

THE CAREER OF ROBERT OF THURNHAM, 1191-1211

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



2007

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Abstract of MPhil Thesis

This thesis examines the career of Robert II of Thurnham a high ranking curial official, whose career in the royal service spanned the reigns of both Richard I [1189-1199] and John [1199-1216]. The thesis begins by examining Robert's modest, if not humble, family background, before moving on to examine his career in the royal service. The thesis treats Robert's curial career in broadly chronological order, starting with his activities on the Third Crusade [1191-2], and then examining his activities as seneschal of Anjou [1195-99], and later as seneschal of Poitou [1201-1204/5]. The thesis concludes by examining such factors as the rewards Robert received for his services to the crown, and the way in which these rewards affected his relationship with the wider Angevin society. This final chapter also attempts to provide more accurate dates, than have hitherto been offered, for the foundations of the religious houses that Robert established, by providing a detailed analysis of the surviving charter evidence, not all of which has been published. It also examines his controversial relationship with the Abbey of Meaux, and his relationship with his brother Stephen, and other prominent *curiales*. Two appendices are included. The first takes the form of an itinerary for Robert's life, with the second examining the value to a study of Robert's life of Peter of Langtoft's 'Chronicle' and Thomas Burton's 'Meaux Chronicle'.

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Abbreviations

<i>AHP</i>	<i>Archives Historiques de Poitou</i>
Ang.	Pounds Angevin.
<i>Ann. St. Aubin</i>	‘ <i>Annals St. Aubin</i> ’, L. Halphen (ed.), <i>Annales Angevins et Vendômoises</i> , (Paris, 1911)
<i>BEC</i>	<i>Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Chartes</i>
BIHR	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
Bk. Fees	Book of Fees, 3 vols., (London, 1920-31)
BL	British Library (St. Pancras - London)
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale (Site Richelieu – Paris)
Cal. Doc. Fr.	Calendar of Documents Preserved in France Illustrative of The History of Great Britain and Ireland. A.D. 918-1206, J.H. Round (ed.), (London, 1899)
<i>Cart. Bas-Poit.</i>	<i>Cartulaires de Bas-Poitou</i> , P. Marchegay (ed.), (Les Roches-Baritaud, 1877)

- Cart. St. Aubins* *Cartulaire de Saint-Aubins d'Angers*, B. de Broussillon
(ed.),
(Paris, 1903)
- Chron. Ang.* *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, J.
Stephenson (ed.),
RS, (London, 1875)
- Chron. Maj.* Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, H.R. Luard (ed.), 7
vols.,
RS, (London, 1872-84)
- Chron. Steph.* Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and
Richard I, R. Howlett (ed.), 4 vols., RS, (London, 1884-9)
- Chron. Rog. Hov.* *Chronica de Rogeri de Hoveden*, W. Stubbs (ed.), 4 vols.,
RS, (London, 1868-71)
- Chron. Tur. Mag.* ‘*Chronicon Turonense Magnum*’, A. Salmon (ed.),
Recueil des
Chroniques de Touraine, (Tours, 1854), pp .64-161
- CRR* *Curia Regis Rolls*, 12 vols., (to 1226), (London, 1922-57)

Combwell Charters ‘Charters of Cumbwell Priory’, *Archeologica Cantiana*,
v, pp. 194-

222 [i]; vi, pp. 190-222 [ii] & viii, pp. 271-293 [iii].

Devizes Richard of Devizes, *Chronicle*, J.T. Appleby (ed. &
trans.), (Nelson

Medieval Classics, 1963)

EHR English Historical Review

EYC Early Yorkshire Charters, W. Farrer & C. Clay (eds.), 12
vols., (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, Record Series,
1914-65)

Feet of Fines [Yorks.] *Pedes Finium Ebor, regnante Johanne, 1199-1214*, W.
Brown (ed.),

Surtees Society, 94, (1897)

Flores Hist. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, H.G. Hewlett
(ed.),

3 vols., RS, (London, 1886-9)

Gesta Hen. *Gesta regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis*, W. Stubbs
(ed.),

2 vols., RS, (London, 1867). (written by Roger of Howden.)

Hist. Ang. Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, F. Madden (ed.), 3 vols., (London, 1866)

Hist. des Ducs Anonymous of Béthune, *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie et des Rois d'Angleterre*, F. Michel (ed.), (Paris, 1840)

Hist. Guil. Mar. *Le Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, P. Meyer (ed.), 3 vols., (*Société de l'Histoire de France*, 1891-1901)

Hist. Rerum Ang. William of Newburgh, '*Historia rerum Anglicanum*', Chron. Steph, vols. i & ii

Interdict Documents P.M. Barnes & W. Raymond Powell (eds.), Interdict Documents, (PRS, 1960)

Itinerarium '*Itinerarium regis Ricardi*', W. Stubbs (ed.), in Chronicles

And Memorials of the Reign of Richard I, RS, 2 vols., (London 1864-5), vol. i

Itinerary Itinerary of Richard I, L. Landon (ed.), (PRS, 1935)

JMH	Journal of Medieval History
Langtoft the earliest	The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, in French verse from Period to the death of King Edward I, T. Wright (ed. & trans.), 2 vols., (London, 1868)
Meaux Chron. Bond, (ed.),	Thomas Burton, <i>Chronica Monasterii de Melsa</i> , E.A. 3 vols., RS, (London, 1866)
<i>Monasticon</i> (eds.),	William Dugdale, <i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> , J. Caley <i>et al</i> 6 vols., in 8, (London, 1846)
<i>Opera Hist.</i>	Ralph de Diceto, <i>Opera Historica</i> , W. Stubbs (ed.), 2 vols., RS, (London, 1876)
<i>Pat. Latina</i>	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... series Latina</i> , J.P. Migne (ed.), 221 vols., (Paris, 1844-1903)
PR	Pipe Roll, (PRS, 1884-to date)
PRS	Pipe Roll Society

- Ptv. Pounds [Poitevin]
- RBE Red Book of the Exchequer, H. Hall (ed.), 3 vols., RS, (London, 1896)
- RHGF* *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, 24 vols., in 20, (Farnborough, 1960)
- Rot. chart.* *Rotuli Chartarum*, T.D. Hardy (ed.), (London, 1837)
- Rot. lib.* *Rotuli de liberatis ac de misis et praestitis, regnante Johanne*, T.D. Hardy (ed.), (London, 1844)
- Rot. litt. claus.* *Rotuli litterarum clausarum in turri Londinensi asservati*, T.D. Hardy (ed.), 2 vols., (London 1833-44)
- Rot. litt. pat.* *Rotuli litterarum patentium in turri Londinensi asservati*, T.D. Hardy (ed.), (London, 1835)
- Rot. obl.* *Rotuli de oblatiis et finibus in turri Londinensi asservati, tempore regis Johannis*, T.D. Hardy (ed.), (London, 1835)

<i>Rot. Norm.</i>	<i>Rotuli Normanniae in turri Londinensi</i> , T.D. Hardy (ed.), (London, 1835)
<i>RCR</i>	<i>Rotuli Curiae Regis</i> . Rolls and Records of the Court held before the King's Justices. From the sixth year of King Richard I to the First Year of King John, F. Palgrave (ed.), 2 vols., (London, 1835)
RS	<i>Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores</i> , or (Rolls Series) 251 vols., (London, 1858-96)
Stg.	Sterling
VCH	Victoria County History
<i>Vie (Guillaume)</i>	William le Breton, ' <i>Vie de Philippe Auguste</i> ', <i>Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton</i> , H.F. Delaborde (ed.), 2 vols, <i>Société de l'histoire de France</i> , (Paris, 1882-5), in volume one
<i>Vie (Rigord)</i>	Rigord, ' <i>Vie de Philippe Auguste</i> ', <i>Œuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton</i> , H.F. Delaborde (ed.), 2 vols, <i>Société de l'histoire de France</i> , (Paris, 1882-5), in volume one

Vita Sancti Hugh. Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, D.L.
Douie & H.
Farmer (eds. & trans.), 2 vols., (Nelson Medieval Texts,
1962)

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine the career of Robert II of Thurnham in the service of kings Richard and John. This thesis will chart Robert's career in a broadly chronological fashion, starting with some basic background information relating to Robert and his family, before turning its attention to the various duties entrusted to him by Richard and John. Although Robert's career was dominated by the affairs of the Angevins' transmarine provinces, much of the source material that survives relates to Robert's activities in England between *circa* 1195 and 1211. In light of this our final chapter examines Robert's involvement in English affairs between these dates.

Robert of Thurnham was one half of the Thurnham brothers, the younger brother of Stephen of Thurnham. Both Robert and Stephen rose to positions of prominence and influence by way of service to the Angevin kings. Although Stephen had risen to a position of prominence by the late-1170s, by virtue of his marriage to Edelina of Broc, it was the crusade that saw both Stephen and Robert emerge as men of modest importance. Whilst Robert appears as one of Richard's senior military commanders, Stephen was entrusted with the task of protecting Berengaria of Navarre and Joan, wife of the late William II, King of Sicily, guiding them to the Holy Land, and then back home to England, by way of Rome, Toulouse, and Chinon.

Although both Robert and Stephen had been crusaders, following their return from the crusade their careers took very different paths. Stephen, who seems to have been an associate of Geoffrey fitz Peter, followed what could be called a typical

administrative career. Following Geoffrey's appointment to the justiciarship in 1198, Stephen was entrusted with a number of important commissions that saw him actively involved in the English administration. During the course of his career he acted as sheriff of Wiltshire and Berkshire, was entrusted with the administration of the estates of the Archbishopric of York, acted as a royal justice, help administer numerous escheats, oversaw repairs to various royal castles in Kent and Wiltshire, and was party to the levying of a number of tallages and amercements; most notably the amercements levied in 1198 on those merchants engaged in the illegal corn trade with Flanders. If Stephen's career could be considered typical, at least in terms of the nature of the duties entrusted to him, then Robert's was atypical. Although Robert, like Stephen, married an English wife (Joanna Fossard), owned estates in England (Mainly in Yorkshire), and undertook occasional duties connected to the English administration, Robert's career was dominated by the affairs of the Angevin kings' transmarine provinces. It is the fact that Robert was essentially an Englishman co-opted into the administrative and military affairs of Anjou and Poitou that makes him such an interesting figure.

Robert of Thurnham is one of the 'usual suspects'. That is to say that it is nigh on impossible to provide a detailed study of the reigns of Richard I or John without having recourse to mention Robert at least once. Although Robert's name is not unknown amongst historians, no detailed biography of his life has ever been written.¹ One reason for this is that Robert has never been seen, perhaps rightly, as a top rank *curiales* under either Richard or John. Although he was a prominent member of the

¹ Some brief biographical details are provided by J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, 2nd Ed. (London, 2001), p. 77 & M. C-J. Beutemps-Beaupré, *Coutumes et Institutions de L'Anjou et du Maine antérieures au XVIe Siècle*, 8 vols., in two parts, (Paris, 1877-1897), Part 2, book 1, pp. 282-6.

court from 1191 until his death in 1211, Robert never held a position of influence comparable to those held by Hubert Walter, Geoffrey fitz Peter or William Marshal. This may account for the lack of interest amongst historians for Robert's career, but another problem concerns the source material which details Robert's career. It must be said from the outset that Robert appears only infrequently in the surviving narrative sources dealing with the reigns of Richard I and John. However, his name appears frequently in the administrative sources produced during John's reign, and it is these sources that provide us with our best source of information for the career of Robert of Thurnham. What the surviving evidence does show, as we shall see, is that Robert was a man who was involved, often at a quite senior level, with many of the most important events of the reigns of Richard I and John. Before turning our attention to these events, we first need to say something about Robert's background prior to his emergence during the course of the Third Crusade.

Robert II of Thurnham and his Family

1154-1189

We can trace the Thurnham family tree from the charters of Combwell Priory [Kent] and Bayham Abbey [Sussex]. Amongst the charters of Combwell Priory, founded by Robert I of Thurnham, is a charter issued by Walkelin Maminot – Robert’s lord – in which we find the following witnesses: ‘...*Robertus de Thorneham et Stephanus de Thorneham et Robertus frater ejus et Michael de Thorneham et Johannes frater ejus.*’² The first Robert of Thurnham mentioned is Robert I of Thurnham the founder of the Priory, who is also mentioned in Walkelin’s confirmation charter to Combwell.³ The relationship between Robert I of Thurnham and the other members of the Thurnham family can be established from later charters.

Another charter issued by Robert I of Thurnham shows that Michael of Thurnham, and by implication John of Thurnham, were his brothers. A charter from the Bayham Abbey chartulary refers to a grant made by Robert to ‘...*Michaeli fratri meo*’ from land he held at Rockland [Sussex].⁴ The relationship between the two Roberts and Stephen mentioned in Walkelin’s charter is made clearer in a charter issued by Stephen’s daughter, Alice of Bending, in which she confirms the grants made to Combwell by her father Stephen of Thurnham and her grandfather Robert I

² *Combwell Charters*, i, pp. 198-9.

³ *ibid.*, i, pp. 196-7. Walkelin Maminot’s confirmation of Robert I of Thurnham’s foundation charter. Robert’s charter has not survived, but that one existed is shown by a reference to it in Walkelin’s charter: ‘...*in donationem illam quam Robertus de Torneham dedit ecclesie de Combwell sicut carta ipsius testatur.*’ Combwell was probably founded during the reign of Henry II. *VCH (Kent)*, ii, pp. 160-1.

⁴ *Monasticon*, vol. 6/part 2 [henceforth vii], p. 913 (No. XII).

of Thurnham.⁵ This means that the second Robert of Thurnham referred to in Maminot's charter to Combwell was Robert II of Thurnham; Stephen's brother and Robert I of Thurnham's son. The relationship between Michael and John of Thurnham and Stephen and Robert II de Thurnham is clarified in a charter issued by Richard de Lunguil witnessed: '*Stephano de Torneham et Roberto fratre suo Johanne de Turneham avunculo eorum.*'⁶

Nothing is known of the Thurnham family prior to the emergence of Robert I of Thurnham. In 1086 the manor of Thurnham, from which the family derived its name, belonged to Ralph [of] Courbepine who held it, and eighteen other manors, from Odo, bishop of Bayeux.⁷ How the Thurnham family came to hold the manor of Thurnham is unclear. It is possible that the Thurnham family were Ralph's descendants, though this seems unlikely. A comparison of the estates held by Ralph in 1086 with those held by the Thurnham family between c.1180 and 1214 fails to provide a match. The Domesday Book for Kent records that Ralph held property in Dover, Canterbury, Ripe, Birling, Thurnham, Fairbourne, Barfreston, South Popeshall, Beamondston, Pevington, Coldred, Ewell, Swanton, Appleton, Easole, Waldershare, Denton, *Platenout* and Bewsborough.⁸ The only property formerly held by Ralph, and which was also known to have been held by the Thurnham family, was Thurnham itself. Although Robert II of Thurnham held land in Dover, this had been given to him by Richard I and was not part of the Thurnham patrimony. Therefore, the Thurnham family must have acquired Thurnham after 1086 and before *circa* 1150. Exactly when, and indeed how, this came about is unknown.

⁵ *Combwell Charters*, i, pp. 218-9.

⁶ *ibid.*, ii, p. 201. Stephen's charter [1211x1214] to Bayham Abbey also acknowledges that Robert was his brother and Michael his uncle. *Monasticon*, vii, p. 912 [No. X].

⁷ *VCH (Kent)*, iii, p. 229.

⁸ *ibid.*, iii, p. 203, p. 206, p. 208, p. 214, p. 226, p. 229, p. 234, p. 237, p. 239, pp. 240-2, p. 245, p. 248.

In fact very little is known about the career of Robert I of Thurnham, who is the earliest known member of the Thurnham family. The baronial survey of 1166 shows that he held three knights' fees from Walkelin Maminot.⁹ It is likely that Robert I had supported Stephen during the Civil War. Walkelin Maminot had certainly been a supporter of Stephen's, and the little evidence that survives suggests that Robert I had shared his lord's allegiance.¹⁰ A charter issued by Robert I of Thurnham, between 1150 and 1154, shows that Robert had had dealings with William of Ypres, Stephen's military commander.¹¹ The charter records Robert's decision to return to Hilary, bishop of Chichester, the six knights' fees that Robert held from Hilary in Icklesham and Bexhill [Both Sussex] in return for land of an unspecified value at Wickford [Essex]. A spurious charter, said to have been issued by King Stephen to Battle Abbey, also suggests that Robert had been one of Stephen's supporters.¹² Although the charter itself is spurious, it is worth noting that the *scriptor* chose to include Robert I of Thurnham as one of the witnesses, presumably because he was known to have been one of Stephen's Kentish supporters. Robert's support for King Stephen would explain why, in 1156, Robert was found to have owed Henry II 50 marks for having the king's peace.¹³ Unlike many royal debtors Robert took his fine seriously; paid it promptly; and by Michaelmas 1158 the Pipe Rolls record that the debt had been discharged in full.

Robert I of Thurnham was certainly dead by 1184, and was probably dead by 1182, since Stephen of Thurnham, the older of the two Thurnham brothers, came into

⁹ RBE, i, p. 194.

¹⁰ R. Eales, 'Local Loyalties in Norman England: Kent in Stephen's Reign', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, viii, pp. 88-108; at p. 91 & p. 104.

¹¹ A. Saltman, *Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury*, (London, 1956), pp. 295-6, no. 71.

¹² H. Cronne & R. Davis (eds.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066-1154*, 3 vols., iii (1135-1154), (Oxford, 1968), pp. 18-19.

¹³ PR, 2 Henry II, p. 66; PR, 3 Henry II, p. 102 & PR, 4 Henry II, p. 102.

his inheritance between 1174 and 1184. A charter issued by Richard, archbishop of Canterbury [1174-1184] refers to an agreement reached between Stephen and Robert, chaplain of St Mary's in Thurnham, concerning the transfer of the advowson of the church of St Mary's to Combwell.¹⁴ Also mentioned in the charter is an agreement between Robert the chaplain and Stephen in which Robert agrees to hold services in Stephen's chapel at his court when Stephen and his household are in residence at Thurnham.¹⁵ This is the first possible reference to the existence of Thurnham castle, although the first explicit reference to a castle at Thurnham does not appear until *circa* 1219 when Mabel of Gatton, Stephen's daughter, refers to Thurnham castle in a charter to Combwell.¹⁶ Whilst Stephen's charter does not prove Thurnham castle existed prior to 1219 it does show, as one might expect, that the Thurnham family had some sort of permanent residence at Thurnham.

Although little is known of the life of Robert I of Thurnham, the careers of his two sons are particularly well documented. Stephen's rise to power began in the last decade or so of the reign of Henry II. Stephen's success owed much to an advantageous marriage contracted in the mid to late-1170s between himself and Edelina of Broc, daughter and heiress of Ranulf of Broc. Ranulf had been one of Henry's most loyal supporters during the Becket controversy, and had provided

¹⁴ Combwell Charters, i, pp. 201-2. That Robert was dead by 1182 would seem to be suggested by the fact that Michael of Turnham, who held land from Robert I, had his agreement to transfer some of his land at Brockley to Juliana, countess of Norfolk, confirmed by Stephen of Thurnham. *Monasticon*, vii, p. 913 [No. XIV]. This was done prior to the foundation of Brockley Abbey by Juliana in *circa* 1182. H.M. Colvin, The White Canons in England, (Oxford, 1951), p. 111. Colvin thinks it unlikely Brockley was founded much earlier than 1182.

¹⁵ *Robertus vero capellanus ecclesie de Thorneham facto concambio et controversia inter ipsum et Stephanum sopita concessit et firmiter promisit quod in capella Stephani de Thorneham quam habet in curia sua fundatum si idem Stephanus cum familia sua ibi moram fecerit tribus diebus in septimana videlicet tertia quarta et sexta nisi festus dies qui perferri debeat intervenerit et die dominica per se vel per capellanum suum divina faciet celebrari. Quod si idem Stephanus residentiam ibi non fecerit per unam diem totam in septimana pro fidelibus defunctis per eundem Robertum vel capellanum ejus divina in eadem capella celebrabuntur.*

¹⁶ Combwell Charters, i, pp. 215-6: '*...inter muros castri de Thorneham.*'

lodgings for the archbishop's assassins on the night before their attack.¹⁷ As well as being a prominent supporter of Henry II, Ranulf was also a wealthy landowner. Through his marriage to Edelina, Stephen acquired not only valuable manors in the neighbourhood of Guildford [Surrey], but also the hereditary titles of *hostiarius de camera domini regis* and royal marshal.¹⁸

There is very little evidence relating to Robert II of Thurnham before his emergence during the course of the Third Crusade. We know that Robert held estates in South-East England before his departure on crusade. The Pipe Roll for 1191 records that Richard of Clare, earl of Hertford, owed the king £70, 17s, 11d for the Welsh scutage on behalf of his knights.¹⁹ However, a number of the earl's knights were pardoned their share of the scutage on the grounds that they had travelled to the Holy Land with the king, and amongst these men we find Robert II of Thurnham. According to the Pipe Rolls Robert had been pardoned the sum of 12d. Since the Welsh scutage for 1190 was assessed at 10s a knights' fee this meant that Robert held no more than one tenth of a knights' fee from Richard of Clare. Robert seems to have become a tenant of the Clare family after inheriting the estates of his uncle Michael. The baronial survey of 1166 showed that Michael held a ninth part of a knights' fee from Roger of Clare, earl of Hertford, in the county of Surrey.²⁰ We know that in the early 1200s Robert held at least one manor in Sussex from Richard of Clare. A charter in the Bayham chartulary records that Michael of Thurnham held the manor of *Begeham* [Bayham – Sussex] from Roger of Clare, which had been granted to him in

¹⁷ For Ranulf see F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, (London, 1986), p. 301 & n.55; p. 303 & n.14. & W.L. Warren, *Henry II*, (London, 1973), p. 507 & p. 509. Ranulf was probably dead by 1177. PR, *25 Henry II*, p. 121.

¹⁸ *Bk. Fees*, i, p. 66 [Guildford – marshal] & p. 67 [Godalming – *hostiarius*].

¹⁹ PR, *3 Richard I*, p. 44.

²⁰ *RBE*, i, pp. 403-407; at p. 406.

exchange for the manor of ‘*Blovestasthe*’ and ‘*unam loricam [hauberk]*’.²¹ Bayham had passed to Robert by the early thirteenth-century since another charter in the Bayham chartulary records that Robert held Bayham from Richard of Clare – Roger’s son and heir.²²

Roger of Clare was not the only noble from whom Michael held estates. Michael also held lands from Walkelin Maminot and his own brother Robert I of Thurnham. A charter in the Bayham chartulary show that Walkelin Maminot had granted Michael land in Brockley [Kent] in return for a lump sum of 40*s*, his service, and an annual rent of 12*d*.²³ Another Bayham charter records that Michael’s brother Robert had given him land at Rockland [Sussex] to hold of him and his heirs for a sixth part of a knights’ fee.²⁴ These estates also passed to Robert who, by the early 1200s, was known to have possessed property in both Brockley and Rockland.²⁵ Michael of Thurnham was also known to have held land at Lamberhurst [Kent], and some of this land passed to Robert, since Robert made grants to Bayham Abbey from

²¹ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 168: ‘*R[ogeri] comes de Clara dedi Michaeli de Turneham terram de Begeham in excambrium pro terra de Blovestasthe quam ipse clamavit quietam in curia mea coram hominibus meis apud Tunebridgiam [Tonbridge – Kent] pro hoc autem excambio dedit mihi unam loricam.*’ Colvin identifies ‘*Blovestasthe*’ as Blockworth, though the O.S. has no record of such a place. H.M. Colvin *The White Canons*, p. 113 & n. 4. ‘*Blovestasthe*’ cannot be positively identified, though it is possible that the name was a corruption of Betchworth [Surrey] where the Clare family were known to have estates. It is almost certain that ‘*Blovestasthe*’ was in Surrey, since Michael was known to have held land in that county from Roger of Clare in 1166. However, Robert does not appear to have owned land in Surrey, so ‘*Blovestasthe*’ was probably Michael’s Surrey manor which was exchanged for Bayham [Sussex] after 1166.

²² BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 169. ‘*Ric[ardus] de Clara...ad petitionem Roberti de Turneham confirmavi Deo et beate Marie de Begeham et canonicis ibidem totam terram de Begeham quam idem Robertus eis dedit et de me tenuit.*’

²³ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 913 [No. XI]. Another charter from the Bayham collection shows that Michael’s service had included acting as steward [*senescallus*] for Walkelin’s wife Juliana, countess of Norfolk. H.M. Colvin, *The White Canons*, pp. 344-5. Juliana derived her title from her first marriage to Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk. Some of the land Michael held at Brockley was returned to Juliana after Walkelin’s death in order to found Brockley Abbey. *Monasticon*, vii, p. 913 [No. XIV]. Not all Michael’s land at Brockley was returned to Juliana, since Robert claimed ownership of land there in *circa* 1205. *ibid.*, vii, p. 912 [No. VIII].

²⁴ *ibid.*, vii, p. 913 [No. XII].

²⁵ *ibid.*, vii, p. 912 [No. VIII].

property he held at Lamberhurst.²⁶ As Michael's heir Robert would have held land from his brother Stephen, and this would explain why in *circa* 1211, following Robert's death, the abbot of Bayham sought to have Robert's grants to the abbey confirmed by Stephen.²⁷ Robert would have held Rockland from Stephen, and Rockland was one of the properties granted to Bayham by Robert on its foundation. That Michael's estates passed to Robert would also explain why Robert showed a greater interest in promoting the welfare of his uncle's foundation at Brockley rather than his father's foundation at Combwell.

In 1189 with the death of Henry II, Robert II of Thurnham, was a man of modest means. The younger son of a moderately wealthy Kentish knight, he had inherited the estates of his uncle who, whilst not a poor man, was hardly a man of great wealth and influence. As far as we can tell the total value of Robert's estates in 1191 was probably less than one knights' fee, made up of a variety of modest holdings in Kent and East Sussex. Yet within a few years Robert would emerge as a man who had earned the respect and gratitude of the new king - Richard I. It was Robert's endeavours during the course of the Third Crusade that would lay the basis for his future success, and it is to these matters, and the career of Robert II of Thurnham in the service of the Angevin kings, that we must now turn our attention.

²⁶ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 913 [No. XVII]. That Michael had also owned land at Lamberhurst is shown in BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 133.

²⁷ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 912 [No. X].

Robert of Thurnham and the Third Crusade

1191-1193

Robert first appears on crusade at Messina in the spring of 1191 when the *'Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi'* states that Richard, shortly before sailing from Messina: *'Classi itaque deducenae et custodiendae praeposito Roberto de Torneham'*²⁸ Unfortunately whilst de Templo mentions Robert's appointment we learn little about his duties as commander of the crusader fleet, other than the fact that he held the post. Richard, whilst at Chinon, had taken care to draw up a list of ordinances to maintain discipline amongst the fleet on its journey east, and one may suppose that, having taken care to compile these ordinances, Richard took equal care to appoint a commander to watch over the fleet who had the ability to implement them.²⁹ A further problem with de Templo's account, at least for us, is that it represents the earliest surviving reference to Robert in the extant narrative sources. Although we possess a couple of references to Robert in the Pipe Rolls, and his name appears in some of his father's charters, we have no other evidence to indicate that by

²⁸ *Itinerarium*, p. 176. The *'Itinerarium'* was written by Richard de Templo, Prior of the Augustinian house of Holy Trinity in London, between 1217 and 1222. This work has much in common with Ambroise's *'Estoire de la Guerre Sancte'*, and debate has raged as to whether de Templo copied Ambroise or whether Ambroise copied de Templo, or even if both writers had access to a third no longer extant source. Recent scholarship on the subject has tended towards the view that de Templo made use of a variety of sources of which the most important was Ambroise's *'Estoire'*. M. Ailes & M. Barber, *The History of the Holy War*, 2 vols., (Boydell, 2004), ii, p. 13. However, de Templo's copy of Ambroise's work may well have been more complete than that handed down to us, which would explain why episodes and names that appear in de Templo's work are not to be found in the extant manuscript of Ambroise's *'Estoire'*. J. Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 127 n. 11, p. 215 n. 85, p. 190 n. 64 & p. 191 n. 68. Robert's appointment as commander of the crusader fleet is one of those references that is not to be found in the extant manuscript of the *'Estoire'*. It has been suggested that de Templo himself had been a participant on the crusade, and that additional details in de Templo's work - absent from the *'Estoire'* - were included as a result of his own experiences. However, absolutely no evidence exists to show that de Templo had been a crusader.

²⁹ *Gesta Hen.*, ii, pp. 110-1.

April 1191 he had risen to a position of prominence in the *familia* of Richard I. However, if de Templo's identification is correct, and Howden's account which we shall consider shortly suggests it probably is, then we must assume that Robert was, by April 1191, already known to Richard, and that his reputation as a military commander, and his standing at court, were sufficiently high for him to be appointed to a position of some responsibility.

Shortly after Robert's appointment Richard gave orders for the fleet to sail for the Holy Land. On 10th April the crusader fleet departed Messina apparently planning to make its way to Acre via Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus.³⁰ Unfortunately the weather conspired to ruin this plan. On 12th April the fleet ran foul of a violent storm causing some twenty-five ships to break away from the main body of the fleet. These ships included those carrying the two royal ladies – Berengaria of Navarre and Joan, wife of the late William II, King of Sicily, as well as the ship carrying Robert's brother Stephen of Thurnham.³¹ These ships failed to make the rendezvous point at Crete and continued east on their own. Having survived one storm these ships were forced to contend with a second storm on the evening of 23rd April just south of Cyprus.

As with the earlier storm the crusader fleet was forced to split up, and some of the ships sought safe anchorage at Limassol [Cyprus]. The remaining ships, including that containing the royal ladies and Stephen of Thurnham rode out the storm at sea.³² The following day the storm abated, and these ships made for Limassol to regroup. On arrival at Limassol they discovered that three ships had sunk the previous night

³⁰ *Itinerarium*, p. 177 & *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 105.

³¹ *Itinerarium*, pp. 184-5 & *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 105-6. Stephen could well have been aboard the same ship as Berengaria and Joan.

³² *Itinerarium*, p. 184.

with some loss of life. They also learnt that the survivors had been imprisoned by the Cypriot authorities in a fort overlooking the town, and that the wrecks themselves had been plundered. The situation was a tense one – conflict between the Greeks [Griffons] and the crusaders had erupted when the crusaders had wintered at Messina - and when Stephen of Thurnham attempted to help his imprisoned companions, the situation deteriorated further. According to the *‘Itinerarium’* Stephen: ‘...*eisdem [those imprisoned] misit necessariorum abundantiam; verum etiam omnia quae missa erant inclusis, ad introitum castelli quo inerant, direpta sunt a Griffonibus et custodibus civitatis.*’ Despite attempts by the Cypriots to explain their behaviour and pacify the crusaders, the mistreatment of their companions and the theft of the alms sent to them further exacerbated tensions. Violence eventually erupted after a rumour spread amongst the crusaders that the Cypriots were planning to arrest them all. Fearful for their liberty and safety the crusaders stormed ashore and, after a brief battle, took control of the town. Later that day Isaac Komnenos, self-proclaimed emperor of Cyprus, arrived in Limassol and negotiated a truce with the crusaders.³³

For Richard the journey east was no less eventful. Richard’s ships had also been affected by the storm of 12th April, and they weighed anchor at Crete to await stragglers. Having left Crete Richard made for Rhodes which he reached on the 22nd. Whilst at Rhodes the king fell ill and it was until 1st May that he was able to set sail for Cyprus.³⁴ The arrival of Richard and the main body of the crusader fleet at Limassol on 6th May saw a renewal of hostilities. According to Ambroise Isaac had

³³ *Itinerarium*, pp. 185-6. Ambroise’s account of these events is much briefer, and less detailed, than that provided by de Templo, and makes no mention to Stephen of Thurnham. M. Ailes & M. Barber, *The History of the Holy War*, ii, p. 51.

³⁴ Richard had apparently been informed as to the whereabouts of the missing ships during his stay at Rhodes. J. Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 145. It is possible that the missing ships had themselves landed at Rhodes en route to Cyprus, although John Gillingham suggests that Limassol had previously been agreed as a rendezvous point.

been making preparations for Richard's arrival; stripping Limassol of anything that could be used to prevent Richard making a landing.³⁵ The agreement reached between Isaac and the crusaders on 24th April does not appear to have satisfied Richard. On his arrival Richard dispatched envoys to Isaac demanding immediate satisfaction for the losses his forces had endured during their stopover at Limassol.³⁶ When Isaac refused to accept Richard's demands, Richard ordered his men ashore. Despite Isaac's preparations Limassol proved no better prepared to resist an amphibious assault than it had the previous week.³⁷ By nightfall Richard and his forces had taken control of Limassol, forcing Isaac and his men to flee north.

It was unlikely that Robert, given his position as commander of the fleet, had been present with his brother Stephen during the initial stages of the crusader arrival on Cyprus, and rather more likely that he arrived on Cyprus at the same time as King Richard. However, Robert did not play a significant role in Richard's initial assault on Limassol, although he was to play a leading role in Richard's subsequent campaigns against the Cypriots.³⁸ It was not Richard de Templo who recorded Robert's involvement in these events, but the invariably reliable Roger of Howden. Although de Templo may not have been with the crusader army it seems fairly certain

³⁵ M. Ailes & M. Barber, *The History of the Holy War*, ii, p. 52

³⁶ *Devizes*, p. 36; *Itinerarium*, pp. 188-9 & *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 106. Robert Mannyng of Brunne, alone of our surviving sources, identified Robert as one of those men entrusted with carrying the king's message to Isaac. *Robert Mannyng of Brunne: The Chronicle*, I. Sullens (ed.), (Binghamton, 1996), p. 587. However, Mannyng's account of the crusade, completed in 1338, was based on that of another later writer – Peter de Langtoft. Langtoft's account of the conquest of Cyprus includes information relating to Robert's involvement in the conquest and administration of Cyprus that is contained in no other source – except the even later 'Meaux Chronicle' by Thomas Burton who based his account on Langtoft's work. Langtoft's account was almost certainly based on material he found in Howden's 'Chronica', and the additional details he added are of very doubtful veracity. In light of this Langtoft and Burton are dealt with separately below. See Appendix B – 'Langtoft, Burton and the Career of Robert of Thurnham.' C. Tyerman's claim that Robert of Thurnham's: '...memories [of the crusade] appear in the Meaux Chronicle' can be shown to be erroneous, and will be dealt with in Appendix B. C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588*, (London, 1988), p. 65.

³⁷ *Devizes*, pp. 36-7; *Itinerarium*, pp. 189-191 & *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 106-7.

³⁸ Robert may well have been involved in the attack on Limassol, but did nothing to merit being singled out for mention by any of the writers who provided descriptions of this event.

that Howden was.³⁹ According to Howden, after Limassol had been secured and the initial treaty with Isaac had disintegrated, Richard divided his forces into two parts. One part Richard retained command of himself whilst the second part was placed under Robert's command. Richard gave Robert orders to sail around one side of the island and seize any ships or galleys which he might encounter in the course of his expedition, whilst: '*...Rex vero cum reliqua parte galearum suarum circuivit alteram partem insulae, et ipse et Robertus ceperunt naves et galeas quotquot invenerunt in circuitu insulae.*'⁴⁰ Not only did Richard and Robert decimate the Cypriot naval forces, but the Cypriot custodians of the coastal towns, cities and castles abandoned their charges in the face of the crusader advance, and fled to the mountains.⁴¹ For Howden Robert and Richard's endeavours were so successful that some of the inhabitants of Cyprus came to Richard to seek peace. With the situation now favouring the crusaders, Richard decided to marry Berengaria of Navarre at Limassol on 12th May.

After the celebration of his marriage Richard turned his attention to the conquest of the Cypriot interior. Howden did not connect Robert with Richard's campaigns in the Cypriot interior, and in fact Robert does not reappear in Howden's account of Cypriot affairs until early June. According to Howden the conquest of Cyprus was completed by 1st June when Isaac Komnenos sued for peace. In return for a promise that he would not be bound in iron chains – it was said that Richard had

³⁹ J. Gillingham, 'Roger of Howden on Crusade', *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, D.O. Morgan (ed.), (London, 1982), pp. 60-75. Howden does not seem to have been on Cyprus during the conquest, but rather at Acre. His information relating to the conquest was probably obtained from those who had participated in it on their arrival at Acre in June 1191. Therefore, Howden's account is not, strictly speaking, an eyewitness account of the conquest.

⁴⁰ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 109-110 & *Gesta Hen.*, i, p. 166.

⁴¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 110.

him bound in silver chains instead – Isaac agreed to surrender.⁴² The campaign to subdue Cyprus had taken barely three weeks and with Isaac’s surrender the nobles of Cyprus, much to the disgust of their countryman the hermit Neophytos, reached a negotiated settlement with Richard.⁴³ The agreement, according to Howden, was that Richard: ‘...*accepit ab universis hominibus insulae medietatem omnium mobilium suorum..*’ in return for which ‘...*confirmavit illis leges, et institutiones, quas habebant tempore Manuelis imperatoris Constantinopolitani.*’⁴⁴ There were a number of advantages afforded to the crusaders by the conquest of Cyprus, and the treaty between Richard and the Cypriots, with its emphasis on access to Cypriot resources, clearly shows that Richard was aware of the benefits such resources could offer his expedition.

Richard though was a realist. He must have known that the Cypriots were only willing to treat with him because of the series of military defeats they had suffered, and the fact the victorious crusader army was camped on their doorstep.

Richard may have reasoned that the Cypriots were simply playing for time, waiting

⁴² *Opera Hist.*, ii, p. 92 & *Devizes*, p. 38. Howden in both *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 111 & *Gesta Hen.*, ii, p. 167 claims that Isaac was held in gold and silver chains: ‘...*manicas de argento et auro.*’

⁴³ Nearly all the sources dealing with the conquest of Cyprus were written by Western European writers. The only Cypriot account of the conquest was provided by Neophytos the Recluse, an embittered, though articulate, hermit who described the disasters that befell Cyprus in a letter sent to his ‘*spiritual son.*’ Neophytos, ‘*De Calamitatibus Cypri*’, in *Itinerarium*, pp. clxxxiv-clxxxviii. Who this spiritual son was is not clear, though he was probably Cypriot noble who had fled Cyprus during the reign of Isaac Komnenos or shortly after the conquest of the island by Richard. The man in question had fled to Constantinople where he had received the rank of ‘*Sebastos*’ from either Isaac II (1185-1195) or Alexius III (1195-1203). Before he fled, Neophytos had promised to write to him and to keep him informed on Cypriot affairs. On two occasions Neophytos writes that it has been twelve years since calamity befell the Cypriots. Neophytos saw many calamities befalling his countrymen so exactly which one he is referring to when he says it has been twelve years since is unclear. His account begins with the usurpation of Isaac Komnenos which took place, according to Neophytos, seven years before the conquest by Richard, giving us a date of 1184 for Isaac’s usurpation. Assuming, as seems reasonable given Neophytos’ account, that Isaac’s arrival was the beginning of the calamities, this would give us a date of 1196 for the composition of the letter. This date agrees with that suggested by G. F. Hill, *History of Cyprus*, 4 vols., (Cambridge 1940-52), i, p. 309 & n.2

⁴⁴ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 111-112 & *Gesta Hen.*, ii, p. 168. Manuel Komnenos, Byzantine Emperor 1143-1180, was a man apparently held in high regard by the Cypriots. Neophytos described him as: ‘... *the most pious emperor, Manuel Komnenos, who is in blessed rest.*’ Neophytos, ‘*De Calamitatibus Cypri*’, p. clxxxiv.

for him to depart for Acre, at which point they could seek to release themselves from the agreement they had entered into. Isaac had not been popular and the Cypriots probably saw his removal as being as much to their own advantage as it was to Richard's.⁴⁵ Richard was undoubtedly aware of this and so as he made his preparations to leave Cyprus, he took steps to ensure that Cyprus would remain under his control, and that the supplies the Cypriots had promised him would be shipped to Acre. According to Howden Richard: '*...tradidit insulam de Cypre Ricardo de Camvilla et Roberto de Turneham in custodia.*'⁴⁶ Robert's involvement in Richard's successful campaigns along the Cypriot coast had no doubt influenced Richard's decision to appoint him as one of the two justiciars of Cyprus. The exact date of his appointment was not given by Howden, but it was probably made shortly before Richard left Cyprus on 10th June.

Despite Richard's preparations problems soon befell the new Cypriot administration. According to Howden: '*Eodem mense Junii, Ricardus de Camvilla, quem rex Anglia constituerat unum de justitiariis suis in insula de Cypre infirmabatur, et sine licentia regis venit ad obsidionem Accon [Acre], et ibi mortuus est.*'⁴⁷ Thus with de Camville's illness, departure and subsequent death, Robert was left alone as the king's justiciar on Cyprus. However, de Camville's unexpected departure was not the only problem that Robert was to face. When the Greeks and Armenians: '*qui ad pacem regis nondum venerant*' learnt of de Camville's departure

⁴⁵ Whilst Neophytos is naturally critical of the Latin regimes post 1191 he is just as scathing of Isaac's rule. Neophytos, '*De Calamitatibus Cypri*', p. clxxxvi. The Greek historian and bureaucrat Nicetas Choniates also believed that Isaac's rule had been detrimental to the Cypriots stating that: '*...[Isaac] raged furiously against the erstwhile happy and prosperous inhabitants of this island.*' Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, H.J. Magoulias (ed. & trans.), (Detroit, 1984), p. 187.

⁴⁶ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 111. In *Gesta Hen.*, ii, p. 167: '*...tradidit imperium de Cypra Ricardo de Camvilla et Roberto de Tornham ad custodiendum.*'

⁴⁷ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 116.

they saw it as an opportunity to raise the standard of revolt, and took up arms against the king's remaining justiciar – Robert.

Howden's account of the composition and size of the rebel army, and his overall account of the revolt is not particularly detailed, which is understandable given that he only had other people's experiences to work from. However, assuming that Howden's account of the revolt, and those who participated in it, is broadly accurate the rebels seem to have consisted mainly of those Greeks or Armenians who had failed to surrender to Richard before his departure from Cyprus; perhaps those who had fled to the mountains during Richard and Robert's campaigns along the Cypriot coastline. Howden states that these rebels elected a new emperor: '*...quendam monachum de progenie Ysacii imperatoris,*' under whose leadership they hoped to expel the crusader garrison, and retake control of the island.⁴⁸ However, the revolt of the monk and his allies was not a success. Howden notes its suppression in the following manner: '*Sed Robertus de Turneham, qui solus remansit, post mortem Ricardi de Camvilla, justitiarius regis in insula de Cypre, magnum congregavit exercitum, et commisit praelium cum illo novo imperatore, et illum et gentem suam vicit, et cepit, et suspendit in patibulo.*' The 'great army' that Robert raised was probably not that great, consisting primarily of those forces left behind to garrison the island, and perhaps a few Cypriots mercenaries. Nevertheless the forces at Robert's

⁴⁸ The account in *Gesta Hen.*, ii, pp. 172-3 is identical to that in the '*Chronica*' with the exception of the description of the rebel monk which reads: '*quendam monachum, consanguineum Ysaac imperatoris.*' Retreat to a monastery was common practice amongst Byzantine politicians faced with death or disgrace. So it is possible, perhaps even likely, that this former monk had entered his monastery not from religious motives, but from political expediency either during the tyranny of Isaac or during the conquest period. There was no love lost between relatives in the pursuit of power in Byzantium.

disposal proved sufficient to counter the crisis, and having defeated the monk and his men in battle, the unfortunate rebel found himself swinging from the gallows.⁴⁹

Although Howden gave details of the problems that beset Robert, other sources show the enormous advantages Richard derived from Cyprus, advantages that Robert, through his quick suppression of the revolt, was instrumental in ensuring were not lost. A number of writers related how Richard, having conquered Cyprus, ordered his men to strip the island of its resources in order to bring assistance to the crusader armies at Acre. According to Ralph of Coggeshall the situation at Acre was dire indeed: ‘...*exercitum Domini apud Ptolomaidam maxima famis laborare, ita ut sexarius [sester] frumenti, sexaginta marcis venundaretur.*’⁵⁰ However, as Coggeshall goes on to say: ‘...*ex Cipro insula quam subegerat victualium copiam undique aggregans tantae calamitati succurrere festinavit.*’ The Laon Chronicler also highlighted the advantages Cyprus, and its subsequent administration under Robert, afforded Richard and the crusader army before Acre: ‘*Tunc rex magnanimus pro tributo imposuit ei, ut in quadam summa frumenti, ordeï, vini et aliorum victualium exercitui christiano ante Aconum, omnibus vite necessariis indigenti, subveniret.*’⁵¹

⁴⁹ Richard had probably kept the Cypriot garrison at a minimum given his finite supply of men, and his need for as many troops as possible to besiege Acre and confront Saladin. If Howden’s account is accurate, and there is no reason to suppose it is not, then Robert had been able to suppress the revolt with those military resources left to him by Richard. This may indicate that the revolt was more limited in scope than that the Templars faced in 1192. That is to say it may have been a localised rather than a general revolt. However, Robert may have acted so swiftly that the revolt never had the opportunity to gain the momentum it needed to expel the crusader garrison. Despite Robert’s success the rebellious Cypriots were not cowed by their defeat and renewed their quest for independence in April 1192 when they rose up against the Templars. A very confused account of the revolt of June/July 1191 can be found in *Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunensis*, A. Cartellieri (ed.), (Leipzig, 1909), p. 52.

⁵⁰ *Chron. Ang.*, pp. 31-2.

⁵¹ *Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunensis*, p. 52.

The accounts of both Coggeshall and the Laon chronicler could be read to imply that the advantages derived from Cyprus were a one of event, acquired immediately after the conquest. However, other sources show that Cyprus was able to provide a longer term solution to crusader supply problems. Kamil-ad-Din claimed that: *'The Franks received reinforcements by sea as well as food, soldiers and arms, to such an extent that fresh vegetables and early fruits were sent to them from the island of Cyprus and arrived within forty-eight hours.'*⁵² The Byzantine court historian Nicetas Choniates made a similar claim. Choniates complained that in the immediate aftermath of the conquest the Latin administration on Cyprus systematically stripped the island of all its resources, and shipped them to the Holy Land.⁵³ Ambroise too recorded that: *'They [Robert and Richard de Camville although they are not named] sent food – barley, wheat, sheep and cattle – with which the land was well provided, and which would be of great value in Syria.'*⁵⁴

Robert's handling of the Cypriot justiciarship, short though his tenure of that office was, meant that it fulfilled the duties which it had been designed to undertake, and thus one is hard pressed not to see Robert's time as justiciar as a notable success. However, the revolt had shown that Cyprus would need firm government if it were to remain the valuable supply base that it clearly was. Robert had been able to suppress the first Cypriot revolt, but his resources, and those of the king, were limited. Despite Robert's success the revolt of June/July 1191 appears to have persuaded Richard that if he was to ensure that Cyprus remained in Latin hands he would have to find someone willing to take control of the island in the longer term. Cyprus, despite

⁵² Kamil-ad-Din, *'L'Histoire d'Alep'*, E. Blochet (ed. & trans.), *Revue de L'Orient*, 12 vols., (Paris, 1893-1911), iv, p. 195.

⁵³ Nicetas Choniates, *O'City of Byzantium*, p. 116.

⁵⁴ M. Ailes & M. Barber, *The History of the Holy War*, ii, p. 61. Although Ambroise does not name Robert he does say that: *'The king left in the land men who well knew the art of war.'*

domestic unrest, was clearly a valuable resource, and in August 1191 Richard negotiated the sale of the island to the Knights Templars.⁵⁵ The sale of Cyprus to the Templars probably brought Robert's involvement with the island to an end. Whether Robert left Cyprus immediately after its sale is unclear, but he was certainly with Richard in the Holy Land by August 1192. On 26th August 1192 Richard, whilst at Acre, issued a charter to John, the nephew of Snelman of Ospringe, confirming the grant made to John by his uncle, and amongst those who witnessed the charter were Robert of Thurnham and his brother Stephen.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ J. Gillingham, Richard I, pp. 152-3 & n.48. & E.C. Furber, 'The Kingdom of Cyprus, 1191-1291', in K.M. Stetton (ed.), A History of the Crusades, 6 vols., (Wisconsin, 1969), ii, pp. 599-629; at. p. 602. The exact date of the sale to the Templars is unclear, but the transaction was probably completed by mid-August 1191. The Templars found the purchase to be less advantageous than they had originally supposed. Like Robert they were forced to contend with armed revolt in April 1192 that persuaded them that the job of holding Cyprus was beyond them. They in turn sold the island to Guy of Lusignan. *ibid.*, p. 602.

⁵⁶ Acta Henrici et Ricardi, ii, pp. 168-169: '...Stephano de Torneham et Roberto fratre eius.' Nick Vincent, despite some reservations, accepts the charter is likely to be genuine.

The Capture and Ransom of King Richard

August 1192 – July 1194

Following his charter attestation of August 1192, it is not until early-1193 that we next find a reference to Robert. At Michaelmas 1193 the accounts of the sherialry of Surrey show that £7, 10s had been allowed on the revenues of the manor of Stoke d'Abernon for monies paid to Robert.⁵⁷ It is usually impossible to establish an exact date from entries on the Pipe Rolls, but this entry records that the revenues in question had been held by Robert for three parts of the year. This would date the transfer of the manorial receipts to *circa* January 1193. That Robert could have returned to England by December/January 1192/3 finds support from Roger of Howden. According to Howden: '*Eodem anno [1192] multi peregrini, qui recesserunt cum rege de terra Suliae, redierunt ante Natale Domini in Angliam.*'⁵⁸ Although there is no reason to suppose that Robert was a member of this party, what Howden's account shows is that by late-1193 crusaders were beginning to return to England from the East, and so the Pipe Roll entry placing Robert in England by January 1193 could well be accurate.

News of Richard's capture by Leopold of Austria arrived in England by mid-January, and steps were quickly taken to dispatch reliable men to Germany to find the king. On 28th February a council at Oxford, headed by the justiciar Walter of Coutances, archbishop of Rouen, decided to send two Cistercian abbots - Robert of

⁵⁷ PR, 5 Richard I, p. 154.

⁵⁸ Chron. Rog. How., iii, p. 194.

Boxley [Kent] and William of Robertsbridge [Sussex] - to Germany in search of Richard.⁵⁹ Given the importance of their mission the two abbots moved swiftly. Howden relates that they found Richard on 19th March at the town of Ochsenfurt near Würzburg as the king was en route to Speyer.⁶⁰ Having met Richard, and satisfied themselves that he was both alive and in decent health, the two abbots returned speedily to England. According to Howden: ‘...redierunt [*the two abbots*] in Angliam post Pascha’, whereupon they informed the justiciar and others of Richard’s situation, and of the agreement that had been reached between the king and Henry VI.⁶¹

What Robert was doing at this time is not entirely clear, although from the fragmentary evidence that survives we can piece together a rough idea of his activities. Although the Pipe Rolls show that Robert had returned to England by January 1193, Howden notes Robert’s arrival in London in late-March or early-April 1193. According to Howden: ‘*Deinde venit Lundonias Robertus de Turneham, familiaris Regis, missus ab eo cum hernasio suo in Angliam.*’⁶² Howden’s account shows that not only had Robert been with Richard in Germany at some point prior to April 1193, but that he had been sent to England by the king, and carried with him the king’s equipment. Howden’s account may suggest that Robert had been captured with Richard, and later dispatched to England following the arrival of the two abbots.

⁵⁹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 198. For the abbots’ names see D. Knowles, C.N.L. Booke, & V.C.M. London, *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales 940-1216*, (Cambridge, 1972), *sub*. Cistercian: Boxley & Robertsbridge.

⁶⁰ This journey from England to Germany might seem remarkably rapid, but travel in the Middle-Ages was not always as slow as one might think. For example Calais to Rome could be done in 28 days. For rates of travel see *Itinerary*, pp. 184-191. Given the gravity of the situation, and the importance attached to finding the king, the abbots and their entourage were likely to have moved as fast as was humanly possible.

⁶¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 205. Easter 1193 fell on 28th March, so the two abbots presumably arrived home in the last few days of March or the first week of April.

⁶² *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 206.

This, however, seems unlikely. Firstly we know from the Pipe Rolls that Robert had returned to England by January 1193 and was therefore, unlikely to have been with Richard when he was captured ‘*in a contemptible little house*’ in the village of Erdberg near Vienna. Secondly none of the accounts of Richard’s capture mention Robert’s presence amongst that small party of men who were with the king.⁶³ A more likely explanation is that Robert had been sent to Germany with the two abbots in late-February, perhaps to afford the two men some protection, and that he, like the two abbots, had met Richard at Ochsenfurt where he was given the king’s equipment and ordered back to England.⁶⁴

One must also bear in mind that Howden’s account of Robert’s arrival in London follows on almost immediately from his account of the return of the two abbots. Although Howden claims that Robert arrived in London after the two abbots this need not mean that he had not been a member of their party when they left England. Unlike the two abbots Robert was carrying the king’s equipment and – light those this may have been given the circumstances of Richard’s capture - it may still have slowed him and his own party down. Richard’s fate, unlike his equipment, was a matter of supreme importance, and the two abbots would not have wasted time after leaving Ochsenfurt in bringing news of the king’s plight to England. It is possible

⁶³ Ralph of Coggeshall, who provides the most detailed account of Richard’s return from the East, and capture by Leopold of Austria, gives the names of some of those with Richard, but does not mention Robert. *Chron. Ang.*, pp. 53-58.

