proof of where Fulke settled in England, and where his sons were brought up. A suggested reference to Winchester is possible<sup>2</sup>, as Winchester and London were conspicuously absent from the Domesday Book, finished in 1086. We also have no information concerning Fulke's wife (however, we have vague references stating that she was called Mathilde<sup>3</sup>), and no dates of birth/death of his sons, for it is likely that his branch of the family was considered of no consequence. We do not know who compiled the document concerning the descent of the House of Rotrou in England. It may have been William Betham, who compiled a Family Tree for the future husband of Giovanna Riario Sforza, Laval Nugent, as a wedding present (in fact it was probably to check that she was really marrying into nobility). It may also have been compiled by John Burke, whose editions of "Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland" have become recognized references in the Genealogy world. A document entitled "A Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family", published in 1853, gives no indication of the author, and contains no footnotes citing information origins<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sinking of the White Ship - November 20, 1120.

<sup>2</sup> I found such a reference, but it has since been buried under the mountain of documentation that I have amassed. It may surface at some later date !

<sup>3</sup> I have seen a reference suggesting that Fulke's wife was Mathilda de l'Aigle, daughter of Gilbert de l'Aigle, but I find this highly unlikely (generation gap).

<sup>4</sup> The document begins with an absolute falsehood, and is obviously the initial source of an idea bandied about on the Internet with no proof whatsoever. This discussion is expanded in detail in the Chapter "Bellême or not Bellême" of Section 1.

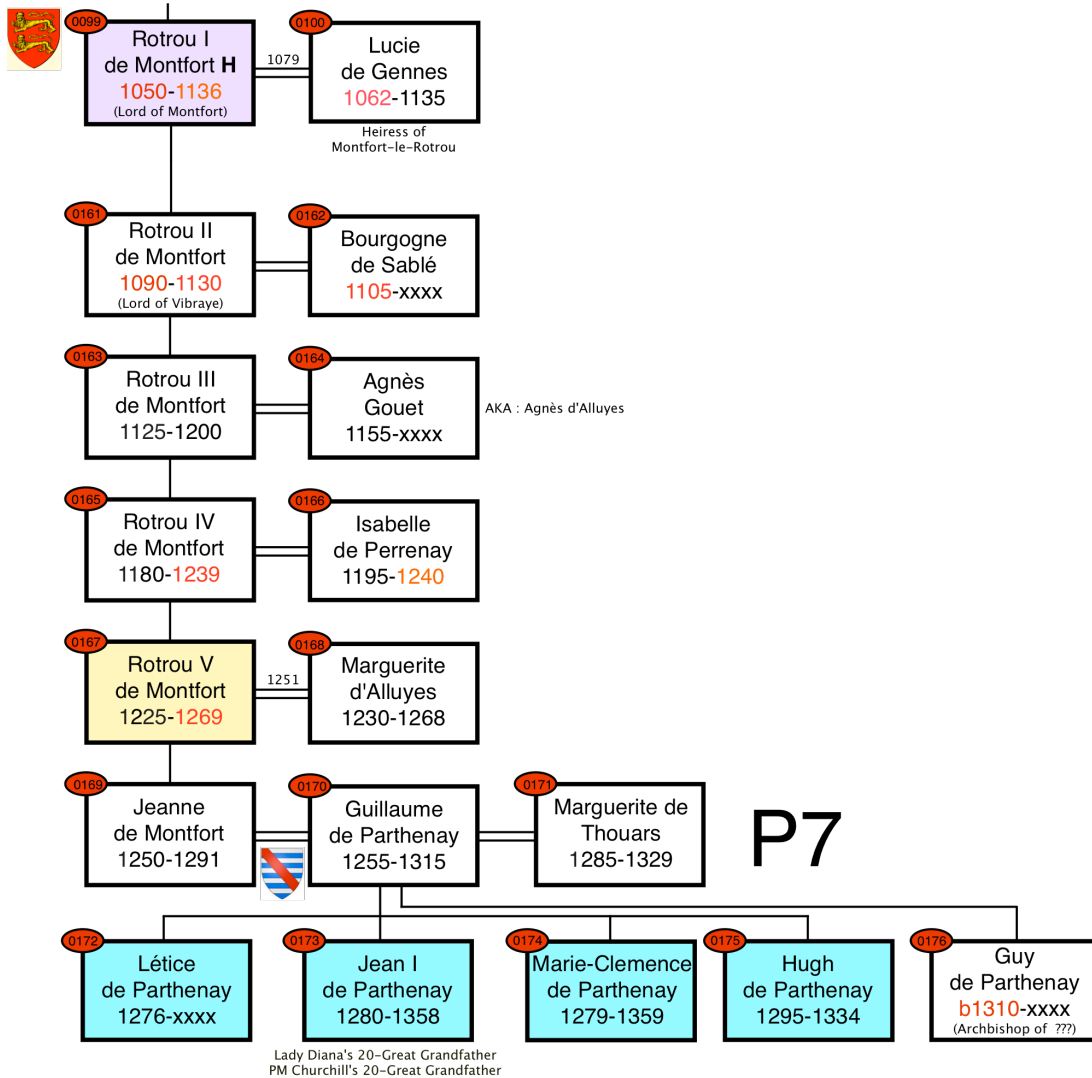
In short, we know very little about Fulke and his sons, and the information we have comes from unsupported sources. This period in the history of the House of Rotrou is most definitely the weakest link in the genealogy of the family.

Fulke must have been little more than 16 if and when he joined his brothers in the Norman Conquest. However no document provides proof of his participation in any part of the conquest of England. The same is true for his brother Rotrou. We know however, that Rotrou was in England at this time, and that he returned to France and much later married into the Monfort family (Lucie de Gennes), creating a descent of five generations of Rotrou de Monforts. Fulke appears to have spent a larger part of his adult life in England, returning to France occasionally for family reasons. He had three sons, Hugh, John and Gilbert, names which were a complete break from family tradition, and certainly influenced by his life in England. Of his sons, absolutely nothing is known, either of their dates of birth (estimated however in the 1080's), their location in England, the names of their wives, and information concerning their children, except their names). We have no indication that any of them returned to France at any time, although Fulkes first son, Hugh, has been referenced as "Lord of Nogent". We must be suspicious concerning this lack of information.

Fulkes last appearance was in France in 1078, as a witness to one of his fathers donations. He has been referenced first as Fulke de Nogent, and later as Fulke de Bellême, but there appears to be no reason for this second sobriquet, as the House of Bellême, and the town of Bellême were still under the control of the descendants of the Talvas family. The date and place of Fulkes death is unknown.

In conclusion, the whole hundred year period after 1066, concerning the Rotrou descendants in England remains a complete mystery. We may even be tempted to question what little information we have, as it is supported by no evidence, cartulary or otherwise. Fulke will forever remain an unknown, albeit essential element of the De Nogent family.

## The House of MONTFORT-LE-ROTROU



It may seem strange to note that the five generations of the Montfort de Rotrou family have left a very indistinct footprint on history. Rotrou, son of Rotrou de Châteaudun, whose descendants were soon to be known as "de Montfort", would marry Lucie de Gennes in 1079, who was from the Montfort family. His brother was Geoffrey II de Châteaudun, Viscount in a family descent which was beginning to leave an indelible mark on the history of their time. The descendants of the Montfort family led into the famous Parthenay family, and hence to Winston Churchill, Diana Spencer, and a future King of England. And yet we know little of the five generations of the Montfort descendants, sitting in the middle of such illustrious connections, all with sons named Rotrou, and whose birth and death dates are vague, and whose lives are so uneventful.

The Lords of Montfort were relatively unknown before Rotrou, son of Rotrou II, Lord of Mortagne and of Nogent-le-Rotrou, took this name, and whose descendants built the family château, towards the last quarter of the 12th Century. In 1093, on about the 16th of November, .....*the first Lord of Montfort* ..... Rotrou de Montfort (1048-1108), together with several other lords of the provinces, assists Count Hélie de Montfort, at the ceremony of transfer of the relics of St. Julien, into the cathedral, whose construction had just been terminated by Bishop Hoel. In about the year 1164, Rotrou (III), Lord of Montfort, of Malestabe (Bonnétable), and Vibraye, founded the Abbey of Gué-de-l'Aune, close to the latter locality. A Leprosarium existed at Montfort, whose origin can be found before the 13th Century, to which Rotrou (IV ?), Lord of Montfort, allocated a "dime" <sup>1</sup> of wine and wheat, that he imposed on the fief of La Bruyère. This is about as much as we can glean about the early Lords of Montfort.

### **Generation 1 - Rotrou I de Montfort (1050-1136) - marries Lucie de Gennes**

Rotrou de Nogent was probably the third son of Rotrou I (6th Viscount of Châteaudun and Count of Mortagne). Whenever he was born, there was nothing left for him, as the titles and lands of his fathers domains had already been scheduled for his two elder brothers. He was certainly not much more than 16 when he is said to have accompanied his brothers Geoffrey and Fulke to England with the armies of William, soon to be the Conqueror. If he did form part of the army of mercenaries who invaded England with William, he apparently returned to France rapidly, after the battle of Hastings, certainly richer, both financially and socially. Nevertheless, he had to wait some years before he married Lucie de Gennes, and became head of the Montfort domains.

We know nothing more about him until some time between 1080 and 1090. At this period, the House of Rotrou was becoming strategically more important. Geoffrey de Mortagne, Rotrou's brother, succeeds his father in 1079, and takes a firm grip on the affairs of the family. He also repairs the gap between his family and the King of France, meeting with Philippe I in 1086. Geoffrey marries Beatrice de Montdidier in 1087, showing the increased influence of the Rotrou family <sup>2</sup>. No doubt all of Geoffrey's brothers benefitted from the improved status of the family. Geoffrey probably influenced the marriage of his brother into the Montfort family. The five generations of Rotrou de Montfort, will end with a daughter, Jeanne de Montfort (1250-1291), who marries Guillaume de Parthenay (1250-1315). Little information is available, except that Rotrou began the construction of a chateau, in which he and the next four generations lived in self-sufficiency, "raising very little dust". This segment of the family never seemed to be implicated with the trials and tribulations of the Counts of Perche.

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<sup>1</sup> The "dime" or dixième (one tenth), is a tax that was imposed upon agricultural products. The tax thus raised was often ceded by the local Lord, to religious orders, as part of their annual income.

<sup>2</sup> Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France (P.47 - Widening Horizons) - 2002 - by Kathleen Thompson

Rotrou I, (as we will call him) is known to have had five sons,<sup>3</sup>, about who we know nothing, except that their father engendered the next generation of the Montfort Rotrous.

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<sup>3</sup> Hugues, Foulques, Gilduin and Raoul, and of course Rotrou II - referred to in a charter - Revue d'Anjou et du Maine - Tome 4 - P.66 - 1858)



## **Generation 2 - Rotrou II de Montfort (1090-1130) - marries Bourgogne de Sablé**

No information is available about Rotrou II de Montfort, except that he married Bourgogne de Sable. He had at least one child, Rotrou III.

## **Generation 3 - Rotrou III de Montfort (1125-1200) - marries Agnès Gouet (d'Alluyes)**

Little information is available about Rotrou III de Montfort. However, he married Agnès Gouet, daughter of Guillaume III Gouet de Montmirail and Mabile of England (daughter of Henry I, King of England). This marriage probably eased the very strained relations with the Perche-Gouet family. At this time, Rotrou III de Montfort's cousin, Rotrou II (the Great), was now known as Count of Perche, which never included the Perche-Gouet !

## **Generation 4 - Rotrou IV de Montfort (1180-1229) - marries Isabelle de Perrenay**

Little information is available for Rotrou IV de Montfort. However, he marries Isabelle de Perrenay, daughter of Robert de Perrenay, Lord of Semblançay. He accompanies Geoffrey de Perche and his brother Stephen, to the VIth Crusade, but apparently returned home safely <sup>4</sup>. They apparently had two sons, of which the elder was Geoffrey <sup>5</sup>, Lord of Semblançay. Geoffrey possibly died young, but certainly had no children, and so the Montfort succession passed to his brother Rotrou V.

## **Generation 5 - Rotrou V de Montfort (1225-1270) - marries Marguerite d'Alluyes**

No information is available for Rotrou V de Montfort, except that he appears to have deserved a place in history, for he appears on a stained-glass window in the Le Mans Cathedral (see below). He married Marguerite d'Alluyes (1239), who was second niece to Agnès d'Alluyes who married Rotrou II de Montfort.

## **Generation 6 - Jeanne de Montfort (1250-1291) - marries Guillaume Larchevêque, Lord of Parthenay, Mervant, Vouant and Taillebourg**

Although the House of Rotrou in France effectively ends with Guillaume de Perche, Bishop of Chalons in 1226, the Montfort branch of the family continues down to the Parthenay family, and ensures a descendancy to this day. The Parthenay line descends directly to the Winston Churchill (Prime Minister of England), Diana Spencer, and thus George Alexander Louis Windsor (the future King of England).

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<sup>4</sup> There is often confusion between Rotrou IV de Montfort and Rotrou IV de Perche. They participated in different crusades, Rotrou IV de Perche died during the third Crusade (in 1191). Rotrou IV de Montfort apparently returned home safely from the sixth Crusade, although a reference in the book "The Armour of Light: Stained Glass in Western France" (P.17) by Meredith P. Lillich states that Rotrou died on the Crusade in 1239.

<sup>5</sup> Histoire de Touraine, depuis la Conquête des Gaules par les Romains - Volume 3 - P.283 - 1828 - By Jean Louis Chalmel. According to the author, this generation was the first to actually title Rotrou as "De Montfort", although historians have associated the title as from Rotrou I who married Lucie de Gennes.

## Rotrou V de Montfort and Le Mans Cathedral

The axial window (Bay 100) of the upper ambulatory of Le Mans Cathedral, the only window that remains visible from the nave of the cathedral, was constructed in the early 1240's. Its glass is maverick, different from all the other bays in the cathedral. The window depicts a monumental Virgin and Child enthroned between Ste. Gervais and Protais, ancient patrons of the cathedral, below them, a king and another figure, both committing suicide, and below the Virgin the kneeling donor in heraldic surcoat, offering his arms in a lancet. He is Rotrou de Montfort, one of the knights named by the chronicler as having been present at the 1254 consecration. .... "The Rotrou de Montfort window is a discordant marriage between unrestrained coloristic richness and a stiff, servile copying of disparate and barely understood Chartrain models" <sup>6</sup>.



Rotrou V de Montfort was the last of his line, a cadet branch of the counts of Mortagne and Perche. His father died on Crusade in 1239. The son served St. Louis from the early 1240's, was married to Marguerite d'Alluye in 1251, took part with his brother in Charles d'Anjou's Flemish expedition in 1254, and died in 1269 or 1270, predeceased by his wife, leaving only a daughter Jeanne. Rotrou is depicted very young in this window, and

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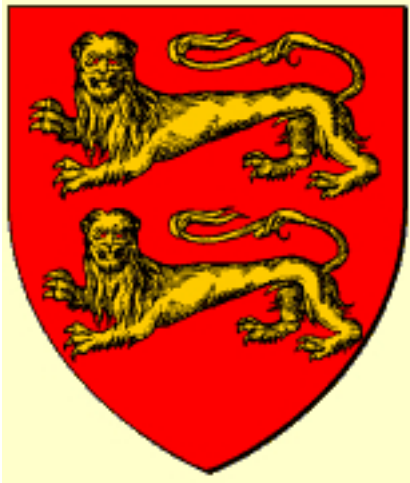
<sup>6</sup> Quote from "The Armour of Light: Stained Glass in Western France" by Meredith P. Lillich.

without a wife or even a brother. There is no reason to believe that his gift is as late as 1254. It may even be a commemoration of his inheritance and new title, (ca. 1240).

### **The Montfort Coat of Arms.**

There seems to be a confusion as to the official coat of arms of the Montfort Branch of the Rotrou Family.

There appear to be two crests, found in various historical documents.



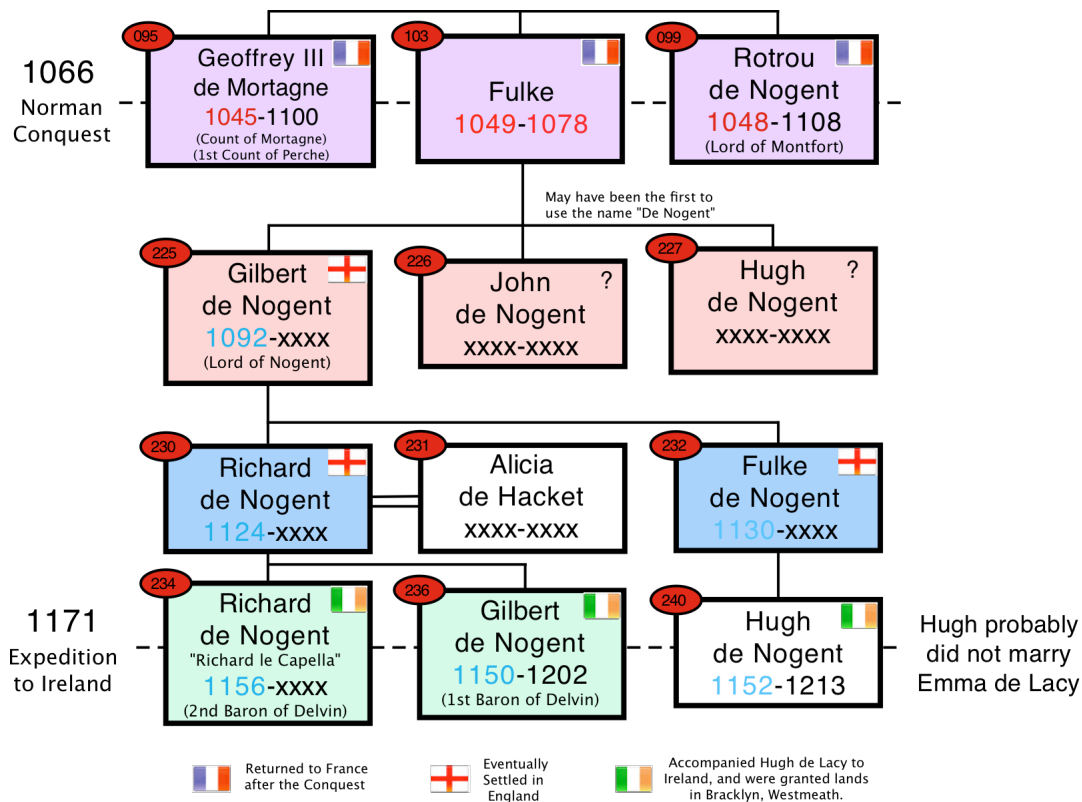
Description : De gueules, à deux léopards d'or.  
*L'escu de gueules a ij léopards d'or rampans, banneret et mansel.*



The second crest shown above, is similar to the Preche crest, but one less chevron.

Description : *D'argent, à deux chevrons de gueules.*

## Descendants of De Nogents in England



This document is probably the one that took the most time to research, and gave the fewest results. After many years of "Googling", I have come up with the following information :

Nobody appears to know anything about the De Nogent family in England between 1066 and 1172. However, in the absence of corroborated information, we can narrow down the areas of doubt concerning this period. We know that one or more (Geoffrey III and at least one brother) of the House of Rotrou assisted William in his conquest of England in 1066. We know that several members of the De Nogent family left England with Hugh de Lacy, and went to Ireland in October 1171. This represents at least three generations over the hundred year period of absolute silence concerning the family. What happened during this period, and where did the members of the family settle during their stay in England? Why is there absolutely no information forthcoming ?

We may hazard a few guesses here ! After all, this is stony ground, and speculation is all we have left ! However, we insist, this is **totally uncertified speculation**. We can start by defining the information that we DO have. Fulke de Nogent is reputed to have had three sons, Gilbert, John and Hugh <sup>1</sup>. Hugh is quoted as having the title of

<sup>1</sup> The naming of the sons was not in the French tradition. Fulke must have been totally immersed in his life in England, although we note his presence in France at least once (1078).

Lord of Nogent, although we have no proof that he ever set foot in France. We do not know the dates of birth or death of any of the members of the family in England, and we do not know where they settled. Gilbert is reputed to have had three sons, Richard, Gilbert and Fulke, and Richard appears to have had four sons Gilbert (1st Baron of Delvin) and Richard (2<sup>nd</sup> Baron of Delvin), Hacket and Christopher, of whom we have concrete evidence of the first two <sup>2</sup>. We must note here that the three generations referred to, imply marriage at about 35, which seems a little high for this period in history. A generation is possibly missing. More important, we have no proof that any of this information is correct.

## So, Let us Speculate !

There are several possible reasons for the lack of information concerning the family in England :

1 - The De Nogent descendants in England (because there **WERE** descendants !) were not of sufficient importance to warrant being "followed" <sup>3</sup>.

Some of the sons of Rotrou I were possibly illegitimate, with the result that they were forced to fend for themselves. Fulke seems to have made several "visits" to France, for he is seen as witness to a charter of 1078. But other than that - complete silence ! His last appearance was ..... 1078 !

