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978-1-107-13003-6 - The Acts and Letters of the Marshal Family: Marshals of England and Earls of Pembroke, 1145–1248: Camden Fifth Series: Volume 47

Edited by David Crouch

Excerpt

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THE MARSHAL FAMILY OF HAMSTEAD

Origins

The earliest member of the lineage who is identifiable in the sources is one Gilbert, who possessed an estate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ hides at Winterbourne Monkton (Wiltshire) in 1086 as a tenant of Glastonbury Abbey. The Wiltshire geld rolls identify him as Gilbert ‘Gibard’ (literally, ‘moonface’) and the Marshal descent from him was deduced by Neil Stacy from the possession of the same estate by John Marshal (I) and the incidence of the surname ‘Giffard’ carried by John’s clerical brother, William.¹ Gilbert does not appear in 1086 as holder of known Marshal centres (notably Hamstead and Cheddar, though a Gilbert was perhaps the predecessor of John Marshal at Easton Royal in Kinwardstone Hundred, Wiltshire²). This indicates that the breakthrough of the family into the royal court and marshalcy came after the Domesday Survey. Was this Gilbert Giffard of Winterbourne the father or grandfather of John Marshal? Chronologically he could be either. Were he the grandfather he might as well have been the maternal as the paternal forbear of John. Though John Marshal had a brother known as William Giffard – which at first sight makes it more likely that Gilbert would have been the father or paternal grandfather – the contemporary Basset-Ridel example indicates that a maternal surname might well be taken by a younger son. The origins of the Giffard-Marshal lineage is only otherwise indicated by a mention of its kinship with the Herefordshire family of Evreux, major tenants of the Lacy family and lords of Lyonshall castle.³ The kinship might derive from a marriage at the time of Gilbert (I) or

¹Stacy, ‘Henry of Blois’, 32 and nn.

²Gilbert’s surname appears in the Wiltshire geld rolls, which are roughly contemporary with the Inquest and mention Gilbert *Gibard* as pardoned $2\frac{1}{2}$ hides and $\frac{1}{2}$ virgate out of the assessment for Selkley hundred, in which his $3\frac{1}{2}$ Domesday hides at Winterbourne Monkton was located, *VCH Wiltshire* 2: 200. The five hides at *Estone*, *Domesday Book* 1: fo. 73a, which one Gilbert held of Dreux fitz Pons in 1086 have never been identified successfully with any of Wiltshire’s several Eastons, and the suggestion here is only tentative, by a process of elimination.

³In 1207 William Marshal is made to refer to *Estiembie mon cosin d’Evreues*, *HWM* 2: lines 13490–13491. For a study of the Evreux family, B. Holden, *Lords of the Central Marches: English Aristocracy and Frontier Society, 1087–1265* (Oxford, 2008), 97–102.

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[More information](#)

it might be that the two families shared a common lineage, though the possession by the Marshals of a Herefordshire estate in 1155 at Upleadon perhaps indicates just such a marriage. There is a reference in Henry II's charter to John Marshal (II) of the family's unspecified lands in Normandy, which tends to confirm that the Giffard-Marshals were ultimately of continental not English origin.⁴

Gilbert Marshal (I)

Gilbert appears in the historical record near the end of his career. In 1130, when Gilbert was already dead, his son owed £22 13s 4d for the office of master marshal following a lawsuit between himself and his father on the one side and Robert de Venox and William of Hastings on the other. The only other mention of Gilbert is a record of the presentation of *Willelmus Giffard filius Gilleb(erti) regis marescal(li)* to the church of Cheddar Hole (Somerset) in the time of Bishop Godfrey of Bath and Wells (1125–1135).⁵ That in itself is significant, however. Cheddar was a major royal estate in 1086, and clearly Gilbert had picked it up by royal favour subsequent to the Domesday survey, either in the reign of Rufus or of Henry I, probably to enhance his office of marshal of the household. The same must be true of the estate at Hamstead Marshall (Berkshire). At the time of the Domesday Survey, Hamstead was a manor of no more than a hide enjoyed by Hugolin, the king's steersman. In 1086 it was held along with another hide at neighbouring Irish Hill and a virgate at Bucklebury.⁶ The fact that Hugolin held the manor, presumably in return for acting in some maritime capacity for the king, may be enough of an explanation for its transfer to Gilbert Marshal (I) in return for a different serjeanty at some time early in the reign of Henry I.