⁶⁴ The manor of Thurnham was only a few miles east of the abbey of Boxley and would have been well known to Robert. The proximity of Boxley to Thurnham might account for why Robert was chosen to accompany the two abbots, both of whom were presumably known to Robert. However, a more important consideration in the decision to send Robert to Germany with the two abbots was probably the close relationship he had with Richard. As Howden said Robert was: ‘*familiaris Regis.*’

that Robert, burdened with Richard's equipment, fell behind his companions, accounting for his slightly later arrival in London.⁶⁵

There is certainly some evidence to show that Robert had been to Germany between Michaelmas 1192 and Michaelmas 1193, quite possibly in connection with the mission of the two abbots. An entry of the Pipe Rolls for 1193 states that the sheriff of Kent had claimed expenses totalling 40s for monies paid out to those Flemings [probably Flemish mercenaries] who had crossed the sea in the service of the king with Robert.⁶⁶ Unfortunately dating this entry is problematic since, as was common practice, no indication is given as to when this payment was made. However, the fact that it appeared on the Kent account could well indicate that Robert and his Flemish soldiers were heading for a Flemish port (possibly Antwerp) and hence on to Germany.⁶⁷ Given that we know Robert's next trip to Germany did not take place until December 1193 one can suggest that this entry relates to Robert's trip of February 1193. The fact that Robert was accompanied by Flemish mercenaries might suggest that he had been dispatched to provide the two abbots with protection.

Howden's statement that Robert had been in London *circa* Easter 1193 finds support from the Pipe Rolls. According to the accounts submitted before the

⁶⁵ Howden does not give an exact date for either the arrival of the two abbots or Robert. He simply says the two abbots arrived after Easter. That Robert returned later would suggest that he arrived in London during the first week of April.

⁶⁶ PR, 5 Richard I, p. 166. That this expenditure was authorized on the king's writ might seem to indicate that the payment was made after April 1193 when the two abbots returned to England bearing instructions for the king's men. However, this need not necessarily be the case because whilst Richard was in Germany Walter of Coutances, breaking with tradition, authorized expenditure not by means of the justiciar's seal but in the king's name. F. J. West, The Justiciarship in England, 1066-1232, (Cambridge, 1966), p. 76. For examples see PR, 5 Richard I, p. 158 [Relating to the army of Gloucester and the siege of Swansea that almost certainly date to 1192].

⁶⁷ In the following year we find numerous entries on the Kent accounts relating to payments made to those men carrying money and goods to Germany in order to discharge the king's ransom. PR, 6 Richard I, pp. 242-243.

Exchequer by Roger le Duc and Roger fitz Alan, joint custodians of the farm of London and Middlesex, Robert had been in London when various luxury goods, later dispatched to Germany, had been collected.⁶⁸ It is unclear whether these goods were destined for the king's personal use, or were intended to form part of the king's. If these goods were intended to cover the cost of Richard's ransom then they must have been collected after Easter 1193, since no one in England would have known of Richard's agreement with Henry VI until after the return of the two abbots. Even if the goods had been collected for the king's personal benefit, one would assume that this would not have taken place until after the return of the two abbots and Robert to England, since detailed knowledge of Richard's whereabouts and needs would not have been available until after their return.

Between April 1193 and July 1194 our knowledge of Robert's activities is sparse. What we do know is that Robert had returned to Germany by the spring of 1194. Robert's presence in Germany at that time is evidenced by a copy of a letter, issued by Henry VI and addressed to Richard I, which Ralph de Diceto included in his work under the year 1194.⁶⁹ The letter reads: '*Dilectionem tuam scire volumus quod fideles tui Walterus Rothomagensis archiepiscopus et [Savericus] Bathoniensis episcopus, et Robertus de Turneham multa supplicatione nobis institerunt, quatinus Ottonem nepotem tuum [Otto of Brunswick] nobiscum equitare permetteremus.*' This request was refused – diplomatically of course - since domestic concerns meant that Henry was reluctant to allow Otto to join his entourage. According to Henry '*...pater ejus dux Saxonum nobis suspectus est, cujus malitiam veremur, petitiones eorum admitere noluimus.*' Nonetheless Henry was mindful of the need to maintain

⁶⁸ PR, 5 Richard I, p. 158.

⁶⁹ Opera Hist., ii, p. 118.

good relations with Richard, if only to secure the remaining portion of his ransom, and concluded his letter by reassuring Richard that Otto's position in Germany would be made as comfortable as possible: '*...idem Otto de die tres servientes habiturus est, qui ei serviant et assistant.*'⁷⁰

Given the company Robert was to be found in, and the timing of the letter, one must assume that Robert was in Germany at this time as a hostage for the ransom demanded by Henry, and not merely as an emissary of the king. We know from Diceto's own work that Walter of Coutances was one of those left as a hostage in Germany after the Mainz conference in February 1194. Saveric, bishop of Bath is named as another of the hostages surrendered at that time by Roger of Howden.⁷¹ In light of this it makes sense to place Robert at Mainz in early-February when the negotiations between Richard and Henry were finalized. On 4th February Richard was finally released having made an advance payment of £100,000, and having promised a further £50,000. Henry demanded hostages be surrendered as surety for the outstanding ransom money. Richard had little choice but agree and according to Diceto: '*Walterus Rothomagensis archiepiscopus, et Willelmus cancellarius regis, et alii quidam dati sunt in obsidatum.*'⁷² Diceto's account is supported by Roger of Howden who states that '*...rex Angliae tradidit imperatori Walterum Rothomagensem archiepiscopum, et Savericum Batoniensem episcopum, et Baldwin*

⁷⁰ Diceto did not give a date for when the letter was issued but it was probably issued after 4th February 1194. Firstly the letter deals with the circumstances surrounding the detention of Otto of Brunswick - one of the hostages surrendered by Richard. Secondly it made little sense for the letter to have been issued before that date since Richard was still Henry's prisoner, and the matter could have been discussed at Mainz. These negotiations probably began after Richard's men had received orders from the king, issued after his departure from Mainz in early-February. The orders must have arrived in Germany before Robert and Walter were released. Walter had returned to England by 19th May, and Robert might have returned as early as 10th April. Therefore, the orders must have been issued before, or very shortly after Richard's return to England on 13th March. Indeed it is possible that they were issued before Richard returned to England, but after he had left the emperor at Mainz.

⁷¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 233.

⁷² *Opera Hist.*, ii, p. 113.

*Wac, et alios multos, filios comitum et baronum suorum obsides de residuo percuniae redemptionis suae.*⁷³ Although Robert is not named as a hostage, both Diceto and Howden make it clear that the men they named in their accounts were only a few of those left as hostages, and Robert was almost certainly one of those ‘many others’ or ‘certain others’ mentioned by Howden and Diceto.

Tracking the movement of the king’s officials between England and Germany at this time is not easy. Although we know Robert was in Germany in February/March 1194 we have no clear idea as to how and when he arrived there. Unlike the previous year there is no entry on the Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1194 relating to money paid out to Robert in person. However, an entry on the Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1195 almost certainly relates to Robert’s trip to Germany of the previous year. The Exchequer clerk recorded that the sheriff of Kent had paid 36s: ‘...in passagio Baldewini Wac ad Regi in Alemannia...per breve Regis’, and a further 44s 6d. ‘...in passagio Roberti de Turneham in Alemannia...(per idem breve).’⁷⁴ Although the Pipe Rolls would indicate that these monies had been paid between Michaelmas 1194 and Michaelmas 1195, it is much more likely that they related to expenditure carried over from the previous year. Two factors suggest that this was the case. The first is that the entry states that Baldwin Wake had received his money in order to enable him to travel to the king in Germany. Since Richard had been released by February 1194, and had returned to England by 13th March, the entry must relate to a payment made before these dates. Secondly we know from Roger of Howden’s ‘*Chronica*’ that Baldwin Wake had been one of those men surrendered by Richard as a hostage for the remaining portion of his ransom and was, therefore,

⁷³ *Chron. Rog. How.*, iii, p. 233.

⁷⁴ PR, 7 Richard I, p. 2.

almost certainly at Mainz in February.⁷⁵ Since the writ authorizing the payment to Baldwin was the same as that authorizing the payment to Robert it seems reasonable to conclude that the two men had travelled together to Germany. In view of these factors one must conclude that the entry relates to Robert and Baldwin's trip to Germany in late-1193 or early-1194, i.e. before the Mainz conference of February 1194. The Pipe Rolls for 1194 provide further information relating to Robert's trip to Germany. At Michaelmas 1194 an Exchequer clerk recorded that the sheriff of Kent had paid out 2½ marks: '*in passagio Roberti f. Hermeri et hominum Roberti de Turnham a Sandwiz [Sandwich] usque Andwers [Antwerp]*.'⁷⁶ Although this group appears to have travelled separately from Robert – under the command of Robert fitz Hermeri – it is possible that these men had been sent on ahead in order to make arrangements for Robert and his companions' onward journey from Antwerp to Mainz.

How long Robert remained in Germany is not entirely clear, although he had certainly returned to England by late-May 1194 and could, conceivably, have returned to England by early-April. That Robert may have been released as early as late-March 1194 is suggested by an entry on the Pipe Rolls. At Michaelmas 1194 it was recorded that the sheriavalry of Surrey had been granted to Robert, after Reginald of Cornhill had held the post for half a year. Given the manner in which the financial year was divided this entry would presumably indicate that the transfer took place *circa* Easter 1194 [10th April].⁷⁷ Whilst this entry may seem to place Robert in England by early-April this need not necessarily have been the case. *Prima facie* it made little sense to replace Reginald with a man who was still a prisoner in Germany.

⁷⁵ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 233.

⁷⁶ PR, 6 Richard I, p. 243.

⁷⁷ PR, 6 Richard I, p. 22.

However, although Robert held the post as sheriff of Surrey until 1207 he never actually administered the county in person, entrusting it instead to members of his *familia*. Therefore, it is possible that Robert and Richard had agreed on Robert's appointment prior to Richard's departure from Germany, and that they had also agreed on who would act as sub-sheriff in Robert's absence. That Robert's appointment as sheriff was a reward for the services he had rendered the king during his captivity would seem to be borne out by the manner of his appointment. Although many sheriffs were replaced by Richard after his return from Germany, most of them had paid the king for their appointments, and many had also promised an increase in the county farm. Robert, however, had done neither, indicating that his appointment was a favour granted rather than a favour bought.⁷⁸

Although it is conceivable that Robert had returned to England by early April, it is perhaps more likely that he returned in mid-May 1194 with Walter of Coutances. Although the date of Robert's return is unclear, we know from the work of Ralph de Diceto that Walter was back in London by 19th May.⁷⁹ Although Diceto does not name Robert as one of Walter's companions, we know from Diceto's work and the Pipe Rolls that the two men, even if they had returned to England separately, were reunited towards the end of May 1194. According to Diceto it was shortly after his return to London that Walter made ready to cross over to Normandy.⁸⁰ Diceto's statement is confirmed by an entry of the Pipe Rolls recording that the sheriff of Hampshire had claimed expenses of £9, 10s for monies paid out to Walter and Robert

⁷⁸ PR, 6 Richard I, p. xx. Stenton points out that although no payment is recorded that does not mean one was not made. However, since payments and increases promised by other recently appointed sheriffs are recorded, it seems reasonable to assume that since no payments or promises were made by Robert, or Hugh de Bosco the new sheriff of Hampshire, that their appointments were manifestations of royal favour. *ibid.*, pp. xvii – xxi. Cf. *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 240-241.

⁷⁹ *Opera Hist.*, ii, p. 115.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, ii, p. 115.

of Thurnham for the hire of four ships to enable them to cross the channel.⁸¹ This entry almost certainly relates to the journey to France mentioned by Ralph de Diceto rather than to Walter's, or Robert's, earlier journey to Germany. Two considerations support this view. The first is that this entry appears on the Hampshire account, suggesting that Walter and Robert's destination was a Norman rather than a Flemish port. Secondly other entries in that years account show that the sheriff of Hampshire had been kept busy providing the king's servants and officials with money whilst they made ready for the king's wars. The same writ that was used to obtain funds for Robert and Walter also authorised expenditure for Peter of St. Mère Eglise and Master Edmund to cross the sea with games and crossbowmen, presumably for the king. Other entries in this section relate to the manufacture of crossbow bolts, the collection and cartage of the king's treasure, and the transportation of crossbowmen, all activities that point to military preparations of some sort; preparations that would not have taken place until after Richard's return to England. In which case one must assume that the entry relating to Walter and Robert also related to a journey made after March 1194. That Walter had indeed crossed to Normandy in late-May find support from the work of Roger of Howden. Howden notes Walter's, but not Robert's, presence at a proposed conference between Richard's officials and representatives of Philip Augustus at Pont de L'Arche on 13th June that year.⁸² Given the lack of any explicit references to Robert in the surviving source material between May and July 1194 one should probably assume that Robert, having crossed the Channel with Walter, parted company from the justiciar and headed south to rejoin

⁸¹ PR, 6 Richard I, p. 212.

⁸² Chron. Rog. How., iii, p. 253.

the king. We know that Robert had joined Richard's entourage by late-July because Robert witnessed a charter issued by the king at Poitiers on 28th July 1194.⁸³

⁸³ Itinerary, p. 98. Although there is no evidence for Robert's activities in the period between late-May and late-July 1194 it is not inconceivable that, having crossed the Channel, Robert headed directly to Anjou/Poitou to rejoin the king. This is where we find him in late-July. If so then it is possible that Robert had been involved in the battle of Freteval and Richard's campaigns against Geoffrey of Rancon and Ademar, count of Angoulême.

Seneschal of Anjou

(January 1195 – April 1199)

By the summer of 1194 Robert had emerged as one of Richard's most trusted followers, a position borne out not only by Howden's description of Robert as '*familiaris Regis*', but also by his involvement in the conquest of Cyprus, and the various duties he had been entrusted with during, and after, the king's captivity. Richard was clearly grateful for Robert's services, and during the course of 1194 a number of rewards were granted to him. Apart from the post of sheriff of Surrey, Richard also appears to have granted Robert the hand in marriage of Joanna Fossard at some point during the summer or winter of 1194.⁸⁴ However, Robert's standing and power were to rise further following his return to active service in France in the summer of 1194 when he was appointed to the post of seneschal of Anjou. The exact date of Robert's appointment is unclear. The first reference to Robert as seneschal of Anjou comes in a charter issued at Brionne in January 1195.⁸⁵ Since Richard's charter of July 1194 describes Robert simply as '*Robert of Thurnham*' his appointment must have taken place after July 1194 and before January 1195.⁸⁶ It is possible that Robert's appointment took place *circa* August 1194. Ralph de Diceto relates that at some point during the summer of 1194 Richard summoned his barons, presumably those of Maine and Anjou, to a meeting at Le Mans, where he: '*...sought to shame them into stronger support by a speech commending to them the deeper*

⁸⁴ See below p. 145 & n. 4.

⁸⁵ *Itinerary*, p. 100.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 98. Robert's predecessor as seneschal was likely to have been Payn of Rochefort who was known to have held the post in 1190-1. Cf. J. Boussard, *Le Comté d'Anjou sous Henri Plantagenêt et ses fils, 1151-1204*, (Paris, 1938), p. 117.

*devotion displayed by his English subjects.*⁸⁷ There is no indication in Diceto's account, or any other work, to suggest that Maine or Greater Anjou in general, were subject to the same unrest that had recently affected the Touraine or Southern Poitou, and there is certainly no evidence to suggest that the barons of Maine and Anjou were contemplating revolt. However, had Richard believed that the loyalty and commitment of his Angevin subjects was somewhat less than wholehearted, he may have chosen this point to appoint a new seneschal, one in whose loyalty and competence the king could have complete faith.

The Breton Revolt (1196-7)

Although we know Robert had been appointed seneschal of Anjou by January 1195 it is not until the following year – when he is to be found active in Breton affairs - that we first find evidence of Robert's actual duties, and even then the evidence is far from overwhelming. Robert's involvement in the Breton revolt of 1196-1197 is a slightly contentious subject. Much of our evidence for both Richard's and Robert's activities in Brittany in this period is derived from the work of Pierre Le Baud, a fifteenth-century French historian. Le Baud's work, although a secondary work, is still considered as a valuable source by modern Breton historians since it contains details, usually summaries, of a number of documents that are longer extant.⁸⁸ However, despite the value of Le Baud's work one must treat it with a degree of

⁸⁷ R. V. Turner & R. R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart*, (London, 2000), p. 197. *Opera Hist.*, ii, p. 119. This episode is not dated by Diceto – except to the year 1194 - but Turner and Heiser suggest it took place after the king's campaigns against Philip Augustus and the Poitevin rebels of July 1194. It may have taken place in early-August since Richard was at Poitiers on 28th July after which he headed north to Normandy, presumably via Angers and Le Mans.

⁸⁸ J.A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins: Province and Empire, 1158-1203*, (Cambridge, 2000), p. 3.

caution since Le Baud has a tendency to lean heavily towards Breton nationalism, and this may have affected his interpretation of the sources at his disposal.⁸⁹

Although we possess no evidence for Robert's involvement in Breton affairs until 1196, his royal master turned his attention to the problems facing him in Brittany in the spring of 1195.⁹⁰ Although technically part of the Empire, Angevin authority in Brittany was weak. In 1189 Richard had arranged the marriage Constance, duchess of Brittany (his brother's widow) to Ranulf, earl of Chester, in an attempt to strengthen Angevin authority in Brittany. Despite Richard's best plans the marriage of Constance and Ranulf did little to strengthen Angevin influence over Brittany, since Ranulf was never in a position to exercise his rights as Duke of Brittany. In March 1195 Richard sought to address this state of affairs, and negotiated a settlement between Constance and Ranulf. Despite the king's endeavours this settlement did not prove successful, and by late-1195 Ranulf had been driven from Brittany by disaffection amongst the nobility. Such a direct challenge to Angevin authority could no go unanswered, and in early-1196 Richard visited Rennes in an attempt to resolve the dispute. This expedition seems to have achieved little, and following Richard's return, Constance was summoned to Normandy by the king. Richard's anger at Constance's failure to assist in the implementation of the 1195 accord seems strong, since he ordered her arrest and imprisoned by her husband Ranulf.⁹¹ Shortly after Constance's capture Richard demanded the Breton nobles surrender Arthur into his

⁸⁹ Le Baud's account of Breton affairs between 1195 and 1197 is to be found in P. Le Baud, *Histoire de Bretagne*, pp. 201-204 & *Chroniques de Vitré*, pp. 30-32. However, Le Baud's account is not an easy read, and the detailed and critical analysis of Le Baud's work for this period provided by Judith Everard is indispensable. J. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, pp. 159-164. Everard provides a summary of the conflict in *ibid.*, pp. 164-167. All references are to P. Le Baud, *Histoire de Bretagne avec les Chroniques de Maisons de Vitré et de Laval*, (Paris, 1683).

⁹⁰ J. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, pp. 159-160.

⁹¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 7. Cf. J.A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, pp. 160-1.

custody and, when they refused, the king marched into Brittany in search of the young prince.⁹² This campaign did not prove successful, and having withdrawn from Brittany Richard sought instead to negotiate with the Breton lords. Following negotiations Richard agreed, in exchange for hostages and a promise by Constance that in future she would act ‘*par son conseil et ordonnance*’, to release Constance by 15th August 1196. According to Le Baud Robert of Thurnham had been party to this agreement on Richard’s behalf.⁹³

With a treaty agreed the Bretons waited for Richard to fulfil his part of the agreement. On 15th August a number of senior Breton nobles and ecclesiastics were said, by Le Baud, to have gathered at Saint-Malo de Beignon to await the arrival of Constance. When Richard did not fulfil his part of the bargain the Bretons rebelled. In response to their rebellion Le Baud relates that Richard ordered his troops to enter Brittany under the command of ‘*Robert le Seneschal*’ and Mercadier, in order to bring the rebels to account and to take possession of Arthur.⁹⁴ The target of Robert and Mercadier’s campaign, and by implication the king’s ire, were the lands of Andrew of Vitré, a prominent Breton baron owning extensive estates in south-east Brittany. According to Le Baud the Angevin forces lay waste to Andrew’s estates, but failed to find either Andrew or Arthur, both of whom had withdrawn deeper into Brittany in the face of the Angevin advance. Since the capture of Arthur ranked high in the king’s objectives, Robert and Mercadier were forced to pursue Andrew. Le Baud

⁹² According to Everard this campaign took place in mid-April. J.A. Everard, Brittany and the Angevins, p. 165. It may have been in connection with the negotiations with the Bretons, prior to capture of Constance and the campaign of April 1196, that we find Richard and Robert at Chinon on 4th February 1196. Itinerary, p. 110.

⁹³ P. Le Baud, Histoire de Bretagne, pp. 203-4 & J.A. Everard, Brittany and the Angevins, p. 162.

⁹⁴ P. Le Baud, Histoire de Bretagne, p. 204. From later references it is clear that Le Baud understood ‘*Robert le Seneschal*’ to be Robert of Thurnham, seneschal of Anjou. Everard suggests this campaign took place after August 1196. J. Everard, Brittany and the Angevins, p. 163.

goes on to relate how the Angevin forces eventually found Andrew and his allies near the town of 'Kaerhes [Carhaix] where: '...l'assailirent par grand force et y eut entr'eux dure bataille, ou il mourut grand nombre de Cothereaux.'⁹⁵ With the Breton having carried the day Robert and Mercadier were forced to retreat back to Anjou, destroying the countryside as they went.

Although there is no evidence, apart from Le Baud's own account, that links Robert by name to the Breton campaigns of 1196/7, there is certainly plenty of evidence to show that a military campaign took place in Brittany in late-1196/early-1197. William of Newburgh, a usually reliable source, records that: '*His diebus [1197] Britones, qui a rege Anglorum jampridem desciverant, vasta finium suorum per cohortes regias depopulatione coerciti, in ejusdem regis foedus et gratiam cum suo Arturo rediere,*'⁹⁶ The St. Aubin annalist also noted that the spectre of warfare had arisen in Brittany during 1196 writing that: '*Rex Anglorum Richardus Britones rebellantes missis [multis Brabanti]onum millibus, mira probitate perdomuit.*'⁹⁷ Details of the war are also to be found in a Breton work.⁹⁸ It was the Paimspont annalist who mentioned Mercadier's involvement in these affairs stating that '*...venit Marcaderus in Britanniam cum exercitu magno. His temporibus, fuit magna guerra in Britannia, et mortalitas hominum.*'⁹⁹ What none of the extant sources support is

⁹⁵ The identification of Le Baud's 'Kaerhes' as Carhaix is not certain. J.A. Everard, Brittany and the Angevins, p. 163.

⁹⁶ *Hist. Rerum Ang.*, ii, p. 491.

⁹⁷ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 28.

⁹⁸ '*Chronica Abbatiae Painspontis*', *RHGE*, xviii., pp. 331-2; at p. 332. Although known as the Paimspont annals it is possible the work was compiled at the monastery of St.-Jacques de Montfort. See J.A. Everard & M. Jones (eds.), The Charters of Duchess Constance of Brittany and her Family, 1171-1221, (Boydell, 1999), pp. 197-8. Although dated 1198 the entry is likely to relate to the events of late-1196 or early-1197. There is no evidence for an Angevin invasion of Brittany in 1198.

⁹⁹ Given that none of these accounts state that Richard himself was personally involved in the fighting, it is likely that they refer to the campaign of late-1196 or early-1197 rather than Richard's campaign of April 1196. Details of Richard's campaign of April 1196 are provided by Howden and William le Breton. J. Everard, Brittany and the Angevins, p. 163.

the idea that Robert and Mercadier suffered a defeat comparable to that Le Baud claimed took place at Carhaix, and it is worth noting that Le Baud in a later work omitted any reference to a battle of Carhaix, preferring instead to attribute Richard's change of heart to the losses suffered by Robert during the campaign.¹⁰⁰ Although Le Baud's account – at least of the campaign itself - may not be particularly reliable, it does seem to have been the case that Angevin forces, perhaps led by Robert and Mercadier, invaded Brittany at some point after August 1196. However, how deep into Brittany they ventured is not known, but Newburgh's account would suggest that the war had been confined to the border regions. In light of this, and given that Le Baud does not seem entirely sure as to whether the battle of Carhaix actually took place, one should probably conclude that the campaign, quite possibly led by Robert and Mercadier, had been order against targets in the Breton marches in order to either pressure the Breton nobility into surrendering Arthur, or perhaps to capture Arthur personally.

For Le Baud either the defeat at Carhaix, or the losses suffered by Mercadier and Robert during their campaign, was the prime reason why Richard looked to secure a peace. However, for Judith Everard it was the failure of the Angevin expedition to capture Arthur – whom the Bretons had managed to spirit away to Paris – that was a more important factor influencing Richard's decision to seek a negotiated settlement.¹⁰¹ It made little sense to continue the war against the Bretons if the prime objective of that war was not in Brittany but Paris. The exact date for the peace accord is unknown, but Everard suggests that peace had been reached by the summer

¹⁰⁰ P. Le Baud, *Chroniques de Vitré*, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ J.A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, p. 165.

of 1197.¹⁰² Negotiations between the rebels and Richard may have begun as earlier as spring 1197. For Everard the presence of Richard, Robert of Thurnham and Maurice, bishop of Nantes [who Le Baud places at the meeting at Saint-Malo de Beignon] at Tours on 1st April 1197 may have been connected with the peace negotiations.¹⁰³ Le Baud includes in his work a summary of the final peace accord, between Richard and Constance, which shows that Robert had been instrumental in assisting the king negotiate the peace. According to Le Baud it had been ‘*through the good offices of Robert of Thornham, seneschal of Anjou*’ that a treaty had been agreed between André of Vitré, Guillaume of Lohéac, Amaury of Montfort, Alain of Châteaugiron and Guillaume d’Esprinay, and the king.¹⁰⁴ The exact date of this accord is unknown, though Everard suggests a date of 1196 or 1197. Given what we have considered above it could well have been agreed in late-1196 or early-1197 once Robert’s attack on Brittany had concluded. It had certainly been agreed before December 1198 because Richard issued a charter, before this date, confirming the agreement reached between Robert and the rebels.¹⁰⁵ Le Baud also records that Constance had promise, on behalf of her followers, that they would keep the peace, and that she would expel from her territories any who failed to do so. As part of the final accord Constance, Herbert, bishop of Rennes, Peter, bishop of Saint-Malo, and Robert ‘*...iurerent pour le Roy d’Angleterre envers lesdits Barons et Chevaliers [of Brittany]*’.¹⁰⁶ Robert’s involvement in Breton affairs continued after the agreement of 1197. Shortly after 28th June 1198 we find Robert, as seneschal of Anjou, appearing

¹⁰² *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 19.

¹⁰³ J.A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, pp. 165-6. *Itinerary*, pp. 116-7.

¹⁰⁴ J.A. Everard & M. Jones (eds.), *The Charters of Duchess Constance of Brittany*, C34. We shall see, when we consider Robert’s career as seneschal of Poitou, that negotiations with rebellious or discontented nobles were an important aspect of a seneschal’s duties.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, C35.

¹⁰⁶ P. Le Baud, *Chroniques de Vitré*, pp. 35-6. Cf. J.A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, pp. 166-7.

as a witness to a charter issued by Constance confirming the treaty agreed between Andrew of Vitré and William de la Guerche.¹⁰⁷

Berry (1197)

We next discover Robert acting in a military capacity during the summer of 1197. In 1197 Alexander of Ford, the recently elected abbot of Meaux, left England in search of Robert in an attempt to bring to a conclusion the conflict that then raged between his house and Robert over Wharram-le-Street.¹⁰⁸ A brief account of Alexander's French expedition was included by Thomas Burton in his 'Meaux Chronicle'. According to Burton, Alexander, having crossed first to Normandy in search of Hubert Walter, eventually found Robert: '*...ultra Turones...toti Andegaviae et exercitibus regis Ricardi in partibus illis praefectum.*'¹⁰⁹ Although Burton's account shows that Robert was active in Richard's service in a military capacity, he provides us with no details of Robert's activities, except that he commanded the king's forces in those regions beyond Tours. However, we know from three sources - William of Newburgh, Roger of Howden, and Ralph of Coggeshall - that Richard was active in Berry in July/August 1197.¹¹⁰ At this time Richard was pursuing the war against Philip Augustus in those regions of Berry and, Howden ventured, the Auvergne, which had defected from their Angevin allegiance during Richard's captivity. Since Berry could certainly be considered as being '*beyond Tours*', it

¹⁰⁷ J.A. Everard & M. Jones (eds.), *The Charters of Duchess Constance of Brittany*, C.40.

¹⁰⁸ *Meaux Chron.*, i, pp. 231-2. For the Wharram dispute see below pp. 152-162.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, i, p. 290. Dated simply to 1197.

¹¹⁰ *Hist. Rerum Ang.*, ii, p. 495, *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 20 & *Chron. Ang.*, p. 77. Howden claims that Richard, presumably with Robert's assistance, captured as many as ten castles from Philip in the course of this campaign.

seems likely that Alexander arrived at Robert's camp in July or August 1197 whilst Robert was supporting Richard's campaigns against the rebels of Berry.

Beyond the Borders

Although Robert was to spend much of his time within the borders of his bailiwick, he was occasionally to be found in the king's entourage in Normandy. We learn of Robert's attendances at court from the witness lists to royal charters. Although witnesses lists to royal charters tell us where Robert was, and on what dates, they tell us nothing of his duties, or the reason for his presence in the king's entourage. With that said it is worth noting that Ralph Turner and Richard Heiser have calculated that for the period 1194-1199 Robert: '*..was the eleventh most frequent attestor of royal charters*', which, given that Robert was often away from the king in Anjou, is certainly indicative of Robert's high standing at court.¹¹¹ The earliest reference to Robert as seneschal of Anjou comes in a charter issued by Richard at Brionne [Normandy] on 9th January 1195. Unfortunately we cannot say why Robert was in Normandy at this time, though his stay there appears to have been brief since he does not attest any of the king's charters issued later that month. After

¹¹¹ R. Turner & R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart*, p. 188. Robert attests a total of twenty-one of Richard's charters. However, the time distribution of these charters is not particularly even. Very nearly three quarters of Robert's known attestations took place between September 1198 and March 1199. For Robert's itinerary see Appendix A. There has been some debate as to the reliability of charter witness lists as a guide to attendance at court, and as a guide to standing at court. See discussion in C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, (Yale, 2001), pp. 499-506. Although David Bates' comments merit careful consideration, it does seem as though a correlation exists between the frequency of attestation to royal charters and prominence at court. Thomas Keefe's work on charters issued in the first year of the reign of Richard I is particularly compelling. T.K. Keefe, 'Counting Those Who Count: A Computer Assisted Analysis of Charter Witness-Lists and the Itinerant Court in the First Year of the Reign of King Richard I', *Haskin Society Journal*, i, (1989), pp. 135-145.

January 1195 it was not until late-1197 that we next find Robert in Normandy, and this time the reason for his presence at court is made abundantly clear. On 16th October 1197 we find Robert, and many other prominent Angevin loyalists, at Rouen.¹¹² Robert's presence at court at this time was in response to the recent agreement reached between Richard and Walter, archbishop of Rouen, regarding the archbishop's manor at Les Andelys which Richard had seized in order to construct Châteaux Gaillard. The manor of Les Andelys had caused considerable friction between Richard and Walter - Walter had even placed Normandy under interdict - and the meeting at Rouen, at which Richard issued a charter settling the dispute, was attended by many of Richard's leading barons and officials, as well as prominent Churchmen, from both sides of the channel.

Robert's stay in Normandy proved brief, suggesting that he had been called north purely for the purpose of witnessing the resolution of the Les Andelys dispute. However, the following year Robert was once again to be found in Normandy. On 22nd May 1198 we find Robert with the king at Les Andelys. There is no obvious reason for Robert's presence in Normandy at this time, and his stay was brief.¹¹³ It is possible that he was at court to attend a meeting of Richard's senior officials, since the witness list to Richard's charter reads a little like a Who's Who of Angevin government. According to Richard's charter, those present included the archbishops of Rouen, York and Dublin, the bishop of Durham, John, count of Mortain, William

¹¹² *Itinerary*, p. 123.

¹¹³ Charters issued by Richard on 25th May and 27th May would suggest that he had left court by these dates. *Itinerary*, p. 128.

Marshal, Geoffrey fitz Peter, William, earl of Salisbury, Geoffrey of la Celle, and the Préaux brothers - Peter and John.¹¹⁴

Robert's trips to Normandy tended to be brief, but his visit during the late-summer of 1198 was more protracted. We first find Robert in Normandy on 12th August when he and Richard were at Oully. It was at Oully that Richard issued a charter confirming the grants Robert had made, on the king's orders, to the abbey of Marmoutier the previous year.¹¹⁵ A number of Robert's officials had accompanied Robert to Normandy including Master Philip of Chinon, Stephen Amenon, and Gerald of Athée. A number of other prominent figures from western France may also have journeyed north with Robert, since the Oully charter was also attested by Andrew of Vitré, Peter des Roches, and William of Mauléon.¹¹⁶ However, Robert was not merely in Normandy in connection with the affairs of Marmoutier. If he had been then one would have expected him to leave court following the issue of the king's confirmation charter. This did not happen since charters issued later that month, and into the next, show that Robert almost certainly remained in Normandy until late-September 1198.¹¹⁷ Although we have no explicit evidence that enables us to say for certain why Robert was in Normandy at this time, one can be reasonably certain that he had come north from Anjou with reinforcements for the king, and that he himself took part in the king's military enterprises in southern Normandy later that

¹¹⁴ Perhaps Robert's interest was in the bloody shower that was said to have fallen on Les Andelys earlier in May 1198. *Opera Hist.*, ii, p. 162.

¹¹⁵ *Itinerary*, p. 132.

¹¹⁶ The witness list to Robert's charter of 1197 is very similar to that of Richard's charter of August 1198. Robert's charter had been witnessed by Andrew of Vitré, William de Musterleis, Master Philip of Chinon, Stephen Amenon, and Reginald the clerk. Richard's charter of 1198 was witnessed by Robert himself, Andrew of Vitré, William of Mauléon, Master Philip of Chinon, Peter des Roches, Stephen Amenon, and Gerald of Athée.

¹¹⁷ *Itinerary*, p. 132 [22nd August – La Roche d'Orival], p. 134 [8th September – Chateau-Gaillard] & [15th September – La Roche d'Andely], p. 135 [19th September – La Roche d'Andely].

September. It is probably no coincidence that Richard's great victory at Courcelles and Gisor of late-September took place about a week after Robert's last attestation.¹¹⁸

Although Robert sometimes travelled beyond the borders of his bailiwick to meet Richard, we also find the two men together when Richard was within the borders of Robert's seneschalry. As the king's senior representative in Anjou Robert would have been Richard's principal source of information and intelligence relating to Angevin affairs, and that information would have been called upon by the king on those occasions that he journeyed into Anjou. We have already seen that Robert, in his capacity as seneschal, was to be found in the king's entourage when the king was in Anjou in February 1196 and April 1197.¹¹⁹ Following the meeting at Tours in April 1197 Robert and Richard were not to be found together again in Anjou until January 1199. Although Robert was likely to have been involved in the king's campaigns in Southern Normandy in late-September 1198, he had probably returned to Anjou shortly after the king's victory at Gisors, since he attests none of the king's charters issued between October 1198 and January 1199. However, in late-January 1199 with the war in Normandy, temporarily at least, at a close, Richard moved south to Anjou. Robert appears to have travelled north from Angers to Le Mans in order to meet Richard as he crossed into Maine, and on 24th and 28th January we find both men at Chahaignes, south east of Le Mans.¹²⁰ The two men remained in the vicinity of Le Mans for over a week since we find them together again on 2nd and 3rd February at La

¹¹⁸ Had Robert brought forces from the south this may account for the presence of William of Mauléon and Andrew of Vitré in his company. It is unlikely either man would have been called north simply to witness the king's confirmation charter to Marmoutier, although Everard has suggested that Andrew may have had an interest in Carbay. J. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins*, p. 167. It is of course possible that Andrew and William were already with the king when Robert and his party arrived, though there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case.

¹¹⁹ *Itinerary*, p. 110 [4th February 1196 – Chinon] & pp. 116-7 [1st April 1197 – Tours].

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142. That Robert had been in Anjou when Richard crossed the border seems to be shown by the fact that a charter issued on 23rd January at Chahaignes was not attested by Robert. Presumably Robert arrived at Richard's camp late on 23rd or on 24th.

Suze-sur-Sarthe.¹²¹ Later that month we find the two men at Colombiers on 19th February. Richard remained within Robert's bailiwick until early-March, when he appears to have decided to head south to the Limousin to support Mercadier in his campaigns against the Viscount of Limoges. On 1st March we find Robert and Richard at Roche-Turpin near Vendôme.¹²² Ten days later the two men were at Chinon. Robert's last known meeting with Richard took place on 11th March at Chinon, and Robert may well have left for Angers that day or early the next.¹²³

The Struggle for the Angevin Succession

(March/April 1199)

As Richard prepared to head to the Limousin Robert almost certainly returned to Angers, where we find him when news of the king's death reached Anjou – probably on 8th or 9th April.¹²⁴ The news of Richard's death was to prove a significant upset for Robert, who had not only lost his royal master, but would soon have to face a widespread rebellion within his seneschalry. Although England and Normandy declared for John – albeit, it was said, with certain reservations amongst some of Richard's leading supporters – the barons of Anjou declared for Arthur.¹²⁵ The Angevin lords argued, with apparent justification, that their customs favoured the claim of the son of an older brother over those of a younger brother.¹²⁶ Until April

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹²² *Itinerary*, p. 144.

¹²³ Robert probably left Chinon on 11th March since the witnesses list to Richard's charter of 12th is identical to that of 11th with the exception of Robert, who is absent.

¹²⁴ News of Richard's death had reached William Marshal at Vaudreuil on 10th April, so presumably that news had reached Robert a day or two earlier. W.L. Warren, *King John*, (London, 1961), p. 49.

¹²⁵ *Hist. Guil. Mar.*, ii, lines: 11861-11908. Cf. D. Crouch, *William Marshal*, (Longman, 1990), p. 77.

¹²⁶ J.C. Holt, 'The Casus Regis: The Law and Politics of Succession in the Plantagenet Dominions, 1185-1247', *Colonial England*, (London, 1997), pp. 307-328; esp. p. 308.

1199 Anjou had been relatively peaceful, but now Robert was to face a general uprising that would throw his bailiwick into chaos, and John's future as count of Anjou into doubt.

Robert appears to have been aware early on of the trouble the rebels might cause him. The Tours chronicler records that in April 1199 Robert, assisted by Gerald of Athée, left Angers and travelled east along the Loire valley ensuring that the principal fortresses of the region, including Chinon and Loches, were adequately garrisoned to resist any rebel advance.¹²⁷ Having completed his tour of inspection he established his headquarters at Chinon. At some point before his departure from Angers Robert seems to have appointed Thomas de Furnes as *prévôt* of Angers, presumably to ensure that the town was in the hands of a man whom he could trust should the rebels march against it.¹²⁸ Unfortunately Robert's confidence in both Thomas' ability and loyalty would appear to have been misplaced. As Robert and Gerald marched east, the rebels turned their attention to Angers, arriving before the city gates on 18th April. Although the castle at Angers was held by Thomas, his authority seems to have been weak within the town itself since the townspeople, whose sympathy lay with the rebel cause, threw open the gates to Arthur's supporters, and permitted them to enter the town.¹²⁹ The defection of the townspeople to

¹²⁷ *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 145: '*Robertus vero de Thorneham [Robertus de Ternesam - BN, MS, Collections des Mélanges de Colbert, 46, folio 21r] et Girardus de Atheis Cainonem [Chinon], Lochas [Loches] et alias munitiones ex parte regis Angliae munierunt.*' An exact date is not given, but it must have been before Angers fell to William des Roches on 18th April. In all likelihood Robert departed Angers after the news of Richard's death had reached him, and presumably after he had become aware of the reaction of the Angevin lords to that news. Therefore, he probably left Angers some time early in the second week of April.

¹²⁸ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 86. It is impossible to tell from Howden's account when Thomas was appointed to guard Angers. He may have held the post prior to April 1199, but given the sudden change in circumstances brought about by Richard's death, it is possible that Thomas was appointed shortly before Robert left for Chinon.

¹²⁹ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 19: '*Die vero Pasche postea receptus fuit Arturus apud Andegavim a burgensibus eiusdem civitatis.*' Ralph of Coggeshall [*Chron. Ang.*, p. 99] also believed that the rebels enjoyed

Arthur's cause was a serious blow to Robert, but worse was to follow. Shortly after the arrival of the rebel army in Angers Roger of Howden records that: '*Thomas vero de Furnes, nepos praedicti Roberti de Turneham, tradidit Arturo duci Britanniae civitatem et castellum Andegavis.*'¹³⁰ Roger of Wendover, using Howden's work as the basis of his account, gave a broadly similar description, but added that Thomas not only surrendered the city and the castle of Angers to Arthur but: '*...eidem Arturo adhaesit.*'¹³¹

The figure of Thomas de Furnes is a mysterious one indeed. He was described by Roger of Howden as Robert's '*nepos*' which in a latter period might mean nothing more than a 'kinsman', but which in this period is usually used in its classical sense - 'nephew'. Jacques Boussard and Alfred Richard certainly understood the relationship between Robert and Thomas as being that between an uncle and his nephew.¹³² Unfortunately there is no evidence, other than Howden's account, to suggest that Robert actually had a nephew. We know that he had five nieces, from his brother's marriage to Edelina of Broc, but as far as we can tell Stephen and Edelina's marriage resulted in no male children.¹³³ Nor were any of Stephen's son-in-laws called Thomas; although Adam of Bending, who had married Stephen's daughter Alice, had a son called Thomas. Thomas of Bending was known to have been attached to Robert's *familia* during the reign of King John since he attests two charters issued by Robert and his wife, and following Robert's death he

popular support and were, therefore, able to occupy both Angers and Le Mans. The popularity of Arthur's cause amongst the townspeople of Angers was also mentioned by the author of the Breton Chronicle who recorded that: '*...ingressus est urbem Andegaviae, cum magna gloria, Arturus Dux Britanniae.*' '*Chronica Britannici*', *RHGF*, xviii, pp. 329-331; at p. 329. For William des Roches' involvement see *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 145.

¹³⁰ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 86.

¹³¹ *Flores Hist.*, i, p. 286.

¹³² J. Boussard, *Le Comté d'Anjou*, p. 126 & A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou: 778-1204*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1903), ii, p. 334.

¹³³ See Thurnham Family Tree.

was said to have been in possession of some of Robert's property along with Stephen of Thurnham and Robert de Bareville.¹³⁴ It is possible that the mysterious Thomas was Robert's nephew as a result of his marriage to Joanna Fossard. Although Thomas Burton claimed that Joanna Fossard was an only child, we know that she had at least one sister - Ydoine Fossard.¹³⁵ Unfortunately we have no evidence to suggest that Thomas was Ydoine's son. Under normal circumstances one might simply dismiss Roger's account as ill informed. However, it has been suggested, by a number of eminent historians, that Roger's informant for these events was Robert himself, who presumably knew who he was, or was not for that matter, related to.¹³⁶ Unfortunately there is no evidence – except Howden's work – that connects any one called Thomas de Furnes with Robert of Thurnham, nor does any individual of that name seem to have existed. Therefore, one must either assume that Howden was entirely erroneous on this point, or else that '*nepos*' is meant to be understood as 'kinsman' rather than 'nephew', and that Howden somehow managed to confuse Furnes with Bending. Whatever one's view it remains the case that the only likely candidate for the mysterious Thomas de Furnes is Thomas of Bending.

The situation for Robert in April 1199 was hardly an edifying one. Even though a number of writers record the fall of Angers and Le Mans to the rebels, the Tours chronicler states that Tours too fell to the rebels around the same time.¹³⁷ This meant that three of the most important urban centres in the Angevin seneschalry were,

¹³⁴ Thomas of Bending attests a charter issued by Joanna Fossard at La Rochelle between 1201 and 1204, as well as Robert's confirmation charter of the same issued in England *circa* 1205. *Monasticon*, vii, pp. 1025-6. PR, *14 John*, p. 16.

¹³⁵ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 105 & pp. 231-2. For Ydoine see J. Parker (ed.), *Feet of Fines for the County of Yorkshire, 1218-1231*, (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1921), p. 37.

¹³⁶ D. Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscript of Roger of Howden's *Chronica*', *EHR*, xcvi, (1983), pp. 297-310; at p. 309; J. Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 16 and J. Gillingham, 'Historians without Hindsight', S.D. Church, (ed.), *King John: New Interpretations*, (Boydell, 1999), pp. 1-26; at p. 16.

¹³⁷ *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 145.

by late-April, in the hands of the rebels. Although the vital fortresses at Saumur, Loches, and Chinon remained in the hands of Robert's garrisons, the countryside itself appears to have been awash with unrest. Adam of Eynsham, who was in Anjou at this time with his master Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, was warned by the bishop of Angers and others that in Anjou: '*There is safety nowhere, neither for the inhabitants of cities, nor for the travellers on the road.*'¹³⁸ However, Hugh and Adam ignored this advice and continued their journey, making their way east, via Frontevrault, to Chinon where Robert had his headquarters.

Whilst Angers, Tours and Le Mans were falling to the rebels, and the Angevin countryside was falling into chaos, King John, as his brother had before him, was making his way to Chinon to secure the castle and, just as importantly, his brother's treasure. According to Roger of Howden: '*...ipse Johannes perrexit ad Chinonem, ubi thesaurus fratris sui erat, quem Robertus de Turneham habens in custodia tradidit ei, cum castello de Chinun, et castello de Saumur et aliis castellis regis, quae ipse custodiebat.*'¹³⁹ Ralph of Coggeshall gave a very similar account stating that John: '*... audita morte fratris sui...statim Chinun castellum adiit, ubi thesaurus regius servabatur, traditoque sibi castello et thesauro a Roberto de Turneham.*'¹⁴⁰ About the same time as John arrived at Chinon to take possession of the castle and treasury which Robert had been guarding for him, Hugh, bishop of Lincoln and Adam of Eynsham arrived from Frontevrault. According to Adam on a Wednesday morning

¹³⁸ *Vita Sancti Hugh*, ii, p. 132. Adam used the warning, and Hugh's subsequent decision to ignore it, as evidence for the saintly Hugh's determination and commitment to the liberties of the Church. As such it suited Adam's purpose to have the countryside awash with unrest. However, other sources make it clear that Anjou at this time was a province in turmoil, so perhaps Hugh's account is not too great an exaggeration of the problems facing Anjou and Robert at this time. *ibid.*, ii, pp. 135-136.

¹³⁹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 86.

¹⁴⁰ *Chron. Ang.*, p. 99.

in late-April: ‘...John, surnamed Lackland, was elected at Chinon as his [Richard’s] successor by certain English magnates who held the castle there.’¹⁴¹ Although Adam did not refer to Robert by name, it is quite clear from his account to whom he was referring, since the only person who held Chinon at that time, and who could be considered as an English magnate, was Robert himself.¹⁴²

Administrative Duties (1195-99)

Although military affairs appear to have taken up a considerable amount of Robert’s energies, the fact remained that his duties as seneschal consisted of more than merely leading the king’s armies against the king’s enemies. Jacques Bousard was particularly interested in the evolution of the office of the seneschal of Anjou and, for the period which concerns us, he described the office in the following manner. ‘*Néanmoins, en toutes ces fonctions, le sénéchal agit surtout parce qu’il est le représentant du comte d’Anjou dans la province. Le dapiférat n’est spécialement ni un office du justice, ni un office militaire, ni un office de finance. Le sénéchal est le représentant du comte en Anjou et dans le Maine. Il administre ses biens...Le sénéchal est devenu a la fin du xii siècle, mais á cette époque seulement, un véritable vice-comte.*’ It was not simply Robert who was required to oversee such a wide range of duties. In fact all senior royal officials were expected to be omni-competent;

¹⁴¹ *Vita. Sancti Hugh.*, ii, p. 137. The exact date is not given. However, we know Hugh was at Frontevault on Palm Sunday [11th] and spent three days there before leaving for Chinon. This would mean John probably arrived at Chinon on Wednesday 14th April. A charter issued by Eleanor at Fontevault on Wednesday 21st April shows that John was in the region by that date since her charter is witnessed by John and Robert, who had presumably already surrendered Chinon to John, probably on 14th April.

¹⁴² Eynsham’s use of the plural ‘*magnates*’ causes some problems since we know that Robert alone was in command of Chinon in April 1199. It is possible that by the time Adam and Hugh arrived at Chinon, some of those men who had been at Châlus with Richard had arrived at Chinon to await John’s arrival.

overseeing the king's affairs on the battlefield, in the exchequer, and in the law courts. Even in usually peaceful England the justiciar was expected to be as capable of leading military expeditions as he was in ensuring that the king's justice was carried out. It was because of Geoffrey fitz Peter's campaigns in South Wales in 1198, in particular the siege of Pains Castle in the Braose lordship of Radnor, that Gerald of Wales was able to quote Psalm 144 in his letter in honour of Geoffrey's victory: '*Blessed be to God who has taught your hands to war and your fingers to fight.*'¹⁴³

Whilst military duties took up a considerable amount of Robert's time, far more than they took up of Geoffrey's, as seneschal Robert was also expected to oversee a range of administrative duties. Unfortunately the evidence for these duties is poor, and although a number of documents have survived from Robert's time as seneschal, they provide relatively little information regarding his duties off the battlefield. Of Robert's surviving *acta*; one relates to the affairs of St. Aubin of Angers, one to the Abbey of Marmoutier, and one to the Abbey of St. Serge. Details regarding his administrative activities beyond this are entirely unknown, although it is to be expected that his administrative duties, at least within the royal demesne, involved more than simply working with the major monastic houses of Anjou. In any case one should be wary of assuming that this small body of surviving material is even remotely representative. A problem we face, and shall face again in subsequent chapters, is that the seneschalries of Anjou, Poitou and Gascony do not appear to have kept detailed administrative records similar to those kept in England and Normandy. There are, for instance, no Angevin or Poitevin Pipe Rolls. However, fiscal documents relating to these regions are occasionally calendared on the Norman Rolls

¹⁴³ H.E. Butler, *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis*, (London, 1937), p. 131. Although Gerald was later to condemn Geoffrey for exactly the same victory. *ibid.*, p. 181.

and on the rolls of letters Patent and Close. All our indigenous sources for the administrative duties of the seneschal of Anjou during the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries have survived only because copies of the seneschal's decisions were written up in charter form and kept in the archives of the monastic houses who benefited from those decisions.

For Boussard justice, rather than military matters, was the principle function of the seneschal.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately only one document has survived from Robert time as seneschal which shows him acting in his capacity as the king's chief law officer. A charter issued by Robert, at some point before May 1199, records the resolution of a dispute between Geoffrey, abbot of St. Aubins of Angers and Renaud of Château-Gontier.¹⁴⁵ Abbot Geoffrey had claimed that following his election as abbot, Renaud had refused to pay him the homage that was his due for the rights that Renaud held from the abbey. Robert's charter records the outcome of this dispute, which was resolved after Renaud agreed to do the homage demanded by Geoffrey. What is not clear from the charter is whether Robert was confirming an agreement reached in his own court, or one that had been agreed earlier, either in a local court, or mutually between the two parties. In view of the lack of any alternative evidence, i.e. an earlier charter recording the agreement, one must assume that the charter represents the outcome of a case heard in Robert's own court, in the presence of Ralph, bishop of Angers, Geoffrey, seneschal of Château-Gontier – a comital castle

¹⁴⁴ J. Boussard, *Comté d'Anjou*, p. 125. For the importance of the seneschal's judicial duties see *ibid.*, p. 119 & n. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Cart. St. Aubin*, ii, p. 180. The date of *circa* 1191 given by Boussillon is incorrect, and was based on the known dates for the death of William, abbot of St. Aubins [1189], and election of Geoffrey as his successor [1191]. BN, MS, Lat., 2825, f. 107v & f. 109. *Ann. St. Aubin*, pp. 17-8 for the death of William and the election of Geoffrey. Boussillon seems to have assumed that the case came before the seneschal's court shortly after Geoffrey's election, but this need not necessarily have been the case. The charter ought to be dated 1195x1199.

built by Fulk Nerra - and four other men whose identities and status are unknown.¹⁴⁶ Robert's involvement in this dispute was likely to have been occasioned by the fact that Renaud of Château-Gontier was a tenant of the Count of Anjou whose demesne included Château-Gontier. This would also account for why Geoffrey, seneschal of Château-Gontier, a junior official attached to Robert's administration, was called upon to attest the charter, and had presumably also been involved in the resolution of the dispute. The involvement of Geoffrey, abbot of St. Aubin would also account for Robert's involvement. Geoffrey was abbot of one of the richest and most important monastic houses in Anjou. St. Aubins had been founded by the comital family, and continued to enjoyed royal patronage. Richard's ancestors had even held the title of 'archiabbas' of St. Aubins, and Richard himself, at the beginning of his reign, had been forced to mediate in a disputed election.¹⁴⁷ As the king's senior representative in Anjou – 'un véritable vice-comte' as Boussard rightly identifies him, Robert would have been expected to have ensured that any dispute between a tenant of the count and an important ecclesiastic was resolved with the minimal of trouble,. In the absence of a royal charter confirming the agreement, a charter issued by Robert would have represented the next best thing. As seneschal Robert would have been required to undertake those duties that Richard himself was in no position to fulfil. If Richard, as the abbey's chief patron, was not in a position to issue a charter ensuring the formal resolution of an issue of importance to the monks and their abbot, then this duty fell to the seneschal.

