

= Alexander of Lincoln =

Alexander of Lincoln (died February 1148) was a medieval English Bishop of Lincoln , a member of an important administrative and ecclesiastical family . He was the nephew of Roger of Salisbury , a Bishop of Salisbury and Chancellor of England under King Henry I , and he was also related to Nigel , Bishop of Ely . Educated at Laon , Alexander served in his uncle 's diocese as an archdeacon in the early 1120s . Unlike his relatives , he held no office in the government before his appointment as Bishop of Lincoln in 1123 . Alexander became a frequent visitor to King Henry 's court after his elevation to the episcopate , often witnessing royal documents , and he served as a royal justice in Lincolnshire .

Although Alexander was known for his ostentatious and luxurious lifestyle , he founded a number of religious houses in his diocese and was an active builder and literary patron . He also attended church councils and reorganized his diocese by increasing the number of archdeaconries and setting up prebends to support his cathedral clergy . Under Henry 's successor , King Stephen , Alexander was caught up in the fall from favour of his family , and was imprisoned together with his uncle Roger in 1139 . He subsequently briefly supported Stephen 's rival , Matilda , but by the late 1140s Alexander was once again working with Stephen . He spent much of the late 1140s at the papal court in Rome , but died in England in early 1148 . During his episcopate he began the rebuilding of his cathedral , which had been destroyed by fire . Alexander was the patron of medieval chroniclers Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth , and also served as an ecclesiastical patron of the medieval hermit Christina of Markyate and Gilbert of Sempringham , founder of the Gilbertines .

= = Early life = =

Alexander was a nephew of Roger , Bishop of Salisbury , probably the son of Roger 's brother Humphrey . His mother 's name , Ada , is known from the Lincoln Cathedral libri memoriales , or obituary books . Alexander 's brother David was archdeacon of Buckingham in the diocese of Lincoln . Other relatives included Nigel , another nephew of Roger 's ; and Adeilm , later Treasurer of England , who was recorded as Roger 's nephew but perhaps was his son . It is possible , although unproven , that Nigel was really Alexander 's brother rather than his cousin . Roger 's son Roger le Poer , who later became Chancellor of England , was also a cousin . Alexander 's cousin Nigel had a son , Richard FitzNeal , who later became Treasurer of England and Bishop of London . Alexander also had a nephew William , who became an archdeacon , and a great @-@ nephew named Robert de Alvers .

Alexander 's birthdate is unknown . Together with his cousin Nigel he was educated at Laon , under the schoolmaster Anselm of Laon , and returned to England at some unknown date . The historian Martin Brett feels that Alexander probably served as a royal chaplain early in his career , although no sources support this conjecture . Alexander was an archdeacon in the diocese of Salisbury by 1121 , under his uncle . While occupying that office he was credited with a writing a glossary of Old English legal terms in the Anglo Norman language , entitled the Expositiones Vocabulorum . Unlike his cousin Nigel , Alexander does not appear to have entered the king 's household or administration before his appointment as a bishop , and only attested , or witnessed , one royal charter before his elevation to the episcopate in 1123 .

= = Bishop = =

Alexander was nominated to the see of Lincoln in April 1123 and was consecrated bishop on 22 July 1123 , at a ceremony held in Canterbury . He owed his appointment to his uncle 's influence with King Henry I ; the Peterborough version of the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle noted that Alexander 's elevation to the episcopate was done entirely for the love of Roger .

During his time as bishop Alexander secured the submission of St Albans Abbey to his diocese and founded a number of monasteries , including Haverholme Priory (a Gilbertine house) , Dorchester

on Thames (an Arrouaisian Order house) , Louth Park , and Thame ; Louth was one of the first Cistercian houses founded in England , and Dorchester was the refoundation of a former collegiate church . During Alexander 's episcopate 13 Cistercian abbeys and seven nunneries were founded in his diocese . Alexander himself consecrated the church at Markyate used by the medieval mystic Christina of Markyate and her nuns , and it was he who consecrated her as a hermit at St Albans Abbey . Alexander also founded a hospital for lepers at Newark @-@ on @-@ Trent .

Although Alexander was a frequent witness to royal charters and documents , there is no evidence that he held an official government position after his appointment as bishop , unlike his relatives Roger and Nigel . Nevertheless , Alexander subsequently appears to have become a regular presence at the royal court . He frequently attested royal charters after 1123 , and probably acted as a royal justice in Lincolnshire and the town of Lincoln . He also held the royal castles at Newark , Sleaford and Banbury , and gave confirmations of grants to the church at Godstow .