2 - The Domesday Book, completed in 1086, did not cover certain parts of England <sup>4</sup>, and the De Nogent descendants may have lived a relatively comfortable life on the spoils of the Conquest, while raising very little dust.

3 - The following speculation is important enough to be discussed in detail.

The Rotrou family has crossed the path of a highly important Norman family. In 1066, the interests of the brothers Walter de Lacy and Ilbert de Lacy cannot have escaped the Rotrou descendants, as they all had important participations in the Norman Conquest. The De Lacy family were staunch followers and allies of the Dukes of Normandy, and so followed William, to a man. The De Lacy descendants were royally accepted in England, with numerous domains, and a very high profile of respectability. It is said that Walters daughter Emma married Hugh de Nogent, who then took the name "de Lacy". Although we believe this to be erroneous, we cannot so eliminate the probable bonds which linked the de

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<sup>2</sup> In evidence of this, Burke indicates that there were three successive generations of Gilberts.

<sup>3</sup> This is surprising, for during this period, the Rotrou saga continued in France, with increasing dimensions. The Rotrou descendants in the Perche have become very powerful, thanks to the alliance with William (the Conqueror), a marriage with the daughter of a King of England, and the increasing importance of the "Perche" power block in a strategic part of North-West France. Why, then, was the "English" branch of the family so ignored, or more correctly, why do we know so little about it ?

<sup>4</sup> Winchester and London, and certain parts of Northern England (and Wales ?) are conspicuously absent from the Domesday book (1086). Anybody living off the fat of the land with domains ceded by William in these areas, could have spent a hundred years in comparative luxury, while being totally inconspicuous.

Lacy and the de Nogent families over this period in England. Both families were present in England, they probably were in contact, perhaps in the unsubdued parts of England (for example Wales), and they may have had common interests, and so when Henry II nominated Hugh de Lacy to build and head an expeditionary force to Ireland in 1171, to bring the rogue "Strongbow" to heel, the De Nogent descendants, Gilbert and Richard were an integral part of the expeditionary force. Why and how did the De Nogent family form part of this expedition ? The links between the two families, either geographically or socially must have aided the choice of Hugh de Lacy to "invite" the de Nogents to accompany them to Ireland. In true "de Nogent" fashion, always eager for a fight, certainly interested in gleaning riches from such an expedition, and possibly having difficulty holding on to what little existence they had in England, Brothers Gilbert and Richard were among the group of Anglo-Norman mercenaries drawn together by Hugh de Lacy. The results of their collaboration will be shown in the creation of the Baronry of Delvin in Ireland, one of the thirteen Baronries that Hugh de Lacy will create, under the seal of Henry II. Hugh's sister Rosea, will marry Gilbert de Nogent, first Baron of Delvin, proof of the long and close relationship shared between these two families.

During this period, the relations between Henry II of England and the De Nogent descendants in France were on an all-time high ! <sup>5</sup> This could help explain why the English descendants of the family were so highly represented in the expedition to Ireland. However, we must concede that many Anglo-Norman families had received vast domains in England, and were quite happy to leave the Irish expedition to the more adventurous souls !

From such vague information concerning the family de Nogent during this period, arise much speculation, most of which is subject to criticism, and refusal. However, we are forced to ask ourselves the vital question :

WHO can shed light upon the De Nogent descendants in England during this period, and even more important, upon which data are based their arguments.

At this moment in time, we have a very limited number of sources of information :

1 - Sir William Betham, who evaluated the Nugent descendancy for his client Giovanna Riario-Sforza (1798 - 1855) <sup>6</sup>, may have built his data on unsure ground. As it was compiled for the marriage of Laval Nugent to the Countess, it was probably available in about 1815. There is absolutely no visible corroboration of his evaluations, and the document he created is difficult to obtain. Was this document the basis of the document

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<sup>5</sup> Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - New Opportunities - P.104 - Kathleen Thompson - "... from the mid 1170's, relations with King Henry were most readily promoted by Rotrous brother Geoffrey, who was frequently in the Kings presence, attested his acts and received signs of favour".

<sup>6</sup> Offered as a marriage gift to her future husband Laval Nugent, but certainly a vetting process to ensure that he was worthy, this document is not visible on the Internet, but an extract may have been made available in the same year, 1853, in the form of the unnamed document "A Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family".

"A Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family", published in the same year (1853) ? It seems that this Betham document covered 85 family branches.

2 - The Mormon Microfilm Database. They may have a copy of the Betham document, but it is unlikely that they have other data. In this case, no valid data will be forthcoming.

3 - The IGRS (Irish Genealogical Research Society) Data Base in London which may have a copy of the microfilm in their Nugent archives. Do they have data for the Nugent Family which can shed light upon this important period in the Nugent history ?

4 - The Nugent family itself must hold valuable information concerning this period.

And we may say that we have absolutely no proof of the data presented in the first paragraphs of the document "A Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family" edited in 1853, by an unknown author, from no apparent source, and with no corroboration. Inasmuch as we can trash the first affirmation ".. the de Nogents descend from the illustrious family of Ivas de Belleme, a powerful Norman Baron", we are certainly suspicious of any other information in this document ! In the same way, and with regret, we must council readers to totally ignore the Internet document "Nugent Surname History" by Marian Keaney, which contains far too many falsehoods to be considered as a serious document. Here again, we find skimpy and uncorroborated data concerning the family which is bandied about on the Internet, without the slightest research. We have personally counted more than 50 references in Internet sites, concerning the totally false suggestion that the family originated from "Yvas de Bellesme, a powerful Norman Baron", which then goes on to cite the many towns of Nogent from whence the family could have originated. With so little research made by these webmasters, and the tendency to abuse of the commands "Copy/Paste", we must certainly be wary of the veracity of information on the Internet !

And so we close this uncertain chapter concerning the De Nogent Family in England. The quotes "*The origin of this Peerage is obscure*" and "*The descent of the Baronry is obscure*", certainly refer to the early period in Ireland, from 1172, for the historical and cartulary evidence concerning the emergence of the Rotrou family in France, around 960, is certainly no longer questioned.

## De Nogent Possessions in England

As a result of several marriages, and also the association with three successive Kings of England, the House of Rotrou inevitably acquired land and dominions in England. Unfortunately, as the House of Rotrou in France provided no male heir in 1226, their lands and manors were forfeit to the French Crown (Law of Reversion). However, even during the lifetime of the Counts of Perche, English assets were confiscated and restored at the whim of the King of England, as successive Counts fell into and out of favour. As of 1204, due to financial difficulties and a rather rapacious attitude, King John (Lackland), the current King, paid no heed to the fact that many of the possessions of the Counts of Perche actually belonged to his niece. He confiscated them even so.

This document will make no effort to establish a complete history of the lands and manors belonging to the House of Rotrou over a period of more than 100 years. This feat has already been admirably expressed in the book by Kathleen Thompson <sup>1</sup>, which we have quoted many times on this site. Miss Thompson has done deep research into the English affairs of the Rotrou family, and I will certainly not copy wholesale, passages from her book, nor attempt to better her research. For all Nugents wishing to expand their knowledge of the origins and development of the House of Rotrou, I strongly encourage readers to lash out the required cost of Miss Thompsons book. They will be rewarded with a fascinating story about the beginnings of our family. However, from available resources on the Internet, I have gleaned enough information about the possessions to show the importance of the Rotrou family in England, by the wealth of their lands and manors.

Orderic Vitalis <sup>2</sup> has clearly stated that Geoffrey III de Mortagne (1045-1100) received rich rewards from William the Conqueror for his participation in the conquest of England. Either these rich rewards were in the form of liquidities, or else, if they were lands and manors in England, Geoffrey must have disposed of them before the availability of the Domesday book (1086), which was a compilation of all land and livestock attribution in England. No trace of English possessions can be seen allocated either to Geoffrey, or any of his family who settled in England. In truth, the Domesday Book, although representing a formidable picture of the distribution of riches in England <sup>3</sup> at this time, sheds no light upon any members of the Rotrou family.

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<sup>1</sup> Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France : The County of the Perche, 1000-1226 - Chapter 7 - The Rotrou Counts and England, 1100-1226.

<sup>2</sup> An English Chronicler (1075-1141) His works are superbly presented in English by Marjory Chibnall - "The World of Orderic Vitalis" (1984)

<sup>3</sup> This compilation has never been repeated, and although not quite complete (lacking information for London, Winchester, Northumberland and Durham), has nevertheless provided historians and genealogists with an unprecedented amount of information concerning the distribution of wealth at that time.



## Rotrou Family Assets in England

Aldbourn Manor	Wiltshire
Wanborough Manor	Wiltshire
Newbury Manor	Berkshire
Shrivenam Manor	Wiltshire
Toddington	Bedfordshire
Great Horkesley	Essex
Kempsford	Gloucestershire
Sandleford	Berkshire

We have no indication that the subsequent Counts of Perche obtained lands or manors in England on their own account. As far as we know, all of the possessions which came into the hands of the family were as a result of three important marriages :

- 1 Rotrou II - The Great (1085-1144) marries (1103) Mathilda, illegitimate daughter of King Henry I (Beauclerc).

Mathilda brought the manors of Aldbourne and Wanborough into the Rotrou estates.

- 2 Rotrou II - The Great (1085-1144) marries (1126) Hawise de Salisbury, daughter of Walter FitzEdward, Earl of Salisbury.

Hawise brought the manors of Newbury and Toddington (from her grandparents) into the Rotrou estates. Kempford manor also possibly comes from Hawises' grandparents. Certain estates had once been the property of Ernulf de Hesding. Hawises' brother was Earl Patrick, whose mother is considered to have been Sibil de Hesding, sister of Matilda, the presumed wife of Patrick de Cadurcis, and the marriage of Rotrou with Hawise may probably account for the interest which the Earls of Perche acquired in Ernulf de Hesding's possessions.

- 3 Geoffrey III (1158-1202) marries (1189) Mathilda of Saxony, daughter of Heinrich V of Saxony.

Mathilda brought holdings in Suffolk, Essex and Kent into the Rotrou estates.

There were certainly other possessions in England that came into the hands of the House of Rotrou. The above list only represents the possessions that I know of.

The following pages have been compiled from the **Victoria County History** site.

Founded in 1899 and originally dedicated to Queen Victoria, the VCH is an encyclopaedic record of England's places and people from earliest times to the present day. It is without doubt the greatest publishing project in English local history, having built an international reputation for scholarly standards.

Based at the Institute of Historical Research in the University of London since 1933, the VCH is written by historians working in counties across England.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 12

D. A. Crowley (editor), A. P. Baggs, Jane Freeman, Janet H. Stevenson

Year published

1983

### ALDBOURNE

Aldbourne, a downland parish north-east of Marlborough and south-east of Swindon, includes Aldbourne village, the hamlets of Upper Upham and Woodsend and part of that of Preston, and the deserted hamlet of Snap. It measures 3,441 ha. (8, 502 a.)<sup>4</sup> and forms a rough square with an extension at its north-west corner. The parish's northern boundary, later also the hundred boundary, had for its western two thirds apparently been established by the mid 11th century along Rogues or Sugar Way, which is said to have run approximately east and west c. 4 km. north-west of Aldbourne village. The parish was largely conterminous with a single estate, Aldbourne manor, on which there was a church in the late 11th century. By a will of about 970, Alfheah left ALDBOURNE to his brother Alfhere. Gytha or her son Earl Harold held the estate in 1066. It passed to William I, and after 1086 was granted to a Count of Perche. Aldbourne was held in 1135 by Rotrou III, Count of Perche (died 1144), and passed with the title to his son Rotrou IV (died 1191) and to the younger Rotrou's son Geoffrey. Rents from Aldbourne or Wanborough granted by Rotrou III, Count of Perche to the priory of Lewes (Suss.) about 1135, were probably from Wanborough. Rotrou IV, Count of Perche, gave Aldbourne church to the priory of Nogent-le-Rotrou (Eure-et-Loir) before his death in 1191.

After the death of Geoffrey in 1202, the manors were controlled by the King, the beginnings of a complete forfeiture which was to take place some time later. John Lackland, died in 1216, and the future king, Henry III, was too young to be declared king. The task of regent was given to one of the most influential men in England at that time, Hubert de Burgh, 1st Earl of Kent. De Burgh was instrumental in the victory of the Battle of Sandwich, and gained more and more favour with the English court, even advising the king to sign the Magna Carta. De Burgh and the Earl of Salisbury worked in harmony for several years, preparing the future fortunes of their families. Four manors belonging to the Count of Perche, were confiscated in 1217 after the death of Geoffrey's son Thomas, Count of Perche, at the battle of Lincoln. The manors of Aldebourne, Wanborough, Newbury and Toddington were granted to the Earl of Salisbury. Salisbury made a bargain with the de Burgh, and the lands were partitioned between them.

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<sup>4</sup> The **Hectare** (ha) is a unit of measurement of an area. It corresponds to 10,000 square metres (an example is a square of 100 metres in length and breadth). The **Are** (a) represents 100th of a hectare (or 100 square metres). Many of the old measurements of the Middle Ages represent the area that a farmer could plough with two oxen, in a single day, or a sub-division of such areas. Middle Age definitions of these area measurements are no longer true, but have been rounded to values of the Metric System.

Salisbury acquired Aldebourne and Wanborough, while de Burgh acquired Newbury and Toddington. The rectory of Aldebourne was finally appropriated by 1228, just after the death of the last Count of Perche (Guillaume, bishop of Chalons) in France. De Burgh and Salisbury were also making moves to confiscate the lands held by the Count of Perche at Shrivenham in Berkshire. Their objectives were clear, as they hoped that the confiscated manors and lands would be conceded to them and their descendants as a hereditary right, when the king came of age. In 1229, this is exactly what happened.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 9

Elizabeth Crittall (editor) R. W. Dunning, K. H. Rogers, P. A. Spalding, Colin Shrimpton, Janet H. Stevenson, Margaret Tomlinson

Year published

1970

### WANBOROUGH

According to a charter purporting to be of the time of Stigand, Bishop of Winchester (c. 1043–53), the area of the present parishes of Wanborough and Little Hinton formed part of that bishop's estates. The manor of WANBOROUGH was still held by the Bishop of Winchester in 1086, and was then assessed at 19 hides <sup>5</sup>. In 1166–7 the Count of Perche was holding the manor. This was Rotrou IV, son of Rotrou III by Hawise, sister of Patrick, 1st Earl of Salisbury. He may have inherited the property through his mother, or possibly through his grandfather, Geoffrey III, Lord of Mortagne <sup>6</sup>. Rotrou IV died in 1191 and was succeeded by his son Geoffrey IV; the sheriff rendered £4, three years later for the new Count's lands in Aldbourne and Wanborough. Geoffrey IV died in 1202 and his son Thomas was killed at the battle of Lincoln in 1217, fighting for Prince Louis. His lands were taken into royal hands, but almost immediately Wanborough and other properties were granted to William Longespée, Earl of Salisbury, the King's uncle.

Rotrou III, Count of Perche, gave a hide of land to Lewes Priory in 1135. The grant was confirmed several times during the next 25 years. In 1210 the monks drew rents from the land worth £1, but there is no trace of the property in the 1535 valuation of their lands. The land was demised by the tenant, Robert son of Roger, in 1169 as security for a loan.

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<sup>5</sup> Hide - An ancient measure of land - 4 virgates (about 120 acres), used as a measure of taxation in the Domesday Book (1086). It was not a fixed area of land, but represented a value, such as the amount of land sufficient to support a family.

<sup>6</sup> Wanborough (and Aldebourne) actually formed part of the endowment of Mathilda (Maud), daughter of Henry I, when she married Rotrou II (The Great) in 1103.

A small estate granted by Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche, was confirmed to the canons of Bradenstoke in 1207, and consisted of 7s. rent.

The church of Wanborough with its tithes and some land attached to it was among those granted by St. Osmund to Salisbury Chapter in 1091. It was still held by the chapter in 1146, but apparently not in 1158. The advowson<sup>7</sup> was presumably included in the grant of the church to the chapter, but its descent over the next 200 years is obscure. It may have passed to the overlords of the main manor of Wanborough, the Counts of Perche, and from them to the Cluniacs of Nogent-le-Rotrou (Eure-et-Loir), for whom the Counts had a special devotion. It was not among the possessions of that house confirmed in a bull<sup>8</sup> of 1182, but in 1290 the Prioress of Amesbury asserted that Nogent-le-Rotrou had held the advowson of Wanborough for 100 years and had then granted it to her.

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<sup>7</sup> The right in English law of presenting a nominee to a vacant ecclesiastical position (from Medieval Latin "advocatia" - a summoning)

<sup>8</sup> A bull is a patent letter or charter issued by a high authority of the Catholic Church, such as the Pope himself. It is named after the lead seal which is appended to the end, in order to authenticate it. A bull can define a confirmation of property, or a charter of protection accorded to a monastery or any religious institution.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Berkshire : Volume 4

William Page and P.H. Ditchfield (eds)

Year Published :

1924

### NEWBURY

Newbury stands on the River Kennet; the road leading from London westwards runs through the northern part of the town. At the present date the area of the borough is 1,826 acres.

If Newbury was to a great extent identical with Ulvritone it soon changed hands. From Ernulf de Hesding it passed (conjecturally by the marriage of one of his daughters) to the family of Chaworth *alias* Mundublel. Payne de Mundublel held Newbury in 1166, but by 1189<sup>9</sup> it had fallen to the king. Then it passed to Rotrou IV, Count of Perche<sup>10</sup>, and was resumed with other Norman lands by King John in 1205, and at some subsequent period granted to the famous Fawkes de Breauté. But the Count of Perche apparently resumed his claim to it before his death at the battle of Lincoln in 1217, as his brother<sup>11</sup> and heir the Bishop of Chalons afterwards ceded all rights in the town to William the Marshal and the Earl of Salisbury. The manor was confirmed to Salisbury in 1217. The borough passed to William the Marshal, and soon the manor also passed to the same family. In 1231 the manor formed part of the dower of the Countess of Pembroke, the King's sister, who had married the second Earl Marshal. In 1229 Salisbury received a grant of land in Newbury of 100s.

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<sup>9</sup> This date looks a little strange - 1169 would seem a more likely year.

<sup>10</sup> The close association between Henry II and Geoffrey of Perche (son of Rotrou II, the Great), resulted in the grant of Newbury (and Teddington) to Geoffrey, around 1175. When Geoffrey died in 1180, some of these lands (which ones ??) were passed on to his brother, Rotrou IV. These lands had belonged to the descendants of Ernulf of Hesdin, and the marriage of Geoffreys father (Rotrou III) to Harwise of Salisbury, had given him a tenuous right to part of the inheritance left by Ernulf. However, by 1205, King Jean had already confiscated more than half of the families recent acquisitions, and even the continued payments of Mathilda to her uncle, in order to recover the family properties were doomed to failure. By 1212, all of the families English properties had been confiscated

<sup>11</sup> This is an error. The next Count of Perche, Guillaume de Chalons was Thomas' uncle.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Bedford : Volume 4

William Page & P.H. Ditchfield(editor)

Year published

1924

### **SHRIVENHAM**

The area now included in the hundred <sup>12</sup> of Shrivenham was in 1086 divided between the three hundreds of Shrivenham, Wyfold and Hildeslaw. Within these three hundreds the king in 1086 held Shrivenham, Faringdon and Sparsholt in demesne <sup>13</sup>. Faringdon early developed into a borough, and was apparently already separate from the hundred of Wyfold when granted by King John to Beaulieu Abbey. The hundred of Faringdon, as held by the abbot, included the parishes of Great and Little Faringdon and Coxwell. Shrivenham remained royal demesne until 1200, when the manor was granted to Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche <sup>14</sup>, the rights over the hundred evidently being included in the grant of the manor. Early in the reign of Henry III the manor and hundred were acquired by William Marshal Earl of Pembroke and William Longespée, Earl of Salisbury.

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<sup>12</sup> In medieval times, areas of land were defined such : a hide was an area of land that would support a family, typically about 30 acres of land, depending on its quality. A hundred was simply a hundred hides. Other medieval measurements existed, but are not defined here.

<sup>13</sup> In the feudal system the "demesne" was the land, not necessarily all contiguous to the manor house, which was retained by a lord of the manor for his own use and support. In English, the "domain" is probably the equivalent term, taken from the French.

<sup>14</sup> John Lackland ceded Shrivenham to Geoffrey in 1200, when he became King of England, upon the death of his brother, Richard the Lionheart.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Bedford : Volume 3

William Page (editor)

Year published

1912

### **TODDINGTON**

Comprising 15½ hides, Toddington was held by Wulfweard "Levet" before the Conquest, and was afterwards granted to William Spec, who before 1086 exchanged this manor for two others held by Ernulf de Hesding. Two of Ernulf de Hesding's daughters are afterwards found connected with this parish. Of these Matilda, with her husband Patrick de Chaworth, made a grant of the church of Toddington, which was attached to the manor, to the Abbey of La Couture, 1100–22. This grant was made especially for the soul of "Ernulf de Hisden who held before us the land which we now hold" and was confirmed by Matilda's grandson Payn de Chaworth in 1167. Between this date and 1180, Toddington passed to Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche, who represented Sibel another daughter of Ernulf de Hesding, being her great-grandson. He died in 1202, and Toddington was still held by his widow, Mathilda, the Countess of Perche, in 1205. At this date, on the severance of English and Norman fealties, the English lands of the Count of Perche escheated <sup>15</sup> to the Crown, and Toddington was granted to Peter des Roches. This grant was temporary, and before 1229 the manor was again in the possession of the Crown, and was at that date conferred on William Marshal Earl of Pembroke on the occasion of his marriage with Eleanor sister of Henry III, who was to retain a life interest in Toddington <sup>16</sup>.