Robert's position as the count/king's representative, and the authority that position carried, is highlight in a second charter preserved by the monks of St. Aubin.

¹⁴⁶ *Testes: 'Radulfus episcopus Andegavensis, Gaufridus Castri Gunterii senescaullus, Renaud Bernuce, Michael de Gobiz, Gaiterius de Loigne, Thebaudus de Coudre.'*

¹⁴⁷ R.V. Turner & R.R. Heiser, The Reign of Richard I, p. 193.

At some point before April 1199, Geoffrey, abbot of St. Aubins, issued a charter granting various rents to Rocelin de Lude, a clerk in his service.¹⁴⁸ Although the grants themselves were modest, and the provisions of the charter of little interest to our study, the composition of the witness list is worth considering. The charter was attested by two groups of men. The first group witnessed the charter on behalf of Rocelin, whilst the second group did so on behalf of Abbot Geoffrey. Beneath both sets of witnesses, and physically separate from them, we find that the charter was also witnessed by Robert in his capacity as seneschal of Anjou. The importance of this lies in the fact that Robert does not appear to have attested for either party, but as an independent representative of the count. Even if Richard's approval for the grants were not required, it still made sense for both Geoffrey and Rocelin to secure the complicity of the seneschal, whose authority was second only to the king's.

The only charter issued by Robert, as seneschal of Anjou, which is dated is that issued to the abbey of Marmoutier in 1197.¹⁴⁹ At some point during this year orders were issued by the king to Robert instructing him to surrender the king's share of the tolls collected from the city of Angers. According to the charter the tolls on Angers were shared between the king and the monks of Marmoutier. We know that Robert had been ordered to surrender the king's share because Robert had his clerk state that the charter had been issued: '*...ad mandatum et voluntatem domini mei regis Ricardi.*' Even if this passage had not been included one would be hard pressed not to assume the involvement of the king given that the seneschal did not have the

¹⁴⁸ *Cart St. Aubin*, ii, p. 254. The date Boussillon gives for this charter, *circa* 1200, is incorrect. Robert had been replaced as seneschal by August 1199 at the latest, and was probably replaced as early as May that year. Therefore, the charter was probably issued earlier than April 1199. The best we can do is offer a range of 1195x1199 for this charter's issue.

¹⁴⁹ P. Marchegay (ed.), *Archives d'Anjou recueil de documents et mémoires inédits sur cette province*, 3 vols., (Angers, 1843), ii, p. 14.

authority to permanently alienate the count/king's revenues in this manner without prior authority. The charter states that the king had ordered the surrender of his share of the tolls because he wanted the manor of Carbay which belonged to the Abbot of Marmoutier. Unfortunately it was not said why the king wanted the manor. One interesting aspect of the charter is that it records that the king's share of the revenues from the tolls on Angers amounted to 3000s annually, which is to say £150 [Ang.] or £37½ [Stg.].¹⁵⁰

Although the king's rights, in relation to escheats, wardships and heiress were far more limited in Anjou than in either Normandy or England, it remained the case that the king could seize property belonging to those whose actions had displeased him.¹⁵¹ A charter issued by Robert at Angers in 1197 or 1198, records his decision with regards to a certain house at Baugé which he ordered to be returned to the abbey of St. Serge. This charter states that: '*Ego R[obertus] de Torneham [MS - Tornaham], senescallus Andegavensis, notum facio me domum de Baugeio quam in manu domini Regis propter forisfactum Gaufridi de Gemeleria saisieram reddidisse abbati et monachis Sancti Sergii, quitam per compositionem inter me et ipsos.*'¹⁵² Having disposed of the aforementioned house, Robert then took the opportunity of rewarding one of his own men when he granted '*Hugh my clerk*' 100 *sous* annually from the rents collected from the same house. Although we know that the house in question had been taken into the king's hands prior to it being surrendered to the abbot of St. Serge, it is not clear why Geoffrey de Gemeleria had been dispossessed. It is not even clear whether it was taken into the king's hands on the orders of the king

¹⁵⁰ The fact that the king's revenues were capable of being assessed at a fixed amount suggests they were probably farmed out in return for this sum annually.

¹⁵¹ R. V. Turner, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart.*, p. 185.

¹⁵² J. Boussard, *Le Comté de Anjou*, p. 123 & n.4. Contains only part of the charter. For a copy of the charter, including Robert's grants to Hugh, see BN, MS, Anc. F. lat. no. 5446, f. 190v.

himself or on those of the seneschal. What is clear is that Geoffrey de Gemeleria had done something which had displeased the king and/or the seneschal, and one would suspect that the seneschal would not disseize a resident of the comital demesne without first seeking the king's consent.

Although the king may have been involved in issuing the orders to seize the house at Baugé, there is no indication that he was involved in its surrender to the abbot of St. Serge. The fact that Robert's charter contains no reference to royal orders having been received, as the Carbay charter of 1197 had done, would indicate that the decision may have been taken on Robert's authority alone. The fact that Robert also took the opportunity to reward one of his own men, also speaks of an independent act. One would assume that had the charter been issued upon receipt of orders from the king, both the abbot of St. Serge, and perhaps Hugh too, would have wanted it noted since it would strengthen their claim to the rights given in the event of any future legal dispute. Although the charter was issued in Robert's name, it is interesting to note that the only witness named was Ralph, bishop of Angers, who had also witnessed Robert's charter confirming the resolution of the dispute between St Aubins and Renaud of Château-Gontier. That the charter was issued at Angers, and involved one of that city's monastic houses would account for the bishop's presence, but bishops, and other senior ecclesiastical figures, often played an important role in the administrative, and sometime military, affairs of France and England during our period. Of course on the evidence of two charter attestation it would be unwise to draw any general conclusions regarding the bishop of Angers' involvement in Robert's administrative regime. However, these charters do show us that the seneschal and bishop were not unknown to each other and, as one might expect, on

those occasions when Robert's administrative duties touched upon Church affairs, Robert could seek the advice and authority of the bishop of Angers.

We know of one other act undertaken by Robert that touched upon the king's relationship with the monastic houses of Anjou. On 19th November 1198 Henry, abbot of Noyers died, and the monks elected Eudes d'Azay, the abbey's cellarer, as their new abbot. There appears to have been some controversy over the choice made by the monks since Robert was ordered by Richard to undertake an investigation of the circumstances surrounded Eudes' election.¹⁵³ Robert does not appear to have found any evidence of any wrong doing since the king: '*...ratilia l'élection, confirma la liberté du monastère par ses lettres et enjoignit à son sénéchal de prendre l'abbaye sous sa protection.*'¹⁵⁴ The investigation of contentious matters was probably an important part of the seneschal's duties, though evidence for such duties are more abundant once the Close and Patent Rolls become available to us. Richard's, and John's, dominions were too extensive for them to be in a position to investigate every complaint that came before their court in person, and their knowledge of any given issue, especially technical legal disputes, might not be sufficient for them to pass judgement. In situations such as these the seneschal would be ordered to look into the matter, and then to advise the king on the best course of action. We cannot say for certain when Richard confirmed Eudes' election – although it must have been before April 1199 - but it may have been shortly before, or perhaps even during, Richard's visit to Anjou between late-January and March 1199.

¹⁵³ M. C-J. Beautemps-Beaupré, *Coutumes et Institutions de L'Anjou et du Maine antérieures au XVIe Siècle*, 8 vols., (Paris, 1877-97), Part 2, book 1, p. 285.

¹⁵⁴ C. Chevalier, *Histoire de l'abbaye de Noyers*, (Tours, 1873), p. cxxxvii.

Finance

Financial records for the southern seneschalcies in our period are virtually nonexistent. However, we do possess a number of *acta* from the early years of the reign of King John that deal with financial matters relating to the seneschalry of Anjou. Assuming that no significant alterations were made to the functions of the seneschal of Anjou in the period after Robert's dismissal, and there are no reasons for thinking that any were made, we can use these records to shed some light on the fiscal duties of the seneschal during the last years of the twelfth-century. The fiscal duties of the seneschal were probably more complicated than the surviving evidence suggests. Such evidence usually only shows how the king arranged for his debts to be discharged on his behalf by the seneschal from the revenues of his bailiwick. We have very little evidence of any financial duties incumbent on the seneschal which may have arisen from the internal affairs of his bailiwick. Nonetheless the surviving evidence does enable us to see something of what may have been expected of Robert in the fiscal sphere.

Nearly all our evidence for the seneschal of Anjou's financial activities has survived in the form orders from the king calendared on the Norman Rolls for the second and fourth years of the reign of King John. These letters bear much in common with those letters we find calendared on the Close Rolls.¹⁵⁵ The majority of these letters contain orders relating to the payment of debts – either cash fees or

¹⁵⁵ *Rot. Norm.*, p. xv.

occasionally goods - owed by the king to his supporters, which the king wished to be paid from the revenues of the seneschalry of Anjou. The fiscal duties of the seneschal of Anjou, at least in regards to royal debts, appear to have differed little from those expected of the king's English and Norman officials.¹⁵⁶ Some examples will help highlight this. On 23rd June 1200 John ordered William des Roches - who had gained the seneschalry in September 1199 - to pay William Camerarius, presumably from the revenues of his seneschalry, the £30 [Ang.] that Camerarius was accustomed to receive from the king each year.¹⁵⁷ In early-August 1200 John wrote to William informing him that he had retained in his service two men; Eudo de Ponte and Eudo Martingni.¹⁵⁸ The two Eudos had been retained for the sums of £100 [Ang.] and £60 [Ang.] *per annum* respectively, and William was under instructions to ensure these sums were paid, until such time as the king was able to make alternative arrangements. Thus William was ordered to ensure that half the money owed to each man in respect of his fee was paid to the men themselves or their accredited envoys. On 6th September 1200 John wrote to William informing him that he had paid Gavius de Fertate and his son Geoffrey £20 of the £200 annual fee which he had given them. The remaining £180 was to be paid by William in two instalments. £80 were to be paid at the coming Michaelmas, with the final £100 payable at Easter 1201.¹⁵⁹ The following day William was informed that a similar situation pertained to the £100 *per annum* John owed Hugh de Caours.¹⁶⁰ John wrote that he had already paid Hugh £10 from his own chamber, and the remaining £90 was to be paid by William, with the first instalment of £40 payable at Michaelmas and the balance at Easter.

¹⁵⁶ B.D. Lyon, 'The Money Fief under the English Kings 1066-1485', *EHR*, 66, (1951), pp. 161-195; at p. 170 notes that many holders of cash fiefs received their monies direct from the farms of the English counties and the Norman *vicomté*.

¹⁵⁷ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 26. Orders attested by Robert of Thurnham.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 29.

Cash fees were certainly the most common means by which the king rewarded his supporters, but they were not the sole means of royal patronage utilized in Anjou. Actual grants of land by the king to his supporters, at least in Anjou, were rare events. This was partly because the king gained control of fewer escheats, heiresses, and wards in Anjou than in England or Normandy, but it was also influenced by the fact that the Angevin kings tended not to make significant grants from their demesne lands, given that this permanently alienated valuable resources. However, we do possess one example of a land grant from the early years of the reign of King John.. On 29th June 1200 John wrote to William des Roches informing him that he had given Guérin of Glapion, seneschal of Normandy, the king's vineyards in Le Mans and the king's meadows at *Parco*.¹⁶¹ Although these grants may not have amounted to a major territorial concession, it is probably relevant that the man receiving these grants was one of considerable power and influence, and not a mere military retainer or minor noble. The king could use the resources of the county of Anjou to reward his followers in other ways. In September 1200 John informed William that he had decided to give Alan fitz Comté six cart loads of good wine, and that William was expected to ensure that this gift was honoured.¹⁶²

Although we know that Robert was probably responsible to the king for discharging the king's debts, we know very little about the revenues that were at the seneschal's disposal to honour those debts. In fact any examination of the structure of Angevin finance in our period is plagued by problems. Although the Norman Rolls, and to a lesser extent the Patent and Close Rolls, give us some idea of how the king

¹⁶¹ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 27.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p. 31.

spent the revenue he collected from his demesne lands, they tell us very little about the manner in which that money was collected, where it was collected, and just how much money was collected. This lack of any accurate, or even inaccurate, internal fiscal documentation has been a cause of problems for historians. Quite apart from the limitations it places on our understanding of the nature of Angevin government in the late twelfth-century, it also plagues any discussion of the relative incomes of Richard and John compared to those collected by Philip Augustus.¹⁶³

That Richard and John derived revenue from their demesne lands in Anjou cannot be doubted. We know from Robert's charter of 1197 that Richard was accustomed to collect £150 [Ang.] a year from tolls levied on Angers, and a charter issued by Richard in February 1199, and attested by Robert, shows the king making an annual grant of £20 [Ang.] from the revenues of his demesne lands at Baugé to the Priory of Les Loges.¹⁶⁴ Evidence survives from the reign of King John that shows, as one might expect, that John raised revenues in Le Mans. In March 1203 John wrote to Brice, seneschal of Anjou, informing him and his associates that he had quit Richard Loire of the £75 [Ang.] which Richard owed the king from the revenues of the bailiwick of Le Mans, and another £75 [Ang.] owed to the king from the tallage levied on the town of Le Mans.¹⁶⁵ The seneschal himself was probably not responsible for the actual collection of revenue, but rather he seems to have kept a watching brief over those junior officials attached to his administration who were personally involved in collecting the king's revenues. We have already seen in relation to the king's revenue from Le Mans that the seneschal had to be kept

¹⁶³ J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, pp. 95-100 & N. Barratt, 'The Revenues of John and Philip Augustus Revisited', in S.D. Church (ed), *King John: New Interpretations*, pp. 75-99.

¹⁶⁴ *Itinerary*, p. 143 & *Acta of Henry II and Richard I: Part.2*, p. 185.

¹⁶⁵ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 29b. *Cf. ibid.*, p. 44b. For other examples see R.V. Turner and R.R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart*, pp. 194-9 & J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, pp. 60-61.

informed of any financial dealings between the local *prévôts* and the king, presumably so that the seneschal would not summon his junior officials for monies that they did not owe. An entry on the Norman Rolls for June 1200 also shows that the king needed to keep his seneschal informed of the financial dealings of those officials attached to his administration. On 25th June John wrote to William des Roches instructing him to make allowance to the *prévôt* of Chinon for the £25, 6s, 2d that the *prévôt* had paid to Master Urric for the construction of siege engines.¹⁶⁶ Presumably the king wished to ensure that the *prévôt* would not be summoned for these monies when the seneschal or his officials audited the *prévôt* of Chinon's accounts. John needed to issue these instructions to William because orders instructing the *prévôt* of Chinon to provide assistance to Master Urric had been sent directly to the *prévôt* without first passing through the hands of the seneschal.¹⁶⁷

Without more detailed evidence firm conclusions should probably be avoided, but it does seem fairly clear that Robert, as seneschal, was at the head of the Angevin seneschalry's financial administration, and was responsible for keeping some sort of watching brief over the collection and distribution of the king's revenues. If he did not, then it made little sense in the king keeping him, or his successors, informed of the financial activities of the *prévôts*. Whether the seneschal's financial duties involved overseeing an annual audit comparable to that exercised over the English county farms can perhaps be doubted, although some form of audit of the count's demesne income was likely to have taken place. The fact that copies of the king's orders were sent to the Norman Exchequer for entry onto the Norman Rolls would suggest that standards of financial record keeping were far more rudimentary in Anjou

¹⁶⁶ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 24.

than in Normandy. Had Anjou possessed a system of financial record keeping comparable to that in use in Normandy one would have expected copies of the king's instructions to have been sent to Angers rather than Caen. With that said some sort of financial department, even if only extremely rudimentary, must have been attached to the Angevin seneschalry, in order that the seneschal and his officials might have access to some expert knowledge. Although the seneschal's day to day involvement in the financial affairs of his bailiwick may have been modest in scope it seems likely to have been the case that he was ultimately accountable to the king for both the collection and distribution of the king's revenues.

Personnel

The seneschal was the king's senior representative in Greater Anjou but he was not the only royal official involved in the administration of Anjou. Although Robert was ultimately accountable for the affairs of the county, he was assisted in the execution of his duties by junior officials attached to his administration. '*Au-dessous de ce grand personnage qu'est le sénéchal d'Anjou*' noted Boussard '*...existent une foule de petits officiers qui composent l'administration comtale.*'¹⁶⁸ These junior officials, who like the seneschal himself were appointed by the king, were located at important military and commercial centres through out the royal demesne, such as Angers, Baugé, Brissac, Langeais, Loches, Loudun, Mirebeau, Château-Gontier, Montbazou, Moncontour, Saumur, and Tours.¹⁶⁹ These junior officials were referred to as either seneschals or *prévôts*; and the terms seem to have been used

¹⁶⁸ J. Boussard, *Le Comté de Anjou*, p. 129.

¹⁶⁹ J. Boussard, *Le Comté de Anjou*, pp. 64-7 & p. 132. R.V. Turner and R.R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart*, p. 187.

interchangeably.¹⁷⁰ Such junior officials were not a new phenomenon, and had been part of the administrative structure of Anjou since the early-eleventh century. Very little is known about these junior officials except for the odd, often oblique, reference to them in the chronicles, and their occasional appearance as witnesses to charters issued by the seneschal or the count/king. Even a historian as well acquainted with the sources as Boussard could only identify eight men who held the important post of *prévôt* of Angers for the period 1112-1204. Moreover, whilst Boussard noted that whilst it is possible to occasionally identify the holders of these offices, it is somewhat more difficult to say exactly what duties were incumbent upon them by tenure of that office.¹⁷¹

From Robert's time as seneschal of Anjou we know the names of only a few of these junior officials. The charter of 1197, dealing with the Carbay exchange, was attested by a number of officials attached to the Angevin seneschalry namely; Master Philip of Chinon, Stephen Amenon and Reginald the clerk. Reginald's occupation is obvious, but the posts held by Philip and Stephen are less apparent. An earlier charter, issued by Payn of Rochefort seneschal of Anjou in 1190, records a final concord reached between the Abbey of Fontevrault and the mayor of Saumur over local rights that both parties had been claiming as their own.¹⁷² The witnesses to this charter included Geoffrey Imbert, seneschal of Moncontour, and Stephen Amenon, seneschal of Mirebeau. It is impossible to say for certain whether Stephen still held the post of seneschal of Mirebeau in 1197. The *scriptor* of the 1197 charter did not

¹⁷⁰ In Latin these titles are generally rendered *senescallus*, *-i* & *prepositus*, *-i* though spellings occasionally vary slightly. There appears to have been no formalized system of address for junior officials, and an official referred to as a seneschal in one document might be known as *prévôt* in another.

¹⁷¹ J. Boussard, *Le Comté d'Anjou*, p. 138. Cf. R.V. Turner and R.R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart*, p. 187.

¹⁷² *Cal. Doc. Fr.*, No. 1087.

describe him as such and, given that official titles were rarely omitted from charters issued by the king or his seneschals, one must assume that he no longer held that post. However, his presence amongst the witnesses of the 1197 charter, and again as a witness to Richard's 1198 confirmation charter, shows that he was still involved in the affairs of the County of Anjou. The third witness to the charter of 1197, Master Philip of Chinon, is another whose official function is difficult to discern. It is possible that this Philip was the same Master Philip who attested Eleanor of Aquitaine's charter of April 1199 in which he was described as '*Master Philip, treasurer of Anjou.*'¹⁷³ Despite the absence of detailed documentary evidence relating to the financial affairs of Anjou, it is clear that the king derived revenues from these regions and that a treasurer would have been needed to keep track of them, and the officials who collected them. Another of Robert's officials who can be identified was Geoffrey, seneschal of Chateaux-Gontier who attested Robert's charter confirming the agreement between Renaud of Chateaux-Gontier and Geoffrey, abbot of St. Aubins. Geoffrey was probably present to advise Robert, who was not a native of Anjou, of the historical relationship between Renaud and the abbots of St. Aubins. Detailed local knowledge such as this probably meant that Robert relied heavily on the advice and assistance of his junior officials.

One junior official who served with Robert in the late-1190s, and who would later achieve a position of considerable power and influence in his own right, was Gerald of Athée. The Tours chronicler identified Gerald as Robert's associate during the Angevin succession crisis and, therefore, a man of some importance by that date. Moreover we can surmise from Richard's confirmation of the Marmoutier charter in

¹⁷³ Cal. Doc. Fr., No. 1301.

August 1198, that that Gerald had been attached to the Angevin administration since at least that date. In 1201 William des Roches issued a charter confirming an agreement that had been reached between the monks of Villeloin and Tancred de Bois concerning the ownership of the town of Chedon and its adjacent lands.¹⁷⁴ This agreement had originally been reached during Robert's time as seneschal, since William's charter records that the two parties had reached their original settlement in a court presided over by William d'Azay, *prévôt* of Loches, with the assistance of Gerald of Athée and John Limousin whom the charter described as having acted: '*vicem Roberti de Terneban, tunc temporis seneschalli.*'¹⁷⁵ Although Robert was not directly involved in the resolution of this dispute, Gerald and John were his factors or '*lieutenants*' as Dubois aptly puts it, and it is clear from the charter that Gerald's and John's authority stemmed solely from their relationship to Robert in whose name, and by whose authority, they were empowered to act.

Dismissal

April 1199 had proved a trying month for Robert, and although events had not proceeded quite according to plan, his swift action in the days following the arrival of the news of Richard's death had prevented a complete collapse in the Angevin position. Nonetheless, the situation was hardly favourable to John, and it comes as little surprise to find that Robert was replaced as seneschal at some point after John's arrival at Chinon in April. An exact date for Robert's dismissal cannot be established. The last datable reference to him as seneschal comes in a charter issued by Eleanor of

¹⁷⁴ William's charter saw the renewal of this agreement by Tancred's sons Geoffrey and William.

¹⁷⁵ G. Dubois, '*Recherches sur la vie de Guillaume des Roches*', *BEC*, (1871), pp. 88-145; at p. 120 & n. 5. Dubois correctly identifies '*Terneban*' as Thurnham. Robert's name seems to have given western French writers some problems, with the Tours Chronicler rendering it as '*Ternesam*'.

Aquitaine on 21st April 1199, issued a week after John's arrival at Chinon.¹⁷⁶ A charter issued by John on 30th July that year at Rouen was attested by Robert without reference to his tenure of the post of seneschal of Anjou; though the witness list to this charter has been abbreviated, and perhaps the clerk omitted his title for the sake of brevity.¹⁷⁷ However, a charter issued by John on 23rd August 1199 shows that Robert had been dismissed from his post as seneschal by that date, since the witness list is given in full and Robert is not referred to as seneschal.¹⁷⁸ Roger of Howden's work suggests that Robert had been removed from office by late-April or early-May 1199 in order to facilitate the appointment of the Poitevin noble Aimary, viscount of Thouars.¹⁷⁹ A problem with Howden's account is that although we know Robert had been replaced by Aimary, we have no idea when this took place because Howden only gives the date of Aimary's own dismissal and not that of his appointment. However, other evidence has survived which shows that in late-April and early-May 1199 Eleanor of Aquitaine was busy buying the support of the Poitevin nobles for her son.¹⁸⁰ During this period a number of concessions were made to the Poitevin lords in order to bind them to John's cause. Therefore, it seems likely that Aimary's appointment took place either in the last week of April or in the first week of May 1199.¹⁸¹ In light of this one can suggest that Robert must have been replaced as

¹⁷⁶ *Cal. Doc. Fr.*, No. 1301.

¹⁷⁷ *Rot. chart.*, p. 10b.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 97.

¹⁸⁰ *Cal. Doc. Fr.*, No. 1099 [Grants to Mauléons] & A. Richard, *Histoire de Comtes*, ii, p. 337. For the Lusignans see 'Recueil de Documents concernant la Commune et la Ville de Poitiers 1063-1327', *AHP*, 45, (1923), pp. 45-8. For Aimary of Thouars's pledge of loyalty see *Rot. chart.*, p. 31. John began to confirm his mother's grants to the Poitevin lords in the summer of 1199. *Rot. chart.*, p. 11, p. 24b & p. 25. Cf. J. Martindale, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Last Years', in S.D. Church (ed.), *King John: New Interpretations*, pp. 137-164; esp. pp. 160-165.

¹⁸¹ It is interesting to note that the task of recovering Angers, or at least of intimidating its inhabitants, in late-April 1199 was entrusted to Eleanor and Mercadier rather than Robert. *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 88. That Mercadier and Eleanor had been sent against Angers might indicate Robert's removal from office by that date. It has been suggested that Howden's source for events in Western and Southern France in March-May 1199 had been Robert himself, and we might suppose that had he played a significant role in John's attempts at re-conquest, then he might have mentioned it to Roger. The

seneschal shortly after he witnesses Eleanor's charter of 21st April. However, the fact that he continued to hold the post for a week following John's arrival shows that he was not dismissed immediately upon the king's arrival. This may indicate that Robert's dismissal owed more to John's need to reward Aimary, than it did to John's desire to punish Robert.

Tours Chronicler, who was aware of Robert's activities in early-April, recounts that Tours was attacked in late-May by an army commanded by a number of prominent Poitevin nobles, including Aimary of Thouars who may have been leading his first expedition as seneschal. The Tours Chronicler does not mention Robert in connection with this event. *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 145.

Robert and John

May 1199 – February 1205

In the King's Entourage

One might assume that Robert's removal from office shows that John had no faith in his brother's former favourite. However, the evidence shows this was not in fact the case. Although Robert was dismissed as seneschal, he continued to be a prominent member of John's entourage, and a frequent presence at court. In May/June 1199 we find Robert in England with John, having accompanied the king from Normandy to England in late-May, and having also, presumably, been present at the king's coronation.¹⁸² Robert's stay in England, like John's, proved brief, and it seems likely that Robert left for Normandy with John in June that year. In late-July and early-August 1199 we find Robert in Normandy as the king renewed the alliances Richard had made with Baldwin, count of Flanders and Renaud, count of Boulogne.¹⁸³ After these negotiations were finalized Robert appears to have left court, and we do not find him in John's company again until January the following year. It is not clear where Robert went during this break from court life, but it is possible he took the opportunity to tour his Yorkshire estates. Although he had been married to Joanna for nearly five years, he does not appear to have been in a position to visit the estates that Joanna brought him. It is perhaps no coincidence that a

¹⁸² *Feet of Fines [Yorks]*, pp. 1-2. A final concord between Robert and Alexander, abbot of Meaux, places Robert at Northampton on 6th June 1199.

¹⁸³ *Rot. chart.*, p. 10b [30th July – Rouen], p. 30b [18th August – Roche-Andely – Treaty with Renaud, count of Boulogne], p. 12 [23rd August – Rouen]. Cf. F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy 1189-1204*, (Manchester, 1913), p. 139 & n. 47.

number of legal disputes initiated by Robert in order to recover lands and rights he believed had been usurped at an earlier date seem to have begun during 1199.¹⁸⁴

Robert had returned to court by late-January 1200, and for the period 19th January 1200 to 27th April 1201 Robert was at court on an almost constant basis.¹⁸⁵ Charter's witness lists show that Robert was with John during many of the most important events of the first few years of his reign. In January/February 1200 Robert was with John in Normandy as the king began the negotiations with Philip Augustus that would later be ratified in the treaty of Le Goulet. With these discussion complete Robert returned to England with John in late-February. Robert remained at court throughout March and April, sailing to Normandy with John in early-May. Robert was in Normandy whilst the king finalized the treaty of Le Goulet, and toured his Norman possessions.¹⁸⁶ With the treaty of Le Goulet sealed on 22nd May Robert accompanied John to Maine and Anjou, before returning to England in early-October. For the period 29th October to 6th December Robert does not appear in the list of witnesses to any of John's charters. However, he was said to have been at court in late-November when Roger of Howden identifies him as one of the witnesses to William, king of Scotland's, homage to John at Lincoln on 22nd November.¹⁸⁷ Lincoln was not far from Robert's estates in East Yorkshire and Doncaster, and it is possible that he spent at least some of the period between October and December 1200 on his Yorkshire estates, returning to court to witness the homage of the King of Scotland, and for the funeral of Hugh, bishop of Lincoln.

¹⁸⁴ See 'Robert and England' below.

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix A.

¹⁸⁶ In May or June of 1200 Robert acted as a witness to Aimary, earl of Gloucester's charter agreeing to the surrender of Evreux in accordance with the treaty of Le Goulet. *Cal. Doc. Fr.*, p. 474.

¹⁸⁷ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 142. Robert probably remained in Lincoln until at least 23rd November for the funeral of Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, whom he had met at Chinon in April 1199.

Robert probably remained at court following Hugh's funeral, since we find him at Ludgershall on 6th December. After that date Robert may have left court briefly, because he does not appear as a witness to any of John's charters until Woodstock on 30th December 1200. Robert seems to have spent all of January 1201 at court, but may have left in early-February. In late-December 1200 John had been in the Home Counties, and Robert had accompanied him north through Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, and at least as far north as Durham where he attests a charter on 7th February. After this Robert probably left court since he does not appear to have accompanied John north to Alnwick and Cumberland. It is not until Canterbury on 28th March, when John arrived back in the South-East from his northern excursion, that we next find the two men together. It is possible that Robert made his own way south from Durham, perhaps visiting his estates in nearby Doncaster and East Yorkshire, rejoining the king when he arrived at Canterbury. March and early-April were spent at various royal manors in the Home Counties, after which the king and Robert headed to the West Country. Robert's last attestation in this period took place at Exeter on 27th April.

It was in April 1201 that Robert first became involved in the king's dealings with the Lusignan family. In late-March a letter arrived for John, from his mother Eleanor, informing him that certain Poitevin barons had: '*..terram et castra vestra seisierant sine licencia et voluntate vestra.*'¹⁸⁸ Eleanor did not say who these men were, but Aimary, viscount of Thouars, in a letter stressing his commitment to John's cause – issued at Eleanor's request - refers to the tension that then existed between

¹⁸⁸ *Rot. chart.*, p. 102b. This letter, and that from Aimary of Thouars, had arrived by 24th March since copies of these letters were enrolled between letters issued on 19th and 24th March.

John and Hugh le Brun. Reading between the lines of Aimary's and Eleanor's letters it is hard not to see the unrest in Poitou at this time as having something to do with the machinations of the Lusignan family.¹⁸⁹ John certainly believed that the Lusignans were working against him, and on 1st April he issued instructions stating that: '*...praecipimus et volumus commodum nostrum fieri de boscis, instaurmentis, et de omnibus catallis comitis Augi [Ralph of Exoudun, count of Eu] in Anglia. Unde vobis mandamus que vendicionem quam dilectus noster Robertus de Turnham vel certi balli sui, quos ad hoc facienda loco sui posuerit, de boscis, instaurmentis et aliis catallis praedicti comitis fecerint ratam habebimus et firmam et vendicionem istam eis warantizabimus.*'¹⁹⁰ Further evidence showing that Ralph, count of Eu, had incurred the king's wrath at this time is provided by Roger of Howden who, in a passage datable to this period, stated that: '*Varinus de Clapiun [Guérin of Glapion], senescallus Normanniae, ex mandato domini sui Johannis regis Angliae obsederat castellum de Driencurt [Drincourt], quod Richardus rex Angliae dederat Radulfo de Yssoudun, comiti de Auco.*'¹⁹¹ Although Robert was technically in charge of the seizure and sale of Ralph's English property, he does not appear to have taken personal control of the operations because he remained at court until at least 27th April. However, we do know that on 9th April Robert attested orders dispatched to the sheriff of Surrey instructing the sheriff to convey Amfrey, the count of Eu's seneschal

¹⁸⁹ 'Lusignans' is short hand for Geoffrey of Lusignan (by 1200) lord of Vouvant, Mervent and Moncontour, and his nephews Hugh IX of Lusignan [Usually known as Hugh le Brun], lord of Lusignan and count of La Marche, and Ralph of Exoudun, count of Eu. For the relationship between the three men see S. Painter, 'The House of Lusignan and Châtellerault, 1150-1250', *Speculum*, 30, (1955), pp. 374-384; at p. 376. Geoffrey held the castellany of Vouvant from Hugh le Brun, but the castellanies of Moncontour and Mervent were held from John since they formed part of demesne of the count of Anjou and Poitou respectively. S. Painter, 'The Lords of Lusignan in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Speculum*, 32, (1957), pp. 27-47; at p. 44. Castle tenure in Poitou and southern Anjou in the early thirteenth-century, especially after Eleanor's bribery of the Poitevin lords in April/May 1199, is a sometimes fiendishly complex puzzle. It is best tracked with the aid of R. Hadju's appendix to 'Castles, Castellans and the Structure of Politics in Poitou, 1152-1271', *JMH*, 4, (1978), pp. 27-54; at pp. 44-49.

¹⁹⁰ *Rot. chart.*, p. 103.

¹⁹¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 161. Judging by the structure of Roger's account this campaign was launched in late-March or early-April, probably shortly after Eleanor's letter arrived in England.

[presumably for the Rape of Hastings], to Corfe.¹⁹² The initial stages of the seizure were almost certainly in the hands of Robert's bailiffs, as John's orders of 1st April suggest, and we know that as late as Michaelmas 1204 the constable of Hastings castle – the seat of the Rape of Hastings – was one of Robert's men.¹⁹³

Between late-April and August 1201 we lose sight of Robert's whereabouts. John had left for France in mid-May that year, and was in Normandy by early-June. Robert, however, seems to have remained in England after leaving court around 27th April. It is possible, perhaps even likely, given the orders he had been entrusted with, that Robert headed to Sussex to oversee the seizure of the count of Eu's possessions. However, Robert did not remain in Sussex for more than a couple of months, since he had sailed for France by July. On 1st August Robert was with John at Chinon during a meeting of a number of leading Angevin continental officials; including William des Roches, seneschal of Anjou, Geoffrey of la Celle, seneschal of Poitou/Gascony, and Guérin of Glapion, seneschal of Normandy.¹⁹⁴ About a month after this meeting Geoffrey of la Celle was replaced as seneschal, and Robert appointed in his place. Robert's was not appointed immediately after the Chinon meeting since on 11th August 1201 Geoffrey attested a charter to the Abbey of Saint-Maixent in his capacity as seneschal of Poitou.¹⁹⁵ Robert had, however, assumed responsibility for the two seneschalries by 23rd September 1201.¹⁹⁶ Although Robert was seneschal by 23rd September he could not have been appointed to the post much before this date

¹⁹² *Rot. lib.*, p. 94. Bizarre as these orders may seem, given Robert was in fact the sheriff of Surrey, the orders were almost certainly for the attention of Robert's sub-sheriff - Alan de Wilton. It could well have been Alan who oversaw these initial operations on Robert's behalf.

¹⁹³ PR, 6 *John*, p. 219

¹⁹⁴ J.W. Baldwin (ed.), *Les Registres de Philippe Auguste*, (Paris, 1992), pp. 488-490; No. 42.

¹⁹⁵ A. Richard, 'Chartes et Documents pour servir a l'histoire de L'Abbaye de Saint-Maixent', *AHP*, xvi, (1886) & *AHP*, xviii, (1887), ii, no. ccciii [11th August 1201]. This is the last reference to Geoffrey as seneschal.

¹⁹⁶ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 1.

because letters patent informing the king's men in Poitou and Gascony of Robert's appointment were not issued until 29th October.¹⁹⁷

It is not hard to find a reason for Robert's appointment. For one thing Geoffrey does not appear to have been John's first choice for seneschal. In January 1200 the post had been given to Ralph of Mauléon, the prominent Poitevin nobleman. Unfortunately Ralph had died unexpectedly in February 1200.¹⁹⁸ Geoffrey's first real test as seneschal came a year later with the outbreak of the Easter 1201 revolt. Geoffrey's response to this rebellion does not appear to have been particularly successful, with Roger of Howden recording that: '*Pictavi [rebels]...praevaluerunt adversus custodes terrarum suarum et castella sua obsederunt.*'¹⁹⁹ It was almost certainly in response to Geoffrey's failure to subdue the rebellious Poitevin lords that he was replaced by Robert.²⁰⁰ Roger of Howden was convinced that Robert's appointment was an attempt by John to subdue the rebellious Poitevin. According to Roger: '*Ad quorum impetum comprimendum constituit rex Angliae Robertum de Turneham procuratorem.*'²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Rot. chart.*, p. 58b [30th January - Ralph of Mauléon seneschal of Poitou] & p. 59b [22nd February – Appointment of Geoffrey of la Celle as seneschal of Poitou.] That Ralph had died rather than been replaced see *Cartulaires de Bas-Poitou*, P. Marchegay (ed.), (Les Roches-Baritaud, 1877), p. lxx. The date given in the charter of 1199 is misleading since the charter must have been dated using the Easter-Easter calculation of the year, then commonplace in Poitou. Geoffrey of la Celle had acted as seneschal of both Poitou and Gascony during the reign of Richard I, so he was no newcomer to the post of seneschal.

¹⁹⁹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 160.

²⁰⁰ H.G. Richardson, 'The Letters and Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine', *EHR*, lxxiv, (1959), pp. 193-213; at p. 212 claims that Geoffrey died soon after 27th July 1201. This is incorrect since we know he was still alive in August that year, and letters patent sent to Robert in May 1203 show he was still alive at that date. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 30.

²⁰¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 176.

Seneschal of Poitou/Gascony

Robert's appointment as seneschal of Poitou/Gascony made him the king's senior representative in those lands south of the Loire, and by virtue of that a man of considerable power and influence. When Robert arrived in Poitou in late 1201 he would have discovered a situation quite different from that he had been used to as seneschal of Anjou. The political structure of the County of Poitou differed substantially from that of Anjou, England and Normandy.²⁰² Although in Normandy and England, and to a lesser extent Anjou, there were nobles of considerable power and influence, political power in these regions tended to be fragmented. In Poitou effective political power was in the hands of a very small group of nobles. By the late twelfth-century there were five families who dominated Poitevin political life.²⁰³ These were the families of Lusignan, Thouars, Mauléon, Parthenay, and of course the Count of Poitou himself.

One of the problems that may have hampered Geoffrey's attempts to subdue the rebels could have been the lack of military installations in his hands, and it is certainly the case that the three earliest known orders issued to Robert as seneschal of Poitou dealt with the transfer of fortifications into the seneschal's hands. Many of the most important castles in Poitou were, by early-1201, in the hands of the leading Poitevin lords or their allies. Thanks to the work of Robert Hadju we can identify those castles that were, in the autumn of 1201, either in Robert's hands or in those of junior

²⁰² For the political structure of Poitou see R. Hadju, 'The Structure of Politics in Poitou, 1152-1271', pp. 27-54.

²⁰³ R. Hadju, 'Family and Feudal Ties in Poitou 1100-1300', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 8, (1977), pp. 117-39; at p. 135.

officials attached to the Poitevin administration.²⁰⁴ In Northern and Central Poitou John held just four castles at Poitiers, Montreuil-Bonnin, Niort, and La Rochelle. In southern Poitou, prior to the death of Ademar, count of Angoulême in 1202, John controlled another five castles at Le Chateau-d'Oléron, St Jean-d'Angely, Saintes, Cognac, and Jarnac. With Ademar's death John took control of Merpins, Chateaufort-sur-Charente, Martignac-Charente and Angoulême. On 23rd September 1201 John sent orders to Laon Ogier, presumably one of the king's officials in Poitou, ordering him to arrange the surrender to Robert of a certain tower that was at that time in the hands of another Angevin loyalist Reginald de la Pérate.²⁰⁵ On the same day instructions were sent to the bishop of Poitiers ordering him to surrender his tower at Chauvigny to Robert.²⁰⁶ A month later instructions were sent to Ademar, count of Angoulême, instructing him to surrender to Robert two castles – Limeuil and Tour-Blanche - that Ademar had in his custody.²⁰⁷

Robert's appointment as seneschal was undoubtedly a significant vote of confidence in his abilities, but the post to which he had been appointed could be considered something of a poisoned chalice. By September 1201 relations between John and many of the Poitevin lords were at the lowest point since John had come to the throne. The short lived Easter 1201 rebellion had shown that unrest in Poitou was serious, and although John had been able to deal with this revolt, he had failed to address its underlying causes. Another significant problem was that the unrest was

²⁰⁴ As was the case with the seneschalry of Anjou, many of the king's fortifications in the seneschalry of Poitou were in the hands of prévôts or junior seneschals attached to the Poitevin administration. For the *prévôts* of Poitiers and Montreuil-Bonnin see E. Audouin (ed.), *Recueil de Documents concernant la Commune et la Ville de Poitiers, 1063-1327*, *AHP*, 44, (1923), pp. 41-2 (1187) & pp. 42-3 (Aug 1196) & pp. 45-8 (May 1199).

²⁰⁵ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 1. Reginald de la Pérate is to be found active in John's service in 1202. *ibid.*, p. 21b.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1. 'Chammac'. A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 391 & n.1 identifies 'Chammac' as Chauvigny, an important estate belonging to the bishops of Poitiers.

²⁰⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 3.

not simply limited to the Lusignans, but appears to have affected other Poitevin families as well. Whilst in general historians have tended to see John's problems in Poitou between September 1199 and Easter 1202 as essentially a dispute between John and the Lusignans, the malaise in fact went much deeper than this.²⁰⁸ John's relationship with another powerful Poitevin, Aimary, viscount of Thouars, had deteriorated rapidly since September 1199 when John had compelled Aimary to surrender the seneschalry of Anjou.

Although Robert was seneschal of Poitou and Gascony during a period of almost endemic warfare we have surprisingly little evidence of his military activities. In fact most of the source material we possess relates to Robert's administrative activities. That Robert was expected to undertake military operations is shown in letters patent dispatched to the archbishops and bishops of Gascony and other of John's supporters in the region on 12th December 1201. '*Mandamus vobis*' stated John '*quod dilecto et fideli nostro Roberto de Turnham senescallo Pictaviae et Wasconiae faciatis loco nostro exercitus et procuracionem quas nobis debetis, tamquam persone nostre faceretis si praesentes ibi essemus*' concluding his instruction by warning them that if this was not done '*molestia erit nobis.*'²⁰⁹ These letters were unlikely to relate to a specific military operation then underway or in preparation, but were rather a general instruction to John's followers informing them that the military service they owed John ought to be rendered to Robert in the king's absence were Robert to request it.

²⁰⁸ W.L. Warren, *King John*, p. 69 & J. Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, p. 89.

²⁰⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 3b.

Following the flurry of orders in September 1201 we know relatively little about Robert's activities until early-1202. What we do know is that in November 1201 Robert was sent on a diplomatic mission to Armagnac. Letters patent issued to Gerald, count of Armagnac, informed him that he should have faith in those things related to him by Robert, Peter of Verneuil and Raymond Bernard: '*...de negociorum suorum promocione*'.²¹⁰ Quite what this phrase refers too is unclear except, of course, that the king required Gerald's assistance in the furtherance of his affairs.²¹¹ It has been suggested by Alfred Richard that this mission was connected to the king's negotiations with Sancho, king of Navarre, and that John had wanted to use Gerald as an intermediary between himself and Sancho.²¹² Although this is certainly a plausible suggestion, evidence of Gerald's involvement in these negotiations is lacking, and the fact that he does not attest the charter finalizing these negotiations in February 1202 may indicate that Robert's mission to Armagnac was connected to a separate matter.

Robert himself certainly played some role in the negotiations with Sancho since we find him at Angoulême in February 1202 during which the agreement between John and Sancho was finalized. In January 1202 John moved south from Normandy into Anjou and the Touraine. Having spent the last week of January at Loches he moved south again crossing into Poitou on 31st January when we find him at Montmorillon near Poitiers. As John journeyed south Robert appears to have been awaiting the king's arrival at Angoulême where we find the two men on 4th and 5th

²¹⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 3.

²¹¹ This phrase, or one very similar, appears frequently in letters patent. The nature of the business under discussion, or the manner in which the king wanted the recipient to promote his affairs cannot usually be established, although one can occasionally hazard a guess. The messengers who bore the letters would have been informed by the king of the nature of their mission before leaving court, making it unnecessary to repeat these instructions in written form. These sorts of letters patent – letters of credence as Hardy classified them – were simply to ensure that the recipient treated the information imparted to him by the messengers as coming directly from the king.

²¹² A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 392.

February 1202.²¹³ It was at Angoulême that John renewed the alliance with Sancho, king of Castile. This meeting saw the king in company with many of his leading supporters from Poitou and Gascony. We know that present at that meeting had been Robert himself, Elias, archbishop of Bordeaux, Hugh, bishop of Saintes, Ademar, count of Angoulême, Aimary, viscount of Thouars, and Peter des Roches.²¹⁴ With the treaty finalized John and Robert moved west to Cognac on 6th February, where they parted company.²¹⁵ As John made ready to return to Normandy letters patent were issued instructing the citizens of Bordeaux to have faith in those things that Robert and Elias, archbishop of Bordeaux, had to say concerning the debt the citizens owed the king, and other matters relating to the king's business in those parts.²¹⁶ So as John moved north, Robert headed south to Bordeaux on the king's business.

As with the earlier mission to Armagnac, the purpose of Robert's mission to Gascony was not stated. However, letters patent issued later that year might relate to diplomatic negotiations undertaken by Robert on the king's behalf in this period. On 12th June John wrote to Elias, archbishop of Bordeaux informing him that '*...pax prolocuta per nos et comitem Engolismi [Ademar, count of Angoulême] et seneschallum Pictaviae inter nos et Gaston de Bearz [Gaston VI, viscount of Béarn] nobis placet.*'²¹⁷ The terms of the peace accord were not stated, but the fact that it pleased John suggests Robert and Ademar had managed to help negotiate an accord favourable to the king. There were obviously problems in Gascony at this time since

²¹³ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 5b-6.

²¹⁴ Other prominent Angevin loyalists at the meeting included William, earl of Salisbury, Peter of Préaux, and William Brewer.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 5b.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5b.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 12b. Both Robert and Ademar had been at the Angoulême meeting in early-February, and although the king's letter to the townspeople of Bordeaux only mentioned Robert and Elias as having been sent to them on the king's business, it is possible that Ademar had also gone south to help negotiate with the rebels.

John told Elias that, if possible, peace accords ought to be agreed with other Gascon lords who, like Gaston, had withdrawn from the king's service. It therefore seems possible that Robert had been sent to Gascony in order to help negotiate accords with those nobles who had withdrawn from their allegiance to John.²¹⁸

Diplomatic duties would form a large part of Robert's activities as seneschal, but routine administrative matters, at least until early-1203, would also occupy his time, just as they had when he had been seneschal of Anjou. In late-January 1202 John wrote to Robert and other royal officials in Poitou informing them that he had taken into his custody and protection Peter, son of Peter Bertin (the former seneschal of Poitou) together with the lands, properties, rents, and possessions that had belonged to Peter Bertin. Robert and the others were ordered to ensure that Peter, and his father's properties, were protected until Peter son of Peter had reached an agreement with John.²¹⁹ Around the same time John informed Robert that he had taken into his protection Master Isenbert, master of the schools of Saintes, and given him possession of a house near the bridge at La Rochelle.²²⁰ On 17th February orders were sent to Robert instructing him to ensure that William des Roches had possession of those rents at La Rochelle which William had been accustomed to receive when Geoffrey of la Celle had been seneschal.²²¹

²¹⁸ Gascony seems to have been in turmoil since the death of Richard I. Ralph of Mauléon and Geoffrey of la Celle had been dispatched by John to Gascony in February 1200 in order to help pacify the region. *Rot. chart.*, p. 58. Mercadier and Elias of Malmort had also been active in trying to suppress the rebellious Gascon lords, much to annoyance it seems of Innocent III who ordered an investigation into Elias' behaviour. *Pat. Latina.*, 215, cols. 243-245 & M.H Géraud, 'Mercadier. *Les Routiers au Treizième Siècle*', *BEC*, (1841), pp. 417-443; at pp. 436-8. The treaty with Gaston did not last long. In October 1204 Gaston – and another former Angevin loyalist, Gerald, count of Armagnac – were found fighting for Alphonse, king of Castile. A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 454.

²¹⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 5. For Peter as seneschal see E. Audouin, 'Recueil de Documents concernant La Commune et la Ville de Poitiers', pp. 49-50.

²²⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 9b.

²²¹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

The Road to Mirebeau

Although the Patent and Close Rolls usually only enable us to see what manner of administrative duties Robert had been entrusted with – even then they are not always particularly forthcoming with details - we know from other sources that 1202 was a year of rebellion and warfare in Poitou and the neighbouring regions. By April 1202 Philip Augustus had tired of John's attitude towards the Lusignan question. John's refusal to answer a summons issued by Philip to account for his behaviour appears to have been the last straw for Philip, or at least a convenient *casus belli*. By Easter 1202 Philip's forces were marching north to conquer Normandy, whilst in the west Philip's allies, including a number of prominent Poitevin lords, were preparing for a renewed attack on John's possessions in Anjou and Poitou.

Robert's military activities in the weeks and months following the Poitevin revolt of Easter 1202 are unknown. In fact it is hard to say what exactly was happening in Poitou in general in this period. What we do know is that the Poitevin administration appears to have survived the initial stages of the rebellion relatively unscathed since routine administrative matters continued to demand Robert's attention. This would suggest that if fighting took place in Poitou at this time it may have been relatively localised. On 4th June 1202 John wrote to Robert informing him: '*...quod Eblo de Rupefort [Ebles of Rochefort] fecit nobis ligenciam de terra quam Aumericus de Resse de eo tenebat ad censum.*'²²² In view of Ebles' homage, Robert was ordered to ensure that the land in question was returned to Ebles without delay, together with the charter previously agreed between Aimary and Ebles. On the

²²² *Rot. Norm.*, p. 46.

same day John wrote to Robert ordering him to ensure that Geoffrey Martell ‘...*qui nobis bene servit et cuius servitium plurimum commendamus*’ was made quit of the 4000s [Ptv.] that he owed the Jews of Saintes.²²³ On 14th June John wrote to Robert ordering him to assign Master Philip Rosinnoil £40 [Ang.] from the revenues on the salt customs at Bordeaux which had been taken into the king’s hands.²²⁴ The grant was not a permanent one, and John stated that Master Philip was to hold these revenues only ‘...*donec dominus Rex ei assignaverit redditum quem ei concessit.*’ Grants by the king to his favourites continued to be an area which created work for Robert. Seven days later John instructed Robert to ensure that Mainard de Certes was given the fee which belonged to him.²²⁵ On 24th June John wrote to Robert regarding John of Forz’ fee. Robert was told that as soon as he was able he ought to assign John that fee ‘...*in certo loco assignetis ubi illud recipere possit.*’²²⁶ The final clause may indicate that some areas of Poitou were not available to Robert to make this grant because of the fighting. In August John wrote to Robert stating that: ‘*Mandamus est Roberto de Turneham...quod sine dilatione faciat habere Willelmo Walensy filiam Herberti Burland quas ei dedit [John] in uxore.*’²²⁷

Although routine administrative matter continued to demand Robert’s attention through-out the summer of 1202, there is some evidence to show that the war was beginning to have an effect of Robert’s duties, and that there was some concern at court, as one might expect, regarding the situation in Poitou. It was probably in response to the news of the Poitevin rebellion that John decided, in late-April 1202, to order the transfer of 500 marks from Normandy to Poitou for Robert’s

²²³ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 47.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 54. For the identification of ‘*magistro P. Rosinnoil*’ as Peter see *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 18b.

²²⁵ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 52.

²²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 52.

²²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 61.

use.²²⁸ According to the Patent Rolls Robert of Vieuxpont was ordered to give this money to Richard, a clerk in Robert's service, who was then in Normandy. On 7th June 1202 John wrote to Robert ordering him to provide the king with two prisoners of war, from among those whom Robert had in custody, who could be exchanged for Philip the Breton and John de Haire; presumably members of John's armed forces who had been taken prisoner by the French king or his Poitevin allies.²²⁹ However, we have no idea how these men came to be in Robert's custody, though one might assume that either Robert himself had captured them, or they had been taken by other officials attached to his administration. In either case we can see that the war was beginning to have its affects on Robert's administration, and that losses on both sides may have been more extensive than the limited narrative sources would have us believe. In early-May Robert, together with a number of other leading Angevin officials in Poitou/Gascony, had received a delegation from Normandy led by William, earl of Salisbury and Peter of Préaux.²³⁰ These two men carried instructions for Robert, but unfortunately no idea of what these instructions were can be gleaned from the Patent Rolls. John just told Robert that he should have faith in those things: '*...vobis dicent ex parte nostra de negociis nostris promovendis.*' Given the situation in Poitou at this time, one can assume that some of the information conveyed related to John's plans for the suppression of the Poitevin revolt. As well as conveying orders the two men may also have been under instructions to obtain information from Robert regarding the situation in Poitou/Gascony. William may

²²⁸ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 9b.

²²⁹ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 48.

