

= Ranulf Flambard =

Ranulf Flambard ( sometimes Ralph Flambard , Ranulph Flambard , or Ranulf Passiflamme ; c . 1060 ? 5 September 1128 ) was a medieval Norman Bishop of Durham and an influential government minister of King William Rufus of England . Ranulf was the son of a priest of Bayeux , Normandy , and his nickname Flambard means incendiary or torch @-@ bearer , and may have referred to his personality . He started his career under King William I of England , probably in the compilation of the Domesday Book , as well as being the keeper of the king 's seal . On the death of William I , Ranulf chose to serve the new king of England , William Rufus .

Under Rufus , he continued to hold the king 's seal , and also became involved in the financial administration of the kingdom , where he quickly made a name for himself by his novel methods of raising revenue . He was given custody of a number of vacant ecclesiastical offices , administering at one point sixteen vacant bishoprics or abbeys . His many duties have led to him being considered the first Chief Justiciar of England . During Rufus ' reign , Ranulf supervised the construction of the first stone bridge in London and oversaw the construction of the king 's hall at Westminster . In 1099 he was rewarded with the bishopric of Durham .

On the death of Rufus in 1100 , Ranulf was imprisoned in the Tower of London by Rufus ' successor Henry I of England . Ranulf was a convenient scapegoat for the financial extortions of Rufus ' reign . He became the first prisoner to escape from the Tower and went into exile in Normandy with Rufus ' and Henry 's older brother Robert Curthose , the Duke of Normandy . Ranulf became a leading advisor to Robert , and assisted in his unsuccessful invasion of England , an attempt to oust Henry from the throne . The brothers reconciled , but although Ranulf was restored to office he spent the next few years in Normandy , returning only after Henry had defeated Robert at the Battle of Tinchebray . Ranulf subsequently retired from political life , with only occasional appearances in public . He remained active in ecclesiastical affairs , attending councils and working to defend the rights of his see .

= = Early life = =

Ranulf was a Norman and the son of Thurstin , a parish priest in the diocese of Bayeux . Ranulf was probably born about 1060 , as he was close to 70 when he died in 1128 . Originally he worked for Odo of Bayeux , but he soon entered the chancery of King William I , Odo 's half @-@ brother . He stood out amongst the other clerks for his intelligence and his good looks . His nickname , Flambard , means torch @-@ bearer , incendiary or devouring flame ; and may have been given to him for his high @-@ spirited personality . Orderic Vitalis , a medieval chronicler , records that Robert fitzThurstin gave the nickname to Ranulf , because Robert resented the fact that Ranulf , though of low birth , ordered the nobility around . Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury told the pope that the nickname came from Ranulf 's cruelty , which Anselm likened to a consuming flame . Orderic went on to claim that Ranulf was " educated from boyhood with base parasites among the hangers @-@ on of the court " .

Ranulf acquired the reputation of an able financier and administrator , and helped to increase the royal revenues . He appears to have played an important part in the compilation of the Domesday survey , perhaps even the main orchestrator of the project . Domesday Book gives his profession as clerk , and records him holding land in a number of counties . Before the death of the old king he became chaplain to Maurice , Bishop of London , whom he had formerly served in the chancery . Some sources call him " almost illiterate " , but this probably meant he was not formally educated in the liberal arts . His work in the chancery and as an administrator would have required knowledge of Latin . He also served as the keeper of the king 's seal from about 1085 . Once , while he was traveling in the Thames estuary with the seal , he was captured by pirates . Thinking quickly , he prevented the capture of the seal by throwing the seal into the sea . Although he served William the Conqueror , he does not attest a single genuine charter or writ of William 's , which implies he was not a leading servant . When King William died and his lands were split between his elder son Robert Curthose , who received Normandy , and the third son , William Rufus , who received

England , Ranulf chose to serve Rufus in England .

= = Work under Rufus = =

Before the death of William the Conqueror , Ranulf held a prebend in the diocese of Salisbury . Early in the reign of Rufus he held the offices of dean of Christchurch in Twynham , Hampshire and was a prebendary of London and Lincoln . He was still keeper of the king 's seal , and also may have been in charge of the royal scriptorium . He is usually described as the chaplain of Rufus , but he is also called treasurer and sometimes capitalis justiciarius . Other times his role is given the title procurator . William of Malmesbury calls him the " manager of the whole kingdom " .