The church of Toddington was granted to the abbey of La Couture, Le Mans, between 1100 and 1122, and confirmed to the Benedictine monks there by Henry I between the same dates, by Payn de Chaworth in 1167, by Henry II 1180 to 1186, and by Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche 1192 to 1202.

The priory of Dunstable acquired a considerable estate in the parish of Toddington during the 13th century, and possibly earlier, for among the grants enumerated in the cartulary of that monastery are those of Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche, whose connection with this parish extended from 1180 to 1202. He confirmed to the monks of Dunstable 5

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<sup>15</sup> Escheate - the reversion of lands in English feudal law to the lord of the fee when there are no heirs capable of inheriting under the original grant. This is similar to the French Law of Reversion (Middle English, developed from Latin - "escheir" - to fall, to devolve).

<sup>16</sup> Such precise information can only come from the "Pipe Rolls", official documents created to show the movement of riches into and out of the coffers of the state.

virgates <sup>17</sup> of land in Chalton and 34 acres of land in Herne, and confirmation of this grant was afterwards made by William Marshal Earl of Pembroke.

## Victoria County History

A History of the County of Essex: Volume 10

Janet Cooper (Editor)

Year published

2001

### **GREAT HORKESLEY Manor**

The manor of GREAT HORKESLEY was apparently held in demesne with Nayland manor until 1517. Sweyn was succeeded by his son Robert (d. 1132 x 1140) whose son Henry of Essex forfeited his lands in 1163. By 1198 Nayland had been granted to Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche (d. 1202) <sup>18</sup>. He was succeeded by his son another Geoffrey, after whose death in 1205 <sup>19</sup> the lands reverted to the Crown. By 1215 Nayland had been granted to Hubert de Burgh (died 1243) who was succeeded by his son John (died 1274). John apparently gave Nayland to his son, another John (died 1280), who exchanged it with the Crown in 1272.

### **OTHER DOMAINS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOUSE OF ROTROU**

#### **The Baronry of Kempford**

Kempford lies in Gloucestershire upon the Thames halfway between Gricklade and Lechlade where the river parts Gloucestershire from Wiltshire. From the time of the Conquest official records are no longer silent. The pages of Domesday show that the manor of Kempford was granted by William the Conqueror to Arnulph or Ernulph de Hesding. He came from a family of rank and influence in France, with its headquarters at Hesding in Artois or Picardy in the lands of the Counts of Flanders.

This grant then, originally made by Ernulph de Hesding, is confirmed by his daughter Matilda and his son-in-law Patrick de Cadurcis: "We have placed it, for our souls' sake,

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<sup>17</sup> A virgate is an old Anglo-Saxon measurement of land which represents the area which can be cultivated by two oxen in a normal season. It represents a quarter of a hide, or about seven modern acres.

<sup>18</sup> Great Horkesley was granted to Geoffrey in 1198, by Richard the Lionheart just before his death in an accident in 1199.

<sup>19</sup> We must contest this reference. Geoffrey IV was succeeded in 1202 by Thomas, not by a Geoffrey. The Geoffrey in question, who was in fact the eldest of Geoffrey IV's sons, but seems to have died very young.



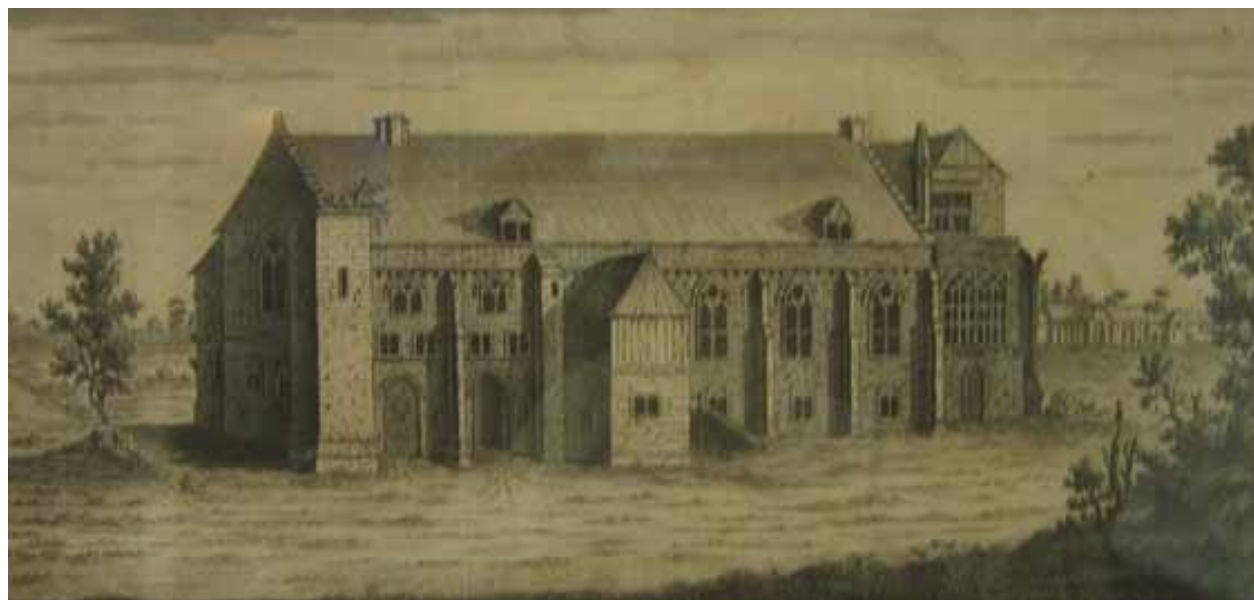
upon the altar in the dedication of the church". The same grant is next confirmed twice by the king - first by William II and later by Stephen. It is then confirmed by the bishop of Worcester - in whose diocese the parish was at that date. Pagan de Cadurcis, grandson of the original donor, again confirms the gift "for the soul of my brother Hugo and for the souls of all my ancestors and for my own soul", and this renewal of the grant is confirmed by Henry II – apparently twice, It is further confirmed by Rotrou III, Count of Perche, between 1144 and 1147 <sup>20</sup>. The grant is confirmed by Pope Celestine the third.

## LESSER KNOWN DOMAINS

KT <sup>21</sup> suggests other, lesser-known domains which were ceded to the Rotrou family :

Domains of varying importance, but probably quite small, in Suffolk, Essex and Kent.

Warden Priory	Bedfordshire ??
Chelsfield	Kent,
Bradenstoke Priory	Wiltshire.



Bradenstoke Priory

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<sup>20</sup> This grant shows the presence of the Count of Perche in this area, which is close to his assets of Wiltshire, at the indicated dates.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Thompson, in a seminar "Le Pouvoir dans le Perche au temps des Rotrou", 22 October, 2006 in Nogent-le-Rotrou. Her other major work concerning the Rotrou family is referenced more completely in the "Site Information" menu, pointing to the sub-menu "Research Documentation" of this site.

## The Priory of Sandleford

Some time between the years 1193 and 1202, although the material is not sufficient to fix the exact date, Geoffrey IV, Count of Perche (1158-1202), and Matilda of Saxony, his wife (1172-1214), founded, on some land about a mile south of Newbury, a Priory at a place already called Sandleford. We know but little of the early history of the monastery, except that it was dedicated to SS. Mary and John Baptist, and put in charge of Austin Canons.

It is possible that prior to the foundation of Sandleford by Geoffrey of Perche and Matilda his wife, for Monks or Regular Canons of the Order of St. Augustin, a small community of Secular Canons, or Recluses, dwelt here, as the "Recluses of Sandleford" are referred to in the Pipe Roll<sup>22</sup>, 26 Henry II., 1180.

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<sup>22</sup> The Pipe Rolls (also called the Great Rolls) are a collection of financial records maintained by the English Exchequer, or Treasury. They record payments and debts made to the government, and as such, record much about the royal income. In the case of Rotrou lands in England, the Pipe Rolls showed attribution, confiscation and sometimes subsequent restoration of lands and chattels belonging to the family. The earliest Pipe Roll dates from the XIIth Century.

## The White Ship

There have been many tragedies in history. But few can be compared to the accident that took place on the 25th of November, 1120, a few metres off the coast of Barfleur, a small port on the Normandy coast. In a matter of minutes, the future of the English nobility of that time was reduced to ashes, in what was supposed to be a festive occasion. To place this tragedy in its context, we must recount the events leading up to this fateful evening.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 had succeeded in overwhelming the lands and lives of every soul in England, Wales and Scotland. Although it required many years to complete the invasion of Britain, by the end of the century, most of the British Isles had been quelled, even down to the resisting Welsh, and the ardent Scots. William, whose name had changed overnight from "the Bastard" to "the Conqueror", had gambled and won, by succeeding in invading a country only distant from the mainland of Europe by a mere 30 kilometres, a pitiful distance that had only been breached once before, more than a thousand years earlier, by the Romans.

More than 50 years after the Conquest, the situation in England had changed radically. Any resistance had been severely repressed by Williams forces. Few people have any knowledge of the brutality imposed upon this conquered land to silence any revolt. The rebellion of 1169 in the North of England was met with savage reprisals. Crops were burned, towns and villages were razed to the ground. There was not even a dog to bark to show unwillingness to Norman oppression. In fact, the starving people of Yorkshire were forced to eat dogs and cats in order to stay alive. Such were the cruelties imposed upon a rebellious nation, who refused to lie down to Norman occupation.

The French language was commonly used among the Norman nobility, a language still unknown to the lower classes. Normans and other mercenaries who had made the Conquest possible were showered with confiscated land and manors. English nobility was treated in a different manner by William. In true medieval style, the principle of the carrot was applied to this country. Some lands were restored to English nobles on the basic principles of "I will take it back, if you displease me in any way." And so the XIIth century opened in a strange manner with frequent displacements of Anglo-Norman nobility across the Channel, from France to England, and from England to France, as if the magic barrier of this stretch of water, which had resisted invasion for so long, had ceased to exist. The lucky Anglo-Norman nobility managed to hold estates in their native country, and had been "rewarded" with land in the other country, and made frequent trips from one side of the Channel to the other. The reigning King, at first William the Conqueror, and later, his son Henry I, would make frequent trips to and from France, to ensure that their affaires were in order.

Henry had had many illegitimate children, but he had a surviving son, William, who was destined to guarantee the continuation of his family. William, called the Aethling, would be an acceptable successor to his father in the future, because his parents had united both the Saxon and the Norman royal houses. William, even at the early age of seventeen, had fought alongside his father in claiming their rights to lands in

France. After defeating King Louis of France at the battle of Brémule, Henry began preparations to return to England with his court, and the hundreds of "hangers on", always eager to follow the King and his son William. Thomas Fitz-Stephen<sup>1</sup> offered his new ship, "La Blanche-Nef" (the White Ship) to carry the King and his entourage from Barfleur to England. Henry had already made his own plans, but accepted the offer for his son and their retinue. Orderic Vitalis tells us that much wine had been brought aboard the ship, not only for the revellers, but also for the crew. Henry left Barfleur first, and had a head start against the new ship. Fitz-Stephen ordered the crew to make all efforts to overtake the Kings vessel. As the new ship was by far a superior vessel, this would have been possible, but in their haste, and possibly under the influence of the wine, the crew were over confident, and the ship struck a submerged rock while exiting the port of Barfleur. In complete darkness, the ship sank quickly, and of more than 300 English and French nobles were drowned, leaving only two survivors<sup>2</sup>. The future king, William, so it is told, was able to escape in a small boat, but hearing the cries for help from his half-sister, Mathilda, he returned to save her, but perished when his tiny boat capsized.

Since the assistance that Geoffrey III of Mortagne and his brothers had given to William, father of Henry I, in his conquest of England, the relations between the Rotrou Family and the new Anglo-Norman royalty, had become close. Henry had given his illegitimate daughter Mathilda, in marriage to Rotrou III. Rotrou had become a friend and counsellor to Henry, during the time that Henry had spent in Normandy. When Henry decided to return to England with his family and royal following, it was because he had made peace with the King of France, and solved his major problems in France, at that time. We do not know why Rotrou did not accompany his wife to England. He was perhaps much occupied with local affairs of the Perche. And so Mathilda took the second boat, the White Ship, a special treat offered by her father, with her half-brother William, and so their destiny was sealed. Two sons of Julienne de Perche, the daughter of Geoffrey III of Mortagne, were also lost on this tragic night, where more than 300 of the cream of royalty and nobles of Normandy and England were lost.

Over in England, next day, King Henry became puzzled when the White Ship did not dock or even appear on the horizon. But the news of the catastrophe reached the nobles at his court soon enough, and everyone discovered they had lost family and friends. Stewards, chamberlains and cupbearers had all died – wives and husbands, sons and daughters. As the court mourned, no one dared break the dreadful news to the King, and a whole day and night went by before a young boy was finally pushed into the royal presence, weeping, to throw himself at the King's feet. When Henry realised what had happened, he fell to the ground himself, grief-stricken at the news. He had to be shepherded away to a room where he could mourn privately – this stern Norman king did not care to display weakness in public

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas was the son of Stephen FitzAirard, the captain of the Mora, the ship which brought William the Conqueror over from Normandy, during his invasion of England in 1066, FitzStephen owned and captained the [White Ship](#) which at that time was docked in Barfleur harbour.

<sup>2</sup> A butcher from Rouen (Berold) and a French noble Geoffrey de l'Aigle (Rotrou III's nephew by marriage). However, Geoffrey (brother of Gilbert de l'Aigle who married Julienne de Perche, Rotrou's sister) has been defined by others, as having drowned on the White Ship.

The death of William [the Aethling] left Henry with only one legitimate child, a daughter called Matilda. Matilda was very unpopular, as she was married to Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, a traditional enemy of England's Norman nobles. Repercussion of this tragedy was incommensurable. Stephen of Blois, a relative of Henry I, usurped the position of Matilda, Henry's daughter, to become King of England. In revenge, Matilda and her husband Geoffrey, launched a long and devastating war against Stephen, in order to control the throne of England. This anguished period of English history was called "The Anarchy", the war between England and Normandy, which lasted between 1135 and 1154. Neither side could gain a decisive advantage, and the war dragged on for many years. Matilda eventually succeeded in placing her son Henry to become the new King of England in detriment to the attempt by Stephen to put his own son, Eustace, on the throne. After the siege of Wallingford, Stephen and Henry agreed to a truce<sup>3</sup> When Stephen and Henry sealed the treaty with the "Kiss of Peace"<sup>4</sup>, the city of Wallingford was assigned the Royal Charter for its help in reuniting the belligerents.

This catastrophe left a mark on English and French aristocracy for many a year. The House of Rotrou also suffered a great loss, for Matilda, the daughter of King Henry was also the wife of Rotrou III. So saddened by the loss of his wife, Rotrou vowed that he would never remarry. However, after some years, he relented, and married Hawise de Salisbury, who gave him three sons, Rotrou IV, Geoffrey and Stephen. And so, by a stroke of fate, the House of Rotrou was given a new lease of life, by a tragedy off the coast of Normandy, during a winter night in November, 1120.

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<sup>3</sup> The truce was known as the Treaty of Winchester (1153), where Stephen recognised Henry as his future heir. Stephen died one year later (1154), and the new king Henry II began the reconstruction of his kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> The Kiss of Peace was an ancient Christian custom which was later interpreted as a sign of peace in between enemies.

This is a poem written in 1878, about the White Ship Disaster

By none but me can the tale be told,  
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.  
(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)  
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,  
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.  
(The sea hath no King but God alone)

King Henry held it as life's whole gain  
That after his death his son should reign.

'Twas so in my youth I heard men say,  
And my old age calls it back today.

King Henry of England's realm was he,  
And Henry Duke of Normandy.

The times had changed when on either coast  
"Clerkly Harry" was all his boast.

Of ruthless strokes full many an one  
He had struck to crown himself and his son;  
And his elder brother's eyes were gone.

But all the chiefs of the English land  
Had knelt and kissed the Prince's hand.

And next with his son he sailed to France  
To claim the Norman allegiance:

And every baron in Normandy  
Had taken the oath of fealty.

'Twas sworn and sealed, and the day had come  
When the King & the Prince might journey home:

For Christmas cheer is to home hearts dear,  
And Christmas now was drawing near.

Stout Fitz-Stephen came to the King;—  
A pilot famous in sea-faring;

And he held to the King, in all men's sight,  
A mark of gold for his tribute's right.

"Liege Lord! my father guided the ship  
From whose boat your father's foot did slip  
When he caught the English soil in his grip,

"And cried," By this clasp I claim command  
O'er every rood of English land!"

"He was borne to the realm you rule o'er now  
In that ship with the archer carved at her prow:

"And thither I'll bear, an' it be my due,  
Your father's son and his grandson too.

"The famed White Ship is mine in the bay;  
From Harfleur's harbour she sails today,

With masts fair-pennon'd as Norman spears  
And with fifty well-tried mariners."

Quoth the King: "My ships are chos'n each one,  
But I'll not say nay to Stephen's son.

"My son and daughter and fellowship  
Shall cross the water in the White Ship."

The King set sail with the eve's south wind,  
And soon he left that coast behind.

The Prince and all his, a princely show,  
Remained in the good White Ship to go.

With noble knights and with ladies fair,  
With courtiers and sailors gathered there,  
Three hundred living souls we were:

And I Berold was the meanest hind  
In all that train to the Prince assign'd.

The Prince was a lawless shameless youth;  
From his father's loins he sprang without ruth:

Eighteen years till then he had seen,  
And the devil's dues in him were eighteen.

And now he cried: "Bring wine from below;  
Let the sailors revel ere yet they row:

“Our speed shall o’ertake my father’s flight  
Though we sail from the harbour at midnight.”

The rowers made good cheer without check,  
The lords and ladies obeyed his beck;  
The night was light, and they danced on the deck.

But at midnight’s stroke they cleared the bay,  
And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune  
To the double flight of the ship and the moon:

Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped  
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead:

As white as a lily glimmered she  
Like a ship’s fair ghost upon the sea.

And the Prince cried, ”Friends, ’tis the hour to sing!  
Is a songbird’s course so swift on the wing?”

And under the winter stars’ still throng,  
From brown throats, white throats, merry & strong,  
The knights and the ladies raised a song.

A song,—nay, a shriek that rent the sky,  
That leaped o’er the deep!—the grievous cry  
Of three hundred living that now must die.

An instant shriek that sprang to the shock  
As the ship’s keel felt the sunken rock.

’Tis said that afar—a shrill strange sigh—  
The King’s ships heard it and knew not why.

Pale Fitz-Stephen stood by the helm  
’Mid all those folk that the waves must whelm.

A great King’s heir for the waves to whelm,  
And the helpless pilot pale at the helm!

The ship was eager and sucked athirst  
As a swimming bladder fills when pierc’d;

And like the moil round a sinking cup,  
The waters against her crowded up.



A moment the pilot's senses spin,—  
The next he snatched the Prince 'mid the din,  
Cut the boat loose, and the youth leaped in.

A few friends leaped with him, standing near.  
"Row! the sea's smooth and the night is clear!"

"What! none to be saved but these and I?"  
"Row, row as you'd live! All here must die."

Out of the churn of the choking ship,  
Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,  
They struck with the strained oars' flash & dip.

'Twas then o'er the splitting bulwarks' brim  
The Prince's sister screamed to him.

He turned about, still rowing apace,  
And through the whirled surf he knew her face.

To the toppling decks clave one and all  
As a fly cleaves to a chamber-wall.

I Berold was clinging anear;  
I prayed for myself and quaked with fear,  
But I saw his eyes as he looked at her.

He knew her face and he heard her cry,  
And he said, "Put back! she must not die!"

And back through the flying foam they reel  
Like a leaf that scuds in a water-wheel.

'Neath the ship's travail they scarce might float,  
But he rose and stood in the rocking boat.

Prone the poor ship leaned on the tide:  
O'er the naked keel as she best might slide,  
The sister toiled to the brother's side.

He reached an oar to her from below,  
And stiffened his arms to clutch her so.

But now from the ship some spied the boat,  
And "Saved!" was the cry from many a throat:

And down to the boat they leaped and fell:  
It turned as a bucket turns in a well,  
And nothing was there but the surge & swell.

The Prince that was and the King to come,  
There in an instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee  
And maugre the Norman fealty!

He was a Prince of lust and pride;  
He showed no grace till the hour he died.

When he should be King, he oft would vow,  
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.  
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake,  
But I saw him die for his sister's sake.

By none but me can the tale be told,  
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.  
(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)  
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,  
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.  
(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

And now the end came o'er the waters' womb  
Like the last great Day that's yet to come.