²³⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 11. Peter and William carried orders for Elias, archbishop of Bordeaux, Hugh, bishop of Saintes, Aimary, viscount of Thouars, Martin Algais, and William des Roches.

have been sent south to provide Robert with reinforcements, though there is no evidence that he remained in Poitou for long.²³¹

Although we know little about the activities of the rebels before their attack on Mirebeau in late-July, it seems that John was sufficiently concerned by their activities to make a change to the structure of government in Western France. On 13th July 1202 John sent letters patent to his men in La Marche informing them of the appointment of a new seneschal for that county. John wrote that: '*Mittimus ad vos dilectem et fidelem nostrum Brandinum [Brandin] quem fecimus senescallium comitatus Marchis...et ei tamquam senescallo nostro sitis in omnibus intendentes.*'²³² Until this point La Marche had been within Robert's jurisdiction, and the castles and fortifications in John's hands within La Marche were under Robert's command. In light of this further letters patent were issued the same day to Robert ordering him to surrender these to Brandin.²³³ Although the loss of La Marche was undoubtedly a

²³¹ Contact between Robert and John appears to have been relatively easy in this period, in direct contrast to the situation the following year. We know from the mission of William, earl of Salisbury and Peter of Verneuil that John could send men to Poitou, but we know too that Robert's men could travel to Normandy. Richard the clerk had been in Normandy [probably at Rouen] in late-April. On 23rd June John had written to his supporters in Angoulême and La Marche thanking them for their help in promoting his affairs in those regions, information concerning which had been communicated to him by Robert. It is not clear how Robert transmitted this information, though Peter of Verneuil and William, earl of Salisbury – given that they had been with Robert in May – could have brought this information back to Normandy with them. This information may have been taken to Normandy by Master Peter de Rosinnoil. Peter had been active in Angoulême at some point during 1202, and appears to have been at court in early-June. *Rot. Norm.*, p. 54 & *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 14.

²³² *ibid.*, p. 14b.

²³³ Brandin appears in John's service between April and December 1199 when he is first referred to as seneschal of Gascony. P. Marchegay (ed.), '*Chartes de Fontevraud concernant l'Anuis et La Rochelle*', *BEC*, (1858), pp. 321-47; at p. 338. he appears again as seneschal in letters patent issued in January 1200. *Rot. chart.*, p. 58. In April 1200 he was implicated in the murder of the routier captain Mercadier, and appears to have lost the post of seneschal soon after this. *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 114. The degree to which Brandin was responsible for Mercadier's murder has been the subject of some discussion, with Alfred Richard arguing that the murder was carried out by Brandin on John's orders. A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, pp. 370-1. This seems unlikely given that what little evidence we have suggests Brandin was actually punished for his role in the affair. He lost the post of seneschal after April 1200, and his estates in La Marche, given to him by Henry II and Richard I, were confiscated, perhaps because of his role in Mercadier's murder. Although Brandin may have incurred the king's displeasure he did not fall completely from grace since in July 1202 we find him active in Normandy as part of the garrison at Gournay-en-Bray [*Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 13b] Although Brandin was a

diminution in Robert's responsibilities one should not read too much into John's actions. Although Brandin would take the title of seneschal, John's letter to Robert concludes by stating that: '*...ipse [Brandin] vobis inde tamquam senescallo nostro Pictaviae et Wasconiae respondebit et erit intendens.*' In effect Brandin was only a sub-seneschal; Robert's junior not his equal.

The reason behind the appointment is not made clear, but given the timing it looks as though John was trimming Robert responsibilities to enable him to focus on the problems posed by the Poitevin lords who had sided with Philip Augustus and Arthur. La Marche had been a source of contention between John and Hugh le Brun, one of the rebel commanders, and no doubt John feared Hugh would try to regain control of La Marche at some future point.²³⁴ Brandin's appointment would free Robert to concentrate on Poitou, and at the same time provide a focal point for Angevin resistance in La Marche in the face of any renewed Lusignan aggression. Once the transfer of power in La Marche had been enacted Robert was ordered to ensure that the estates granted to Brandin in La Marche by Henry II and Richard I were returned to him.²³⁵

leading figure in the defence of Gournay, the castle's capture by Philip Augustus in July 1202 effectively meant he lost his job. It was perhaps as a reward for his loyalty at Gournay that he was appointed seneschal of La Marche. However, Powicke had suggested that Brandin was a Poitevin, which may also account for his appointment. F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 150.

²³⁴ Hugh had invaded La Marche as soon as news reached him of the death of Richard I in April 1199. J.L. Lemaitre (ed. & trans.), *Bernard Itier Chronique, Les Classiques de L'Histoire de France au Moyen Age*, (Paris, 1998), p. 30. La Marche had probably been recovered by John by March 1201. *Rot. chart.*, p. 102. It was certainly in John's hands, or at least Robert's, when Brandin was appointed. F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 150.

²³⁵ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 56. [14th July 1202].

Mirebeau and its Repercussions

The stunning Angevin victory at Mirebeau on the morning of 1st August 1202 seemed set to crush the Poitevin rebellion at a stroke. A few days after his victory John wrote to his English barons informing them of his triumph. Although John's letter boasts of his success - and despite what was to happen in the coming weeks Mirebeau was a great success – the list of prisoners taken at Mirebeau shows just how far disaffection with John's behaviour had spread in Poitou. Although the most important prisoners had been Geoffrey of Lusignan, Hugh le Brun, and Arthur, duke of Brittany, the letter also relates the capture of Raymond of Thouars (youngest brother of Aimary, viscount of Thouars), Saveric of Mauléon (nephew of William of Mauléon, lord of Mauléon and Talmont), Hugh, viscount of Châtellerault, and Andrew of Chauvigny, lord of Chateauroux and Deols (A former favourite of Richard I's).²³⁶

There is no evidence that Robert himself had been at Mirebeau. Letters patent dispatched to Serno, mayor of Poitiers, on 11th August may indicate that Robert was with the king in early-August.²³⁷ According to John's orders Serno was to make arrangements in relation to the surrender of those castles belonging to Geoffrey of Lusignan and Hugh le Brun, and which were still in the hands of garrisons loyal to those two men. Once these arrangements had been made Serno was to contact Robert, who would send men to garrison those castles. Had Robert been in Poitiers at this time it may have made more sense to send these instruction to Robert himself. However, just because Robert was not in Poitiers did not mean he was with John, or

²³⁶ *Chron. Ang.*, pp. 137-8.

²³⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 16.

that he had fought at Mirebeau. The seneschal of Poitou/Gascony's duties covered a wide area, and Robert could have been almost anywhere within the king's dominions south of the Loire.

Although Robert probably played no part in the victory at Mirebeau, he was to play a significant role in John's attempts to undo the damage that the king's behaviour after Mirebeau caused. Far from securing his control over Anjou and Poitou, Mirebeau heralded an almost total collapse of the Angevin position in those regions. Not only would the rebellion not end with the capture of the Lusignans, who were treated with almost suicidal leniency, but rumours of Arthur's death, and the harsh treatment meted out to many of those taken prisoner at Mirebeau, would lead other important Poitevin lords, who had remained aloof from the initial stages of the rebellion, to desert John.²³⁸ Probably the most significant defection was that of William des Roches, seneschal of Anjou, whose relationship with John appears to have collapsed a little over a fortnight after Mirebeau. The reasons for William's defection have been discussed by other historians, but it falls to us to consider Robert's role in John's attempts to address the problems faced by William's defection.²³⁹

William's defection appears to have forced John to draw Robert into Angevin affairs, probably because no other senior royal official was geographically as well

²³⁸ The treatment of the Poitevin prisoners was said to have been particularly harsh, especially for those detained at Corfe; amongst whom were Hugh, viscount of Châtellerauld, Saveric of Mauléon and Aimary of Forz. 'Annales de Margan', *Annales Monastici*, RS, i, p. 26 & *Hist. des Ducs.*, pp. 99-101. John's failing support in western France following Mirebeau is mentioned, in general terms, by Ralph of Coggeshall. *Chron. Ang.*, p. 138. The Tours chronicler also alludes to John's lack of support, at least in the Touraine. However, this work could be considered vehemently anti-Angevin, especially for the period 1202-1205. *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, pp. 145-150; esp. 148-149.

²³⁹ F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 153; W.L. Warren, *King John*, p. 80; R.V. Turner, *King John*, (Longman, 1994), p. 120 & G. Dubois, 'Recherches sur la Vie de Guillaume des Roches', *BEC*, 34, (1873), pp. 502-541.

situated to help as Robert. John's attempts to restructure the government of Anjou in the wake of William's defection began on 17th August, at Le Mans, when John informed the townspeople of Angers of the appointment of Philip de Rameford as the new *prévôt* of Angers.²⁴⁰ The following day orders were sent to Robert regarding the future garrison arrangements for a number of castles formerly in the custody of William des Roches. John wrote to Robert stating that: '*Mittimus ad vos dilectem nostrum Willelmum de Stagno ad liberanda castra quae recepti de Willelmo des Rupibus hiis quibus precipimus liberari. Et ideo vobis mandamus quatinus fidem habetis hiis que idem Willelmus vobis dicet inde de castris illis muniendis.*'²⁴¹ John's orders are a little misleading given that he had only written to William des Roches the previous day regarding the surrender of these castles to de Stagno. As such these castles could not have been in de Stagno's hands when the orders to Robert were issued. As far as one can tell de Stagno was to travel south to Angers to relieve William of those castles - the names of which de Stagno must have known since John's letters do not mention them - and then move on to Poitiers to convey Robert's orders to him. Whether these castles were actually surrendered by William, or those garrisons who had possession of them, is not known. Even if they were, then they were probably handed over to Brice the chamberlain after he became seneschal of Anjou on 31st August 1202.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 17.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁴² Powicke believes that these castles were indeed surrendered to Robert. F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 154. However, he may have assumed John's use of '*recepti*' meant that the castles were already in de Stagno's hands. In fact, as we have said, this could not be the case since the orders to Robert were only issued a day after those to William des Roches, and presumably de Stagno left court carrying both sets of letters patent. – they may even have been issued the same day, but were enrolled on different days. It is not always clear if the date on letters patent refers to the date they were issued by the king, or the date when the copies were added to the rolls. In some cases the latter explanation is obviously correct. Even if de Stagno had acquired some, or all, of these castles, there are no further orders to Robert that suggest he retained control over any castles located within the borders of the seneschalry of Anjou. In fact Robert's tenure of these castles may have been intended, at the outset, as a temporary measure, until John appointed a new seneschal of Anjou.

Although Robert was not at court when these orders were issued, he must have been summoned north about the same time, since on 25th August we find him and John at Chinon. With Robert's arrival alterations to the structure of Angevin government continued. On 25th August Robert attested letters patent to the residents of the honours of Mirebeau and Moncontour regarding the appointment of William de Enla's as the new constable/*prévôt* of Mirebeau and Hugh Malebisse as the new constable/*prévôt* of Moncontour.²⁴³ On 29th August Robert attested letters patent to king's forces at Angers, and the townspeople, informing them of the impending arrival of Guy of Thouars, formerly count of Brittany, who was being dispatched to oversee the affairs of Angers.²⁴⁴ A few days latter John appointed Brice, his chamberlain, as the new seneschal of Anjou.²⁴⁵

Robert remained at court until early-September, when he was sent to the Limousin in a bid to shore up support for John in that region. On 7th September John issued two letters patent – one to the consuls of the castle of Limoges and a second to various Angevin officials in the Limousin – informing them that the news of the capture of Guy, viscount of Limoges had been related to him - perhaps by Robert when he had come north a week or so earlier - and instructing them that he was sending Robert and Peter of Verneuil to the region with orders for them.²⁴⁶ Although the capture of the Viscount of Limoges was certainly a significant success, news

²⁴³ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 17. Hugh's appointment may have been made on Robert's recommendation. We have little evidence for Robert's wider connections at court during John's reign, but what little evidence we have suggests that Robert and Hugh – a household knight of John's – were relatively close. When Hugh Malebisse attempted to restore his nephew Roger to royal favour - circa 1200 - Robert was one of those who supported his attempt. *Rot. obl.*, p. 140. In 1199 Hugh fined to recover those estates seized when he had rebelled with John in 1194, and Robert was one of his pledges. *Ibid.*, p. 41. Cf. J.C. Holt, *The Northerners*, (Oxford, 1961), p. 75.

²⁴⁴ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 17b.

²⁴⁵ Gerald of Athée was appointed seneschal of the Touraine on 24th August. *ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 18.

appears to have reached John that the loyalty of another prominent Limousin lord, Archibald, viscount of Comborn, was questionable. On 15th September letters patent were issued to Archibald which suggest that John had serious concerns about Archibald's commitment to his cause.²⁴⁷ John stated in his letter to Archibald that whatever Robert, or any of the other named men, might say or promise him on the king's behalf would be done. This would suggest that Robert and the others had been instructed to buy Archibald's support should it prove necessary. The king also ordered Archibald that he ought to obey Robert, and to do that which Robert required of him in order: '*...quod honori vestro semper debeamus intendere.*' Unfortunately no indication is given of exactly what Robert might have been required to order Archibald to do.

On 29th September, following Robert's departure from court, John wrote to the abbots and priors of a number of monastic houses in Poitou/Gascony ordering them to quit William Maingot of the debts that he owed them.²⁴⁸ According to John, Robert had been instructed to discharge these debts on the king's behalf, and that John was willing to underwrite all the debts that William had incurred.²⁴⁹ Affairs in the south did detain Robert for long, and by late-October he was probably back in Poitou. Despite John's efforts to contain the threat posed by William des Roches, the situation in Anjou had continued to be problematic, and Robert assistance was once again required. In late-September John had left Anjou for Normandy, but by mid-October news appears to have reached him of further problems in Anjou and the Touraine, since he left Rouen on 16th October reaching Le Mans by 29th. As John travelled

²⁴⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 18b.

²⁴⁸ Two of the houses mentioned were Breuil and St. Cyprien. '*Puteo Rivelli*' I cannot identify. The house known as '*Monte. St. Johannis*' could be a clerical error for Saint-Jean de Montierneuf, an important house in Poitiers with connections to the counts of Poitou.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 18b.

south Robert would seem to have been summoned north from Poitou since we find the two men at Saumur in early-November.

It is at the Saumur meeting that evidence emerges of Robert's negotiations with those Poitevin lords who had withdrawn from John's service, in particularly those entered into with Aimary, viscount of Thouars.²⁵⁰ On 2nd November John issued a charter confirming a truce that had been agreed between himself and Aimary.²⁵¹ According to John's charter this truce had been negotiated by Robert, William Maingot and Brice, seneschal of Anjou. The success of Robert's negotiations should not be over emphasised. The agreement was a truce, not a peace treaty, with both parties agreeing that, until the 13th January 1203, they would not attack each others' possessions. Although Robert and the others had helped negotiate a truce with Aimary, the concluding paragraph of John's charter shows that this had only addressed some of the problems facing Robert in Poitou. John states that, if they were to show themselves willing, he would extend the truce to include William of Mauléon, and the count of Eu's men at Chizé and Civray. The count of Eu's men had no doubt rebelled with their lord at Easter 1202, but William of Mauléon seems to have remained aloof from the early stages of the rebellion, and may only have withdrawn his support for John when he learnt of the fate that befell his nephew Saveric.

²⁵⁰ Aimary had defected in the weeks following Mirebeau. Perhaps because of the treatment of his brother Raymond, who had been taken prisoner at Mirebeau. The Tours chronicler claimed that Aimary defected because, even though he had helped John secure his victory, John had secretly tried to have him captured. *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 147. Whatever the real reason for Aimary's defection it remained the case that relations between the two men had been strained since September 1199 when Aimary had been stripped of the seneschalry of Anjou.

²⁵¹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 21.

The truce with Aimary represented a rare piece of good news and, in part at least, John had much to thank Robert for. However, this was the only good news to reach John in early-November. It was probably just before the charter to Aimary was issued that John learnt of the capture of Angers by William des Roches on 30th October.²⁵² About the same time news probably arrived regarding the lord of Ambroise's attack on Tours, which was said to have taken place: '*Circa festum...Omnium Sanctorum [1st November]*'.²⁵³ The two pronged attack on Angers and Tours probably explains why John made no immediate attempt to recover Angers, and remained at Saumur until at least 14th November. Robert himself remained at Saumur until 3rd November, since he attests two letters patent issued that day.²⁵⁴ However he seems to have left court shortly after 3rd since he attests no further charters or letters patent until 20th November.²⁵⁵

Where Robert went after leaving court is not known. Given the recent truce with Aimary of Thouars, and John's offer to other Poitevin rebels, Robert may have returned to Poitou in order to continue negotiations, presumably with William of Mauléon and the other groups named in John's charter. If so these matters did not detain him long, and he had returned to court by 20th November when we find him with John at Chinon - perhaps to inform John of his lack of success with regards to these negotiations.²⁵⁶ Robert stay at court was brief. We know that Robert had left court by 2nd December since letters patent to the abbot of Saint John of Angely -

²⁵² *Ann. St. Aubin*, pp. 20-21.

²⁵³ *Chron. Tur. Mag.*, p. 149. The lord of Ambroise was another former Angevin vassal who appears to have defected to Philip following the French king's invasion of Normandy.

²⁵⁴ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 19 & p. 20.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 20b.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 20b. The evidence, or rather the lack of it, suggests William of Mauléon *et al* did not take up the king's offer.

regarding restitution from the king's property for the debts that William Maingot owed to the abbey - state that John himself had written to Robert regarding these orders, indicating that Robert was no longer at court.²⁵⁷ In fact we can be fairly certain that Robert had left court fairly soon after 20th November since by 4th December John was complaining that he had been expecting to see Robert at court for sometime but that Robert had never arrived.

Early-December witnessed another significant alteration in the structure of Angevin government in south-western France. In letters patent, issued 4th December, to his supporters in Gascony and Perigord John informed them of his decision to appoint Martin Algais as the new seneschal for these regions.²⁵⁸ Since September 1201 Robert had held the posts of seneschal of Poitou and seneschal of Gascony jointly, but now Gascony and Perigord, as La Marche had been some months earlier, were to be removed from his authority, and entrusted to another of John's closest supporters. It is not clear from John's orders why he had decided to relieve Robert of his authority over Gascony and Perigord, though a number of explanations suggest themselves. One possible explanation is that John needed to reward Martin Algais for his services during the war so far. Given the fact that Angevin support in Anjou and Poitou appears to have been haemorrhaging in the period after Mirebeau, John had greater need than usual to bind his remaining supporters to his cause. This may have been particularly true of Martin who seems to have suffered some sort of serious military defeat in early-November 1202.²⁵⁹ That Martin's service was valued highly

²⁵⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 21.

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 20b. According to A. Richard, Martin had been beaten in battle and captured. A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, pp. 414-5. Cf. F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, pp. 154-5 & n. 161.

by John can be seen from the concluding sentence of his letter to the men who had been with Martin when he had suffered his misfortune earlier in the year. ‘*Sciatis*’ wrote John, ‘*quod de servicio ipsius Martini priusquam de servicio alicius nos laudamus.*’ One could argue that John’s decision to appoint Martin as seneschal represented the king’s desire to compensate Martin for his earlier misfortune, as well as to reward him for the services he had rendered the king, rather than any loss of faith he may have had in Robert or his abilities.

Another factor that might account for John’s decision, could relate to his future plans in relation to Anjou. We shall see that in January 1203 Robert led an expedition into Anjou aimed at recapturing Angers from William des Roches, and the decision to launch this expedition may well have been taken in early-November when Robert was known to have been at court. Given that the joint seneschalries of Poitou/Gascony covered a huge geographic area – we have already seen that administrative duties had required Robert to make extended trips away from Poitiers – John may have decided to limit Robert’s responsibilities in the south-west of France in order to enable him to concentrate his attention on Poitou, and the future campaign into Anjou. The situation in Poitou, as the Patent Rolls for August, September and November 1202 show, had deteriorated markedly, and John may no longer have thought that Robert could physically oversee such a broad geographic area. It may have been in order to ensure Robert’s attention was solely focused on the problems that beset him in Poitou, and the planned campaign against William des Roches, that Gascony and Perigord were divided from his administration and allocated to another known loyalist. However, John’s decision to relieve Robert of Gascony and Perigord, seems almost certainly to have been reached without Robert’s advice. As John

himself said in the closing sentence of his letter to Robert: ‘...vos diu expectavimus quem vellemus que essetis ad consilium illud dandum. Sed ex quo non venistis non potuimus omittere quin hoc faceremus.’²⁶⁰

The Raid on Angers

We do not know Robert’s reaction to the news of Martin’s appointment, but it does not seem to have affected his loyalty to John. In fact a little over a month later we find Robert actively involved in the king’s attempts to drive William des Roches from Anjou. Robert’s attack on Angers is the only military undertaking led by Robert, as seneschal of Poitou, for which any evidence has survived. Details relating to Robert’s campaign are contained in two of the surviving codices of the Annals of St. Aubin. The two accounts are brief, but reasonably informative. Codex B relates that: ‘*Die autem mercurii ante Purificationem beate Marie accessit Robertus de Turneham ad eandem civitatem [Angers] et, ea miserabiliter depredata et in parte combusta, secessit.*’²⁶¹ The author of Codex G, using Codex B as the basis of his account, states that: ‘*Die autem mercurii ante instantem Purificationem accesserunt gentes regis Angliae latenter ad suburbium civitatis Andegav[ensis eamque intrantes sub] causa religionis miserabiliter deprædarunt et partem po[ntis combusserunt] et eadem die inde recesserunt.*’²⁶²

²⁶⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 21. Martin held the post of seneschal until April 1205 when he appears to have left John’s service. *ibid.*, p. 53b. After 1205 the next reference to Martin is in 1211 when he is to be found fighting for Simon of Montfort. Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay, ‘*Historia Albigensis*’, W.A. & M.D. Sibly (eds. & trans.), *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, (Boydell Press, 1998), p. 136.

²⁶¹ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 21 [B].

²⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 29-30 [G] from BN, MS, *Collections des Melanges de Colbert*, 46, ff. 43-46. The poor state of the original manuscript from which Codex G is copied can be inferred from the fact that whilst Colbert 46 is in excellent condition, there are frequent gaps in the text caused by the copyist inability to

Whilst the St. Aubins accounts enable us to see something of Robert activities in John's service in early 1203 they do not tell us whether this attack was simply an ambitious chevauchee north by the seneschal of Poitou, or part of a larger campaign of re-conquest aimed at driving William des Roches and his supporters out of central Anjou. F.M. Powicke argued that Robert's attack was not simply an ambitious raid by Robert, but rather that it was part of a co-ordinated plan of re-conquest designed to regain control of Anjou, or at least to reopen communications between John's northern and southern dominions.²⁶³ William des Roches' defection in the autumn of 1202, followed by the capture of Angers in late-October, had effectively cut the Angevin dominions in two. According to Powicke John envisaged a two pronged attack against Angers and William, with Robert striking north from Poitou, whilst the king led his men south from Normandy. The evidence cited by Powicke certainly supports his theory, and in light of this it seems reasonable to accept it.

The two codices offer slightly different accounts of the attack. In Codex B Robert's attack was fairly straightforward. On 29th January Robert and his men approached Angers, plundered it, fired part of the city, and then retreated.²⁶⁴ Codex G

make out what was written in the original manuscript. The manuscript from which the copyist worked was from the Library of St. Aubins of Angers. See title of work on f. 43: '*Fragments from another Chronicle of St. Aubins of Angers from the same library.*' This manuscript has not survived but was based, in part at least, on Codex B.

²⁶³ F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, pp. 157-8 & n.192.

²⁶⁴ An earlier attempt to address Robert's activities in Anjou during the war of 1201-1205 was made by George Dubois in 1873. G. Dubois, '*Recherches sur la Vie de Guillaume des Roches*', *BEC*, 34 (1873), pp. 502-541, at p. 522 & n.6 & p. 540. Dubois argued that these two accounts related to two separate attacks made by Robert. The first in January 1203 against Mirebeau and a second against Angers in January 1204. Although Dubois made an intelligent analysis of the material, his thesis was undermined by his use of the 'inferior' [F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 158 & n.192.] edition of the annals provided in '*Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France.*' '*Addenda Chronico Andegavensi S. Albini*', *RHFG*, xviii, p. 325. The transcription of Halphen's Codex B in the '*Recueil*' omits the passage relating to the capture of Angers in October 1202 by William des Roches which, in Halphen's edition, immediately precedes Robert's attack on '*eamdem civitatem*'. Dubois argued that

is slightly more informative. Assuming Halphen's reconstructions are correct, we have Robert and his men approaching the city suburbs in secrecy before entering the city under the pretext of religious devotion. After gaining entrance to the city by subterfuge the Angevin troops plundered the city, burnt part of the bridge, and withdrew. The bridge in question was probably that crossing the Maine rather than the Pont de Cé which crossed the Loire a few miles south of the city. If this were the case it may indicate that Robert was already aware that John would not be coming to his assistance, since it made no sense to destroy the bridge across which John's army - presumably planning to approach Angers from the north - would have to cross. If Robert had been aware that John's plans had changed, it may explain why he raided the city in the manner that he did, rather than make a concerted effort to capture the city.²⁶⁵ Given the current situation in both Anjou and Poitou it is doubtful whether Robert could have held Angers without John's assistance. The statement that Robert's men entered the '*sub causa religionis*' is problematic. One can hardly smuggle an entire army into a city, especially one on a war footing, using such a ruse. Perhaps the annalist meant the passage to be understood in the sense that a detachment of Robert's men entered the city, perhaps pretending to be pilgrims - there were certainly plenty of religious sites in Angers in the early thirteenth-century - and then set about ransacking the place

'*eamdem civitatem*' must refer to Mirebeau which appeared a few lines previously in his edition, because no other city was mentioned between Mirebeau and Robert's attack. However, in the full transcript provided by Halphen, '*Andegavim*' appears after '*Mirebellum*' which would mean that '*eamdem civitatem*' must refer to Angers and not Mirebeau. In light of his earlier work, when Dubois came to tackle the account of the raid by '*gentes regis Angliae*' in Codex G, he reasoned that it must have been a separate attack on Angers made at a later date. However, he stated that this attack had also been made: '*sous la conduite de Robert de Turneham*' even though Robert was only named as commander of the expedition in Codex B.

²⁶⁵ The only evidence we have for communication between Robert and John at this time comes on 10th January when John, at Verneuil en route to Le Mans, wrote to Robert ordering him to surrender to the bearer of the king's letter a knight called Aimary, who had been in the service of the bishop of Chartres, and who was now a prisoner in Robert's custody. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 22b. However, it is possible that a messenger was dispatched to Robert, when the king was at Le Mans on 23rd January, who - despite the apparent problems facing travellers heading south from Le Mans - was able to get a message to Robert regarding the king's change of plans.

John himself appears to have been confident of victory as he moved south from Normandy during the first few weeks of the New Year. Some idea of the king's optimism can be gleaned from the Patent Rolls . On 3rd January whilst at Chambray John issued orders to the chapter of St. Martins at Angers informing them that he had appointed Peter des Roches, by this time a close companion of the king, dean and ordering them that: '*...ei [Peter] tamquam decano vestro intendatis.*' Angers was at that time in William des Roches' hands, and one could see this letter as an attempt by John to divide the expected spoils before they had been taken, and to ensure that once the city was recovered his supporters would hold prominent local positions. John's optimism may even have grown to encompass Poitou. On 17th January, at Alençon, John issued letters of safe conduct to Geoffrey of Lusignan, Hugh le Brun and their men to come and meet with him.²⁶⁶ It seems unlikely that John expected the Lusignans to assist in the fight against William des Roches, but this letter might suggest he had hopes of a rapprochement with the two men and their allies, similar to that he had agreed with Aimary, viscount of Thouars, the previous year.²⁶⁷ However, circumstances conspired to thwart John's plans. Four days after writing to the Lusignans John arrived at Le Mans where he was informed that the roads south were impassable on account of enemy activity. To further compound matters John learnt a few days later that Robert, count of Alençon had defected. In his fury John abandoned his advance and turned back hoping to repair some of the damage that the count of Alençon's defection had caused.

²⁶⁶ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 23.

²⁶⁷ The date clause on John's letter may be indicative of John's thinking. The safe conduct would last until Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Robert's attack on Angers fell a few days before this. Perhaps John had hoped the Lusignans would come to meet him in the aftermath of his victory.

Robert's attack on Angers not only failed to secure any long-term advantage for John, but it also represented the last major offensive undertaken by John's supporters south of Loire until May 1205.²⁶⁸ In fact Robert's campaign appears to have confirmed the weakness of the Angevin position in general. William des Roches certainly believed, by April 1203, that Robert and John no longer posed any significant threat to his position. On 7th April William arrived before the walls of Beaufort-en-Vallée on the road between Angers and Saumur. Though this castle was still in Angevin hands, under the recently appointed constable Segin Rigaud, the garrison, perhaps disheartened by Robert's failure two months earlier, and realizing that help from either Robert or John was now unlikely, surrendered without a fight.²⁶⁹ Fifteen days later Philip Augustus, having settled affairs to his satisfaction with the nobles of Maine, Touraine, and eastern Poitou, sailed down the Loire and accepted the surrender of Saumur.²⁷⁰ If the situation for Robert had looked bleak in January 1203 by the end of April it looked even worse.

The Beginning of the End (1203)

As the flames died down over the suburbs of Angers, it had been the Capetian king and his allies who had taken the offensive; with impressive results. After this the Angevin regime in western France took on the appearance of a spent force. Although it remains true that the defenders of Poitou/Touraine held out against Philip

²⁶⁸ According to Powicke: '*...the seneschal of Poitou made a destructive but not very effective attack on Angers.*' F.M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 158.

²⁶⁹ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 21 [B] & p. 30 [G]. '*In festo paschali, feria secunda, adveniente [7th April] Willelmo de Rupibus senescallo Andegavensi cum exercitu suo, Beaufordus sine conflictu ei reddita est.*' G gives a near identical account but without a date clause. For other Angevin losses in Anjou at this time see F.M. Powicke, *Loss of Normandy*, p. 159 n.195 & 196. Segin had been appointed in November 1202. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 20.

²⁷⁰ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 21 [B] & p. 30 [G].

Augustus and his allies for a further two years, they were never again in a position to take the offensive. After the conclusion of Philip's spring 1203 campaign, we lose sight of what was going on in along and south of the Loire until early-1204. Most writers were rather more interested in events in Normandy in this period than they were in those in Anjou and Poitou. The annalist of St. Aubin's continued to take an interest in the course of the war, but he wrote of it in a rather general sense, noting that: '*...de die in diem multiplicata est miseria in regionibus Cenomannie, Pictavie et Andegavie et Britanniae ita ut, villis et castris et oppidis depredatis et combustis, nulli etati aut conditioni parceretur.*'²⁷¹ Robert was probably responsible for some of this destruction and misery, but following the raid on Angers his activities, at least in relation to the battlefield, are unknown.

Robert's position was weaker by late-January 1203 than it had been at anytime since his appointed in September 1201. However, given recent Capetian successes, John's reliance on him had actually increased. In January 1203 Robert had been one of four Angevin seneschals in western France – discounting Martin Algaïs in Gascony - but by May 1203 he seems to have been the only one that had survived the recent disasters. Brice the chamberlain appears to have lost his post *circa* April/May 1203. At least no further orders were issued to him as seneschal after April.²⁷² Gerald of Athée, who had held the post of seneschal of Touraine, was last referred to by this title in April 1203, though he continued to act as constable of Loches until 1205.²⁷³ Brandin, seneschal of La Marche, seems to have disappeared entirely by April 1203. On 11th April letters patent containing orders relating to La Marche were addressed to the constable and bailiffs of La Marche and not to Brandin as seneschal, in fact he is

²⁷¹ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 21 [B] & p. 30 [G].

²⁷² *Rot. Norm.*, p. 85. Last orders issued to Brice as seneschal of Anjou.

²⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 86. Last time Gerald is referred to as seneschal. Cf. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 33.

not even mentioned.²⁷⁴ So by May 1203 Robert would seem to have been John's most senior official in what remained of Angevin western France, simply because Capetian advances during April had effectively eliminated the Angevin seneschalries of Anjou and Touraine.

Some idea of the disruption caused by the Capetian advances of April 1203 can be seen from an examination of the Patent and Close Rolls, and those orders calendared on the Norman Rolls. The vast majority of our source material relating to Robert's activities during the period 1201 to 1205 comes from these sources, and from them we can compile a table showing the frequency with which orders were sent to Robert.²⁷⁵

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot.
1201	LDR									2				2
	LRR										1	2	1	4
1202	LDR	2	1			1	7	2	3				1	17
	LRR	1	1				2		1	4		1	1	11
1203	LDR	1	1		1	2		2						7
	LRR		2											2
1204	LDR									1	3	1		5
	LRR								1					1
1205	LDR		1											1
	LRR		1											1
														51

²⁷⁴ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 28. On 16th April letters patent were issued addressed to all the leading Angevin officials in western France and Brandin's name is notable by its absence. *ibid.*, p. 28b Presumably he had defected or died between July 1202 and April 1203.

²⁷⁵ LDR are letters addressed to Robert containing direct orders from the king. LRR are letters to other royal officials or supporters which contain references to orders given by John to Robert, but for which no independent letters patent or close survive.

We can see that in 1202, the first full year of his term of office, a total of 28 written orders were dispatched containing instructions for Robert, or references to instructions given to Robert. By 1203 this figure had dropped to 9, and by 1204 it had fallen further to just 6. Looked at in terms of percentages, we see that 75% of all the orders issued relating to Robert's activities were issued between September 1201 and April 1203, whereas 25% were issued after April 1203. On average, for the 42 months that Robert held the post of seneschal, 1.2 orders were issued *per* month. However, for the 19 months leading up to April 1203 the average was exactly 2 orders *per* month. In contrast, the 23 months following April 1203 saw an average of just 0.6 orders *per* month. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that between August 1203 and July 1204 not a single order appears to have been sent to Robert. The period after April 1203 did not witness a complete breakdown in communication between John and Robert, but it is worth noting that enrolled orders dropped by very nearly 75%.

A number of reasons may explain this drop in communications. Firstly the main road between Normandy and Poitou ran through territory held by Philip Augustus' allies – i.e. William des Roches and Robert, count of Alençon – which would have meant that messengers carrying orders between Robert and John would probably have had to rely on sea transportation.²⁷⁶ This difficulty in communication is clearly shown by Robert's inability to attend court. John had complained in December 1202 that he had been waiting a long time to see Robert, who he had seen only a few weeks earlier, and had he known that he was not to see Robert again until July 1205, nearly three years later, he may have chosen to express himself differently.

²⁷⁶ Problems with communications between Normandy and Poitou are mentioned by Powicke. F.M. Powicke, The Loss of Normandy, p. 154 & n. 155.

The king himself does not appear to have thought that Poitou was particularly safe. Following his visit to Angoulême in February 1202 John never got closer to Poitiers, at least before the 1206 expedition, than Chinon or Saumur. If John needed to see Robert, then Robert had to cross into Anjou. This isolation presented various problems for both the king, who relied on seeing his seneschal for reports and intelligence, and for the seneschal who found himself cut off, quite literally it seems, from court and the king's guidance. Another reason for the drop in communications may simply have been that John found himself completely absorbed by the need to defend Normandy, and had relatively little time to direct his attention to Poitevin affairs. Moreover, one suspects that the flow of messengers from Poitou to court dropped significantly after January 1203 and, as a result of this, John's knowledge of Poitevin affairs may not have been as detailed as it had been before that date.²⁷⁷

In any case from January 1203 onwards the king's officials in Poitou were fighting for their very survival, and although administrative orders continued to arrive for Robert, the vast majority of these dealt with the war effort and the consequences of that effort.²⁷⁸ What might be termed routine administrative matters – e.g. grants to favourites, gifts to monastic houses, legal decisions or inquiries – cease almost entirely. The majority of orders dispatched to Robert in the months following the failed campaign of January 1203 related to the war effort. Following the victory at Mirebeau a number of Lusignan castles had been seized by John, and later placed in

²⁷⁷ It is not until November 1204 that we know for certain that one of Robert's men – Jacob the chaplain, was in England, apparently with one Robert, a messenger in the service of Gerald of Athée. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 13b & p. 16. However, the comings and goings of messengers between the king and his transmarine officials are better tracked using the Close Rolls than the Patent Rolls, and the Close Rolls do not become available to us until June 1204.

²⁷⁸ It is worth bearing in mind that the Patent and Close Rolls only tell us that orders were sent, they do not tell us whether they arrived. Even if they did arrive that is no guarantee that they were enacted as stated. The Patent and Close Rolls give us an idea of how John understood the situation in Poitou, but how well informed he was – especially after January 1203 – is hard to know.

the hands of men accountable to the king through Robert. Some of these had been returned to the Lusignans following their release from captivity, but at least one – Vouvant - remained under the control of an Angevin garrison in February 1203. On 18th February letters patent were issued to Lupillin the Balistarius, constable of Vouvant, ordering him to surrender custody of Vouvant to the man Robert had chosen for the job.²⁷⁹

In late-May 1203 Robert was ordered to send John the hostages of the Poitevin nobleman Chalon of Rochefort – another defector from 1202 - who Robert held in his custody.²⁸⁰ Later that month, or perhaps early the next, Robert was ordered that ‘...*faciat habere Gaufrido de Cella [Geoffrey of la Celle] unum vel duos prisiones redimendos*’ who were valued at £27 [Ang.].²⁸¹ At La Rochelle attempts had been made to shore up the city’s defences. On 10th July 1203 John wrote to Robert informing him of his desire to compensate the Templars for the loss of their watercourse at La Rochelle which had been seized in order help fortify that town.²⁸² John’s idea was to grant the Templars the watercourse known as ‘*la Besse Regine*’. However, John instructed Robert that this was only to be done if Robert himself, with the advice of the townspeople of La Rochelle, thought it to the king’s advantage. Though most orders were issued with the king expecting them to be enacted as stated one finds, from time to time, that the king was aware his decision might not necessarily be the right one. In these instances letters patent or close might contain the following proviso; namely that the orders ought only to be enacted as stated if: ‘...*commodum [et honorem] nostrum esse videritis.*’ Sometimes the seneschal was

²⁷⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 25b.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 29b.

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 30. The date on these orders is missing, but they must have been issued between 31st May or 4th June.

²⁸² *ibid.*, p. 32.

left to make this judgement on his own, but often the king would name those officials and prelates whose advice the seneschal ought to seek before making his final decision.

By the spring of 1203 John could not help but be aware that Robert's position in Poitou was fast becoming untenable. Robert's problems were three fold. Firstly the strategic situation by late-April 1203 had deteriorated markedly with Capetian forces having advanced south and east from Angers and as far west as Saumur. A further problem facing Robert was that the Capetian victories had robbed him of resources in the form of former Angevin vassals who had defected to the French king. With fewer Poitevin lords acknowledging John, Robert had less men on whose services he could call. Money may also have a problematic area. As seneschal Robert derived his financial resources from those lands in the hands of the count of Poitou, either taxed directly by royal officials or put out to farm. Loss of these lands, especially those in Eastern and Northern Poitou, to Philip's allies denied him access to important revenues streams.²⁸³ The account of the St. Aubin annalist, cited above, suggests that those lands that remained under his control may well have been ravished by warfare, thus reducing the revenues he could expect to raise from these estates.

What little evidence we possess would seem to show that John, at least in 1203, expected, or at least hoped, that Poitou would continued to finance the war

²⁸³ R.V. Turner & R.R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard I*, pp. 216: state that it: '*...is impossible to map the ducal domain*' in Poitou and Gascony. However, they note that it seems to have been most extensive in Poitou, Aunis and Saintogne, Bordelais, and the Bazadais. In Poitou the most important comital estates lay around Poitiers, with other estates located around Niort, and the Vendée. The coastal regions of Olonnais and Talmondais also contained important demesne estates. Figures are few and far between, but we do know that in 1200 the farm of La Rochelle was granted to the townspeople of that city for one year at a fixed fee of £2000[Ang.]. *Rot. chart.*, p. 58b.

effort with out any significant call on English resources.²⁸⁴ On 19th February 1203, probably in response to the failed campaign the previous month, John issued letters patent to ‘*all his faithful men*’ of Poitou asking them to provide Robert with a loan of 1000 marks ‘*...ad defensionem terrae nostrae quam habet in custodia.*’²⁸⁵ An identical request was made on the same day to those merchants who traded at La Rochelle, asking them to provide Robert with a further 1000 marks from their merchandise. This appeal, perhaps surprisingly, enjoyed a degree of success. Perhaps because the king promised to personally underwrite any loans that were made. A number of payments were authorized by John in connection with these requests. On 18th June 1203 John wrote to Geoffrey fitz Peter ordering him to pay two merchants the 385 marks which they had loaned Robert: ‘*...ad defensionem terrae nostrae.*’²⁸⁶ The towns people of La Rochelle, traditionally supportive of the Angevin regime, also responded to John’s appeal. On 27th September 1204 John wrote to the barons of the Exchequer ordering them to pay Matthew de Divilin and the burghers of La Rochelle the £80 [120 marks]: ‘*...quas commodaverunt Roberto de Turnham senescallo nostro Pictaviae apud Rochellam.*’²⁸⁷ Whether this loan had been made as early as February 1203, or whether it was a loan made at a latter date in response to a further request for support, is not clear. However, what does seem clear is that La Rochelle, at least, was prepared to contribute to Robert’s war chest.

Although some members of Poitevin society were prepared to contribute towards the war effort, John had asked for 2000 marks and, as far as the sources enable us to see, he received only a quarter of that sum. It is possible that more than

²⁸⁴ Between September 1201 and April 1203 only 500 marks were known to have been provided by John, and those were paid out of Norman reserves.

²⁸⁵ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 25b.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁸⁷ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 9b.

money was forthcoming from John's Poitevin supporters, since the surviving financial records only record payments made on English or Norman financial reserves. Robert may have repaid some additional loans from the money sent to him by John in April 1203. Letters patent issued on 16th April record that John had sent money to Poitou, how much and for what purpose is not stated, and that Robert was only to spend this: '*per visum et consilium matris nostrae [Eleanor] et Willelmi Cocus [William le Queu]*'.²⁸⁸ This money may have been sent to discharge the loans made by the good burghers of La Rochelle and others, but it could just have easily have been John's personal contribution to Robert's war chest.

This money had probably arrived with John of Verneuil who had been sent to Poitou by the king to bring instructions to his supporters in the south. According to John's letter, Verneuil had information to impart to Robert, Martin Algais, seneschal of Gascony/Perigord, Brice, still seneschal of Anjou though not for much longer, Hubert of Burgh, Queen Eleanor, Elias of Malmort, archbishop of Bordeaux, William Maingot, and William le Queu. That is to say he had information for all the leading Angevin officials and loyalists south of the Loire. John of Verneuil had clearly been sent south with instructions for the defenders of Poitou and Gascony since the king stated that: '*...de missione quam vobis fecimus fidem habetis eidem Johanni in hiis que inde vobis dicet.*' What this 'mission' was is hard to fathom. When the king issued letters patent stating that the recipients should have faith '*in hiis que inde vobis dicet,*' there was no point in actually stating what those things were. The messenger had been briefed before he left court, and the matter in hand might require several pages of text to communicate in full.

²⁸⁸ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 28b.

Short of making contact with John of Verneuil in the afterlife we will never know what information he actually passed on to Robert and the others. The ‘mission’ in question might have been a specific military undertaking intended to halt the advance of Capetian forces along the Loire, though absolutely no evidence exists to suggest that John’s supporters actually launched such an attack. In fact there is no evidence that John’s supporters were able to do anything other than cling desperately to what still remained in their hands. Given the people for whom the instructions were intended, one could suggest that ‘mission’ should probably be understood in more general terms, and probably related to John’s plans – if he had any – regarding the overall defence of Anjou, Poitou and Gascony, rather than a specific military operation. Nonetheless the letters show that despite problems in Normandy, John still had his mind on the affairs of Poitou and Gascony, and that he had provided its defenders with money to help shore up their position.

Robert’s lack of allies in Poitou, especially amongst the Poitevin nobles, was one that would prove difficult to address. John, unlike Richard, had never enjoyed much support amongst the leading Poitevin nobles. What support he did enjoy had usually been acquired by making concessions to the Poitevin nobility, for example those grants made to the Mauléons, Thouars and Lusignan families in April/May 1199. By April 1203 the only Poitevin nobles of any standing to remain loyal to John were Hugh, viscount of Parthenay, and William Maingot, lord of Surgères. In fairness to John he seems to have recognized quickly, after the set backs of spring 1203, that something had to be done about Robert’s lack of manpower, and lack of support amongst the Poitevin nobility. Between April 1203 and November 1204 John

made a number of attempts to persuade those Poitevins who had abandoned him to return to their former allegiance. He also negotiated with those men who had been captured at Mirebeau and were still held in prison. As late as the summer of 1203 John still had a number of prominent Poitevin nobles imprisoned; including Saveric of Mauléon, Aimary of Forz, eldest son of Imbert of Forz, and Hugh, viscount of Châtellerault, all of whom were detained at Corfe.²⁸⁹

Imbert of Forz, an important noble from the Ile d'Oléron, had been a prominent supporter of Angevin rule in Poitou during the reign of Richard I, and the early days of the reign of King John.²⁹⁰ However, the capture and subsequent imprisonment of his son appears to have turned him against the English king. On 10th July 1203 John made an attempt to restore relations with Imbert. He wrote to Robert informing him that if Imbert were willing to pay £1050 [Ptv.] for the ransom of his son then Robert, having demanded security from Imbert for the ransom money and the future good behaviour of himself and his son, should write to John stating that these conditions had been met, and John would arrange Aimary's release.²⁹¹ Imbert appears to have accepted these conditions, or at least to have negotiated some sort of rapprochement with John, since we find him active in John's service, in Robert's company, by October 1204.²⁹²

²⁸⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 33b. For other prisoners taken at Mirebeau and still held in custody in England see *ibid.*, p. 24 [January 1203] & p. 40b [April 1204].

²⁹⁰ Imbert had been with John at Rouen in August 1199 when he attests John's charter to the Abbey of Montierneuf in Poitiers. F. Villard (ed.), '*Recueil des Documents relatifs à l'Abbaye de Montierneuf de Poitiers (1076-1319)*', *AHP*, 59, (1973), pp. 186-7. For Imbert in general see A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 428.

²⁹¹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 32.

²⁹² *ibid.*, p. 46b & p. 49b.

John also seems to have realised that even if some of the Poitevin rebels were persuaded to return to their former allegiance this might not be enough to secure Robert's position. The arrival of Hubert of Burgh as the new constable of Chinon *circa* June 1203 represented a concrete example of John attempts to reinforce Robert's position with external resources.²⁹³ Although Hubert was one of the highest ranking Angevin official dispatched to help Robert, we also discover that other English knights, many of whom had connections to Robert, were in Poitou fighting for their master. A charter issued by Robert's wife Joanna Fossard at La Rochelle, shows that two English knights – Robert de Bareville and Peter de Lunguil - were in Poitou in Robert's service.²⁹⁴ In the late-summer of 1202 we find Peter, son of Simon Pistor of Wallingford, in Poitou in Robert's service.²⁹⁵ In 1203 the *Curia Regis* Rolls show that Ingeram of Cornborough, son of William of Cornborough a Yorkshire knight, was serving in Poitou.²⁹⁶ Another man known to have been active in Poitou by the summer of 1203 was Adam of Bending.²⁹⁷

The Fail of Poitou/Touraine (1204-1205)

Despite John's efforts it is hard to see how the situation in Poitou by late-1203 could be rescued without some significant change in the relative strategic positions of the two powers. Despite the gloom that must have pervaded discussions at the king's

²⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 30b.

²⁹⁴ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 1025.

²⁹⁵ *CRR*, ii, p. 98.

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*, ii, p. 172. The Cornborough family had connections to Robert personally. William and his son Ingeram attested Robert's charters to St. James of Doncaster. BL, MS, Cotton Tiberius, C, v, f. 255r-v.

²⁹⁷ *CRR*, iii, p. 1.

court, and that of the seneschal, it was not until the summer of 1205 that Angevin resistance in Poitou/Touraine finally crumbled. Although most contemporary writers were more interested in the fate of Normandy than they were in the fates that befell the Angevin possessions along, and south of, the Loire, we are fortunate that a number of writers did deem such matters to be of interest. The two Capetian historians, Rigord and William le Breton, took considerable interest in the fate of Poitou and the Touraine. The surrender of Rouen on 24th June 1204 saw a shift in Philip's ambitions towards the Touraine and Poitou. A shift that was reflected in Rigord and William's works. Another writer who took a keen interest in events in Poitou and the Touraine in 1204/5 was Ralph of Coggeshall, monk, and later abbot, of the Cistercian monastery of Coggeshall [Essex].

Rigord and William le Breton provide the most detailed accounts of the situation in Poitou from the spring of 1204 until the late-summer of 1205, though unfortunately neither mention Robert in connection with these events. Whilst both Rigord and William were keen to dwell on events in Normandy in 1204, they were more reticent about Philip's campaigns in Poitou/Touraine later that year.²⁹⁸ Philip's Norman campaigns were indisputably a spectacular success, but the invasion of Poitou and the Touraine in early-August was much less remarkable. According to Rigord, Philip, having raised an army, entered Aquitaine where: '*...civitatem Pictavis cum omni terra circumposita, castellis scilicet, vicis et villis, recepit et barones illius terre ei fidelitatem fecerunt sicut domino suo ligio facere consueverant.*'²⁹⁹ Although Rigord was keen to highlight Philip's successes, especially with regards to the

²⁹⁸ *Vie (Rigord)*, p. 161 & *Vie (Guillaume)*, p. 222. For the most part William followed Rigord's account, although he tried even harder than Rigord to put a positive gloss of Philip's campaign by omitting any reference to the failed attack on La Rochelle.

²⁹⁹ *Vie (Rigord)*, p. 161.

restoration of his rightful lordship over the Poitevin nobles, he was more reticent about Philip's failures. Although Rigord records that Philip attacked Chinon, Loches and La Rochelle in the course of the expedition he claims that: '*...superviente hyeme, dimisit, et, circa Lochas et Chinonium posita obsidione, in Franciam reversus est.*' The unexpected arrival of winter provided a useful excuse, but the fact remains that La Rochelle had resisted the Capetian advance, and although Niort had been surrendered to Philip by William le Queu by September 1204 and Loches and Chinon were under siege, the later two fortresses, arguably more important than Niort, were not to fall for another year.³⁰⁰

The loss of Poitiers in August was a significant blow to Robert's position. Whether he had made any attempt to defend the city we cannot know, though one must assume, given the city's importance, that some attempt was made to hold it. Nor do we know where he went after the city had fallen. Alfred Richard has suggested, quite reasonably, that Robert withdrew to La Rochelle, and helped prevent that city from falling to Philip.³⁰¹ He certainly seems to have done something that reflected to his credit, since Ralph of Coggeshall would speak highly of Robert's activities in John's service at this time. However, like Rigord and William le Breton, he does not connect Robert with any specific event or military episode. Like Rigord and William, Ralph included details relating to Poitou/Touraine in the summer of 1204 after his account of the fall of Normandy.³⁰² Coggeshall's account is by far the most detailed and accurate of all the surviving sources compiled in England relating to the fall of

³⁰⁰ A charter issued by Philip Augustus at Chinon in September 1204 to William would strongly suggest that Niort had been surrendered rather taken by force. A. Giry, *Les établissements de Rouen: études sur l'histoire des institutions municipales de Rouen*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1883-1885), ii, No. XXVI. William had been appointed 'constable' of Niort in March 1204. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 39b.

³⁰¹ A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 449.

³⁰² *Chron. Ang.*, pp. 146-7.

Poitou/Touraine. In fact his account is so detailed that Ralph must have had access to a particularly well informed source.

Ralph's account began with a brief historical overview of the situation in Poitou stating that: *'Inter Pictavenses vero et Aquitanicos magnus conflictus per totum illud tempus extiterat.'* Robert's involvement in these events is mentioned early on with Ralph recording that *'...una pars eorum exsequeretur praecepta regis Angliae cum Roberto de Turnham, cui regio illa fuit commissa.'* Ralph's account heaps praise on the shoulders of those men attached to the Poitevin administration in this period, although it is Robert who appears to have been held in the highest regard by Ralph's source. According to Ralph, Robert: *'...in omni decertatione contra rebelles fortunatissimus et omni probitate conspicuus extiterat.'* Other figures attached to the Poitevin administration also received praise from Ralph's quill. Saveric of Mauléon: *'...qui datis obsidibus de custodia regis Angliae exiens [August 1204], viriliter ac fideliter contra hostes ejus decertabat.'* Ralph knew that Philip had enjoyed some success in the course of his endeavours, but he also knew of the setbacks he had endured. Unlike Rigord and William le Breton, Ralph gave a more balanced assessment of Philip's activities noting that Philip: *'...auxilio eorum [William des Roches and Hugh le Brun] fretus, totam fere sibi subjugaret Pictaviam, excepta Rochella, quae se per totum illud anni spatium viriliter contra omnes tuebatur.'* Nor was it just La Rochelle that had held out against Philip. Ralph relates that: *'Castellum similiter de Chinun non se tradidit adversariis per totum illud tempus, Huberto de Burch in eo existente.'* Gerald de Athée, constable of Loches, was also marked out for praise with Ralph noting that: *'...ferociter contra hostes saepius decertabat atque castellum illud viriliter tuebatur.'*

Ralph did not name his source for this information. However, it seems almost certain that it was either King John or a member of his *familia* that provide Ralph with this information. A number of reasons would seem to support this conclusion. Firstly we know from the Close Rolls that John was at Coggeshall in October 1205, at the very time it has been suggest, by David Carpenter, that Ralph was actually writing this section of his work.³⁰³ Another reason for thinking that Ralph's account is a summary of information acquired during John's visit, is the style of the account and the details contained therein. For instance, the fact that Saveric of Mauléon left hostages with John before being allowed to return to Poitou is something that we know about from only two other sources; the '*Histoire des Ducs*' and the Patent Rolls, neither of which Ralph was likely to have had access to.³⁰⁴

Another reason why we might consider John, or someone close to him who was aware of the king's attitude towards the defenders of Poitou/Touraine, as a possible source, is that Ralph's description of the activities of Robert, Gerald, Hubert, and Saveric appears to reflect John's own attitude towards these men. Very few men emerged from the debacle of 1202-5 with much credit to their names. We know that there had been talk of treasonable activities amongst those men appointed by John to guard his Norman possessions.³⁰⁵ Despite John's general mistrust of those who had served him in Normandy, the men who had fought in the Touraine and Poitou were regarded by John as men whom he could trust, and men whose services merited reward. Of the men known to have been active in Poitou and the Touraine in 1204/5

³⁰³ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 55 (16th October) & D. Carpenter, 'Abbot Ralph of Coggeshall's Account of the Last Years of King Richard and the First Years of King John', *EHR*, 113, (1998), pp. 1210-1230; at. p. 1228.