John Marshal (I)

John was the master marshal of King Henry I before 1130, an office he was holding at the time the *Constitutio Domus Regis* was composed for the information of King Stephen soon after his succession in December

⁴App. I, no. 2.

⁵*PR 31 Henry I*, 14; *CP*, 10; App. G, p. 93n. For the opponents to Gilbert in his case over the marshalship, J.H. Round, *The King's Serjeants and Officers of State* (London, 1911), 89–91. A subsequent incumbent of Cheddar church was a 'W(illiam) nephew of John Marshal', and thus probably a son of William Giffard, see nos 3–4.

⁶*Domesday Book*, 1: fo. 63b.

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1135, when there were also three lesser marshals.⁷ By then he was already a mature man with several children, married to a woman by the name of Adelina. John Marshal was a frequent witness to the new king's charters and benefited from his prompt declaration for the new king. King Stephen considerably augmented his modest estates. The principal gains were the castle and borough of Marlborough (Wiltshire), and the hundred court of Kinwardstone in the same county along with the hundredal manors of Wexcombe and Great Bedwyn.⁸ His gains were extended south by possession of the manor and forest of Ludgershall, a more contentious acquisition as it was a royal estate that had formerly belonged to John's powerful neighbours, the Salisbury family. One other grant from Stephen in Wiltshire may have been the manor of Cheverell, which John still held in 1155.⁹ John Marshal played an active part in the warfare in north Wiltshire between King Stephen and the Angevin party between 1138 and 1144. At the end of 1140 he was named with Walter of Salisbury as a leader of the Wiltshire barons who opposed the king's attempt to impose on them as earl the Breton count, Hervey de Léon, though John of Worcester says that earlier in the same year John was a royalist.¹⁰ From 1141 he became a consistent Angevin supporter, though that did not stop a local conflict developing between John and the new head of the Salisbury family, Patrick, probably in 1145–1146. Unknown local difficulties led to a serious outbreak of warfare between the two men. The Marshal biography implies that the warfare was begun by Patrick and led to John's capitulation. A settlement between the men was brokered by the head of the Angevin party, Earl Robert of Gloucester. It involved the divorce by John Marshal of his wife Adelina, by whom he had two sons, and a second marriage to Sibyl, sister of Earl Patrick.¹¹ Sibyl brought to John with her the north Wiltshire manor of Mildenhall, a strategic acquisition north of Marlborough, a subtenancy held by the Salisburys of the abbot of Glastonbury, but which the earl was happy to unload on John as his tenure of it was disputed.¹² John

⁷ *Constitutio domus regis*, ed. and trans. S.D. Church (Oxford, 2007), 210.

⁸ John was holding Marlborough 'a very strong castle belonging by right to the king' and another fortification at Ludgershall in 1138, *Annales de Wintonia*, in *AM*, 2: 51. For the description of Marlborough, *Gesta Stephani*, ed. K.R. Potter and R.H.C. Davis (Oxford, 1976), 106. The king was dating writs at Ludgershall as early as 1103, *Regesta*, 2: nos 630–631.

⁹ *Ceriel*, held by John Marshal as *terrae datae* in the pipe roll of 1155 is interpreted as Cherhill, Wiltshire, by Painter, *Marshal*, 10, though Cheverell seems a more likely derivative form, being *Cheurel* in 1086.

¹⁰ Crouch, *Marshal*, 15–16.

¹¹ For this, D. Crouch, 'Robert Earl of Gloucester's mother and sexual politics in Norman Oxfordshire', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), 323–325; idem, *Marshal*, 17–19.