At Christchurch , he reduced the number of canons serving the church from 25 to 13 , through not replacing clerks who died . Ranulf kept the revenues that would have gone to the missing canons and used it to rebuild the church . Some medieval sources claim that in rebuilding the church at Twynham , he not only demolished the church he was replacing , but nine others that were nearby .

As chief financial administrator , he bore the brunt of the chronicler 's condemnations for extortion and efforts to increase royal revenues . Besides attempts to increase the efficiency of collection and the rate of taxation , Ranulf created new methods of raising money . One of his new measures in revenue collection came in 1094 , when the fyrd , or English militia , was assembled in order to fight in Normandy against the king 's brother Robert Curthose . When all the men had assembled , instead of sending them to Normandy , Ranulf dismissed them , after collecting the 10 shillings that each man had been given by their district for maintenance . Ranulf then spent the money on mercenaries . Ranulf also actively pressed lawsuits , including bringing suit against Anselm on the day of Anselm 's consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury . Another innovation was the attempt to collect a relief , much like the relief due from vassals at the death of an overlord , from the under @-@ tenants of church lands when the church office changed hands . This attempt came at the death of Wulfstan , Bishop of Worcester in 1095 , when the king sent writs to the free tenants of the bishop , setting the amount of relief owed to the king . This attempt was not repeated , however .

He administered for the king a large proportion of the vacant ecclesiastical offices . He personally managed sixteen abbeys or bishoprics . Eventually he obtained the wealthy see of Durham for himself in May 1099 , being consecrated on 5 June 1099 . He had been the custodian of the see since the death of the previous bishop in early 1096 . At his consecration , he managed to avoid giving a profession of obedience to Thomas the Archbishop of York , just as his predecessor had done . William of Malmesbury , a medieval chronicler , accused Ranulf of paying 1 @,@ 000 pounds for the bishopric . He was given ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Carlisle and Cumbria , because his predecessors had done so as bishops of Lindisfarne , but he only exercised this for a short time , as after the accession of Henry I jurisdiction over these areas was transferred to the diocese of York .

It has been suggested that Ranulf may have been the first Justiciar of all England ( or chief justiciar ) , although he never held the title and it is not clear if his power was as extensive as Roger of Salisbury in the following reign . He ran the government of England while Rufus was fighting in Normandy , not only raising money , but issuing writs and judging court cases . William of Malmesbury in describing Ranulf 's financial efforts said that he " skinned the rich , ground the down the poor , and swept other men 's inheritances into his net . " Another medieval chronicler , Orderic Vitalis , said that Ranulf planned to revise the survey of England , almost certainly Domesday Book , and that he planned to use that revised survey to confiscate all excess holdings over a certain amount . If this was really planned , it was never carried out .

Ranulf often worked in concert with Haimo the dapifer , or seneschal , and Urse d 'Abetot in carrying out royal judgements . On one occasion , they , along with Robert Bloet the Bishop of Lincoln , reassessed the lands of Thorney Abbey for taxes . On another occasion , they were ordered along with Ralph de Luffa Bishop of Chichester to see that the abbey of Fecamp received custody of a church at Steyning . Others who often worked with Ranulf were Robert FitzHaimo , Roger Bigod , and Eudo the dapifer . These men are sometimes considered by historians to be the first Barons of the Exchequer . There are also signs during Ranulf 's administration of resident justices in the counties who held courts for the king . Itinerant justices were probably also used to

hear pleas that were reserved to the crown .

While administering England for Rufus , Ranulf also supervised construction projects . Under his management , the first stone bridge in London was constructed . Ranulf also built a wall around the White Tower in London , enclosing the inner ward . A new hall at Westminster was also built , of which the outside walls of Westminster Hall are still surviving . He started building the church at Christchurch at Twynham , which he had been granted by Rufus . After Rufus ' death , the church was confiscated from Ranulf , and building work ceased . The crypts and transepts of the current church , however , date from Ranulf 's construction work .