³⁰⁴ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 55b & *Hist. des Ducs*, p. 101.

³⁰⁵ R.V. Turner, *King John*, pp. 123-7

many went on to achieve high office under John, and were seen, by some later writers, as among his closest and most trusted advisors. Saveric of Mauléon went on to hold the post of seneschal of Poitou, and later fought for John during the Civil War. Gerald of Athée, once his ransom had been paid by the king, went to England where he became sheriff of Gloucester. If the king himself were not Ralph's source, then it is likely to have been either Peter of Stoke, Geoffrey fitz Peter, or William, earl of Salisbury, all of whom had been at Coggeshall with John, and all of whom were well acquainted with Poitevin affairs.³⁰⁶ Of course it is possible that Roger derived his material from a number of the men who had been at Coggeshall.

Robert's Capture

Although Philip had not achieved all his aims during the summer of 1204, his withdrawal brought Robert only a brief respite. John realised that Robert's position, and that of Gerald of Athée and Hubert of Burgh, was now close to untenable. In April/May 1203 John had tried to assist Robert by attempting to negotiate the return of some of those men who had abandoned his cause, and to supply Robert with money to continue the war effort. Following Philip's campaigns of 1204 the situation with regards to these two matters appears only to have deteriorated. It is to his credit that John made various attempts to shore up Robert's position in Poitou. Perhaps the most significant move, at least in relation to Robert's lack of allies, came in July/August 1204 with the release from captivity of Saveric of Mauléon. Saveric had been held

³⁰⁶ Peter of Stoke had been at court when Robert returned from captivity in July 1205. William, earl of Salisbury had served alongside Robert in Poitou. Geoffrey fitz Peter was probably the best placed to provide Ralph with details relating to the king's financial arrangements with Moreue of Malmort, with which Ralph's account ends, since he had been party to the discussions between John and Elias of Malmort. *Rot. chart.*, p. 112 [12th October – Caen] & p. 114b [2nd November – Vernol]. *Ibid.*, p. 125 [18th January 1205 – Reading] & p. 135 [Wilton].

prisoner at Corfe castle since the autumn of 1202, and although negotiations relating to his release may have begun as early as August 1203, it was not until August 1204 that the final arrangements had been made, and Saveric was permitted to return to Poitou.³⁰⁷ Robert was first informed of Saveric's impending return on 10th August 1204 when letters close were dispatched to him ordering that: '*...habere faciatis Saverico de Malo Leone totam terram quam fuit Radulphus de Malo Leone patris sui die qua Rex Ricardus frater noster obiit.*'³⁰⁸

John clearly hoped that Saveric's return would not only aid Robert in terms of military support, but that it would also help persuade those who had defected since the spring of 1202 to return to John's cause. On 8th August John sent letters patent to Robert in which he wrote: '*...quod omnes illos qui ad consilium Savarici de Malo Leone revertentur ad servicium et fidelitatem nostram manuteneatis et defendatis nec faciatis eis vel fieri permittatis injuriam, molestiam, vel graviam. Et si quid postea eis forisfactum fuerit id eis sine dilatione emendari faciatis.*'³⁰⁹ Saveric was not alone in being expected to help ensure that the Poitevin rebels returned to their former allegiance. In further letters patent issued the same day the king promised that any peace accord that might be negotiated by Robert, Saveric, Hubert of Burgh or Gerald of Athée with rebels wishing to return to his service, would be adhered too by the

³⁰⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 33. Following an attempted escape by Saveric, and others held at Corfe, before August 1203, John ordered Saveric and Aimary of Forz to be sent to him in Normandy. Negotiation regarding Aimary's release had begun by July 1203. Although an agreement may have been reached with Saveric before the summer of 1204, John was not prepared to release Saveric until the hostages he had promised had been delivered into the king's custody. The hostages had arrived in England by July 1204, after which Saveric was returned to Poitou. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 3. *Hist. des Ducs*, pp. 100-1 provides an interesting account of Saveric's time in England. Although some of his information can be shown to be inaccurate, the suggestion that it had been Hubert Walter who had negotiated an accord with Saveric should not be ruled out. Cf. A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, pp. 428-30.

³⁰⁸ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 5.

³⁰⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 44b.

king.³¹⁰ In the past, as we have seen, any treaty negotiated with rebel nobles required the king's subsequent approval, but John's letters of August 1204 would appear to have given Robert and the others *carte blanche* in their negotiations with those nobles who had withdrawn from the king's service. John's hopes in these matters, despite the faith he appears to have had in Robert and Saveric, were not to be realized. The Patent and Close Rolls make no mention to former rebels having returned to John's cause in the weeks and months following the issue of these orders. In fact in late-September we find John writing to Robert regarding the possible return of the rebel Henry Buchard.³¹¹ This letter though, like the earlier letters to Robert and Saveric, was phrased almost entirely in the subjunctive, leading one to conclude that although Henry might be willing to return to his former fidelity he had not yet done so, and no evidence survives to suggest that he actually did.

In early-1203 John had hoped, vainly perhaps, that Poitou itself could provide the majority of the financial resources Robert would need to contain Philip. However, by the summer of 1204 John seems to have abandoned this notion, probably because Philip's capture of Poitiers and Niort would have deprived Robert of two of his most important sources of revenue.³¹² In order to make good these losses John appears to have started shipping money to Robert and his associates at a much higher rate than had previously been the case. The Close Rolls show that in the course of the summer and autumn of 1204 various sums of money were sent from England to Poitou/Gascony to help finance the resistance. On 21st June 1204 John wrote to Geoffrey fitz Peter informing him that he had loaned William Brewer 500 marks from

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44b.

³¹¹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 46.

³¹² Letters patent issued on 4th February 1205 suggest that the Ile d'Oléron, the location of a number of comital estates, was still in Angevin hands, or at least John believed it was still in the hands of his allies. *ibid.*, p. 49b.

the 2000 marks which William had been given to send to Gascony.³¹³ On 15th July John wrote to his treasurer ordering him to pay William Brewer 200 marks which William had loaned John to send to Poitou.³¹⁴ In late-October orders were sent to the treasurer and the barons of the Exchequer informing them that they were to make allowance to Robert of Vieuxpont for the 2400 marks which he had paid to various royal officials through William Brewer junior at Salisbury in late-September.³¹⁵ These monies were sent to Poitou to help finance its defence. On 30th November John wrote to the sheriff of Devon ordering him to find a boat for the Hospitallers to enable them to transport treasure to Poitou.³¹⁶ On the same day the barons of the Exchequer were ordered to make allowance to Reginald of Clifton for the costs he had incurred in the carriage of £1000 from Nottingham to Freemantle, which were then shipped to Robert in Poitou. These sums were known to have been sent to Poitou, but Ralph of Coggeshall claims that John gave the astonishing sum of 28,000 marks to Moreue of Malmort.³¹⁷ Ralph's source, as we have seen, was likely to have been well informed, but this figure may have been an exaggeration. We know that at least 1,500 marks were sent to Gascony during 1204, but there is no evidence that any more than this was sent.

As John tried to raise money and manpower for his beleaguered supporters, the business of administration in Poitou continued; though by now at a much reduced rate. As with most orders dispatched since January 1203, the majority of Robert's instructions during the winter of 1204 were connected to the war effort. By October 1204 Philip's campaigns had wrought destruction in eastern Poitou. Despite having

³¹³ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 2 & *Rot. obl.* p. 271.

³¹⁴ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 2b

³¹⁵ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 13.

³¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 15.

³¹⁷ *Chron. Ang.*, pp. 146-7.

lost many of the most prominent nobles of Poitou to Philip by early-1203, John continued to try and bind the last remaining Poitevin lords to his cause. On 5th October John wrote to Robert informing him of the king's desire to see Elias de Murnac take the daughter of Theobald Vassard as his wife. On the same day further instructions were sent informing Robert of John's decision to grant to Theobald Vassard the lands of Geoffrey Martell, now a rebel, on the Ile d'Oléron, until such time as Geoffrey might return to John's service.³¹⁸ John stated that he wished Theobald to have these estates as compensation for the losses he had sustained in the course of his service to John – probably lands lost to Philip and his allies, or lands ruined by war. On 9th October orders were issued to the seneschal of Poitou, and the mayor and commune of La Rochelle, informing them that he had granted Geoffrey de Hungaria the estates at La Rochelle which had previously belonged to William de Capella – presumably yet another rebel - and that they were to ensure that these were handed over to Geoffrey without delay.³¹⁹ It was not just nobles whose services John, through Robert, sought to maintain. An attempt was also made to ensure the continued support of the townspeople of Angoulême. On 15th November 1204 the seneschal of Poitou was informed of the king's decision to permit the burghers of Angoulême to have a mayor and a commune of their own and to have the *Etablissements de Rouen* in order to bind them to his cause, and to encourage them to help in the defence his lands.³²⁰ In the end these preparations, modest as they were, made very little difference to the final outcome of the Angevin/Capetian struggle in Poitou, and made next to no difference to Robert because at some point between October 1204 and February 1205 he was captured by forces allied to Philip Augustus.

³¹⁸ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 46b.

³¹⁹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 11.

³²⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 48.

Robert's capture was noted by Ralph of Coggeshall who wrote, under the year 1205 that: '*Captus est Robertus de Turnham ab exercitu regis Franciae.*'³²¹ The circumstances surrounding Robert's capture were not recorded in any further detail by Ralph, but he did add a further statement of praise to his earlier description of Robert's heroics in Poitou recording that: '*...tam strenue rebelles Pictavos debellaverat.*' The reference to '*the army of the King of France*' might seem to date his capture to April/May 1205 when Philip was once again active in Poitou. However, the Patent Rolls show that Robert's capture must have occurred by February 1205. On 3rd February 1205 John issued letters patent to all his men of Poitou, or what was left of them, ordering that: '*...sitis intendatis dilecto et fideli nostro Saverico de Malo Leone tamquam seneschalo nostro ad fidem et honorem et commodum nostrum et ad securitatem terrae nostrae quousque Robertus de Turnham liberatus sit de prisona et seneschallcie intendere possit.*'³²² Given the concluding sentence to these orders, news of Robert's capture must have been known in England by February.

Although Coggeshall's date for Robert's capture may well be accurate, it is possible that he had been misinformed, and that Robert's capture had in fact taken in late-1204. The reason for thinking this is that in late-1204 letters patent were issued announcing the appointment of Richard de Maisi and William of Saint Lô as custodians for the sherialry of Surrey; the sherialry having been in Robert's hands

³²¹ *Chron. Ang.*, p. 152.

³²² *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 49b. These orders were carried to Poitou by various messengers dispatched by John two days later. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 19. Despite Robert's capture having been known by 3rd February, letters patent issued on the 4th – relating to grants from John's remaining demesne lands on the Ile d'Oléron, were still issued to Robert as seneschal, although Saveric and Imbert of Forz are also mentioned in the address. Perhaps the clerk made an error, or perhaps John thought that Robert's captivity would prove brief.

since *circa* Easter 1194.³²³ Although these orders are undated it seems likely that they were issued between 2nd November and 18th December 1204. The orders in question were enrolled on the reverse of Membrane 6 of the Patent Rolls, and Membrane 6 covers the period between 2nd November and 18th December 1204. These orders were probably issued before 18th December 1204 because a second letter added to the reverse of Membrane 6 – following on from the orders relating to William and Richard’s appointment – was dated 18th December 1204. It is impossible to say for certain whether these orders were issued because news of Robert’s capture had arrived at court. However, had such news arrived it would certainly help explain John’s decision, which is difficult to explain otherwise. In light of these orders one could hesitantly suggest that Robert’s capture took place between 5th October and 18th December 1204, with a date of late-November or early-December being possible for the arrival of information relating to Robert’s capture at court.³²⁴ Nonetheless it is only in February 1205 that we can be certain that Robert had been captured, and given that news of his capture was likely to have been transmitted quickly to England, one should not rule out a date of January 1205 for his capture, based on Coggeshall’s statement.³²⁵ The appointment of William and Richard may have been unconnected to news of Robert’s capture, and may have been made because John believed that Robert would be in Poitou for some time to come.

³²³ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 54b.

³²⁴ If news of Robert’s capture had arrived in late-November or early-December it may explain why John, Robert’s chaplain, delayed his journey to Poitou. On 3rd November orders were issued to William the treasurer to pay John 2 marks to enable him to cross the sea to join Robert. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 13b. However, John was still in England in late-December. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 16. If news of Robert’s capture had reached England in November or December, John may have delayed his departure until reliable information relating to Robert’s current whereabouts was available. That said, poor weather, or the lack of a ship, may also account for the delay.

³²⁵ Judging by John’s journey times to La Rochelle in 1206 and 1214, it would only have taken about five days for a fast ship to have brought news to England.

Robert and John

1205-1209

Return from Captivity

Although John had expected Robert to resume control of the seneschalry of Poitou following his release from captivity this was not to happen. In fact Saveric of Mauléon, who had only been expected to be a temporary appointee, continued to hold the post until April 1209. None of our surviving sources tell us why John's plans, in relations to Robert's reappointment, changed between February and July 1205. However, it seems likely that Saveric's endeavours as seneschal, during Robert's captivity, proved sufficiently successful to persuade the king that he ought to be kept on as seneschal despite Robert's release. Probably the most significant success that Saveric was credited with was the recapture of Niort in May 1205.³²⁶ It may have been the retaking of Niort that had influenced Ralph's source for the affairs of Poitou in this period to describe Saveric as a man who: '*...viriliter ac fideliter contra hostes ejus decertabat.*' It is worth remembering that Ralph of Coggeshall, or at least his source, could not point to one specific success Robert had orchestrated, and could only write in rather general, albeit positive, terms about his activities.

Although Saveric's success meant that Robert was not to resume control of the seneschalry of Poitou, the affairs of western France continued to feature prominently

³²⁶ *Hist. des Ducs*, p. 101.

in his career. Although it is true that Poitou, and to a lesser extent Anjou, continued to dominate Robert's professional activities, he was never again to achieve the degree of prominence that he had enjoyed in the decade between 1195-1205. In fact we shall see that between 1205 and 1209 Robert acted more of an advisor and intermediary, than as senior ranking member of the king's transmarine service. This is not to say that Robert had fallen from grace, or no longer had the king's confidence, but rather than John's ambitions in Anjou and Poitou were now to be pursued through other men – notably Saveric and Aimary of Thouars – and although Robert still had a role to play, his importance seems to have diminished following his return from captivity.

We know that Robert had returned from captivity by late-July 1205 since we find him and John at Bexley on 21st July.³²⁷ It is unlikely that Robert had returned to England much before this date. Evidence from late-June 1205 would suggest that Stephen of Thurnham was still in the process of finalizing the financial arrangements relating to Robert's ransom. On 27th June John wrote to constable of Hastings castle and the seneschal of the Rape of Hastings informing them that: '*ad petitionem Stephani de Turneham*', he had decided to accept the homage of Geoffrey, son of John of St. Legers, for the land which his father had held from the Count of Eu in the Rape of Hastings.³²⁸ The lands in question had earlier – probably *circa* April 1201 – been granted to Robert. John's letter does not say why Stephen had negotiated the return of these lands to Geoffrey, but it is possible that Stephen, on Robert's behalf, negotiated their return for a cash settlement that could be used to pay part of Robert's ransom.

³²⁷ *Rot. chart.*, p. 157.

³²⁸ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 40. The land in question was assessed at three and a half knights' fees. PR, I *John*, p. 111.

John too may have helped pay part of Robert's ransom. On 29th July – three days after Robert's return to court - John wrote to the Exchequer ordering his officials to make allowance to William of Cornhill for the 400 marks which William had paid to Robert as a gift on the king's orders.³²⁹ Although it was not stated that this gift was intended to help cover the cost of Robert's ransom, we do know that John helped pay the ransoms of a number of prominent Angevin officials, or members of their families. Following the Angevin defeats of 1204 and 1205 we find John assisting in the ransoming of Andrew of Belcamp's brother, Peter des Roches' nephew, William Brewer's son, and perhaps most notably in the protracted negotiations that led to the release of Gerald of Athée.³³⁰ Neither John's gift, nor Stephen's dealings, appear to have been able to raise an amount sufficient to discharge the ransom in full. In February 1206 we find John granting Robert permission to export corn to Flanders specifically for the purpose of raising money to pay the balance of his ransom.³³¹

Robert's stay at court following his return from captivity proved brief. As far as we can tell Robert remained at court for the last week of July, since we find him

³²⁹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 44. Cf. PR, 7 John, p. 12.

³³⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 42 [Belchamp], p. 45b [des Roches], p. 55b [Brewer]. John initially lent William Brewer 1000 marks to ransom his son, but later quit William of this loan, thus making him a gift of a 1000 marks. *ibid.*, p. 62. For Gerald see *ibid.*, p. 65 & *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 92b, p. 97 & p. 104.

³³¹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 59b. No source states the size of Robert's ransom, but it must have been more than the 400 marks John gave to him on his return from France. We could suggest a figure of around 1000 marks as the likely size of his ransom given what we know of the ransom demanded for Gerald of Athée. In November 1207 we discover that the master of the Hospitallers had been able to arrange Gerald's release for 1000 marks. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 97. Although Gerald had been ransomed for 1000 marks, in May 1206 John thought that a ransom of 2000 marks might prove necessary to secure Gerald's freedom. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 65. Given that Robert 'outranked' Gerald one can say with some confidence that his ransom was unlikely to have been less than 1000 marks, and could even have been higher. To put this in perspective. The fixed annual income of Robert's estates in 1212 was £278, 2s, 3½d [~417 marks] which meant that his ransom, if we assume it to have been 1000 marks, was more than double his ordinary annual income. PR, 14 John, pp. 5-6. This figure is discussed in more detail pp. 145-6.

with John on 26th at Freemantle and again on 28th at Mitcheldever.³³² Almost immediately upon his return from France Robert was called upon to advise the king on Poitevin matters. On 28th July letters close were dispatched to Saveric of Mauléon ordering him to hand over to Bonin, son of Benedict the Jew of Talmont, and Deusay, Benedict's nephew, the land on the Ile d'Oléron which John had given to Benedict.³³³ That Robert's advice had been sought in connection with these orders would seem to be borne out by the fact that Robert himself was called upon to attest them. We shall see that Robert would, in the coming months, frequently be called to court for the purposes of advising the king on Poitevin affairs. It can be no coincidence that the majority of orders sent to Poitou and Gascony – at least between July 1205 and May 1206 – were issued at those times when Robert was known to have been at court. During this period a total of 19 orders were sent to Poitou/Gascony by John. Of these 11 (58%) were issued when Robert was known to have been at court, 4 (21%) were issued when Robert was likely to have been at court, and only 4 (21%) were issued when Robert was almost certainly not at court.

Shortly after 28th July Robert left court, and we do not find him in John's company again until October that year. Robert does not appear to have been assigned any specific duties before leaving court, at least we have no evidence to show that he had been. What little evidence we have suggests that he may have spent some time in Surrey, the county of which he was titular sheriff. Robert had lost the post of sheriff of Surrey *circa* December 1204.³³⁴ However, Robert was reappointed to office

³³² *Rot. chart.*, p. 156 & *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 44.

³³³ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 44. There seems to have been some confusion as the exact relationship between Benedict, Bonin and Deusay. Bonin and Deusay were described as Benedict's sons in orders dispatched in late-April 1205. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 53b. Perhaps with Robert's return the king, and his officials, were given more accurate information as to the relationship between the three men.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 54b & PR, 7 John, p. 152.

following the Michaelmas 1205 audit of the county farm.³³⁵ We know Robert was in Surrey in late-October 1205 since we find him and John together at Guildford on 31st October.³³⁶ Proving that Robert was actively involved in the affairs of Surrey is problematic. Orders were dispatched to the sheriff of Surrey during the summer of 1205, but these were not addressed to Robert by name but, as was common practice, were simply addressed to the sheriff.³³⁷ Given the lack of evidence relating to Robert's activities one should probably assume he divided his time between his estates in Yorkshire and Sussex, and work within the sherialry of Surrey.

The Campaign of 1206

Whatever Robert's activities following his return to England, his respite from the affairs of John's continental possessions proved to be brief. In late-1205, as John was making the final arrangements for his planned campaign to western France, Robert was recalled to court to advise the king. Robert had been recalled to court by late-December 1205 and we find him and John at Brill on 22nd and Marlborough on 28th and 29th of that month. Having spent the festive season in the Home Counties John moved south-west to Hampshire and Wiltshire taking Robert with him. It was in this period [between 3rd and 9th January] that a spate of orders were issued by John relating to the affairs of Poitou and Angoulême.³³⁸

³³⁵ PR, 8 John, p. 115 & PR, 9 John, p. 63. Robert was permanently replaced as sheriff by John fitz Hugh in July 1207. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 74.

³³⁶ *Rot. chart.*, p. 159 & 159b. The fact that Robert does not attest any charters issued shortly before or after this date suggests that he had been in Guildford when John arrived and remained there after the king had departed. An alternative explanation for Robert's presence at Guildford is that his brother held important estates there, and he may have been in Guildford on family business rather than in his capacity of sheriff of the county.

³³⁷ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 45, p. 45b, p. 46, p. 59b.

³³⁸ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 58.

On 4th January John issued instructions to the mayor and *prévôt* of Angoulême, and his loyal men of that county, ordering them to surrender Oliver of Turenne, then a prisoner in their custody, to the bearer of these the king's letters patent. The bearer of these letters was named as one of Robert's own men, and Robert himself attested the orders. On 5th January letters patent, of the kind seen in August 1204, were dispatched to Saveric of Mauléon stating that John would accept those gifts that Saveric might make to the king's bachelors, and to the men who had withdrawn from the king's fidelity, from his remaining Poitevin lands and rents. On the same day a general pardon was issued to the barons and knights of Poitou who had withdrawn from the king's service promising them that, should they return to the king's service, he would forgive them their past transgressions and restore to them the property they held during the reigns of Henry II and Richard I. On 9th January Robert attested orders to Saveric ordering him to ensure that the fortalices built by Peter and John Bertin, and others, near La Rochelle, and which were '*harmful*' to that town - presumably meaning that they were a threat to Angevin control - were destroyed.

At the same time as the aforementioned letters patent were issued letters close were drawn up also relating to Poitevin affairs.³³⁹ On 3rd January orders were sent to the sheriffs of Devon and Somerset regarding the passage to Poitou of Geoffrey Luttrell and other messengers in the king's service.³⁴⁰ On 4th or 5th January letters close were sent to Saveric regarding the affairs of Niort and the behaviour of William

³³⁹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, pp. 61b-62. Although none of these orders were attested by Robert, he does attest orders to the barons of the Exchequer relating to the affairs of Peter of Stoke issued at Beer-Regis on 6th January.

³⁴⁰ Luttrell was one of John's household knights. Like Robert he had Yorkshire connections, having married the daughter and co-heir of William Paine in 1203. S.D. Church, 'The Rewards of Royal Service in the Household of King John: A Dissenting Opinion', *EHR*, (1995), pp. 277-302; at p. 288. It is likely that Luttrell and Robert were well known to one another, and it is possible that Luttrell gained his commission thanks to Robert's influence.

le Queu. On 5th January letters close were sent to William of Rochefort thanking him for his faithful service, and ordering to have faith in the information conveyed to him by the king's messengers. The king's messengers did not merely carry letters and oral orders for the king's supporters in Poitou. On the 8th January a number of letters close were dispatched to the king's officials relating to passage of Geoffrey Luttrell and others to Poitou.³⁴¹ Amongst these we find one showing that Geoffrey was under orders to carry money to Poitou. According to orders sent to the sheriff of Devon and Robert of Winchester - one of the officials in charge of the treasury at Exeter - 1500 marks were to be paid to Geoffrey and his associates, which they in turn were to take to Poitou.³⁴² This was not the sum total of the money these men carried to Poitou. Letters patent issued on 29th January show that another 1000 marks had been paid to Geoffrey at Dorchester by Thomas de Sanford when John and Robert were there on 8th January.³⁴³

Soon after 9th January Robert left court, though it is unclear exactly where he went or what he did. Although one of Robert's men had been sent to Angoulême it is unlikely that Robert himself went to France at this time. Had Robert been en route to Angoulême then this would presumably have been stated in the letter to John's officials in the region. After all it made no sense to have Robert attest these orders if himself was going to Angoulême in person. Nor was Robert likely to have gone to Poitou, since the rolls of letters close show that the mission to Poitou was in the hands of Geoffrey Luttrell and others. A more likely explanation is that Robert returned to his own estates to make ready for John's planned expedition to Anjou and Poitou of

³⁴¹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 62.

³⁴² The king's messengers moved promptly after the king's orders had been finalized, and letters close show they received the money they were to take to Poitou at Exeter on 17th January. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 63.

³⁴³ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 59.

later the same year. That Robert had remained in England after leaving court would seem to be indicated by orders issued on 21st February in which William of Wrotham and Reginald of Cornhill were informed that Robert, subject to various conditions, had been given permission to export wheat to Flanders in order to help pay the cost of his ransom.³⁴⁴

In late-April or early-May Robert returned to court, and on 3rd May we find Robert attesting letters patent issued by the king at Swallowfield.³⁴⁵ Robert may have arrived at court in late-April because on 30th April three letters patent were issued to John's men in Gascony notifying them of the appointment of Reginald of Pons as the new seneschal for Gascony.³⁴⁶ Although we know Robert was at court in early-May he may not have remained there long. His last attestation took place at Basingstoke on 6th May, after which we do not find him and John together until August 1206. It is possible that Robert remained at court as the king prepared to cross to Poitou, but was not called upon to attest any of the king's *acta*. However, one could explain Robert's absence by suggesting that he was sent on ahead to Poitou to prepare for the king's arrival. Given that Robert was well known to many Poitevin officials, and those nobles still at odds with the king, it may have made sense to send Robert on ahead to help pave the way for the king's arrival.

³⁴⁴ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 59b.

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 63b. It is possible, but unlikely, that Robert made a brief visit to court in March 1206. A number of *acta*, including a 'charter' issued by Peter de Bruis witnessed by Robert, were handed over to the king's chamber by Peter de Lucy when the king was at Geddington on 13th March 1206. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 70. However, this does not mean the documents in question were issued on that day, and it is perhaps more likely that Robert witnessed Peter's 'charter' at an earlier date – perhaps whilst he was absent from court. The date on the Close Rolls states when the *acta* came into the possession of the king's chamber, and not the date on which they were issued. The fact that they were added to the back of the relevant membrane of the Close Rolls may indicate that they were not issued at court, but that copies of the documents were added to the Close Rolls for administrative purposes.

³⁴⁶ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 63. It is possible that Robert's advice over this appointment was sought, although the letters were attested by Geoffrey fitz Peter and Peter des Roches, both of whom were men of higher standing than Robert.

Whether Robert remained at court or went on ahead to Poitou, it remains the case that it is not until 27th August, when we find Robert and John at Niort, that we have any idea of Robert's whereabouts.³⁴⁷ Robert's activities during John's campaigns of 1206 are almost impossible to discern, and the most we can really say is that Robert accompanied the king to Poitou and Anjou. It seems likely that Robert remained in the king's entourage after John left Niort, since the next reference to Robert comes in early-September, shortly after John had captured Angers. In letters patent issued on 8th September, John informed Robert of his decision to grant to Robert fitz Walter: '*...terram [et] domos et vineas et redditus qui fuerunt Johnis Boley apud Andegavensem.*'³⁴⁸ These orders suggests that Robert held some position of authority in Angers at this time, although exactly what that position was is not clear. Given Robert's presence at Angers, and the date on which the letters were issued, one could assume that he had been part of the force that had captured Angers a day or two earlier, and control of part of the city may have been granted to Robert. Robert may have remained at Angers after John had left seeking further conquests, because Robert does not appear in the sources again until 21st September when we find him and John at Angers.³⁴⁹

Although John had achieved some successes during the course of his campaign, the arrival of Philip Augustus in mid-September forced him to bring the campaign to a conclusion. On 26th October a two year truce was sign - one that seems to have done little more than confirm the strategic and political positions of the two kings as they had existed before John's arrival – following which John returned to La

³⁴⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 67.

³⁴⁸ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 74.

³⁴⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 67b.

Rochelle to make ready for his return to England. It seems likely that Robert accompanied the king to La Rochelle. On 6th November, at La Rochelle, letters patent were issued in which John stated that he himself would act as guarantor for the £164 [Ptv.] that Robert had loaned William, earl of Salisbury, promising that if William failed to repay that money then he would.³⁵⁰

Poitevin Duties (1206-1207)

Although John was to return to England shortly after this letter was issued, Robert was to remain in Poitou. John's decision to leave Robert in Poitou at this time was probably influenced by two factors. Firstly it seems possible that John, probably before leaving Poitou, had decided to send financial support to his Poitevin allies. On 22nd January 1207 letters close were issued to the custodians of the king's treasure at Exeter detailing arrangements for the transfer of 5000 marks to Saveric of Mauléon and Robert in Poitou.³⁵¹ The money in question was dispatched promptly, and on 21st April 1207 letters close, issued to William the Treasurer, show that Robert of Winchester and his associates had handed over this money to Robert.³⁵² According to the dating clause the transaction had taken place at La Rochelle on 13th March 1207.

Had the transfer of this money been the sole reason for John's decision to leave Robert in Poitou, then one would have expected Robert to have returned to England once the money had arrived. However, this was not to happen since

³⁵⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 68.

³⁵¹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 77. Cf. PR, 9 John, p. 179.

³⁵² *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 82.

letters patent issued on 10th May 1207 show that Robert was still in Poitou at that time.³⁵³ Another possible reason for John's decision to leave Robert in Poitou could be that he had doubts about the loyalty and competence of Saveric of Mauléon. In September 1206, shortly after the capture of Angers, Saveric had been given orders to guard that city in the king's absence.³⁵⁴ However, when news reached Saveric of the impending arrival of Philip Augustus, he abandoned Angers and retreated south across the Pont-de-Cé presumably en route to Poitou. There is no evidence that John had any serious misgivings about Saveric's loyalty and competence, and no attempt was made to countermand the orders of June 1206 which had instructed Peter of Stoke to released Saveric's wife and mother; at that time still hostages in England.³⁵⁵ However, it is possible that John thought it advisable, given Saveric's behaviour at Angers, to leave behind someone in whose loyalty he could have complete faith. Robert was, after all, by far the best qualified of the king's supporters to undertake such a watching brief.

Robert almost certainly remained in Poitou between November 1206 and July 1207. However, in late-July 1207 we find Robert making a very brief visit to court. As far as we can tell Robert's visit lasted no more than three days, since we find him with John on 20th July at Melksham on 22nd July at Brook, and finally on 23rd July at Charterhouse. The reason for Robert's return to England, and the brevity of his stay at court could be explained by recent developments in Poitou. Although the 1206

³⁵³ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 83.

³⁵⁴ *Ann. St. Aubin*, p. 32 [G]. This passage is based, in part, on material derived from Codex B, but the information relating to Saveric's activities is independent of any known source.

³⁵⁵ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 66b & p. 67b. They were probably released as a reward to Saveric for his loyalty to John since his return to Poitou in August 1204. However, it is worth noting that other hostages surrendered by Saveric in July 1204 remained in the king's hands, and no steps were taken to release them following the king's return from Poitou. E.g. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 86. Hugh de Alemannia remained a hostage for over a decade in the household of the Earl of Ferrers. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 110.

campaign had concluded with the two monarchs agreeing to a two year truce, William le Breton notes that this held good for only a few months. William wrote that in 1207: *'Philippus rex iterum, collecto exercitu, Aquitaniam intravit et vastavit terram vicecomitis Thoarcii, Parthenacum cepit et quamplures munitiones circumpositas evertit; quasdam vero munitas sub custodibus sibi retinuit.'*³⁵⁶

Although William is not specific about the date, one could suggest that the attack took place in June/July 1207. Some circumstantial evidence would seem to support this suggestion. On 2nd June 1207 John dispatched orders to William the Treasurer and Robert the Chamberlain instructing them to make various, modest, payments to messengers who had come to England in the service of certain Poitevin notables.³⁵⁷ The list of men who had dispatched messengers to England at this time is impressive, with John's letter mentioning representatives having arrived from Saveric of Mauléon, William of Mauzé, Theobald Vassard, Aimary of Forz, Aimary of Thouars, the archdeacon of Poitou, and possibly the abbot of Saint Maixent as well. Quite why such an impressive delegation was in England at this time is not stated, but it is possible they had come to warn John that plans were underway by the French king and his allies to invade.

It is unlikely that the attack had taken place by the time these messengers arrived in England. The Patent and Close Rolls do not contain any orders suggesting

³⁵⁶ *Vie (Guillaume)*, p. 225. Cf. *Vie (Rigord)*, p. 165 which gives a very similar account, albeit with the addition of the involvement of Henry Clément and William des Roches. *'Anno Domini MCCVII, Philippus rex, collecto exercitu, Aquitaniam intravit et terram vicecomitis Thoarcensis vastavit, Partenacum cepit et alias quamplures circumpositas munitiones evertit et quasdam munitas sub custodia marescalli sui [Henry Clément] et Guillelmi de Rupibus reliquit.'* The problem with 'Rigord's' account is that it was probably not written by Rigord, but by a continuator from St. Denis, using the late-thirteenth-century 'Chronicle' of William of Nancy [Guillaume de Nangis] as his source. G.M. Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis*, (Brookline, 1978), p. 60. Compare 'Rigord's' account with F. Guizot (ed. & trans.), *Chronique de Guillaume de Nangis*, (Paris, 1825), p. 95.

³⁵⁷ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 86b.

that the Poitevin administration was on a war footing at that time. In fact the few orders dispatched to Poitou in May, June and early-July 1207 were routine in nature, suggesting that Poitou was as peaceful then as it usually was.³⁵⁸ However, orders dispatched later that same summer, following Robert's arrival from Poitou, would seem to suggest that something had taken place in Poitou that demanded the king's attention, and that of his treasury, and that something was almost certainly Philip's invasion. On 25th July, a mere two days after Robert had attested his last charter, orders were sent to the sheriff of Devon instructing him to find a ship to convey the king's messengers and treasure to Poitou.³⁵⁹ The sheriff was ordered that he should ensure that the treasure was carried by the first ship sailing for Poitou, to ensure that rumours of the treasure would not arrive in Poitou before the treasure itself. Whether John's worries were the result of his naturally suspicious nature, or because he feared that the money would not be safe in Poitou given the recent warfare, cannot be known for certain.³⁶⁰

The treasure that was to be shipped to Poitou was almost certainly the 2900 marks which the king had ordered Robert de Bareville and the sheriff of Devon to convey to Poitou.³⁶¹ The role of Robert de Bareville in the transfer of this money

³⁵⁸ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 71b, p. 73b, & p.75b. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 82, p. 83, & p. 87. Of course this need not necessarily prove anything since we have already seen that routine administrative matters continued to be sent to the Poitevin administration even during the height of the war of 1202-5. However, it is worth recalling that during that period letters close and patent, even if they did not speak openly about the war, frequently contained information and orders that only made sense if one assumed military operations had been on going.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁶⁰ Five days later further orders were sent to the sheriff of Devon regarding the need to find a ship for Robert de Bareville to carry the king's treasure to Poitou. *ibid.*, p. 89. However, these orders did not repeat the injunction that the ship was to be the first to leave lest rumours of the treasure's impending arrival precede the treasure ship. It is not clear whether these orders were intended to countermand the initial orders, or whether they were simply a reminder to the sheriff. If the latter then it would seem to indicate that John was anxious that the treasure be dispatched to Poitou as soon as possible.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 90 & p. 91. A further shipment of treasure was sent to Poitou between Michaelmas 1207 and Michaelmas 1208 since an entry in the Pipe Rolls records payments – large payments – made for

indicates a connection with Robert. Robert de Bareville was a member of Robert's *familia*, and what little information we have about his life suggests that he was a relatively prominent member of Robert's *familia*.³⁶² In light of Robert's brief stay at court, and the fact that one of his men was soon to be involved in what may have been an emergency transfer of funds to Poitou, one could suggest that Robert had returned to England in late-July to bring John news of the attack, and to persuade him to supply Saveric, and other of the king's Poitevin allies, with financial support to help them resist the Capetian king and his allies. We know that the money Robert de Bareville was to convey to Poitou was intended for John's leading supporters in the region; Saveric of Mauléon and Aimary of Thouars. On 8th December 1207 letters, for the king's attention, arrived from Saveric and Aimary at Clarendon.³⁶³ According to these letters Saveric had received 2200 marks from Robert de Bareville, whilst Aimary had received 700 marks. Aimary's letter states that de Bareville had handed over the money at La Rochelle on 30th September 1207. Unfortunately neither man stated what the money had been used for, but given what we know had happened in Poitou in the course of the summer of 1207, one must assume that the money had been intended to help finance the war effort. It seems reasonable to assume that Robert, after leaving court, returned to Poitou to reassure Saveric and Aimary that help was on its way. However, this is difficult to prove. The summer of 1207 saw relatively few written instructions dispatched to Poitou, and those that were sent do

the hire of ships to enable John of Grey, bishop of Norwich, and one of John's closest supporters, to lead the king's treasure into Poitou. PR, 10 John, p. 171.

³⁶² De Bareville had been Robert's seneschal for the Fossard estates in 1199. H.G. Richardson (ed.), Memoranda Roll 1 John, (PRS, 1943), p. 13 & p. 15. He had also served in Poitou between 1202 and 1204. Nor was this de Bareville's first mission to Poitou since Robert's return from captivity. He had been party to the transfer of fund to Robert and Saveric in Poitou ordered by John in early-1207. Rot. litt. claus., p. 82.

³⁶³ Rot. litt. pat., p. 83.

not mention Robert by name.³⁶⁴ All we can say for certain is that Robert left court in late-July and did not return until October 1207.

The Campaign of 1208

Wherever Robert had gone, we know that he was back at court by early-October since we find him and John at Lambeth on 5th, 6th and 7th October, at Westminster on 19th, and at Windsor on 25th.³⁶⁵ On this occasion, as with many earlier instances, Robert was at court in connection with the affairs of Poitou. On 7th October Robert attested routine orders, dispatched to the mayor of La Rochelle and Saveric, regarding the king's grants to Gerald de Camera – probably a chamber clerk – of an annual rent of £40 from the king's revenues at La Rochelle which John had granted Gerald.³⁶⁶ Although Robert's stay at court in the winter of 1207 was longer than his July visit, it is clear that within a month of his arrival plans were already in hand for his return to Poitou. On 5th November orders were sent to the sheriff of Devon instructing him to find a ship to enable Robert to return to Poitou.³⁶⁷ Robert did not depart immediately, and on 15th December we find him with John at Egbury.³⁶⁸ Whilst at Egbury John issued two letters patent connected with the

³⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 75b. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 89b & p. 91. Letters close and patent dispatched to Poitou, as we have seen, were usually addressed to the seneschal alone since he was the king's senior representative in the region. Other prominent members of the Poitevin administration were only mentioned in the king's letters if the seneschal was under orders to seek their advice before reaching a decision regarding the king's instructions. However, more often than not the king's orders did not require discussion, only action, and so it was left to the seneschal as to whom he would consult over how the orders in question were to be enacted.

³⁶⁵ *Rot. chart.*, p. 171-171b & *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 93.

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 93. This was in addition to an earlier grant made to Gerald by John during the campaign of 1206. *ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁶⁸ *Rot. chart.*, p. 173b

planned return of Robert to Poitou.³⁶⁹ Robert would appear to have remained at court until 19th December, since on that day letters patent were issued to Geoffrey of Neville ordering him to surrender to Robert, or to Robert's men, the Poitevin nobleman John Moneer, who was in Geoffrey's custody.³⁷⁰ Robert probably left court shortly after the orders to Geoffrey were issued, as preparations for his trip to Poitou appear to have been well advanced by that date. On 22nd December instructions were sent to the sheriff of Devon stating that if one ship was insufficient to enable Robert and his entourage to sail to Poitou, then the sheriff was to provide funds for an additional ship.³⁷¹

We are fortunate that evidence has survived that shows that Robert's activities in late-1207 were connected to John's plans for a counter-attack against the French king and his allies, a decision that must have been made about the same time as Robert returned to court in October. We know that Robert was returning to Poitou in connection with a proposed military operation from entries on the Close Rolls and Pipe Rolls. On 9th January 1208 John wrote to the barons of the Exchequer informing them that allowance was to be made to the custodians of the bishopric of Lincoln for the thousands of crossbow bolts they had purchased on the king's behalf.³⁷² This letter records that many of these bolts were known to have been taken to Poitou; some of them by Robert himself. At Michaelmas 1208 the Exchequer clerks noted that 7*s*, 6*d* had been allowed on the sheriff of Hampshire's account for the acquisition of pikes

³⁶⁹ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 77b [Letters of simple protection for Robert so long as he was in the king's service in Poitou.] & [Orders to all the king's bailiffs in whose bailiwicks Robert held wardships ordering them to guard and protect Robert's wards and their men so long as Robert was in Poitou.]

³⁷⁰ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 77b. John Moneer had been captured during the 1206 campaign, and had been taken to England when the king left Poitou. *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 75. On his arrival in Poitou Robert was under orders to take hostages from John Moneer to ensure his future good behaviour and that of his men. *Rot. obl.*, p. 461.

³⁷¹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 98b. PR, *10 John*, p. 63 shows that this additional ships had been needed.

³⁷² *Rot. litt. claus.*, pp. 100-100b.

that were then sent to Poitou.³⁷³ At the same time it was recorded that a further 40 marks had been spent on the king's orders for hauberks: '*...quas Robertus de Turneham portavit in Pictavia.*' As well as military equipment, John also provided his Poitevin allies with financial support, though this was almost certainly dispatched to Poitou after Robert had left England. On 15th April 1208 John wrote to William Brewer ordering him to provide Andrew of Belchamp and William Revel with 2000 marks which they were under orders to transport to Poitou. Early the following month orders were sent to the sheriff of Devon instructing him to find a reliable ship, crewed by good mariners, to enable Andrew and William to cross over to Poitou.³⁷⁴ Robert had probably arrived in Poitou by January 1208, and he was certainly there by February that year. On 27th February John wrote to the bailiffs of the sea ports informing them that he had granted licence to Robert's men to lead one ship loaded with corn to Poitou to sustain Robert in the king's service.³⁷⁵

Robert had clearly returned to Poitou with military supplies, and the work of William le Breton tells us what these supplies were used for. Under the year 1208 he records that: '*...Henricus marescallus, Willelmus de Rupibus et [vicecomes de Meleduni] cum trecentis militibus Francis, conflixerunt [in Pictavia] contra Savericum de Malleone et vicecomitem Thoarcensem, qui cum magna armatorum multitudine invaserant terram regis Francie et predas abducebant, et prevaluerunt eis, et, [preda excussa], bello eos confecerunt; ceperunt XL milites Pictavos armis*

³⁷³ PR, 10 John, p. 127.

³⁷⁴ Rot. litt. claus., p. 112 & p. 114b.

³⁷⁵ Rot. litt. pat., p. 79b.

*probatos, inter quos fuerunt Hugo frater vicecomitis, Henricus de Lisinano filius ejusdem, Portaclea et alii.*³⁷⁶

Once again William did not give an exact date for the campaign, but one could suggest, as indeed one might expect, that it took place in July or August 1208. The entry preceding the above account is an obituary for Odo, bishop of Paris who died on 13th July that year. Entries following the above account also relate to the events of the summer of 1208. We know that the money John sent to Poitou in the spring of 1208, which was probably intended to help finance the campaign, did not leave England until May at the earliest. Some circumstantial evidence exists to suggest that the campaign began after mid-July. On 17th July 1208 John issued letters patent stating that he had granted Reginald the clerk ‘*dilecti et fidei nostri Sauarici de Malo Leano senescalli nostri*’, an annual cash fee of 10 marks, to be paid from his own chamber, until such time as John was able to provide him was an ecclesiastical benefice.³⁷⁷ Such letters patent tend to be fairly formulaic, and one should not read too much into John’s description of Saveric as ‘*our faithful and beloved*’. However, we might legitimately ask - considering the campaign of 1208 was such a disaster (more than 2000 marks spent, 40 men lost, and Parthenay left in Capetian hands) - whether the grant to Reginald would have been made had John already known of the outcome of

³⁷⁶ *Vie (Guillaume)*, pp. 225-6. ‘Rigord’ [(*Vie (Rigord)*), pp. 165-6] relates that: ‘...marescallus predictus [Henry Clément] et Guillelmus de Rupibus, collectis fere trecentis militibus, vicecomitem Thoarcensem [Aimary] et Savericum de Maloleone, qui cum manu valida terras regis intraverant et magnas preas ducebant, ex improvise supervenientes confecerunt; in qua confectura capti sunt xl milites Pictavenses et eo amplius, videlicet Hugo de Thoarcio, frater vicecomitis, Haimericus de Lisinnano, filius vicecomitis, Portaclea [de Mausy] et quamplures alii strenui bellatores, quorum nomina scribere noluimus. Hos omnes domino regi Francorum Parisius sub diligenti custodia captos miserunt. Demum datis treugis a bello quieverunt.’ As we said earlier this material was probably derived from William of Nancy. F. Guizot, *Chronique de Guillaume de Nangis*, p. 99. However, unlike the earlier account - where names were added - ‘Rigord’ omits to mention Adam II, viscount of Melun in connection with these events.

³⁷⁷ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 85.

the campaign.³⁷⁸ John certainly appears to have held Saveric responsible for the failure of this campaign, since in April 1209 he formally dismissed Saveric as seneschal.

Neither William le Breton, nor William of Nancy, mention Robert as having participated in the campaign, and the other sources at our disposal simply detail Robert's involvement in the preparations leading up to the campaign. Even if Robert had participated in the expedition he seems to have avoided falling into the hands of the French king's allies, because he returned to England in early-September 1208. Details of Robert's return to England are to be found in the Pipe Rolls of the Bishopric of Winchester. The Winchester Rolls record details of various payments, charged to the bishop's revenues, connected with Robert's return from Poitou.³⁷⁹ One entry states that 13s, 2d had been incurred: '*In expensis domini Roberti de Turneham, quando venit de Pictavia.*'³⁸⁰ It is possible that Robert landed in England at Portsmouth since another entry records that 12d was allowed to cover the cost of transporting two tuns of wine – a gift from Robert to Peter des Roches – by sea from Portsmouth to Fareham.³⁸¹ We are fortunate that details have survived in the Winchester Roll that enable us to suggest a date for Robert's return to England. The relevant entry reads: '*In expensis domini Roberti de Torneham, Ricardi de Marisco, Willelmo de Sancto Maxentio, vicecomitis Sumersetae et familiae domini Episcopi apud Tantonam expectantium adventum domini Regis et domini Episcopi per iij dies j*

³⁷⁸ The loss of Parthenay in 1207, and the failure to recover it in 1208, must have been particularly galling for John. High, viscount of Parthenay had been the most loyal of the senior Poitevin lords during the war of 1202-5. He was the only senior Poitevin lord known to have remained loyal to John through-out that period – and it may well have been to punish Hugh for his adherence to the Angevin cause that the campaign of 1207 had seized Parthenay. Parthenay was not recovered until 1214. *Flores Hist.*, ii, pp. 99-100.

³⁷⁹ The bishop of Winchester at this time was Robert's former companion in arms – Peter des Roches.

³⁸⁰ *Winchester Rolls*, p. 68. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 70.

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 2.

tonellus vini.³⁸² We know from the Patent Rolls that John and Peter des Roches were at Taunton on 21st September and 27th September 1208, so it was likely that Robert returned to England in early or mid-September 1208, probably shortly after the conclusion of the failed campaign of that summer.³⁸³

Robert did not remain at court following his arrival in England, and what little evidence we have would seem to suggest that he returned to Yorkshire. It is not until 12th April 1209, at Robert's own manor of Doncaster, that John and Robert were next to be found together, and once again conversation would seem to have been dominated by Poitevin affairs.³⁸⁴ On 7th April 1209, at Nottingham, John issued letters patent to his Poitevin and Gascon followers notifying them of important changes to the administration of those regions. John wrote: '*Mandamus vobis quod sitis intendentes sicut antea fuistis dilecto et fideli nostro Saverico de Malo Leone tamquam senescallo nostro ... [lacuna] ... honorem nostrum senescalciam nostram recipere et servare voluerit. Quod si forte noluerit tunc sitis eodem modo intendentes Roberto de Turnham quousque aliud inde vobis mandaverimus*'.³⁸⁵ Robert does not appear to have been at court when the decision to dismiss Saveric was taken, and the first Robert may have heard of this decision was at his meeting with John at Doncaster.

³⁸² *ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁸³ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 86b. An entry on the Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1209 stating that £10, 9s, 8d had been allowed the citizens of Winchester for the robe given to Robert, and for the expenses incurred when Robert and other messengers, came from Poitou, probably relates to this period, though it must have been made after October 1208. PR, 11 John, p. 173.

³⁸⁴ *Rot. chart.*, p. 185.

³⁸⁵ *Rot. litt. pat.*, pp. 90b-91. The *lacuna* in the surviving roll prevents identification of Saveric's replacement, and this is compounded by the loss of the Patent and Close Rolls shortly after these orders were issued. What we do know is that the two posts of seneschal of Poitou and Gascony were to be reunited in the hands of one seneschal, and given the seneschal of Gascony at this time was Reginald of Pons, we may suggest that he was the king preferred choice. However, there may have been problems with the appointment, perhaps ones similar to those that had faced Robert when he held both posts, since by 1213 – when the Close and Patent Rolls are once again available to us – the two posts had been divided, with Reginald keeping Gascony, and Ivo de Jallia acquiring Poitou. *ibid.*, p. 92.

Although Robert's was no longer the power he had once been, John still held him to be sufficiently reliable to be entrusted with the mission of informing Saveric of his dismissal. Robert must have sailed for Poitou shortly after 12th April. He may even have reached Poitou by May 1209, since we know that John dispatched a messenger to Robert on 24th May, though what information he carried is, as usual, unknown.³⁸⁶ Entries relating to Robert's journey to Poitou found their way onto the Pipe Rolls for Michaelmas 1209. One entry records that Robert had required five ships and two galleys to transport himself and his followers to Poitou.³⁸⁷ Given that Robert had needed only two ships the previous year, one must assume that he led a larger retinue to Poitou in the summer of 1209 than he had in the winter of 1208, and it is possible that John had assigned him military support, in case Saveric decided to contest the king's orders.³⁸⁸

Although Saveric was to rebel in 1212, Robert's mission to Poitou appears to have passed off peacefully, with Saveric accepting his fate without any apparent dispute. The king's new appointee also seems to have accepted his commission, making the need for Robert to remain in Poitou superfluous. Robert appears to have returned to England in late-November or early-December since we find him at court on 9th December at Easton. From entries on the *misae* rolls it would seem likely that Robert had only recently returned from Poitou. The *misae* rolls record that John gave Robert a gift of 300 marks on 9th December, probably as a reward for his services in

³⁸⁶ *Rot. lib.*, p. 112.

³⁸⁷ *PR*, 11 John, p. 145.

³⁸⁸ Another explanation may lie in the fact that Robert was known to have brought soldiers back from Poitou to enter the king's service, and these additional ships may have carried them, and the other goods Robert returned from Poitou with.

Poitou.³⁸⁹ On the same day we find Robert and Geoffrey of Neville at court in connection with certain soldiers who had come from Poitou into the king's service. That Robert had headed straight to court following his arrival in England would seem to be suggested by the fact that Geoffrey the Gascon, Robert's servant, who had been placed in charge of the goshawks that Robert had bought back from Poitou for the king, did not arrive at court until a few days after Robert.³⁹⁰ With his return to England Robert's involvement in the affairs of John's transmarine provinces came to an end, or at least that is what we must assume given that lack of any evidence to the contrary.³⁹¹

This period of Robert's life, from July 1205 until December 1209, was certainly less spectacular than the ten years prior to July 1205 had been. Robert was no longer the king's senior representative in Poitou, but it was clear that he was still a man whom John trusted, and whose advice and service the king valued. The nature of his new role, and the fact that contemporary chroniclers took little or no interest in Poitevin affairs, at least when John was not campaigning there, helps explain why Robert's name does not appear in the literary sources. The infrequency of his name in the administrative sources, at least in those detailing instructions to Saveric of Mauléon, can be explained by the way in which those sources were compiled, and the nature of the information contained therein.

However, the very fact that information relating to Robert's activities is rare, at least in comparison with the earlier period, is probably indicative of at least a slight decline in his standing at court. Although Robert was often in Poitou, his frequency of

³⁸⁹ *Rot. lib.*, p. 142.

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 143 (14th December).

³⁹¹ The loss of the Patent and Close Rolls all but ends our knowledge of Robert's activities.

attestation of royal *acta*, was much lower – post 1205 - than for any other period of his life so far. The table below shows Robert’s attestations to John’s *acta*.

