

# Jordan De Sandford: The Real Jordan Fantosme

## Abstract

In 1174 an author with the pen name of Jordan Fantosme composed a well-known rhyming poem entitled, in English, *Chronicle of the war between the English and Scots in 1173 and 1174*. Jordan's *Chronicle* relates the events of the two-year war in which the troops of Henry II overcame a revolt led by his son, called the "Young King," allied with Scotland and France, a rebellion that almost overthrew the king's dominion in Britain. Written in Anglo-Norman French, Jordan's *estoire* provides an action-packed eyewitness account of the military campaigns in those two years; the narrative is presented in a rousing, journalistic style almost devoid of religious allusions or mythical fabrications, or other similar fictional trappings of 12<sup>th</sup> century historical writing. Although the work has received considerable scholarly attention, the name of the presumed author, Jordan Fantosme ["Jordan the Spirit"] is obviously a *nom de plume*, and almost nothing has been known about the author himself. A substantial amount of biographical information is available about other 12<sup>th</sup> century English historians, like Gerald of Wales, Orderic Vitalis, and Master Wace, but the identity of Jordan Fantosme has remained a puzzling mystery. The present study, for the first time, identifies "Jordan Fantosme" as Jordan de Sandford, a cleric related to King Henry II through the king's mother, Empress Matilda, and to Arlette, the mother of William the Conqueror. Jordan, it can be shown, was a prominent member of the de Sandford family, a wealthy Anglo-Norman baronial lineage. The family included Jordan's father, Robert de Sandford, the castellan of Wareham Castle, who provided critically-needed assistance to Matilda's forces during the Anarchy, thereby helping bring Henry II to the throne of England. Other family members had included Warin the Bald (the sheriff of Shrewsbury), as well as the sheriff of Dorset, and the sheriff of Lincolnshire.<sup>1</sup> Records link "Jordan Fantosme" directly to Nichols de Chandos a member of Jordan de Sandford's mother's family, and to Jordan's son-in-law Richard de Anesty.

Lacking knowledge of the background of Jordan Fantosme, scholars have guessed that the poet might have been a troubadour from the south of France, or an accomplished historian from Metz, France; Sir Francis Palgrave declared him to be an Italian. Jordan de Sandford was none of these: He was a man of affairs: a chancellor to the King of Scotland, an Archdeacon in Wales, and the director of a school in Winchester. Jordan appears to have assumed the cognomen of "Jordan Fantosme" as a young man, long before the family toponymic "de Sandford" was bestowed on his father Robert in about 1141. Without a permanent family name handed down over many decades, it has been difficult for scholars to recognize the connection between "Jordan Fantosme" and the distinguished de Sandford family. Identifying Jordan Fantosme as Jordan de Sandford, a privileged member of the Anglo-Norman ruling caste, leads to an entirely new tentative interpretation of the *Chronicle* as an after-dinner entertainment recitation to be performed at the king's Christmas Court in December, 1174.

**Keywords:** Jordan Fantosme, Jordan de Sandford, King Henry II, Empress Matilda, Scottish Medieval history, the Young King, twelfth-century historians, Robert de Sandford, William the Conqueror, Arlette, Thomas de Sandford, Anglo-Norman England, Angevin England, medieval historiography.

<sup>1</sup>There are two existing MSS copies of the *Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme*, one at Durham Cathedral, and the other at Lincoln Cathedral. In light of the longstanding ties of the de Nicole (i.e., de Sandford) family to Lincoln and Lincolnshire, it is not surprising that one copy would be found in the Lincoln Cathedral. Alan of Lincoln was the successor to Jordan's grandfather Alured de Lincoln, and had an extensive fief in the shire of Lincoln at the time of the Domesday survey. See "Observations on the Rolls," pg. cliii in: *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normannie sub Regibus Anglie Vol. II*, ed. Thomas Stapleton (London, 1844).

## The Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme

The rhyming poem by "Jordan Fantosme," entitled, in English, *Chronicle of the War between the English and Scots in 1173 and 1174*, provides a first-hand, eyewitness account of the two-year war in which the troops of King Henry II overcame a rebellion led by his son, the "Young King." In the war, William the Lion (the king of Scotland), and the ruling house of France joined in the revolt, and almost overthrew the Angevin monarchy in Britain. Written in

Anglo-Norman French, Jordan's *estoire* [narrative history] provides an action-packed story of the military campaigns waged during those two years, presented in a rousing, journalistic style devoid of religious trappings or mythical fabrications.<sup>1</sup> As Matthew Strickland has

<sup>1</sup>For the features of 12<sup>th</sup> century English histories, see: Nancy Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, 1977). See also: Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (New York, 2011); John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987); Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963); Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*

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written, “Unique, of course, is a dangerous word, but in many respects Jordan’s poem stands *sui generis*. It is not a *chanson de geste*, a *lai*, or a romance. The events and characters it describes are not only factual but strictly contemporary.”<sup>2</sup> According to the poem’s latest translator, Ronald C. Johnston, “As literature, the *Chronicle* seems to me to be absolutely first class.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Chronicle* has received considerable scholarly attention. First translated into English by Francisque Michel and published in 1840,<sup>4</sup> a translation by Ronald C. Johnston appeared in 1981.<sup>5</sup> The text has been the subject of scholarly monographs by Anthony Lodge, Geert De Wilde, Geoff Rector, Marianne Ailes, Matthew Strickland, Dominica Legge, and others.<sup>6</sup> The name of the presumed author, Jordan Fantosme [“Jordan the Spirit”], however, is obviously a *nom de plume*; and almost nothing reliable has been known about the author himself, a mystery that has led to endless speculation regarding the intent and mindset of the author. As Anthony Lodge wrote in 1990, “[Jordan Fantosme’s] *Chronicle* has long been regarded as a major source by historians... However, for all the erudite scrutiny it has received, Jordan’s *Chronicle* remains a puzzle.”<sup>7</sup> Scholars have guessed that Jordan Fantosme might have been a *trouvère* [a minstrel or troubadour], that he studied in Poitiers, and that he was an Italian named Giordano Fantasma who came to England with Henry of Blois. This current study concludes, however, that “Jordan Fantosme” was in fact Jordan de Sandford, a prominent member of a wealthy Anglo-Norman family; if Jordan Fantosme was actually Jordan de Sandford, none of this guesswork regarding the poet’s identity comports with the facts.<sup>8</sup>

Free of the religious allusions that mark the writing of monastic authors like Orderic Vitalis and Gerald of Wales, and devoid of the

mythical monsters and fantastical legends that permeated popular works of the twelfth century like the tale of Fulk FitzWarin. Jordan Fantosme is the one medieval writer who reads today like the journalistic accounts of a battlefield reporter. Writing 700 years before German historian Leopold von Ranke laid down his now-famous dictum to write history “wie es eigentlich gewesen ist”—“as it actually happened”—Jordan Fantosme described current events and personalities in astonishing clarity and authenticity.

The spirited first-hand account of events eye-witnessed by Jordan Fantosme stands in sharp contrast to other well-known works of twelfth-century English history, works usually written by plodding, isolated, anodyne monks far removed from the actual events.<sup>9</sup> The *Chronicle* provides a unique and unvarnished window into the world of the Norman ruling class of twelfth-century England. Up to this time, however, little has been known about who the author with the pen name of “Jordan Fantosme” actually was, a shortcoming that has led to endless speculation about the author. The present study suggests that “Jordan Fantosme” was in fact Jordan de Sandford, the scion of a highly-placed Norman baronial family, and the progenitor of aristocratic descendants who were to hold some of the highest offices in the land over the ensuing 200 years. And by obtaining biographical details about the author, a deeper, richer, and more meaningful understanding of the poem itself can be gained.

## Jordan de Sandford: Early Years

Jordan de Sandford was born in about 1111 to his parents Robert and Beuza (née Chandos).<sup>10</sup> He was probably born in Bayworth, a village lying halfway between Oxford and Abingdon Abbey, where his father — known then as “Robert of Lincoln” — was serving as a knight for the abbot. Later, from about 1130 – 1135, there are records showing “Jordan Fantosme” studying theology and grammar in Paris under the famed scholar Gilbert de la Porrée. A colorful picture, which shows Porrée in an upper register and Jordan as one of three students in the register beneath, is archived in the manuscripts collection of the municipal library in Valenciennes, France (Figure 1). The exact years that Jordan studied in Paris are not known, but for the time to have been when Gilbert de la Porrée was in Paris, the years would have been about 1130 – 1135, when Jordan de Sandford would have been roughly ages 15 to 20 (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup> We know that in 1141 Jordan de Sandford was serving as a Chancellor to King David of Scotland. He would not have had this position unless he had been well trained in theology and was able to read and write Latin fluently, so the identification of Jordan Fantosme as Jordan de Sandford is fully consistent with known facts. Jordan would have been about age 30 in 1141.

<sup>9</sup>For example: Wace’s *Roman de Rou*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*, William of Malmesbury’s *Deeds of the English Kings*, Orderic Vitalis’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*, William of Newburgh’s *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, Walter Map’s *De Nugis Curialium*, Gervase of Canterbury’s *Chronicon*, Ralph of Diceto’s *Imagines Historiarum*, Roger of Howden’s *Chronicon*, the *Itinerarium Cambriae* by Gerald of Wales, or *Chronica Maiora* by Matthew Paris.

<sup>10</sup>The Berkshire Victoria County History says that “Robert de Sandford was a knight of the Abbey of Abingdon in 1111 with a son Jordan, 269.” Today Abingdon is in Oxfordshire.

<sup>11</sup>Gilbert de Porrée was at Chartres in 1124; he is mentioned in Paris in 1141, and left Paris to become the Bishop of Poitiers in 1142. It is known that Jordan Fantosme studied in Paris, so the young man must have studied there before Porrée left for Poitiers. See *The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée, Bishop of Poitiers, 1142-1154* by Nicholas Martin Haring (1951). Porrée taught grammar, and was known to whip his students for making a grammatical mistake. Later Jordan Fantosme taught grammar in Winchester; we can only wonder if Jordan whipped his students too!

(London, 1974); Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London, 2004); and Alan Cooper, “The Feet of those That Bark Shall Be Cut Off: Timorous Historians and the Personality of Henry II” in: *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXIII (2000).

<sup>2</sup>Matthew Strickland, “Arms and the Men: War, Loyalty and Lordship in Jordan Fantosme’s *Chronicle*.” in *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference (1990)*, ed. C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey Woodbridge (1992).

