

= John de Breton =

John de Breton ( sometimes John le Breton , John Breton , John Bretun or John Brito ; died c . 12 May 1275 ) was a medieval Bishop of Hereford . He served as a royal justice and sheriff before being nominated to Hereford . He is sometimes credited with the legal treatise Britton ; but in its current form Breton cannot be the author as the work refers to laws written 15 years after the bishop 's death .

= = Life = =

Breton was the son of William le Breton , a royal justice . The elder Breton , who is sometimes styled William Brito in records , came from a family who often served as justices and other legal officials . Occasionally the younger Breton appears in the records as John Bretun or John Brito . He served as Sheriff of Herefordshire from 1254 to 1257 , and then as constable and bailiff of Abergavenny around 1257 . In October 1259 he was sent abroad on matters pertaining to King Henry III of England , and Henry 's son , the future Edward I. He then served Edward as keeper of the prince 's wardrobe and then after November 1261 as the prince 's steward .

In late 1261 Breton is noted as owing £ 120 in the royal records . A notation next to the debt implies that he was a canon of Hereford Cathedral at this point , but the *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* 1066 ? 1300 does not identify him as such . Breton does not appear in the records from this point until after the Battle of Evesham in 1265 , when he is noted as holding a grant of royal safeguarding .

Breton served as a royal justice from 1266 , first in the Court of Common Pleas , and then at the King 's Bench from 1268 . He was elected to the see of Hereford around 6 January 1269 . He was consecrated on 2 June 1269 at Waverley by Nicholas of Ely who was Bishop of Winchester . After his election and consecration , he no longer served as a royal justice .

Breton was given leave to go to the continent to meet Edward when he returned from Crusade , in 1273 , but the bishop did not attend Edward 's coronation .

= = Death and legacy = =

Breton died on or before 12 May 1275 , when the custodian of the bishopric was given orders to seize Breton 's estate because of debts owed to the king . These debts dated back over 20 years , to his time as sheriff . A Thomas le Breton , presumably a relative , was a canon at Hereford Cathedral from 1273 , and probably owed his office to John .

A number of chronicles that mention Breton 's death also note that he was the author of a legal treatise entitled *le Bretoun* , but this cannot be the surviving work called *Britton* , at least not in the current form , as that work discusses laws composed 15 years after Breton 's death . It is unclear why he was credited with the work , and whether this attribution is just a confusion of Breton with the real author or if he did in fact author the work , which was later revised . The fact that the *Britton* is written in French , not Latin , and that it contains little information about the theory of law , being mostly concerned with the practical application of laws , points rather strongly to an author who was a royal justice , which Breton was .