

WALERAN DE BELLOMONTE; first Earl of Worcester, Count of Meulan and Mellent, Lord of Pont Audemar, Brienne and Beaumont. He was also known as William of Wigonia (Worcester).

He was born in 1104 and died at the monastery at Preaux 9th April 1166; he was the twin son of Robert first Norman Earl of Leicester (see p. 18 ORD. VIT. III. 348. IV. 59). At his father's death he received as his share of the inheritance, the Norman estates at Meulan and Beaumont. He also owned the manor of Vatteville on the left bank of the Seine (ibid III. 474). Like his brother, he was a great feudal statesman and warrior.

In 1119 during Henry 1's struggle in Normandy against his nephew - son of Robert Duke of Normandy, Waleran sided with the King; but in 1123 he joined in a conspiracy at Croix S. Leufroi, but he was defeated by William de Harcourt at the Battle of Bourgteronde, he fled to Brienne; on Henry's approach he withdrew to his castle at Beaumont. The King captured his castles at Brienne and Pont Audemar, the latter after a seven weeks siege, and burnt his towns of Montfort, Brienne and Pont Audemar, (ibid I. 155). He also deprived him of his title of Count of Meulan. In the following year, 24th March 1124, he proceeded to the relief of his tower of Vatteville, he had with him his three brothers-in-law, Hugh de Chateau Neuf, Hugh de Montfort and William Lord of Breval. Very early in the morning they assaulted the entrenchments which the King had thrown up round the castle and they endeavoured to force a convoy of provisions through to the besieged. But Waleran and the two Hughs and about eighty men at arms were captured and closely confined for five years, first at Rouen and then in England. The King had now reduced all Waleran's castles except that at Beaumont; which he ordered him to deliver up and Waleran being a prisoner he realised that discretion was the better part of valour, and fearing to expose himself to greater peril if he refused, he sent a messenger to Morim who had charge of his affairs to give it up without delay (ibid IV, 77, T. Forester). He was afterwards pardoned, but again rebelled declaring for William of Normandy, nephew of King Henry. The Royalist forces captured his castles at Brienne and Pont Audemar (ibid I. 155). By 1135 he had regained the King's confidence, for he and his twin brother were both present at Henry's deathbed. He then took up Stephen's cause and in the spring of 1136 he went to Normandy and in the autumn of that year captured Roger de Toeni. He remained there till the following spring and then returned to England, the next year he was made Joint Lieutenant of Normandy, soon after he crossed the Channel again, in order to suppress a rising against the English government. Towards the end of 1138 he returned to England and was then sent north

to attack the Scots, driving them out of the castle of Wark, he was probably present at the Battle of the "Standard" at Northallerton when the Scots were completely defeated.

By this time he had become chief adviser to the King and he defended him in his controversy with the Bishops of Salisbury and Ely at the Council of Oxford (Stubbs CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY, I. 321; Freeman, NORMAN HIST. V. 287). Matters came to a crisis, a riot followed, the Bishop was seized and imprisoned, this was followed by civil war. Robert, Earl of Gloucester, cousin of the King attacked Worcester in October 1139 on behalf of the Empress Maud; he destroyed a considerable portion of the city and carried off a large amount of plunder; on the 13th of November Waleran attacked and defeated John Fitz Harold, who was serving under the Earl of Gloucester, he then re-entered the city and captured many prisoners. He was in chief command at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, when he saw that the battle was lost he escaped, but the King, surrounded by a few of his Knights, fought with great courage, but at last worn out by fatigue and deserted by all, he surrendered to his Cousin Robert and was by him taken to the Empress Maud, who caused him to be imprisoned at Bristol (HENRY OF HUNTINGDON, 224, 30.) Later in the year he with his brother Robert negotiated peace with Geoffrey of Anjou (ORD. VIT. IV. 221).

He served under Geoffrey, Count of Anjou in the siege of Rouen in 1143/4; he afterwards captured and burnt Emandreville and the Church of S. Sever, where many of both sexes perished in the flames. The Empress Matilda captured his castle at Worcester and granted it to William de Beauchamp (GEOFFREY DE MANDEVILLE, Round, p. 313).