<sup>3</sup>Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme’s Chronicle*, trans. Ronald C. Johnston (New York, 1981), xvi.

<sup>4</sup>Jordan Fantosme, *Chronicle of the War Between the English and the Scots in 1173 and 1174*, trans. Francisque Michel (1840).

<sup>5</sup>Johnston *Op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup>See Anthony Lodge, “Literature and History in the *Chronicle* of Jordan Fantosme,” in: *French Studies*, XLIV, Issue 3 (July 1990) 257–270; Geert de Wilde, “Revisiting the Textual Parallels and Date of Thomas of Kent’s *Alexander* and Jordan Fantosme’s *Chronicle*,” *Medium Aevum* Vol. 83, No. 1 (Jan. 1, 2014); Geoff Rector, “Faites le mien desir’: studious persuasion and baronial desire in Jordan Fantosme’s *Chronicle*,” in: *Journal of Medieval History*, Volume 34 (2008), Issue 3, 311–346; Marianne Ailes, “Early French *Chronicle* – History or Literature?” in: *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 26 (2000), 301–12; Ronald C. Johnston, “The versification of Jordan Fantosme.” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, Année 1977, Vol. 20, Numéro 80, 368–370; Matthew Strickland, *Op. cit.*; Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963); P. A. Becker, “Jordan Fantosme, La Guerre d’Écosse: 1173–4” in: *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* Lxiv, 1944, 449–556; Ian Macdonald, “The *Chronicle* of Jordan Fantosme: Manuscripts, Author and Versification” in: *Studies in Medieval French Presented to Alfred Ewart on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1961), 242–58; and Ronald C. Johnston, “Jordan Fantosme’s Experiments in Prosody and Design”. *Mélanges de langue et littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Aix-en-Provence, 1979), 355–67.

<sup>7</sup>Lodge *Op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>For a good summary of the traditional assumptions about Jordan Fantosme, see the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry for “Jordan Fantosme,” or the Wikipedia entry on Jordan Fantosme at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan\\_Fantosme](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jordan_Fantosme).



**Figure 1** Gilbert Porrée and His Students. Jordan de Sandford, labelled here as “Jordanus Fantosma”, is the figure in the lower register on the left side. Valenciennes, Bibl. mun. ms. 197, f. 4v.



**Figure 2** Closeup of Jordan Fantosme as a Student of Gilbert Porrée. Jordan is depicted here as a young man, perhaps 15 or 16 years old, around 1130 with red hair and a light complexion. Valenciennes, Bibl. mun. ms. 197, f. 4v.

### Jordan in Carlisle

Jordan de Sandford is recorded serving as chancellor to David King of Scots in the king’s court at Carlisle in 1141, and as chaplain to the earl of Huntingdon (Carlisle, at that time, was considered to be in Scotland).<sup>12</sup> In the *Chronicle*, Jordan Fantosme mentions Carlisle seven times, and describes the city in such glowing detail that he must

<sup>12</sup>Regesta Regum Scottorum I, *The Acts of Malcolm IV*, ed. G.W.S. Barrow (Edinburgh, 1960), 111-12, 145-6, 158. See K. J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152-1219: A Study in Anglo-Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1985).

have had considerable first-hand experience there (Figure 3). Lines 1350 – 1352 of the *Chronicle* read:

Tant eirent lur jornées, ne sai que plus vus die,  
Qu’il poent veoir Carduil de beauté replenie;  
Les murs e les tureles li soleilz esclarzie.

And so they spent their days, I know not what more to tell you,  
That they could see Carlisle full of beauty;  
The sun illuminates the walls and turrets.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 3** The Fortress at Carlisle. Jordan wrote about this fort in glowing terms.

### Jordan in Brecon, Wales

Records of the Cathedral of St. David’s in Wales indicate that a certain “Jordan” was the Archdeacon of Brecon in the 1140s, with the first mention of the name Jordan occurring some time between 1141 and 1148 Figure 4 & 5.<sup>14</sup> This Jordan was removed from his post of Archdeacon during the reign of Pope Eugenius III (1145-53), but he was later restored to the position after an appeal to the pope.<sup>15</sup> The last occurrence of his name as Archdeacon came after December 19, 1148.<sup>16</sup> In about 1155 the prolific writer Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales) came into conflict with this Jordan as Gerald complained that Archdeacon Jordan was married. Following this attack, the office of Archdeacon of Brecon was transferred to Gerald. This “Jordan” in Brecon appears to have been Jordan de Sandford, since records show that Jordan de Sandford was married to a woman named Christina de Langley.<sup>17</sup>

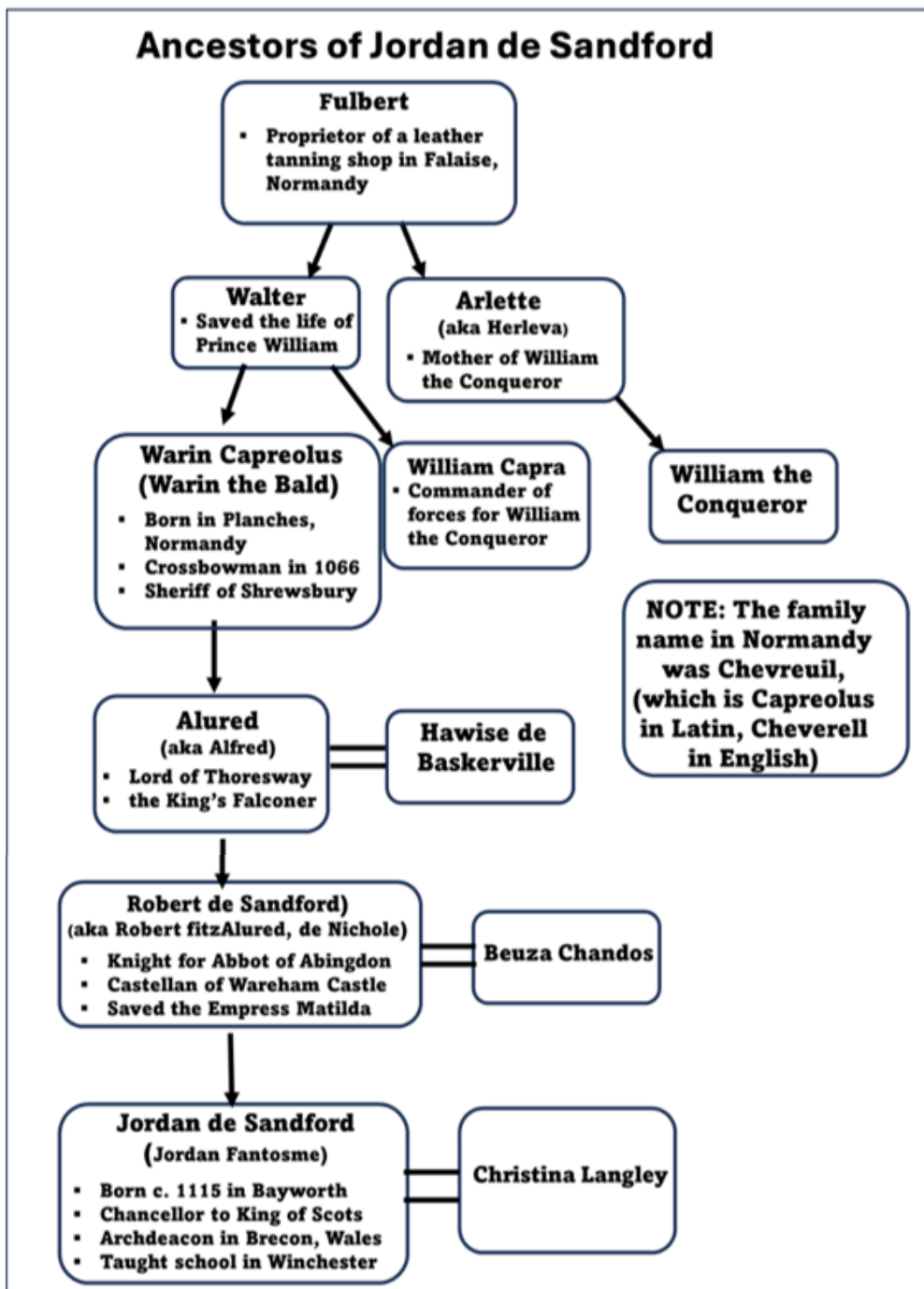
<sup>13</sup>The word “jornées” in the Francisque Michel translation of 1840 is translated as “progress.”

<sup>14</sup>See “Archdeacons: Brecon”, in: *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300: Volume 9; the Welsh Cathedrals*, ed. M.J. Pearson (London, 2003), 54-56.

<sup>15</sup>See *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke (Cambridge, 1967) no. 112.

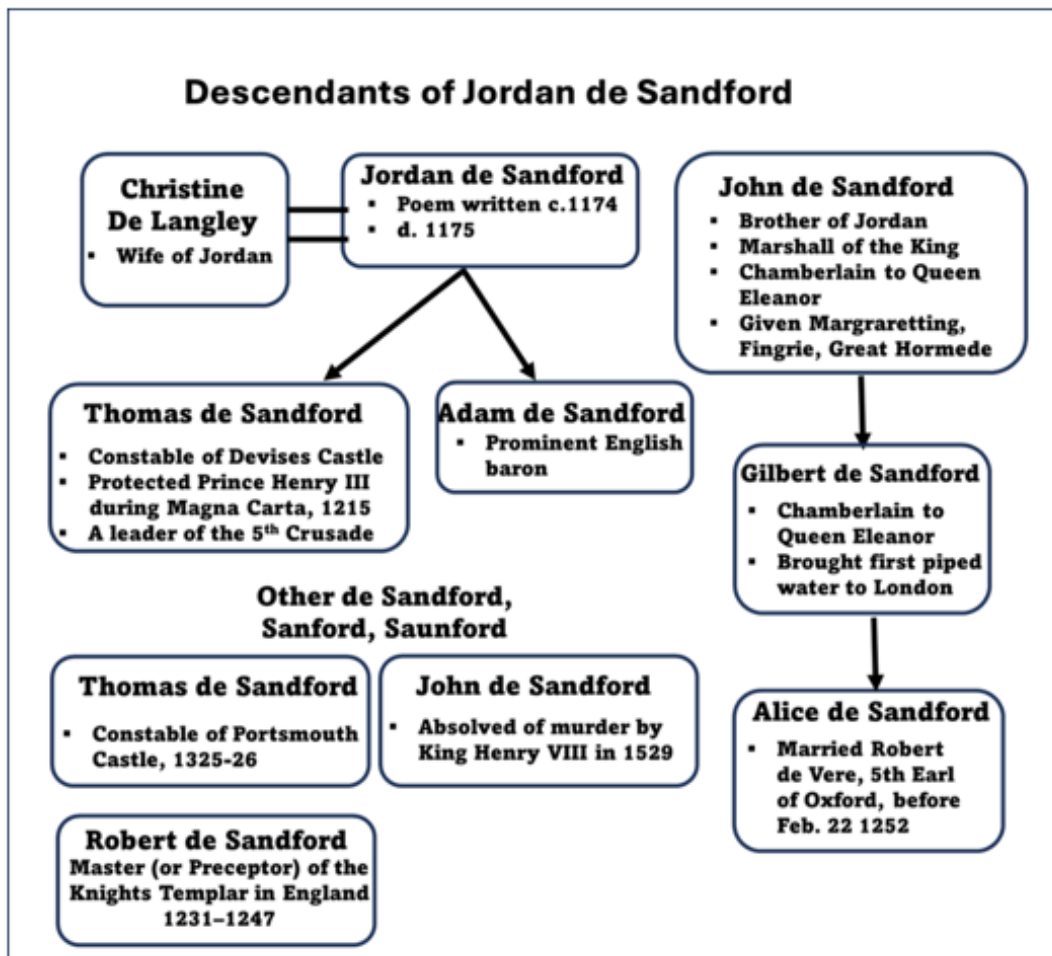
<sup>16</sup>See Charter 30 in: *St Davids Episcopal Acta, 1085 – 1280*, ed. Julia Barrow (Cardiff, South Wales Record Society, 1998).

