

= Robert de Chesney =

Robert de Chesney (died December 1166) was a medieval English Bishop of Lincoln . He was the brother of an important royal official , William de Chesney , and the uncle of Gilbert Foliot , successively Bishop of Hereford and Bishop of London . Educated at Oxford or Paris , Chesney was Archdeacon of Leicester before his election as bishop in December 1148 .

Chesney served as a royal justice in Lincolnshire during his bishopric , and maintained a close relationship with his nephew , Foliot . He was also an early patron of Thomas Becket , and gave the young cleric an office in his diocese early in Becket 's career . Although shown favour by King Stephen of England , including the right to a mint , Chesney was present at the coronation of King Henry II of England in 1154 and went on to serve Henry as a royal justice . Around 1160 , Chesney became embroiled in a dispute with St Albans Abbey in the diocese of Lincoln , over his right as bishop to supervise the abbey . The dispute was eventually settled when the abbey granted Chesney land in return for his relinquishing any right to oversee St Albans .

Chesney was active in his diocese ; more than 240 documents relating to his episcopal career survive . They show him mediating disputes between religious houses and granting exemptions and rights in his diocese . Chesney bought a house in London to serve as an episcopal residence , constructed an episcopal palace in Lincoln , and founded a religious house outside the city . He died in December 1166 , probably on the 27th , and was buried in Lincoln Cathedral .

= = Historical background = =

After Henry I 's death in 1135 , the succession was disputed as the king 's only legitimate son , William , had died in 1120 . The main contenders were the king 's nephews , Stephen , Count of Boulogne and his elder brother Theobald II , Count of Champagne , and his surviving legitimate daughter , Matilda , usually known as the Empress Matilda because of her first marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor , Henry V. After Matilda was widowed in 1125 , she returned to her father in England , who then secured her marriage to Geoffrey , Count of Anjou . All the magnates of England and Normandy were required to declare fealty to Matilda as Henry 's heir , but after Henry I 's death in 1135 Stephen rushed to England and had himself crowned , before Theobald or Matilda could react . The Norman barons accepted Stephen as Duke of Normandy , and Theobald contented himself with his possessions in France . But Matilda was less patient : she secured the support of the king of Scotland , David I , her maternal uncle , and the support of her half @-@ brother Robert , Earl of Gloucester , an illegitimate son of Henry I , in 1138 .

Stephen was initially secure on his throne but , by 1139 , stresses had appeared . David I invaded England in 1138 , and some of the English nobles rebelled , but Stephen had dealt with both threats by April 1139 . Later that year , he arrested Roger , the Bishop of Salisbury , and his nephews Nigel , the Bishop of Ely and Alexander , the Bishop of Lincoln , who were not only powerful ecclesiastics but important royal administrators . In September 1139 , Matilda landed in England to contest the throne , supported by her half @-@ brother Robert . Stephen himself was captured in February 1141 by Matilda 's forces , but Robert 's subsequent capture by forces loyal to Stephen later that year allowed his exchange for Stephen in November 1141 . The result was an effective stalemate , with Stephen controlling parts of the country and others under the control of Matilda 's supporters . During the 1140s , Matilda 's husband , Geoffrey of Anjou , wrested Normandy from Stephen .

= = Early life = =

Chesney 's family originated from Quesnay @-@ Guesnon in the Calvados region of Normandy near Bayeux in France , but they had settled in the Midlands of England and held lands there , particularly in Oxfordshire . His parents were Roger de Chesney and Alice de Langetot . His brother William de Chesney remained a layman , and became one of Oxfordshire 's leading landowners . Another brother , Reginald , was the abbot of Evesham Abbey . Chesney 's sister Agnes was married to Robert Foliot , steward to the Earl of Huntingdon . Agnes and Robert were probably the

parents of Gilbert Foliot , later Bishop of Hereford and Bishop of London . Although it is a surmise that Foliot 's mother was a sibling of Chesney , it is certain that Chesney was Gilbert 's uncle .

Chesney probably attended schools in either Oxford or Paris , as later in life he was referred to with the title of magister , signifying that he was educated . He was Archdeacon of Leicester by about 1146 , and held the prebend of Stow . He was also a canon of the chapel of St. George at Oxford Castle .

= = Election = =

Chesney was elected to the See of Lincoln on 13 December 1148 , by his cathedral chapter , apparently without outside interference . He was consecrated by Theobald of Bec at Canterbury Cathedral on 19 December , the day after his ordination as a priest .