Alexander was probably at the 1125 church council held at Westminster by the papal legate John of Crema , and shortly afterwards accompanied the legate on his journey back to Rome . He was still in Rome in 1126 , and may have helped to obtain a papal confirmation of his uncle 's possession of Malmesbury Abbey , Abbotsbury Abbey , and Horton . At some point during his episcopate , an eighth archdeaconry was established in his diocese , for the West Riding area of Lindsey . Besides these reorganizations , Alexander had a number of clerics in his personal household , including Gilbert of Sempringham , who later founded the Gilbertine order . Other members of the bishop 's household were Ralph Gubion , who became abbot of St Albans , and an Italian Bible scholar named Guido or Wido , who taught that subject while serving Alexander .

Alexander presided over the organization of his diocese into prebends to support the cathedral clergy ; he established at least one new prebend and augmented two others . He also attended the church councils in 1127 and 1129 that were convened by William de Corbeil , the Archbishop of Canterbury . Later , during 1133 and 1134 , he and the archbishop quarrelled , but the exact nature of their dispute is unknown . William and Alexander travelled to Normandy in 1134 to seek out King Henry to settle their dispute .

= = Reign of Stephen = =

After Henry 's death in 1135 the succession was disputed between the king 's nephews ? Stephen and his elder brother Theobald II , Count of Champagne ? and Henry 's surviving legitimate child Matilda , usually known as the Empress Matilda because of her first marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor , Henry V. King Henry 's only legitimate son , William , had died in 1120 . After Matilda was widowed in 1125 she returned to her father , who married her 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 sanguine and secured the support of the Scottish king , David , her maternal uncle , and in 1138 that of her half @-@ brother , Robert , Earl of Gloucester , an illegitimate son of Henry I.

The election of Theobald of Bec to the Archbishopric of Canterbury was announced at the Council of Westminster in 1138 . The medieval chronicler Gervase of Canterbury writes that 17 bishops attended the council , which implies that Alexander was present . After a failed expedition to Normandy in 1137 , the influence of Alexander 's uncle , Roger of Salisbury , waned at the court of King Stephen , but the king took no action against the family that might incite them to rebel . In early 1139 Stephen may have named William d 'Aubigny as Earl of Lincoln , perhaps in an effort to limit Alexander 's influence in Lincolnshire .

In June 1139 a knight was killed during a fight in Oxford between a party of Roger of Salisbury 's men and a group of noblemen . The king ordered Roger to attend his court to explain the circumstances of the incident and to surrender custody of his castles , which Roger refused to do , resulting in his and Alexander 's arrest ; Roger 's other nephew , Nigel , evaded capture . Another possible explanation for the arrests is offered by the Gesta Stephani , a contemporary chronicle ,

which reported the king 's fear that Roger and his nephews were plotting to hand their castles to the Empress Matilda . Stephen may alternatively have been attempting to assert his rights over the castles , and demonstrate his authority over powerful subjects . Alexander was imprisoned in Oxford , in conditions described by some medieval chroniclers as bad .

Since the work of Henry of Huntingdon , who wrote in the years before 1154 and who regarded Stephen 's actions as treachery against the clergy that earned him punishment from God , Alexander 's arrest has been seen by many historians as a turning point in Stephen 's reign . Writing in the 1870s , the historian William Stubbs felt that the arrest destroyed the royal administration , but modern historians have advanced differing explanations for the troubles that followed , not all of which are related to the bishop 's arrest .

After Roger and Alexander 's arrests Nigel defied the king . The bishops ' castles refused to surrender to the king , therefore Stephen threatened to starve Alexander and Roger until they did . Sleaford and Newark surrendered and were given into the custody of Robert , the Earl of Leicester . Earl Robert also seized some of Lincoln 's episcopal estates that had been disputed between the earl and the bishop . Alexander subsequently excommunicated Earl Robert when the earl refused to return the castle to Alexander 's custody . Alexander then successfully applied to Pope Innocent II in 1139 for support in his efforts to recover Newark castle from Earl Robert .

Stephen 's brother , Henry of Blois , Bishop of Winchester and one of the king 's main supporters , had recently been appointed papal legate . Henry objected to Stephen 's actions in arresting the bishops and confiscating their property , as they were in contravention of canon law . Henry called a legatine council , a church council convened by a papal legate , at Winchester to discuss the issue , which ended in nothing being done , although both sides threatened excommunication and stated they would appeal to Rome and the papacy for support . Alexander did not attend the council of Winchester , but his uncle did . He seems to have borne Stephen no ill will over the arrest , and worked with the king during Stephen 's later reign .