<sup>17</sup>In 1235 the *Testa de Nevill* listed the manor of Langley, a parish of Hamstead Norris in Berkshire County, south of Oxford, as being held by Gilbert de Sandford for one knight’s fee. This land appears to have been held by Jordan de Sandford after his marriage to Christina de Langley, and appears to have been handed down to Jordan’s son Adam de Sandford, and then descended on to Gilbert de Sandford. See *Rotuli Curiae Regis, vol. I, 1196-1199* (1835),



**Figure 4** Ancestors of Jordan de Sandford. Jordan's great-grandfather was Warin the Bald, a nephew of Arlette, William the Conqueror's mother, and therefore considered a member of the Norman aristocracy.

120, and *Pipe Rolls* (1884), 14. See Katherine S. B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday Descendants: A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066–1166, Vol. II: Pipe Rolls to Cartae Baronum* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002).



**Figure 5** Descendants of Jordan de Sandford. Jordan's son Thomas was the castellan of Devises Castle and protected young Prince Henry during the revolt of the barons in 1215. Jordan's brother John served as Chamberlain to Queen Eleanor.

In the contemporary world it would be unimaginable for clergy of the Catholic Church to be married and have a family, but in the twelfth century celibacy was not always practiced, especially among the Welch clergy. Canon 21 of the First Lateran Council of 1123 had stated that, "We absolutely forbid priests, deacons, subdeacons, and monks to have concubines or to contract marriage," and church officials denounced the practice, but the marriage of clerics was difficult to root out and eradicate.<sup>18</sup> Gerald of Wales harshly rebuked Jordan for being married, but his scolding reproach does not appear to have phased Jordan de Sandford, for there is no evidence that Jordan ever abjured his wife or his five children. This Jordan, the married Archdeacon, may well have been Jordan de Sandford. It should be noted that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century the position of Archdeacon was normally a sinecure, a title that generated revenue for the incumbent, but required little if any actual religious involvement Figure 6.

### Jordan de Sandford in Winchester

In the 1150s "Jordan Fantosme" operated a school in Winchester, near Winchester Cathedral. Some time between 1154 and 1158 this

<sup>18</sup>See C. N. L. Brooke, "Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England, 1050-1200," in: *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XII No.1 (1956), 1-21; and see also C. N. L. Brooke, "Married Men Among the English Higher Clergy, 1066-1200," in: *Cambridge Historical Journal* XII No. 2, (1956), 187-188.

Jordan brought suit against John Joichel, when both were clerks of the Bishop of Winchester, Henry of Blois, who was serving as Principal Official of the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>19</sup> The school over which Jordan and Joichel quarrelled in 1155 was in Minster Street, outside the precinct of Winchester, though on land belonging to the cathedral monastery. This is known because in a grant to the Priory of St. Denis at Southampton, some land in Minster Street is described as being "the house which was Jordan Fantasma's and the house of Aimer the squire." The same house was described in 1367 as being "where the school is now held."<sup>20</sup> The *Great Roll of the Pipe* for the fifth year of the reign of King Henry the Second, 1159, shows that "Jordanus de Sanford" was paying taxes for land in Winchester at the same time that the quarrel with Joichel was going on.<sup>21</sup>

Further evidence that Jordan de Sandford was Jordan Fantosme is seen the next year, on April 10, 1160, when Richard de Anesty found bishop Henry de Blois and his clerk Jordan Fantosme at Fareham, a

<sup>19</sup>Arthur Francis Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England*, (New York, 1915), 133. See also *Letters of John of Salisbury, Bishop of Chartres*, ed. W. J. Millor (London, 1955) 2 volumes. See: John Henry Parker (ed.) *A Guide to the architectural antiquities in the neighborhood of Oxford* (1846), Preface, lxii.

<sup>20</sup>Leach *Op. cit.*, 134. See also the references to Jordanus Sanford in *The Great Roll of the Pipe for the Fifth [-thirty-fourth] Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second*, 9 and 126.

<sup>21</sup>Henry II ran from 19 December, 1158 to 18 December, 1159.



In addition, in lines 912 and 913 of the poem *Jordan Fantosme* makes explicit reference to London, showing that he had good knowledge of the city and its barons:

Fors la cite de Lundres, u nul ne set sa per;  
As baruns de la vile ne pot nul cumparer.

Except the town of London, of which nobody knows its peer;  
To the barons of the town none could be compared.

Jordan de Sandford paid taxes on property in London, again linking “Jordan Fantosme” to Jordan de Sandford. Jordan de Sandford died in Wales some time in 1175.<sup>24</sup> The war between the Scots and the English described in *Jordan Fantosme’s Chronicle* took place in 1173 and 1174. Hostilities terminated in early December of 1174 with the Treaty of Falaise, so Jordan de Sandford must have died within one year after the end of the war. In fact, the poem mentions no events that occurred after 1174.

### Jordan de Sandford: *Primus Inter Pares*

The *Chronicle* of Jordan Fantosme is filled with references to barons who were serving as governors of castles being held for King Henry II, men like: Roger Fitz Richard, lord of Newcastle on Tyne; William de Vesci, holding the fortress of Alnwick; Odinel de Umfravile, at Prudhoe; Robert de Vaux, governor of Carlisle; and Roger d’Estuteville, holding Wark Castle in Northumberland. Others are mentioned as well, including: Roger de Mowbray, Adam de Port, Humphrey de Bohun, and Roger le Bigod. Jordan’s *Chronicle* breezily chides these commanders for their shortcomings, and lauds them for their heroism in fending off the dastardly Scots (See Figure 7).



Figure 7 The Norman Gate of Prudhoe Castle.

In recounting the history of the war, Jordan treats these great barons as equals, implying that he was in the same elite social strata

<sup>24</sup>One way his year of death is confirmed is that in on pg. 99 of the *Great Rolls of the Pipe for 1174/75* (21 Hen II), Thomas, the eldest son of Jordan, is listed responsible for the tax of 8 pounds silver in Cheleswurda, a tax that up to that time Jordan himself had been assessed. Henry II was crowned 19 Dec 1154, so this means that Jordan died between Dec. 19 of 1174 and Dec. 18 of 1175.

as they. In several lines, Jordan addresses directly the king’s magnates sitting before him. For example, lines 706-707 read:

Oez, seignurs, qu’avient de trop ultrage,  
Ke lur avint d’Escoce la salvage.

Hear, lords, what happens from too great daring,  
What happened to them from savage Scotland.

In a rigidly aristocratic society like 12<sup>th</sup> century England, only a person having the same rank and privilege as these great magnates would have dared to playfully twist the nose of these august nobles and treat them as peers. For Jordan Fantosme to have treated these lords as equals, his family would have had to include powerful military commanders, most likely men who had accompanied William the Conqueror in the brutal subjugation of Britain, men who had received great baronies in return for their heroism and valour in the bloody conquest.

Jordan de Sandford’s family ancestry featured military leaders fully on par with the castellans appearing on the pages of the *Chronicle*. In 1174 the de Sandford family would have been viewed at court in the highest ranks of Angevin England’s military elite, with a military lineage fully the equal to any other of the king’s barons (see Figure 4).

For example, Jordan’s great-grandfather had been Warin the Bald, the fabled sheriff of Shrewsbury appointed by earl Roger de Montgomery to subjugate the Welch through unending, brutal combat. For about 15 years, from about 1070 to 1085, Warin had doggedly led the Norman conquest of central Wales, eventually dying in the Llyn Peninsula of northwest Wales during a particularly brutal military expedition to subdue and overcome stubborn Welch resistance.<sup>25</sup> Oderic Vitalis described Warin the Bald as “a man of small stature but great courage, who bravely encountered the earl’s enemies, and maintained tranquillity throughout the district entrusted to his government.”<sup>26</sup> This Warin had fought for the Conqueror as a crossbowman [*arbalistarius*] at the Battle of Hastings and had been rewarded with 15½ hides held by Abingdon Abbey, lands awarded to him under the name of “Warin de Planches.”<sup>27</sup> Credentials of having an ancestor who had fought with the Conqueror were almost obligatory to be in the highest ranks of the king’s barons.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup>See David Moore, “Gruffydd ap Cynan and the Medieval Welsh Polity” in: *Gruffudd Ap Cunan: A Collaborative Biography*, ed. K. L. Maund (Woodbridge, 1996).

<sup>26</sup>Oderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, Vol. 2., trans. Thomas Forester (1853), 10.