Year	Charters ³⁹²	Letters Close ³⁹³	Letters Patent ³⁹⁴	Total
1199	4	NE	NE	4
1200	72	0	NE	72
1201	30	0	0	30
1202	NE	NE	7	7

³⁹² NE = Not Extant. Charter rolls survive [Printed in *Rot. chart.*] for 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14 & 18 John.

³⁹³ The earliest of the letters close are classified as Liberate Rolls, and these survive for 2, 3 & 5 John. Printed *Rot. lib.*, pp. 1-108, with a fragment in *Memoranda Roll 1 John*, pp. 88-97. The Close Rolls proper [printed in *Rot. litt. claus.*] begin in 1204. R. Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, (Oxford, 2000), p. 698.

³⁹⁴ The Patent Rolls survive for 3-10 & 14-18 John. All printed in *Rot. litt. pat.*.

1203	NE	0	0	0
1204	0	0	0	0
1205	9	1	0	10
1206	3	1	9	13
1207	8	2	0	10
1208	NE	0	0	0
1209	1	NE	0	1
1210	0	NE	NE	0
1211	NE	NE	NE	0
				147

Between 1199 and April 1201 Robert attested no fewer than 106 royal charters (72% of all his attestations), achieving a level of attestation matched only by such leading *curiales* as Geoffrey fitz Peter, William Marshal, Hugh of Neville and William Brewer. Robert's return to active service in Poitou between 1201 and 1205 would account for the lack of attestations in that period. Following his return from France, Robert still attested royal *acta*, but he was no longer a regular presence at court. One explanation for this was probably his frequent trips to Poitou, and the fact that for the last three years of his life much of the source material has been lost. Another possible explanation for Robert's frequent absences from court, particularly after the winter of 1208, was that Robert no longer a young man, and having dedicated the greater part of his adult life to the ambitions of the Angevin kings, he may simply have chosen to recuperate from the travails of the summer of 1208 on his Yorkshire estates. Court life was demanding and stressful, and perhaps the years of toil had taken their toll on Robert. However, even allowing for these factors, it is hard not to conclude that the

drop in the number of *acta* attested by Robert probably, if only in a small way, reflected a drop in Robert's status at court. The loss of the sherialry of Surrey to John fitz Hugh in 1207, would also suggest that Robert's star was on the wane. One cannot argue that Robert fell completely from grace following his return from captivity- if he had then he would not have been entrusted with the duties that he had been – but the impression we gain of Robert between 1205 and 1211 is at some variance with the Robert who appears in the sources between 1191 and 1205.

One reason for Robert's loss of standing may have been the loss of his patron Hubert Walter. We learn of Robert's connections to Hubert from the work of Thomas Burton. Burton was convinced that one of the reasons that Robert was able to pursue the Wharram dispute so successfully was that his connections at court ensured that his views, and his alone, prevailed. On one occasion Burton states that: '*...principum regni, qui omnes fere Roberto favebant*' had ensured Robert's success in the early stages of the Wharram dispute.³⁹⁵ Elsewhere he claims that Abbot Alexander: '*neque per archiepiscopum neque per ipsum regem aut aliquem alium de dicta grangia et terris quicquam poterat impetrare.*'³⁹⁶ However, these were rather general statements and, even if accurate, do not enable us to identify those who supported Robert. However, Burton did openly identify Hubert Walter as one of Robert's supporters, stating that Hubert was: '*in omnibus fautorem Roberti.*'³⁹⁷ Although Burton is a much later writer, and his work, as we shall see, is not always unbiased, he may well have been correct to identify Hubert as Robert's patron. When Abbot Thomas resigned, and the monks of Meaux were forced to seek a new abbot, a central factor in the election of the unknown Alexander of Ford had been his previous relationship to

³⁹⁵ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 232

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*, i, p. 290.

³⁹⁷ *ibid.*, i, p. 232.

Hubert Walter.³⁹⁸ If Hubert Walter had not been seen by the monks as one of Robert's key allies, then Alexander's earlier career would, presumably, not have played such an important factor in his election. If Burton is correct to identify Walter as Robert's patron, it may help explain why Robert's standing at court seems to have diminished following his return from captivity. It is a strange coincidence indeed that Robert returned to England in the very month that Hubert died - July 1205 - and from July 1205 onwards Robert never again achieved the degree of prominence that he had enjoyed between 1195 and 1205.

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*, i, p. 289.

Robert of Thurnham and England

1195 - 1211

In previous chapters we examined the different ways in which the Angevin kings utilized Robert's services, and the dangers and problems that Robert faced in the execution of his duties. However, life in the royal service was not all-selfless sacrifice. Royal officials, especially those who held positions of power and authority, expected to be rewarded for their services. Despite the fact that Robert spent much of his career on the continent it was in England, rather than Poitou or Anjou, that he received the rewards for these services. In this final chapter we shall examine not only the different ways in which Richard and John chose to reward Robert, but also the way in which these rewards affected Robert's relationship with the wider English community.

Rewards

Of all the rewards bestowed on Robert by far the most valuable was the hand in marriage of Joanna Fossard, given to him by Richard in *circa* 1194. Joanna was the daughter and heiress of William Fossard II, a prominent Yorkshire nobleman owning extensive estates in East and South Yorkshire. The marriage to Joanna was to prove the beginning of a lengthy, and fraught, relationship between Robert and the Abbey of Meaux [Yorks.]. For this reason Thomas Burton, author of the 'Meaux

Chronicle', carefully recorded the details surrounding the marriage.³⁹⁹ According to Burton William Fossard II died: '*relicta unica parvula filia sua nomine Johanna, et infra aetatem constituta; quam Richardus rex cuidam Roberto de Thurnham, militi de Cancia, senescallo Vasconiae strenuo et in expeditione probatissimo, dedit in uxorem.*'⁴⁰⁰ In fact Joanna was not an only child. Evidence emerged after Robert's death that William Fossard had had a second daughter – Ydoine Fossard.⁴⁰¹ Nonetheless William's estates passed to Robert by virtue of this advantageous marriage.⁴⁰² The fact that Ydoine Fossard was unable to lay hands on any portion of her father's inheritance until after Robert's death, is indicative of the high regard in which Robert was held by the king. The marriage to Joanna transformed Robert's standing in society both economically and socially. From having been a relatively poor younger son of a Kentish knight, his marriage to Joanna meant that Robert was now a direct tenant of the crown owning extensive estates.⁴⁰³

Some idea of the value of the Fossard inheritance can be gained from an examination of the accounts submitted by Henry de Rademan to the Exchequer at Michaelmas 1212. With Robert's death in 1211 – he left no male heir - the Fossard inheritance passed into the king's hands. John in turn granted custody of the Fossard

³⁹⁹ For Thomas Burton's see Appendix B.

⁴⁰⁰ Meaux Chron., i, pp. 231-2. Another account of the marriage was given by Burton [*ibid.*, i, p. 105]: '*Sed [William Fossard II] tandem mortuus habuit unam filiam juvenem et heredem, nomine Johannam, quam Robertus de Turnham, miles strenuus de Cancia, desponsavit.*'

⁴⁰¹ J. Parker (ed.), Feet of Fines for the County of Yorkshire, p. 37.

⁴⁰² An exact date for the marriage of Joanna and Robert is difficult to establish. The Pipe Rolls show that they were definitely married by Michaelmas 1197. PR, 9 Richard I, p. 51. Burton's account of the Wharram dispute suggests they could have been married by late-1196, and that they were certainly married by the summer of 1197. Since Robert was on active service in Anjou between January 1195 and April 1199 one could suggest that the marriage took place in mid to late-1194 after Robert's return from Germany. We have seen that on his return from Germany Robert was given the sheriffdom of Surrey *circa* Easter 1194, so perhaps Joanna's hand in marriage was given to him about the same time. This would fit with Farrer's suggestion that William Fossard died at some point in 1194. William was certainly dead by Michaelmas 1195 when his wife Beatrice proffered ten marks to have her dower. EYC, ii, p. 328.

⁴⁰³ According to the surviving records the Fossard barony was assessed at thirty-one and a half knights' fees. RBE, i, p. 407-8; ii p. 490 [1210-11] & PR, 13 John, p. 30.

escheat to Gilbert fitz Reinfrey. Gilbert appointed Henry de Rademan to administer the estates on his behalf.⁴⁰⁴ According to Henry's accounts the Fossard inheritance generated an annual income of £278, 2s, 3½d from fixed rents [rent of assize], and the from the farm of the manor mills. In addition to this Henry accounted for £56, 8s, 10d from pleas and perquisites, £17, 15s ½d from the sale of wool, 40s from the fisheries, 44s, 9½d from the sale of small goods, 68s, 6d from the sale of a bullock and some oxen, £6, 11s, 3½d from the sale of cheeses, £4, 18s, 4d raised from herbage and pannage rights, and £40, 3d from the sale of wheat. Thus the gross revenues of the Fossard inheritance amounted to the princely sum of £411, 9s, 4d.⁴⁰⁵ The Exchequer allowed Henry expenses totalling £69, 15s, 3½d for the administration of the Fossard inheritance, meaning that the net income of the Fossard inheritance was £341, 14s, ½d.

Although the Fossard inheritance was the single largest gift made to Robert in the course of his career, other smaller rewards were also bestowed on him. In addition to the Fossard inheritance Richard also gave Robert land in Dover [Kent]. In September 1216 John issued a charter to Solomon fitz Lethelin of Dover confirming the grant made to Solomon by Robert of one messuage at Dover with its appurtenances. The land in question was: '*...illud mesuagium quod Rex Ricardus frater noster eidem Roberto dedit pro servicio suo.*'⁴⁰⁶

Although the bulk of his landed wealth had been acquired by the time of Richard's death, Robert also received various grants from John. Most of John's

⁴⁰⁴ PR, 14 John, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁰⁵ The Exchequer clerk gave the total as £411, 9s, 2d making him 2d out in his calculations, but he subsequently corrected his error by adding the missing 2d to the revenues from escheats and wardships that had been in Robert's hands.

⁴⁰⁶ *Rot. chart.*, p. 218b.

grants appear to have been temporary ones in the form of wardships and escheats. By January 1205 Robert had possession of three and a half knights' fees in Sussex which had previously belonged to John of St. Leger.⁴⁰⁷ John had lost these estates, located within the Rape of Hastings, because he had granted them, presumably without the king's consent, to Biset of St. Leger. According to John's orders, Robert had held these estates: '*...quando transfretavit in servicio domini Regis.*' Given what we know of Robert's activities regarding the Rape of Hastings *circa* April 1201, we should assume that these estates were granted to Robert between April and July 1201, i.e. before he sailed to France to take up the post of seneschal of Poitou.⁴⁰⁸ Robert was known to have held another knights' fee in the Rape of Hasting, independent of the lands of John of St. Leger, which had probably been acquired between April and July 1201 from land confiscated from Ralph of Exoudun, count of Eu.⁴⁰⁹

Robert also benefited from a number of wardships. Wardships formed an important aspect of royal patronage. The king could grant the custody of minors, their marriages, and temporary control of their lands to court favourites, who in turn profited from the estates until the heirs came of age. This appealed to the king because it cost him nothing, at least in terms of real currency. Explicit evidence for wardships granted to Robert by Richard is not available, though evidence has survived from the first year of John's reign showing that Robert held at least two wardships in 1199, which may have been given to him by Richard I.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 17b & PR, *7 John*, p. 111.

⁴⁰⁸ It was these estates that were returned to Geoffrey of St. Leger in June 1205 after the intervention of Stephen of Thurnham.

⁴⁰⁹ PR, *7 John*, p. 111 & *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 43b.

⁴¹⁰ *Rot. chart.*, p. 46. [Adolph of Bouton] & *Memoranda Rolls 1 John*, p. 21 [Eustace de Burnes]. According to the Red Book the Burnes' estates were assessed at five knights' fees. *RBE*, i, p. 136.

The most important wardship granted to Robert, or at least the wardship for which Robert was willing to pay the most, was that of Stephen III de Meinil, whose father, Robert III de Meinil, had been a tenant of the Fossard barony.⁴¹¹ Robert de Meinil was dead by November 1206, since on 6th November John issued instructions to Geoffrey fitz Peter ordering that no one except Robert, or his bailiffs, were to be permitted to interfere in the estates that Robert de Meinil held from Robert.⁴¹² Not all Robert de Meinil lands were held from Robert; some were held from the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁴¹³ Before Michaelmas 1207 Robert proffered 1000 marks to have custody of Stephen, the right to marry him, and custody of those lands which Stephen's father had held from the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁴¹⁴ Although John agreed to this before Michaelmas 1207, a charter confirming Robert's rights in relation to the Meinil wardship was not issued until December 1207. John's charter of 15th December 1207 confirmed the details recorded in the Pipe Rolls, but adds that Robert was permitted to marry Robert de Meinil's heirs to Robert's nieces and nephews, which is to say the children of Stephen of Thurnham.⁴¹⁵ Stephen de Meinil was not the only ward in Robert's hands in December 1207. On the same day the Meinil charter was issued, letters patent were issued to those officials in whose bailiwicks Robert held wardships.⁴¹⁶ The king's officials were ordered to ensure that Robert's wards, and their tenants, were protected whilst Robert was in Poitou in John's service. Unfortunately these orders make no specific reference to the

⁴¹¹ *RBE*, i, p. 407. Robert II de Meinil held one knights' fee from William Fossard II.

⁴¹² *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 75.

⁴¹³ *EYC*, ii, pp. 133-137. In 1229 the lands that Stephen held from the Archbishop of Canterbury were assessed at five knights' fees. *ibid.*, ii, p. 144.

⁴¹⁴ *PR*, 9 *John*, p. 69.

⁴¹⁵ *Rot. chart.*, p. 173b. Robert died before any marriage could be arranged because Stephen was still a minor in 1211. *PR*, 14 *John*, pp. 5-6 & *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 389.

⁴¹⁶ *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 77b.

wardships then in Robert's hands, nor do they state in which counties he held them, but they do refer to wardships in the plural.

The various escheats and wardships granted to Robert must have been of considerable value. Some idea of just how valuable they were can be seen from a further examination of Henry de Rademan's accounts of 1212. Since the escheats and wardships granted to Robert were held from the king, with Robert's death they, like the Fossard inheritance, returned to the king to be administered by Henry de Rademan. Following his account of the Fossard revenues Rademan accounted for the revenues collected from those escheats and wardships granted to Robert by the king before his death. According to Rademan's accounts the lands of Adam de *Muletorp* [Mowthorpe?] had produced £4, 4*s*, whilst those of Stephen de Meinil generated a further £44, 4*s*, 8½*d*. The lands that had belonged to John of Buckton [nr. Bridlington] added a further 36*s*, whilst the lands that had been Master Roger Arundel's netted £45, and the lands of Robert the Balistarius produced a further £4, 7*s*, 6*d*.⁴¹⁷ Three other estates: *Wichton*, Kilham [nr. Driffield], and the farm of the mill at *Muneketon* [Moor Monkton – Nr. York?] provided a further £99, 2*s*, 11*d*.⁴¹⁸ In total these estates provided the king with a gross income of £197, 15*s*, 1½*d*. Rademan was allowed £17, 16*s*, 2*d* for his expenses, resulting in a net income of £180, 18*s* 11½*d*.⁴¹⁹ If we combine the figures for the Fossard inheritance with those for the escheats and wardships in Robert's hands in 1211, we discover that the income

⁴¹⁷ Master Roger's lands had escheated to the crown with his death in 1210, and must have been granted to Robert shortly thereafter. *EYC*, ii, pp. 376-7.

⁴¹⁸ I have been unable to identify *Wichton*, but one William de *Wichton* was a tenant of Peter de Brus who was himself a tenant of the Fossard barony, so presumably this manor lay somewhere in East Yorkshire.

⁴¹⁹ The Exchequer clerk notes that the £17, 16*s*, 2*d* of expenses applied to the lands that had been Robert de Meinil. I have assumed that the clerk meant this to be understood as the allowance made for Henry's expenses for all the non core Fossard estates. However, if this allowance had been made purely in relation to the administration of the Meinil's estates, then the aggregate gross and net totals remain the same, but the net income of the Meinil estates is £26, 8*s*, 6½*d*.

from Robert's former possessions was £610, 4s, 5½d (gross) and £522, 13s (net). By any standards a very respectable figure.

Other rewards given to Robert by Richard and John could be considered more modest, though they still reflect the value the two kings placed on Robert's service. Between 1191 and 1211 Robert was exempted from the payment of every scutage levied by Richard or John.⁴²⁰ Although this may seem a small matter, the number of scutages levied by John, and the rate at which they were levied, shows that these exemptions must have amounted to a considerable sum between 1199 and 1211. Robert also received cash gifts from John. We have already seen that Robert was given a gift of 400 marks by John on his return from Poitou in July 1205 and another 300 marks in December 1209, again on his return from Poitou.⁴²¹ The king could grant his supporters cash gifts, but this cost him hard currency.

Another way in which the king could reward his supporters financially, but without actually having to part with any money, was to allow them to make fines with him for favours and then not demand payment of the money or goods promised. Court favourites could proffer for a range of favours, safe in the knowledge that not all, if any, of the sum proffered would be demanded by the king. In turn the king could use these debts as a way of keeping his officials under control. Those who served the king loyally, as Robert did, could find that part of their debt was written off; in effect a cash gift that cost the king nothing. The king could also choose to ignore the fact that debts were often not repaid at all, or at least not repaid in full. However, those that incurred the king's displeasure could find these debts coming back to haunt them.

⁴²⁰ PR, 3 Richard I, p. 44; PR, 6 Richard I, p. 183; PR, 10 Richard I, p. 36; PR, 1 John, p. 41 & p. 54; PR, 3 John, p. 243; PR, 4 John, p. 67; PR, 5 John, p. 211; PR, 7 John, p. 62 & p. 111.

⁴²¹ Rot. litt. claus., p. 44; PR, 7 John, p. 12 & Rot. lib., p. 142.

The Angevin kings, especially John, used proffers for royal favours as a means of 'patronage management'.⁴²²

In the course of his career Robert ran up a number of debts with the king. The single largest debt was the 1000 marks he had proffered for the Meinil wardship. The original terms of repayment were entered into the Pipe Rolls at Michaelmas 1207.⁴²³ For the financial year 1206-7 various amounts were deducted from this debt. Robert had given 86 marks to William, earl of Salisbury, on the king's instructions, whilst the two men were in Poitou, and this was credited to him on the Meinil account.⁴²⁴ A further 87½ marks were paid to the Exchequer by Robert himself. A surplus on the Surrey farm resulted in another £4, 3s, 11d being deducted from the debt. However, before the financial year ended a further 300 marks were deducted after the king intervened to pardon Robert for that amount. This was, in effect, a gift to Robert of 300 marks which had cost the king nothing in terms of real coinage.⁴²⁵ However, at Michaelmas 1207 Robert still owed the king 520m 2s, 9d. After this initial burst of activity the account remained dormant. Nothing was repaid in 1207/8, and although 10 marks were discounted from the debt in 1208/9, this was because Robert had paid out 10 marks on the king's orders.⁴²⁶ In 1209/10 Robert paid a further £41, 9d into the Exchequer, leaving him with £299, 2s to pay.⁴²⁷ Since Robert died *circa* Easter 1211 it is not surprisingly that nothing more was ever paid to the Exchequer to discharge this debt. Therefore, Robert died still owing the king £299, 2s - ~45% of

⁴²² T. K. Keefe, 'Proffers for Heirs and Heiresses in the Pipe Rolls, *Haskin Society Journal*, 5, (1993), pp. 99-109; p. 108. This policy was ruthlessly exploited by John in the latter years of his reign, and probably explains why Peter of Mauley had to proffer 7000 marks in 1214 (more than the Fossard inheritance would yield in over a decade) for Robert's daughter's - Isabella of Thurnham. PR, 16 John, p. 94.

⁴²³ PR, 9 John, p. 69.

⁴²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 74.

⁴²⁶ PR, 11 John, p. 136.

⁴²⁷ PR, 12 John, p. 156.

what he had originally promised - clearly having failed to pay the sums agreed, on the dates agreed, some four years earlier.⁴²⁸ In fact Robert was not particularly fastidious in repaying the debts he owed the king. At Michaelmas 1200 it was recorded that Robert had promised the king two palfreys, each valued at £5, for the right to hold a three day fair at Doncaster.⁴²⁹ Yet at Michaelmas 1211 he still owed the king the two palfreys; the debt not even having been paid in part.⁴³⁰ Circa March 1208 Robert had promised John two more palfreys for having confirmation of the grants that he had made to Bayham Abbey. However, John never received these palfreys either.⁴³¹ Although Robert made a number of proffers in return for grants by John, he only ever paid a proportion of these proffers, if indeed he paid anything at all. This failure to repay his debts indicates the high regard in which Robert was held by John.

The Wharram Dispute

The Fossard barony was clearly a very valuable acquisition, but Robert believed that it could be even more valuable. Robert believed that lands and rights belonging to the Fossard family, and which ought now to belong to him, had been usurped by his neighbours and others in the period prior to his marriage to Joanna. The period 1198-1208 saw Robert initiate a series of legal disputes with various neighbouring landowners intended to recover lands and rights that he claimed had been usurped at an earlier date. Perhaps the most interesting of these disputes

⁴²⁸ PR, 13 John, p. 50.

⁴²⁹ PR, 2 John, p. 111. Despite what the Pipe Rolls say John had only granted Robert an increase of one day to the pre-existing fair held at Doncaster each year on 24th and 25th July. A charter to this effect was issued by John on 9th May 1200. *Rot. chart.*, p. 57b.

⁴³⁰ PR, 13 John, p. 49.

⁴³¹ PR, 10 John, p. 101 & PR, 13 John, p. 237.

concerned Wharram Grange [Wharram-le-Street - Yorks.] ownership of which was contested between Robert and the Abbey of Meaux.

The Wharram dispute was one of the most important events to have affected the Abbey of Meaux during reigns of Richard I and John. As such Thomas Burton gave it considerable attention. The events that set up the circumstances under which the dispute erupted took place twenty years before Robert set foot in Yorkshire. Burton's account of these events is lengthy and well detailed, and much of what Burton had to say on the subject is supported by independent evidence. According to Burton, William Fossard II's youthful adventures in the household of his guardian William le Gros, count of Aumâle, and subsequent self-imposed exile left him burdened with considerable debts.⁴³² These debts – said by Burton to have been 2060 marks at one stage - were owed to the famous Jewish financier Aaron of Lincoln.⁴³³ In order to pay these debts William entered into an arrangement with Philip, abbot of Meaux. William's proposition was simple. Philip would take on all William's debts, in return for which William would grant Meaux various properties from which they could earn the income needed to pay the debt, as well as four and a half carucates at Wharram as a gift for having agreed to the transaction. Aaron was eager to recover his money, and offered to forgo more than 500 marks of William's debt if Philip would agree to William's offer. In 1176 Philip agreed to accept responsibility for the remaining 1260 marks of William's debt, promising to pay Aaron, each year, the sum of 60 marks until the debt was discharged.⁴³⁴ Burton states that once the agreement

⁴³² Burton's account of the origins of the Wharram conflict can be found in Meaux Chron., i, pp. 103-5 [General background] & pp. 173-5 [Detailed account].

⁴³³ Meaux Chron., i, p. 174. For Aaron of Lincoln see J. Jacobs, 'Aaron of Lincoln', Transactions of the Jewish Society of England, iii, (1899), pp. 157-173.

⁴³⁴ Meaux Chron., i, p. 174: '*Et quidem ipse Willielmus, sicut promiserat, quatuor carucatas terrae et dimidiam in Wharroma...nobis conferebat.*'

had been signed, William gave the abbey the four and a half carucates at Wharram he had promised earlier.⁴³⁵

The matter remained settled until late-1186 when Aaron died, and his chattels, including the loans he had made during his life – and there were many – passed into the hands of the king.⁴³⁶ The king in turn ordered the Exchequer to call in these loans. At this point a problem occurred. Among the various charters found in Aaron's storerooms were a number relating to William's debts. These charters showed that William still owed Aaron more than £500, money that the king now demanded from William.⁴³⁷ William denied owing any such sum claiming, rightly, that he had transferred the whole of his debt to Meaux, and that they were now responsible for it. According to Burton the king's officials next demanded the money from Meaux. Thomas, abbot of Meaux, claimed that the debt had already paid, and that the money the king was demanding had in fact been pardoned them as part of their arrangement with Aaron. However proving this turned out to be problematic. The problem was that although Aaron had promised to forgive the monks more than 500 marks of the debt no documentary evidence to prove this seems to have been kept by Aaron. Eventually a charter confirming Meaux's position was found – where was not said - and read out to the barons of the Exchequer who entered it: '*...in rotulo quodam, sed non in magno rotulo.*'⁴³⁸ This failure to have the charter entered onto the Pipe Rolls was to prove significant.

⁴³⁵ Meaux Chron., i, p. 175.

⁴³⁶ PR, 32 Henry II, p. 50 & p. 195.

⁴³⁷ Meaux Chron., i, p. 177 & PR, 3 Richard I, pp. 17-24 [*Rotulus de debitis Aaron Judeus*]; at p. 22.

⁴³⁸ Dating these events is problematic. That they took place after Aaron's death is clear, but the first reference to William's debts on the Pipe Rolls occurs at Michaelmas 1191. PR, 3 Richard I, p. 22. Presumably it was at some point after Michaelmas 1190 that William was summoned for the debt. These events must have taken place before William died in c.1194. Therefore, a date of 1191-1194 is likely.

It was shortly after Abbot Thomas had resolved the issue of William's debts that problems developed in relation to Wharram. Burton's account of the initial stages of the conflict is a little confusing. According to Burton, shortly after the marriage of Robert and Joanna, Robert's mother-in-law – Beatrice Fossard – apparently encouraged by Robert, petitioned the king to have: '*terram nostram [Meaux's] in Wharroma*' returned to her as her dower.⁴³⁹ Burton's account is a little misleading, since it could be understood to imply that Beatrice was seeking the return of all Meaux's lands at Wharram. In fact the final concord by which the Wharram dispute was settled - a copy of which was almost certainly available to Burton – shows that Beatrice had sought only the four and a half carucates at Wharram, which William Fossard had given to Meaux in return for having taken on his debts.⁴⁴⁰ Burton goes on to state that after '*multas...labores et angustias*', an agreement was reached with Beatrice to settle the claim. No date was given for this settlement, but Burton states that it took place before Robert became personally involved in the dispute as a petitioner, but after the marriage of Joanna and Robert, so a date of mid to late-1196 seems possible.

It was after this settlement that Robert entered the fray demanding: '*...omnes terras de Wharroma...ut de jure hereditario uxoris suae*', which presumably meant that Robert not only wanted the four and a half carucates Beatrice had sought, but the other grants made to Meaux at that location by the Fossard family over the years.⁴⁴¹ However, Burton's statement is incorrect, a fact that he himself was almost certainly aware of since he had access to the final concord of 1199. This shows that the land

⁴³⁹ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 232.

⁴⁴⁰ *Feet of Fines [Yorks.]*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴¹ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 232.

Robert had petitioned for was limited to the four and a half carucates that Beatrice had originally sought. Another point that Burton omits to mention, perhaps deliberately, is that the matter of William's debts were far from the settled matter he had led his readers to believe.

That Robert claimed the manor of Wharram as the hereditary right of his wife was almost certainly true. Robert was to make similar claims, on a frequent basis, in relation to other lands and rights. However, what Burton does not record is that Robert was being held accountable for £510, 10s that the Exchequer believed William Fossard owed the king and which Robert, as William's heir, now owed the king.⁴⁴² Robert may well have claimed the manor as the hereditary right of his wife, not simply because he wanted to deprive Meaux of its rights, but because he believed Meaux had reneged on its deal with William Fossard. The four and a half carucates at Wharram had been given to Meaux as a reward for taking on William's debts, a fact that Burton himself was prepared to admit. For Robert the situation must have looked fairly clear cut. William had given the land in question to Meaux in return for having taken on his debts; but those debts were still outstanding; Meaux had not fulfilled its obligations; thus the land ought to be returned to him. Robert's petition proved successful, as might seem reasonable given the circumstances, and according to Burton the land was taken into the king's hands on the orders of Hubert Walter. An exact date for the trial by which Robert recovered Wharram is not given, but from references elsewhere in the text it must have occurred in either late-1196 or early-1197, it had certainly taken place before the summer of 1197.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴² PR, 5 Richard I, p. 68 & PR, 10 Richard I, p. 31.

⁴⁴³ No record of the case survives, but various references in Burton's work name Hubert as the judge. Meaux Chron., i, p. 289 & p. 232.

The loss of Wharram seems to have helped hasten the end of Thomas' abbacy since he resigned his post shortly after the court reached its decision.⁴⁴⁴ Burton makes it clear that the Wharram dispute was a matter of grave importance to the monks, and was instrumental in securing Alexander of Ford's election to the abbacy. Alexander was unknown to the monks of Meaux, but it was said that he was a decent, learned man, and perhaps more importantly: '*...bene notus et satis familiaris fuerat praescripto Huberto Cantuariensi archiepiscopo*', by whose judgement Wharram had been lost.⁴⁴⁵ Such was the importance of Wharram to Meaux that: '*...ipse Alexander, anno Domini 1197, in abbatis officium substitutus in partibus nostris vix per 15 dies moram fecit, sed statim ad dictum archiepiscopum, qui tunc in Normannia morabatur, de cujus adjutorio plurimum nimirum confidebat, transfretavit*. Alexander's former relationship with Archbishop Hubert soon showed its value, and on his arrival in Normandy his appeal to Hubert found a receptive ear. Leaving Normandy, Alexander set out in search of Robert, whom he found in eastern Touraine or Berry in the summer of 1197. At their meeting Alexander presented Robert with the letters of support he had received from Hubert, together with those he had bought from England from Baldwin of Bethune, count of Albemarle, and asked him to return Wharram. In addition he offered to pay Robert 100 marks to end the dispute. Alexander's journey proved to be a wasted one, since neither the intervention of Hubert and Baldwin, nor the offer of a cash settlement, had any effect on Robert who refused to return the land.⁴⁴⁶

Having left France, Alexander returned to England and Hubert Walter, with whom he remained for six months. During his stay Alexander continued to argue his

⁴⁴⁴ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 233.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid.*, i, p. 289.

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid.*, i, p. 290.

case for the return of Wharram, but despite his former relationship with Hubert, his influence at court, according to Burton, was nothing compared to that wielded by Robert. It is possible that Burton truly believed that Robert's standing at court was an impediment to Meaux recovering Wharram. We shall see shortly that Robert does indeed appear to have enjoyed preferential treatment in his many legal disputes. However, this was not the sole reason for why Alexander failed to recover Wharram, and Burton, having lamented on the iniquities of court life, continues his account of Alexander's endeavours. According to Burton, whilst Alexander was at court he had access to the administrative records stored at Westminster and: '*...per vii. dies non cessavit quaerere transcriptum cartae Aaron de quo praedictum est [that is the charter entered onto an Exchequer roll circa 1190, but not the Pipe Roll].*' Alexander's researches were not in vain since: '*...tandem inveniens in magno rotuli [Pipe Roll], data una marca argenti, illud transcribi fecit, et quod de nullo debito Willielmi Fossard de caetero tenebatur respondere in eodem similiter rotulo scribi fecit.*'⁴⁴⁷

Burton's account of Alexander's search for the missing charter is enlightening. Although Burton claims that Robert had behaved entirely incorrectly in relation to Wharram, it is noteworthy that Alexander was so keen to find proof that William's debts to Aaron had been discharged in full. According to Burton's own account the king's demands for the outstanding money had been settled *circa* 1190 when Abbot Thomas had brought the matter before the Exchequer. There is no evidence from either Burton's own work, or from the Pipe Rolls, to suggest that the monks of Meaux had been summoned for this debt since then. That Burton included this search in his

⁴⁴⁷ Meaux Chron., i, p. 290. A copy of the charter in question was indeed enrolled on the Pipe Rolls. EYC, ii, p. 391 & PR, 9 Richard I, n.43.

account of the Wharram dispute would seem to indicate that the question of William's debts were part of the problem between Meaux and Robert. One could suggest that Robert's refusal to return Wharram, when he and Alexander had met earlier that year, had involved the question of William's debts. It is possible that Robert had refused to return the manor until Alexander had ensured that the question of William's debts had been settled with the Exchequer. This would explain not only why Robert rejected the offer of 100 marks - because it was less than what he owed the Exchequer - but also why Alexander returned to England in search of the missing charter of 1176.

Whilst Alexander was attempting to recover Wharram, and to sort out the confusion surrounding William's debts, matters at Wharram itself went from bad to worse. Burton states that shortly after the failed mission to France, the news of Robert's success in recovering the manor was communicated to Robert's officials for his Yorkshire estates. Burton goes on to records that: '*...custodes dicti Roberti apud Byrdsalliam [Birdsall] omnes conversos et servientes nostros in ipsa grangia de Wharroma praeter duos conversos ejecerunt.*'⁴⁴⁸ The two lay brothers who remained were held under house arrest and their guards, who watched them day and night, had sworn to allow neither food nor drink to be given to them. Quite apart from holding Meaux's men hostage Robert's men: '*Domos etiam, molendinum scilicet, magnum pistrinum et horreum unum pergrande, et reliqua aedificia similiter asportaverunt.*'⁴⁴⁹ The material recovered was carried away and used to build houses at the neighbouring manor of Birdsall. To what extent Burton's account of the seizure of Wharram grange is accurate is unclear. Burton does not, at least in regard to the Wharram dispute, seem to have invented material, though he does appear to have distorted,

⁴⁴⁸ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 290.

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*, i, p. 291.

probably deliberately, some of the material he had at his disposal. Given the lack of any independent evidence to confirm Burton's account at this point, one is tempted to suggest that Burton may have exaggerated what took place at Wharram. However, it is not impossible, indeed it is likely, that once news of Hubert Walter's decision reached Yorkshire, Robert's men took steps to take possession of the disputed property, and in the process expelled those monks and lay workers they found there. The buildings which Burton claims were demolished could well have been situated on that property. Once again though we should question the extent of the property seized. Burton's account suggest that all the abbey's property was taken into Robert's hands by his men, but we know that Robert was only seeking the return of the four and half carucates given to Meaux by William Fossard. Although this represented a sizable portion of Meaux's property at Wharram, it by no means represented the sum total of that property. In which case either Robert's men exceed their authority by laying hands on all Meaux's property at Wharram, or else Burton, or his source, have exaggerated what took place.⁴⁵⁰

Although the conflict had engendered bad feelings between Robert and Meaux a solution was eventually found. Burton states that: '*...post biennium, post obitum videlicet regis Ricardi [1199], resipiscens et poenitens quod tanta mala nobis intulisset nihil de nobis exigens, ipsam grangiam nobis sponte reddidit et quietam clamavit.*'⁴⁵¹ Burton's account suggests that a remorseful Robert, perhaps affected by the death of King Richard, and seeing the error of his ways, decided to make amends

⁴⁵⁰ It is unlikely that Robert played any significant role in the seizure of Meaux's property at Wharram because we know he was in France when Burton said it took place. Robert's '*custodes*' are not named by Burton, but one was probably Robert de Bareville, who was known to have been Robert's seneschal for the Fossard estates in 1199. *Memoranda Roll 1 John*, p. 13 & p. 15. De Bareville seems to have retained the post of seneschal of the Fossard estates until at least Michaelmas 1200. *CRR*, i, p. 265.

⁴⁵¹ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 291.

to Meaux for his behaviour. This could of course be true, although another explanation is available, albeit one Burton was not prepared to admit. By Michaelmas 1198 the confusion surrounding William Fossard's debts to Aaron had been resolved. Although Burton admitted that Aaron's charter of 1176 had been found by Alexander during his search of the government records in 1197/8, what Burton did not accurately record were the consequences of that discovery. Burton's claim that Alexander had had the charter of 1176 entered onto the Pipe Rolls was accurate, but of greater importance was the use to which the barons of the Exchequer put that document. The Pipe Rolls for 1198 record that although Robert had previously been held accountable for the £510, 14s William Fossard was thought to have owed the king this was no longer to be the case: '*...quia recordatum fuit per barones quod abbas de Mealse et monachi attulerunt cartam predicti Aaron de quietantia predicti debiti que liberata fuit predicto Willelmo coram baronibus, in qua carta continetur quod predicti monachi predictum Willelmum acquieverunt de predicto debito pro mille et cc et lx m.*'⁴⁵² Having taken this document into account the barons of the Exchequer then declared that: '*...carte de predictis debitis Aaron predicto Roberto reddantur, et quod amplius nec ipse nec heredes eius post ipsum pro hoc debito distringantur. Et ita quietus est.*' What is important about this entry is that the principal beneficiary of the lost charter of 1176 having been located was Robert, and not the monks of Meaux as Burton's account would have us believe.

With the question of William's debts now resolved in his favour it is possible that Robert agreed to drop his claim to the four and a half carucates, and it is worth noting that the agreement by which the conflict was brought to a close was concluded

⁴⁵² PR, 10 Richard I, p. 43.

almost immediately on his return to England with John in 1199. The agreement – which Burton knew had been issued at Northampton in 1199 - stated that Robert and Joanna would abandon their claim to the four and a half carucates at Wharram. However, should Robert have an heir by Joanna Fossard, and should he still wish to have possession of that land, the monks would exchange the it for twenty liberates of land elsewhere in the Fossard barony, so long as it was well situated, and if they were compensated for improvements made at Wharram in the meanwhile.⁴⁵³ Should Robert not wish to enter into an exchange for Wharram then the monks were to have that manor in free and perpetual alms. The only significant difference between Burton's account and the final concord, concerns the matter of compensation. Burton claims that Robert refused to compensate the monks for their losses during the conflict, and the final concord makes no mention of compensation, which would seem to confirm Burton's statement. It is perhaps worth mentioning that Robert does not appear to have sought to make an exchange for Wharram, suggesting that the manor itself was of less importance to him than William Fossard's debts.

Cliffe, Doncaster and Lythe

The dispute between Robert and Meaux was a well documented example of Robert's attitude to those he believed had wronged him. Yet it was far from an isolated example. Roger of Howden provides details relating to a dispute between Robert and Philip of Poitiers, bishop of Durham over the manor of Cliffe [Yorks. –

⁴⁵³ Meaux Chron., i, p. 291 & Feet of Fines [Yorks.], pp. 1-2. Dated Northampton 6th June 1199. Those present when this concord was issued were the king himself, Hubert Walter, Geoffrey fitz Peter, William Marshal, William Brewer, Hugh Bardulf, Simon of Pattishall, and John of Guestling. D.M. Stenton, Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198-1212, 4 vols., (Seldon Society – 1967), iii, p. 50.

Nr. Howden]. According to Roger, in 1198: ‘*Philipus Dunelmensis episcopus, ad petitionem Roberti de Turneham, concessit ei coram rege recognitionem xii. legalium hominum de visneto de Clif, quis illorum majus jus habebat in manerio illo de Clif: videlicet utrum ipse Robertus debeat manerium illud tenere de episcopo Dunelmensi, et inde homo suus esse; vel episcopus illud deberet habere in demenio.*’⁴⁵⁴

Although Howden gave the date of the case as 1198, that was presumably the date in which the dispute began. It was not until June 1199 that we find the first reference to the dispute in the *Curia Regis* Rolls, and it was not until September 1200 that the court’s judgement, a summary of which Howden provided, was finally delivered.⁴⁵⁵ Howden recorded that: ‘*Per sacramentum igitur xii. hominum recognitum est, manerium illud esse jus haereditarium uxoris praedicti Roberti [Joanna], filiae Willelmi Fossard [II].*’ The *Curia Regis* Rolls give a similar account of the court’s findings, though they show that the bishop’s losses were more serious than Howden’s account suggests. The *Curia Regis* Rolls record that the jurors had, as Roger stated, reported: ‘*...quod Robertus de Thurnham habet majus jus tenendi villam de Clif cum pertinentiis de episcopo Dulmiensi quam episcopus in dominico.*’ However, they went on to add: ‘*...quod pertinentie de Clif sunt sicut divise villarum vicinarum se extendant scilicet Hemmingesburc [South Hemmingbrough] et Duffeld [Duffield] et Osgetebi [Osgodby] et Bardenebi [Barlby or Barmby on the Marsh] et ex una parte est aqua de Use [Ouse] divisa; et dicunt quod idem Robertus debet tenere villam de Clif cum omnibus pertinentiis.*’⁴⁵⁶ Roger was obviously well informed about the case, which is of little surprise since Roger was a figure known to both the defendant and the

⁴⁵⁴ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁵⁵ *RCR*, i, p. 421.

⁴⁵⁶ *CRR*, i, p. 282.

plaintive.⁴⁵⁷ Yet Roger was not entirely unbiased in his analysis of the proceedings. Roger believed that the court had reached the wrong discussion, lamenting that: ‘...*episcopus amisit manerium illud de Clif, quod praedecessores sui multo tempore pacifice et inconcusse possederant.*’⁴⁵⁸ Like Burton, Howden believed an injustice had been done, but unlike Burton he avoided any out right accusations of undue influence having been wielded at court.

Despite the conclusive nature of the court’s findings, the Cliffe verdict was the beginning rather than the end of Robert’s legal disputes in that part of Yorkshire. At Easter 1203 Wandril de Curceles, on behalf of Robert and Joanna, petitioned the courts concerning three carucates with their appurtenances in Osgodby which they claimed were held without legal right by Jordan of Osgodby.⁴⁵⁹ The bishop of Durham also informed the court that he had a claim to those carucates, apparently undaunted by the findings of the king’s court in 1200. As with the earlier Cliffe dispute the matter was resolved in Robert’s favour. According to the Feet of Fines the case was brought to a conclusion in April/May 1204 when a final concord was issued in which Jordan acknowledged that the property in question was Robert’s by right of his wife.⁴⁶⁰ Robert in turn re-granted the manor to Jordan to hold of him for a quarter of a knights’ fee. An arrangement for which Jordan paid Robert 40 marks. In 1208 a further case that had its origins in the Cliffe dispute found its way to the courts. At Hilary 1208 Robert and Joanna, again represented by Wandril de Curceles, petitioned against Ralph Bardolf for the one knights’ fee with its appurtenances in South Duffield

⁴⁵⁷ Roger obtained material from both Robert and Philip of Poitou. J. Gillingham, ‘Historians without Hindsight’ in S.D. Church (ed.), *King John: New Interpretations*, pp. 1-26; esp. pp. 14-24.

⁴⁵⁸ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 69.

⁴⁵⁹ *CRR*, ii, p. 226. Wandril was probably originally from Courcelles [Normandy]. However, it has proved impossible, except for the phonetic similarity, to connect Wandril with Normandy, so his name has been left as Curceles since this is how it appears in most of the sources.

⁴⁶⁰ *Feet of Fines [Yorks.]*, p. 89.

which Robert claimed was his by hereditary right of his wife, a claim that Ralph denied.⁴⁶¹

Two further cases of Robert's attempts to restore, as he saw it, the traditional rights of the Fossard family are sufficiently well documented to merit attention. The first concerns the advowson of the church of Doncaster which Robert contested with Robert II of Longchamp, abbot of St. Mary's York. The earliest references to this case appears at Easter 1200, and the case was heard in full at Michaelmas the same year. The clerk of the court gave a detailed account of the arguments advanced by both parties.⁴⁶² Robert argued that: '*...advocationem ecclesie de Danekastr [Doncaster] cum pertinenciis ut illam que ei et uxori ejus habet descendere de jure Roberti Fossard proavi uxoris sue, unde ipse Robertus fuit saisitus tempore H[enrici] regis avi ut de jure, et totam villam de Danecastre cum advocacione predictae ecclesie et cum omnibus aliis pertinenciis invadiavit pro v. centum marcis, quas idem Robertus de Turnham solvit domino regi ut dicit, qui ei reddidit villam de Danekast' ut jus uxoris sue cum omnibus pertinenciis.*' Robert's case is certainly supported by the surviving evidence. That Doncaster was mortgaged by Robert Fossard to Henry I for 500 marks is shown by a reference in the Pipe Rolls.⁴⁶³ It can also be shown that Robert had indeed paid Richard I the 500 marks necessary to redeem the manor, and that as a consequence the manor, on the king's orders, was returned to him '*cum omnibus pertinenciis.*'⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ CRR, v, p. 143.

⁴⁶² RCR, ii, p. 182 & CRR, i, pp. 279-280.

⁴⁶³ PR, 31 Henry I, p. 25.

⁴⁶⁴ PR, 9 Richard I, p. 51.

However, the Abbot of York argued that the case was not as simple as Robert suggested, and that Robert was arguing from a deliberately false premise. According to the Abbot: ‘...*ecclesiam [of Doncaster] possedit et habuit a conquestu Anglie ex dono Nigelli Fossard avi predicti Roberti [Fossard], et inde ejus Nigelli kartam ostendit, que testatur quod Nigellus illam dedit abbacie Ebor.*’ The abbot’s case was simple. Since the church had been given to St. Mary’s by Nigel Fossard before Doncaster had been mortgaged to the king, the advowson could not have passed to the king and, therefore, could not be returned to Robert with the rest of the manor, because it had been given to the abbey ‘*in puram et perpetuam elemosinam*’ by Nigel. What was more the abbot said he possessed not only Nigel’s charter granting the advowson, but also William Fossard I’s charter confirming that grant and, the abbot went on to say: ‘...*habet cartas omnium regum Anglie et confirmaciones donaciones Nigelli et Willelmi [Fossard].*’

The surviving sources provide conflicting evidence as to the merits of each party’s case. A charter, said to have been issued by Nigel Fossard, does record the grant of the advowson of Doncaster to St. Mary’s.⁴⁶⁵ However, the charter is not an original but part of a chartulary, and the original, if one ever existed, has not survived. The charter is undated, but if genuine it must have been issued after 1089 because in that year William II issued a charter confirming various grants made to St. Mary’s, and no mention is made in William’s charter to Doncaster.⁴⁶⁶ Since the abbot claimed he had held the advowson ‘*a conquestu Anglie*’ the fact that no mention is made to it in William’s charter of 1089 casts suspicion on the abbot’s testimony, or at least this part of his testimony. Nonetheless the abbot’s

⁴⁶⁵ EYC, ii, p. 325.

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*, ii, p. 326.

case may have had some legitimacy. On 20th October 1207, seven years after the case began, the dispute was finally settled. A final concord was issued in which we discover that Robert abandoned his claims to the church of Doncaster and those chapels attached to it, except Rossington and Loversall. These the abbot acknowledged belonged to Robert and Joanna, saving various pensions payable from the chapels for the lives of the incumbent vicars.⁴⁶⁷ This agreement cost Abbot Robert 200 marks.

A second case of interest involves Robert and the canons of Nostell [Yorks.]. At Easter 1201 a jury was to be summoned to investigate whether the advowson of the church of Lythe [Yorks.] ought rightly to belong to Robert or to Nostell.⁴⁶⁸ Robert argued that the church had belonged to the Fossard family until: ‘...*tempora Willelmi Fossard [II], cui Willelmus comes Albemar’ [William, count of Aumâle] tempore werre abstulit terram illam de Lid cum advocacione ecclesie.*’⁴⁶⁹ The clerk of the court goes on to relate that as a result of the war between the two Williams it ought to be considered as to whether ‘...*canonici de Sancto Oswaldo [Nostell], qui nunc ecclesiam illam tenent et advocacionem illius ecclesie deforciant Roberto de Thurnham et Johanni [sic] uxori eius, alium habuerint*

⁴⁶⁷ Feet of Fines [Yorks.], pp. 112-3.

⁴⁶⁸ CRR, ii, p. 429.

⁴⁶⁹ Thomas Burton [Meaux Chron., i, pp. 104-5] claims that Count William attacked William’s lands because William, whilst a minor in his household, had impregnated his sister. In revenge the Count asked King Henry II for permission to punish William. This was granted and Count William and Robert de Stuteville, sheriff of Yorkshire, lay siege to William’s castle at Birdsall and demolished it. That some sort of military conflict took place between the two Williams seems certain. However, Farrer suggests that it as a consequence of William’s: ‘... *injudicious sympathy with the northern rebellion of 1174*’, rather than his behaviour in Count William’s household. EYC, ii, p. 328. Farrer’s argument makes more sense than Burton’s, given that ‘*tempore werre*’ is best understood in terms of the war of 1173-4. That these were the circumstance under which the fighting took place would explain why Robert de Stuteville, sheriff between 1170 and 1175, was involved in the fighting. It seems unlikely that Henry II would have sanctioned de Stuteville’s involvement under the circumstances described by Burton.

ingressum in eadem ecclesia nisi per predictum Willelmum comitem Albermar' ablatorem predicti Willelmi Fossard.'

The prior of Nostell, Ralph of Bedford, naturally disputed any wrong doing on Nostell's part arguing, as the Abbot of St. Mary's had argued the previous year, that Robert was deliberately misrepresenting the facts. Ralph called Geoffrey, archbishop of York [1191-1215] to support his case, and although the archbishop could not appear in person, he nominated Ralph to submit testimony on his behalf. According to Ralph, the archbishop was of the opinion that: '*...ipsi [the canons of Nostell] habent ecclesiam illam de Lid de dono Roberti Fossard patris predicti Willelmi Fossard [I]*' and, what was more: '*ipse Willelmus post confirmavit donum illud per cartam suam quam profert.*' The charter offered the court showed that William Fossard I: '*...carta sua confirmavit elemosinam quam pater suus Robertus Fossard fecit ecclesie Sancti Oswaldi, et nominat inter plura alia ecclesiam de Lid.*' Nor was this the end to the documentation that Prior Ralph could produce in support of his claim. The record goes on to relate that: '*[Ralph] profert etiam cartam Henrici regis avi idem confirmantem et cartam Henrici regis patris idem confirmantem et confirmationem regis Ricardi.*' The court allowed Robert the final say, and he approached the court and: '*...dicit quod Robertus Fossard nichil confirmavit predicte ecclesie nisi quod pater suus ei dedit, scilicet xx. solidos de ecclesia et in ecclesia illa.*' There the clerk ended his description of the two parties statements, concluding that the case was to go without a set day for a hearing until Robert and King John had returned to England.

Although Robert did not return to England until July 1205, the case came before the courts again in 1202.⁴⁷⁰ Robert did not appear in person but was represented by his attorney Wandril de Curceles.⁴⁷¹ The clerk did not restate all the details of the case that had been recorded during the Easter session, but a new development had taken place and required inclusion in his summary. The clerk recorded that: ‘...prior [Ralph] produxit quandam cartam Roberti Fossard qua continetur ipsum dedisse ecclesiam illam ecclesie ipsius prioris.’ Although Ralph had been able to show the court a number of charters purporting to confirm his right to the advowson of Lythe the previous year, he had not offered the court a copy of the original charter issued by Robert Fossard. Now, however, he was able to produce it. Given the care he had taken in collecting together diverse charters to show the court the previous year, it seems surprising that the most important charter of all had been left out of the Ralph’s original deposition. Robert’s attorneys certainly thought something fishy was going on, and having examined the charter they decried it as a forgery. The clerk recorded their objection noting that: ‘...atornati Roberti calumpniantur cartam illam eo quod videtur esse recenter facta’, i.e. that it had probably been made after the previous hearing. In view of the contentious nature of the documentation, the court took Robert Fossard’s ‘charter’ and William Fossard’s confirmation charter into its possession, ordering that they be surrendered into the custody of Geoffrey fitz Peter.

Whether the charter produced by the Prior was recently fabricated, as Wandril seems to have thought, is difficult to ascertain. Amongst the charters that have

⁴⁷⁰ CRR, ii, pp. 135-6.

⁴⁷¹ Two attorneys represented Robert in this case, though only Wandril can be identified.

survived as part of Nostell's chartulary are three that relate to this case.⁴⁷² The first is a charter, apparently issued by Robert Fossard, by the hand of Thurstan, archbishop of York, granting Nostell the churches of Bramham, Wharram-le-Street and Lythe.⁴⁷³ This is probably a copy of the charter produced by Prior Ralph in 1202 which Robert's attorneys claimed was a forgery. Nostell's chartulary contains a second charter, apparently issued by William Fossard I, confirming the grants made by his father Robert Fossard; namely the advowsons of the churches of Bramham, Wharram-le-Street and Lythe.⁴⁷⁴ This was probably a copy of the confirmation charter shown to the court in 1201. The final relevant document in Nostell's chartulary is a charter issued by Henry I confirming the grants made to Nostell by Robert Fossard by the hand of Archbishop Thurstan, presumably a reference to the charter of Robert Fossard's mentioned above.⁴⁷⁵ However, this charter, whilst recording the grants of the churches of Bramham and Wharram-le-Street, does not mention the church at Lythe. In fact it refers to yet another church - St Oswald in Eskdale. It is impossible for us to establish the rights and wrongs of this case for ourselves, but the fact that Henry I's charter makes no mention to the church of Lythe, would seem to cast some doubt of Prior Ralph's testimony.

The cases considered above represented the most interesting of Robert's legal disputes, but they do not represent the sum total of Robert's legal activities. Between 1197 and 1208 Robert was involved in a total of fifteen different legal actions, a comparatively large number, most of which would appear to have been

⁴⁷² Compiled between the thirteenth (after 1263) and fifteenth-centuries. G.R.C. Davis, Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain, (London, 1958), pp. 81-2.

⁴⁷³ EYC, ii, pp. 337-8. Dated by Farrer c.1126-1129.

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.*, ii, pp. 340-1. c. 1135-1140.

