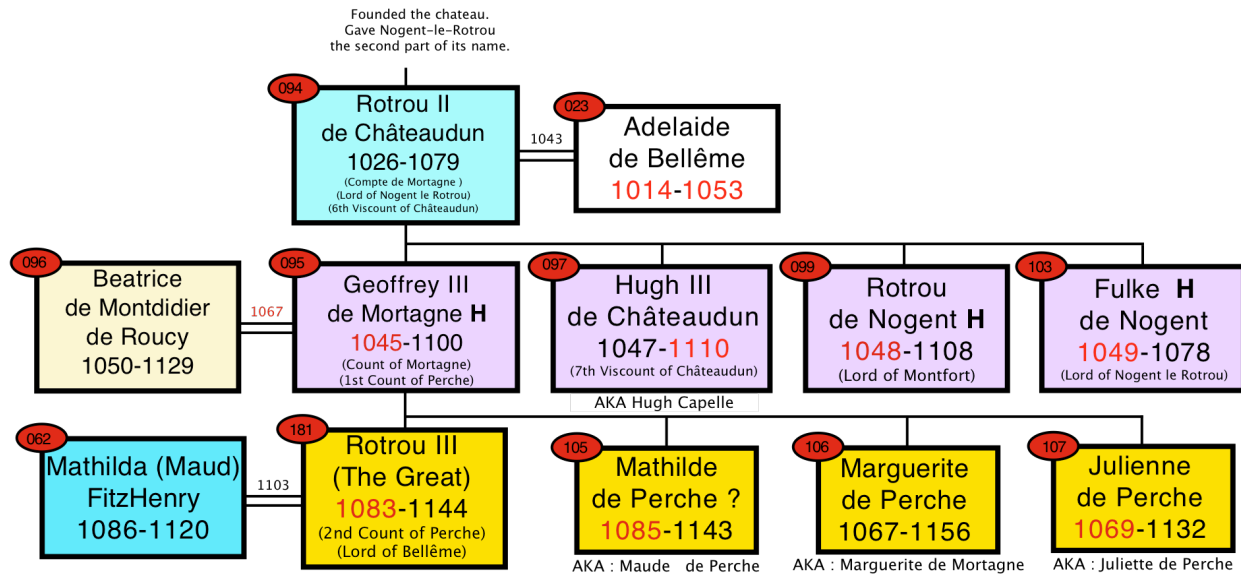


Geoffrey III de Mortagne



It may seem surprising to find the story of Geoffrey III de Mortagne here. Geoffrey has already been covered in the section "Viscounts and Counts" in Book 1. And yet Geoffrey represents what we may consider as a water-shed for the Rotrou Family, certainly as a result of the successful campaign with William the Conqueror. The family widens its horizons, and the children of Geoffrey move into a new dimension of importance. They establish and consolidate links far from the home of Nogent-le-Rotrou. Rotrou III (the Great) will marry into royalty of England. The daughters Mathilde, Marguerite and Maud, marry far afield from their family base. Perhaps the most important is represented by the marriage of Maud de Perche into the de Lacy Family. This may herald a close connection into relations which will invite the future De Nogent sons to accompany Hugh de Lacy to Ireland in 1171.

Rotrou II and Adelaide (Adeliza) de Bellême had at least 4 sons, Geoffrey III de Mortagne (1045-1100) who inherits the title of Lord of Mortagne, Hugh III de Châteaudun (1047-1110), who becomes Viscount, Rotrou (1049-1108), who would later become Rotrou de Montfort, and Fulquois who will be the root of the De Nogent descendants in England. Rotrou is also known for having had one other son and a daughter, who may have been illegitimate ¹. Before the marriage of Rotrou to Adelaide, the two families were sworn enemies, and had been for many years. The tide changes somewhat at this moment, as Geoffrey obviously meets Roger de Montgomery, his cousin by marriage, They may not have become close friends, but Roger certainly opened the communication path between the Rotrou family and the Dukes of Normandy.

¹ As Adelaide probably died about 1053, it is likely that these children were born to an unknown woman.

It is obviously because of this link, that the Rotrou family eventually aligns with the Normans, a judicious decision, as it heralds the intense development of the House of Rotrou.

Geoffrey III accompanies William "the Bastard" (Duke of Normandy) on his conquest of England in 1066. No precise information is available about what happened in England concerning the Rotrou family, after the Conquest, but we can build a reasonable picture.

Orderic Vitalis notes ²: "Interfuerunt huic praelio.....Goisfredus Rotronis Moritoniae comitis filius "

"Among those who took part in the battle were Geoffrey, Son of Rotrou, Count of Mortagne"

and : "Quoque Goisfredus, Rotronis filius Mauritanienensis alique comites et optimates quos singillatim nominare nequeo magnos redditus et honores in Anglia receperunt a rege Guillelmo"

"Likewise Geoffrey, son of Rotrou of Mortagne and other earls and magnates too numerous to name received great revenues and fiefs in England from King William."

Other authors have examined the history of this period. **L. Joseph Fret**, in his works *"Antiquités et Chroniques Percheronnes"*, Volume 1, 2 and 3, gives a comprehensive account of the Rotrou Dynasty, as seen in the 19th Century. He quotes Bry de Clergerie and Rene Courtin ³ in his accounts, while giving his own viewpoint of the development of the Rotrou Dynasty, the beginnings of which are still clouded in uncertainty.