With prayers in vain and curses in vain,  
The White Ship sundered on the mid-main:

And what were men and what was a ship  
Were toys and splinters in the sea's grip.

I Berold was down in the sea;  
And passing strange though the thing may be,  
Of dreams then known I remember me.

Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand  
When morning lights the sails to land:

And blithe is Honfleur's echoing gloam  
When mothers call the children home:

And high do the bells of Rouen beat

When the Body of Christ goes down the street.

These things and the like were heard & shown  
In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone;

And when I rose, 'twas the sea did seem,  
And not these things, to be all a dream.

The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,  
And the deep shuddered & the moon shone:

And in a strait grasp my arms did span  
The mainyard split from the mast where it ran;  
And on it with me was another man.

Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky,  
We told our names, that man and I.

“O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,  
And son I am to a belted knight.”

“And I am Berold the butcher's son  
Who slays the beasts in Rouen town.”

Then cried we upon God's name, as we  
Did drift on the bitter winter sea.

But lo! a third man rose o'er the wave,  
And we said, “Thank God! us three may He save!”

He clutched to the yard with panting stare,  
And we looked & knew Fitz-Stephen there.

He clung, and “What of the Prince?” quoth he.  
“Lost, lost!” we cried. He cried, “Woe on me!”  
And loosed his hold & sank through the sea.

And soul with soul again in that space  
We two were together face to face:

And each knew each, as the moments sped,  
Less for one living than for one dead:

And every still star overhead  
Seemed an eye that knew we were but dead.

And the hours passed; till the noble's son

Sighed, "God be thy help! my strength's foredone!—

"O farewell, friend, for I can no more!"

"Christ take thee!" I moaned; & his life was o'er.

Three hundred souls were all lost but one,  
And I drifted over the sea alone.

At last the morning rose o'er the sea  
Like an angel's wing that beat tow'rds me.

Sore numbed I was in my sheepskin coat;  
Half dead I hung, and might nothing note  
Till I woke sun-warmed in a fisher-boat.

The sun was high o'er the eastern brim  
As I praised God and gave thanks to Him.

That day I told my tale to a priest,  
Who charged me, till the shrift were releas'd,  
That I should keep it in mine own breast.

And with the priest I thence did fare  
To King Henry's court at Winchester.

We spoke with the King's high chamberlain,  
And he wept and mourned again & again,  
As if his own son had been slain:

And round us ever there crowded fast  
Great men with faces all aghast:

And who so bold that might tell the thing  
Which now they knew to their lord the King?  
Much woe I learnt in their communing.

The King had watched with a heart sore stirr'd  
For two whole days, and this was the third:

And still to all his court would he say,  
"What keeps my son so long away?"

And they said:— "The ports lie far and wide  
That skirt the swell of the English tide;

"And England's cliffs are not more white  
Than her women are, and scarce so light

Her skies as their eyes are blue and bright;

“And in some port that he reached from France  
The Prince has lingered for his pleasure.”

But once the King asked: “What distant cry  
Was that we heard 'twixt the sea and sky?”

And one said: “With suchlike shouts, pardie!<sup>240</sup>  
Do the fishers fling their nets at sea.”

And one: “Who knows not the shrieking quest  
When the sea-mew misses its young from the nest?”

'Twas thus till now they had soothed his dread,  
Albeit they knew not what they said:

But who should speak today of the thing  
That all knew there except the King?

Then pondering much they found a way,  
And met round the King's high seat that day:

And the King sat with a heart sore stirr'd,  
And seldom he spoke and seldom heard.

'Twas then through the hall the King was 'ware  
Of a little boy with golden hair,

As bright as the golden poppy is  
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss:

Yet pale his cheek as the thorn in Spring,  
And his garb black like the raven's wing.

Nothing heard but his foot through the hall,  
For now the lords were silent all.

And the King wondered, and said, “Alack!  
Who sends me a fair boy dressed in black?”

“Why, sweet heart, do you pace through the hall  
As though my court were a funeral?”

Then lowly knelt the child at the dais,  
And looked up weeping in the King's face.

“O wherefore black, O King, ye may say,  
For white is the hue of death today.

“Your son and all his fellowship  
Lie in the Sea's bed with the White Ship.”

King Henry fell as a man struck dead;  
And speechless still he stared from his bed  
When to him next day my rede I read.

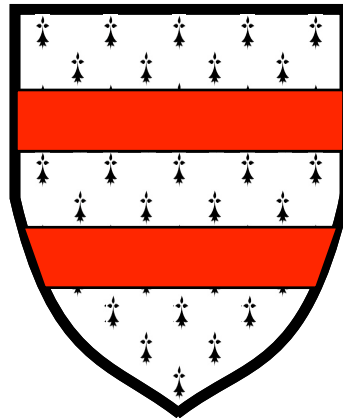
There's many an hour must needs beguile  
A King's high heart that he should smile,—

Full many a lordly hour, full fain  
Of his realm's rule and pride of his reign:—

But this King never smiled again.

By none but me can the tale be told,  
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.  
(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)  
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,  
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.  
(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1880.



# BOOK THREE

Ireland  
(1171- 1415)

# **A PROMISE OF GLORY**

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# Ireland in the 11th and 12th Centuries

## 11th Century Ireland



The XIth century in Ireland saw much upheaval. There were eight major kingdoms in Ireland at this time, and most of them spent their time warring with their neighbours. During this time, Viking control over limited but important seaports on the east coast of Ireland (Dublin, Wexford and Waterford) complicated the internal battles between the native Irish. These seaports were centres of trade and manufacture, and as such were highly important to those who controlled them. The kings of Leinster were particularly interested in these ports, as most of them were in or close to Leinster<sup>1</sup>. However, in attempting to unite Ireland, Brian Boru did not try to evict the Norsemen who were firmly installed in some of these East coast towns. Strangely enough, the warlike Vikings slowly converted to Christianity, and merged with the Irish, taking their customs and their language. In the early XIth Century, they had already been assimilated into Ireland, sometimes fighting against, sometimes making alliances, with their new neighbours.

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<sup>1</sup> Waterford, although in a small kingdom to the south of Leinster, had been controlled by Leinster since the late Xth century.

## Synopsis of events in the XIth Century



And so the aube of the XIth century saw Ireland in continuous internal war. In the kingdom of Munster, a certain Brian Boru was permanently occupied in defending his territories against Mael Sechnaill, King of Mide and High-King of Ireland.

997 - Mael was forced to acknowledge Brian Boru's authority over the south of Ireland, and they agreed to divide Ireland between them. However, this agreement was broken when Brian turned against Mael, and within a short time had forced him to submit. Brian then claimed kingship over the whole of Ireland. Although faced with rebellions in

conquered territory, Brian finally forced every major regional king into submission, and became the first real High-King of Ireland. Brian died in 1022, killed by a Viking chief who was fleeing from battle. He was succeeded by Diarmait mac Mail na mBo.

1039 - King Iago of Gwynedd (Northern Wales) was killed by Gruffydd ap Llewelyn but his family escaped to Dublin. Iago's son Cynan prepared two unsuccessful campaigns to try and recover his father's kingdom. Cynan's son, Gruffydd, born years later (about 1054), also vowed to succeed where his father had failed. After a few unsuccessful attempts, Gruffydd sailed from Waterford to South Wales in 1081, and with the help of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth (Southern Wales), he succeeded in recovering the title of king of Gwynedd for his family, but his success was short-lived. In 1099 Gruffydd again returned from Ireland, this time to succeed in his final attempt to regain Gwynedd. He managed to keep a hold on his kingdom until his death in 1137.

1044 - Hywel ap Edwin, king of Deheubarth, was expelled by Gruffydd ap Llewelyn, and sought refuge in Ireland. He raised a fleet there and attempted to retake Deheubarth, but he and a large number of his Irish mercenaries were killed in battle by Gruffydd.

1051 - Godwin, Earl of Essex, and his sons, rivals of King Edward the Confessor, were banished from England and sought the aid of Diarmait Mac Máel, king of Uí Chennselaig and of Leinster (1042-1072), who was grandfather of Diarmat Mac Murchada (above). They raised a fleet to launch attacks on the Devonshire, Somersetshire and Kentish coasts.

1055 - Aelfgar, earl of Anglia, Earl of Mercia, was banished for treason from England by Edward the Confessor. He went to Ireland where he raised a fleet, formed an alliance with Gruffydd ap Llewelyn, king of Gwynedd, and led their combined forces in an attack on the city of Hereford. As a result King Edward was obliged to restore him to the Earldom of East Anglia.

1066 - Two surviving sons of King Harold Godwinson had escaped to Ireland after the battle of Hastings. They were given sanctuary by Diarmait mac Mail na mBo, who eventually lent them a fleet of ships from Dublin, which they used in their invasions of England, in their sterile attempts to return to power.

1070 - Diarmait was one of the most important kings in Ireland. His influence was felt as far away as the Hebrides, the Isle of Man and Wales. He installed his son Murchadas as King of Dublin. However, Murchadas died in 1070, before his father. Diarmait died in 1072, and was succeeded, as King of Leinster by his son, Domnaill mac Murchada. Now that Brian Boru and his son were both dead, Ireland sank into a state of disorder.

1088 - Rhys ap Tewdwr, King of Deheubarth (Southern Wales), was expelled by the sons of Bleddyn, King of Powys (Southern Wales), and he fled to Ireland, raised a fleet in Dublin and returned to defeat them and retake his kingdom. Gruffydd, son of Rhys, was fostered in Ireland, and it was from Ireland that he returned to Wales about 1113 in a bid to regain his father's kingdom. He was partially successful in his attempt, with the help of King Henry I, but in 1127 he was obliged to flee to Ireland once more.

1097 - Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, prince of Powys (Central Wales), fled to Ireland after the Norman victory of Mon in 1097. He returned in 1099 to with the object of making a truce with the Normans. Cadwgan's son, Owain, was forced to flee to Ireland in 1109. On his return from Ireland, Owain mounted a number of expeditions into Dyfed (Southern Wales) taking Norman prisoners, and shipping them as slaves, back to Ireland.

## **XIIth Century Ireland**

An important part of Irish events, that is sometimes omitted by historians, includes the connections between the Irish, Norse and Welsh prior to the arrival of the Normans of 1169. From the 11th century onwards political refugees from Britain gravitated toward Leinster in Ireland, and who sought mercenary fleets from the Hiberno-Norse towns of Dublin, Waterford, and Wexford. We must clarify the reason for this state of affairs. Williams Conquest of England, which began in 1066, met with considerable resistance for many years. In particular, Wales and the north of England represented a hard nut to crack, as they fiercely resisted "The Conqueror". William put his most powerful and faithful followers into the regions which contested his authority, but drove a hard bargain. If his followers could conquer and hold the rebel English and Welsh, they would be significantly rewarded. If they failed, then they would lose everything, especially favour with the new King of England. This state of affairs lasted a long time, with repercussions into the XIIth century. Welsh contestants chose to flee their country, and to install themselves in a more favourable climate, where opposition was mostly formed by Irish farmers with staffs and pitchforks. However, their ultimate object was not to contest any land in Ireland, but to mount an invasion to recover their homeland. The relatively safe havens of Ireland were prime vantage points from which to try and recover kingdoms lost to the powerful Anglo-Norman invaders.

The Welsh and the Scottish were not going to give in so easily to William. It was for this reason that William put his most trusted men close to the Borders, with enticing grants of land, and titles of importance, but only if they managed to hold the lands against the stubborn Celts. In order to build more successful opposition, some Welsh temporarily retreated to Ireland, where they found the possibility to mount minor invasions into their own country, in the hope of evicting the Norman invaders. In actual fact, the situation in Wales was similar to that of Ireland, even before the arrival of the Normans. In both countries, there were small kingdoms in a permanent state of war with their neighbours. Kingdoms were won and lost in Wales and Ireland long before the Normans brought more problems.

### **Synopsis of events in the XIIth Century**

1102 - Arnulf de Montgomery, who had been granted the lordship of Pembroke (South-West Wales) by King William Rufus about 1093, revolted against Henry I. In consequence he sought a marriage alliance with Muirchertach Ua Briain, king of Munster (1086-1119) and high-king of Ireland. Despite his Irish alliance Arnulf forfeited the lordship of Pembroke, and sought temporary haven in Ireland.

1110 - Dermot MacMurrough (Diarmait Mac Murchada) was born, son of Donnchad mac Murchada, King of Leinster and Dublin.

1115 to 1131, Turlough destroyed everything in his path and from 1140 began to emerge as the most powerful, and thus the possible future king of Ireland. When he died in 1156, his power was supplanted by that of the king of the Ui Neill, Muirchertach Mac

Lochlainn.

1140 - Dermot unexpectedly became King of Leinster upon the death of his elder brother Enna mac Donnchada Mac Murchada. The High-King Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair thought that Dermot would become a rival and so instigated plans to drive Dermot from his kingdom. But, until the turn of the century, the most powerful king in Ireland was Dermot MacMurrough (Diarmait Mac Murchada), King of Leinster. Dermot could count on powerful support from the Anglo-Normans and the current Norwegian king, and managed to dominate most of the country. However, he had enemies who were becoming more powerful and who contested his domains. Domnaill Mac Lochlainn, king of the Ui Neill, managed to limit the plans of MacMurrough, until a third contestant, Turlough O'Connor, King of Connacht (1106-1156), arrived on the scene.

1144 - Gruffydd ap Cynan's sons, Cadwalladr and Owain, begin feuding in Wales. Cadwalladr treacherously killed Owain's nephew Anarawd of Deheubarth. Owain was incensed, and sent his son Hywel to invade Cadwalladr's territory. Cadwalladr sent to Ireland for help, resulting in a Norse fleet sailing to Abermenai, led by Þórkell, brother of King Ragnall of Dublin.

1165 - Henry II hired a fleet from Dublin in his Welsh campaign of 1165. The fleet can only have been made available to Henry with the consent of Diarmait Mac Murchada as overlord of Dublin. The following year Diarmait was ousted from his kingship in Ireland and sought aid from Henry II and the Cambro-Normans in Wales. Henry owed a favour to Mac Murchada.

So did the island of Ireland present itself to the world in the XIIth century, much associated with the invaded country of Wales, a turmoil of war, treachery and haegemony which was rife, until Dermot MacMurrough upset the apple-cart. The stage was set for a radical change in the history of Ireland, which was to last for seven centuries.





## Introduction to the Nugents in Ireland

Ireland ! In the 7th and 8th centuries, a country that has offered civilisation and culture to a barbarous Europe. A country that, from the 12th century, will suffer the most despicable and the most humiliating treatment imposed by a "civilised" European country, upon its neighbour. For nearly seven centuries, a Catholic country brought to its knees, and symbolically decapitated by a Protestant England.

How did this come about ? What was the trigger which began the slow but sure descent of the Irish into the depths of slavery imposed by successive Kings and Queens of England. This subject merits a closer study, for the initial incursions of the English into Ireland in second half of the 12th century were neither colonialist nor invasionist. They were simply a response to a call for help ! And while we are on this subject, we can set the scene for the arrival in Ireland of the English descendants of the De Nogent family, the Nugents, as they are now known.

The first movements of hostility and animosity towards Ireland begin from the Vatican, in the course of the 12th Century. A contemporary chronicler, Giraldus Cambrensis <sup>1</sup>, writes that in about 1155 the pope granted Henry authority over Ireland so that he could reform the Irish church. The pope, appropriately, is Adrian IV - the only Englishman to have held the see of Rome. However, Henry II was busy consolidating his hold on England, and any ideas of subduing Ireland were put on the backburner.

The future of Ireland was decided by what at first, seemed to be of a secondary nature. One of the Kings of Ireland <sup>2</sup>, Dermot MacMurrough (Diarmait Mac Murchada) was driven from his kingdom, Leinster, by a coalition of Irish and Norse belligerents. Calling upon Henry, King of England, to help recover his kingdom, Dermot escaped to Wales to plead his cause. King Henry had his hands full with "internal affairs" <sup>3</sup>, and so gave Dermot authorization to approach his allies. Dermot was thus obliged to recruit mercenaries to assist him in recovering his lands. Dermot turned to Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke (known as Strongbow), a descendant of the Capetians and the Dukes of Normandy. Fortunately for Dermot, Strongbow was, at this time, out of favour with King Henry, and his title of Earl of Pembroke had been confiscated. In a sorry financial position, Strongbow jumped at the chance to improve his situation, especially as Dermot went so far as to promise the hand of his daughter Aoife, together with other incentives of land, if Strongbow succeeded. He organized the setting up of a small expedition to Ireland, headed by Robert FitzStephen. FitzStephen had been released from prison on condition that he went to Ireland to help Dermot. Henry must have thought that this way he could get rid of these

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<sup>1</sup> Medieval clergyman and chronicler of the second half of the 12th century, Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales) was archdeacon of Brecon. Of mixed Norman and Welsh blood, nephew of Robert FitzStephen, and future chaplain to Henry II, he was well situated to offer his arguments at this time.

<sup>2</sup> At this period in Ireland there were at least eight kingdoms in Ireland; Meath, Ulaid, Munster, Cork, Limerick, Leinster, Airgialla and Breifne.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury had just been assassinated, and King Henry was "somewhat" involved.

troublesome characters, but in fact it turned out to be a rather unfortunate decision <sup>4</sup>. FitzStephen's force, although small in number, was more than enough, with its modern fighting techniques, to overcome local Irish resistance. Strongbow, at this moment, was only piloting the help to Dermot, from a distance, but he was brought directly into the fray, when Dermot began to covet the high-kingship of Ireland. Dermot had recovered some of his authority, but was obliged to recognize Ruari O'Connor as the high-king, and to promise to send his foreign allies back to Wales (known as the treaty of 1169). Dermot requested more support from Strongbow, who eventually arrived in August of 1170 with a force of 1000 men, composed of a majority of archers <sup>5</sup>). This force, together with those of Dermot, FitzStephen and FitzGerald, captured the town of Waterford. Dermot gave Strongbow the hand of his daughter, as promised, and thus the treaty of 1169 was broken. The city of Dublin soon fell to the combined Irish/Norman armies, and Strongbow went on to retake Wexford and Waterford which had been lost to Norse forces for a short time.

Henry, by this time was beginning to get worried that he had let Strongbow create a rival state in Ireland. His idea of letting Strongbow loose in Ireland was turning out to be a very bad idea indeed ! He rapidly amassed a large army (about 7000 men), and arrived in Ireland in October 1171. Strongbow immediately took the wise decision to bow to his liege, and surrendered his Irish conquests to Henry, who showed magnanimity, and granted Strongbow the kingdom of Leinster, while retaining Dublin, Waterford and Wexford for himself. The Irish kings paid homage to Henry, but retained their full powers. This was effectively replacing the authority of the Irish high-kings, and in addition guaranteeing the security of the kingdoms, a situation that the Irish kings fully accepted.

Before leaving Ireland in April 1172, Henry granted the province of Meath to the head of his army, Hugh de Lacy, but, much more important, appointed him "justiciar" (viceroy). This gave to Hugh de Lacy practically the same powers as the King himself, an honour rarely given. Henry's object was clear, to reward the De Lacy family for generations of faithful service to his cause, and also to leave a loyal servitor on site in Ireland, to curb the aspirations of Strongbow <sup>6</sup>.

There are two schools of thought in Ireland at this moment, entirely opposed. The Irish do homage to Henry, under absolutely no pressure. They recognise his power, and submit to his presence, probably with the idea that he will protect them from the invading Vikings. However, the Anglo-Norman families who have come to "save" the kingdom of Dermot MacMurrough have other ideas in mind. Perhaps the Anglo-Norman lords preferred to take a chance on their potential in Ireland, rather than wage it against an unsure future in England, Wales and Scotland. They have all been present since the Conquest of 1066. Many of them were endowed with lands and dominions, but some of the Norman descendants have difficulty holding on to their

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<sup>4</sup> This is not a normal tendency for Henry. He has shown significant political acumen in his reign, so far. However, he has an enormous problem to solve at home, involved with the assassination of Thomas A'Beckett.

<sup>5</sup> The use of archers at this time, a Norman development, was lethal to the poorly protected armies, such as the Irish.

<sup>6</sup> Henry certainly estimated that Strongbow would continue his intrigues in Ireland, but did not wish to order him to return to England. Strongbow would be out of the way, but nevertheless under the watchful eye of de Lacy.

lands. At the frontiers of Williams conquered land, such as Wales and Scotland, resistance to the Norman invaders continued long after the initial invasion of 1066, and William deliberately gave some of the largest tracts of land to his vassals on the principle "If you can hold it against all odds, you can keep it". Welsh dissidents continually harried these Norman barons on the border with England, in true terrorist fashion <sup>7</sup>. Not surprising indeed, that some Anglo-Norman family descendants were tempted to try their luck in Ireland.

We must remember the basic rules applied to estates and titles by the King of England at this period. His subjects were vassals, and they were considered as tenants of the land attributed by him. He could destitute someone of their land and titles, as he pleased, and attribute them to another who had come into favour <sup>8</sup>. The case with Strongbow was an ideal example. He had fallen out of favour, and was not likely to regain it. However, Henry, although appearing to be magnanimous, was in fact a very astute ruler, using the "carrot", or allocation of land and titles, to keep his subjects in line, and to maintain power in unsettled times. Unfortunately for Strongbow, his future was severely compromised, for he died in June, 1176, and all his rights were confiscated by the crown <sup>9</sup>. The situation in Ireland continued to deteriorate, until, little by little, the initial expeditions to Ireland, turned into a real invasion, and Ireland progressively was reduced to effective slavery for more than 600 years.