¹² For Mildenhall, Stacy, 'Henry of Blois', 32–33. For the remarriage, see App. I, no. 1. John also held (Temple) Rockley from the Salisbury family, perhaps a consequence of the

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Marshal continued to be active in the civil disturbances of Stephen's reign, mounting an aggressive campaign in 1152, which involved the seizure of the Berkshire borough and castle of Newbury. John Marshal's seizure of Newbury may well have been in the interests of the Salisbury family and their close relatives, the French counts of Perche.¹³ The accession of King Henry II in October 1154 found John Marshal in a very advantageous position compared to what he had been in 1135. His Danegeld exemptions as an officer of the Exchequer amounted in 1155 to £16 10s in six counties, over four times what they had been in 1130. In addition he now controlled three substantial castles, a forest, and a borough. However, the precarious nature of his position is equally clear. His most substantial assets were in *terrae datae*, royal assets held at the king's pleasure. Initially, his position seemed secure, confirmed as a marshal of the royal household, where he appeared regularly in 1155 and 1156, and employed as a minor justice and castellan. But over the next few years it collapsed. Before he left for France in 1159, the king removed Marlborough, and one presumes also Ludgershall, from John's custody, which broke his power in Wiltshire at a stroke, and much diminished his income. That there was personal animosity involved is clear from Diceto's remark that when the king returned in 1163 his first business after dealing with the Welsh was John Marshal, who was under suspicion of treason for dabbling in prophecies about the king's death on campaign.¹⁴ In 1164 John was apparently rehabilitated and an eager auxiliary in the king's persecution of Thomas Becket, one of whose biographers calls John at that time, 'a member of the king's household and very influential with the king'.¹⁵ John Marshal died less than a year later, on 22 July 1165, and was buried at the Salisbury family foundation of Bradenstoke in Wiltshire.¹⁶ John Marshal had numerous children by his two wives. The Marshal biography lists two sons by his first marriage to Adelina: Gilbert (II) and Walter, and it lists by Sybil: John (II), William (I),

marriage, see no. 8. Rockley was demesne of Edward of Salisbury in 1086, *Domesday Book*, 1: fo. 69d.

¹³For the connection and lands, K. Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000–1226* (Woodbridge, 2002), 167–171; she does not deal with the Marshal evidence, however.

¹⁴*Imagines Historiarum*, in *The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols, Rolls Series (1876) 1: 308.

¹⁵M. Cheney, 'The litigation between John Marshal and Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1164', in *Law and Social Change in British History*, ed. J.A. Guy and H.G. Beall (London, 1984), 9–18.

¹⁶He was dead at Michaelmas 1165, *PR 12 Henry II*, 95. His anniversary mass at Longueville Priory was endowed by his son William to be held on 22 July, see no. 66.

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Excerpt

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Ansel,¹⁷ and Henry, later bishop of Exeter,¹⁸ as well as two unnamed daughters who were married 'richeement'. John (I)'s charter selling Nettlecombe (Somerset) to Hugh de Ralegh mentions as the four elder sons: Gilbert, John, Walter, and William.¹⁹ One known daughter of John was Margaret, married first to Ralph de Somery and secondly to Maurice de Gant; a second was Matilda, married Robert de Pont de l'Arche. However, a third might have been the lady who married the knight and seneschal of Gloucester, William le Gros of Old Sodbury, whose children and grandchildren were closely linked to their Marshal cousins thereafter.²⁰

Gilbert Marshal (II)

Gilbert first appears in the record in the summer of 1153 as a party to a settlement between himself and his mother and stepfather over her inheritance, carried out before Duke Henry Plantagenet.²¹ It is not said why her inheritance was in contention, but Gilbert clearly felt his rights to be threatened. Between 1156 and 1159 Gilbert appears with three of his younger brothers as assenting to their father's sale of Nettlecombe (see no. 5). He was given an expensive mount, a hunter, for his compliance. At the time the elder son of John (I) by Sybil was apparently being considered the son most likely to end up with a share of the inheritance, though Walter was paid a gold piece for his compliance also. Despite what the Marshal biographer was told, Gilbert survived his father and took a share of his estates in July 1165,

¹⁷This is the first instance of the Franco-Germanic name Ancel, Ansel, Hansel or (in French) Anseau in the family, easily confused with the homophonic Anselm. Little is known of this son, though he appears at Lagny in 1179 in his brother's retinue, and also in that of his cousin, Count Rotrou IV of the Perche, Sées, archives départementales de l'Orne, H 2621.