In 1144 Stephen rewarded him for his many services by creating him Earl of Worcester, he also made him a grant of the town.

He went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and subsequently to the disastrous Second Crusade in 1147 and took part in the attack on Lisbon, when the Moors were driven out of the City (Dansey, CRUSADES, RAMSAY, Foundations of England, II 433). On his return in 1149 he quarrelled with the King, and went so far as to offer the crown to Theobald, Stephen's brother, but this was declined (Dr. Bright, Hist. Eng. I, 84). He then joined the party of the Empress Matilda and held Worcester on her behalf. The King captured and burnt the town, but failed in his attempt on the castle. Two years later the King attacked again, Waleran was driven out and escaped to Normandy, where he was taken prisoner by his nephew Robert de Montfort, who confined him in the castle of Obec, he gained his release by a grant of some portion of his estate

to his nephew. In 1154 he attempted to take the castle of Montfort, but without success. The King then captured and burnt the city of Winchester which belonged to Waleran (Dansy).

In 1157 we find him at Henry II's Court and in May 1160 he was one of the witnesses to the Treaty of Peace between Henry II and Louis of France; he also at this time witnessed the charter of the Abbey of Coggeshall.

He was generous in his gifts to churches, amongst others to the Abbey of Notre Dame du Voeu, in the diocese of Rouen. This he founded, in conjunction with the Empress Matilda, the latter in fulfilment of a vow which she made when besieged at Oxford and in like manner the Earl for a vow taken when shipwrecked on returning from the Holy Land. He also gave very liberally towards the foundation of Bordesley Abbey, Co. Warwick c. 1141. A facsimile of a deed conveying one of his gifts will be found in H.S. Ellis's ROYAL AND OTHER CHARTERS. He made rich grants to the Church of S. Nicaise, Mellent and built a bridge there. He also gave an orchard and ninety acres of land, near to his castle, to the Abbey of Bec, in 1144, this was sanctioned by the Pope, but the monks at S. Frideswide's, Oxford claimed the land, the dispute was settled by Waleran giving an estate at Edenetown to S. Frideswide's. In after years he took the Benedictine habit of the Abbey of Preaux of which he was patron. The Abbot of Mont S. Michel said "he was the greatest richest and best man in Normandy."

His seal, depicting him on horseback, may be seen at the British Museum (Equestrian Seals p. 245. Catalogue II 235.) It is one of the earliest examples of heraldry which we have. It was in use in 1150. (Round, Archaeological Journal LI. 43).

In 1136 King Stephen betrothed his daughter Mary of Blois, when only two years old to him, but he eventually married Elizabeth (? Agnes), widow of Gournay de Rochfort and daughter of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Evreux. They had issue:

I. Robert, heir.

II. Isabella. In June 1180 she made a grant to the Abbey of Savigny in the diocese of Coutances. She married first Geoffrey, Baron de Maggenne and secondly Maurice, Lord of Craon.

III. Amaury.

IV. Roger.

V. Waleran, Lord of Montfort. In 1178 he was present at the dedication of the Church of Notre Dame du Bec.

VI. Etienne.

VII. Hugh, Lord of Blinchefeld, a benefactor to the Abbey of Resson.

VIII. Marie, married Hugh Talbot, Baron of Cleuville, Lord of Hotot-sur-Mer.

IX. Amice, married Henry, Baron de Ferrieres.

X. Duda, married William de Molines, issue (1) Simon (2) Hugh, both died young.

ROBERT DE BELLOMONTE, Count of Meulan, Lord of Pont Audemer, Lord of Praaux and second Earl of Worcester; died 20th September 1181. He attested many charters to Abbeys and churches amongst others one to the Monastery of S. Mary de Frè at Rouen in 1167 and he made many handsome gifts to religious houses. In August 1173 he joined Prince Henry in his rebellion against his father Henry II. He was present at the meeting of King Henry and Louis of France 21st September 1177, when the former took the oath which he failed to keep to join in a new Crusade (Michelet, HIST. FRANCE, I. 492). The following year he witnessed a grant of £100 per annum in favour of the Abbey of Bec, which was chargeable on the revenues of the Viscomte of Rouen.

His seal will be found in the British Museum.