<sup>27</sup>In the Hundred Rolls of 1272, the name “Warin de Planches” was spelled phonetically, but incorrectly, as “Gueres de Palance” (with the “G” of “Gueres” representing the “W” sound. Before the Conquest, Warin and his brother William had lived in the village of Planches, a small town in the Orne Département of Normandy, near Moulins-la-Marche where William commanded the motte-and-baily mound fort there. That this “Gueres de Palance” was indeed Jordan’s great-grandfather Warin is confirmed in records of 12 Hen. II upon the assessment of aid for the marriage of Maud, the king’s daughter, in which Jordan de Sandford was certified by the Abbot of Abingdon to hold four knights’ fees *de veteri feoffamento*; Jordan’s son Thomas was later shown holding one knight’s fee in Abingdon, and Jordan’s son John held a sixth part of a knight’s fee of the abbey of Abingdon in “Samford.” See T. C. Banks, *Baronia anglica concentra*, Vol. II, 531. See: John Henry Parker (ed.) *A Guide to the architectural antiquities in the neighborhood of Oxford* (1846), pg 360.

<sup>28</sup>We can be sure that Jordan de Sandford was related to Guerres de Palances because in 1165 Jordan de Sandford held the same four knights’ fees of the Abbot of Abingdon that “Guerres de Palances” was recorded as holding after

And Warin's brother had been William de Moulins-la-Marche, a key military lieutenant of the Conqueror.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the Conquest, this William had been castellan of the strategic motte-and-bailey hill fort at Moulins-la-Marche, on the southern border of Normandy, a fortification that he held for Duke William; and later, in 1073, William was a commander in Duke William's invasion of Maine.<sup>30</sup> Orderic Vitalis described William de Moulins-la-Marche (also known in Latin as "William Capra" or "William Chièvre") as the fiercest of combatants, saying, "he was too fond of vain and empty glory, in pursuit of which he was guilty of indiscriminate slaughter. It is reported that he shed much blood, and that his ferocity was so great that every blow he dealt was fatal."<sup>31</sup> In the *Chronicle* Jordan relates that Robert de Beaumont, the third earl of Leicester, besieged the castle at Haughley for four days, and afterwards took the castle. It is significant that Simon, a son of Jordan's great-granduncle William de Moulins-la-Marche, had been the castellan of that fortress for several years. Moreover, William's second wife was the daughter of Robert I de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester. This Robert was the son of Roger de Beaumont, the Count of Meulan, the first Earl of Leicester, who had been rewarded with 90 manors in Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Wiltshire and Northamptonshire after the Conquest. This means that Jordan de Sandford was related to the Earl of Leicester, the malefactor who had schemed with the Young King to launch the bloody uprising of 1173-74.

In addition, Jordan's own father Robert de Sandford (known originally as Robert fitz Alured de Lincoln) had been a key military commander for the Empress during the Anarchy, thereby playing a significant role in bringing Prince Henry to the throne in 1154 as King Henry II.<sup>32</sup> While serving as castellan of Wareham Castle in Dorset on the southwest coast of Britain, Robert declared for the Empress in

the Conquest.

<sup>29</sup>Charter 225, 432-434, of *Recueil des Acts des Ducs de Normandie de 911 à 1066*, ed. Marie Faroux (Caen, 1961) records William, seigneur de Moulins, donating the revenues of the fortress at Moulins to the monks of Saint-Père de Chartres, saying that he is "Ego Willelmus miles, filius Walterii." After 1066 William de Capra (aka William Capreolus or William Chièvre), the brother of Warin the Bald, had been given 42 manors in Devon, becoming one of the area's largest landholders. William Capra or Chièvre is listed as tenant in chief in Somerset in Domesday Book of 1086 DB I 110. For the holdings of William Capra see: *The Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art Vol. XXX* (1898), pp. 419, 425. William de Moulins-de-la-March (known as "William Capra" in the Domesday Book), died in 1100 and was buried in the chapter house of St. Évroul, Normandy. See: *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis, Vol. VI, (Book xiii)*, trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford), 405.

<sup>30</sup>Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia* (1806), Vol. 6, 1. In this reference, the family name "Cheverell" is incorrectly Anglicized as "Chièvre," which means "goat" in French, and has been Latinized from "Cheverell" to "Capra," which also can mean "goat." The family name "Cheverell" actually means a small Continental deer, similar to the roebuck in England, whose Latin name is *Capreolus caprae*. William, the son of William de Moulins-la-Marche (i.e., William Cheverell) joined in a rebellion against the king in 1115, so his estates in Devonshire escheated to the crown during the reign of King Henry I, who granted them to his own illegitimate son William I de Tracy. See I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1960), 20-21, "Barony of Bradninch."

<sup>31</sup>See *Orderic Vitalis*, Marjorie Chibnall trans., Vol. V, Book X, 227; and Book IV, Ch. XIII, 76.

<sup>32</sup>We can be sure that Robert de Sandford was the son of Alured because records show that Holme, a cell of Montacure, was "founded by Robert, son of Alfred of Lincoln." See: R. Allen Brown, "The Coming of the Cluniacs" in: *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies, Vol. III* (1980), 69. In a charter of Henry I, the king testifies to Roger, bishop of Salisbury and Warin the Sheriff, that he has granted a license to Alured de Lincoln to hold the land of Holme. See: *Victoria County History: A History of the County of Dorset, Vol 2* 1908, 80-82.

1138 when Matilda had few baronial supporters. After a short hiatus when the fortress was held by Stephen's forces, Robert was restored to his position of castellan of Wareham; he then kept that strategic castle open for the Empress, allowing a critically needed supply line bringing supplies from across the Channel to remain open.<sup>33</sup> As David Crouch has written, "Wareham was an invaluable link between Earl Robert's territories in the southwest of England. And beyond Normandy to the effective head of his cause, the count of Anjou. It is for this reason that Wareham figures so prominently in the events of Stephen's reign."<sup>34</sup> There is even circumstantial evidence that Jordan's father Robert de Nicole [i.e. Robert de Lincoln] assisted Empress Matilda in her harrowing escape from Oxford Castle in December of 1141: Her escape route through snow and a howling gale to Wallingford Castle led directly through Robert's lands of Bayworth and Sunningwell.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after that incident Robert de Nicole became known as "Robert de Sandford."<sup>36</sup> And it appears that he received this title in gratitude for his help in getting out of prison. Warin the Bald and his descendants wanted above all else to have a toponymic name like their peers – and now, finally, they had one.

Thus Jordan de Sandford, even though he himself was a cleric, had the family military credentials to place him in the highest ranks of the Norman and Angevin nobility. An indication of Jordan de Sandford's closeness to the king is shown by the fact that shortly after his death in 1175, his four sons are referred to in one charter as "pages to the king" ("*pueris domini regis*").<sup>37</sup> Jordan and his family must have been well known *familiares* to the king and his entourage. Jordan de Sandford's social status was also elevated because he could trace his family ancestry back to the royal family of William the Conqueror himself. At a time when royal blood served as a revered mark of aristocratic distinction, a lineage that traced back to the Conqueror set a man apart from those nobles having less prestigious origins.

Jordan could trace his ancestry back to Arlette, the young mistress of Duke Robert who, in about 1028, had an affair with the Duke and gave birth to a child who forever after would be known as William the Bastard. Arlette (known also as Herleva), was the daughter of Fulbert of Falaise, the proprietor of a leather tanning shop located just walking distance from the duke's castle.<sup>38</sup> Tradition had it that Arlette's brother

<sup>33</sup>See Howlett 1889, pg 1340. And see Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1969-80), 518. This is mentioned in *Gesta Stephani*, and in David Crouch, "Robert earl of Gloucester, and the daughter of Zelophead" in: *Journal of Medieval History* 11 (1985), 234. Henry of Huntingdon mentions Robert de Nichole holding the castellum de Warham on pg 267.

<sup>34</sup>David Crouch, *The Normans: The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2002), 235-236. For the bold escape from Oxford by the Empress, see the *Gesta Stephani*, 88-89, William of Malmesbury, 768-769, William of Newburgh, vol. 1, 43, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 384.

<sup>35</sup>Robert held 7 hides in Leverton, 5 in Chilton, 2 in Denton, 2 in Wadley, 1 in Bayworth, and 4 in Sunningwell providing a good escape route for the Empress.

<sup>36</sup>The Empress made numerous grants to show appreciation to barons who supported her cause. See "Carta Matildæ Imperatricis de creatione Milonis de Glocestria in comitem Hereford A. D. 1141 An. 6 Stephan," 14 in: *Foedera, Conventiones, Litteræ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, 1137-45, An. 2-10 Steph.* ed. Thomas Rymer and Robert Sanderson (1818). See Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford, 1991), and Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-53* (1996). The family toponymic "de Sandford" was bestowed on Robert fitzAlured in about 1141.

<sup>37</sup>See *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. William Dugdale, Charter Nr. III, "Littlemore Nunnery." See also: John H. Parker, *A Guide to the Architectural Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Oxford* (Oxford, 1846), 360.

<sup>38</sup>The legend of Arlette and the story of Walter saving the life of young Duke William are provided in Paul German, *Histoire de Falaise* (Caen, 1993), 76. See François Neveux, *La Normandie des ducs aux rois, Xe-XIIe siècle*

Walter (a son of Fulbert) had saved the life of the young Duke when assassins had made their way into his bedroom. Jordan de Sandford's great-grandfather Warin the Bald was the son of Arlette's brother Walter, and therefore Jordan was related, however distantly, to William the Conqueror himself, to the Conqueror's youngest son King Henry I, to Henry's daughter Empress Matilda, and to her son King Henry II (Figure 3). In Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, the author demonstrates a close personal familiarity with King Henry and with Henry's leading nobles. In medieval England ancestry played a supremely important role in determining social standing, and the bloodline ties of the de Sandford family to the Conqueror afforded Jordan de Sandford access to the ranks of the *curiales* of the royal court enjoyed by few others.