Among the mercenaries who accompanied Hugh de Lacy to Ireland with Henry, were several members of the de Nogent family, who stayed on only too eager to take their chances in this new land, and to look forward to what they thought could be a more prosperous future. Their hopes were satisfied beyond their wildest expectations when Hugh de Lacy, in true feudal fashion, divided the county of Meath given to him by Henry, among his thirteen principal followers, and even dubbed many of them with the title of Baron.

It is beginning to look as if the De Nogent descendants are here to stay .....

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<sup>7</sup> The Welsh and the Scots have shown their disapproval of English domination for more than a thousand years. Today, however, they cannot show this disapproval as they used to do in times gone by !

<sup>8</sup> The indication of the changes of heart of the subsequent kings, year after year, can be seen in "The Pipe Rolls", a yearly list of the attribution of wealth to the Kings subjects. These Pipe Rolls, available to this day, are a valuable aid to genealogists and historians, in following the fortunes of many families, as they fall into and out of favour with the King.

<sup>9</sup> Standard feudal practice in the Middle Ages, and a sword of Damocles over the heads of many of the favoured vassals. They were never sure whether they would continue to "please" their King, or whether their descendants would have perennial rights previously given to their fathers. Even worse, when no male heir was forthcoming, forfeiture was immediate, and titles and land would be recovered by the crown.

# The Ireland Invasion

## Causes of the Invasion of Ireland

The "invasion" of Ireland began theoretically many years before it actually took place. This strange turn of events began as a result of papal influence in 1155. Pope Adrian IV, the only ever English Pope, issued a papal bull <sup>1</sup> which encouraged Henry II, King of England, to assume control over Ireland, in order to enforce the reforms of the Catholic Church in this country. The exact date upon which this document was drafted is not clearly defined. Although its origin is quoted in 1155, it is also noted as having existed in a document by John of Salisbury, in 1159. An excerpt from this document shows the encouragement of the papacy to intervene in State affairs of England, with concern for the salvation of a wayward country called Ireland. In a document addressed specifically to Henry, he indicates :

*Now, most dear Son in Christ, you have signified to us that you propose to enter the island of Ireland to establish the observance of law among its people, and to eradicate the weeds of vice; and that you are willing to pay from every house one penny as an annual tribute to St. Peter, and to preserve the rights of the churches of that land, whole and inviolate. We, therefore, receiving with due favor your pious and laudable desires, and graciously granting our consent to your petition, declare that it is pleasing and acceptable to us, that for the purpose of enlarging the limits of the Church, setting bounds to the torrent of vice, reforming evil manners, planting the seeds of virtue and increasing Christian faith, you should enter that island and carry into effect those things which belong to the service of God and to the salvation of that people; and that the people of that land should honorably receive and reverence you as Lord; the rights of the churches being preserved untouched and entire, and reserving the annual tribute of one penny from every house to St. Peter and the most Holy Roman Church.*

However Henry II was occupied at the outset of his career in securing his hold on England itself, and any plans of intervention in Ireland were delayed for several years. It is not sure if Henry would ever have taken on the recommendations of the papal bull, and launch operations to "bring the Irish to heel", but he was eventually driven to it by events which were, in fact, of his own doing.

The political climate in Ireland at the time was one of inter-tribal rivalries, as it had been for centuries. In the mid-1100's a great rivalry for the high-kingship of Ireland existed between Muirchertach MacLochlainn of Tirowen and Ruairi O'Connor [Ruadrí Ua Conchobair] of Connacht. Dermot MacMurrough [Dairmait Mac Murchada], the King of Leinster, allied himself with MacLochlainn, and Dermot's greatest foe, Tiernan O'Rourke

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<sup>1</sup> This edict, known as the "Laudabiliter" will launch a chain of events which will last more than eight centuries, and will result in the literal enslaving of the Irish until 1922, when it was declared an Irish Free State, a dominion of the British Commonwealth..

[Tighernán Ua Ruairc], King of Breifne, allied himself with O'Connor. Dermot and Tiernan were bitter rivals contending for the middle kingdom of Meath, and at one point Dermot abducted the wife of O'Rourke, thus sealing the hatred between these two kings.

In 1166 the high-king Muirchertach MacLochlainn died. Dermot MacMurrough, losing his greatest ally and protector in MacLochlainn, saw his kingdom in Leinster invaded by O'Connor and O'Rourke. On this occasion the Ostmen (Norsemen) of Dublin also participated in ousting Dermot from his kingship in Leinster.

## **Dermot MacMurrough seeks help from England**

Losing his powerful allies in Ireland, the ousted King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, had few options available to recover his kingdom. He decided to seek help from Henry II, the current King of England. Henry II was rather absorbed with local problems at the time <sup>2</sup>, and so suggested that Dermot seek the help of one of his vassals, Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke (known as Strongbow). Henry gave Dermot a Letter of Patent to Dermot :

*Henry, King of England, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and earl of Anjou, to all his liegemen, English, Norman, Welsh and Scotch, and to all the nations under his dominion, greeting. When these letters shall come into your hands, know ye, that we have received Diarmait, Prince of Leinster, into the bosom of our grace and benevolence. Wherefore, whosoever, in the ample extent of all our territories, shall be willing to assist in restoring that prince, as our vassal and liegeman, let such person know, that we do hereby grant to him our licence and favour for the said undertaking.*

At this time De Clare had been denied his title, because he has displeased Henry, and so Henry thought has he would be rid of a troublesome subject by sending him off to Ireland to help out Dermot. And so did Henry set in motion a succession of events which would have repercussions for many centuries.

Dermot formed an alliance with Strongbow when he promised grants of land as well as his daughter's hand in marriage, in exchange for his help. After winning Strongbow over to his cause, Dermot visited the Welsh prince of South Wales, Rhys ap Gruffydd, to gain the freedom of Robert FitzStephen, a "Knight of great reknown," who had been held captive by Rhys. Strongbow needed support if he wished to succeed in solving Dermot's problem. At the request of Robert's half-brothers, David (bishop of St. David's) and Maurice FitzGerald, Robert was released on condition that he went to Ireland to assist Dermot MacMurrough. All was ready for the Anglo-Normans to come to the help of a bespoiled Irish King.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry had been unwise in speaking about the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Beckett, with who he had frequent quarrels. When his close associates heard him saying. "Will nobody rid me of this turbulent priest ", they took it to heart, and murdered Beckett. Henry was now up to his ears in trouble, as he was suspected of murder !

## The Norman "Invasion" of Ireland is Under Way

In late 1168, Dermot returned to Ireland with a small force of Welsh and Flemish under the command of Robert FitzStephen. With only 30 knights, 60 men-at-arms and 300 archers <sup>3</sup>, FitzStephen was prepared to take on Dermot's enemies. With native Irish support to regain control of his homeland, Dermot attempted to reclaim his kingship of Leinster. He was however defeated southeast of Carlow town by the High-King Ruairi O'Connor and his ally Tiernan O'Rourke, the same who had ousted him in 1166.

Shortly after, Maurice de Prendergast with a force of about 200, reinforced FitzStephen's group. Merging with a force of near 500 Irishmen under MacMurrough, the combined army marched toward the Norse-Irish seaport of Wexford, where battle began outside the walls of the town. Encountering the Norman mounted and armored knights and the deadly Welsh archers, the Norse army of about 2,000 retreated into their town. After repeated assaults on their walled city, the Norsemen called for terms of peace and were forced to recognise Dermot as their overlord. At this time, Dermot granted lands in Wexford to Robert FitzStephen and his half-brother Maurice FitzGerald, as well as to Hervey de Monte Marisco, an uncle of Strongbow.

Once that Dermot and FitzStephen realised that they had the wind in their sails, they decided to continue. They invaded Ossory (which is now Kilkenny), the most western kingdom of Leinster. Dermot had a bone to pick with Donal MacGiolla Phadriag, King of Ossory, who had previously captured and blinded Dermot's eldest son. In a battle lasting three days, the Ossorians were defeated. Encouraged by his successes, Dermot moved on to Leinster where he did battle against the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles. However, the High-King of Ireland, Ruairi O'Connor returned to Leinster and together with the help of the Church, forced Dermot into negotiation. In a treaty of 1169, Dermot was allowed to keep the kingship of Leinster, as long as he recognised Ruairi as the High-King, and send his foreign allies back to where they came from. The Norsemen in the port of Dublin reluctantly accepted all these terms, and so Dermot now found himself in a much greater position of power.

## The Arrival of Strongbow

At the close of 1169, Maurice FitzGerald arrived in two ships with more soldiers and archers. Dermot was beginning to become more confident, and asked Strongbow to send more forces. Even with a much smaller force, Dermot was now sure that it would easily quash any resistance. He even caressed the idea of even becoming High-King. Strongbow had equally high hopes for his future, seeing that he would marry Dermot's daughter Aoife and possibly become overlord in Leinster. He sent another force to

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<sup>3</sup> This may seem a rather meagre force to combat the invading forces to Dermot's kingdom, but it must be remembered that several hundred archers were more than a match against a much larger Irish army.

Ireland under control of Raymond le Gros to ensure safe landing for the main force, which he would accompany some time later. He finally arrived in August 1170, with 1000 men, near the town of Waterford. The combined forces then marched on the walled city of Waterford, and although encountering early resistance, managed to enter and capture the town. Dermot arrived soon after the capture, and immediately fulfilled his promise to Strongbow. The marriage of Aoife and Strongbow took place, and Strongbow was promised as heir to Dermot for the Kingdom of Leinster. Under these circumstances, the previous treaty was thus broken, and it was obvious that the High-King Ruari would react. Ruari was at this time responding to a rebellion by the O'Brian clan in Munster, but he began to assemble a large army to march against Dublin, which he knew to be the next target for the Anglo-Norman forces. Although negotiations had been started between the opposite forces, the Anglo-Norman army had already reached the walls of Dublin, and were successful in entering Dublin from different direction. Asculf MacTorkil the Norse King of Dublin was obliged to retreat by the only way open to him. The defeated Norse forces boarded ship and fled.

Ruari was furious that the Norse possessors of Dublin had begun discussions to leave Dublin, even before the battle, showing that they were not prepared to take on the Anglo-Norman forces. He withdrew his army from where they were, close to Dublin. Encouraged by such little resistance, Dermot then marched into Meath which he had been eyeing for some time, for it was held by one of his greatest enemies, Tiernan O'Rourke. Dermot certainly wanted revenge on the person who had defeated him twice, once in 1166, and then again in 1168.

Up to this moment, the other Irish kings were just lookers-on in a fight between Dermot and the High-King O'Connor. But the death of Dermot in May 1171, and the fact that Strongbow, a foreigner, now became King of Leinster, was too much to accept. The Irish Kings were called upon by O'Connor to drive the Anglo-Norman invaders from Ireland.

At first, and because Ruari was able to assemble large numbers, the attempt to drive out the Anglo-Normans was partially successful. Waterford was soon lost to Dermot MacCarthy of Desmond. FitzStephen was captured by the remaining Norsemen. The Norse returned by sea so as to retake the city of Dublin that they had lost. At the same time, Ruari and his army came overland to prepare an attack on Dublin. Unfortunately for the Norse/Irish association, the Norse fleet landed and attacked

Initially the Irish-Norse campaign to oust the Normans was successful. Dermot MacCarthy of Desmond recaptured Waterford. The Norsemen of Wexford captured FitzStephen. A large Norse fleet under MacTorkil returned to lay siege on Dublin, while Ruari's army was approaching Dublin by land. Unfortunately for the alliance between Norse and Irish, the Norse attacked without waiting for Ruari's land forces, and were overrun by the cavalry of Milo de Cogan and his brother Richard. Even with 60,000 soldiers which laid siege to Dublin, the Norman forces had an advantage using superior technology, especially the archers, and completely routed Ruari's forces. Ruari prudently retreated back into his kingdom of Connacht, with his credit as High-King severely undermined.

Strongbow went on to retake Wexford and Waterford, as well as to defeat the Ossorians who were being aided by O'Brien of Limerick. The other leaders in Leinster soon submitted.

By this time Henry II had noted the successes of Strongbow's forces and feared that affairs were getting out of hand in Ireland. Building an army large enough to quell Strongbow's previous initiatives, Henry arrived in October, 1171, with a large army to assume control of the situation, and to set himself up in the role of the protector against the marauding Norman barons. Strongbow, considerably intimidated by the presence of his king, immediately backed down and rescinded all his Irish conquests to Henry and paid him homage. Henry, always magnanimous, but with an eye on future events granted the kingdom of Leinster to Strongbow but kept Dublin, Waterford and Wexford for himself. The majority of the conquered Irish kingdoms agreed to the authority given to Henry by the Pope and to the peace he offered in Ireland. In truth, they were only replacing one High-King for another. As such, they literally retained all control over their territories but agreed to pay tribute to Henry, in short, a similar situation to the previous one, where they previously paid tribute to an Irish High-King. Henry was intelligent in offering them similar terms that they already accepted before, and they gratefully took advantage of the offer.

### **The Initial Call for Help Turns Into An Invasion.**

Before leaving Ireland in April, 1172, Henry made sure that he was not leaving Strongbow to his previous devices. He granted to Hugh de Lacy, one of his close followers, the province of Meath, and appointed him constable of Dublin and justiciar (or viceroy), which meant that he would be a representant of the King himself, with nearly the same powers. With a totally free hand, De Lacy took control of the situation, killing Tiernan O'Rourke, and stopping resistance in the county of Meath. By 1175, he and Strongbow finally controlled Irish resistance, liberally using the power given by Henry, and set about sharing out conquered lands among their chief vassals<sup>4</sup>.

By 1175 the Treaty of Windsor recognized Ruairi O'Connor as High-King of Ireland outside Leinster, Meath and the area around Waterford. In return, Henry demanded tribute from the Irish chiefs. Ruairi's followers treated this agreement as a diplomatic victory, but its importance was later limited only to the province of Connacht, provided that tribute was paid.

In 1176, after repeated rebellions against both O'Connor and the Normans, the O'Brien king of Thomond burned the city of Limerick, leaving a gutted city in its place, of no use to the invaders. There was also continued unrest in South Munster.

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<sup>4</sup> History tells us that there were 13 major supporters of de Lacy who were declared Barons, and allocated large tracts of land, all paying a small knights tribute to offset the 50 knights tribute that de Lacy had to pay to Henry. Gilbert de Nogent and his brother Richard were among those who greatly benefitted from de Lacy's gesture.



After the death of Strongbow in June, 1176, control of Leinster was temporarily given to Henry II, until 1177, when he transferred all of his rights as Lord of Ireland to his son John.

In 1177, John de Courcy, recently arrived from England, and with no authority to do so, invested Ulaid (Ulster), and ruled for a time as Prince. Hugh De Lacy's charter for Meath was renewed on stricter terms, and the two Irish kingdoms in Munster, controlled by McCarthy and O'Brien, were ceded to Robert FitzStephen and Miles de Cogan, who took possession of a part of Cork and exacted tribute from McCarthy for the rest. Limerick was ceded to Philip de Braose and others, who in fact, had failed to conquer any land at all from O'Brien.

What followed in Ireland of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries was a change from acquiring lordship over men to colonizing land. The founding of borough towns, castles and churches; the importing of tenants; and the increase in agriculture and commerce were among the changes brought on by the Cambro-Normans following the Invasion.

## Henry II in Ireland

Henry II, (1133-1189), King of England, was not descended directly from the previous Kings of England. He was the son of Geoffrey V Plantagenate, the husband of Mathilda of Scotland, who was the daughter of Henry I (Beauclerc). Thus Henry I was his grandfather on the maternal side. His mother was thus a claimant to the English throne, and as Henry was descended from the English Saxon kings, and also the kings of Scotland, he was an obvious candidate for the throne of England. He was born in Le Mans, in France, and went to England for the first time when he was nine, to continue his education.

He married Eleonor d'Aquitaine in 1152, and was crowned King of England in December 1154. Shortly after becoming King, Henry sent an ambassador to meet the newly elected Pope Adrian IV (the only English Pope), and the question of invading Ireland to "bring the Irish into the fold" soon presented itself. However, the plan to "invade" Ireland fell into abeyance for some time.

The relations between the House of Rotrou and the King of England deteriorated after the death of Henry I and his faithful friend Rotrou II. Rotrou II was forced to play a two-sided game with both the King of England and the King of France, and however delicately he played his cards, whenever the two kings came to blows, he always sided with King Louis. He felt the displeasure of Henry quite clearly in 1167, when all profits from his his English possessions were payed into the Kings exchequer (see the "Pipe Rolls" of that period).

In 1166, the Irish question surfaced in a different way. In Ireland, King Diarmait Mac Murchada of Leinster was driven out of his kingdom by the High King of Ireland. He requested help from Henry, who was rather busy with problems in England at that time. Henry suggested that one of his followers could help to solve the problem, a certain Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, nicknamed "Strongbow". Diarmait, as future payment to Strongbow, offered him his daughter Aoife in marriage and promised to make him heir to the kingdom.

Strongbow sent troops to Ireland, and finally went there himself. He quickly subdued Irish resistance in several cities, and Henry soon realized that Strongbow may be getting too big for his boots, but he had a small problem on hand in England concerning Thomas Becket, who had just been assassinated.

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, constantly thwarted Henry's reformation plans, and drove Henry to say "What miserable drones and traitors have I nurtured and promoted in my household who let their lord be treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born cleric!". His closest allies heard his words, and set about resolving Henry's problem, simply by murdering Thomas. Henry must have spent the rest of his life regretting his words.

As Henry was already tied up with the "Thomas Becket" problem, some time elapsed before he could turn to the "Irish" problem, not because of the Popes injunction, but simply because Strongbow was becoming a problem. Finally, in October, 1171, he himself arrived in Ireland with a large force, to bring Strongbow to reason. Hugh de Lacy was in charge of the mercenary force of Henry, which included, among many other knights, Gilbert de Nogent and his brother Richard. The invasion of Ireland soon became reality, and was to last for more than 700 years. When Henry returned to England, he was unwilling to let Strongbow reiterate his conquests in Ireland. Henry gave a large part of Meath to his faithful follower Hugh de Lacy, with the title of "Justiciar" (Viceroy), allowing him to conduct all Irish decisions in his name, but with the exception of church matters. In this way did the De Lacy Barons receive large grants of land from Hugh de Lacy, inciting them to settle in Ireland.

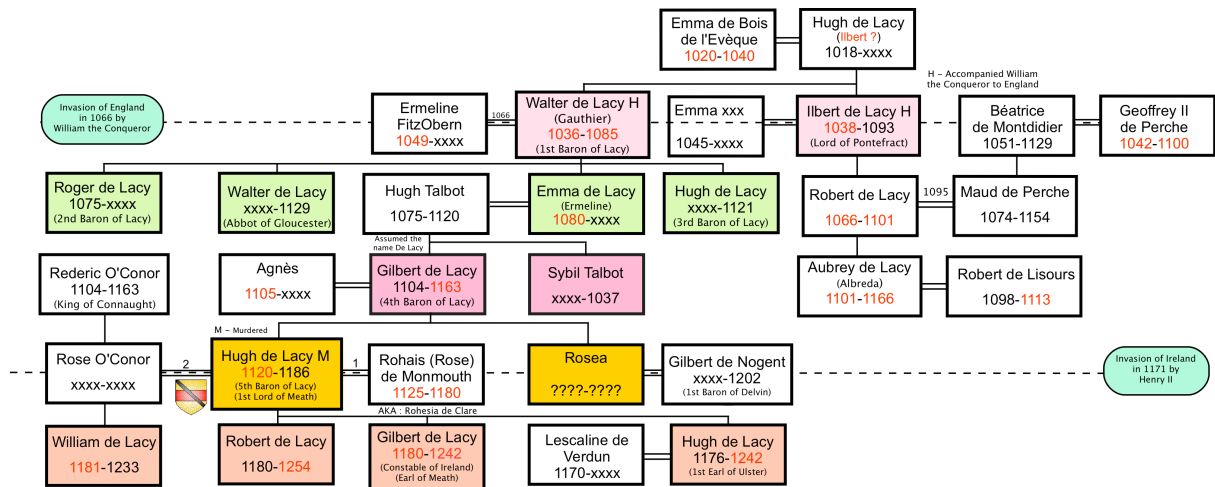
Henry launched an important phase of castle-building to protect the captured territories. In Louth alone, more than 23 castles were built, although many were of the Motte and Bailey construction, and had limited use. Others were built in stone, not necessarily as defensive positions, but to show a hand of superiority and prestige, which was useful in the administration of the conquered territories. Henry left Ireland the spring of 1172, with several of his problems solved. In 1175 he agreed to the Treaty of Windsor, under which Rory O'Connor would be recognised as the High-King of Ireland, while giving homage to Henry in the vassal tradition. Whatever plans Strongbow nurtured when Henry returned to England were severely curtailed. Strongbow ceased to be a problem altogether, when he suddenly died in 1176.