Gilbert Foliot 's letters provide some background to Chesney 's election , showing that King Stephen of England and Stephen 's brother Henry of Blois , the Bishop of Winchester , attempted to secure Lincoln for one of their relatives : the royal candidates were the abbots of Fécamp , Westminster , and St Benet 's of Hulme . They were rejected by Pope Eugene III , paving the way for the chapter to elect Chesney . Foliot relates that the electors from the chapter travelled to London , where they proceeded to elect Chesney in front of Foliot , Theobald , and some other bishops . That account is contradicted by Chesney 's profession of obedience to Theobald , which claims that the election took place on 13 December 1148 at Westminster . Henry of Huntingdon and Ralph de Diceto , both medieval chroniclers , approved of the election and mentioned the unanimous nature of Chesney 's selection . That Chesney 's brother William was a firm supporter of Stephen 's probably helped reconcile Stephen and his brother to Chesney 's election .

Chesney returned to Lincoln on 6 January 1149 , where he received a letter from Arnulf , the Bishop of Lisieux in Normandy , congratulating him on his appointment . Arnulf also asked Chesney to help the cause of Henry fitzEmpress , Empress Matilda 's eldest son and a contender for the English throne .

= = Bishop under Stephen = =

Correspondence between Chesney and his nephew Gilbert Foliot suggests their relationship was quite close . Foliot strongly supported his uncle 's candidacy for Lincoln , writing to Pope Eugene III to encourage papal approval of the election . Foliot later ordered a copy of the Digest for his uncle , which demonstrates Chesney 's interest in Roman law . Some of Archbishop Theobald 's letters , written to Chesney and recorded in John of Salisbury 's collection of letters , contain the earliest recorded quotations from Gratian 's Decretum in an English source . They were part of a letter sent by Theobald to Chesney discussing difficult legal cases , and giving advice on how to resolve them .

Shortly after his consecration , Chesney was presented with a copy of the newly updated version of Henry of Huntingdon 's *Historia Anglorum* ; Huntingdon had been a fellow archdeacon . Chesney was present at several of King Stephen 's courts , and the king named the bishop as the local justice for Lincolnshire .

At the height of the civil war during Stephen 's reign , and shortly after Chesney 's consecration , the bishop acted as a guarantor for the treaty between Ranulf de Gernon , the Earl of Chester , and Robert de Beaumont , the Earl of Leicester , drawn up to limit the fighting between the two earls during the civil war . Chesney was present at the legatine council held by Theobald in March 1151 , and was one of the judges , along with Theobald and Hilary of Chichester , the Bishop of Chichester , in a dispute between the monks of Belvoir Priory and a secular clerk over the right of the clerk to a church . Chesney appointed the future Archbishop of Canterbury , Thomas Becket , to a prebend in his cathedral chapter during the latter part of Stephen 's reign .

The civil war ended with the Treaty of Winchester , late in 1153 , which provided that Matilda 's son Henry would succeed Stephen after his death . When Stephen died the next year , this became a lasting peace . In the last year of Stephen 's reign , in mid @-@ 1154 , Chesney acquired the right

to operate a mint in the town of Newark , granted in perpetuity . But as there are no surviving coins , it seems that the mint was not in operation for long . Chesney also acquired the right of justice in the city of Lincoln , and was involved in the commercial life of his diocese , establishing a fair in the town of Banbury in 1154 .

= = Bishop under Henry II = =

Chesney witnessed a charter of Henry fitzEmpress ' before Henry 's succession to the throne as Henry II , and was present at the consecration of Roger de Pont L 'Evêque as Archbishop of York on 10 October 1154 . The bishop then was present at Henry II 's coronation on 19 December 1154 , and appears to have continued to act as a royal justice in Lincolnshire during the early part of King Henry II 's reign ; the 1156 Pipe Roll has the sheriff of the county accounting for 10 marks arising from the pleas of the bishop in the county . Chesney was often with the royal court , as he attested a number of Henry II 's charters during the early part of the king 's reign , and accompanied him to northern England in 1158 and to Normandy in 1160 .

The bishop served as the judge in a dispute in 1158 between a dean from the diocese of York and a citizen of Scarborough , in which the layman alleged that the dean had extorted large sums of money from him by repeatedly charging his wife with adultery and fining her . The dean 's actions were contrary to a royal decree , but although he appeared before a royal court he escaped secular penalties because he was a clerk . The result of the case , a precursor to the later Becket dispute , aroused King Henry 's anger , but the death of the king 's brother Geoffrey and the king 's subsequent travel to the Continent to deal with that issue meant that the matter was eventually dropped .

