

Gilbert de Clare, 1st Earl of Pembroke

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Gilbert fitz Gilbert de Clare (c. 1100 – 6 January 1148), was created Earl of Pembroke in 1138. He was nicknamed Strongbow^[a] for his skilled use of the long bow.

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Life

Born at Tonbridge, Gilbert de Clare was a son of Gilbert Fitz Richard de Clare and Alice de Claremont.^[1] He started out without land and wealth of his own but was closely related to very powerful men, specifically his uncles Walter de Clare and Roger de Clare.^[2]

In 1136 Gilbert fitz Gilbert led an expedition against Exmes and burned parts of the town, including the church of Notre Dame, but was interrupted by the forces of William III, Count of Ponthieu and escaped the resulting melee only after suffering heavy losses.^[3] Gilbert was a Baron, that is, a tenant-in-chief in England, and inherited the estates of his paternal uncles, Roger and Walter, which included the baronies and castles of Bienfaite and Orbec in Normandy. He held the lordship of Nether Gwent and the castle of Striguil (later Chepstow). King Stephen created him Earl of Pembroke, and gave him the rape and castle of Pevensey.

After Stephen's defeat at Lincoln on 2 February 1141, Gilbert was among those who rallied to Empress Matilda when she recovered London in June, but he was at Canterbury when Stephen was recrowned late in 1141.^[4] He then joined Geoffrey's plot against Stephen, but when that conspiracy collapsed, he again adhered to Stephen, being with him at the siege of Oxford late in 1142. In 1147 he rebelled when Stephen refused to give him the castles surrendered by his nephew Gilbert, 2nd Earl of Hertford, whereupon the King marched to his nearest castle and nearly captured him. However, the Earl appears to have made his peace with Stephen before his death the following year.^[5]

Family

Gilbert fitz Gilbert de Clare



Seal of Gilbert fitz Gilbert, from Lansdowne MS. 203

Spouse(s)	Isabel de Beaumont
Noble family	de Clare
Father	Gilbert Fitz Richard
Mother	Alice de Claremont
Born	c. 1100 Tonbridge
Died	6 January 1148

He married Isabel de Beaumont, before 1130, daughter of Sir Robert de Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, Count of Meulan, and Elizabeth de Vermandois.^[6] Isabel had previously been the mistress of King Henry I of England.^[7]

By her Gilbert had:

- Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke^{[b][8]}
- Basilia who married Raymond fitz Gerald.^[9]
- a daughter who married William Bloet.^[10]

Notes

- ^ He was called ‘Strongbow’ but his son Richard is much more readily associated with that nickname.
- ^ William Dugdale had credited Gilbert, the first Earl of Pembroke, with a second son who was named Baldwin fitz Gilbert; but Round showed that this Baldwin was really his brother. See: CP: X, Appendix H, p. 100.

References

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- ^ George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage; or, A History of the House of Lords and All its Members from the Earliest Times*, Vol. X, Eds. H. A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White, & Howard de Walden (London: The St. Catherine Press, Ltd., 1945), p. 348, & footnote (a)
- ^ J. H. Round, *Geoffrey de Mandeville* (Longmans, Green, 1892), p. 158
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- ^ George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage; or, A History of the House of Lords and All its Members from the Earliest Times*, Vol. VII, Eds. H. A. Doubleday & Howard de Walden (London: The St. Catherine Press, Ltd., 1929), p. 526, footnote (c)
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- ^ George Edward Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage; or, A History of the House of Lords and All its Members from the Earliest Times*, Vol. X, Eds. H. A. Doubleday, Geoffrey H. White, & Howard de Walden (London: The St. Catherine Press, Ltd., 1945), Appendix H, p. 100
- ^ David Crouch, *William Marshal; Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire 1147-1219* (London & New York: Longman, 1990), p. 139

See also

- Gilbert de Clare at Castlewales.com (<http://www.castlewales.com/clare.html>)

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