Relations between the House of Rotrou and Henry improved after 1173. Geoffrey, the brother of Rotrou III was a witness to royal charters, and the English possessions were restored to the family. It seems that both Henry and Rotrou now understood the importance of working together, as their fathers had done previously.

Upon Henry's death in 1189, good relations were totally restored with the House of Rotrou, with the English possessions maintained as incentive to Rotrou, and with a close ally in France as incentive to Henry. Thus did several generations of the House of Rotrou and the Kings of England work together for a mutual benefit.

Henry died in July, 1189, and was buried in Fontevraud Abbey (Maine-et-Loire), France, after spending the last years of his life in trying to divide his lands between his numerous ambitious children.

# The De Lacy Family



The links between the De Lacy family and the de Nogent family are known to have existed over several centuries. In this document, we will attempt to clarify this relationship, and show the links which associated these two families, and the benefits that both families incurred.

The two famous family names were associated over the period beginning at the Norman Conquest, just before 1066, and extending into the invasion of Ireland in 1172. The de Lacy family originated in Lassy in Normandy (our first records are found in the 10th Century), a noble family already associated with this county over a period of several generations. Descendants of the first known of the family, a certain Hugh de Lacy, assisted William of Normandy, in his conquest of England. Hugh de Lacy's sons, Walter de Lacy, and his (probable) brother Ilbert, played a major role in the Conquest of England. It is likely that the De Lacy family met with the Rotrou Family before the Conquest, when the marriage of Rotrou II with Adelaide de Belleme allowed Rotrou to meet Roger de Montgomery, a close ally of William Duke of Normandy. As a result of a change of orientation, the Rotrou Family sided with William, and are known to have fought in the battle of Hastings. At the same time, and as new associates of William, the De Nogent family, from the Perche, in the form of Geoffrey II de Mortagne, Rotrou de Montfort, and Fulke de Nogent <sup>1</sup>, just across the border from Normandy, and in principle having totally different objectives, found themselves in the battlefields of England, with apparently common interests.

Some time after the Norman Conquest, a daughter of Geoffrey II de Mortagne and Beatrice de Montdidier, a certain Maud of Perche is reputed to have married Robert, a son of Ilbert de Lacy <sup>2</sup>. This is the first reference of a real association between the two

<sup>1</sup> These titles were probably attributed at a later date.

<sup>2</sup> There appears to be a confusion between Malthilda (Maud) de Perche, who married Raymond de Turenne, and a little known daughter of Geoffrey II de Mortagne, also called Maud, who is shown as

families, although they have obviously frequented each other in the course of affairs with William of Normandy, King of England. There is also information suggesting that Emma de Lacy, sister of Walter de Lacy, married Hugh de Nogent, the son of Fulke de Nogent, who had settled in England after the Conquest. The said Hugh, adopted the name de Lacy after the marriage. We now know that the Hugh in question was not Hugh de Nogent, but a certain Hugh Talbot, and this is supported by the fact that a de Nogent would never at this time take the name of de Lacy, even if it was well known. The de Nogent family was far too well known to accept a change of name. Although we can not confirm this possibility, the De Lacy and De Nogent families were nevertheless known to be close.

We are left to speculate upon the reason for which the de Nogent descendants, Gilbert de Nogent and his brother Richard (de Capella) were called upon to assist Hugh de Lacy in his expedition to Ireland with Henry II, in late 1171. It is probable that the relations between the two families had been maintained during their period of settlement in England. The two families may even have found themselves relatively close together in an unspecified part of England (or Wales), defending the interests of their new king, William. Relations between the two families must have been excellent after their arrival in Ireland, as Gilbert de Nogent married Emma, the sister of Hugh de Lacy. It is also true that relations between the Rotrou family and Henry II were at an all-time low. This may have incited members of the family to give a helping hand to Henry's plans in Ireland.

For whatever reason of close or distant association between the two families, the De Nogent brothers, Gilbert and Richard, were an integral part of the expedition to Ireland, and were rewarded, together with other families, with "large tracts of land in Meath". Hugh de Lacy's status in Ireland at the dawn of the year 1172, was certainly at a high. He was rewarded, above and beyond the call of duty, with the title of Viceroy (justiciar) <sup>3</sup>, which meant that he had almost the same powers as the King himself <sup>4</sup> (with the notable exception of church matters), in the country of Ireland, a reward he used to the full.

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having married into the de Lacy family. We will not insist upon this little known information, although it denotes the beginning of a close relationship between the two families.

<sup>3</sup> The terms Viceroy and justiciar are not interchangeable. A viceroy replaces a king in controlling a country during the king's absence. A justiciar is a medieval term which approximates to "Prime Minister" or Lord Chief Justice, which defines, in fact, a separation of power. The justiciar is responsible for internal affairs, but cannot act in place of the King. The limits of the powers of both these positions have changed somewhat over the centuries.

<sup>4</sup> With the exception of religious matters, which would always rest with the crown, Hugh de Lacy was now authorized to create all levels of nobility up to the level of Baronry. All of Hugh's major followers were thus declared Baron of the territories that they were allocated. Gilbert de Nogent became Baron of Delvin, a title which would be carried down to modern times.

## Hugh de Lacy - Viceroy

The De Lacys (see the "Lacy" pedigree) came from Normandy with William the Conqueror, and were nominated Earls of Lincoln in England. Hugh de Lacy came to Ireland with King Henry the Second, A.D. 1171, and obtained from that monarch a grant of the whole kingdom of Meath. He was made lord palatine of Meath, and for many years chief governor of Ireland. He erected numerous castles, particularly in Meath and Westmeath, as those of Trim, Kells, Ardnorcher, Durrow, etc., and endowed some monasteries. He is thus described in Holingshed <sup>5</sup>: "His eyes were dark and deep-set, his neck short, his stature small, his body hairy, not fleshy, but sinewy, strong and compact; a very good soldier, but rather harsh and hasty." It appears from Hanmer and others, that he was an able and politic man in state affairs, but very ambitious and covetous of wealth and great possessions; he is also represented as a famous horseman. De Lacy's second wife was a daughter of King Roderick O'Connor; and his descendants, the De Lacys, were lords of Meath, and earls of Ulster, and founded many powerful families in Meath, Westmeath, and Louth, and also in Limerick, some of whom were much later distinguished marshals in the service of Austria and Russia.

When King Henry returned to England, he was loath to leave a situation where Strongbow could continue to expand his power. He chose to nominate Hugh de Lacy as Viceroy, in order to establish a balance of control in Ireland. De Lacy firmly established himself in his new role, and divided the ancient Kingdom of Meath amongst his various chiefs. He conferred upon them, as was his prerogative as Viceroy, the titles of Baron :

1. Hugh Tyrrell obtained Castleknock, and his descendants were for a long period, barons of Castleknock.
2. Gilbert de Angulo (or Nangle) obtained Magherigallen, now the barony of "Morgallion," in Meath.
3. Jocelin, son of Gilbert Nangle, obtained Navan and Ardracran. The Nangles were afterwards barons of Navan; and many of them took the Irish name of "MacCostello," and from them the barony of Costello in Mayo derived its name.
4. William de Missett obtained Luin, and his descendants were barons of Lune, near Trim.
5. Adam Feipo or Phepoe obtained Skrine or Skryne, Santreff or Santry, and Clontorth (which means either Clonturk or Clontarf). This family had the title of barons of Skrine, which title afterwards passed to the family of Marward.
6. Gilbert FitzThomas obtained the territories about Kenlis, and his descendants were barons of "Kells."

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<sup>5</sup> Raphael Holinshead (1529–1580) was an English chronicler, whose work, commonly known as Holingshed's Chronicles, was one of the major sources used by William Shakespeare for a number of his plays.

7. Hugh de Hose obtained Dees or the barony of "Deece," in Meath.
8. Hussey, barons of Galtrim.
9. Richard and Thomas Fleming obtained Crandon and other districts. The Flemings became barons of Slane; and a branch of the family, viscounts of Longford.
10. Adam Dullard or Dollard obtained Dullenevarty.
11. **Gilbert de Nogent obtained Delvin; and his descendants were Barons of Delvin, and [much later] Earls of Westmeath.**
12. Richard Tuite obtained large grants in Westmeath and Longford. His descendants received the title of barons of Moyashell, in Westmeath. (It was this family which inherited the title of Baron of Delvin through marriage).
13. Robert de Lacy received Rathwire in Westmeath, of which his descendants were barons.
14. Geoffrey de Constantine received Kilbixey, in Westmeath, of which his descendants were barons.
15. William Petit received Castlebreck and Magheritherinan, now the barony of "Magheradernon" in Westmeath. The Petits became barons of Mullingar.
16. Myler Fitzhenry obtained Magherneran, Rathkenin, and Athinorker, now "Ardnorcher."
17. **Richard "de Capella", brother of Gilbert de Nogent, obtained "much land."**

The castle of Dearthagh or "Durrow," In the King's County, was under construction by De Lacy on the site of a famous monastery of St. Columcille in 1186, when he was treacherously slain by a "Galloglass" <sup>6</sup> named O'Meyey. His death was attributed by the uneducated Irish to that circumstance as a judgment from Heaven. The man who killed De Lacy fled to his accomplices in the wood of Clair or "Clara;" but it appears from MacGeoghegan and others, that the Irish attacked and put to the sword the English retinue at the castle of Durrow, and that having taken De Lacy's body into their possession, they concealed it for nearly ten years, when, A.D. 1195, it was interred with great pomp in the abbey of Bective, in Meath; Mathew O'Haney, Archbishop of Cashel, and John Comyn, Archbishop of Dublin, attending at the ceremony.

After the death of Hugh de Lacy, the family maintained its favourable situation with respect to King Henry. Hugh's son, also called Hugh was nominated Earl of Ulster.

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<sup>6</sup> Galloglass - mercenary warrior élite.

Grant of Ulster made by King John to Hugh de Lacy,  
A. D. 1205. Patent Roll, T. L. 6 John.

“ The King to Meyler Fitz Henry, &c. and the Barons of  
“ Ireland, &c. Know ye, that we have given and granted to  
“ Hugh de Lascy, for his homage and service, the land of  
“ Ulster, with the appurtenances, to have and to hold as John  
“ de Curcy held the same the day on which the same Hugh  
“ overcame him in the field, or on the day preceding: SAVING  
“ however to us the crosses of the same land:—And know ye,  
“ that we do retain with us the aforesaid Hugh, and are lead-  
“ ing him with us in our service; and therefore to you we com-  
“ mand that his land and all his you preserve, maintain and  
“ defend as our demesne. Witness myself, at Windsor, the  
“ 2nd day of May.”

## Charter from King Henry II to Hugh de Lacy

Grant of the Lordship of Meath from King Henry the Second  
to Hugh de Lacy, A. D. 1172.

“ Henry King of England, Duke of Normandy and of  
“ Aquitaine, and Earl of Anjou, to the Archbishops, Bishops,  
“ Abbots, Earls, Barons, Justices and others his Ministers  
“ and Faithful, French, English and Irish of his whole land,  
“ greeting. Know ye that I have given and granted, and by  
“ this my present charter confirmed, to Hugh de Lacy, for  
“ his service, THE LAND OF MEATH, with all its appur-  
“ tenances, by the service of fifty knights, to him and his  
“ heirs, to have and to hold from me and my heirs as Mur-  
“ cardus Hu-Melachlin, or any other before or after him better  
“ held the same. And for an increase of this, I give all the  
“ fees which he rendered or will render about Dublin, while  
“ he is my deputy to do me service at the City of Dublin:  
“ Wherefore I will and firmly command, that the same Hugh,  
“ and his heirs after him, the aforesaid land may have, and  
“ hold all liberties and free customs which there I have or am  
“ able to have, by the before named service, from me and my  
“ heirs, well and in peace, freely and quietly and honourably,  
“ in wood and in plain, in meadows and pascuages, in waters  
“ and mills, in streams and pools and fishings and huntings,  
“ in roads and ways, and ports of the sea, and in all other  
“ places and things to the same belonging, with all liberties  
“ which there I have or am able to give, and by this my  
“ charter have confirmed. Witness, Earl Richard son of  
“ Gilbert, William de Braosa, William de Albini, Reginald  
“ de Cortenai, (&c.) at Wexford.”





## Gilbert de Nogent

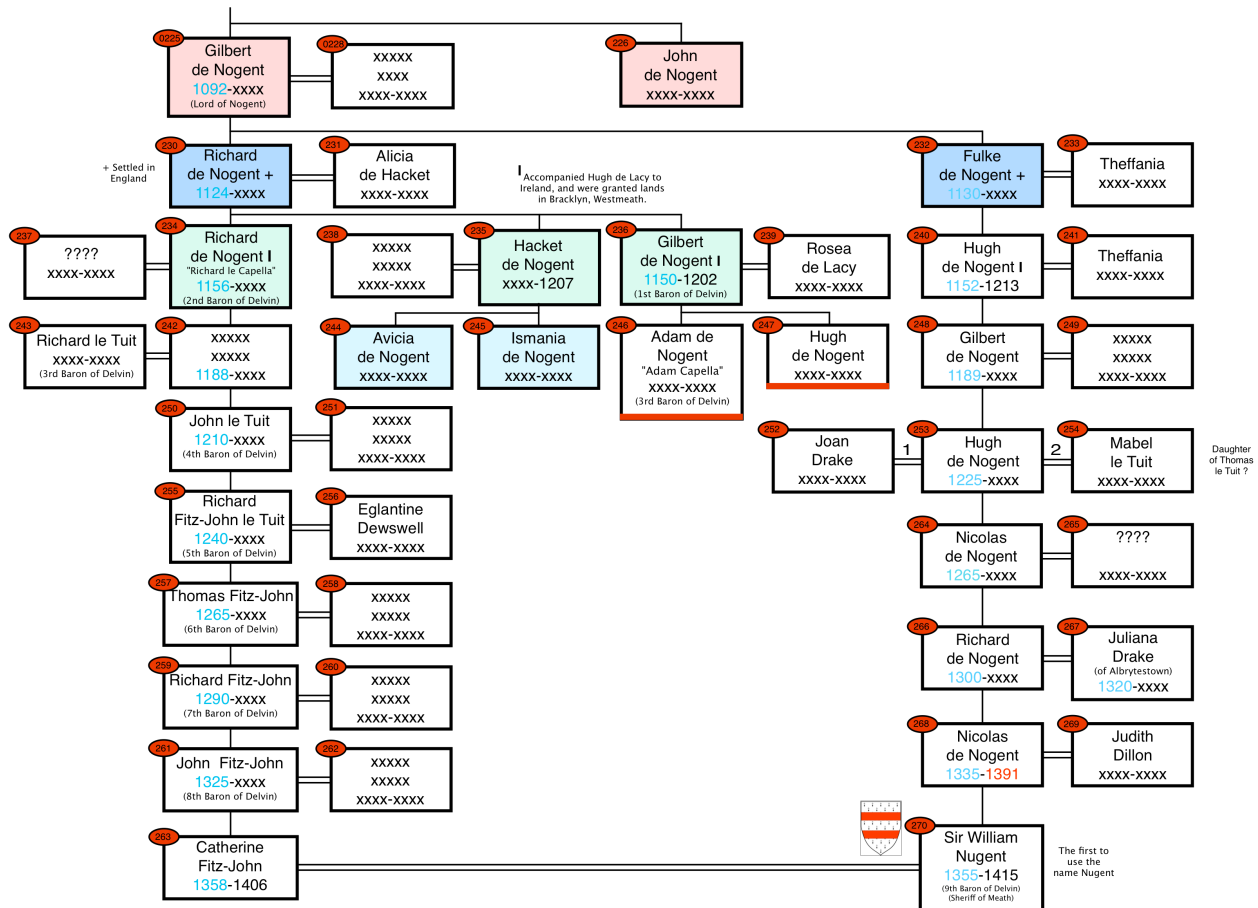
We have practically no knowledge of the descendants of the de Nogent family in England, after the Norman Conquest. Where they lived, and what they did for the hundred years between 1066 and 1171, is completely unknown. Because of their affiliation to the Count of Perche, they may have been royally treated by the several Kings of England that ruled during this period (William I, William II, Henry I, Stephen, Henry II). We do not know who compiled the names of the several generations of de Nogent descendants, and how they managed to know the names of all the males, but rarely the names of their wives. We must be suspicious of the fact that we have no birth or death dates. Lodge and Archdall <sup>1</sup> suggest that there were three successive sons called Gilbert de Nogent, of which the first was the son of Fulquois de Nogent (brother to Geoffrey II who participated in the Battle of Hastings). We can note a radical change in the Christian names of our descendants in England. Unfortunately, if we suppose a generation of about 25 years, in between the known Fulquois de Nogent and the Gilbert de Nogent who accompanied Hugh de Lacy to Ireland, we have a serious time-line problem, suggesting a missing generation. If they settled in London, or Winchester, they would have been invisible to data made available in the Domesday Book (1086). And so we must make some educated guesses about the birth date of our Gilbert, who accompanied Hugh de Lacie to Ireland, and eventually settled there. Our information concerning the first generations of the family in Ireland are confusing. There are two possible lines of descent <sup>2</sup> to Sir William Nugent (1355-1415 - probably the first to assume the name Nugent). We are unsure of the position of Nicholas de Nogent, who married Judith Dillon. Was he the father, or the brother of Sir William ?

The six generations of the family previous to this date are much of a mystery, as they faded out of public interest, having lost the Baronry of Delvin to the Le Tuite (Fitz-John) family. Of a certain Walter de Nogent who received land from Hugh de Nogent in 1309, we have no information, and can not place him on the family tree. We can only be sure of the Nugent descent in Ireland when Sir William Nugent recovered the title of Baron of Delvin, around 1407.

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<sup>1</sup> John Lodge and Mervyn Archdall - The Peerage of Ireland - Vol. 1 - Page 215

<sup>2</sup> 1- The peerage of Ireland, 2- The Internet site "Stirnet".



In the reign of Henry II, when the kingdom of Ireland became first subject to the English Crown, Sir Gilbert de Nugent, with his brethren and relations, accompanied Sir Hugh de Lacy (Lacie) in that expedition; to which Sir Hugh, the King allotting the County of Meath, to hold of the Crown by Knight's service, he gave to Sir Gilbert, in recompence of his brave and signal services, his sister Rosa in marriage, and, as a portion with her, the Baronry of Delvin to him and his heirs, with all the appurtenances<sup>3</sup> and towns (except the village of Torrochelach, belonging to the Abbot of Foure) to hold by the service of five Knights fees<sup>4</sup> as appears by the grant<sup>5</sup>, to which was affixed the seal of a Knight in complete armour on horseback. This large tract of land Sir Gilbert distributed to his brethren and others; his third brother

<sup>3</sup> I suppose we could loosely translate "appurtenances" as "lock, stock and barrel".

<sup>4</sup> Feudal rules in the Middle Ages included a knight fee or knight service whenever a title was given to a vassal. For more information concerning Feudal privileges and obligations, see chapter 3 of Book 1.

<sup>5</sup> In these words, "*Hugo de Lacie, omnibus sanctae Matris Ecclesie Filiis et omnibus suis et Amicis, Francis, Anglis, et Hibernicus salutem. Sciatis, me dedisse et presenti charta mea confirmasse Gilberto de Nugent et haeredibus suis Delvin totam, quam in tempore Hibernicorum tenerant O'Finilani, cum omnibus pertinentiis et villis, quae infra praedictam Delvin continentur (excepta quedam villa abbatis de Foure, nomini Torrochelach) pro fervito, quinque militum infra terram meam de Midia faciendo; fibi & haeredibus suis à me et heraedibus meis liberè et honorificè et plenariè tenendum in bos et in plano, in pratis et pascuis, in ecclesiis & capellis, in viis et semitis, in aquis et piseariis, in stagnis et molendinis, et venationibus cum omnibus libertatibus et liberis consuetudinibus, quas ibi habeo, vel habere debeo. Hiis testibus, William Parvo, Rob. de Bigarr, Gib. de Boscharr, Nich. Clerico, Phil. Clerico, Rog. Camerario, Ad. Clavigero, Rob. de Alto-Villari, Arm. de Bigarr, et aliis*".

Christopher, becoming seated at Balrath, and John at Brackloone; from whom probably descended Hugh de Nogent, living in 1296, (24 Edw. I.) who by Joan his wife, had Hugh, who, with his wife Margery, in 1309, gave 40s. to Walter de Nogent for licence of pasture in two parts of five carucates <sup>6</sup> of land in Taghmon.

