

= William de Chesney =

William de Chesney (flourished 1142 ? 1161) was an Anglo @-@ Norman magnate during the reign of King Stephen of England (reigned 1135 ? 1154) and King Henry II of England (reigned 1154 ? 1189) . Chesney was part of a large family ; one of his brothers became Bishop of Lincoln and another Abbot of Evesham Abbey . Stephen may have named him Sheriff of Oxfordshire . Besides his administrative offices , Chesney controlled a number of royal castles , and served Stephen during some of the king 's English military campaigns . Chesney 's heir was his niece , Matilda , who married Henry fitzGerold .

= = Background = =

Following King Henry I 's death in 1135 , the succession was disputed between the Henry '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. Matilda 's brother , and King Henry 's only legitimate son , William died in 1120 , leaving Matilda as Henry 's only legitimate offspring . After Matilda was widowed in 1125 , she returned to England , where her father 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 when Henry I died in 1135 , Stephen rushed to England and had himself crowned before either Theobald or Matilda could react . The Norman barons accepted Stephen as Duke of Normandy , and Theobald acquiesced to his brother 's usurpation .

Matilda , though , was not reconciled to losing the throne , and secured the support of the Scottish king , David , who was her maternal uncle . In 1138 she also secured the support of her half @-@ brother , Robert of Gloucester the Earl of Gloucester , an illegitimate son of Henry I. Most of the reign of King Stephen was dominated by the efforts of Matilda and later her son , Henry of Anjou to oust Stephen from the throne . The height of the civil war was from 1142 to 1148 , but it began in 1138 when Robert of Gloucester declared for Matilda , after previously supporting Stephen . Traditionally , historians have referred to the period of civil war as " The Anarchy " , but recent scholarship has rejected the extreme view of the time period as lawless ; most historians see the reign as disordered but not highly so , and Stephen as weak but not useless .

= = Early life = =

Chesney was the son of Roger de Chesney and Alice de Langetot . The elder Chesney came from near Quesney @-@ Guesnon in the Calvados region of Normandy , and held lands in England from Robert d 'Oilly at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1087 . Alice was the daughter of Ralph de Langetot , who held lands of Walter Giffard at the time of Domesday . William 's brother Robert de Chesney later became Bishop of Lincoln . His other siblings were Reginald , who later became abbot of Evesham Abbey , Hugh , Ralph , Hawise , Beatrice , Isabel , and Roger . Chesney was the uncle of Gilbert Foliot who became successively abbot of Gloucester Abbey , Bishop of Hereford and Bishop of London . It is likely that it was one of William 's sisters that married Gilbert 's father , although there is no sure evidence of this . Chesney also mentioned as relatives the brothers Alexander de Chesney and Ralph de Chesney , but the exact relationship is unknown . Chesney needs to be distinguished from another William de Chesney , who held the office of Sheriff of Norfolk between 1146 and 1153 .

= = Career = =

William and his brother Roger de Chesney were leading supporters of King Stephen in 1141 , and were both leaders in Stephen 's army that gathered at Winchester . In 1143 , William de Chesney was given control of the town and royal castle at Oxford . He also held the town and castle of Deddington , which he had acquired at least by 1157 , and possibly earlier . Although he did not

begin the fortifications at Deddington Castle , it is likely that he began the first stone defences at the site . Deddington was Chesney 's most important holding in Oxfordshire , and the basis of his power in the county .

Before he controlled Deddington , Chesney temporarily administered the lands of Robert d 'Oilly , who had previously held Oxford Castle but had defected to the side of the Empress Matilda in 1141 and died a year later . D 'Oilly 's heir took refuge with Matilda when Stephen overran his lands two weeks after his father 's death , leading to Chesney 's control of the d 'Oilly lands . Some historians have seen this holding of the lands as Stephen giving Chesney the d 'Oilly barony , but the only evidence for this is that Chesney eventually owned a manor previously belonging to d 'Oilly which does not necessarily mean that he received the whole barony . It is far more likely that Stephen gave Chesney parts of the lands of William fitzOsbern , which had reverted to the king in 1075 . Most of the known lands of fitzOsbern are known to have been owned by Chesney or by tenants who held the lands from him .

Historians are divided in their views as to whether Chesney held the office of Sheriff of Oxfordshire . Whatever the exact office that Chesney held in Oxfordshire , the townsmen of Oxford referred to him as their " alderman " before such honorifics were in common use .

In 1145 , Chesney was forced to ask Stephen for help in fending off the approach of Philip , a younger son of Robert , Earl of Gloucester , who was threatening Chesney 's control of Oxford . During the period 1142 ? 1148 Chesney forced Gloucester Abbey , then under the abbacy of his nephew Gilbert Foliot , to pay him sums of money . Foliot , in one of his surviving letters , reprimanded his uncle for his behaviour , asking him " Which of God 's poor around you have you not harmed ? " In 1147 , Chesney granted the island of Medley to Osney Abbey in the name of his father and brother Roger , as well as King Stephen , Queen Matilda and their son Eustace . After 1148 , Chesney apparently began to hedge his bets as he appears in the company of Roger of Hereford , the Earl of Hereford , who was a firm supporter of Matilda 's and her son Henry 's cause .

Chesney served again as the leader of Stephen 's army at Wallingford Castle in 1153 and in August he was defeated by Henry of Anjou . The subsequent peace settlement , the Treaty of Wallingford , gave Henry the English throne after Stephen 's death . A part of the treaty awarded control of Oxford Castle to Roger de Bussy . Although Chesney had lost control of the castle , none of his lands were confiscated . Early in 1154 , Chesney was with Henry , as he was a witness on two charters of Henry 's . After Henry 's ascension to the throne , Chesney came to terms with the new king , and received confirmation of his lands from the king by 1157 . He spent time in Normandy with Henry from 1159 through to 1161 . He continued to receive favours from the king , such as exemption for payment of danegeld on his manor of Deddington in 1156 .

Chesney married Margaret de Lucy , who was probably a relative of Richard de Lucy , another of Stephen 's main supporters . He died sometime between 1172 and 1176 . Chesney 's heir was his niece Matilda , whom King Henry II married to Henry fitzGerold , a royal chamberlain .