Jordan de Sandford had the high social standing that allowed him to circulate freely in the court of Henry II, a prominence that could have made him the appropriate person to write a poem commemorating the deeds of Henry's barons during two years of warfare. This social position can be seen in the fact that four of Jordan's family members had been sheriffs:

- I. Jordan's brother Alured II de Lincoln served as sheriff of Dorset and Somerset 1166-7 and 1170-4.<sup>39</sup> In tax records he is referred to as "William Brito." In 1165 Alured de Lincoln II held a barony of 30 fees.
- II. Jordan's great-grandfather Warin the Bald had served as sheriff of Shrewsbury from about 1070 to 1085; and in 1102 Warin's son Hugh also became Sheriff of Shropshire.<sup>40</sup>
- III. Jordan's grandfather Alured de Lincoln was related to Turolde, the sheriff of Lincoln, since Alured's mother had been Hélisabeth, the daughter of Godegifu ("Godiva"), the countess of Coventry, the sister of Turolde.<sup>41</sup>

The prominent social standing of Jordan de Sandford's family can be seen in marriages of several men in the family to wealthy heiresses. For example, Jordan's grandfather Alured de Lincoln was married to the wealthy heiress Hawise de Baskerville, the daughter of Nicolas de Baskerville, the widow of Hugh FitzGrip, castellan of Wareham. In the Domesday Book, Hawise, the widow of Hugh FitzGrip (*Haduidis filia Nicholai de Bascheville uxor Hugonis de Varhan filii Griponis*) held 18 manors in Dorset, lands which descended to Jordan's brother Alured II; and by the time of the *Cartæ Baronum* in 1165, this Alured was responsible for 25 knights fees, and was listed as Number 30 on the list of barons.<sup>42</sup>

(Rennes, 1998), 95; see also William of Malmesbury, *Book III*, c. 230, vol. 1, 426-427, and vol. 2, 219-30.

<sup>39</sup>For Alured II as sheriff of Dorset, see *English Episcopal Acta, VIII: Winchester, 1070-1204*, ed. M. J. Franklin (Oxford, 1993). For Robert de Sandford as father of Alured II and Robert de Lincoln, see *Two Cartularies of the Augustinian Priory of Bruton and the Cluniac Priory of Montacute*, ed. Somerset Record Society viii, 1894, 160-162; and also *Montacute Cartulary* v, 178.

<sup>40</sup>*Victoria County History: Shropshire*.

<sup>41</sup>For Alured as the son of Hélisabeth and grandson of Godegifu, see Charter IX on pg. 522 of *Collection des Cartulaires de France, Vol. II: Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Saint-Père de Chartres*, ed. M. Guérard (Paris, 1811). In this Latin language charter, Alured's name is spelled "Erinaldo." Alured's mother is given in Latin as "Hélisabeth," and her mother as "Godegifu." Another version of the name "Godegifu" was "Godeva"; Anglicized to "Godiva," this is the same woman who in legend rode naked through the streets of Coventry. See Daniel Donoghue, *Lady Godiva: A Literary History of the Legend* (Blackwell, 2003), 19. For Turolde and his sister, see Judith A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge, 1997), 100. In the Domesday Book, Alured is designated in one place as "Aluredus nepos Turolde." See *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normannie sub Regibus Angliæ Vol. II*, ed. Thomas Stapleton (London, 1844), "Observations on the Rolls," clii.

<sup>42</sup>See John H. Round "The introduction of knight service in England" in:

The high social position of Jordan de Sandford can also be seen in the lives of his descendants (Figure 5):

- I. Jordan's eldest son **Thomas De Sandford** became a good friend of William Marshall and served as the constable of Devises Castle, said to be the "most gorgeous in Christendom."<sup>43</sup> During the revolt of the barons in 1215, Thomas remained unwaveringly loyal to Plantagenêt King John, who entrusted Thomas to keep his eldest son Henry safe behind the walls of the impregnable castle. In October of 1216, following the death of King John, Thomas de Sanford turned the nine-year old boy over to William Marshall to be coronated as Henry III.<sup>44</sup> He then joined the Fifth Crusade and ended up dying at the siege of Damietta.<sup>45</sup>
- II. **John de Sandford**, Jordan's brother, had a long and prominent career as the marshal of King John, and served as Chamberlain to Queen Eleanor. John was richly rewarded with numerous manors including Great Hormede in Herefordshire, as well as Woolston, Nuthamstead, Fingrie, Ginges, and Margaretting in Essex.<sup>46</sup>
- III. John's son **Gilbert de Sandford** (1182-1211) inherited the honorary position of Chamberlain to the Queen. In the 1230s and 1240s the village of Tyburn was held by Sir Gilbert, and in 1236 the City of London contracted with him to draw water from Tyburn Springs, which he held, to serve as the first piped freshwater supply for the city. Gilbert's daughter **Alice de Sandford** married Robert de Vere, the third Earl of Oxford, carrying the rights to serve as Chamberlain to the Queen to the de Vere family.
- IV. From 1231 to 1247 **Robert de Sandford** served as Master of the Templars in England, arguably the most powerful non-governmental, non-religious position in the country. Dozens of English charters record Magister Robert receiving donations of manors to support the work of the Templars.
- V. Later, in 1296 (24 Ed I) another **Thomas de Sandford** served as one of the field generals of King Edward I in his efforts to subdue William Wallace in Scotland.

## A new interpretation of the *Chronicle*

This study suggests that "Jordan Fantosme" was in actuality Jordan de Sandford, the scion of an extraordinarily wealthy and prominent family in Angevin England, although a family that heretofore has received little scholarly attention. Up to this time, scholars have speculated that the mysterious Jordan Fantosme may have been a twelfth-century historian, or perhaps a trained poet, a troubadour knowledgeable about Occitan poetry from southern France. However, identifying Jordan Fantosme as Jordan de Sandford leads to an entirely different conclusion: Jordan de Sandford was a practical man of affairs, an educator, an archdeacon, and a chancellor, and in no

*Feudal England* (1895). 225 ff, and Frank M. Stenton, *English Feudalism* (1932), 136-9. See *Liber Niger Sacccarii*, ed. T Hearne (1728). 49-340, and *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, ed. H. Hall, Rolls Series (1886), 186-445. Hugh FitzGrip appears to have been based at Wareham, for in a charter for Montvilliers, a Norman nunnery, to which he gave land, he is styled "Hugh de Varham."

<sup>43</sup>John Henry Parker (ed.) *A Guide to the architectural antiquities in the neighbourhood of Oxford* (1846), pg 360.

<sup>44</sup>For the revolt of the barons and Henry II, see Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224* Routledge, 2016).

<sup>45</sup>See: John Henry Parker (ed.) *A Guide to the architectural antiquities in the neighbourhood of Oxford* (1846), pg 362.

<sup>46</sup>In 1212 John de Sanford held Fingrith and Gingam "per seriantiam talami regine." See *Testa de Neville, Part I: 1198-1242* (London, 1920), 122.

way would have been considered a romantic troubadour or a monkish historian.

Jordan's poem is not at all a piously religious work, as were most twelfth-century works of literature. The word "God" appears 52 times in the poem's 2076 lines, but in most instances the word "God" is more a figure of speech rather than a reference to some omnipotent, theological being. Jordan's references to God are simply perfunctory slogans like "Deu vus beneie!" ["God bless you!"] or "Deus les maldie!" ["May God curse them!"]. In only two places does Jordan appear to reference a God that can intervene directly in the affairs of humans. On line 1268 Jesus is said to have turned the wind against Scotland:

Mès Jesu le glorius de tutes riens furmeire,  
Turnad au rei d'Escoce le vent mult à cuntraire

But Jesus the glorious, of all things the creator.  
Turned against the king of Scotland the wind very contrary

And in Line 1301 God is credited for having saved the lives of the English:

Mès Deu nostre pere devum tuz loer :  
Quant il del rei d'Escoce e de sun ost si fier  
Nus ad tenu les vies, si l' devom mercier.

But God our father we must all praise:  
When he from the king of Scotland and from his host so wild  
Has preserved us our lives, we ought to thank him.

In line 202 Jordan notes that the king has praised the God of glory and the noble St. Peter; and in line 489 Jordan makes a brief reference to Jesus and the Virgin Mary as "God the glorious and his mother true." But outside of these isolated references to godly intervention, the poem is far different than the insistently theological writing of monks and clerics at that time.<sup>47</sup> Thus the poem is for all intents and purposes a work of secular history, the rousing story of two years of warfare by battle-hardened veterans, told in chronological sequence in a manner far removed from the ranks of devoutly Christian literature.

Jordan de Sandford was not a plodding monk writing history in an isolated monastery far removed from the battlefield. To the contrary, Jordan was an enthusiastic partisan in the war of 1173-74 between Scotland and England, a cheerleader exuberantly applauding the bravery and heroics of those castellans who had remained loyal to the crown, while decrying the villainy of those barons who had turned against his exulted king. Jordan accurately portrays Northumberland as being held by the king – but never hints that the province had been held by the king of Scots for decades and that king William the Lion had something of a legitimate claim to the territory.<sup>48</sup>

Jordan Fantosme must have been well acquainted with the nobles

<sup>47</sup>The word "God" appears 52 times in the poem's 2076 lines, "Jesus" is mentioned twice, and "Mary Mother of God" once, but these scant references hardly make the poem devout.

<sup>48</sup>For a general review of the revolt against Henry II see Martin Aurell, "Révolte nobiliaire et lutte dynastique dans l'Empire angevin (1154-1224)" in: *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 24, 2002, p. 33-34. For a general review of Norman relations with Scotland, see: R. L. Græme Ritchie, *The Normans in Scotland* (Edinburgh, University Press, 1954).

of Henry II mentioned in the poem. In the poem he addresses the King directly to his face in a familiar and intimate way, and mentions the king's barons as if he were speaking to friends and associates. Jordan must have been well assured of his standing in the court, for in the *Chronicle* he shows no hesitation to address the King face to face in a rather cheeky, and almost scolding, taunting manner, confident that he would not suffer for his impertinence. The usual forms of address for a king for much of the Plantagenêt era were "Your Highness" and "Your Grace." (Only later, with Richard I, did the title "Your Majesty" and "Your High Majesty" come into use at the royal court).<sup>49</sup> In lines 6-19 of the poem, Jordan has the temerity to address the King with the second person pronoun "you" – not "Your Highness" or "Your Grace" -- and chides the King for not having transferred more lands to the Young King:

6 Al curuner de vostre fiz ne vus suvienge-il mie  
7 Ke l'umage de uost ses meins le rei d'Aubanie  
8 Li feistes presenter, senz fei aver mentie ?  
9 Puis lur deistes ambedous: "Deus les maldie,  
10 Ki de vus departirad amur ne druerie !  
13 Puis entre vus e vostre fiz mortel nasquid envie,  
18 Surportastes à vostre fiz auques de seigneurie,  
19 Tolistes lui ses volentés, n'en pot aver baillie :

6 At the coronation of your son do you not remember  
7 That the homage from the hands of the king of Albany  
8 You caused to be presented to him without having faith  
for sworn  
9 Then you said to both: "May God curse those  
10 Who would remove from you love or friendship!  
13 Then between you and your son a deadly hatred sprung  
up,  
18 You filched from your son something of his honour.  
19 You took away from him his will, he could not get the  
mastery of it."<sup>50</sup>

If Jordan's poem was not the work of a reclusive monk, neither was it the work of a troubadour extolling the virtues of romantic love. In the poem the word "love" is used 31 times (as the noun *amur* or the verb *amer*), but in fact "love" is used in the patriotic sense of: to remain loyal, to stay faithful without revolting, or to remain allied with. A *trouvère* singing praises to the enchanting charms of women or the pain of unrequited love he was not.