He married Maud daughter and co-heiress of Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, a natural son of Henry I by Elizabeth daughter of Robert de Bellomonte first Earl of Leicester.

I. Robert, heir.

II. Peter, succeeded his brother Robert in the Earldom of Mellent and became head of the Courseuilles family. He abandoned the Royal party in 1207, handing his castle over to the King of France. He died soon afterwards. He married Eustache daughter of William Bacon, Lord de Molley and had issue, two sons:

(1) Raoul, heir.

(2) Jean, Lord of Plaigne, Canon of Rouen. He founded an Obit for his mother in connection with this church.

RAOUL DE MELLENT, Lord de Beaumont, Baron de Brienne and de Courseville, Lord Bennieres, de Lion, de Chastillon and de Molley-Bacon. He gave up his estates at Beaumont and Brienne to King Louis of France in August 1255 in exchange

for the Lordship of Courseules, on paying £600 and rendering two knights service for forty days. He then ceased to use the surname of Beaumont. In 1298 he was summoned to parliament. He married Blanche daughter of Jean, Baron Ferrieres, secondly married Jeanne, daughter of Fouzues-Painel, Baron de Hambie and had issue:

- 1a. Raoul, Lord of Courseules, heir.
- 2a. Gallien de Mellent, Lord of Teil, alive 1358.
- 3a. Jean de Mellent, Canon of S. Sepulchre's at Caen.

III. Joan, (third child of Robert) married Beaumesnil de St. Celerin and secondly married in 1179 Robert de Harcourt from whom the French Harcourts are descended.

VI. Waleran, Lord de Beaumont, alive in 1223, married 1179 Marguerite, daughter of Raoul, Baron de Fougeres and widow of William Count de Bertrand, issue:

(1) Roger, d.s.p.

(2) Robert, one of the founders of the Abbey of Barbery in the diocese of Bayeux, alive in 1222, married Agnes de Preaux in 1204, issue one, Mabire, married in 1223 William de Vernon, Count of Devon, Lord of Isle of Wight, d.s.p. The estates then passed to her great uncle Peter (see SUPRA).

V. Henry, Lord of Sahus. In 1192 he witnessed a charter granted by his father to the Abbey of Bonport.

VI. Amaury, Lord of Roissy, he witnessed a charter in 1180.

VII. William, Lord of Vey.

VIII. Onfrey.

ROBERT DE BELLOMONTE, de Wigonia and of Breston, Belstone, Devon, Count of Meulen, third Earl of Worcester. In 1191 he sided with John in his endeavour to seize the kingdom, whilst Richard Coeur de Lion was at the Crusades, as a punishment he was excommunicated and his English estates were forfeited by the Great Council of the Barons. In 1204 on the capture of Normandy by Philip of France he lost his Norman estates, they were added to the French royal domain.

He married Jane, daughter and co-heiress of Baldwin of Belstone, issue:

I. Waleran, killed whilst on a pilgrimage, apparently left no issue.

II. William, heir.

III. Robert de Wigonia of Belston.

IV. Roger, a priest in holy orders, held a Prebendal stall at S. Paul's Cathedral in 1192.

V. Mabira, married at Beaux near Rouen, William (Richard?) de Riviers, Earl of the Isle of Wight, some authorities say she married William de Vernon, Earl of Devon, the latter died 1217. She had a son, Baldwin.

WILLIAM OF WIGONIA, fourth Earl of Worcester, owned South Tawton and other estates in Devonshire. William had issue, a daughter.

I. Mary, married Robert Courtenay, issue William who obtained a grant of the manors of Chivelstone, Devon, Wray, East Ayshe from Henry II, he then assumed the surname of Chivelstone. He married and had issue two sons:

1a. William de Wray, held the manor of Northwyke, Worcester, in 1243.

2b. John de Chivelstone.

For the descendants of the Chivelstone family see Charles Worthey's DEVONSHIRE WILLS, p. 387. These estates passed eventually by marriage into the Halwell family.

Robert Beaumont owned lands at Throkmorton, Worcestershire in 1325 on which he raised £60 from Robert de Throkmorton.

A Robert de Meulen held the Bishopric of Hereford in 1167.