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, ii, p. 339. c. 1126-1129.

related to property or rights connected to the Fossard inheritance. Although the Fossard inheritance is not always mentioned in the court summary, we do know that of these fifteen disputes thirteen were related to Yorkshire, two to Surrey, and one to Kent.⁴⁷⁶ Since Robert only acquired land, and interests, in Yorkshire following his marriage to Joanna, one can assume that the Yorkshire disputes were connected in some way to the Fossard inheritance. This is, after all, what the Wharram, Cliffe and Lythe disputes all show. Of Robert's fifteen separate disputes, thirteen involved Robert as the petitioner and two as the defendant.⁴⁷⁷ The majority of Robert's legal actions (ten out of the fifteen) were before the courts by 1199 or 1200, and a number of these (Cliffe and Wharram) were known to have been initiated before the death of Richard I. The *Curia Regis* Rolls tell us very little about some of these disputes, but one interesting later case involved Robert and the Templars. In 1206 Robert petitioned for the return of the mill on the fosse at York which he claimed was held illegally by the Templars.⁴⁷⁸ Unlike many of Robert's disputes this dispute was resolved relatively quickly. In May 1207 a final concord was issued at Westminster, following the receipt of the king's writ, in which Robert agreed to drop his claim to the mill at York in return for a cash settlement of 200 marks, and a loan from the Templars of a further 300 marks.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ [Year, County, Defendant, Plea] *RCR*, i, p. 138 [1198, Yorks., Canons of Melton, Land in Birdsall]. *ibid.*, ii, p. 250 [1200, Yorks., Prior of Sempringham, Charter]. *CRR*, i, p. 74 [1199, Kent, Abbot of Wasto, advowson of the church of Boughton [Perhaps Boughton Monchelsea - Nr. Maidstone]; p. 262 [1200, Yorks., Prior of Watton, Charter]. A number of charters survive recording grants to the nuns of Watton by tenants of the Fossard family. Robert's plea may have concerned one of these. *EYC*, ii, pp. 401-411. *CRR*, iv, p. 98 [1206, Yorks., Templars, Mill on Fosse at York]. *ibid.*, v, p. 143 [1208, Yorks., Ralph Bardulf, One knights' fee in Duffield]. Two cases involving Robert were unconnected to the Fossard inheritance, and were initiated in Robert's name as they involved the affairs of the sherrivalry of Surrey. *CRR*, i, p. 287 [1200, Surrey, Abbot of Chertsey – Debt] & p. 357 [1200, Surrey, Hugh of Neville – Debt].

⁴⁷⁷ Cases involving Robert as a defendant are: *RCR*, ii, p. 183. [1200, Yorks., Countess of Warwick against Robert in a plea of land and homage.] & *CRR*, iv, p. 261 [1206, Yorks., Jury to be called to examined whether Robert unjustly deprived Robert de la Bere of his free tenement in Westingby.]

⁴⁷⁸ *CRR*, iv, p. 98.

⁴⁷⁹ *Feet of Fines* [Yorks.], pp. 99-100. Cf. *Rot. litt. pat.*, p. 64 & p. 64b. Although the final concord is dated 7th May 1207, the Patent Rolls suggest that the case was actually resolved on 5th – presumably

Bayham Abbey

Robert's attitude towards the English Church was not always confrontational. As well as trying to recover lands he believed had been wrongly denied him, he also founded a number of religious establishments. Perhaps the most impressive of these was Bayham Abbey [Sussex]. The Premonastrian abbey at Bayham was not an entirely new foundation.⁴⁸⁰ In fact it was simply a new home for the canons of the Premonastrian house at Brockley which Robert's uncle Michael had co-founded with Juliana, countess of Norfolk, the wife of Walkelin Maminot.⁴⁸¹ The exact date of Bayham's foundation is unknown, though most historians accept a range of 1199x1208. The only historian to have offered a more exact date is Colvin, who suggested that the abbey may have been founded in 1200, but was more likely to have been founded between 1205 and 1208.⁴⁸² However, here we will try to offer a more exact date for the foundation of Bayham. Although we are aided in our task by the survival of a sizable collection of charter evidence from Bayham Abbey, it must be said that only one of the charters relevant to this discussion is dated.⁴⁸³

with the final concord being drawn up two days later. One of those dealing with the case at Westminster was Robert's brother Stephen. A further discrepancy between the Feet of Fines and the Patent Rolls is that the Patent Rolls record that whilst the Master of the Templars agreed to pay Robert 200 marks to settle the case, he also agreed to loan Robert and Joanna a further 300 marks. The loan is not mentioned in the final concord. The case had probably been settled between Robert and the Templars before Robert arrived at court in early-May. He must have informed John of the nature of the settlement on his arrival at court, *circa* 3rd May, resulting in the king sending a writ to Westminster ordering the drawing up of the final concord. Robert was represented at Westminster by Robert de Bareville.

⁴⁸⁰ For Bayham Abbey see S.E. Rigold & J. Coad, Bayham Abbey, (English Heritage, 1985) & VCH (Sussex), ii, pp. 86-9. A more detailed history of the early years of the foundation can be found in H.M. Colvin, The White Canons, pp. 109-117.

⁴⁸¹ H.M. Colvin, The White Canons, pp. 109-112 & pp. 343-5 [Transcript of Juliana's original charter of foundation.] Juliana derived her title from her first marriage to Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk.

⁴⁸² *ibid.*, p. 112.

⁴⁸³ A large selection of charters have survived preserved in a mid-thirteenth-century chartulary from Bayham Abbey. BL, MS, Cotton Otho, A, ii. This work was very badly damaged by fire in 1731. Its leaves were washed and restored in 1826 and mounted in their present form. Two abstracts of the

We know that Bayham had been founded by 1208 since on 17th March 1208 John issued a charter confirming the grants made to Bayham on its foundation by Robert.⁴⁸⁴ The canons of Bayham, during a visitation in the late fifteenth-century, were asked the date of their abbey's foundation, and they answered that the abbey was founded in the year 1200 by Ella of Sackville.⁴⁸⁵ Although Colvin accepts the canons may have been correct - at least with regards to the date - he thinks it unlikely that they were.⁴⁸⁶ In fact it can be shown that the canons were wrong both as to the date of the abbey's foundation, and the identity of the founder. We can be almost certain that Bayham was not founded until at least July 1205. Robert foundation charter has survived, and in it he records that one of the properties given to Bayham on its foundation was the manor of *Grimbroc* in Kent, which he held from the monks of St. Pancras [Lewes].⁴⁸⁷ A charter issued by Hubert, prior of St. Pancras recording the granting of *Grimbroc* to Robert, has also been preserved in the Bayham chartulary. We know that Hubert replaced Alexander as Prior of St. Pancras at some point after

chartulary have fortunately survived – BL, MS, Stowe 924, ff. 47-87 made by Edward Dering (d.1644), and BL, MS, Add, 6037, ff. 75-121, a copy of Dering's abstract made by Oliver Marshall in 1627. For other charters relevant to Bayham Abbey see H.M. Colvin, *The White Canons*, p. 378. The charters in Dering and Marshall's works are numbered, and these numbers correspond to those that have been added to the margins of BL, MS, Cotton Otho, A, ii. A number of charters have been printed in *Monasticon*, vii, pp. 911-915.

⁴⁸⁴ *Monasticon*, vii, pp. 913-4 [Num. XVII]. A charter preserved in Bayham's chartulary, but not on the charter rolls, issued by John on 17th March 1208 at Marlborough. The date and place clause on the charter match with John's known movements at that time.

⁴⁸⁵ *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensa*, F.A. Gasquet (ed.), 3 vols., Camden Society 3rd Series in vols. vi, x, xii, (1904-6), x, p. 73.

⁴⁸⁶ H.M. Colvin, *The White Canons*, p. 112. Colvin thinks it more likely that the abbey was founded between 1205 and 1208. Unfortunately, although Colvin states that he will give reasons later in his work for why he thinks this, he never returns to the point. However, his basic argument that Robert was in Poitou between 1201 and 1205 is correct.

⁴⁸⁷ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 912 [Num. VIII]. The manor of *Grimbroc* appears to have been situated on the road between Bodiam [Sussex] and Sandhurst Cross [Kent]. A charter issued by Guy de Bunecort in c. 1160 in favour of St Pancras refers to a gift of land at Sandhurst 'by the bridge at *Grimbroc*' in the Rape of Hastings. *The Chartulary of the Priory of Saint Pancras Lewes*, 2 vols., xxxviii, (Sussex Record Society, 1932), i, p. 146.

June 1201, and that he continued to hold the post until at least May 1209.⁴⁸⁸ We know, because Hubert's charter says so, that Robert came in person to Lewes to do the homage that he owed to St. Pancras in return for the manor of *Grimbroc*.⁴⁸⁹ If, as seems likely, Robert had left for France before Hubert was appointed Prior, the acquisition of Bayham could not have taken place until after his return to England in July 1205.⁴⁹⁰ In light of this one should probably suggest that Bayham was founded between July 1205 and March 1208. Given that Robert was in England between July 1205 and May 1206, one could offer these dates as a likely range within which the foundation of Bayham took place.⁴⁹¹

Robert's foundation charter shows how Robert provided for the canons. The charter was addressed to '*canonicis ordinis Praemonstratensis, qui manserunt apud Brokeley*.' Robert goes on to state that he has given the canons: '*...totam meam terram apud de Begeham...ad abbatiam ibidem construendam in honore Dei et beatae Mariae*.'⁴⁹² Robert then lists the lands that he had bestowed on the canons,

⁴⁸⁸ D. Knowles, C.N.L. Brook & V.C.M. London, Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940-1216, (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 119-120.

⁴⁸⁹ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta*. 119. '*Hubertus Prior et conventus Sancti Pancras de Lewes consissimus domino Roberto de Turneham terram nostram de Crimbrock tenendam de nobis in feudo et hereditarie reddendo 2s. annuatim praedictus vero Robertus de Turneham fecit nobis de praedicta terra fidelitatem et in conventu nostro iuravit se nobis in omnibus fidem futurum*.' Robert's personal appearance before the prior and monks of St. Pancras is made even more explicit in the Bayham Chartulary. BL, MS, Cotton Otho, A, ii, No. 119. Also noteworthy is that the annual rent of 2s mentioned by Hubert matches that stated by Robert in his foundation charter.

⁴⁹⁰ Robert may have left England in April/May 1201, and had certainly left by July 1201. It is, therefore, conceivable that Robert acquired Bayham before leaving for France, but the timing would have been very tight. Even if Bayham had been acquired before Robert left for France, it was at the very most a month before he sailed, leaving, in my opinion, insufficient time for him to have finalized the arrangements leading to the foundation of Bayham Abbey.

⁴⁹¹ Since Robert had just returned from four years of almost constant warfare, and perhaps as much as six months in a French prison, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that Robert founded Bayham in this period perhaps as a way of giving thanks to God for his delivery from the dangers of Poitou, and from his captivity at the hands of Philip Augustus.

⁴⁹² An abstract of a charter issued by Richard, earl of Clare, shows that the land Robert owned at Bayham he held from the earl. BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 169: '*Ric[ardus] de Clara ... ad petitionem Roberti de Turneham confirmavi Deo et beate Marie de Begeham et canonicis ibidem totam terram de Begeham quam idem Robertus eis dedit et de me tenuit*.' Richard's consent to the grant had

starting with the estates he held at Brockley, that his uncle had been given by Walkelin Maminot. These lands had originally been granted to Michael on condition that 12*d* each year was paid to Walkelin, and the canons were now required to pay this same sum each year to Walkelin's heir - Geoffrey de Say. He also gave the canons the lands he owned in Rockland, held from the monks of St Martin's de Bosco, that carried with them an annual 5*s* rent.⁴⁹³ Other estates had been bought by Robert probably for the purpose of providing for Bayham. Robert's charter records that he gave Bayham those lands at Kingswood in Sandrig which he had bought from William de Kay, as well as the lands he had bought from Gunnora and her sons in Sandrig, next to the abbey, for which the canons would have to pay 2*s* annually to Gunnora. These were Robert's own grants to Bayham, however, as was common practice at the time, he concluded his charter by confirming the grants made to Brockley by his uncle Michael.⁴⁹⁴

Bayham became home not only to the canons of Brockley, but also to the canons of the Premonstratensian house of Otham [Nr. Hailsham – Sussex].⁴⁹⁵ The

been secured before Bayham was founded since Robert's foundation charter states that the grants he had made to Bayham were made: '*...assensu et voluntate domini mei Ricardi comitis de Clare*'.

⁴⁹³ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 118 provides confirmation that Robert held this land from St. Martin's for an annual 5*s* rent. I have been unable to identify the monastery of St. Martin de Bosco. Rockland was situated in the parish of Wartling [Sussex]. *VCH (Sussex)*, ix, p. 139.

⁴⁹⁴ Various charters relating to grants made by Michael to Brockley before his death survive as part of the Bayham Chartulary. BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *cartae* 133, 138, 139. *Carta* 140 provides a summary of the lands, together with their annual rentals, given to Brockley by Michael. This list agrees with those provided by Robert and John in their charters. Robert may have made Bayham an additional grant of property in the neighbouring town of Lamberhurst after 1208 and before 1211. *Monasticon*, vii, p. 913 [No. XVII]. Since this grant does not appear in Robert's foundation charter, it must have been made at a later date. However, no charter had survived of this grant, and it is possible that the *scriptor* of John's charter was misinformed as to the person who had made the grant. We know from the Bayham chartulary that Michael of Thurnham had given Brockley property at Lamberhurst, and it may have been this grant that John's charter alludes to.

⁴⁹⁵ For Otham see H.M. Colvin, *The White Canons*, pp. 112-115. The families of Dene and Thurnham were not unknown to each other. Michael of Thurnham had witnesses Ralph de Dene's foundation charter for Otham. *Monasticon*, vii, p. 911 [Num. I]. There was also a connection by marriage between the Denes and Thurnhams. Ralph de Dene's second wife Joan had married Robert of Gatton who, following Joan's death, married Mabel of Thurnham, daughter of Stephen of Thurnham.

canons of Otham, founded by Ralph de Dene *circa* 1180, moved to Bayham after the canons from Brockley had moved there because no mention is made to Otham in John's charter of 1208, whereas they do feature in John's charter to Bayham of *circa* April 1211.⁴⁹⁶ Ella of Sackville, Ralph de Dene's daughter and by 1208 patroness of Otham, and Robert both issued charters confirming the move of the canons at Otham to Bayham. It would seem from both Ella's and Robert's charters that the canons of Otham had themselves petitioned for this move. Otham would appear to have been poor sited, and lack the resources necessary to sustain the canons; at least in comfort. According to a clause in Ella's charter – an almost identical clause is to be found in Robert's – she had agreed: '*...propter magnas et intolerabiles inedias loci de Otteham, quod transferant sedem abbatiae de Otteham usque ad Begeham.*'⁴⁹⁷

Grosmont Priory

Robert also had a hand in the foundation of the Priory of Grosmont [Yorks.]. The earliest charter for Grosmont [established as a daughter house of Grandmont – hence its name] was issued by Joanna Fossard, and later confirmed by Robert.⁴⁹⁸ According to her charter, Joanna granted the priory: '*...unam mansionem in foresta de Eggetona [Egton –Yorks.] inter Eggetona et Cukelwald [Cocket – Yorks.]*.' In

⁴⁹⁶ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 914. [Num. XVIII]. Robert's charter agreeing to the move from Otham to Bayham would also seem to suggest that the canons of Brockley were already resident at Bayham when their brothers from Otham arrived: '*Quare volo, ut praedicti abbas et canonici de Oteham et de Beuliu [an alternative name for Bayham] et successores eorum habeant et possideant omnes res et possessiones et tenementa, quae eidem ecclesiae de Begeham a me vel ab aliis collata sunt.*' *ibid.*, vii, p. 912 [Num. IX].

⁴⁹⁷ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 911 [Num. V – Ella's charter] & p. 912 [Num IX – Robert's charter]: '*...propter magnas et intolerabiles inedias loci de Otteham, quod transferant sedem abbatiae de Otteham usque ad abbatiam de Begeham, quae dicitur Beuliu.*'

⁴⁹⁸ Robert's position as a patron of Grandmont is recorded in Limoges, Archives Departementales de Haute-Vienne, MS, 1 sem 82 (List of Benefactors of Grandmont), folio.122r-v. Cited N. Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An Alien in English Politic, 1205-1238*, (Cambridge, 1996), p. 38 & n.101. Robert and Joanna's charters are printed in *Monasticon*, vii, p. 1025-6. For Grosmont see *VCH (Yorkshire)*, iii, pp. 193-4.

addition to this she gave the priory two hundred acres in the neighbourhood of Egton forest with the rights to gather timber for the construction of whatever buildings the Prior deemed necessary.⁴⁹⁹ The mill Robert and Joanna owned at Egton Bridge was given to the monks, along with the fishery attached to it. The Prior being permitted to build further fisheries wherever he wished along that stretch of river given to him. As was commonplace these grants were made with ‘*omnibus sectis*’, with the sole exception that: ‘*...molatura hospitii domini villae [of Egton]*’, but then only when the lord of the village was resident. In Goldsborough the Priory was given one plough length, one vachery [for forty cows], pasturage rights for fifty sheep, ten mares, ten sows and two boars: ‘*...et pascua mea ubicumque sint ad pascendas bestia supradictas.*’ Joanna also gave the Priory her houses in York, which had belonged to Benedict the Jew, and which lay between those of Laurence the Clerk and Isping Geil.⁵⁰⁰ In Goldsborough the prior received one man with his messuage and two bovates of land: ‘*...ad terram eorum colendam quam habent in eadem villa.*’ In Egton they received another of Joanna’s villains together with two bovates of land: ‘*...pro molendino et bestiis eorum servandis et aliis serviciis faciendis pro voluntate fratrum.*’. In Sandsend they received one toft, and in Doncaster they received one man and his message. Joanna also granted the prior the right to graze his livestock in Goldsborough with the plough beasts of the lord of Lythe. Compared to other grants made by Robert and Joanna, those made to Grosmont were extensive.

⁴⁹⁹ No trace of the Priory remains, though the town of Grosmont derives its name from Joanna and Robert’s foundation.

⁵⁰⁰ It may have been these houses that were returned to Robert in 1199 in return for a proffer of 6 marks. *Rot. obl.*, p. 25.

Robert's confirmation charter made no additional grants and merely repeats the concessions his wife had made.⁵⁰¹ Robert's charter concludes with an interesting appeal to John that must have been added by Robert when the charter was drawn up, since it does not appear in Joanna's original charter. The charter relates that Robert: '*...rogans humiliter et implorans clementiam domini mei J[ohannis] regis Angliae ut hanc elemosynam protegat fratribus et defendat...et pro servitio quod ei feci fideliter et devote custodiat et confirmet.*' Clearly Robert hoped that the services he had rendered John would help protect the Priory of Grosmont from future harm. At the same time as he issued his confirmation charter, Robert issued a second charter granting Grosmont an additional one-hundred acres in the neighbourhood of Egton and Cocket.⁵⁰²

Providing a date for the foundation of Grosmont is problematic because none of the charters carry dates.⁵⁰³ Joanna's charter was the earliest of the three issued, and it has been suggested that it was issued *circa* 1200.⁵⁰⁴ However, it is more likely that Joanna's charter was issued between 1201 and 1204. The reason for thinking this is that the witness list to Joanna's charter suggests the place of issue was Poitou, and very possibly La Rochelle.⁵⁰⁵ Of the ten witnesses to Joanna's charter, eight can be positively identified. Of these six were Poitevins with connections to La Rochelle, and two were members of Robert's *familia*. Two witnesses: Peter de Capdolio, chaplain of the Temple of La Rochelle, and Alexander Amfrei, are to be found

⁵⁰¹ *Monasticon*, vii, pp. 1025-6.

⁵⁰² *Monasticon*, vii, p. 1026.

⁵⁰³ John's confirmation charter is dated 5th November and was issued at *Witten* [Witney]. It does not carry a regnal year, but was likely to have been issued in November 1213.

⁵⁰⁴ *VCH (Yorkshire)*, iii, p. 193.

⁵⁰⁵ '*Hiis testibus, P[etro] capellano templi de Rupella, Aimerico de Caorz, Petro de Longuil, Aimerico de Rochafort, Helia Bernardo, Alexandro Amfrei, Sans de Belloloco, Roberto de Beravil, Henrico de Trasci, Willielmo Tuaut, et multi aliis.*' I have been unable to identify '*Henrico de Trasci*' or '*Willielmo Tuaut*'.

attesting a charter issued by the commander of the Templars at La Rochelle in 1205.⁵⁰⁶ Another witness with connections to the Templars of La Rochelle was Aimary of Rochefort. Aimary had served alongside Robert during the wars of 1202-5, and later appears to have joined the Templars at La Rochelle, since a charter issued by the commander of the Templars of La Rochelle in 1207 was witnessed by one ‘*frater Aimericus de Rupeforti*’.⁵⁰⁷ Other identifiable witness include men known to have been prominent citizens of La Rochelle during the early years of the reign of King John. These included Aimary de Caours, Helie Bernard, and Sanche de Beaulieu.⁵⁰⁸ The last two identifiable witnesses were men known to have connections to Robert, and were almost certainly members of his *familia*. These were Robert de Bareville, who we have already met, and Peter de Longuil, a Kentish knight with connections to the Thurnham family.⁵⁰⁹ Given what we know of the witnesses to Joanna’s charter, we shall suggest that the charter was issued at La Rochelle, probably when Robert held the post of seneschal of Poitou and should, therefore, carry a date of 1201x1204.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ L.M. de Richemond (ed.), ‘*Chartes de la Commanderie Magistrale du Temple de La Rochelle*’, *Archives Historique de la Saintogne et de L’Aunis*, (1874), I, No. VIII: ‘*fratris P[etro] de Capdolio tunc temporis capellani ecclesie Templi*’ & ‘*Alexander Aufredi*’. P. usually means ‘*Petrus*’ and its declensions. Other witnesses to this charter, issued at La Rochelle, were ‘*Xanson de Bello-Loce*’, almost certainly Sanche de Beaulieu, and ‘*Aimericus de Cahurcio*’, probably to be identified as Aimary de Caours.

⁵⁰⁷ A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 421 & p. 436. L.M. de Richemond, ‘*Chartes de la Commanderie Magistrale du Temple de La Rochelle*’, No. IX.

⁵⁰⁸ A. Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, ii, p. 340 [Aimary de Caours], p. 344 [Sanche de Beaulieu] & p. 363 [Helie Bernard].

⁵⁰⁹ *Combwell Charters*, ii, pp. 201-202.

⁵¹⁰ That it was issued at La Rochelle, the ‘capital’ of Angevin held Poitou after the loss of Poitiers in 1204, might suggest that the charter was issued during the later stages of the Poitevin wars of 1202-1205, perhaps in response to news of Robert’s capture. If the charter were issued after Robert’s capture it might explain why Robert’s confirmation charter was issued in England rather than Poitou, which is what one would have expected had Robert been at liberty at the time Joanna issued her charter. What Joanna was doing in Poitou is not entirely clear. Robert may have taken her to Poitou when he was appointed seneschal. However, it also possible that Joanna was in Poitou either seeking news of Robert or helping to arrange his ransom. Joanna’s charter is unusual in so far as charters disposing of Fossard property were usually issued jointly by Joanna and Robert, and this charter is the only one issued in Joanna’s name alone. In light of these speculations one could suggest a date of late-1204 or early-1205 for the foundation of Grosmont, although this might be asking a little too much of what is largely circumstantial evidence.

The witness list to Robert's charter of confirmation shows that it must have been issued in 1205 or later, since Peter des Roches attests as bishop of Winchester. Witnesses to this charter fall into two distinct groups; namely prominent *curiales* represented by Stephen of Thurnham, Geoffrey fitz Peter, and John fitz Hugh; and men drawn from Robert's *familia* including Robert de Bareville, Wandril de Curceles, Robert de Carduil, and Thomas of Bending. It is tempting to suggest that this charter was issued in late-July 1205, when Robert was at court following his return from captivity. This would account for the mixture of *curiales* and members of Robert's *familia*. Robert's men would have moved to rejoin him shortly after his return to England, and it is possible that Robert de Bareville had been captured with Robert in Poitou. Had Robert's charters been issued in July 1205, it might help explain the clause Robert had added to his confirmation charter, since we have already seen that John appears to have thought highly of Robert's services in Poitou between 1202 and 1205, and would probably have told him so on his return from captivity. Another reason for suggesting a date of *circa* 1205, is that Joanna's grants would have needed Robert's consent before becoming binding, and Grandmont was unlikely to be willing to send men to set up Grosmont without Robert's confirmation of the original grants. Therefore we shall offer a range of 1205x1206 for both Robert's charters, though in truth the best we can say for certain is that they must have been issued between July 1205 and March/April 1211.

[The Hospital of St. Nicholas](#)

Another foundation established by Robert was the Hospital of St Nicholas at Doncaster. Virtually nothing is known about this foundation except that it established by Robert and was, by 1232, partly dependant on Bayham Abbey. Contemporary evidence naming Robert as the founder of the hospital is lacking, but a charter issued by Richard, abbot of Bayham in the late thirteenth-century states explicitly that Robert had been the founder of the hospital.⁵¹¹ That the hospital was endowed by Robert is shown by letters close sent to Gilbert fitz Reinfrey in which reference is made to various grants made to St. Nicholas by Robert before his death.⁵¹² According to John's letter Robert had endowed the hospital with lands at Bramham, Blaxton, Auckley in Finningley and Birdsall.⁵¹³ Robert made other grants to St. Nicholas before he died. Thomas Burton recorded that Robert had purchased land and houses at *Ragbrook*, next to the town of Beverley, from Alexander, abbot of Meaux: '*... quas quidem domos idem Robertus hospitali de Doncastra posta conferebat.*'⁵¹⁴ Although Burton is not specific about which of the hospitals in Doncaster Robert gave the houses to, an abstract of a charter from the Bayham chartulary shows that St. Nicholas had property in Beverley that Robert had bought from the abbot and monks of Meaux.⁵¹⁵

Providing an exact date for St Nicholas' foundation is difficult. D. Knowles claims that it was founded during the reign of Richard I [1189-1199], whereas R. Mary Clay, presumably using John's letters close of September 1213 as a guide, dates

⁵¹¹ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 334: '*...Hospitale quondam fundatum in honore Beati Nicholas in villa de Doncastr' per dominum Robertus de Thornham.*'

⁵¹² *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 151.

⁵¹³ Following Robert's death Peter de Mauley agreed with St. Nicholas to exchange the land the hospital held in Bramham: '*...quam antecessorum noster Robertus de Turnham de propria emptione sua illis dederat*', for land he held at Balby. BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 358.

⁵¹⁴ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 314.

⁵¹⁵ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *Carta* 334. '*...tota terra in Beverlaco in vico Flandrensi quam Robert de Thornham de abbate et monachis de Melsa quondam emit.*'

its foundation to 1213.⁵¹⁶ Mary Clay's date is incorrect given that we know the hospital was established by Robert before his death in 1211. Knowles' range is also likely to be incorrect.. Firstly the manor of Doncaster was not in Robert's hands until *circa* Christmas 1197, so the hospital must have been founded after that date.⁵¹⁷ Given Robert was in France until after the death of Richard I, this makes a foundation date during Richard's reign unlikely, though not impossible. A second point worth considering is that Robert bought property from Alexander, abbot of Meaux which he used to endow the hospital. Relations between Alexander and Robert were extremely poor until the Wharram dispute was resolved in June 1199. In light of this one would assume that the sale of the abbey's property at Beverley took place after that date. This is certainly what the internal chronology of Burton's work suggests.⁵¹⁸ Given that Alexander retired as abbot in 1210, the transaction probably took place between 1199 and 1210. Another reason for thinking that St. Nicholas' was founded in John's reign, rather than Richard's, concerns the manor of Bramham. John's letter of 1213 states the Bramham was one of those properties given to St. Nicholas by Robert before his death. According to the Pipe Rolls this manor was not in Robert's hands until *circa* Michaelmas 1208.⁵¹⁹ If Bramham was granted to St. Nicholas on its foundation, and we cannot be sure that it was, then it would indicate that St. Nicholas was founded between September 1207 and 1210. It is possible of course, that both the property at Beverley and the manor of Bramham were granted to St. Nicholas' after its foundation. However, taking the evidence as a whole one could suggest a

⁵¹⁶ D. Knowles, Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales, (London, 1971), p. 355. R. Mary Clay, The Medieval Hospitals of England, (London, 1909), p. 332. VCH (Yorkshire), iii, p. 306 also gives the date of the foundation as the reign of Richard I.

⁵¹⁷ PR, 10 Richard I, p. 28.

⁵¹⁸ Although the Wharram dispute had been settled by June 1199 relations between Robert and Alexander do not appear to have improved after this. Although Alexander was prepared to sell Robert the abbey's property at *Ragbrook*, he ensured that the £100 Robert had agreed to pay for the property was paid in advance. Meaux Chron., i, p. 314.

⁵¹⁹ PR, 10 John, p. 154.

foundation date for St. Nicholas of between 1199 and 1210, and quite possibly between 1207 and 1210.

By 1232 St. Nicholas was partly dependant on Bayham since the Plea Rolls for Michaelmas 1232 state that twelve acres and a toft in Loversall, held by St. Nicholas, could not be alienated without the permission of the abbot of Bayham.⁵²⁰ It has been suggested that this dependency on Bayham was the result of action taken by Robert, and although this is possible, it seems unlikely.⁵²¹ We do know that by the late-thirteenth-century that a toft, formerly belonging to St. Nicholas, had found its way into the hands of the Abbey of Bayham.⁵²² It seems likely that other estates that Bayham owned in Yorkshire at this time had also been acquired via St. Nicholas.⁵²³ Burton's account of the *Ragbrook* purchase shows that the property that Robert had purchased near Beverley, which was originally given to St. Nicholas, ended up in Bayham's hands. Unfortunately he offers no date as to when this happened, simply stating that it happened after they were conferred on St. Nicholas. Burton is extremely well informed on the outcome of the *Ragbrook* exchange since he states that the property in question, in which Meaux still had an interest, found its way into the possession of secular owners after passing under the control of the Abbot of Bayham.⁵²⁴ A charter, issued in the late-thirteenth-century, confirming Burton's account has survived as part of Bayham's chartulary.⁵²⁵ In the late-thirteenth-century Richard, abbot of Meaux, issued a charter that would seem to suggest that St.

⁵²⁰ *Monasticon*, vi, p. 781.

⁵²¹ *VCH (Yorkshire)*, iii, p. 306.

⁵²² A charter issued by Richard, abbot of Bayham, records that one toft in Loversall was granted to the wife of Richard fitz Robert and her son William for an annual rent of 4s. BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 332.

⁵²³ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *cartae*, 332, 334, 337. Relating to property held in Doncaster, Beverley and Loversall [All Yorks.].

⁵²⁴ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 315. *Belloloco* or Beaulieu refers to Bayham, not the Cistercian foundation of Beaulieu in the New Forest.

⁵²⁵ BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 334.

Nicholas had been dependant on Bayham probably since its foundation. According to Richard: ‘...*tota terra in Beverlaco...quam Robert de Thornham de abbate et monachis de Melsa quondam emit, et nobis contulit.*’ This though must be a mistake, perhaps a deliberate one. Had this property, almost certainly that mentioned by Burton, been given to Bayham by Robert then it would have presumably have been mentioned in either John’s charter of 1208, or that of 1211. Nor does Stephen of Thurnham’s charter to Bayham, issued *circa* 1211, provide any evidence that Bayham possessed property in Yorkshire. Since there is no evidence to suggest that Bayham had any interests in Yorkshire until after Robert’s death – all Robert’s known grants were in Kent or Sussex – one must assume that the relation between St. Nicholas and Bayham was established after Robert’s death, perhaps by Peter I of Mauley who married Robert’s daughter Isabella in 1214.⁵²⁶

The Hospital of St. James

Another hospital in Doncaster benefited from Robert’s largess. Two charters, issued jointly by Robert and Joanna, to the Hospital of St James of Doncaster – apparently a foundation for the sick and lepers - have survived in the register of grants made to the Order of St. Thomas the Martyr of Acre.⁵²⁷ It is not entirely clear whether Robert was the founder of this institution or merely a benefactor. However,

⁵²⁶ It is not impossible that Peter I of Mauley was responsible for St. Nicholas becoming a dependant of Bayham. We know that Peter had dealings with both the hospitals [St. Nicholas & St. James] that Robert had founded in Doncaster. BL, MS, Add., 6037, ii, *carta* 358 [St. Nicholas] & BL, MS, Cotton Tiberius, C, v, f. 255r [St. James]. It was Peter I of Mauley who was responsible for the transfer of St. James to the Order of St. Thomas of Acre, and perhaps he also arranged for the transfer of St. Nicholas to Bayham. Though in fairness the Bayham chartulary contains no evidence to show that Peter had any dealings with Bayham. Peter’s lack of interest in Bayham may explain why Ella de Sackville, whose family continued to make donations to Bayham during the course of the thirteenth-century, was later named as the founder in preference to Robert.

⁵²⁷ BL, MS, Cotton Tiberius, C, v, ff. 152-286.

what little evidence survives suggests he was probably the founder. The two charters in question were the second and third charters entered into that section of the ‘Register of St. Thomas’ detailing the rights and properties held by the order in Doncaster.⁵²⁸ Although Robert’s charters survive as part of Doncaster section of the ‘Register’ his grants were not made to that order. It was Peter I of Mauley, his posthumous son-in-law, who granted his rights over St. James to St. Thomas of Acre in the late 1230s, and it is his charter heads up the Doncaster section of the ‘Register’.⁵²⁹ One might assume from this that Robert founded the hospital, and when the ‘Register’ was compiled Peter’s charter was added first – to support the Order’s claim to the institution - and the remaining charters entered in order of issue.⁵³⁰ Proving this is difficult since none of the charters in the ‘Register’ are dated, but it would make sense of the way the ‘Register’ is compiled.

The earliest of Robert’s two surviving charters records the gift of twelve acres of land in Doncaster, and a further twelve acres of ‘*novo asserto*’ near the mill of the nearby manor of Rossington. The hospital was also granted pasturage and peat cutting rights in both Doncaster and Rossington, as well as exemption from ‘*molituram in omnibus molendiis ipsius.*’ We can be fairly sure that this charter was issued in Yorkshire, probably in Doncaster, since the witness list is made up of two groups, namely those attached to Robert’s *familia*, and those who were either local landowners, officials or ecclesiastics. Members of Robert’s *familia* who witnessed

⁵²⁸ Earliest charter ff. 255r-v. Later charter f. 255v. [VCH \(Yorkshire\)](#), iii, p. 306 mentions St. James but was unaware of the above charters, and gives the earliest reference to this foundation as 1222-3. Cf. D. Knowles, [Medieval Religious Houses in England and Wales](#), p. 355.

⁵²⁹ BL, MS, Cotton Tiberius, C, v, f.255r & A.J. Forey, ‘The Military Order of St. Thomas of Acre’, [EHR](#), cccvixiv, (1977), pp. 481-503; at p. 490.

⁵³⁰ It also explains why neither of Robert’s charters mention the Order of St. Thomas. Both Robert’s charters were issued: ‘...*Deo et Sancte Marie et Sancto Jacobo et fratribus et canonibus infirmio hospitalis sancti Jacobi Doncastre.*’

the charter include Wandril de Curceles and Robert de Carduil.⁵³¹ Local landowners included William Aguillun, a Fossard tenant, and William of Cornborough.⁵³² Local ecclesiastics and secular officials included Peter, parson of Doncaster, Jeremiah, parson of Rossington, Reginald, reeve of Doncaster, and Reginald, clerk of Doncaster, who drew up the charter.

A second charter made additional grants to St. James, including another twelve acres of land in ‘*campio de Turnewat*’ near the mill of Rossington in the parish of Rossington. Robert also granted St James and its tenants the right to mill the grain that this land produced at the mill of Rossington free from multure payments. This charter was almost certainly issued later than Robert’s first charter, and may not have been issued in Yorkshire. The witness list to the second charter differs from that of the first. Some witnesses remained the same, including Wandril de Curceles, and William of Cornborough, who was joined on this occasion by his son Ingeram. Robert de Carduil also attested the charter in association with his son Richard de Carduil. Also attesting were William of Bending, master Roger de la Lea, Philip of *Dessingdun*, Roger Giffard and Robert of Hastings.⁵³³

Dating both charter is difficult. On the face of it the two charters were probably issued before March 1199 because only the second charter mentions King Richard, and neither mentions King John. However, as we saw with the Hospital of

⁵³¹ *Combwell Charters*, ii, pp. 201-202. Robert de Carduil attests a charter issued by Peter de Lunguil to Combwell Priory in association with Stephen of Thurnham and Wandril de Curceles.

⁵³² *RBE*, i, 408. For the Aguillun family see *EYC*, ii, pp. 382-383. For William of Cornborough see *ibid.*, ii, pp. 143-4, pp. 180-1, p. 362 & p. 365.

⁵³³ William of Bending was almost certainly another relative of Adam of Bending who married Robert’s niece Alice. The Giffard and Carduil families were connected to the Thurnham family in general rather than just to Robert. A charter issued by Stephen of Thurnham was witnessed by Robert de Carduil, Robert Giffard and William Giffard. *Combwell Charters*, ii, pp. 201-202.

St. Nicholas, it is unlikely that Robert was in a position to make any grants in Doncaster before 1197. Since we can be fairly sure that Robert spent no time in England between January 1195 and June 1199, the first charter was probably issued after June 1199, perhaps *circa* March 1200 when Robert was known to have been in Yorkshire. The second charter is even harder to date, but may have been issued before Robert returned to active service in Poitou in the summer of 1201. The witness list to the second charter suggests Kent or Sussex as a possible place of issue, and it is possible that Robert had been active in these regions in the spring of 1201 before sailing for France. We also know that Ingeram of Cornborough accompanied Robert to Poitou, though we cannot be certain that he sailed at the same time as Robert since he is not known to have been in Poitou until 1203.⁵³⁴ Given the above problems the best range we can offer for both charter is 1199x1211.

The English Administration

Robert, unlike his brother Stephen, was rarely to be found actively involved in English administrative affairs. That is not to say that Robert had no administrative responsibilities in England, but rather that those responsibilities assigned too him were usually carried out on his behalf by members of his *familia*. Like most men of standing Robert maintained his own *familia*. The composition of Robert's *familia* can be ascertain from the witness lists to his various charters, as well as from references in a number of administrative documents. A total of six charters issued by Robert (and one issued by Joanna) have survived.⁵³⁵ None of Robert's charters have survived in their original form, and all have been preserved as part of the chartularies of the

⁵³⁴ CRR, ii, p. 172.

⁵³⁵ Bayham (2), St. James (2), Grosmont (2 + 1 by Joanna).

houses that benefited from the grants.⁵³⁶ Nonetheless these charters enable us to see something of the company that Robert kept.

As far as we can tell Robert's *familia*, was comprised of two relatively distinct groups. On one hand there were those men who appear to have been attached to the Thurnham family in general, rather than just to Robert. These men attest charters issued by both Robert and Stephen of Thurnham, and would appear to have been drawn from the knightly class of South-East England. A second group would appear to have been men who attached themselves to Robert's *familia* following his marriage to Joanna Fossard, and these men, as far as we can tell, were drawn from the ranks of the Yorkshire knightly class. The two most prominent members of Robert's *familia* were drawn from each of these groups. Robert's attorney Wandril de Curceles was probably of Southern English extraction, since both he, and another of his relatives – John de Curceles - were well known to Robert's brother Stephen.⁵³⁷ Another prominent member of Robert's *familia*, Robert de Bareville, seneschal of Fossard estates, was almost certainly drawn from those men who sought Robert's patronage following Robert's marriage to Joanna Fossard. What little we know of de Bareville suggests he was probably a tenant of the Fossard family, perhaps a relative of the Butterwick family.⁵³⁸

Other identifiable members of the Robert's *familia* can be placed into each of these two groups. 'Southerners' probably included Ralph of St. Leger, Robert's first sub-sheriff for Surrey. Ralph had been known to the Thurnham family since *circa* 1170. Ralph attests a number of charters to Combwell Priory, including two in

⁵³⁶ Although five (six including Joanna's) have witness lists, none are dated.

⁵³⁷ *Combwell Charters*, i, p. 206 & ii, p. 202 [Wandril] & *ibid.*, i, p. 207 [John].

⁵³⁸ *EYC*, ii, pp. 378-8.

association with Stephen of Thurnham, and one in association with Michael of Thurnham.⁵³⁹ Peter de Lunguil was the son of the Kentish knight Richard de Longuil, and both men made grants to Combwell, as well as attesting Robert's charters to St James of Doncaster.⁵⁴⁰ Other 'Southerners' who were known to both Robert and Stephen included Thomas and Adam of Bending, the later being Stephen's son-in-law. At least two of the 'Southerners' – Adam of Bending and Peter de Lunguil – were known to have served alongside Robert in Poitou. The Yorkshire men, who entered Robert's service following his marriage to Joanna, included four Fossard tenants - William and Ingeram of Cornborough, Alan de Wilton and William Aguilun. Of these only Ingeram was known to have fought alongside Robert in Poitou. One interesting thing about the witness lists to the Thurnham brothers' charters is that whilst Southerners are sometimes called upon to attest Robert's charters involving Yorkshire affairs, Yorkshire men are never called upon to attest charters issued by Stephen or others to Combwell Priory. Although Wandril attests nearly all Robert's charters, and a number of those issued by Stephen, Robert de Bareville attests Robert's charters only. This would suggest that members of Robert's Yorkshire *familia* were never integrated into the wider Thurnham family circle. It would seem reasonable to refer to the 'Southerners' as forming part of a Thurnham *familia*, rather than specifically as members of Robert's *familia*. Robert's personal *familia*, if we can call it that, was comprised mainly of Yorkshire men who had entered his service after he had established a name for himself.

⁵³⁹ Combwell Charters, ii, p. 190 [William Fitz Helte's charter to Combwell, issued between 1170 and 1180, is attested by Gilbert of St. Leger and his son Ralph., as well as Stephen and Michael of Thurnham.]; p. 191 [A second Fitz Helte charter attested by Ralph] & p. 192 [Robert de Sevanz's charter of *circa* 1214 attested by Ralph and Stephen of Thurnham.]

⁵⁴⁰ *ibid.*, ii, p. 201 [Richard de Lunguil's charter of *circa* 1180 is attested by Stephen and Robert II of Thurnham.] & pp. 201-3 [Two charters by Peter de Lunguil to Combwell.] Peter's charter of *circa* 1215 (Probably issued between 1211 and 1214) in which he asks for prayers to be said for Robert of Thurnham – perhaps Robert I of Thurnham, but more likely Robert II since it must have been issued shortly after his death - was witnessed by Stephen of Thurnham, and two men well known to Robert - Wandril de Curceles and Robert de Carduil.

Relatively few of Robert's *familia* were known to have prospered because of their attachment to Robert. Wandril de Curceles, perhaps not surprisingly, was one of those who seems to have profited from his attachment to Robert. In November 1204 John wrote to Wandril notifying him that John fitz Hugh, probably the same John fitz Hugh who was constable of the Tower of London and later sheriff of Surrey, had been given custody of the king's park in Guildford [Surrey], and Wandril was ordered to ensure that it was handed over to John.⁵⁴¹ John's letter tells us little except that Wandril held some position of authority within the sherialry of Surrey, which he had probably acquired because of his attachment to Robert, still at that time titular sheriff. Other men known to Robert profited from Robert's control of the sherialry of Surrey. Ralph of St. Leger and Alan de Wilton both held the post of sub-sheriff of Surrey, with Alan moving on to replace Robert de Bareville as seneschal for the Fossard estates.⁵⁴² Other may have benefited in other ways. Robert de Bareville's connections to Robert probably account for his entry into the king's service between 1206 and 1208. However, few of Robert's *familia* found service to Robert a means of achieving greater success in the king's service.

We saw that the confiscation and sale of the count of Eu's property in England, which Robert had been entrusted with in April 1201, was probably undertaken by men attached to his *familia*. However, the most notable example of Robert using men drawn from his *familia* to undertake his administrative responsibilities concerned the sherialry of Surrey. Robert held the post of sheriff

⁵⁴¹ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 13b.

⁵⁴² *EYC*, ii, p. 422. This charter is dated by Farrer 1195x1211, but was probably issued after 1200, since Alan attests as Robert's seneschal, a post held by de Bareville until *circa* Michaelmas 1200.

from *circa* Easter 1194 until July 1207 when he was replaced by John fitz Hugh.⁵⁴³ For much of the time that Surrey was in Robert hands, Robert was rarely to be found in England. So it comes as little surprise that Robert never actually accounted for the county farm at the Exchequer in person. The Pipe Rolls record that the county accounts were submitted by members of his *familia*, acting as under-sheriff.⁵⁴⁴ Between 1194 and 1207 a total six different men acted as Robert's under-sheriffs.⁵⁴⁵ The first of these was Ralph of St. Leger who held the post until Michaelmas 1196 when he was replaced by Alan de Wilton. Alan held the post of under-sheriff until 1201 when he was replaced by John Chaper. Chaper held the post for two years until he himself was replaced by Ralph de Torenni. Torenni was replaced after a year by John de Ferles who held the post until Michaelmas 1204. At Michaelmas 1205 the county farm was rendered before the Exchequer by Richard de Maisi and William de St. Lô acting as custodians.⁵⁴⁶ By Michaelmas 1206 Robert had regained the sherialry, with Richard de Maisi now acting as under-sheriff until Robert was replaced in July 1207.⁵⁴⁷

Matthew Paris has suggested that Robert, by means of a member of his *familia*, played a role in the promulgation of the Assize of Bread in 1202.⁵⁴⁸ According to Paris, the assize had been drawn up by Robert's 'baker' in conjunction with the 'baker' of Geoffrey fitz Peter. Although Robert himself was in Poitou for all

⁵⁴³ *Rot. litt. claus.*, p. 74.

⁵⁴⁴ *Memoranda Rolls 1 John*, p. 5 [Michaelmas 1199]: [*Surreia*] *Robertus de Turneham Vic. non venit quia est in servicio domini Regis ultra mare set Alanus clericus pro eo.*

⁵⁴⁵ Under-sheriffs in brackets. PR, 6 Richard I, p. 221 [Ralph of St. Legers], 7 Richard I, p. 251 [Alan de Wilton], 8 Richard I, p. 30 [Alan de Wilton], 9 Richard I, p. 216 [Alan de Wilton], 10 Richard I, p. 147 [Alan de Wilton]. PR, 1 John, p. 56 [Alan de Wilton] & 2 John, p. 216 [John Chaper], 3 John, p. 225 [John Chaper], 4 John, p. 12 [Ralph de Torenni], 5 John, p. 224 [John de Ferles], 6 John, p. 102 [John de Ferles], 8 John, p. 115 [Richard Maisi], 9 John, p. 63 [Richard Maisi].

⁵⁴⁶ PR, 7 John, p. 152.

⁵⁴⁷ PR, 8 John, p. 115.

⁵⁴⁸ *Chron. Maj.*, ii, pp. 480-1.

of 1202 and was, therefore, unlikely to have been in any position to have been personally involved in the Assize, it is not impossible that his ‘baker’ was involved in these matters. Robert undoubtedly employed a baker, probably even bakers, to take care of the needs of his own household and perhaps those of his tenants. The reference to Robert’s baker’ is, admittedly, a little bizarre, but in Paris’ defence he was quite well informed about Robert’s involvement in English domestic matters.. Paris, alone of our surviving narrative sources, correctly identifies Robert as one of those who had assisted John in the exploitation of the estates of the English Church during the Interdict crisis and – apart from Matthew of Westminster whose work was for the most part an adaptation of Paris’ work – he is the only writer who provided an obituary for Robert. Since Paris’ identification of Robert’s involvement in the affairs of the English Church is accurate, there is no obvious reason why his claim that Robert’s ‘baker’ was partly responsible for the Assize of Bread should be dismissed. Who, or what, was Paris’ source was for this information is unknown. Much of Paris’ material for the reign of King John was derived from the work of Roger of Wendover, but Paris could not have obtained his information relating to the Assize of Bread from this source since Wendover makes no mention to it.⁵⁴⁹ Robert’s baker’s identity will probably have to remain a mystery, but we can at least hazard a guess that the man in question might have been Simon Pistor of Wallingford [Berks].⁵⁵⁰ The *Curia Regis* Rolls for Michaelmas 1202 record that Geoffrey fitz Peter was ordered to ensure that Simon was not summoned to respond to pleas, nor were his lands outside the town of Wallingford to be subject to any legal proceedings, as long as his son Peter was with Robert in the king’s service in Poitou. The fact that this entry occurs under the year

⁵⁴⁹ For Paris and Wendover see A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, i, p. 359 & R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris*, (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 21-34. Wendover’s account of the reign of King John was probably based on an earlier source. *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁵⁰ *CRR*, ii, p. 98.

1202, the same year that the Assize of Bread was issued, could just be a coincidence. However, it remains the case that Simon was the only baker, or possible baker, with whom Robert, albeit via his son, was known to have had any dealings.

Paris provides a second reference to Robert's involvement in English administrative matters. According to Paris, Robert had been one of those men who had advised King John to, and later assisted him, exploit the possessions of the English Church during the Interdict crisis.⁵⁵¹ Unlike his earlier identification of the involvement of Robert's 'baker' in the Assize of Bread, this assertion can be substantiated from an independent source. At the close of Easter 1211 an inquest was held into Robert's stewardship of the estates of Christ Church Cathedral Priory Canterbury which had been taken into the king's hands in 1207.⁵⁵² The inquest shows that Robert had been custodian of these estates for about six months prior to the inquest being ordered.⁵⁵³ According to the inquest, held because of Robert's death, Robert had been appointed to the post at Michaelmas 1210 following the death of the previous custodian Reginald of Cornhill - another of those identified by Paris as having assisted the king in the plunder of the English Church's wealth. Neither Robert nor Reginald were the first custodians of these estates, in fact the estates had first been entrusted to Fulk de Cantelu who was replaced by Robert of London and Henry of Sandwich, who in turn were replaced by Reginald of Cornhill.

The inquest of 1211, together with some earlier documents, provide us with a reasonably accurate picture of the state of the Christ Church estates both before

⁵⁵¹ *Chron. Maj.*, ii, p. 513 & *Hist. Ang.*, ii, pp. 122-3.

⁵⁵² *Interdict Documents*, pp. 57-58.

⁵⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 57.

and after Robert's time as custodian. A comparison between the Inquest of 1211 and the records surviving from Fulk de Cantelu time shows that when Robert took over the estates they had already been systematically stripped of their resources by Fulk and others. This was particularly noteworthy in relation to livestock. The important sheep-farming manor of Cliffe, on the Thames estuary, had been one of the worst effected. Fulk had sold 1,980 ewes and 38 lambs, and when Robert entered office there were no sheep there at all.⁵⁵⁴ The manor of Orpington had also seen considerable devastation. Fulk had sold 13 beef cattle, 10 stots, 7 cows, a bull, 60 ewes, 82 sheep, 6 sows, 24 lambs, and 17 piglets. When Robert assumed responsibility for the manor he found only 2 beef cattle, a cow and a draught-animal.⁵⁵⁵ Crops had also suffered under earlier custodians, and continued to suffer under Robert. The manner in which the Inquest of 1211 was compiled enables us to gain a reasonably accurate picture of how the manors fared under Robert's control. The jurors, from whom the royal officials derived their information, had been asked to provide details of the produce in the manor barns when Robert took over, and when he died. They were also asked to provide details relating to land under cultivation at the time of the inquest. The table on the facing page tabulates this information.

Robert gained control of Christ Church's estates in September 1210 when the manor barns would still have been filled with the produce of the recent harvest. We can see from the table that, with the exception of the manors in Essex and Suffolk, which had been effectively ruined under earlier custodians, the stores of the other manors were still filled with that year's harvest. In total Robert inherited

⁵⁵⁴ *Interdict Documents*, p. 77 [Fulk] & p. 63 [Robert].

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 76 [Fulk] & p. 63 [Robert].

1585 seams, but on his death the manor stores contained only 28 seams, i.e. less than 2% of what had been available six months earlier. Some of these stocks had been used as seed for the 1211 sowing season, but the figures for land under cultivation show that much of the stores Robert inherited must have been sold off. Robert died in late-March or early-April 1211, about the time the manor workers would have started sowing the crops for the coming year. Given that the inquest took place in mid-April, the traditional month for planting the summer crops, not all the sowing for the forthcoming season would have been complete by the time the jurors provided their information. This would explain why 202½ acres had been fully sown, but another 258½ acres had only been half sown. Given the timing of the inquest many of those acres marked down as half sown were likely to have been fully sown come the end of April. However, what is noticeable is that so many manors had no acreage sown at all. This may partly be a result of the timing of the Inquest, but it is worth stating that many of those manor that had no land under cultivation also had no stores on which to draw for seed. The manors of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire accounted for the majority of the stores to be found in April 1211, as well as a sizable proportion of the land under cultivation. It may have been the case that their distance from Canterbury meant that they avoided the worst depredation inflicted on the Christ Church estates by John's custodians. In contrast the estates in Kent had suffered a much greater degree of despoliation. With the exception of Cliffe, none of the Kent manors had any stores left in April 1211, yet relatively few had much land fully or half sown. The manors that seem to have suffered the most under Robert were Eastry and Ickham, both of which had large stores in 1210 but no stores in 1211, and no land under cultivation either.