The *Chronicle* could not have been the work of a poetic *jongleur* or a tome written by a reclusive monastic historian. In the poem the narrator addresses both the king and his barons personally, face to face. From this we can conclude that the work was probably prepared for delivery as after-dinner entertainment. In the twelfth century it was common practice to invite a recitation of poetry to be delivered after feasting at a banquet, often to the accompaniment of a beating drum, or a tambourine. The *Chronicle* was such a poem.

Jordan's poem was a work written to celebrate a great victory: The forces of the king have narrowly vanquished the enemy, and the king's men have gathered together to celebrate the joyous victory that quashed a dangerous rebellion. The men in the room are in a jovial

<sup>49</sup>See Dan Jones, *The Plantagenets: The Warrior Kings and Queens Who Made England* (New York, 2012).

<sup>50</sup>The Francisque Michel translation, published 1840.

mood, congratulating each other, revelling in their good fortune, and probably drinking lustily. In line 115 of the poem, Jordan makes reference to Oliver and Roland, the central characters of the epic poem *la Chanson de Roland*, the rhyming story of a military expedition of Charlemagne's forces to Spain, a work that would have been well known to the military men of Anglo-Norman England.

Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle* is filled with heart-felt relief that King Henry's barons have narrowly escaped a disaster that could have caused the loss of their holdings and an end to their privileged status as the ruling class. The men in the dining hall knew full well that if the rebellion had been successful, they easily could have been displaced, dispossessed from their baronial holdings, losing their wealth and position, and even their lives. They would fight to the death to preserve and protect the king they served and the privileged life they enjoyed. They were in a festive mood that night, and so was Jordan. They had defeated the invasion of Northumberland, a land held by King Henry II, just as Beowulf had come to the aid of Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, and had slain the monster Grendel when the king's mead hall in Heorot had been under attack – and the men wanted to celebrate.

The Treaty of Falaise ending the war between Scotland and England was signed in Normandy on 8 December, 1174. By the terms of this settlement, William the Lion, the king of Scots, was required to swear that Scotland would thereafter be subordinate to the English crown; English soldiers were to occupy several key Scottish castles, and Scotland would be, in essence, a fief of the King of England.

Christmas court would have been held shortly after the Scottish king had officially capitulated. To properly celebrate this resounding victory, Jordan de Sandford, who was well known to both the king and his nobles, appears to have been asked to deliver a recitation at Christmas court, singling out acts of bravery and derring-do by the king's barons during the war. The king's courtiers had much to celebrate that night, and were in an elated mood (Figure 8).

Jordan began:

Oez veraie estoire que Deu vus beneie!  
Del mieldre curune qui unkef fuft en vie  
Talent meftp'f defaire uerf drxiz eft q'iof u die:  
Celui tieng afage qui par autrefe chaftie  
Gentil rei dengleterre ala char tref hardie

Let's hear a true story (God bless you!)  
About the finest king that ever was.  
I'm going to tell this story in rhyming  
verse, and it's a good thing that I do.  
Since it's a wise man who listens to his critics  
Gracious King, with such a noble spirit

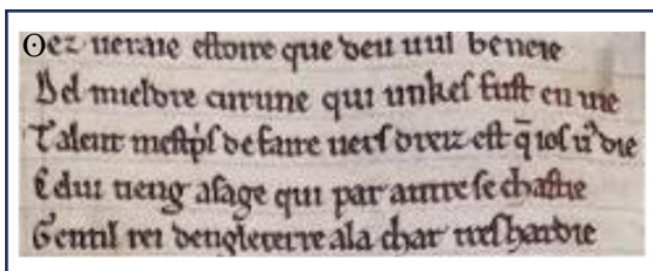


Figure 8 The First Five Lines of Jordan's Poem.

In the *Chronicle*, Jordan then merrily recounts the exploits and good fortune of the king's barons; hence the poem is a work of festive celebration, recalling each man's contribution and accomplishments, while denouncing the treachery of the king's enemies. The poem's length of 2,076 lines is the right length for an after-dinner amusement: Reciting the poem takes about 60 minutes, a good length of time for entertainment at a banquet.

The Christmas court banquet, where the king's courtiers would annually come together from far and wide, was a longstanding tradition in medieval England. Walter Map described a Christmas court that took place in Caen in 1182 saying that it was:

"proclaimed with much heralding to be kept by the lord king at Caen. So a great concourse of people assembled, strangers and natives alike, chief of whom were the king and his son... and many bishops, with a provinceful of counts and barons." Robert Torigni stated that over a thousand knights attended that banquet.<sup>51</sup>

Nicholas Vincent writes that, "Like all courts, that of Henry II was in constant need of entertainment. ... The court had to have some sort of distraction during the long winter nights." In addition to storytellers, Vincent mentions that entertainers of all sorts frequented the dining hall, including minstrels, prostitutes, dice-players, hucksters, clowns, actors, buffoons and harp players.<sup>52</sup> At Christmas 1251, Henry III and his guests were served 830 red, fallow and roe deer, 200 wild boar, 1,300 hares, 385 young pigeons (squabs) and 115 cranes; and that was merely the wild game! Between courses, there were often dramatic interludes, full of elaborate symbolism, with musicians and members of the court taking part.<sup>53</sup> The king spent Christmas at Argentan, Normandy, in December of 1174, shortly after the capitulation of Henry the Lion, and Jordan probably recited the *Chronicle* at that time. We know that Jordan de Sandford died in 1175, so the Christmas Court of December, 1174, may have been the only large convocation of the king's barons held between the end of the war and Jordan's death.

The evidence is strong that Jordan de Sandford was Jordan Fantosme: Jordan de Sandford was well known to King Henry II, since Jordan's four sons were pages in the royal household; Jordan de Sandford's father had been the constable of the castle of Wareham, which was critical in securing the throne for Henry; Jordan de Sandford had the theological and grammatical training that allowed him to become a chancellor to the King of Scotland, the kind of training in Paris that would enable him to know and write Occitan French poetry; and Jordan de Sandford lived in Winchester at the time that Jordan Fantosme is known to have operated a school there. During this time Jordan Fantosme was recorded as being associated with Nicholas Chandos, and Jordan's mother's maiden name was Chandos. The evidence is clear: Jordan de Sandford was Jordan Fantosme.

We can see now that Jordan had assumed the cognomen of "Jordan Fantosme" as a young man, long before the family toponymic "de Sandford" was bestowed on his father in about 1141, and he simply kept using that nickname as a mature adult. Without a repeating family name handed down over many decades, it has been difficult for scholars to recognize the continuity and the interconnections among members of the de Sandford family, and thus it has been difficult to connect "Jordan Fantosme" to the distinguished de Sandford family.

<sup>51</sup>Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. et trans. M. R. James, C.N.L. Brooke, R.A.B. Mynors Oxford, 1983). Robert Torigni found in Howlett "The Metrical Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme" in: *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I, Vol. III*, Richard Howlett (trans.), (London, 1886), 202-380.

<sup>52</sup>Nicholas Vincent. *Henry II: New Interpretations*. Boydell Press, 2007.

<sup>53</sup>Barber, Richard. *The Prince in Splendour: Court Festivals of Medieval Europe* (The Folio Society, 2017).

In the poem, Jordan shows himself to be an enthusiastic supporter of the king, with unending flattery approaching obsequiousness. In lines 116 and 117 he says:

Si ne fud mès oī en fable ne en geste  
Un sul rei de sa valur ne de sa grant poeste.

One has never heard in fable or in story  
Of one single king of his valour and great power.

In other times, court historians like Wace or Benoît de Sainte-Maure might have been asked to make the Christmas presentation, but Benoît had died the year before, in 1173, and many members of Wace's family had joined in the revolt against Henry in 1173.<sup>54</sup> Jordan de Sandford, who was well known to the court, would have been a logical choice to provide the entertainment and would have been counted on for words of fawning adulation.<sup>55</sup>

Believing that Jordan de Sandford was the author Jordan Fantosme, and that the work was delivered as after-dinner entertainment at a feast to celebrate a great military victory, implies that the words used to translate the poem must reflect its intended audience. The men Jordan was speaking to in the king's great hall at Christmas court that year were warriors: tough, battle-hardened, men of the sword. For this reason, the words used by Jordan in the poem would have been chosen for that specific audience, so the language used to translate the poem should reflect their brawny, rough-hewn, military bearing, not the gentle, reflective vocabulary suitable for a scholarly and contemplative monk. By the same token, Jordan was not a troubadour celebrating the joys of courtly love in lyrical words of romantic passion, and his words in translation must steer clear of such an impression.

Three major translations of the *Chronicle* are available today: The 1840 translation by Francisque Michel, the 1888 translation by Richard Howlett,<sup>56</sup> and the Ronald C. Johnston translation of 1981. None of these three translations captures the enthusiastic energy, the surging vitality, or the hearty, raw-boned vocabulary of common, everyday speech that would have been used by fighting men merrily revelling in a great victory. Take, for example, lines 162-164:

N'i ad celui qui ne quide valeir un rei waleis.  
Ore chevalche le rei Henri od tute sa meidnée,  
Devers Dol en Bretaine tient la cheminée.

Francisque Michel translates these lines as:  
There is none of them who does not think himself as good as a  
Welsh king

<sup>54</sup>Martin Aurell, "L'art comme propagande royale ? Henri II d'Angleterre, Aliénor d'Aquitaine et leurs enfants (1154-1204)," *Hortus artium medievalium*, 21, 2015, p. 22-40.

<sup>55</sup>For information on the politics of history writing in the court of Henry II see: Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2013); Matthew Bennett, "Poetry as History? The 'Roman de Rou' of Wace as a Source for the Norman Conquest," in: *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 5, 1982, 21-39; and Peter Dronke, "Peter of Blois and Poetry at the Court of Henry II," in: *Medieval Studies* 38, 1976.

<sup>56</sup>Jordan Fantosme, "The Metrical Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme" in: *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I, Vol. III*, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1886), 202-380.

Now rides king Henry with all his host,  
Towards Dol in Britany he holds his way.