In 1141 Alexander and the citizens of the town of Lincoln requested that Stephen come to Lincoln and intercede with Ranulf de Gernon , the Earl of Chester , who was attempting to enforce what he regarded as his rights to Lincoln Castle . Stephen arrived and besieged Ranulf 's wife and half @-@ brother in the castle , but the earl escaped and sought aid from Robert of Gloucester , Matilda 's half @-@ brother and leading supporter . Following Robert 's arrival in Lincoln a battle took place there on 2 February 1141 , during which Stephen was captured by Matilda 's forces . Alexander was present at Oxford in July 1141 , when the Empress Matilda held court and attempted to consolidate her hold on England . The citizens of London objected to Matilda 's rule when she arrived in their city , and drove her away ; Robert of Gloucester was captured shortly afterwards . This reversal of the Empress ' fortunes resulted in Stephen 's release , after he was exchanged for Robert . The next few years , until 1148 , saw a period of civil war in England , often called The Anarchy , when neither Matilda nor Stephen controlled the country .

= = Patronage = =

Alexander was a supporter of Gilbert of Sempringham 's new monastic order of the Gilbertines , and he was also known as a patron of literature . He commissioned Geoffrey of Monmouth to compose the Prophecies of Merlin , which Geoffrey dedicated to him . Alexander was a patron of the medieval chronicler Henry of Huntingdon , and requested that Henry write his historical work .

Alexander rebuilt Lincoln Cathedral after it had been destroyed by fire at an unknown date . He had the roof done with stone vaulting and began construction of the west front of the cathedral , which was finished under his successor . The only remaining major traces of Alexander 's work on the west end are the carved doors and the frieze on the west front . The author of the Gesta Stephani claimed that Alexander 's additions made Lincoln Cathedral " more beautiful than before and second to none in the realm " . Traditionally , Alexander has been credited with the commissioning of the baptismal font in Lincoln Cathedral , made of Tournai marble . Recent scholarship , however , has cast doubt upon this theory and suggests that the font was carved on the orders of Alexander 's successor , Robert de Chesney .

Stephen granted to Alexander the land on which the Old Palace of the bishops stands in Lincoln , although it is unclear whether it was Alexander or his successor as bishop who began the construction of the existing building . Stephen 's grant added to an earlier one by King Henry , of the Eastgate in Lincoln as an episcopal residence . Work commissioned by Alexander has survived at the three castles he built at Newark @-@ on @-@ Trent , Sleaford , and probably Banbury .

Alexander 's nickname , " the Magnificent " , reflected his ostentatious and luxurious lifestyle . Henry of Huntingdon records that this was a contemporary nickname . Alexander was rebuked by Bernard of Clairvaux for his lifestyle . He may have been responsible for the education of an illegitimate son of King Henry 's , as two charters of Alexander 's are witnessed by a William , who is described as a son of the king . He also advanced the careers of his family , naming his relative Adeilm as Dean of Lincoln during his episcopate . Another member of his household was Robert Gubion , who later became abbot of St Albans Abbey .

The medieval chronicler William of Newburgh wrote that Alexander founded a number of monasteries , " to remove the odium " that he had incurred because of his castle building . Alexander himself stated explicitly that his foundation of Louth was intended to secure the remission of his sins , as well as the salvation of King Henry I , his uncle Roger of Salisbury , and his parents . Alexander also played a part in the founding of Newhouse Abbey in about 1143 . Although the actual foundation was by Peter of Goxhill , Alexander and his successor issued confirmation charters and took the new monastery into their protection .

= = Death = =

Alexander spent most of 1145 and 1146 at the papal court in Rome , although some time during that period he was in England as one of the witnesses to the peace accord signed between the earls of Chester and Leicester . He returned to the papal court , then at Auxerre , in 1147 , but he was back in England by the time of his death the following year . Henry of Huntingdon says that Alexander picked up his last illness while travelling . Alexander died in February 1148 , probably on the 20th , as that was the date on which his death was commemorated at Lincoln Cathedral , and he was buried at Lincoln on 25 February 1148 . No tomb remains , but 12th @-@ century documents record that Alexander left the cathedral a number of books , mostly biblical works .