¹⁸See the study in *English Episcopal Acta*, 11: *Exeter, 1046–1184*, ed. F. Barlow (British Academy, 1996), pp. xlii–xlv. Henry may not have been originally intended for the church; he was not even in subdiaconal orders when elected dean of York in 1189 (at which time he would probably have been in his thirties) which shows he had kept his options open, Howden, 3: 17.

¹⁹*HWM*, 1: lines 61–116, 368–398. For the Nettlecombe charter, see no. 5.

²⁰*CP* 10: App. G. p. 95n; N. Vincent, 'The borough of Chipping Sodbury and the Fat Men of France', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 116 (1998), 42–59. It is worthy of note that an undated charter of William, earl of Gloucester, (died 1183) issued in Normandy at some point after 1160 has among the witnesses his seneschal William le Gros and, further on, one *Willelmo Mairsallo*, listed as last of the lay witnesses and perhaps in company with his brother-in-law, Archives départementales du Calvados, H 6510 (Cartulary of St-André-en-Gouffern), fo. 22v (a charter overlooked in R.B. Patterson's edition of the Gloucester acts).

²¹*Regesta*, 3: no. 339, also App. I, no. 1.

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[More information](#)

by which time his full sibling, Walter, may very well have been dead, as the other share went to John (II). Gilbert and John owed £100 each for the fine for entry into their father's lands and – one supposes – office, though which took the marshalcy is unclear as both young men are called *marescallus*. By September 1166 Gilbert had followed his father childless to the grave, and John (II) was sole heir.²²

John Marshal (II)

John has to have been born about the end of 1145, the first child of his father's second marriage. In his father's Nettlecombe deed, issued between 1156 and 1165 when the younger John was a teenager, he appears to be already designated as recipient of a part of his father's estates, though that may have been because he was the most likely recipient at that point of his mother's *maritagium*. In the event John succeeded to the entire Marshal estate in 1166, and subsequently received a general confirmation of his office of marshal (*ministerium*) and estates on either side of the English Channel from King Henry II, presumably on performing homage to the king (App. I, no. 2). The next trace of John is in the household of the youngest son of Henry II, Count John of Mortain, whose seneschal he had become before the end of the reign of Henry II, during the period in which his younger brother William was rising as a military commander. He was not the only seneschal of Count John nor were his appearances in his following numerous, but he accompanied him at least once to France before 1189.²³ It may be that it was John Marshal's still strong position in Berkshire and Wiltshire that helped his recruitment to the count's household, as Count John was powerful in the West Country, where he enjoyed possession of Marlborough castle. John Marshal's connection with his younger brother led to an increasing profile in the sources after 1189 and the succession of King Richard. He immediately received a confirmation of the hundred of Kinwardstone and gained the royal manor of Bosham in Sussex at a fee farm.²⁴ Soon after King Richard's accession he was created escheator, the royal officer responsible for estates and heirs reverting to the Crown. But within three months he had lost that office and been appointed

²²PR 12 Henry II, 95 (Devon) 'Gill(eber)tus maresc(allus) debet .c. libras. pro parte terre patris sui. sed mortuus est'.

²³Bodl. Libr., MS Rawlinson B 499, fo. 2r; Berkeley Castle Muniments, Select Charter 47; *The Irish Cartularies of Llanthony Prima et Secunda*, ed. E. St John Brooks (Dublin, 1953), 79–80.

²⁴App. I, nos 3–5. He took over payment of the farm for Bosham from the reeves who had previously owed it at Michaelmas 1190, PR 2 Richard I, 7.

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[More information](#)