Howlett translates these lines as:

Nor is there one of them who does not think himself worth a  
Welsh king.

Then rides king Henry with all his company;  
Towards Dol in Brittany he holds his course.<sup>57</sup>

And Johnston translates this as:

Not one of them but thinks himself the equal of a Welsh king.

Now King Henry with all his train rides on; he takes the road to  
Dol in Brittany.<sup>58</sup>

Each of these three translations tries to faithfully indicate the meaning of the written words, but fails to capture the high-spirited emotion, the drama, the lingo or the argot of rough and ready fighting men carousing after a stunning victory. Though bishops would have been present, most of the attendees were not pious churchmen, and a translation of Jordan's poem must avoid the vocabulary of a devoutly theological speaker. As each man's name was mentioned by Jordan, no doubt the room would be filled with good-natured ribbing, chortling laughter, and grunts of mock derision. The poem celebrated the camaraderie of the jubilant victors, as faint hints of the *Song of Roland* and, before that, the legend of *Beowulf* echoed between the lines from across the centuries.

## Features of the new translation of Jordan Fantosme

Based on these discoveries about Jordan de Sandford being the author of *The Chronicle of the Warrrr Chronicle of the War between the English and Scots in 1173 and 1174*, it is apparent that an entirely new translation is in order. Below are six principles that should guide this new translation, guidelines that should be baked into every line:

### I. Author

"Jordan Fantosme" was a pseudonym for Jordan de Sandford who died in 1175. The poem includes events that occurred in 1174, so there is very good reason to believe that Jordan wrote the poem to be recited at the king's Christmas Court, held in December of 1174.

### II. The de Sandford family

Jordan and his family were well known supporters of Henry II, a standing that would allow him to skewer powerful barons with impunity. Jordan's father had rescued the Empress Matilda (Henry II's mother) from imprisonment at Oxford Castle, and his brother John was Chamberlain to the Queen. He could needle and roast and be confrontational to the disloyal without feeling threatened. His jabs at cowardice are pointed. Jordan can be teasing, scolding, flattering, and provoking and knows he'll still stay in the good graces of the king who is sitting at the head table.

### III. The audience

The hall was filled with men who had just faced rebellion and had narrowly escaped being overthrown and probably murdered. They

<sup>57</sup>Howlett, pg. 217.

<sup>58</sup>Johnston, pg. 15.

were there to celebrate their unlikely victory, no doubt drinking way too much ale and mead. Jordan knows who saved the king's skin and who hesitated. The audience was noisy, rowdy and boisterous, uproariously cheering when a favorite name was mentioned, and hooting with mock indignation when a wavering fair-weather friend was called out for uncertainty. The audience at Christmas Court, December 1174, was a room full of warriors still buzzing from victory; the men in the room were in a jovial mood, congratulating each other, revelling in their good fortune, and probably drinking lustily.

#### IV. Performance art

Jordan's poem was written to be performed, so it is theatrical with the vibrant energy of robust excitement: His narrative pacing is theatrical. A dry, scholarly, anodyne translation in words suited to a tonsured monk totally misses the point of Jordan's animated, action-packed style. The poem was not written for silent reading; it was meant to be performed with humor and gusto, with a whiff of contempt for the disloyal, and praise for those who stayed loyal during the rebellion. The poem was meant to be heard; it was meant to exude fire, and passion, and fortitude. Jordan's poem has been called a "chronicle", but the word "chronicle" has been used to describe dry-as-dust academic history – while Jordan's poem is a story of a life-or-death struggle, dripping with high drama and a grateful, collective sigh of relief when it was over. A high-stakes story told with punchy cadences filled with swagger and vengeance, with profound relief that the whole sordid affair was, at last, finally over. Previous translators have treated the poem like a clerk's painstakingly neutral monastic record. But Jordan was not neutral: He was a fiery cheerleader for the winning team, exuberant and impassioned.

#### V. Pacing

The men in the audience were rough-hewn military men, not college literature academics, so the pacing of the recitation must have been fast-paced, hard-driving, with clear beats and a throbbing, pulsating, powerful cadence. Jordan stood before that rowdy crowd that night and recited his poem with a cheeky, confident air of a man who had just survived a Near Death Experience, as had they all, with a rollicking tone of victory and joy that drips from every line.

#### VI. Jordan's personality

Jordan has been called by medieval scholars as, possibly, a troubadour, or a military man, or an Italian. But he was not: Jordan was a man of affairs, a man who rejected Catholic dogma and remained married despite Church teachings. He might have picked up some Occitan expressions when he was a student in Paris, but he was not from the Midi. He may have been an archdeacon, but he was not religious in any conventional sense of the word (the job of archdeacon, more often than not in the 12th century, was a sinecure, not a truly religious figure). Jordan's voice is secular, worldly, and partisan. The poem is for all intents and purposes a work of secular history... far different than the insistently theological writing of monks, writing so common in the 12th century. Jordan uses the word "God" only in curses, blessings, and exclamations — not for theology.

#### VII. Jordan's social standing

Jordan had the social standing to scold Henry II to his face. In lines 6–19 Jordan addresses Henry directly with "you," not "Your Grace," and even chides him for mishandling the Young King. Jordan has the temerity to address the King with the second person pronoun 'you'... and audaciously faults the King with impunity. Jordan was the scion of a highly privileged Norman family, a family of generations of land-holding aristocrats who could trace their lineage to the mother

of William the Conqueror herself, a man who could hold his own, eyeball-to-eyeball, with any Norman baron in the land. In many places in the poem Jordan uses the word "you." At this point in the recitation he is probably looking squarely in the eye of a wealthy baron and saying "you". His "you" is not generic.

### Summary of the war of 1173–74 according to Jordan

According to the poem of Jordan de Sandford the rebellion of 1173–74 had five major phases:

- I. The War in France
- II. The First Scottish Invasion of England in 1173
- III. The War in Suffolk
- IV. The Second Invasion of England by the Scots
- V. The Capture of King William

Here is a nutshell, is the story of the war as presented by Jordan. The Revolt of 1173–74 was a rebellion against King Henry II of England by three of his sons, his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their rebel supporters. The revolt ended in failure after eighteen months; Henry's rebellious family members had to resign themselves to his continuing rule and were reconciled to him. King Henry II ruled England, Normandy, and Anjou, while his wife Queen Eleanor ruled the vast territory of Aquitaine (today's southwest France). In 1173 Henry had four legitimate sons (from oldest to youngest: Henry, called the "Young King", Richard (later called "the Lionheart"), Geoffrey, and John "Lackland", all of whom stood to inherit some or all of these possessions). Henry also had an illegitimate son named Geoffrey, born probably before the eldest of the legitimate children.

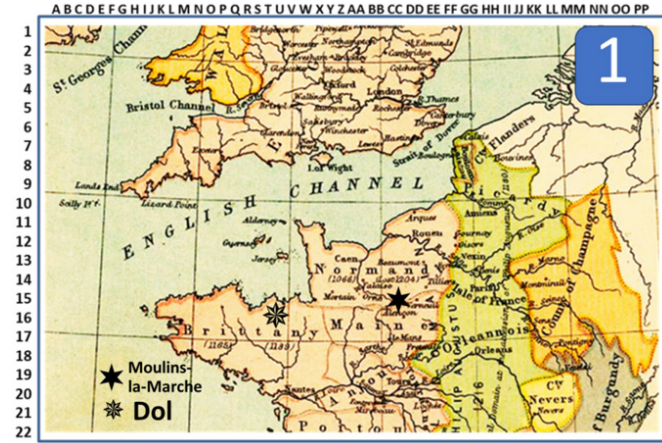
#### *Part 1: The War in France*

Henry "the Young King" was 18 years old in 1173 and praised for his good looks and charm. He was married to the daughter of Louis VII, the King of France and Eleanor's ex-husband. Henry the Young King kept a large and glamorous retinue but was constrained by his lack of resources: "he had many knights but he had no means to give rewards and gifts to the knights". Young Henry was therefore anxious to take control of some of his ancestral inheritances to rule in his own right.

The immediate practical cause of the rebellion was Henry II's decision to bequeath three castles, which were within the realm of the Young King's inheritance, to his youngest son, John, as part of the arrangements for John's marriage to the daughter of the Count of Maurienne. At this, Henry the Young King was encouraged to rebel by many aristocrats who saw potential profit and gain in a power transition. His mother Eleanor had been feuding with her husband, and she joined the cause as did many others upset by Henry's possible involvement in the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170, which had left Henry alienated throughout Christendom.

In March 1173 Henry the Young King withdrew to the court of his father-in-law, Louis, in Paris, France and was soon followed by his brothers Richard and Geoffrey (Map 1). Eleanor tried to join them but was stopped by Henry II on the way and held in captivity. The Young King and his French mentor created a wide alliance against Henry II by promising land and revenues in England and Anjou to the Counts of Flanders, Boulogne, and Blois; William the Lion, King of the Scots, would have Northumberland. In effect, the Young King would seize his inheritance by breaking it apart. Hostilities began in April 1173 when the Counts of Flanders and Boulogne invaded

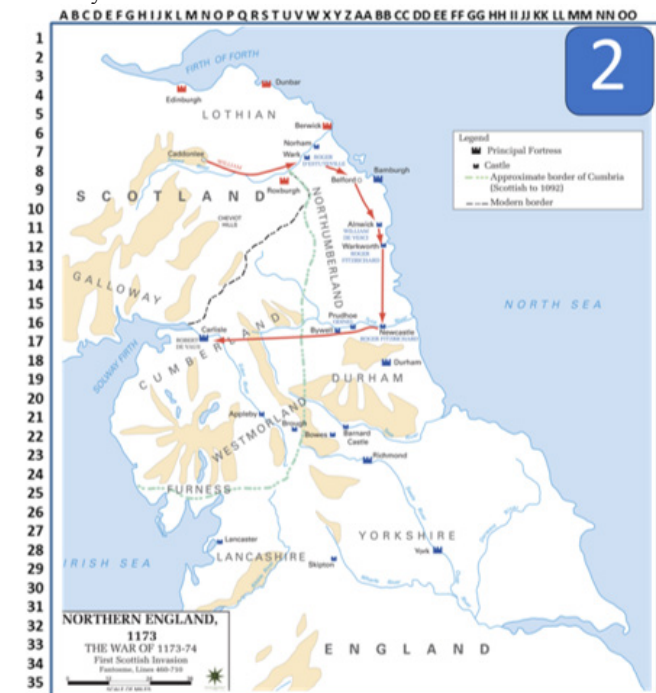
Normandy from the east, the King of France and young Henry from the south, while the Bretons attacked from the west (see Map 1). Each of the assaults ended with failure: the Count of Boulogne was killed, Louis was defeated and kicked out of Normandy, and the Bretons were routed with great loss of life and treasure at the fortress of Dol. William the Lion's attacks in the north of England were also a failure. Negotiations were opened with the rebels in Normandy between father Henry II and son young Henry, to no avail.