= = Under Henry I = =

At the succession of King Henry I , the new king imprisoned Ranulf in the Tower of London on 15 August 1100 on charges of embezzlement . His custodian , William de Mandeville , allowed the bishop to escape on 3 February 1101 . Flambard was not only the first inmate of the prison , but also the first person to escape from it . A popular legend represents the bishop as descending from the window of his cell by a rope which friends had smuggled to him in a flagon of wine . Ranulf gave the wine to his guards , and after they were drunk and asleep , climbed down the rope to escape . His friends had arranged a ship to transport Ranulf , some of the bishop 's treasure , and the bishop 's elderly mother to Normandy . He took refuge across the English Channel with Henry 's brother Robert Curthose , where he became one of the duke 's principal advisors . King Henry dispossessed Ranulf of his lands at Whitsun in 1101 , and the new Archbishop of York Gerard deposed him from his bishopric . The Archbishop of Canterbury , Anselm arranged for Flambard 's trial in a papal court for simony , and a papal decree was issued against Ranulf .

As Robert 's advisor , he pressed the duke to dispute Henry 's claim to the crown of England . The historian David Crouch says that Ranulf " had to provide the strategic vision and energy that Duke Robert lacked " , and other historians have agreed that Ranulf 's arrival was the catalyst to Curthose 's ability to mount an invasion . Ranulf was in charge of organizing transport for the duke 's invasion of England , and also secured the defection of some of Henry 's ships , thus allowing the fleet to land safely . Robert invaded England in July 1101 along with Ranulf , but Robert agreed at the Treaty of Alton on 2 August 1101 to renounce his claim to the English throne . Although no chronicler mentions Ranulf being present at Alton , he probably was there . Ranulf was pardoned in the treaty and restored to his bishopric , but he chose to stay with Robert for five more years . Some historians , including C. W. Hollister , see the treaty as mainly Ranulf 's work , as mainly an attempt to salvage his ecclesiastical career in England , along with a displacement of Ranulf from being the chief councillor of Curthose to merely being one of many .

Robert rewarded Ranulf for his advice during the invasion by entrusting him with the administration of the see of Lisieux . After Robert 's defeat by Henry at Tinchebray in 1106 , the bishop was among the first to make his peace with Henry , and returned to Durham . He retired from political life . Henry had already replaced him with Roger of Salisbury an able financier who was infinitely more acceptable to the nation . Although some historians have theorized that Ranulf 's time in Normandy was as an agent of Henry , it appears that Ranulf was mainly looking out for his own interests and those of his family .

In 1108 , Ranulf was dragged into the middle of the ongoing dispute between Archbishop Anselm and the newly appointed Archbishop of York , Thomas over whether or not Thomas should profess obedience to Anselm . Because Anselm refused to consecrate Thomas without a profession , and Thomas refused to profess , Thomas was unable to consecrate bishops himself . Ranulf wrote to Anselm , asking that he might act as Thomas ' surrogate and consecrate Thurgot as Bishop of St Andrew 's . In September 1108 , Anselm wrote to Ranulf forbidding anyone but Thomas or Anselm himself to consecrate Thurgot or any other bishops . Later , Ranulf tried to bribe King Henry to take Thomas ' side . Thurgot had been prior of the cathedral chapter at Durham , but had disagreed with Ranulf , who arranged for him to be elected to St Andrew 's as a solution to the quarrel .

It was Ranulf who ordained Thurstan , the archbishop @-@ elect of York , as a priest in 1115 , although Thurstan had to wait for consecration as bishop for another four years . Ranulf attended

the Council of Reims in 1119 held by Pope Callixtus II . In 1125 John of Crema , the papal legate to England , visited Durham to investigate charges against the bishop . Medieval chroniclers told the story that the legate was much taken with Ranulf 's niece , and after sleeping with the girl , took no action on the charges against Ranulf . The story is unlikely to be true .