sheriff of Yorkshire instead.²⁵ He incurred the hostility of William de Longchamp, most probably because of his association with Count John. The anti-Semitic riot and massacre in York in the spring of 1190 was the excuse for removing him from the shrievalty, in which he was replaced by Osbert de Longchamp, the chancellor's brother, immediately after Easter (25 March) 1190.²⁶ On Longchamp's fall, John Marshal gained the shrievalty of Sussex, where he already had interests and a marriage connection with the family of Du Port. John's identification with the party of Count John can be suggested as the ultimate cause of his undoing. John Marshal may have participated in Count John's attempted coup in March 1193, though he was still sheriff at Michaelmas that year. However, his last appearance in the sources in 1194 shows him to have been involved with the count's embattled party. His brother's biography reports his death, news of which reached William at the same time as that of the return of King Richard to England in mid March 1194.²⁷ Since John Marshal's dead body lay at Marlborough it seems likely that he had been responsible for its seizure in Count John's interest on 10 February 1194, and he must have died during the course of the subsequent siege. William Marshal was therefore in armed opposition to his own brother at the time of John's death, having been active in the West Country resisting the count's supporters. He chose not to attend his brother's body to its interment at Bradenstoke priory, but sent his knights as escort to it, and went instead to join King Richard at Nottingham. John Marshal (II) had contracted a marriage to a daughter of Adam du Port, a baron of Hampshire and Sussex.²⁸ The marriage was childless, but John had at least one illegitimate child by an extra-marital liaison with one Alice de Colleville, who can be identified as the wife of a Sussex knight. By her he had John Marshal (of Hocking), who appears in one of his father's charters (see no. 6) and who was, after his father's death, brought up by his uncle William. He had a distinguished career as an administrator and soldier, becoming marshal of Ireland and a baron in his own right.²⁹

²⁵ *PR* 5 *Richard I*, 14.

²⁶ *PR* 2 *Richard I*, 58, 59; Howden, 3:34. John's consequent loss of reputation is evident, as Nicholas Vincent points out, in Newburgh's characterization of him in the guise of Pilate in his account of the event, 'William of Newburgh, Josephus and the New Titus', in *Christians and Jews in Angevin England*, ed. S. Rees Jones and S. Watson (York, 2013), 70–71.

²⁷ *HWM*, 1–2: lines 10018–10076.

²⁸ For her parentage, *HWM*, 2: lines 10062–10064.

²⁹ For this John and his mother, Crouch, *Marshal*, 89–90n.

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[More information](#)**William Marshal (I)***Early Career*

The existence of a biography of William, the fourth son of John Marshal (I), offers an unprecedented glimpse of a medieval life, and has encouraged numerous modern treatments of his career. The biography was commissioned in 1224 by his eldest son and executors from a French poet called John, and completed in 1226. It has most to say about his later life but preserves family traditions about his youth and early career, which must derive from the Marshal's anecdotes about his own life.³⁰ His earliest memories appear to have been the dramatic part he played in the siege of Newbury castle in 1152. In 1158 or 1159 he was despatched overseas to be brought up in the military household of his mother's cousin, William de Tancarville, the chamberlain of Normandy. He spend eight years there before being knighted, probably at the age of twenty, at his cousin's expense before he joined a campaign against a Flemish invasion of Upper Normandy in the spring or early summer of 1166.³¹ Following his first taste of warfare, in a skirmish at Neufchâtel-en-Bray William's career was transformed by his exposure to the tournament circuit, after a highly successful excursion with the Tancarville household to an event in Maine in the summer of 1166. He appears to have followed the circuit on his own account thereafter. Subsequently discharged by his cousin, William appears to have made his way back to England, where he was successful in gaining a place in the household of his uncle, Earl Patrick of Salisbury, before the earl took up the rule of Poitou. He was in his uncle's company in April 1168 when the earl was ambushed and assassinated by the Lusignan family. William distinguished himself on the day by the ferocity of his resistance before being wounded in the thigh and captured. After a period in captivity he was ransomed as an act of charity by Queen Eleanor, whose household he subsequently entered. In or about June 1170 he was seconded into the newly formed household of the Young King Henry. William would already have been acquainted with the teenage king, who had been living with his mother in Normandy before crossing to England.

³⁰D. Crouch, 'Writing a biography in the thirteenth century: The construction and composition of the "History of William Marshal"', in *Writing Medieval Biography: Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. D. Bates, J. Crick, and S. Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2006), 221–235. The following section is principally based on my earlier biographical studies of the Marshal.