**Map 1** The War in France, c. 1173. The court of king Louis VII was at Paris, but the English king controlled Normandy, Britany, Main, Anjou, and Poitou. Warin the Bald was from Moulins-la-Marche.

**Part 2: The First Scottish Invasion**

In 1173 The forces of King William of Scotland gathered at Caddonlee (N-7 in Map 2) and then headed down the Tweed River to strike at Wark Castle (W-7), overlooking the Tweed. His forces then ravaged Belford (AA-9), committing abominable atrocities. His men then moved south along the coast to attack Warkworth (BB-12) and then Newcastle (BB-17). His forces then moved west along the Tyne River, and began to lay siege to Carlisle (N-17). The modern border is shown in Map 2 as a dashed line; the approximate border in 1173 is shown by a broken line of dashes and dots.

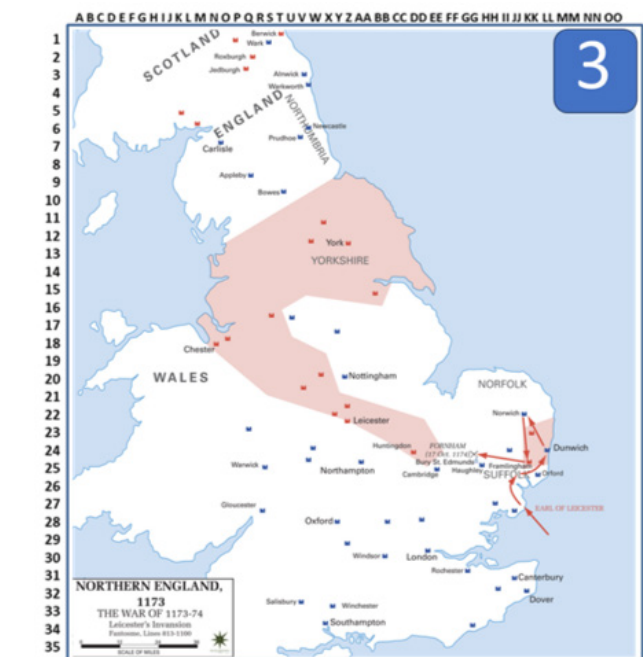


**Map 2** The First Invasion of England.

**Part 3: The War in Suffolk**

Robert de Beaumont, the Earl of Leicester, a supporter of young Henry who had been in Normandy and was chief of the aristocratic rebels, took up the charge next. He raised an army of Flemish mercenaries and crossed from Normandy back to England to join the other rebel barons there, principally Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk. The Earl of Leicester tried to land 3,000 Flemish troops in Dunwich (LL-24 of Map 3) in an attempt to overthrow and depose Henry II and replace him with his son. His plot was repulsed by the loyal residents of the village who turned the invader's boats away when they tried to disembark. Because of this, the Earl of Leicester was forced to set sail again, finally landing at Orford, a now long-gone port east of Harwich (KK-25). Flanders is seen in Map 1 at HH-5.

The Earl of Leicester was intercepted by the English forces returning from the north in Scotland, led by Richard de Luci, and was completely defeated at Fornham, north of Bury St. Edmunds, on Oct. 17, 1173. The battle was between the rebel forces under the command of Leicester and royal forces under the command of Richard de Luci, the Chief Justiciar, as well as Humphrey de Bohun (Lord High Constable), Reginald de Dunstanville (the Earl of Cornwall), William of Gloucester (the Earl of Gloucester), and William d'Aubigny (the Earl of Arundel). The rebel forces were numbered at 3000 mercenaries, while the royal forces included at least 300 knights, as well as the Earl of Norfolk's son, Roger Bigod, who had remained loyal to the king. Along with these knights, the royal forces also had the support of local citizens and the military loyalty of three earls: Gloucester, Arundel, and Cornwall. The rebels were caught fording the River Lark near the present villages of Fornham St Genevieve, Fornham All Saints, and Fornham St Martin in Suffolk, at a location about 4 miles (6.4 km) north of Bury St Edmunds (GG-25 of Map 3). With his forces split, Leicester's cavalry was captured and his mercenaries were driven into nearby swamps where the local peasants killed most of them. Leicester was captured, as was his wife, Petronilla de Grandmesnil, who had put on armor herself. Leicester remained in captivity until January 1177 when some of his lands were returned to him. Norwich Castle was captured by Hugh Bigod with a force of over 800 soldiers in July 1174.



**Map 3** The War in Suffolk.

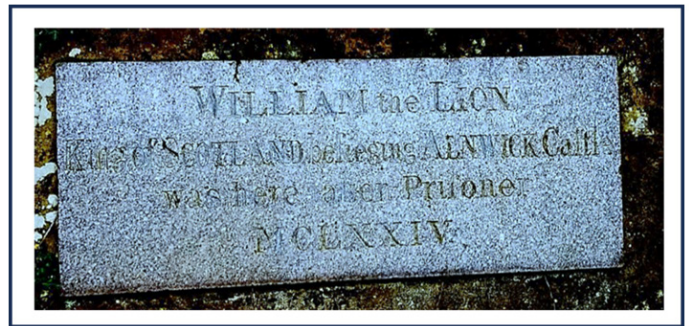
**Part 4: The Second Scottish Invasion**

In the spring of 1174 the rebellion continued. David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion, moved south to attempt the conquest of northern England and took up the leadership of the rebel barons. William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby and one of the rebels, burned the royal burgh of Nottingham while Hugh Bigod likewise torched Norwich.

King William of Scotland first attacked Wark (V-8 of Map 4) and then headed to Carlisle (N-17). He then attacked Appleby (R-21) on the Eden River, and then headed down the Eden River to strike at Brough (X-22). The Scottish King and his men then moved east to attack Prudhoe on the south bank of the River Tyne in Northumberland (Y-17). His forces then headed north to strike at Alnwick (AA-11).

**Part 5: The Capture of King William**

Henry II, who had been in Normandy fighting his enemies, landed in England on July 8, 1174. His first act was to do penance for the death of Thomas Becket, who was murdered by two of Henry’s knights three years earlier and had already been canonized as a saint. The day following the ceremony at Canterbury, on July 12, 1174, in a seeming act of divine providence for Henry II, William the Lion and many of his supporters were surprised and captured at the Battle of Alnwick (AA-11 of Map 4) by a small band of loyalists. King William was strapped on a palfrey horse and ignominiously led to the castle of Richmond (AA-23) and to York (CC-28)(Figure 9).



**Figure 9** Plaque Near Alnwick Castle Marking Where Scottish King William was Captured. The marker reads: William the Lion, King of Scotland befeing Alnwick Castr, was here after Prifoner, MCVLXXIV.

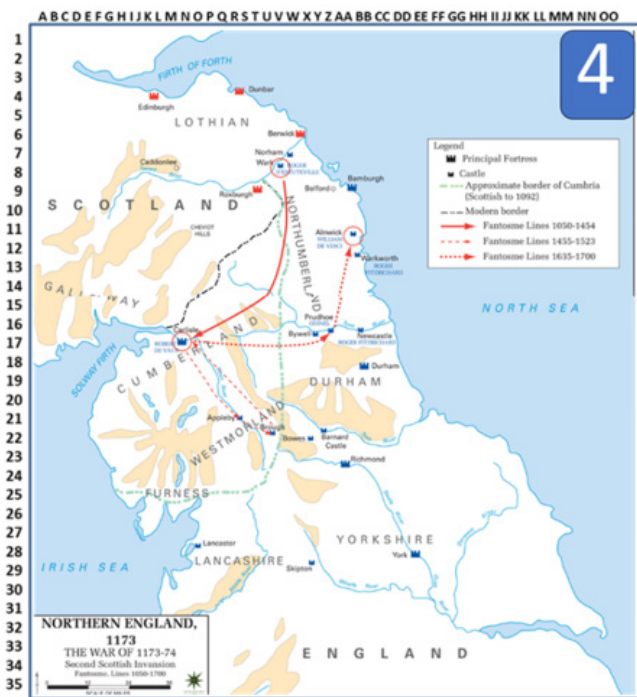
**Aftermath: The Treaty of Falaise**

In the aftermath Henry II was able to sweep up the opposition, marching through each rebel stronghold to receive their surrenders. With England taken care of, Henry returned to Normandy and began to draft a settlement with his enemies. On September 30, 1174, “King Henry, the king’s son, and his brothers, returned to their father and to his service, as their lord” while Henry sent an army north and took several Scottish castles, including Berwick and Edinburgh.

On December 8, 1174, an agreement was signed between the captive William I, King of Scots, and Henry II, King of England. Since he had no heir, William was forced to bargain for release to prevent the end of the Scottish line of kings. The Treaty of Falaise (AA-14 on Map 1) required William to swear that Scotland would thereafter be subordinate to the English crown. English soldiers were also to occupy the key Scottish castles of Roxburgh, Berwick, Jedburgh, Edinburgh, and Stirling. Although they were the richest burghs in the kingdom, Scotland would still be heavily taxed to pay for their upkeep.

During the next 15 years, William was forced to observe Henry’s overlordship, and to obtain permission from the English crown before putting down local uprisings. However, Henry allowed William to keep the barony of Tynedale, and returned the earldom of Huntingdon in 1185 (although this was later gifted to William’s younger brother David). The treaty was annulled in 1189 when Richard the Lionheart, Henry’s heir, effectively sold southern Scotland back to the Scottish king to help fund Richard’s crusade in the Holy Land.

The revolt had lasted eighteen months, played out across a large area from southern Scotland to Brittany. At least twenty castles in England were recorded as demolished on the orders of the king. Thetford Castle in Norfolk belonged to Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, and was demolished on the king’s orders after the rebellion ended. Many towns were destroyed and many people were killed. Blame was placed on young Henry’s advisors, the rebel barons, who manipulated the inexperienced and rash prince for gain.



**Map 4** The Second Scottish Invasion.

**Acknowledgments**

None.

**Conflicts of interest**

None.