### **Translation from Latin to English of the grant made by Hugh de Lacy to Gilbert de Nogent**

*Hugh de Lacy, to all the sons of Holy Mother Church, and to his Men and Friends, French, English, and Irish, greeting. Know ye, that I have given, and by this my present charter confirmed, to Gilbert de Nogent and his heirs, all Delvin, which the O'Finilans held in the time of the Irish, with all the appurtenances and towns which are contained within Delvin aforesaid (except the town of the Abbot of Foure, by name Torrochelach), for the service of five knights to be rendered within my land of Meath, to him and his heirs from me and my heirs, freely and quietly, and honourably and fully to be held, in wood and in plain, in meadows and pascuages <sup>7</sup>, in churches and chapels, in roads and ways, in waters and fisheries, in pools and mills and huntings, with all liberties and free customs which there I have or ought. These being witnesses, William Parvo, Rob. de Bigarr, Gilb. de Boscharr, Nich. Clerico, Phil. Clerico, Rog. Camerario, Ad. Clavigero, Rob. de Alto-Villari, Arm. de Bigarr, and others.*

Gilbert de Nogent was attributed 20,000 acres of land in Bracklyn, from the 800,000 acres of the county of Meath. With the title of Baron, and the allocation of land was associated a fee of five knights to be made available to the service of Hugh de Lacy. Although other followers of Hugh de Lacy were given more land, Gilbert was evidently one of the closer associates of the De Lacy family. Gilbert married Rosea de Lacy, thus sealing bonds which had existed between the two families since the Norman Conquest <sup>8</sup>. Gilbert is also called upon a witness to several deeds of Walter de Lacy, the son of Hugh, a sure sign of the close association of the two families.

Gilbert de Nogent becomes the first Baron of Delvin. At his death, his brother Richard (de Capella) becomes 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron, as Gilberts' son Adam is too young to assume the title.

Adam de Nogent is the elder son of Gilbert. The second son Hugh will die without issue.

Here, we have conflicting information. Gilbert de Nogent dies in 1202, and his brother Richard assumes the title. The death of Richard is not known, probably between

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<sup>6</sup> The carucate (from the Latin *carruca* - wheeled plough) was based on the area a plough team of eight oxen could till in a single annual season (120 acres today). Many of the medieval land measures were in fact defined on an area of land maintained by a certain number of oxen tilling the land, or even an area of land large enough to maintain a family for a complete year.

<sup>7</sup> No definition of this word appears available in English, although it is mentioned many times in old documents. The author will hazard a guess at "pastures"

<sup>8</sup> Delvin Castle (or Nugent Castle), now a ruin, was built in 1181 by Hugh for his brother-in-law.

1210 and 1220. Who becomes Baron (3rd) of Delvin. Some documents indicate Adam, Gilberts son, some indicate Richard le Tuite.

In all probability, Adam becomes 3rd Baron for a short time before his death (without issue - did he die young ?), and then the title passes through Richard de Nogent's daughter (name unknown) to Richard le Tuite<sup>9</sup>.

However, all documents agree that the Baronry of Delvin was lost to the De Nogent family, due to a lack of male issue<sup>10</sup>. The Baronry will be recovered in the same manner, nearly 120 years later, when the "Le Tuite"/FitzJohn" family has no male issue, and the surviving daughter of John FitzJohn will marry Sir William Nugent of Balrath. The Baronry of Delvin returns to the De Nogent family, after five generations of control by the FitzJohns.

It is useful, at this time to indicate that the French name of "De Nogent", is modernized to "Nugent" by Sir William Nugent in about 1410, although the exact date is unknown..

For the moment that the Nugent family (for that is their new name) have recovered the baronry of Delvin, they, so to speak, "come back into the news' !

Sir William Nugent is Sheriff of Meath in 1401 and 1402

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<sup>9</sup> Here, we have a name problem. The "le Tuite" family is known in Ireland at this time, with similar titles and land allocations to the de Nogent family, but some documents specify that the title of Baronry of Delvin fall into the hands of the "Johns" or "Jones", or the "Tuites", or the "FitzJohns". Probably, the name of the successive descendants of the family changed from "le Tuite" to "Fitz-John", through several generations.

<sup>10</sup> This has happened before with catastrophic results. At about the same time, in France, the entire line of the De Nogents comes to an abrupt halt in 1226, some time after the death of Thomas de Perche, at Lincoln, in 1217. Most decidedly, the good luck of the De Nogent family seems to be running out !

## The Baronry of Delvin

Following the lineage of the Barons of Delvin is no mean affair. To try and follow the De Nogent descendants in Ireland, who were finally to become the Nugents, let us return to the closing years of the 12th Century, when the De Nogent ancestors first set foot on the shores of Ireland.

Exactly when King Henry II gave the county of Meath to Hugh de Lacy is not sure. What we do know, is that he did it for two reasons :

- 1 - He wanted to repay the De Lacy family for their constant loyalty,
- 2 - He wanted to balance the power of his loyal subjects against that of Strongbow, who had been exercising just a little bit too much power in a land that Henry had been ordered by the Vatican to "bring into line with the church".

Strongbow (Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke), who had finally understood the importance of the opportunity which was offered to him by Dermot MacMurrough, the ousted King of Leinster, had come to Ireland himself, with more soldiers. He had spent more than a year with superior forces, causing havoc and conquering several important cities. Henry had finally realized that this situation could degenerate into an intolerable situation, and so decided to solve the problem personally. He arrived in Ireland in October 1171, with an army strong enough to cause Strongbow to bow to his king and to his superior forces. From this moment, Strongbow realized that he had to play his cards with caution, so he relinquished all the conquered land and cities to his liege. He had married the daughter of the Irish King Dermot MacMurrough, and had also had the promise of MacMurrough kingdom, so he thought he had little to fear. Henry was magnanimous, and promptly returned the majority of the conquered lands to Strongbow, while keeping the major prizes of Dublin, Waterford and Wexford. But Henry was not yet finished ! He knew he had to return to England to look after current affairs, but he was worried about the potential havoc that Strongbow could wreak, if he was left to his own devices.

Henry had not set foot in Ireland alone. He had brought with him a large force of mercenaries, including descendants of the De Lacy family, who had been faithful to the crown for several generations. Hugh de Lacy, their chief had also convinced a handful of Anglo-Norman knights to accompany him, probably with the traditional promises of booty. These Anglo-Norman families were having a hard time in England (and Wales), and perhaps thought that there was more to be had in a new land. For whatever reason, the mercenaries arrived with Hugh de Lacy, 13 Barons of high repute, following de Lacy, rather than sustaining the King of England. Their efforts were rewarded far more than they could ever hope for.

Henry had spent more time than he could afford in Ireland, but he had to return to current affairs in England. However, he was loathe to leave the avaricious Strongbow, who would certainly carry on his conquests, the moment that Henry turned his back. Henry wanted to ensure that the balance of power was maintained. He gave Hugh de Lacy the County of Meath, but more important, he named him "justiciar" (or viceroy), which allowed De Lacy the right to name Barons, as if he were the King himself. De Lacy

divided the county of Meath amongst his Anglo-Norman Barons, and named many of them Barons in their own right. Among them, the descendant of Fulke de Nogent (or Fulke de Bellême), Gilbert de Nogent was thus nominated Baron of Delvin, and was awarded "large tracts of land in Bracklyn, Meath".

Strongbow had little time to benefit from his new kingdom, which he inherited upon the death of Dermot MacMurrough, and the marriage to MacMurrough's daughter. He died in 1176.

## The Descent of the Family as Barons of Delvin

Although declared as Barons of Delvin, the fortunes of the De Nogent Family took a turn for the worse, when Richard de Nogent (known as la Capella), the brother of Gillbert, and who was named Baron of Delvin upon the death of his brother, had no male heir. Richards daughter (her name is not recorded) married Richard le Tuit, and the Baronry of Delvin escaped into the Le Tuit family. The tide turned for the De Nogent descendants when, more than 100 years later, John Fitz-John, 8th Baron of Delvin had no male heir, and his daughter married ..... a descendant of the De Nogent family, in the name of Sir William (a cousin of the line of Richard la Capella), who appears to be the first to have anglicized the De Nogent Name to NUGENT. The Baronry of Delvin returns to the Nugent family, and the Nugents and their descendants are finally on the road to fame and fortune, although the family will suffer much from the changing attitudes of the successive Kings and Queens of England over the next centuries.

Nugent descendants married into many important English and Irish noble families, because they themselves were noble. We will follow the descendancy of the Barons of Delvin, who were later titled "Earls of Westmeath". In the following table, are included the Lords of Delvin, so named when the title of Baron or Earl was already assigned to the first in line

*In the following list, dates on blue are extrapolations, and dates in red are approximations. Dates in black are probably correct, and dates marked "xxxx" indicate "unknown".*

*The early Barons of Delvin were obviously numbered from "1". However, at a later date, and for some obscure reason, the numbering system changed (restarted at "1"). These new numbers are not shown in the following tables, for reasons of clarity.*

In the following tables, the Family Number is an internal number I have given to each of the De Nogent/Nugent Family Members, and is not used in this document <sup>1</sup>. The Diagram Vector is a coordinate which allows you to locate any Family Member on the large Family Diagrams <sup>2</sup>. These diagrams are far too large to be included in this document, and can only be studied on a computer (pdf files). As a result, these two references are not used in association with this document, unless a CD was included, or unless you access the [nugent.fr](http://nugent.fr) Internet site.

Family Number	Name	Title	DOB-DOD	Filiation	Diagram Vector
0236	- Gilbert de Nogent	(1st Baron of Delvin) -	(1150-1202)	Son of Richard	1R6
0234	- Richard de Nogent	(2nd Baron of Delvin) -	(1156-xxxx)	Brother of Gilbert	1Q6
0243	- Richard (Fitz-John) le Tuit	(3rd Baron of Delvin) -	(xxxx-xxxx)	Husband of Rosa, daughter of Richard	1Q6
0250	- John (Fitz-John) le Tuit	(4th Baron of Delvin) -	(1210-xxxx)	Son of Richard Fitz-John	1Q7
0255	- Richard (Fitz-John) le Tuit	(5th Baron of Delvin) -	(1240-xxxx)	Son of John Fitz-John	1Q7
0257	- Thomas Fitz-John	(6th Baron of Delvin) -	(1265-xxxx)	Son of Richard Fitz-John	1Q7
0259	- Richard Fitz-John	(7th Baron of Delvin) -	(1290-xxxx)	Son of Christopher	1Q7
0261	- John Fitz-John	(8th Baron of Delvin) -	(1325-xxxx)	Son of Richard	1Q8

<sup>1</sup> Family Member Numbers are shown on the Family diagrams, associated with the Name and the Date of Birth/Date of Death of each Family Member.

<sup>2</sup> The Diagram Vector is a position coordinate which enables rapid location of a Family Member on the large Tree Documents of the family. The coordinate is made up of 3 alphanumeric characters :

Character 1 represents the Diagram Number,

Character 2 represents the horizontal axis of the position on the diagram (A letter from A to Z),

Character 3 represents the vertical axis of the position on the diagram, within the column of the letter defined in Character 2 (from 1 to 9).

Example : 0236 Gilbert de Nogent has a vector of 1R6,

All diagrams are composed of a large number of quadrants,

1 represents the Diagram Number where the Family Member is to be found,

R represents the column R quadrant within Diagram 1,

6 represents the depth quadrant within the column R quadrant.



Family Number	Name	Title	DOB-DOD	Filiation	Diagram Vector
0270	- Sir William Nugent -	(9th Baron of Delvin) -	(1355-1415)	Son of Nicholas - "The first NUGENT"	2U1
0301	- Sir Richard Nugent -	(10th Baron of Delvin) -	(1382-1475)	Son of William	2U2
0307	- James Nugent -	(Lord Delvin)	(1408-1458)	Son of Richard	2S2
0309	- Christopher Nugent -	(11th Baron of Delvin) -	(1434-1478)	Son of James	2S2
0311	- Richard Nugent -	(12th Baron of Delvin) -	(1460-1537)	Son of Christopher	2S2
0313	- Sir Christopher Nugent -		(1483-1531)	Son of Richard	2S2
0315	- Richard Nugent -	(13th Baron of Delvin) -	(1523-1559)	Son of Christopher	2S2
0325	- Christopher Nugent -	(14th Baron of Delvin) -	(1544-1602)	Son of Richard	2S2
0328	- Richard Nugent -	(1st Earl of Westmeath) -	(1583-1642)	Son of Christopher	2S2
0357	- Christopher Nugent -	(16th Baron of Delvin) -	(1604-1625)	Son of Richard, 1st Earl	2S3
0363	- Richard Nugent -	(2nd Earl of Westmeath) -	(1621-1684)	Grandson of Richard, 1st Earl	2S3
0393	- Christopher Nugent -	(Lord Delvin) -	(xxxx-1684)	Son of Richard, 2nd Earl	2S3
0401	- Richard Nugent -	(3rd Earl of Westmeath) -	(1667-1714)	Grandson of Richard, 2nd Earl	2S3
0400	- Thomas Nugent -	(4th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1669-1752)	Brother of Richard, 3rd Earl	2S3
0403	- Maj. Gen. John Nugent -	(5th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1671-1754)	Brother of Thomas, 4th Earl	2S3
0410	- Christopher Nugent -	(Lord Delvin) -	(1690-1752)	Son of Thomas, 4th Earl	2S3
0407	- Thomas Nugent -	(6th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1714-1792)	Son of John, 5th Earl	2S3
0416	- Richard Nugent -	(Lord Delvin) -	(1742-1761)	Son of Thomas, 6th Earl	2S3
0417	- George Frederick Nugent -	(7th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1760-1814)	Son of Thomas, 6th Earl	2R3
0425	- George Thomas Nugent -	(8th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1785-1871)	Son of George Frederick, 7th Earl	2S3
0436	- William Henry Nugent -	(Lord Delvin) -	(1818-1819)	Son of George Thomas, 8th Earl	2S3
0381	- Anthony Francis Nugent -	(9th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1805-1879)	4th Cousin of George Thomas, 8th Earl	2Q3
0685	- William St. George Nugent -	(10th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1832-1883)	Son of Anthony, 9th Earl	2P4
0686	- Anthony Francis Nugent -	(11th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1870-1933)	Son of William, 10th Earl	2P4
0687	- Gilbert Charles Nugent -	(12th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1880-1971)	Brother of Anthony, 11th Earl	2Q4
0688	- William Anthony Nugent -	(13th Earl of Westmeath) -	(1928-xxxx)	Son of Gilbert, 12th Earl	2Q4
0690	- Heir Apparent Sean Charles Weston Nugent -		(1965-xxxx)	Son of William, 13th Earl	2Q4
0691	- Heir Presumptive Hon. Patrick Mark Nugent -		(1966-xxxx)	Brother of Sean, Heir Apparent	2Q4

## **Nugents in England and Ireland**

The 600 year story of the De Nogent Family in Ireland from 1415 (the approximate date that the family name was anglicised to Nugent), is obviously disjointed. Many members of the family have left indelible traces, in Ireland, in England, and later, in other countries of the world. The following document gives a list of the more famous Irish Nugents, and a cameo of their major exploits.

This chapter is under construction, and will be available very soon.

The rest of this document contains "cameos" of all important Nugents from 1415 to today.

Each cameo is a short description of the life and exploits of the major members of the family. I know not how many cameos will be created, nor the final size of this chapter, but it will terminate the 12 years of development of my Family Tree.

In the near future, I will only make minor corrections to any documents in my Internet Site. My work will be complete after addition of the cameos.

Francis Nugent Dixon - 22nd of December, 2014

## Bibliography

I could never have written the story of the Rotrou Family and their Nugent descendants without extensive reading. Throughout more than ten years of developing the Nugent Family Tree, I had to read in detail, many books, documents and charters, written in Latin, French and English over a period of centuries. Quite recently, the project Google Books has made available documents that I could never have hoped to find. The Internet Site Ancestry.com also provided most valuable and detailed information, especially Census Data for my "recent" family. A list of the most important books that I studied, can be seen below :

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| TITLE : .....             | Recherches Historiques sur Nogent-le-Rotrou  |
| SUB-TITLE : .....         | Histoire des Pays et Comté du Perche et Duché d'Alençon  |
| LANGUAGE : .....          | Old French - rather difficult to read  |
| AUTHOR : .....            | Gilles Bry de la Clergerie   |
| BIRTH/DEATH : .....       | 1590/1659  |
| AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... | Lawyer   |
| YEAR WRITTEN : .....      | 1620   |
| YEAR PRINTED : .....      | 1620   |
| EDITOR : .....            |  |
| I HAVE A COPY : .....     | PDF - downloaded from Bayerische Staatsbibliothek  |
| CONTENTS : .....          |  |
| COMMENTS : .....          | A comprehensive presentation, although heavily biased into associating the Rotrou lineage with the House of Bellême. This work plagiarizes the book "Histoire de Perche", by René Courtin, never once acknowledging the original author. |
|                           |  |
| TITLE : .....             | Histoire de Perche   |
| SUB-TITLE : .....         |  |
| LANGUAGE : .....          | French   |
| AUTHOR : .....            | René Courtin   |
| BIRTH/DEATH : .....       | Unknown  |
| AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... | Lawyer, Counsellor to the King of France   |
| YEAR WRITTEN : .....      | 1611   |
| YEAR PRINTED : .....      | 1611   |
| EDITOR : .....            | Marchand et Gilles, L. Daupeley - Mortagne   |
| I HAVE A COPY : .....     | I have access to an Internet copy, but can't download it.  |
| CONTENTS : .....          |  |
| COMMENTS : .....          | The first of three major works concerning the Perche.  |
|                           |  |
| TITLE : .....             | Recueil des Antiquités du Perche   |
| SUB-TITLE : .....         | Comtes et Seigneurs de la dicte Province   |
| LANGUAGE : .....          | French   |
| AUTHOR : .....            | Léonard Bar - Sieur de Boulais   |

- BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1545/1620  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : Lawyer and Historian  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1613  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1890  
 EDITOR : ..... Picard-Hayes - Mortagne  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... Yes - in PDF form from the Internet  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... The second of three major works concerning the Perche.
- TITLE : ..... Mémoires Historiques sur la Ville d'Alençon  
 SUB-TITLE : .....  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... Pierre-Joseph Odolant Desnos  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1722/1801  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : Doctor and Historian  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1787  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... Tome 1 - Reprint 1858, Tome 2 - Original 1787.  
 EDITOR : ..... Poulet-Mallassis et de Broise - Alençon - Perche  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - in PDF form from Google Books Tome 1 & 2.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Often referenced by Des Murs and De Romanet in their books. Tome 2 is not within De Nogent date scope.
- TITLE : ..... Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes.  
 SUB-TITLE : .....  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... Jean LeBrun (Abbé Frét)  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1800/1843  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : Curé de Champs - Historian du Perche  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1838/1840  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... Vol. 1-1838, Vol. 2-1838, Vol. 3-1840  
 EDITOR : ..... Mortagne-Imprimerie de Glaçon  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - All three volumes - in ".pdf" form.  
 CONTENTS : ..... Vol. 1 covers Nogent-le-Rotrou  
 Vol. 2 covers Bellême/Talvas  
 Vol. 3 covers Mortagne  
 COMMENTS : ..... A remarkable overview of customs of the Perche, over the centuries.
- TITLE : ..... Burke's Peerage and Baronetage.  
 SUB-TITLE : .....  
 LANGUAGE : ..... English  
 AUTHOR : ..... John Burke, Esq. and his son Sir John Bernard Burke  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... Father - 1786/1848 ..... Son - 1814/1892  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : Historians  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1832

- YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1832 and yearly updates  
 EDITOR : ..... Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - in PDF form from Google Books.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Obviously one of the most comprehensive reference documents. However, Burke may base his information concerning the early origins of the De Nogent family on the heavily biased book by Brie de la Clergerie.
- TITLE : ..... Histoire des Comtes de Perche.  
 SUB-TITLE : ..... De la Famille des Rotrous.  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... M.O. Des Murs.  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1804/1878  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... Lawyer/Conservateur de la bibliothèque de Nogent-le-Rotrou.  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1856  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1991 (Reprint)  
 EDITOR : ..... P. Bertrand - Paris  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... Reprint - in ".jpg" form. - also pdf  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Extremely valuable - Much detail.
- TITLE : ..... Géographie du Perche et Chronologie de ses Comtes  
 SUB-TITLE : ..... Cartulaire de cette province  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... Olivier Romanet de Beaune  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1859/1936  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... Vicomte de Romanet, President de la Société Percheronne d'Histoire et d'Archéologie  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1890  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1890-1902  
 EDITOR : ..... Imprimerie de l'Echo de L'Orne - Mortagne  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... ORIGINAL - in poor condition - it cost me 500 euros !  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Extremely valuable - Much detail.
- TITLE : ..... Prosopon Newsletter  
 SUB-TITLE : ..... Les Vicomtes de Châteaudun et leurs Alliés  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... Christian Settiani  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1961/xxxx  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... Université de Sorbonne, Paris  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1999  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1999  
 EDITOR : ..... Prosopon Newsletter

- I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - in '.pdf' form.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Very valuable, difficulty in interpreting his badly designed trees, made on a keyboard, and not with a graphics program, but I managed to build my own diagram using the transcriptions of the Cartulary documents that he presents.
- TITLE : ..... Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France  
 SUB-TITLE : ..... County of the Perche (1000-1226).  
 LANGUAGE : ..... English  
 AUTHOR : ..... Kathleen Thompson  
 BIRTH/DEATH : .....  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : ..... Honorary Research Fellow - University of Sheffield  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 2002  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 2002  
 EDITOR : ..... Boydell and Brewer  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - Original Book.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... The rise and fall of the Rotrou "Dynasty".  
 Invaluable - a damned good read !
- TITLE : ..... Peerage of Ireland  
 SUB-TITLE : ..... A Genealogical History of the Present Nobility of that Kingdom.  
 LANGUAGE : ..... English  
 AUTHOR : ..... John Lodge, Esq., Revised by Mervyn Archdall, A.M.  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1692/1774  
 AUTHOR BACKGROUND : .....  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1754 - First Edition - 1789 - Revised Edition  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1754/1789  
 EDITOR : ..... James Moore - Dublin  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - in PDF form from Google Books.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... This book, recently appeared in the Google Books list, and has been vital in adding information about the de Nogent arrival in Ireland. We find the charters made by Henry II to Hugh de Lacy, and Hugh de Lacy to Gilbert de Nogent.  
 A 30 page overview of the Family Tree in Ireland to 1782 helps us to consolidate the De Nogent Family Tree.
- TITLE : ..... Le Perche  
 SUB-TITLE : .....  
 LANGUAGE : ..... French  
 AUTHOR : ..... René Musset.  
 BIRTH/DEATH : ..... 1881/1977

AUTHOR BACKGROUND : Geographer, but not a historian  
 YEAR WRITTEN : ..... 1919  
 YEAR PRINTED : ..... 1919  
 EDITOR : .....  
 I HAVE A COPY : ..... YES - in PDF form from Google Books.  
 CONTENTS : .....  
 COMMENTS : ..... Detailed book about the Perche, but no De Nogent information.