The estates under Robert's control had suffered severely at the hands of earlier custodians. However, it must be said that Robert himself seems to have shown no greater sense of proprietary responsibility than either Fulk or Reginald had done. The inquest of 1211 not only supports Paris' statement that Robert had assisted in the exploitation of the English Church, but shows the extent to which those lands had suffered under the king's custodians, and would probably explain why Paris seems to have taken a rather poor view of Robert. The inquest also shows that Robert continued the process of exploitation of the Priory's lands, and that if his exploitation was at a lower rate than that of previous custodians this was not a result of Robert adopting a longer term strategy with regards to the Priory's lands, but simply because much of what could be sold, had been sold.

We have already stated that Robert died in 1211, and that the Canterbury Inquest of that year shows that he died *circa* Easter 1211, since the inquest, set up because of his death, was ordered on 14th April 1211.⁵⁵⁶ In fact Robert was probably dead before 6th April that year when the Abbot of Bayham received a charter confirming all the grants Bayham had received from Robert and others in the years since its foundation.⁵⁵⁷ Given that Robert was the founder and chief patron of the abbey, and given that he died without male issue, the abbot may have moved quickly to secure confirmation of Robert's grants to his house. In light of this one can suggest a date of late-March or early-April for Robert's death. Given the lack of any evidence

⁵⁵⁶ *Interdict Documents*, p. 57.

⁵⁵⁷ *Monasticon*, vii, p. 914 [Num. XVIII]. A further confirmation charter was obtained from Stephen of Thurnham – Robert's lord for some of the lands he had held at Rockland. This charter was probably issued shortly before, or after, John's confirmation charter of 1211. *ibid.*, vi, pp. 912-3 [Num. X].

to the contrary one must assume Robert died of natural causes; he would probably have been in his late-50s or early-60s at the time of his death. Robert was survived by his wife Joanna, who never remarried, and his daughter Isabella of Thurnham, whose wardship passed to King John, just as her mother's had passed to King Richard fifteen years earlier.

Robert's death went largely un-remarked upon by thirteenth-century writers. Ralph of Coggeshall, for whom Robert had been a figure of modest interest, makes no mention of his death, nor for that matter did Roger of Wendover. The first writer to provide an obituary for Robert was Matthew Paris. Paris' obituary is short, though accurate, relating that '[1211] *Obiit quoque Robertus de Thurnam.*'⁵⁵⁸ A more descriptive obituary is to be found in the work ascribed – wrongly – to Matthew of Westminster. According to 'Westminster': '*Eodemque anno [1211] obierunt milites praeclari, Robertus de Turnham et Rogerus constabularies Cestriae.*'⁵⁵⁹ Whilst 'Westminster' adds '*praeclari*' to the description of Robert, an adjective missing in Paris' original obituary, one should be careful before arguing that this addition could be indicative of Robert's lasting fame. In fact the 'Westminster' entry is a summary of two distinct obituaries contained in Paris' '*Chronica Majora*'. In an earlier entry in the '*Chronica*', Paris describes the death of Roger, constable of Chester in the following terms: '*Eodem anno [1211] vir nobilis et miles egregius Rogerus Cestriae*

⁵⁵⁸ *Chron. Maj.*, ii, p. 532 & *Hist. Ang.*, ii, p. 125: '*Per idemque tempus [1211] obiit Robertus de Thurnham.*'

⁵⁵⁹ Matthew of Westminster, *Flores Historiarum*, H.R. Luard (ed.), 3 vols., RS, (London, 1890), ii, p. 140. There was no such figure as Matthew of Westminster. The name coming from an error on the part of a copyist. The work attributed to 'Westminster' is a partial abridgment of the '*Chronica Majora*' made under Matthew Paris' direction at St. Albans before his death. *ibid.*, pp. xx-xxvi; esp. p. xxii. To what extent Paris was responsible for the alterations made to Robert's obituary cannot be known, though given his attitude towards Robert one could assume these changes were made after Paris' death. However, the 'Westminster' obituary was based on Paris' earlier work, and is not an independent obituary.

*constabularius vitam finivit.*⁵⁶⁰ The ‘Westminster’ obituary for Robert and Roger could simply be an amalgamation of material found in Paris with ‘*vir nobilis et miles egregius*’ being replaced by ‘*praeclari.*’ That is to say that the author of this section of the chronicle attributed to ‘Westminster’ - probably a scribe of St. Albans - may not even have known who Robert of Thurnham was, but because he wanted the obituaries for 1211 to be kept in the same place the positive predicate given to Roger by Paris was amended to the plural to include Robert. It is possible that Paris himself oversaw the alteration, he was known to have checked the work of his scribes, but this is unlikely. Given that Robert was seen by Paris as one of John’s henchmen, it is unlikely he would have been party to the more glowing obituary provided by ‘Westminster’. In all likelihood the obituary in the ‘*Chronica Majora*’ was Paris’ own comment on Robert’s death, and the obituary in ‘Westminster’ nothing more than a tidying up exercise by a later scribe of St. Alban’s.

⁵⁶⁰ *Chron. Maj.*, ii, p. 532 & *Hist. Ang.*, ii, p. 124: ‘*Eodemque anno [1211] vir nobilis Rogerus Cestrensis constabularies vitam finivit.*’ The two obituaries were kept separate in the ‘*Historia*’ in keeping with the composition of the ‘*Chronica*’.

Conclusions

Given the nature of our study we are somewhat limited as to the extent of the conclusions we can draw. Reasoning from the particular to the general is never a wise methodological approach, and this is particularly true of Robert whose career was to a certain extent atypical. However, by comparing Robert's career with those of other prominent *curiales* we can perhaps draw some interesting conclusions. As Ralph Turner says of the men who formed the basis of his study: '*...their careers are comparable to those of other royal servants who rose from obscurity to a pinnacle of power and riches under the Angevin kings.*'⁵⁶¹

So far in this study we have avoided using the term 'new man' to describe Robert. However, this is a term that would seem to fit Robert well. Ralph Turner's studies into the Angevin 'new men' have shown that such men, far from being low born commoners – as Orderic Vitalis, Gerald of Wales, and John of Salisbury were wont to claim - were usually: '*...sons of simple knights, usually holders of fewer than five knights' fees.*'⁵⁶² That is to say that most of the 'new men' emerged from backgrounds identical, or at least very similar, to Robert's own. Yet in many ways Robert differed from what Turner might call the typical 'new man'. In his detailed study of the careers of six prominent Angevin 'new men', Turner concludes by stating that: '*Nothing points to heroism on the battlefield as the means by which the four laymen won their monarch's attention...Their chief significance lay in their administrative abilities.*' For Robert though the opposite could be said to be true. It

⁵⁶¹ R.V. Turner, Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England, (Philadelphia, 1988), p. 143.

⁵⁶² *ibid.*, p. 145.

had been Robert's endeavours in Cyprus that had probably persuaded Richard that Robert was a man who could be trusted with further important commissions. No doubt Robert's endeavours as seneschal of Anjou - in which he would seem to have spent more time on the battlefield than in the law courts or the exchequer - were instrumental in persuading John that Robert was just the man he needed to tackle the growing problems then besetting him in Poitou. Administrators were necessary to carry on the business of government, but warfare was almost endemic in one form or another, and so military commanders still had an important role to play. The careers of both Robert of Thurnham and William Marshal show just how important such men were, and how well they could prosper in the king's service.

Robert's background was certainly very similar to that of many 'new men' who rose to positions of prominence during the reign of Richard I and John. However, the course of his career was very different from that experienced by most such men. One important conclusion we can draw is that Robert's career was unusual, perhaps even unique, with regards to the extent to which Richard and John's continental possessions dominated his activities. Few royal officials found their activities so dominated by the affairs of the transmarine provinces as Robert did. Robert's career was even more unusual when we consider that not only did transmarine affairs dominate it to the exclusion of nearly all else, but in the course of a fifteen year career Robert held three of the four great seneschalries of Angevin France; Anjou 1195-1199, Gascony 1201-1202 and Poitou 1201-1205. Robert was only one of two Englishmen to hold a transmarine seneschalry, the only Englishman to hold more than one seneschalry in his whole career, and the only man – during the reigns of Richard and John – to hold three seneschalries. The only other Englishman

to hold a transmarine seneschalry during our period was Roger, constable of Chester, who was appointed seneschal of Anjou in October 1199 following the dismissal of Aimary of Thouars.⁵⁶³ However, Roger held this post for at most a few months, and Roger of Howden's account would suggest that John only intended his appointment to be a temporary one. In fact few of Richard and John's leading continental officials could boast a C.V. that rivalled Robert's. Geoffrey of la Celle could claim to have held the post of seneschal of Poitou twice, once under Richard and again under John. Reginald of Pons, assuming that it was he who had been selected to replace Saveric of Mauléon as seneschal of Poitou in 1209, had, like Robert, been seneschal of both Poitou and Gascony. However, neither of these men ever held the post of seneschal of Anjou.

Although the nature of Robert's service differed significantly from that of other royal officials, in other ways his career mirrored that of other men who held positions of prominence at court; no more so than in the nature of the royal patronage shown to him. Like all royal officials Robert expected to be rewarded for his service. Loyalty alone counted for much, but loyalty, like most things, could be bought or encouraged by the careful dispensation of royal patronage.⁵⁶⁴ The most significant grant made to Robert was the hand in marriage of Joanna Fossard. Heiresses were not always given away freely to the king's followers, since royal officials would often pay, and pay well, for the hand in marriage of an heiress. Indeed when John granted Robert daughter Isabella to Peter of Mauley in 1214 he did so in return for a proffer of

⁵⁶³ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, p. 97.

⁵⁶⁴ For the nature of royal patronage see J.E. Lally, 'Secular Patronage at the Court of King Henry II', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 49, (1976), pp. 159-184. Much of what Lally has to say about the different forms of royal patronage is applicable to the reigns of Richard I and John. An important examination into the manner in which John rewarded his household knights is provided by S.D. Church, 'The Rewards of Royal Service', pp. 278-302.

7000 marks. As far as we can tell Joanna was given freely to Robert by Richard in return for the services that Robert had rendered the king, and this must be some indication of the high standing in which Robert was held by Richard.

The marriage to Joanna transformed Robert's material circumstances. In 1191 Robert held land amounting, at most it seems, to a single knights' fee. Yet Joanna brought with her lands assessed at thirty-one and a half knights' fees. The acquisition of the Fossard inheritance propelled Robert into the baronial class.⁵⁶⁵ Robert Bartlett has shown that: '*In the Angevin period the average annual income of a baron was about £200*', and we have already seen that Robert's annual income for the Fossard inheritance alone was over £340 *per annum*, and over £500 when the revenues from those escheats and wardships granted to him by John was taken into account. Loyal service to the king made Robert a rich man, but there were other prominent *curiales* who prospered better than Robert did, suggesting that although Robert was a man of considerable power and influence, he did not rank amongst the top *curiales* in either Richard or John's reign. The Fossard inheritance did not equal, in terms of knights' fees, those grants made to William Marshal or Geoffrey fitz Peter, and whilst Robert achieved baronial rank, he never acquired an earldom.⁵⁶⁶ Nonetheless in 1211 Robert's estates were, in terms of knights' fees, at least ten times the size of those held by his father.

During this study we have left two important questions unanswered. The first is how was Robert, a man of relatively modest social standing and no known

⁵⁶⁵ R. J. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 213.

⁵⁶⁶ David Crouch, *William Marshal*, p. 62 estimates the total grants made to William at about sixty-five and a half knights' fees. Ralph Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust*, p. 55 estimates the grants made to Geoffrey fitz Peter to have been in excess of one hundred and eighty knights' fees.

connections to the king, able to rise to a position of prominence so quickly during the course of the crusade. The second question that we must try to answer is why was Robert's career - given that neither he nor any member of his family had any known connections to Poitou or Anjou - so dominated by the affairs of these two regions. The answer to the second of these two questions may lay in answering the first.

Although we have absolutely no evidence to illuminate Robert's career prior to the crusade, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Robert must have been known to Richard prior to the crusade. After all, if Richard and Robert were unknown to one another, we are at a loss to explain Robert's position of prominence during the early stages of the crusade. One possible explanation for how Robert and Richard had come to know one another may be that Robert had been attached to Richard's *familia* when Richard was count of Poitou. Tempting as this explanation is one must bear in mind that Robert does not appear as a witness to any of Richard's charters pre-1192, and neither Roger of Howden nor Geoffrey of Vigeois (d. 1184) mention him in their works detailing Richard's activities as count of Poitou. However, this need not rule out the possibility that Robert served Richard as count of Poitou, or that he, and his abilities as a commander, were known to Richard, at least to some extent, prior to the crusade. It could simply mean that Robert, in 1189, was still a relatively junior member of Richard's *familia*, and that it was his activities during the crusade, as we have said, that propelled him into the limelight. It is also worth remembering that Mercadier, who one could argue was one of Richard's most ardent supporters and perhaps closest friend, was known to have served Richard as count of

Poitou, but he attests none of Richard's charters, either as count of Poitou or king of England.⁵⁶⁷

Had Robert been attached to Richard's *familia* prior to the crusade, it might explain why his career came to be dominated by the affairs of Anjou and Poitou. Had Robert served Richard before 1189, Anjou and Poitou would have been regions with which he was familiar. He may even have received modest grants made to him by Richard in these regions. However, evidence for this, both pre and post-1189 is completely nonexistent. Nonetheless we should not rule out the possibility that between *circa* 1189 and 1205 Robert may have received some grants in Poitou and Anjou. Even if Robert had no possessions of his own in Anjou or Poitou he, if he had served Richard as count of Poitou, would have been well acquainted with those men who dominated the affairs of these two regions, since many of the most prominent members of Richard's *familia* – pre and post-1189 - were drawn from these regions. It is possible that even before the crusade Robert would have been well acquainted with many of the men he later served alongside as seneschal of Anjou and Poitou.⁵⁶⁸ Prominent members of Richard's *familia* as count of Poitou had included William Maingot, Peter Bertin, William Longchamp, Philip of Poitiers, Andrew of Chauvigny, Ralph of Mauléon Geoffrey of Lusignan, Geoffrey of la Celle and Mercadier.⁵⁶⁹ This is not to say that Robert was an expert on Angevin and Poitevin affairs in 1195 or 1201, merely that the affairs of these two regions, and the men who dominated those

⁵⁶⁷ Geoffrey of Vigeois, '*Chronica Lemovicensis*', *RHFG*, xviii, pp. 211-223; at p. 222 & p. 223. Although Geoffrey is one of our best sources for the study of Richard's time as count of Poitou, he rarely names those men attached to Richard's *familia*.

⁵⁶⁸ R.V. Turner, 'The Households of the Sons of Henry II', M. Aurell (ed.), *La Cour Plantagenêt 1154-1224*, (Poitiers, 2000), pp. 49-62; esp. pp. 58-62.

⁵⁶⁹ Some of these men would have been known to Robert from the crusade.

affairs, were men with whom Robert could have been more familiar with than many of Richard and John's officials.

Although Robert may indeed have served alongside Richard before 1189, this still begs the question of how he first came to Richard's attention. An answer to this may lie in his brother's rise to power in the late-1170s. We know that by 1180 Stephen of Thurnham held the posts of royal marshal and *hostiarius* which would have made him an influential figure at court. It is possible that Stephen used his connections at court, in particularly those with the king, to aid his brother's advancement. Although we have no evidence to show that this was the case, what evidence we do have, would seem to suggest that the relationship between Robert and Stephen was relatively close. Stephen may have been responsible for securing Robert a position in Richard's *familia*. At the very least we must accept that the fact that Stephen held such a prominent position at court would have been of considerable advantage to Robert in his quest for advancement.

Although Robert's experience prior to the crusade may have made him a suitable candidate for appointment to the seneschalries of Anjou and Poitou, there must have been something about Robert's performance from 1191 onwards that endeared him to both Richard and John, and which accounts for his longevity in the king's service. Richard and John were, after all, men of very different temperaments, and it was not always the case that men who had prospered under Richard; prospered under John. Perhaps the characteristic that most endeared Robert to his royal masters was his loyalty. Loyalty was a quality that the Angevin kings prized highly in their officials, and our study has shown a number of instances where Robert's loyalty to the

Angevin cause was demonstrated. Robert's adherence to John during the Succession Crisis was probably the key factor in ensuring that he continued to prosper during John's reign. Loyalty was not a negligible quality in a royal official. Men like Robert wielded great power and influence, and such men could prove dangerous if their loyalty became doubtful. Robert's loyalty is perhaps best demonstrated by considering that he served Richard and John for nearly two decades, and yet never once was he suspected of anything less than total devotion to the Angevin cause. Considering that much of the time was spent in the notorious snake pit that was Poitou, this achievement is quite remarkable.

The wealth Robert acquired during the course of his career enabled him to mirror the behaviour of other prominent nobles and royal officials in making grants to religious houses. Although Robert was often to be found in conflict with the English Church, this was hardly unusual. The aristocracy and the Church frequently clashed over property. Both groups needed money, and land was the basis of the Angevin economy. Although Robert found himself in conflict with a number of powerful ecclesiastical figures, as well as earning Matthew Paris' distain for his involvement in the plunder of the estates of Christ Church Canterbury, he also made donations to the Church. Like most landowners Robert probably considered donations to the Church to form part of his duty as a nobleman and as a Christian. Such donations did not merely enable Robert to conform to the social and religious norms of his era, but they also enabled him to demonstrate the extent of his wealth, and the success he had achieved during his career. Most men of property sought to establish or endow religious houses, but few of them were, like Robert, in a position to endow four such establishments.

Were we to seek a symbol – still extant today – of Robert’s success, one would be hard pressed to find a better one than the ruins of Bayham Abbey. Although the Hospital of St. Nicholas appears to have floundered by the late-thirteenth-century, three of Robert’s foundations soldiered on until the Dissolution.⁵⁷⁰ Although St. James’ passed into the hands of the Order of St. Thomas of Acre, it survived until that order fell to the capricious grasp of Henry VIII. Grosmont survived until 1539, albeit with only five monks in residence.⁵⁷¹ Bayham Abbey appears to have fared the best. Archaeological surveys have shown that a number of the buildings that formed the core of Bayham Abbey were laid out in the early-thirteenth-century (probably by 1211).⁵⁷² Although Robert was unlikely to have lived to see the completion of the stone buildings his donations helped fund, the canons appear to have been reasonably well provided for by the time of his death. Most notable of these early building works was the impressive cloister that still dominates the site today, and which was probably finished not long after Robert’s death.⁵⁷³ The abbey continued to prosper after Robert’s death, with building work continuing well into the fourteenth-century - although the main buildings appear to have been finished by the end of the thirteenth-century. Bayham, perhaps because of its relative wealth, fell early in the reign of Henry VIII, and had been suppressed by 1525.⁵⁷⁴ Bayham Abbey was not the grandest religious foundation in England, or even Sussex, but it remained, as indeed it was probably intended to, a concrete example of the success Robert had achieved in the service of the Angevin kings.

⁵⁷⁰ D. Knowles & R. Neville Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses, p. 355.

⁵⁷¹ VCH (Yorks.) ii, p. 194 & p. 347.

⁵⁷² S.E. Rigold & J. Coad, Bayham Abbey, p. 4b.

⁵⁷³ *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁷⁴ D. Knowles & R. Neville Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses, p. 184.

That Robert held a position of considerable power and influence during the course of his career cannot be doubted, but his success does not appear to have been translated into something akin to a lasting legacy. In fact it is hard to find any evidence that Robert's fame survived beyond his death, at least outside of Yorkshire. Although a number of fourteenth-century writers included material relating to Robert in their works [Peter de Langtoft, Robert Mannyng and Thomas Burton], it can be shown that all three writers were drawing on earlier works. Howden in the case of Langtoft, Langtoft in the case of Mannyng, and Langtoft and an earlier Meaux chronicler in the case of Burton. Langtoft and Burton both had Yorkshire connections, and it is possible that Robert's appearance in their works is indicative of a more enduring knowledge of Robert's career in Yorkshire than elsewhere. Burton's description of Robert as: '*Robert de Thurnham, militi de Cancia, senescallo Vasconiae strenuo*', was either obtained from one of the earlier historical works preserved at Meaux, or else suggests that knowledge of Robert's origins and activities in the king's service survived, at least in Yorkshire, into the fourteenth-century.⁵⁷⁵ In fact both Burton and Peter of Langtoft were well aware of Robert's crusading activities, suggesting that these had not been forgotten by some sections of Yorkshire society.

Pierre le Baud, writing in the fifteenth-century, also included material relating to Robert, but as we have seen he almost certainly had access to twelfth-century charter evidence which is now lost. The only later writer to include material concerning Robert, and whose material would seem to have been independent of any earlier writer, was Matthew Paris. Some of Paris' information must have come from a

⁵⁷⁵ Meaux Chron., i, p. 231.

source distinct from his usual source – Wendover – suggesting that knowledge of Robert’s activities in John’s service survived until the mid-thirteenth-century. However, Paris’ interest in Robert was largely limited to his role in the exploitation of the English church, a subject close to Paris’ heart, and a subject for which he appears to have had access to a wide range of information.

A key factor in Robert’s inability to secure a lasting legacy was his failure to produce a male heir, to inherit the property that Robert had spent so much time and effort building up. At his death in 1211 Robert was survived by only his daughter Isabella. Isabella was a minor in 1211, and it was not until 1214 that she was given in marriage to Peter of Mauley. It was Peter and his sons [all rather confusingly called Peter] who would profit most from Robert’s success.⁵⁷⁶ By his marriage to Isabella, Peter was able to establish a dynasty that prospered though out the thirteenth-century. The failure to produce a male heir was far from uncommon, and success in the royal service did not always translate into lasting dynastic success. In fact Robert’s own brother, despite having five children who survived to adulthood, could produce no son to carry on his line. Two other men with whom Robert was extremely well acquainted – William Brewer and Geoffrey fitz Peter – also failed to establish lasting dynasties. No doubt both Stephen and Robert, as all royal officials must have done, dreamt of establishing dynasties capable of carrying on and augmenting the success they had achieved, but in this they were to be disappointed.

⁵⁷⁶ C.C. Kingsford, ‘The Barons de Mauley’, *EHR*, xi, (1896), pp. 515-520.

Appendix A

Itinerarium Roberti de Turneham

Entries in italic represent possible rather than confirmed attestations

(x) number of *acta* witnessed at that location.

1192

26 th August	Acre	<i>Acta Henrici et Ricardi</i> , ii, pp. 168-169
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1194

28 th July	Poitiers	Itinerary, p. 98
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1195

9 th January	Brionne	Itinerary, p. 100
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1196

4 th February	Chinon	Itinerary, p. 110
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1197

1 st April	Tours	Itinerary, p. 117
16 th October	Rouen	Itinerary, p. 123

1198

22 nd May	La Roche d'Andely (2)	Itinerary, p. 128
12 th August	Ouilly	Itinerary, p. 132
22 nd August	<i>La Roche d'Orival</i>	<i>Itinerary, p. 132</i>
8 th September	Château-Gaillard	Itinerary, p. 134
15 th September	La Roche d'Andely (2)	Itinerary, p. 134
19 th September	La Roche d'Andely	Itinerary, p. 135

1199

24 th January	Chahaigues (2)	Itinerary, p. 142
28 th January	Chahaigues	Itinerary, p. 142
2 nd February	La Suze	Itinerary, p. 143
3 rd February	La Suze	Itinerary, p. 143
19 th February	Colombiers	Itinerary, p. 143
1 st March	Roche-Turpin	Itinerary, p. 144
5 th March	Chateau-du-Loire	Itinerary, p. 144
11 th March	Chinon	Itinerary, p. 144

Reign of King John

21 st April	Frontevrault	Cal. Doc. Fr. No. 1301
30 th July	Rouen	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 10b
18 th August	La Roche d'Andely	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 30b
23 rd August	Rouen	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 12

1200

19 th January	Pont – Audemer (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 35b.
24 th January	Caen	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 34
30 th January	Bures	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 34
31 st January	Barfleur	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 59
1 st February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 34b
2 nd February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 34b
3 rd February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 35
6 th February	Barfleur	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 35b
7 th February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36
10 th February	Barfleur	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36
16 th February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36
17 th February	Valognes	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36
19 th February	Cherbourg	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36b
24 th February	Barfleur	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36b

1 st March	Winchester	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 36b
4 th March	Windsor	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 39
15 th March	Silverstone (4)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 38 & p. 38b
16 th March	Northampton	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 38
22 nd March	Tickhill	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 39b
25 th March	York (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 39b & p. 40
26 th March	York (3)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 40 & p. 40b
19 th April	Westminster (3)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 68
20 th April	Westminster	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 46
21 st April	Fulham	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 48
22 nd April	Guildford (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 54b
25 th April	Porchester (3)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 50b; p. 51 & p. 54
27 th April	Porchester (4)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 51b; p. 52; p. 54 & p. 55
28 th April	Porchester	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 53b
30 th April	Southwick	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 54
5 th May	Caen	Cal. Doc. Fr. No. 874
9 th May	Roche-Orival	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 58
25 th May	Roche-Orival	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 65
30 th May	Hèrbertot	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 65b
1 st June	Troarn	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 66b
5 th June	Falaise	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 70b
6 th June	Argentan	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 69
7 th June	Argentan	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 70

9 th June	Le Mans	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 69b
10 th June	La Fleche	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 70
18 th June	La Genest	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 70b
21 st June	Angers	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 71b
30 th August	Chinon	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 75b
3 rd September	La Suze	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 75
24 th September	Brix	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 75b
25 th September	Cherbourg	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 76
26 th September	Cherbourg	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 76
11 th October	Guildford	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 76b
16 th October	Clarendon	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 76
19 th October	Marlborough	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 82b
22 nd October	Chelsworth	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 76b
23 rd October	Malmesbury (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 77
23 rd October	Brandenstoke	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 77
28 th October	Winterbourne	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 77b
29 th October	Berkeley	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 78
22 nd November	Norwich	<i>Chron. Rog. Hov.</i> , iv, p. 142.
6 th December	Ludgershall	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 81b
30 th December	Woodstock	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 94

1201

13 th January	Lincoln	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 84b
14 th January	Stow	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 84
18 th January	Lowth	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 84b
25 th January	Beverley	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 84b
27 th January	Driffield (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 85 & p. 101
28 th January	Driffield	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 85
1 st February	Pickering	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 85b
3 rd February	Scarborough	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 85
6 th February	Stockton	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 86
7 th February	Durham	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 86b
28 th March	Canterbury	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 91b
4 th April	Windsor	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 92
7 th April	Freemantle	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 92
7 th April	Marlborough	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 92b
9 th April	Marlborough	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 92b
10 th April	Marlborough (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 93b
15 th April	Cranborne (3)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 93; p. 93b & p. 96
18 th April	Dorchester	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 93
19 th April	Dorchester (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 93 & p. 94b
20 th April	Bridport (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 94b & p. 95

22 nd April	Exeter (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 95 & p. 95b
27 th April	Exeter	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 94. misdated to 17 th
1 st August	Chinon	J.W. Baldwin, <i>Les Registres de Philippe Auguste</i> , No. 42.

1202

4 th February	Angoulême	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 5b
5 th February	Angoulême	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 6
25 th August	Chinon	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 17
29 th August	Chinon	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 17b
2 nd November	Saumur	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 21.
3 rd November	Saumur (2)	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 19 & 20.

1205

21 st July	Bexley	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 157
26 th July	Freemantle (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 156
28 th July	Mitcheldever	<i>Rot. litt. claus.</i> , p. 44
31 st October	Guildford (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 159 & 159b
22 nd December	Brill	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 161

28 th December	Marlborough (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 161
29 th December	Marlborough	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 161b

1206

4 th January	Christchurch	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 58
6 th January	Beer-Regis (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 162 <i>Rot. litt. claus.</i> , p. 62
9 th January	Dorchester (3)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 161b <i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 58
3 rd May	Swallowfield (3)	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 63b & 64
5 th May	Freemantle	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 64
6 th May	Basingstoke	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 64
27 th August	Niort	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 67
21 st September	Angers	<i>Rot. litt. pat.</i> , p. 67b

1207

20 th July	Melksham	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 167b
22 nd July	Brook (2)	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 167b
23 rd July	Charterhouse	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 168
5 th October	Lambeth	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 171
6 th October	Lambeth	<i>Rot. litt. claus.</i> , p. 93
7 th October	Lambeth	<i>Rot. litt. claus.</i> , p. 93
19 th October	Westminster	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 171b

25 th October	Windsor	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 171.
15 th December	Egbury	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 173b

1209

12 th April	Doncaster	<i>Rot. chart.</i> , p. 185
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Appendix B

Langtoft, Burton and the Career of

Robert of Thurnham

Peter of Langtoft

In our earlier discussion of the conquest of Cyprus we made reference to two later works whose authors included details relating to Robert's involvement in the conquest of Cyprus. The first of the two writers whose work we need to consider is Peter of Langtoft, one time canon of Bridlington Priory [Yorks.].⁵⁷⁷ Peter of Langtoft began work on his 'Chronicle', written in Anglo-Norman verse, in 1305 or early-1306 and, according to Thea Summerfield, the work: '*...must have been finished soon after Edward [I]'s death*', which is to say *circa* 1307.⁵⁷⁸ As such it is not a contemporary account of the conquest of Cyprus, and needs to be treated with a considerable degree of caution.

⁵⁷⁷ For Langtoft see A. Gransden, Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307, (London, 1974), pp. 476-486 & T. Summerfield, The Matter of Kings Lives: The Design of Past and Present in the Early Fourteenth-Century Verse Chronicles by Pierre de Langtoft and Robert Mannyng, (Amsterdam, 1998).

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

In fact Langtoft's account of the conquest of Cyprus, was derived from material provided by Roger of Howden in his '*Chronica*', a work that formed Langtoft's principal source for the reign of Richard I.⁵⁷⁹ Although Langtoft derived much of his material from Howden, and follows, with a few exceptions, Howden's general chronology, Langtoft also embroiders on Howden's work, particularly with regards to the conquest and administration of Cyprus. Langtoft was not a slavish copyist. Langtoft, like Howden, first mentions Robert's involvement in the conquest of Cyprus by referring to his role in the Cypriot coastal campaigns of early-May 1191. However, Langtoft's account of the coastal campaign is briefer than that provided by Howden. Whereas Howden provides details of the division of the crusader forces, together with a reasonably detailed account of Robert and Richard's successes against the Cypriot coastal towns, Langtoft merely relates that: '*Robert de Turnham behaves himself nobly, The land on the coast he has conquered clear.*'⁵⁸⁰

A number of episodes in Langtoft's account of the conquest of Cyprus show the influence of Howden's work, even if they are not verbatim translations of that material. In the '*Chronica*' Howden describes the surrender of Isaac's daughter in the following manner: '*...et cum venisset rex cum exercitu suo ad fortissimum castellum quod dicitur Cherin [Kyrenia], in quo erat filia imperatoris, exivit illa obviam regi, et cecidit prona in terram ante pedes regis, et tradidit ei castellum illud, misericordiam postulans.*'⁵⁸¹ Langtoft gave a very similar account, relating that: '*From the castle within the daughter of Isaac descends, And falls before the*

⁵⁷⁹ T. Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings Lives*, p. 64.

⁵⁸⁰ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 109-110 & *Langtoft*, ii, p. 65.

⁵⁸¹ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, pp. 110-111.

*king tenderly weeping, Prays him for mercy for the sake of God Almighty; And the king grants it very courteously...causes the maiden to be sent in gentile manner to his wife.*⁵⁸²

An important difference between Langtoft's work and Howden's is Langtoft's account of the activities of a certain Statin. The story of Statin the steward was inspired by material found in Howden, but was embellished upon, quite considerably, by Langtoft. The name Statin does not appear in Howden's account, but we can clearly see where Langtoft got the inspiration for this figure. Earlier in his account of the conquest Howden includes the story of the defection of one of Isaac's men. According to Howden: *'Quadam vero die, cum supradictus imperator [Isaac] ad prandium suum sedisset, et comites sui cum eo, quidam illorum ait illi: 'Domine, consulimus vobis ut pacem faciatis cum rege Angliae, ne tota gens vestra pereat.'* *Iratus vero imperator propter hunc sermonem, percussit eum cum cultello quem tenebat, et amputavit nasum ejus qui consilium illud dederat: post pradium ille, qui percussus fuerat, abiit ad regem Angliae, et adhaesit ei.*⁵⁸³

It was this story that proved Langtoft with his inspiration for the figure of Statin. According to Langtoft: *'Statin the steward says to the emperor, where he is seated at his meal in royal honour, "Sire king Isaac, I am thy vavator, and keeper of thy lands, I see that dishonour approached thee greatly through this conqueror. He is the king of the English and a wise warrior. Go and make his peace, that by thy*

⁵⁸² Langtoft, ii, pp. 65-67.

⁵⁸³ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 110.

error the kingdom be not lost, which thy ancestor has held till now like a good governor.”⁵⁸⁴ Clearly the idea of a nameless dissenter did not appeal to Langtoft, and Howden’s ‘*quidam illorum*’ is given the name Statin by Langtoft, and the post of Isaac’s seneschal or steward. One difference between the two works is that Statin’s speech is longer in Langtoft’s account than Howden’s, but Langtoft had a greater liking for speeches than Howden. Langtoft’s account of Isaac’s reaction to the speech is nearly identical to that reported by Howden. According to Langtoft: *‘Isaac becomes angry against such a counsellor. With the knife he struck him, throwing it carelessly. A slice off his nose he cuts with the carving-knife. Statin flies thence in shame and grief, and comes to king Richard with very great outcry. The king takes his homage.’*⁵⁸⁵ For Howden the story of the disfigured noble was little more than an aside, and he played no subsequent role in the conquest of Cyprus. Langtoft, however, chose to give Statin a much greater role. Whereas Howden’s account suggests that Richard’s victories in May and June persuaded the Northern Cypriot castellans to surrender, Langtoft claims their surrender was negotiated by Statin: *‘He [Statin] delivers to king Richard without more ado Baffa and Buffenet, Candare and Dendamur, And all the cities of which Isaac was ruler.’*⁵⁸⁶

Langtoft’s account of the actual conquest of Cyprus depended heavily on material derived from Howden, but his account of the post-conquest administration of Cyprus is also influenced by Howden. However, as with the earlier material Langtoft made alterations, some significant, to the account provided by Howden.

⁵⁸⁴ Langtoft, ii, p. 67.

⁵⁸⁵ Langtoft, ii, pp. 67-69.

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid.*, ii, p. 69.

Probably the most significant alteration occurs in early-June 1191. Howden states that Richard appointed Robert and Richard de Camville to guard the island after his departure. Langtoft, however, omits any reference to Richard de Camville, and claims that the island was handed over to Statin, whom Richard made King of Cyprus, shortly before his departure for Acre. According to Langtoft: *‘Now has king Richard completed his business, And by great conquest has seized Cyprus. To Statin le Nasé he does great courtesy; He has given him Cyprus to hold by the sword of him and his heirs, saved the seignury to all the English kings as long as man has life.’*⁵⁸⁷ This statement is so bizarre as to demand immediate dismissal. Not one of the sources for the Third Crusade, and there were many of them, offer any evidence to suggest that Richard appointed a native King of Cyprus. In fact all our sources, at least those that mention Richard’s arrangements for Cyprus, state quite clearly that it had been men drawn from Richard’s retinue who had been left behind to hold the island.⁵⁸⁸ Although Langtoft acknowledges that Robert was left on Cyprus by Richard, he accounts for this decision by claiming that Statin had asked Richard: *‘For Robert de Turnham in succour and aid, until the peace in Cyprus be better established. Robert remains there; king Richard grants it.’*⁵⁸⁹

Langtoft’s account of the Cypriot revolt is broadly similar to Howden’s. Like Howden, Langtoft identified the leader of the rebels as a former monk: *‘...[a] cousin of the deposed emperor Isaac.’*⁵⁹⁰ Howden’s account of the suppression of the revolt was relatively brief, relating that: *‘...Robertus de Turnham...magnum*

⁵⁸⁷ Langtoft, ii, p. 71.

⁵⁸⁸ Devizes, p. 38; *Vie (Rigord)*, p. 109; *‘De Calamitatibus Cypri’*, p. clxxxviii; *Itinerarium*, p. 204 & *Chronicon Universale Anonymi Laudunensis*, p. 52.

⁵⁸⁹ Langtoft, ii, p. 71.

⁵⁹⁰ *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iii, p. 116. & Langtoft, ii, p. 75. In fact Howden only claimed the monk was a relative of Isaac’s. Langtoft probably assumed, or decided, that he was his cousin.

congregavit exercitum, et commisit praelium cum illo novo imperatore, et illum et gentem suam vicit, et cepit, et suspendit in patibulo.' Langtoft gave a slightly longer account. According to Langtoft: '*Robert de Turnham is much provoked, And he goes in search of him [the monk] until he has found him; He takes him by force, has carried him to Cherin, Where he escaped out of prison by night.*'⁵⁹¹ Howden made no mention to this initial capture of the monk; his imprisonment; and his subsequent nocturnal flight. After this brief addition Langtoft continued his account stating that: '*Statin and Robert have cried "To arms!" All the people of Cyprus come there voluntarily. The wretch is retaken, and carried back to Cherin.*'

Once again we find Langtoft embellishing the basic account he obtain from Howden. In the '*Chronica*' the monk is hanged immediately after his capture, but Langtoft inserts a description of a trial that he said took place between the monk's second capture and his execution. According to Langtoft: '*The third day after Robert has given orders to summon the court of all the country. Freemen and bondmen are come gladly to the king's judgment of the monk crowned. Now listen how Robert has pronounced judgment on him.*'⁵⁹² Langtoft then includes a fairly lengthy speech, supposedly made by Robert at the trial. According to Langtoft Robert berated the monk for abandoning the cloister to pursue his political ambitions. Having ordered the monk to be executed, Robert remarks that: '*It would be better for thee to have been sitting in a monastery, And chanting the*

⁵⁹¹ Langtoft, ii, p. 77.

⁵⁹² Langtoft, ii, p. 77.

*mass, and doing God's service, Than to claim a kingdom which Richard has conquered, And hang like a thief so near thy friends.*⁵⁹³

Like Howden, Langtoft ends his discussion of Robert's involvement with Cypriot affairs with the execution of the rebel monk, remarking that: '*When this new king was delivered to death, And the king's peace established in Cyprus, Robert takes leave of Statin le Nasé, Returns to his sovereign with riches enough.*' It is at this point that Langtoft adds a story that had absolutely no basis in the material he found in Howden's '*Chronica.*' According to Langtoft Robert, when he arrives in the Holy Land: '*Tells him [Richard] how a monk, descended from the kindred of the emperor Isaac, was proclaimed emperor by the people of Greece...How he was brought to trial in the court, And how by sentence he was there judged. Said king Richard, "Alas! Shame! Who ever hanged a king? Wast thou mad? Thou didst shame to all crowned heads."*' "*Sire,*" said Robert, "*say no more of him!*"⁵⁹⁴ It seems certain that Langtoft invented this story, but explaining why he did so is not easy. It is possible Langtoft added the story to show Richard's respect for the dignity of royal status, a matter of some interest to Langtoft given his support for Edward I.

Establishing why Langtoft felt the need to make the alterations that he did to Howden's work is a difficult task. Given the nature of his work, and its intended audience, Langtoft may have decided to spice up what he may have seen as the rather dry and sober account provided by Howden. Another possible explanation

⁵⁹³ *ibid.*, ii, pp. 77-79.

⁵⁹⁴ Langtoft, ii, p. 79.

could be that Langtoft was basing his account on his own recollections of Howden's work rather than using an actual copy of that work. It has been suggested that Bridlington possessed a copy of Howden's '*Chronica*', and a man as historically minded as Langtoft would undoubtedly have read that work had a copy been available to him whilst he was at Bridlington.⁵⁹⁵ However, Langtoft's 'Chronicle' was probably written after he had left Bridlington, and he may have been forced to use his recollection of Howden's work, rather than an actual copy of the work. This might explain the occasional divergence in chronology between the two accounts, and also why Langtoft felt the need to invent names and episodes. Langtoft's Yorkshire connections might help explain why Robert is given a more prominent role in the conquest of Cyprus than even Howden gave him. The Mauley family, descendants of the marriage of Isabella of Thurnham and Peter I of Mauley, were still prominent members of the Yorkshire aristocracy at the time Langtoft would have been a resident of Bridlington, and it is possible that Robert's fame proved more durable in this part of the country than elsewhere.

Thomas Burton

The second of the two works we need to examine is the 'Chronicle of Meaux' written by Thomas Burton, abbot of Meaux [1396-1399]. Burton's 'Chronicle' was written at Meaux towards the end of the fourteenth-century, and covers the history of the Abbey of Meaux from its foundation in 1151 until the resignation of

⁵⁹⁵ For Bridlington's possession of a copy of the '*Chronica*' see T. Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings Lives*, p. 17 & p. 228.

Abbot William of Scarborough in 1396.⁵⁹⁶ Burton's treatment of the conquest of Cyprus appears in the general history section of the chapter dealing with the abbacy of Thomas, third abbot of Meaux [1182-1197].⁵⁹⁷ Other material relating to Robert's life is to be found in the local history sections dealing with Adam, first abbot Meaux [1151-1160] and Alexander, fourth abbot of Meaux [1197-1210].

Burton's account of Robert's involvement in the conquest of Cyprus can be dealt with reasonably quickly. Although Bond, and later Tyerman, have suggested that Burton's account of the crusade was influenced by material derived directly, or indirectly, from Robert of Thurnham, it can be shown that Burton's account is in fact little more than a Latin translation of Langtoft's work, with those episodes that could be said to reflect favourably on Robert being omitted wherever possible.⁵⁹⁸ Although Burton probably had access to a copy of the '*Chronica*' - other material in his work relating to the reign of Richard I is derived from Howden - he did not use Howden as his source for Robert's activities on Cyprus.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁶ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 1307 to the early Sixteenth-Century*, (London, 1982), pp. 354-371; at p. 358. Burton appears to have started his work in 1388 and had finished it by 1396.

⁵⁹⁷ *Meaux Chron.*, i, pp. 257-260.

⁵⁹⁸ Bond made this suggestion in the preface to his edition of the Meaux Chronicle. *Meaux Chron.*, p. lxxviii. In fairness to Bond the RS edition of Peter of Langtoft had not been published when he published the 'Meaux Chronicle', so he could not have been expected to have recognized Burton's source, especially when Burton made no mention to his use of Langtoft's work, in either the 'Chronicle' or the 'Register'. More recently C. Tyerman stated that Robert of Thurnham's: '*...memories [of the crusade] appear in the Meaux Chronicle.*' C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588*, (London, 1988), p. 65.

⁵⁹⁹ Burton's sources are examined by Bond *ibid.*, i, pp. lxxix-lxxx. & A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 1307 to the early Sixteenth-Century*, pp. 358-9. Bond identifies 'Benedict of Peterborough', i.e. Howden, as one of Burton's sources for the crusade, but makes no mention to the '*Chronica*', perhaps because the RS edition of volume three of the '*Chronica*' had not yet been published. A comparison of Burton's account of the reign of Richard I with Howden's work is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I believe that the '*Chronica*' was probably the work which Burton used. Burton's account of the reign of Richard I suggests the use of Howden as a source up to April 1199, and not just for the crusade. For instance Burton's account of Richard's death was very likely derived from the '*Chronica.*' *Chron. Rog. Hov.*, iv, pp. 82-4 & *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. 350.

Unlike Langtoft, Burton began his account of Robert's involvement in Cypriot affairs in late-May and early-June 1191, shortly before Richard left Cyprus for Acre, avoiding any mention to Robert's involvement in Richard's campaigns of conquest. In fact he begins his treatment of Robert's activities with the surrender of Isaac Komnenos and Richard's preparations for the trip to Acre. According to Burton: *'Post haec [Isaac's surrender] rex Ricardus, dimisso Roberto de Thornham milite...ad ipsum Ciprum eidem Statino totaliter subjiciendum in mare versus Acram se immisit.'*⁶⁰⁰ The mysterious Statin, who first appears in Langtoft's account, also features in Burton's, and this in itself would point to Langtoft as Burton's source. However, for Burton, Statin was not nearly as important a figure as he had been to Langtoft. Although Burton also claims he had been appointed King of Cyprus by Richard, he makes no mention to the alleged request by Statin for Robert's assistance.

Burton's account of the Cypriot rebellion is broadly similar to Langtoft's. He agrees with Langtoft that Richard's departure was the cause of the revolt stating that: *'Sic rege Ricardo a Cipro discedente, monachus quidam Isakii cognatus claustrum egressus regni diadema singulos perturbando invadebat. Quem Robertus de Thornham apprehensum carceri mancipabat. Qui tamen de carcere noctanter effugiens a Statino rege et Roberto iterum comprehensus patibulo suspensus interiit.'*⁶⁰¹ Burton follows Langtoft's account of the revolt, including his alterations and additions to the material Langtoft had found in the *'Chronica'*. Like Langtoft, Burton has a longer account of the rebel monk's activities, describing his initial capture and subsequent nocturnal flight. However, unlike Langtoft he makes no

⁶⁰⁰ Meaux Chron., i, p. 260.

⁶⁰¹ Meaux Chron., i, p. 260.

reference to the alleged trial that preceded the monk's execution. Another fabrication of Langtoft's, his account of Robert's reception in the Holy Land by Richard, was also included by Burton. According to Burton: '*Robertus autem de Cipro egressus, actus monachi ipsius et qualiter cum eo fecerat Ricardo regi referens, ipsum in indignationem commovit, eo quod regiae dignitati derogans aliquem qui se vocaverat regem suspendebat.*'

Although Burton's account of the conquest of Cyprus differs slightly from that of Langtoft's, all these differences are omissions rather than additions. That Burton chose to omit material that could be said to have reflected well on Robert should come as no surprise. Robert and the monks of Meaux had spent three years engaged in a bitter conflict over Wharram, and despite the resolution of that conflict relations between Robert and Meaux do not appear to have improved. We have already seen that Burton went to considerable lengths to portray Robert as the guilty party in the Wharram dispute, and it was unlikely that he would wish his readers to learn of the more positive aspects of his activities during the conquest of Cyprus. The description of the coastal campaign of May 1191, and the later stages of the conquest, which Burton would have found in Langtoft's work, show Robert to have been a man who was held in high regard by Richard I, as well as a man who had fought successfully for the Christian cause, albeit it against other Christians. In fact Robert appears as an even more important figure in Langtoft's account than he had been portrayed in Howden's '*Chronica*'. Burton may simply have decided to pass over these episodes because for him the most important aspect of Robert's involvement in the crusade was likely to have been the response he received from Richard when he arrived in the Holy Land in August 1191. It may well have been this particular episode that

persuaded Burton to use Langtoft's account of the conquest rather than Howden's. It is not hard to see, given the Wharram dispute, why this particular story would be attractive to Burton. The loss of Wharram had, after all, probably been instrumental in forcing Abbot Thomas' resignation. However, Burton could not include this story without mentioning Robert and the Cypriot revolt, otherwise the episode would make no sense. Because of this Burton had to include material relating to Robert's appointment as justiciar of Cyprus, and the subsequent Cypriot revolt.

Burton did not limit his discussion of Robert's career simply to his exploits on crusade. As we have already seen, Burton's primary interest in Robert activities relates to the Wharram dispute of 1196-1199. Burton's sources for the Wharram dispute, and other episodes involving Robert, are much harder to discern than was his source for the Third Crusade. In general Burton is reluctant to identify the sources at his disposal, especially in the 'Chronicle' which he claims to have written to correct the earlier neglect of Meaux's history and the deeds of its abbots.⁶⁰² However in another of his works - 'The Register of Meaux' - Burton is more forthcoming about the nature of the historical source material available to him.⁶⁰³ A section of the 'Register' was given over to a list of those books that Burton had found in Meaux's library.⁶⁰⁴ Some of the historical works possessed by Meaux were named, but some were referred to rather obliquely as: '*...aliae multae cronicae Angliae.*' It is possible that two of these works were copies, or partial copies, of Howden's '*Chronica*' and Langtoft's '*Chronicle*'.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² *Meaux Chron.*, i, pp. 71-2.

⁶⁰³ BL, MS, Cotton MS, Vitellius, C, vi.

⁶⁰⁴ Printed as an appendix in *Meaux Chron.*, iii, pp. lxxxiii-c.

⁶⁰⁵ According to Gransden, Langtoft's work was particularly popular in Yorkshire. *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, p. 480. Langtoft's work has survived, in its entirety, in nine manuscripts,

Elsewhere in the ‘Register’ Burton refers to other historical works, written at Meaux, which he used as a source for the ‘Register’, and probably for the ‘Chronicle’ as well. According to Bond, Burton’s ‘Register’ shows that he had access to one or more historical works written at Meaux between the twelfth and thirteenth-centuries.⁶⁰⁶ What little Burton says about these works suggests that they were historical works written at Meaux from the abbacy of Adam onwards, and that at least one of them was in the form of a roll. We know from Burton’s brief statements that he had access to a work, or works, containing material relating to the abbacies of Thomas [1182-1197], Alexander [1197-1210], and Hugh [1210-1220], which is to say that he had access to material covering the period in which Robert was known to have been active in Yorkshire.⁶⁰⁷ The subject matter of these works is hard to discern. We know that some of the material included information relating to grants made to Meaux by local nobles. In the course of his discussion on the rents and properties owned by Meaux, Burton occasionally makes reference to this earlier material, in which he claims to have found evidence that supported his statements. In his discussion of those lands held by Meaux, that were exempt from the payment of tithes, he makes a number of references to these earlier works. Burton very occasionally provides dates, at least for certain pieces of information that he had obtained from them. However, as with his dating in general, more often than not he limits his description to a reference to the abbacy of an earlier abbot in which he

all of which were of Northern English origin. In total twenty manuscripts containing part, or all, of Langtoft’s work have survived. T. Summerfield, *The Matter of Kings Lives*, pp. 21-22; esp. p. 22.

⁶⁰⁶ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. lxxi-lxxiii.

⁶⁰⁷ *ibid.*, i, p. lxxii. Bond quotes an number of these entries, though two he omitted are of interest to us because one shows that Burton had access to a work that included material relating to the abbacy of Alexander of Ford, and another contained material dated 1211. BL, MS, Cotton MS, Vitellius, C, vi. f. 110v: ‘*sicut patet per parvum rotulum antiquae cronicae monasterii anno domini mccxi.*’ & f. 114r ‘*...sicut patet per cronicam monasterii tempore Alexander abbate...anno domini [m]ccx.*’

believed the material he was using had been written. Occasionally a more exact date is given by Burton. Burton reveals that he found material in these works with dates of 1210, 1211, 1212, and 1215. This range might suggest the existence of a Meaux chronicler writing in the later years of Robert's life. At the very least it shows that Burton had access to material, probably narrative in nature, that contained material relating to the events of the early thirteenth-century.

Not all of Burton's information for Robert's career was derived from an earlier Meaux chronicler or chroniclers. Some of Burton's sources for the Wharram conflict were administrative rather than narrative sources. He himself admits such material existed when he wrote that he had used: '*alia monasterii memoranda*' as the basis for his work⁶⁰⁸ Before his election as abbot, Thomas had been Meaux's bursar, so he would have been well acquainted with the administrative documents, especially those relating to finance, contained in the abbey's archives.⁶⁰⁹ This would help explain why he was able to provide such accurate figures during his discussion of the debts of William Fossard. In fact his discussion of William debts, and the subsequent financial arrangements between Aaron, William, and Abbot Philip are so detailed, and accurate, as to suggest that Burton had access to a copy of Aaron's charter of 1176. That such a charter would have been preserved at Meaux, especially given Abbot Alexander's troubles in locating a copy of it in 1197/8 seems a reasonable assumption. Burton's account of the final concord between Robert and Abbot Alexander in June 1199 suggests that Burton had access to Meaux's copy of this agreement, since his account is basically a transcript of the concord as it appears in the Feet of Fines, with a few accusations of parsimony on Robert's part thrown in for

⁶⁰⁸ *Meaux Chron.*, i, p. lxxii. Burton also acknowledges his use of administrative documents in his preface to the 'Chronicle'. *Ibid.*, i, p. 71.

⁶⁰⁹ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 1307 to the early Sixteenth-Century*, p. 369.

good measure. Burton's account of the sale of Meaux's property at *Ragbrook* to Robert would indicate that documentary evidence relating to this transaction was preserved at Meaux.⁶¹⁰ In fact despite Burton's lamentations to the contrary, at least in the 'Chronicle', he found the library and muniments room at Meaux reasonably well stocked when he began writing the 'Chronicle'.

In conclusion it seems reasonable to state that Langtoft's work, whilst interesting in itself, is of little value to the study of Robert's life. However, Burton's work is not so easily dismissed, and nor should it be. For the post crusade period of Robert's career the Meaux Chronicle is a valuable and generally reliable resource, especially for the Wharram conflict and Robert dealings with Abbot Alexander. We have already seen that much of the factual information Burton included in his work can be substantiated from other, independent, sources. However, his work, if not vehemently anti-Robert, is at least a far from an unbiased and objective account of his activities, especially his dealings with Meaux. A more problematic aspect of Burton's work are those episodes for which no independent corroborative evidence exists. For instance his treatment of the life of William Fossard II in the household of his guardian, and his account of the misfortunes that befell Wharram in the late-summer or autumn of 1197. These stories may have an element of truth to them, but one should be cautious of taking them at face value. The Wharram incident in particular may have taken place, but one doubts whether it took place exactly as Burton claimed it did.

⁶¹⁰ Meaux Chron., i, pp. 314-5.

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