

# Walter Giffard, Lord of Longueville

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**Walter Giffard**, Lord of Longueville in Normandy (a.k.a. ‘Giffard of Barbastre’), was a Norman baron, a Tenant-in-chief in England, a Christian knight who fought against the Saracens in Spain during the Reconquista and one of the known Companions of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

## Contents

- 1 Life
- 2 Family
- 3 Notes
- 4 References

## Life

Walter<sup>[a]</sup> was the son of Osborne de Bolbec, Lord of Longueville and Avelina,<sup>[b]</sup> sister of Gunnora, Duchess of Normandy.<sup>[1][2]</sup> As such he was a cousin of William the Conqueror.<sup>[1]</sup>

From the mid 1040s Walter’s name appears among the loyal supporters of William the Conqueror.<sup>[3]</sup> Walter was at the Battle of Mortemer and was among the Norman barons who surprised and defeated Counts Odo and Renaud leading the French contingent attacking Normandy from the east.<sup>[4]</sup> In particular, he and another great vassal Robert of Eu encountered Odo’s army encamped in the village of Mortemer with no sentries and the soldiers were drunk.<sup>[5]</sup> The Normans attacked the French while they slept, most being either killed or taken prisoner.<sup>[5]</sup> While Odo himself escaped, when King Henry I learned of the fate of his brother Odo’s army he promptly withdrew his remaining forces and left Normandy.<sup>[5]</sup> In 1054 Walter was in charge of maintaining the siege of Arques castle, against William of Talou, who had rebelled against the Conqueror.<sup>[6]</sup>

Like many other Norman and French knights during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, Walter served as a Christian knight in Spain (c. 1064–65) against the Saracens.<sup>[7]</sup> His epithet *le Barbastre*<sup>[c]</sup> was earned when he took part in the Siege of Barbastro, an undertaking sanctioned by Pope Alexander II against the Moors in 1064, one of the more famous exploits of that time.<sup>[7]</sup> By the time of the Conquest, Walter had returned to Normandy bearing a gift of the King of Spain for Duke William, a magnificent war-horse. The same Spanish war-horse duke William called for on the morning of the Battle of Hastings.<sup>[7]</sup> The Spanish king in question was in all probability Sancho Ramírez of Aragon (1063–94) who was known for making friends and recruiting knights and soldiers from Northern France.<sup>[8]</sup> Walter was also one of the first, if not *the* first in England to go on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, which he did after the siege of Barbastro and before returning to Normandy.<sup>[8]</sup>

In early January of 1066, after Duke William received news of the crowning of Harold Godwinson as king of England, he called together a meeting that included six of his key magnates, Walter Giffard being one of them.<sup>[9]</sup> After telling them of his plan to invade England and take the crown they all advised him they supported

him fully but suggested he call a meeting of all his vassals, which William did.<sup>[9]</sup> In the preparation stage for the Battle of Hastings, Walter was one of the Norman magnates who provided ships for William's invasion fleet. In his case, he provided thirty.<sup>[10]</sup> Walter was one of two who, having been offered the privilege of carrying William's standard in the battle, respectfully refused. Although by this time an older warrior with white hair, he wanted both hands free to fight.<sup>[11]</sup> As a reward for his participation, Walter was granted 107 lordships, 48 of which were in Buckinghamshire.<sup>[12]</sup> The date of his death is not recorded, but his son Walter succeeded him before 1085.<sup>[2][12]</sup>

## Family

Walter was married to Ermengarde, daughter of Gerard Flaitel.<sup>[2][12]</sup> Walter and Ermengarde were the parents of:

- Walter Giffard, 1st Earl of Buckingham.<sup>[2]</sup>
- William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester.<sup>[13][14]</sup>
- Rohese Giffard (d. aft. 1113), she married Richard fitz Gilbert, Lord of Clare.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>^</sup> This Walter has been confused with his son, Walter Giffard, 1st Earl of Buckingham. Orderic confused reports of father and son while Freeman, not realizing that the elder Walter had died in the lifetime of the Conqueror, assumed William Rufus had created the first Walter as earl of Buckingham when in fact it was his son Walter who became the first earl. See: *Records of Buckinghamshire*, Vol 8, Ed. John Parker (Aylesbury: G.T. de Fraine, "Bucks Herald" Office, 1903), pp. 289-293.
- <sup>^</sup> Robert of Torigni calls her Weva, *The Complete Peerage*, Vol II, 386 note (a) states she was Avelina, and both were names of sisters of Gunnora, but it remains uncertain which was which. Also *Europäische Stammtafeln II*, 695 calls her Weva.
- <sup>^</sup> As examples of some of the pitfalls found in translations of earlier works, Walter Giffard's epithet *de Barbastre* appears in a verse by Geoffrey Gaimar. The first of his English translators guessed that *De Barbastre* referred to Walter being a barber. Geoffrey's second translator thought *de Barbastre* was a reference somehow to Walter's cousin, William the Conqueror, being a bastard. In fact, 'Walter de Barbastre' was an honorific gained at the successful siege of Barbastro in Aragon, near Saragossa. See: Archer, 'Giffard of Barbastre', *EHR*, 18, 70 (1903), pp. 304-05; Lomax, 'The First English Pilgrims of Santiago de Compostela', *Studies in Medieval History: Presented to R.H.C.Davis* Ed. Henry Mayr-Harting, Hambledon (1985), 165-176.

## References

- <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England Scotland Ireland Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant Extinct or Dormant*, Vol. II, Ed. Vicary Gibbs (London: The St. Catherine Press, Ltd., 1912), p. 386 note (a)
- <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> <sup>d</sup> <sup>e</sup> Detlev Schwennicke, *Europäische Stammtafeln: Stammtafeln zur Geschichte der Europäischen Staaten*, Neue Folge, Band III Teilband 4 (Marburg, Germany: Verlag von J. A. Stargardt, 1989, Tafel 695
- <sup>^</sup> David Crouch, *The Normans* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2002), p.64
- <sup>^</sup> David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1964), p. 68
- <sup>^</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> <sup>c</sup> François Neveux, *A Brief History of the Normans*, Trans. Howard Curtis (London: Constable & Robinson, Ltd., 2008), p. 127
- <sup>^</sup> David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1964), p. 388

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8. <sup>^ a b</sup> D.W. Lomax, 'The First English Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela', *Studies in Medieval History: Presented to R.H.C.Davis*, Ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985), p. 166
9. <sup>^ a b</sup> Elisabeth M.C. van Houts, 'The Ship List of William the Conqueror', *Anglo-Norman Studies X; Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1987*, Ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge UK: The Boydell Press, 1988), p. 161
10. <sup>^</sup> *Anglo-Norman Studies X, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1987*, ed. R. Allen Brown, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, UK 1988, Appendix 4. "Ships list of William the Conqueror"
11. <sup>^</sup> Edward A. Freeman, *The Norman Conquest of England*, Vol. III (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1869),p. 465
12. <sup>^ a b c</sup> George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England Scotland Ireland Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant Extinct or Dormant*, Vol. II, Ed. Vicary Gibbs (London: The St. Catherine Press, Ltd., 1912), p. 387
13. <sup>^</sup> K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, *Domesday People, A Prosopography of Persons Occurring in English Documents 1066-1166*, Volume I, Domesday Book (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1999), p. 456
14. <sup>^</sup> C. Warren Hollister, 'The Strange Death of William Rufus', *Speculum*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Oct., 1973), pp. 645-46

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