Above is but a short list of the most important documents consulted in my research.

However, the complete list of documents I consulted can be found below. The language of each document is shown after the Year of edition (/E - English, /F - French). Many of the works are in several volumes, or represent an update to previous versions. Because most of these works did not present the Irish or English families in alphabetical order, I was obliged to consult ALL of the volumes, in order to extract Nugent information, a tiring and often fruitless task. Checking and cross-checking the names, the dates or the family descent of the Nugent data that I found, in order to build my family diagrams, took an enormous amount of work, but was well-worth the effort. Building these diagrams little by little took several years of work.

Year	Author	Title
1852/E	J. Bernard Burke	0010-A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary-1852.pdf
1858/E	Sir John Bernard Burke	0020-A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary-1858.pdf
1862/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0030-A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary-1862-Part 1.pdf
1863/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0040-A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary-1863-Part 2.pdf
1832/E	John Burke, Esq.	0050-A General and Heraldic Dictionary-Vol-1-1832.pdf
1832/E	John Burke, Esq.	0060-A General and Heraldic Dictionary-Vol-2-1832.pdf
1830/E	William Lynch, Esq.	0070-Legal Institutions and Feudal Baronries of Ireland.pdf
1845/E	Owen Connellan, Esq.	0080-Annals of Ireland-1171-1392.pdf
1856/E	John O'Donovan	0090-Annals of Ireland-Vol-IV.pdf
1838/F	Louis-Joseph Fret	0100-Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes-Vol 1.pdf
1838/F	Louis-Joseph Fret	0110-Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes-Vol 2.pdf
1840/F	Louis-Joseph Fret	0120-Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes-Vol 3.pdf
1817/E	Compilation	0130-Biographical Peerage of Ireland.pdf
1832/E	Edmund Lodge, Esq.	0140-British Peerage-1832.pdf
1835/E	William Courthope, Esq.	0150-Debrett's Baronetage of England.pdf
1840/E	George William Collen, Esq.	0160-Debrett's Peerage of G.B. & N.I.pdf
1836/F	J. R. Pesche	0170-Dictionnaire Topographique Historique de la Sarthe.pdf
1777/F	M. Le Paige	0180-Dictionnaire Topographique Historique du Maine.pdf
1866/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0190-Dormant-Abeyant-Forfeited-Extinct Peerages-1866-Burke.pdf
????/E	Unknown	0200-Earls of Westmeath.pdf
1793/E	Roderic O'Flaherty	0210-Early Irish Events.pdf
1844/E	John Burke & Son	0220-Extinct & Dormant Baronetcies of England.pdf
1839/F	Augustin Thierry	0230-Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre.pdf
1786/F	M. Doyen	0240-Histoire de la Ville de Chartres.pdf
1828/F	J-L. Chalmel	0250-Histoire de Touraine.pdf
1852/F	A. La Butte	0260-Histoire des Ducs de Normandie.pdf
1821/F	J. Simonde de Sismondi	0270-Histoire des Francais.pdf
1853/E	Unknown	0280-Historical Sketch of the Nugent Family.pdf
1894/E	Vere Langford Oliver	0290-History of Antigua-Vol1.pdf
1896/E	Vere Langford Oliver	0300-History of Antigua-Vol2.pdf
1899/E	Vere Langford Oliver	0310-History of Antigua-Vol3.pdf
1811/E	Dennis Taaffe	0320-History of Ireland-1811.pdf
1833/E	W. C. Taylor	0330-History of Ireland-1835.pdf
1838/E	John Burke, Esq.	0340-History of the Commoners of G.B. & N. I.-1838.pdf
1861/E	John d'Alton, Esq.	0350-Irish Army.pdf
1890/E	John d'Alton, Esq.	0360-King James's Irish Army List-1689.pdf
1818/E	Unknown	0370-L'Art de Vérifier les Dates.pdf
1835/F	Augustin Thierry	0380-La Conquete de l'Angleterre-1066-1070.pdf
2009/F	Frederic Gunst Horn	0390-La Descendance Capetienne.pdf
1847/E	John Burke and Son.	0400-Landed Gentry Vol 1-1847-A-L.pdf
1847/E	John Burke and Son	0410-Landed Gentry Vol 2-1847-M-Z.pdf
1863/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0420-Landed Gentry Vol 2-1863.pdf
1827/F	Robert Wace	0430-Le Roman de Rou et des Ducs de Normandie.pdf
1852/F	M. Emile de Bonnechose	0440-Les Quatre Conquêtes de l'Angleterre.pdf
2003/E	Kathleen Thompson	0450-Mathilda Countess of Perche.pdf
1835/F	Unknown	0460-Memoires des Antiquaires de Normandie.pdf

1937/F	H. Tournouer	0470-Necrologie-Vicomte de Romanet.pdf
1861/E	James Savage	0480-New England Settlers.pdf
2000/E	Elisabeth van Houts	0490-Normans in Europe.pdf
1856/F	M. O. des Murs	0500-Histoire des Comtes du Perche.pdf (Google Scan)
1856/F	M. O. des Murs	0505-Histoire des Comtes du Perche.pdf (Photocopy)
1855/F	Augustus le Prevost	0510-Orderici Vitalis-Tome 5.pdf
1832/E	John Burke, Esq.	0520-Peerage & Barontage Vol 1-1832.pdf
1855/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0530-Seats & Arms of Noblemen-Vol 2.pdf
1771/E	E. Kimber & R. Johnson	0540-The Baronetage of England-Vol 1.pdf
1771/E	E. Kimber & R. Johnson	0550-The Baronetage of England-Vol 2.pdf
1803/E	Rev. William Betham	0560-The Baronetage of England-Vol 3.pdf
1804/E	Rev. William Betham	0570-The Baronetage of England-Vol 4.pdf
1805/E	Rev. William Betham	0580-The Baronetage of England-Vol 5.pdf
1839/E	Jonathan Duncan, Esq.	0590-The Dukes of Normandy from the Time of Rollo.pdf
1859/E	Edmund Lodge, Esq.	0600-The Genealogy of British Peerage-1859.pdf
1884/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0610-The General Armory Of England & Scotland.pdf
1887/E	Walter Money, C.S.A.	0620-The History of Newbury.pdf
1756/E	Unknown	0630-The Irish Compendium or Rudiments of Honour.pdf
1856/E	Unknown	0640-The Peerage Baronetage and Knightage of GB & Ireland.pdf
1768/E	Unknown	0650-The Peerage of Ireland-G and H Account-Vol-2.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0660-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-1.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0670-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-2.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0680-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-3.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0690-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-4.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0700-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-5.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0710-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-6.pdf
1789/E	John Lodge & Archdall, A.M.	0720-The Peerage of Ireland-Vol-7.pdf
1832/E	Edmund Lodge, Esq.	0730-The Peerage of the British Empire-1832.pdf
1856/E	Edmund Lodge, Esq.	0740-The Peerage of the British Empire-1856.pdf
1848/E	Sir John Bernard Burke	0750-The Role of Battle Abbey.pdf
1835/E	Unknown	0760-The United Service Journal.pdf
1863/F	Victor Bouton	0770-Traite de Blason.pdf
1863/F	Sir Bernard Burke	0780-Vicissitudes of Families.pdf
1682/E	Sir Henry Piers, Bart	0790-Westmeath-1682.pdf
1683/F	Louis Moreri	0800-Le Grand Dictionnaire Historique-1683.pdf
1866/F	J.-B. Souchet	0801-Histoire du Diocese et de la Ville de Chartres.pdf
1999/F	Christian Settiani	0802-Les Vicomtes de Chateaudun et Leurs Allies.pdf
1869/E	Sir Bernard Burke	0803-A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary-1869.pdf
1860/E	Edmund Lodge	0804-The Peerage and Baronetage of the British Empire-1860.pdf
1902/F	Vicomte du Romanet	0805-Geographie du Perche-1902.pdf
????/E	Sir Bernard Burke ?	0806-Snipet of Unknown Nugent Extract.pdf
1893/E	Debrett	0807-Debretts peerage.pdf
1919/F	René Musset	0808-Le Perche.pdf
1858/F	Odolant Desnos	0809-Memoires Historiques sur la Ville d'Alencon-Tome 1.pdf
1787/F	Odolant Desnos	0810-Memoires Historiques sur la Ville d'Alencon-Tome 2.pdf
1620/F	Gilles Bry de la Clergerie	0811-Histoire de Comté du Perche et Duché d'Alencon.pdf
1826/E	Orderic Vitalis	0812-Translation from the Latin - Histoire de Normandie.pdf
1835/F	G. B. Depping	0813-Histoire de la Normandie sous le règne de Guillaume.pdf
1866/F	A. LaButte	0814-Histoire des ducs de Normandie.pdf
1898/F	Claud Nugent	0815-Memoires of Robert (Earl Nugent).pdf
1705/F	Sir James Ware	0816-The Antiquities and History of Ireland.pdf
1784/F	Unknown	0817-L'Art de Vérifier les Dates-Book 2.pdf
2003/E	Kathleen Thompson	0819-Illegitimate Children of Henry I.pdf
1830/E	Betham	0819-Nugent from Peerage of Ireland.pdf
1839/E	John Burke Esq.	0820-Peerage And Baronetage-1839.pdf
1909/E	Marquis de Ruvigny	0830-The Nobilities of Europe.pdf
1608/F	Unknown	0831-Parthénie.pdf
2012/E	Christoph Schiller	0832-Motion-Mountain-The-Adventure-of-Physics.pdf
1890/F	Bart des Boulais	0833-Antiquites du Perche.pdf
2002/E	Kathleen Thompson	0834-Seven Texts of St. Denis.pdf
2014/E	My Compilation	0835-Complete Rotrou Family List - Events by Year.pdf

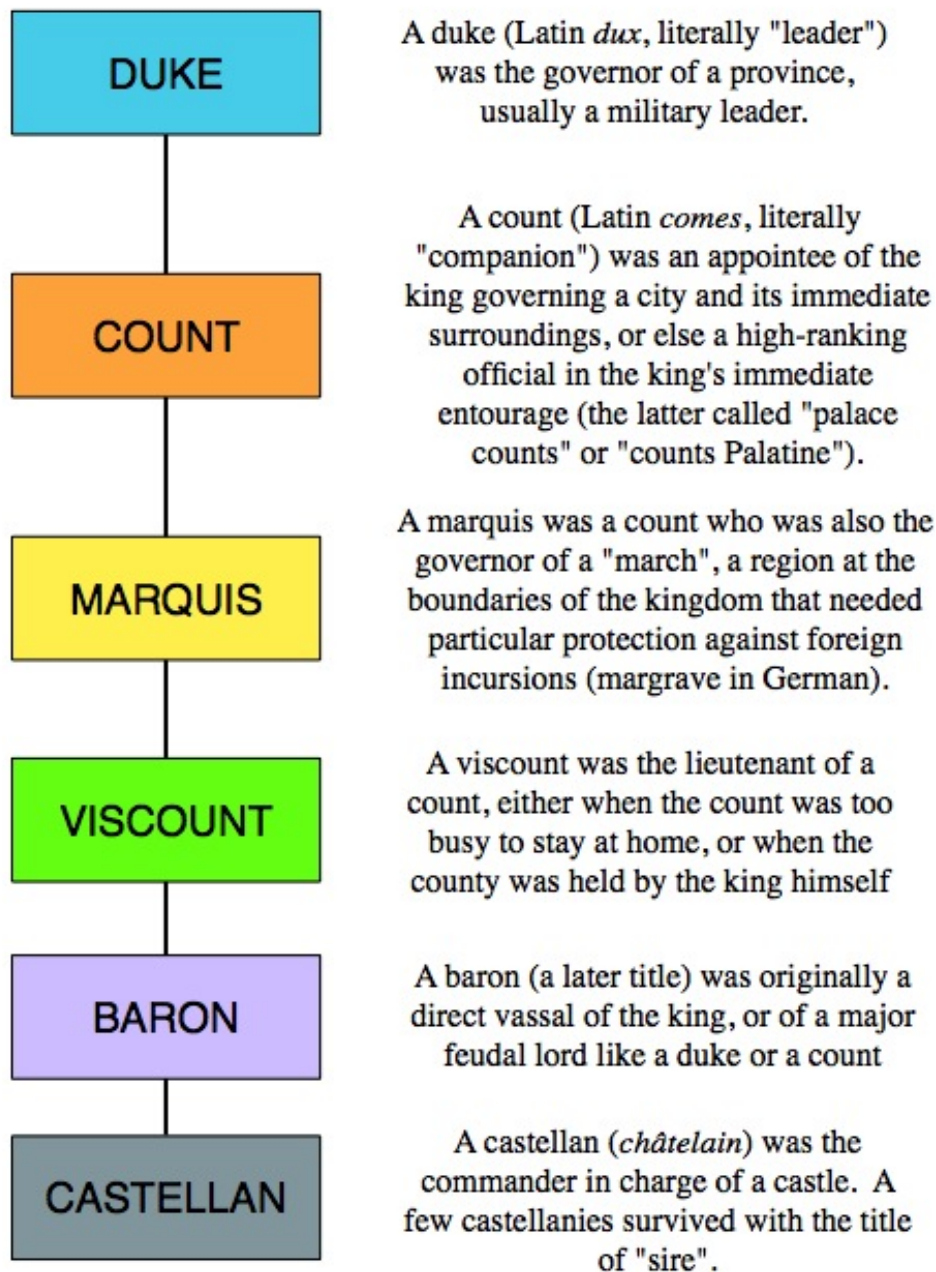


## Appendices

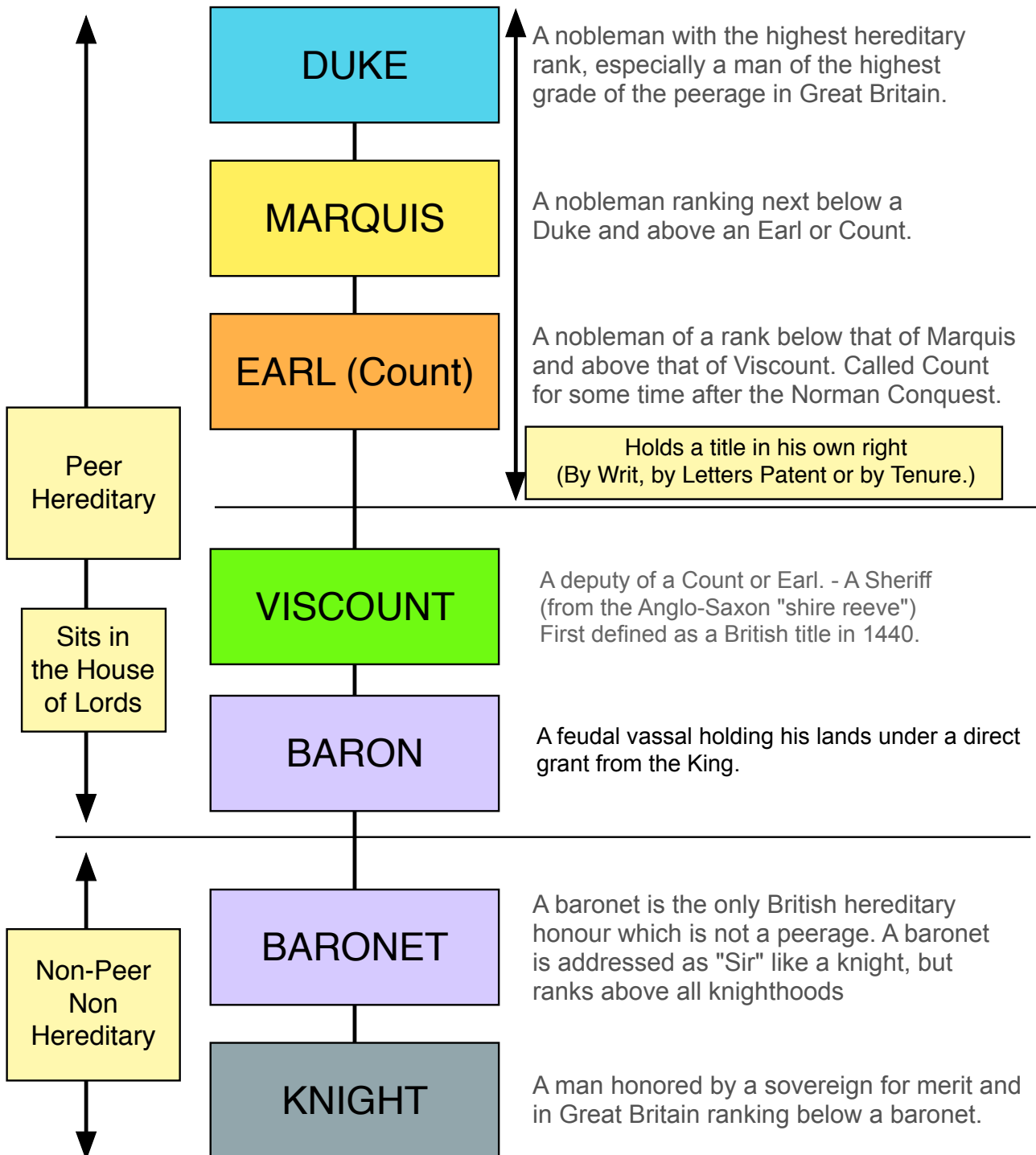
### The Heirarchy of Nobility

The history of the House of Rotrou is peppered with references to Duke, Counts, Viscounts and Barons. It would be interesting to see the heirarchy of such nobles in the Middle Ages . English noble heirarchy is similar to the French, probably consolidated in the years after the Conquest in 1066.

### French Noble Heirarchy



# English Noble Heirarchy



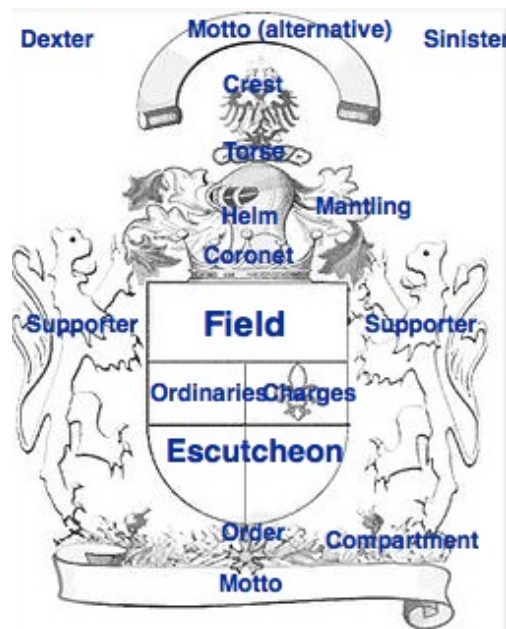
# Heraldry

**Heraldry** is the profession, study or art of creating, granting, and blazoning arms and ruling on questions of rank or protocol. This is practiced by the Officer of Arms.<sup>1</sup> The origins of heraldry lie in the need to distinguish participants in combat when their faces were hidden by iron and steel helmets, although the initial rules have evolved into a much more complex system.

## Shield and Lozenge

A declaration of the symbolic representation of a family is called an "achievement". This is represented in the general form, shown below.

For our needs, we will concentrate on the central element of the achievement, which is the shield (also called "blazon"), created to identify the various families, and their symbolic "representation" and declared "motto".



We will concentrate on the shield, and the motto, which we can see, on many occasions, throughout our family documents.

<sup>1</sup> An officer of arms is a person appointed by a sovereign or state, with authority to perform one or more of the following functions: controlling and initiating armorial matters, and conserving and interpreting [heraldic](#) and genealogical records.