= = Death and legacy = =

Ranulf worked to complete the cathedral which his predecessor , William de St @-@ Calais , had begun ; fortified Durham with a wall around Durham Castle , built Norham Castle to help defend the Tweed River ; and endowed the collegiate church of Christchurch , Hampshire . He built or expanded other churches , including the one at Christchurch in Hampshire which he had endowed , and St. Martin 's in Dover . The first stone bridge at Durham was completed by his instruction in 1120 , the so @-@ called Framwellgate Bridge , a bridge described as " of wonderful workmanship . " He cleared and levelled the Palace Green in Durham between the castle and the cathedral . While the chroniclers mainly condemned Ranulf for his morals , his own cathedral chapter held him in high esteem because of his building activities and his defence of the rights of Durham . Although he usurped some of the income of the cathedral chapter , the money from those rights was used to complete the cathedral rebuilding , and later restored the income to the monks as well as increasing the endowment . At his death , the cathedral walls were complete up to " the covering " , which probably means the vault instead of the roof .

Flambard attracted scholars to his household , and reformed the administration of the diocese , by dividing it into archdeaconries . Ranulf oversaw the translation of Saint Cuthbert 's relics to a new tomb in a lavish ceremony . He was also a patron to the hermit Saint Godric , whom he befriended .

One of Ranulf 's brothers was Fulcher , who was Bishop of Lisieux in 1101 . Another brother was Osbern , who was a royal clerk for Rufus , and the last brother was Geoffrey . Fulcher may have been appointed bishop to enable Ranulf to exploit the see while Ranulf was in exile in Normandy . Ranulf had a son , Thomas , who also held the see of Lisieux , right after his uncle . Like his uncle , he may have been appointed as a placeholder to allow his father to appropriate the revenues of Lisieux . Ranulf 's mistress was an Englishwoman named Alveva or Ælfgifu , who was the mother of at least two of his sons . Alveva 's sons were Ranulf , who was an archdeacon , and Elias . When Ranulf became bishop , he married her to a burgess of Huntingdon , but remained on good terms with both Alveva and her spouse , often staying with them when he travelled away from Durham . Alveva was the aunt of Christina of Markyate , and Christina is said to have rebuffed the bishop 's attempts to seduce her in 1114 . Alveva and Ranulf 's son Elias held a prebend at London and was a royal clerk under Henry I. Ranulf 's son Ralf was parson of Middleham and held a prebend at London too . He was a member of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury 's household after 1138 . Some of Ranulf 's sons were educated at Laon under William de Corbeil , who was one of Ranulf 's clerks . One of Ranulf 's nephews , Ralf , was archdeacon of Northumberland and during the reign of King Stephen helped to hold the diocese of Durham loyal to Stephen . Other nephews were Osbert , who was sheriff of Durham , and Robert , Richard , and William who held fiefs . Unrelated to Ranulf , William of Corbeil became one of Ranulf 's household clerks , and was eventually to be elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 1123 .

Ranulf died on 5 September 1128 . He was buried in his chapter house in Durham , where his tomb was opened in 1874 . His skeleton is still extant , and examination of it reveals that he would have been about 5 ft 9 in ( 1 @.@ 75 m ) tall . He was fond of clothes and was always richly dressed . While he was efficient in collecting the royal revenues , he was generous to his own men , and later in life gave liberally to the poor . His crozier and signet ring were found in his grave , and they were rather plain . An oddity of his grave was that he was buried on top of a layer of charcoal that was laid over alternating layers of lime and dirt .

Ranulf 's reputation has suffered because of the hostility of the monastic chroniclers to both himself and to Rufus . Many chroniclers decried his financial ruthlessness and his lax morals . Orderic described Ranulf 's career as " addicted to feasts and carousals and lusts ; cruel and ambitious , prodigal to his own adherents , but rapacious in seizing the goods of other men " . Besides the

chroniclers , Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury wrote to Pope Paschal II , while Ranulf was in exile , describing Ranulf as " a rent collector of the worst possible reputation . " William of Malmesbury said that Flambard was a " plunderer of the rich , destroyer of the poor " . Victorian historians , including E. A. Freeman , vilified Ranulf , and Freeman especially held that Ranulf was a " malignant genius " . Modern historians have embraced a more moderate view , starting with Richard Southern in 1933 . The historian David Bates felt that he , along with his successor Roger of Salisbury , " were essentially the chief managers of the king 's finance and justice " .