³¹For this problematical incident, see *HWM*, 3: 61–62.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*Royal Captain, 1170–1199*

For the next dozen years, William Marshal was a stalwart of the Young King's household. His role there was as the king's tournament team trainer and captain, an enthusiasm both young men shared. There is no doubt of the deep affective relationship between William and the king during that period, as William was later to say that of all the kings he served, it was the Young Henry who was 'his lord' (see no. 21). Commentators identified William as the king's 'dearest friend'. Their relationship was intense enough to be called homoerotic, though it is unlikely they were lovers. Nonetheless, their close emotional bond was obvious to contemporaries and remarked upon. The biography does not disguise that William ultimately offended the king by his undisguised pursuit of profit on the tournament field, to the neglect of his duty to safeguard Henry from capture. His financial success and rise to the rank of knight banneret also inspired envy amongst a clique of Norman knights within the household, who during the course of 1182 succeeded in engineering William's fall from favour on the grounds of *lèse-majesté*. After Christmas 1182, where there was a confrontation with his master in the presence of King Henry II at Caen, William quit Normandy and took service with Philip of Flanders. He was recalled to the Young King's side in the spring of 1183 following the outbreak of hostilities in Aquitaine between Henry, his father, and Richard, his younger brother. He was at Martel near Limoges when Young Henry died of dysentery on 11 June 1183, and undertook the task of taking his master's cloak to Jerusalem, to fulfil the king's crusading vow. Following his return from Palestine to England, most probably in the spring of 1186, William entered the military household of King Henry II, of which he was a mainstay until the king's death three years later. The position brought him substantial rewards, beginning with the custody of Heloise of Lancaster, heir to the barony of Kendal, and a grant of the royal estate of Cartmel at Christmas 1186. William's earliest extant charter (no. 9) derives from this period and shows him contemplating marriage with the girl. The survival of a letter of summons from the king to William datable to 1188 preserves the king's ironic comment that William had been remorseless in complaining that he had been ill-rewarded for his service. William's inducement to join the king's campaign in Berry in July 1188 was the promise of marriage to Denise, heir to Châteauroux, the dominant lordship in the region.³² William stood loyally by the old king till his ignominious death at Chinon on 6 July 1189. During

³²N. Vincent, 'William Marshal, King Henry II and the honour of Châteauroux', *Archives*, 25 (2000), 1–15.

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[More information](#)

these months Henry II is said to have offered William the marriage of Countess Isabel, heir of Striguil (Chepstow) and Leinster, though he never got as far as actually delivering her to him. William made a successful transition to the household of King Richard, and was chosen to take the new king's first despatches to England. In August 1189 in London he married Countess Isabel, daughter and heir of Earl Richard fitz Gilbert and Aife of Leinster. One of the consequences of this marriage was the partition of the former honor of the earls Giffard between William (through his wife's claim) and the earl of Hertford (App. I, no. 3). The Marshal portion became the lordships of Crendon in England, and Longueville in Normandy. William and his brother John were subsequently closely associated with Richard's court in both England and Normandy until the king's departure on crusade in July 1190. William was subsequently nominated as one of the several royal justices, along with his associates Geoffrey fitz Peter and William Briwerre, to assist the chief justiciars in King Richard's absence.³³ He was in immediate conflict with William de Longchamp, who removed John Marshal from office as sheriff of Yorkshire and attempted to seize Gloucester castle, which William Marshal had by right of holding the shire. The tension continued till Longchamp's removal as justiciar following a coup by Count John in October 1191. It seems clear that William was with his brother at this time close to Count John, and although he did not support Count John's later rebellion against the justiciars in 1193, William's brother, John Marshal, fought for the count to the bitter end, dying in his service at Marlborough in March 1194. William was still attached enough to Count John's interests in March 1194 to assert that he was his lord for Leinster to the king's face, and refuse the king homage for the Irish lordship.³⁴ Following the return of Richard the Lionheart, William spent much of his time engaged in the king's campaigns in France. He was part of an embassy to Baldwin IX of Flanders in the summer of 1197, the first instance of his employment in international diplomacy. He was present at the count's defeat of King Philip Augustus at Arras in August 1197. Baldwin was William's lord for the fee he still held in the city of St-Omer. Following the king's death on 6 April 1199, William unequivocally supported Count John's candidature for the throne, and was despatched by him to secure the compliance of the barons and bishops of England to John's succession. His support for the new king brought considerable rewards, the greatest being investiture as earl on 27 May 1199, immediately before John's coronation.³⁵

³³Howden, 3: 9, 16–17.³⁴*HWM*, 2: lines 10312–10318.³⁵Howden, 4: 90.