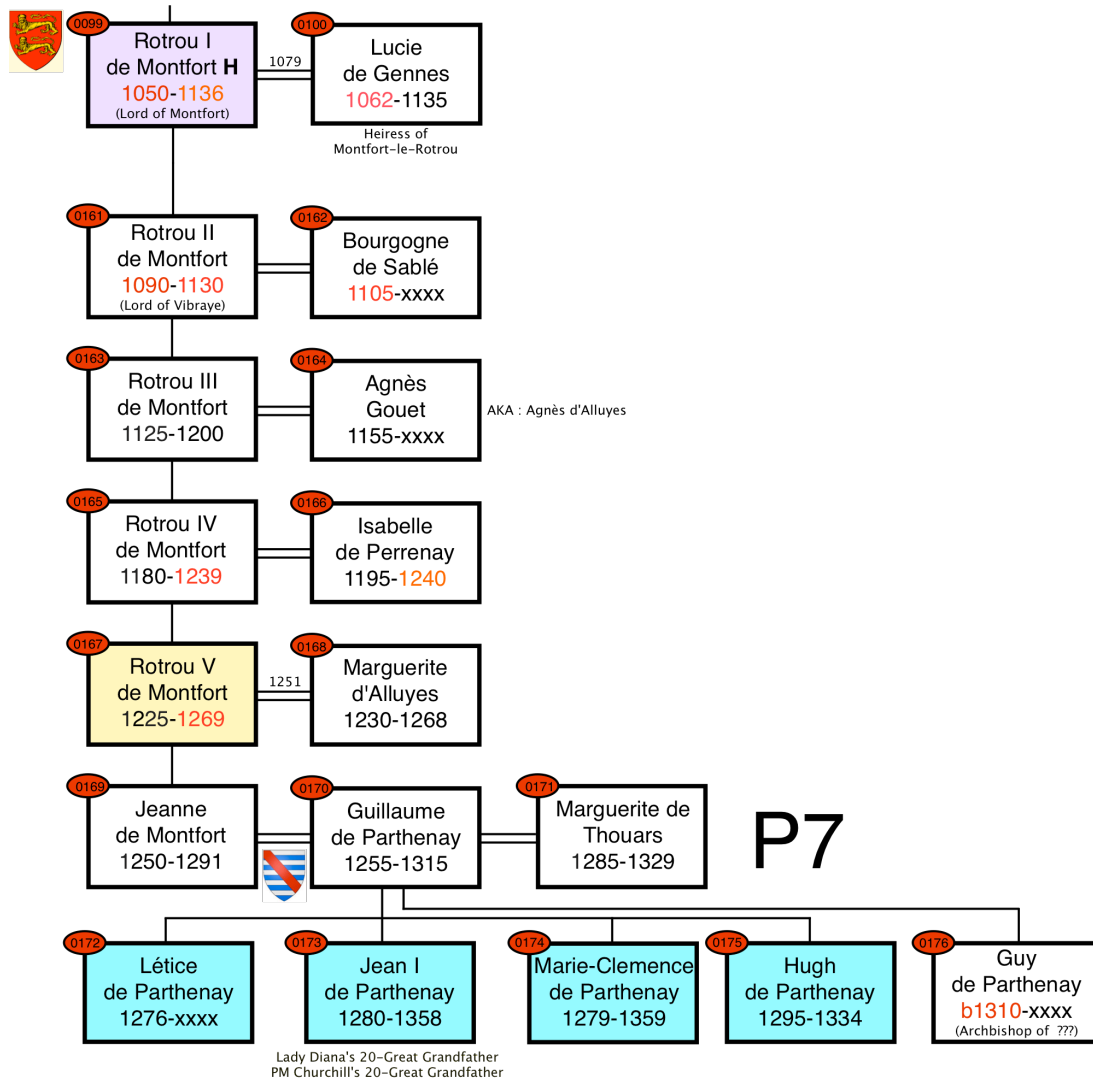


## The House of MONTFORT-LE-ROTROU



It may seem strange to note that the five generations of the Monfort 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 Monfort 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 Monfort, 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 château, 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 married 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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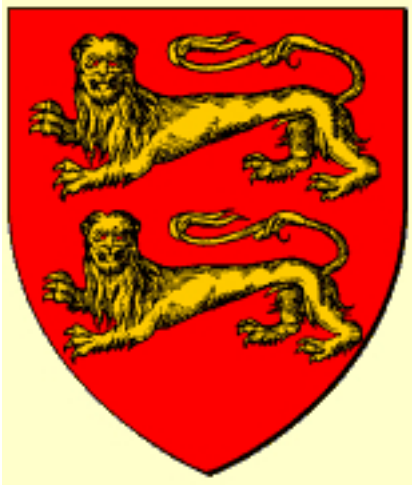
<sup>6</sup> Quote from "The Armour of Light: Stained Glass in Western France" by Meredith P. Lillich.

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.*