In 1161 Chesney became embroiled in a dispute with St Albans Abbey , resulting from his efforts to enforce his right , as bishop , to supervise religious houses within his diocese . Although Pope Alexander III sent a papal bull to England ordering the case to be heard by a panel of two bishops , King Henry II felt that the papal order infringed on his royal rights and had the case decided at the royal court instead . In 1155 ? 1156 St Albans had secured papal privileges from the English Pope Adrian IV , who had previously been a monk there , that exempted the abbey from diocesan supervision , and it was these privileges that Chesney challenged . Chesney secured not only the papal bull but a royal commission to investigate the rights of the abbey as they were in the time of King Henry I. The final disposition of the case took place in 1163 , at a royal council at Westminster , where the abbey produced both the papal privileges and a forged charter of Offa of Mercia in support of their case . As Chesney was unable to produce any documents in support of his own position , the king and council told the bishop that they favoured the abbey 's cause . The king also ruled that the abbey was a royal proprietary church , and thus had special exemptions . In the end , a compromise was reached , whereby the abbey compensated the bishopric with some land in return for the bishop renouncing his claims .

Early in 1162 Chesney was summoned to Normandy by the king , along with Roger , the Archbishop of York , Hugh de Puiset , the Bishop of Durham , and Hilary of Chichester , in order to lend their support to the election of Thomas Becket to the see of Canterbury . In July 1163 , Chesney was present at the royal court held at Woodstock Palace , which included the Welsh prince Rhys ap Gruffydd , the prince of Northern Wales Owain Gwynedd , and King Malcolm IV of Scotland . The two Welsh princes and the Scots ' king did homage to Henry II while at this court . In 1163 Chesney was excused from attending a papal council at Tours because of his health , but he attended the royal councils of Clarendon and Northampton in 1164 , which dealt with the growing dispute , now known as the Becket controversy , between the king and Becket . At those councils Chesney attempted to persuade Becket to compromise , but was unsuccessful . The king subsequently sent Chesney to northern England as an itinerant justice in 1166 .

Chesney 's contributions to the king 's military campaigns on the continent caused him financial difficulties ; at the time of his death he was in debt to a moneylender .

= = Diocesan affairs = =

Chesney 's acta , or documents , contain many examples of him settling judicial disputes , demonstrating how active he was in his diocese . More than 240 of his acta have survived , many of them concerning the religious houses within his jurisdiction . Chesney was appointed a papal judge @-@ delegate at least once , and it was in his court that the case of Philip de Broy , a canon in Bedfordshire accused of murdering a knight , was heard . The case was one of those that contributed to King Henry 's determination that criminous clerks should be subject to royal justice , not just ecclesiastical justice .

In addition to judicial affairs , Chesney worked to ensure good relations with his cathedral chapter , and allowed them exemptions from episcopal jurisdiction . He also permitted the clergy of his diocese to remit the payment of chrism money and forwent the traditional annual payment from the archdeacons of the diocese to the bishop . He suppressed unlicensed schools in Huntingdon and employed a number of educated clerks ; his acta almost always include one witness entitled magister , and often as many as six .

Chesney was a builder in his diocese , where he ordered the construction of the episcopal palace . He also founded a Gilbertine house of canons just outside the city of Lincoln , the priory of St Catherine , shortly after the order was recognised by the papacy in 1148 . Unusually for its time it was only founded for men , although Gilbertine monastic houses typically accommodated both men and women . In 1161 he bought the Old Temple in London as a house for himself . These expenditures contributed to his financial difficulties , along with royal demands , which led to complaints about Chesney 's spending . Another cause for complaint was that he gave away some of his estates as marriage portions for his nieces . Chesney also was a benefactor to the town of Banbury , to which he granted the right to hold a fair some time before 1154 .

= = Death and legacy = =

The exact date of Chesney 's death is uncertain . It may have been 27 December 1166 ; the event is commemorated on both 26 and 27 December . He was buried in the eastern cross aisle of Lincoln Cathedral , along the north side . The modern historian David Knowles wrote that Chesney was " not a man of strong character or decided opinions " .

Chesney left at least ten books to Lincoln Cathedral , of which seven survive . Five of the seven show a uniformity of handwriting , leading to speculation that there may have been a scriptorium at Lincoln Cathedral during Chesney 's tenure , but other surviving books that were in the cathedral library at the same time do not share any handwriting or other characteristics ; Chesney may simply have commissioned the books at the same time from the same scribes .

In addition to Foliot , the brothers Gerard , a canon of Lincoln , and Martin , treasurer of Lincoln , were also Chesney 's nephews . He may also have been related to Fulk de Chesney , another canon at Lincoln . Chesney helped to further the career of Richard Barre , who became a writer and a royal judge and first appears in the record as a witness to some of Chesney 's documents during 1160 ? 1164 . Geoffrey of Monmouth 's last work , the Vita Merlini , was dedicated to Chesney . Foliot owned a copy of the Digest , part of the Corpus iuris civilis , that had originally been glossed for Chesney .

Traditionally , Chesney 's predecessor Alexander has been credited with commissioning the baptismal font in Lincoln Cathedral , made of Tournai marble . Recent scholarship has cast doubt upon this idea , and suggests that the font was instead carved on Chesney 's orders , and commissioned after 1150 .