

= Ralph Basset =

Ralph Basset (sometimes Bassett ; died c . 1127) was a medieval English royal justice during the reign of King Henry I of England . He was a native of Normandy , and may have come to Henry 's notice while Henry held land in Normandy prior to becoming king . Basset is first mentioned in documents about 1102 , and from then until his death around 1127 , he was frequently employed as a royal justice . His son Richard Basset also became a royal judge .

= = Origins = =

Basset was a native of Montreuil @-@ au @-@ Houlme near Domfront in Normandy , and possibly came to the notice of King Henry while Henry was count of Domfront during the reign of Henry 's older brother King William I of England (1087 ? 1100) . Either Basset himself or an earlier person with the same name held lands of Robert d 'Oilly that were recorded in Domesday Book as in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire . If the Ralph in Domesday was not the same as the judge , the Domesday Ralph may have been the judge 's father . Other Bassets in the area were also recorded in Domesday , including a William and a Richard . It is not clear how or if they were related to Ralph . Ralph the judge held lands in Montreuil that in 1150 were considered to be worth two English manors . He held lands in Wallingford and Colston Bassett . The lands in Wallingford were worth 16 and a third knight 's fees .

= = Royal service = =

The first secure mentions of Basset are in royal charters dating to around 1102 , where he appears as a witness . He then appears as a judge in a royal dispute with the sheriff of Yorkshire . Basset is named as one of the commissioners of the Liber Winton , a survey of the landholdings in the city of Winchester which took place at some point between 1103 and 1115 , probably close to 1110 . From his Norman lands , Basset is recorded as donating lands to the Abbey of Saint @-@ Evroul in 1113 @-@ in 1111 Basset took part in the Michaelmas session of the Exchequer , and he continued to take part in financial affairs and can be considered as an early Baron of the Exchequer .

Basset appears as a royal justice in 1116 , serving in Huntingdonshire . Basset was noted in the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle entry for 1124 as hanging 44 thieves , during an eyre in Leicestershire . Possibly , Basset 's severity was part of an attempt to overawe the under @-@ tenants of the Beaumont twins , one of whom , Waleran , Count of Melun rebelled during 1124 . During the period 1110 ? 1127 , Basset was one of the leading royal justices , and was described by the medieval chronicler Henry of Huntingdon as one of the " justices of all England " . Huntingdon 's implication is that Basset 's scope was over all of England , not limited to his own locality .

Basset is recorded in the Pipe Roll of 1130 as having performed judicial functions in 11 different shires , even though by this point he was already dead . Basset also served on the informal vice @-@ regency council that assisted Henry 's wife and son when the king was out of England . Basset seems to have spent most of his judicial and royal career in England , as he only is a witness on one royal document that was drawn up in Normandy . According to the compiler of the Basset family charters , William Reedy , " there is more evidence for Ralph 's service for the king in England " than for any other royal servant who was not clergy . His most active period of royal service was from 1120 to 1130 . An older view from historians was that Basset was Chief Justiciar of England is not held by historians currently , nor can the idea that Basset was the head of justices or just the head of the itinerant justices during Henry 's reign cannot be determined with any confidence either . It is clear that Basset was employed by the king extensively and probably that the nobleman worked mostly full @-@ time for the king .

Basset 's rewards for his royal service included a number of manors . Basset was granted the manor of Mixbury by the king , after the family that held it at the time of Domesday Book died out and it escheated to the king . Other lands held by Basset were probably royal rewards also . One was Quiddenham , which had been held in 1086 by crown . Another was Stoney Stanton , originally

held in 1086 by Robert Despensers .

= = Death and legacy = =

Basset probably died in 1127 , and was certainly dead in 1130 . He is said to have taken ill at Northampton , and to have been clothed in a monk 's habit while on his deathbed . He was buried in the chapterhouse at Abingdon Abbey , which he left a bequest to . A copy of a charter from Archbishop Theobald of Bec , recorded in a cartulary , records most of Basset 's manors . While most of the estates seem to have been held by Basset as a sub @-@ tenant , four of the estates appear to have been held as a tenant @-@ in @-@ chief . These estates were not very valuable , and Basset can not be considered a baron , although his son Richard managed through marriage to become a member of the barons . He held lands in nine counties , perhaps centred in Berkshire .

Basset was the founding member of a dynasty of royal servants who continued to serve the kings of England until around 1250 . The medieval writer and chronicler Orderic Vitalis described Basset as one of the new men of King Henry , who " raised them , so to say , from the dust " . Among Basset 's four sons were Richard Basset , and Nicholas . Another son was Ralph who became a cleric . A fourth son was Turstin , who held land around Wallingford . Basset also had daughters , but their names are not known . Only the first initial of his wife 's name is known , which was A. Richard received the Norman estates , but not most of the English lands , perhaps because he married an heiress .