"Rotrou II (1026-1079), upon his death, leaves the Count of Perche ⁴, Geoffrey, his eldest son; Hughes, his second born, who becomes Viscount of Châteaudun; Rotrou, the third son, who will become Lord of Montfort. The documents of this time tell us little of Fulquois, his fourth son ⁵, his daughter Helvise. As for his wife, she apparently died before her husband, as she is absent in the Charter of Saint-Denis, where she would obviously have been mentioned, as was the custom of this period. We are without any

² The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis, ISBN 0-19-822204-1 - Volume 1 - Editors Note :*" Orderic here deals with a group of men who were already members of comital families before the Conquest. If Geoffrey, son of Rotrou of Mortagne, Count of Perche, who had fought at Hastings, acquired any lands in England, he had apparently abandoned or exchanged them by 1086, for he was not a tenant-in-chief in the Domesday Book"*

³ Bry de Clergerie is known to have plagiarized the book by Rene Courtin, while favouring the association of the Rotrou Dynasty to that of the Bellême Family, that Vicomte de Romanet shows to be ridiculous.

⁴ The attribution of the title of Count of Perche was much exaggerated. At any time during this period, the domains covered by the title "Count of Perche" never covered more than one half of the Perche territory.

⁵ Rather inconvenient for us, as Fulquois was the root of the Nugent family in England and Ireland.

information concerning Rotrou's wife, who is never mentioned in any document of this time. Odolent-Desnos informs us only that her name was Adeline ⁶".

Geoffrey helped William with money and troops, and apparently did go to England for a short time. He was present at the battle of Hastings. However, it is likely that he returned to his titles and his lands in France soon after the crowning ceremony of William in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day, 1066. Geoffrey's brothers Rotrou and Fulquois are also reputed to have participated in the conquest, but no trace is mentioned in documents of this period. However, at a later date, Fulquois's sons apparently settled in Winchester. It must be remembered that the Norman Conquest did not subdue the whole of England and Wales overnight. It took until about 1076 to finalize the Conquest. Geoffrey supposedly was richly rewarded by William, however, no traces of land were apparent in the Domesday book (1086), compiled under orders of William, and the most complete record of wealth attribution ever to be made in England. It is probable that Geoffrey was paid in booty from the early part of the Conquest in Southern England during 1066-1067. The Rotrou family at that period apparently had easy access to liquid cash, and this probably came from tolls on the roads through Nogent-le-Rotrou and also the rewards from the Conquest. It is true also that the Domesday Book was not complete, lacking data from London, Winchester, Northumberland and Durham.

Orderic Vitalis is glowing in his praise for Geoffrey. *"This Count,"* he tells us, *"was magnanimous, handsome, and strong; he feared God, was a devout friend of the Church, a staunch protector of her clergy and the poor. In peace he was gentle and courteous, and of most obliging manners; in war he was powerful and successful, and became formidable to the neighbouring princes who were his enemies. The nobility of his own birth and that of his wife Beatrice rendered him illustrious above all his compeers, and he had amongst his subjects warlike barons and brave governors of castles. He gave his daughters in marriage to men of the rank of counts: Margaret to Henry, Earl of Warwick, and Juliana to Gilbert de l'Aigle, from whom sprung a noble race of handsome children. The glory of Count Geoffrey was exalted by such a progeny, and he maintained it by his valour and courage, his wealth, and alliances. Above all, having the fear of God, he feared no man ⁷....."*

Geoffrey married Béatrice de Montdidier de Roucy in about 1067 and had three daughters (all of who married into senior noble families) and a son, Rotrou III (1083-1144) who married Mathilda, the daughter of Henry I, King of England. This was undoubtedly a belated "Thank You" for services rendered to Henry's father, William the Conqueror. This marriage heralds the success of the Rotrou descendancy, and from this moment, the family has estates in England AND France, and maintains them until the early 13th century. Rotrou III becomes a true Count of Perche, and Lord of Bellême, and his sisters Mathilde, Marguerite and Julienne marry into fame and fortune, and their

⁶ Fret appears to be unaware that this Adeline was Adeline de Bellême, daughter of Guérin de Domfront.

⁷ The Conqueror and his Companions - James Robinson Planche - Geoffrey, Son of Rotrou - Page 262

children marry into Spanish and Sicilian royalty. Rotrou III becomes a "confident" and counsellor to Henry I, and is present at Henry's bedside when he dies in November 1135. The title **Lord of Mortagne** is absorbed into the title **Count of Perche**, which title is passed on to the descendants, who will finally forfeit title and lands to the King of France, when the male line of the Rotrou dynasty is extinguished in 1226.

Geoffrey died in 1100, but had time to settle his affairs, and to prepare the way for his son Rotrou, who had taken up the cross, and at this time was in the Holy Land. Rotrou returned from Jerusalem a short time later, "and found his inheritance intact and waiting for him, under the watchful eye of his mother" ⁸. Geoffrey was buried in the church of the monastery of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, founded in 1030 by his grandfather, Geoffrey II, and which he richly endowed with lands and other possessions.

Geoffrey had two brothers who seem to have accompanied him to England on the Conquest. One of them, Rotrou de Nogent (1047-1108) apparently returned to France quite soon after the Conquest, and eventually married Lucie de Gennes (1065-xxxx), heiress of Monfort-le-Rotrou, becoming Lord of Monfort. Descendants of the Montfort branch of the Rotrou family married into the De Parthenay family, ancestors of P.M. Winston Churchill and Lady Diana Spencer. Undoubtedly, Rotrou, although now belonging to a wealthy and powerful family, but having no titles of his own, had become rich enough to marry into a family which brought him a title.

Geoffreys second brother was Fulquois, of which we know little. He too is perported to have accompanied his brothers to England. We do not know if he settled in England or not, but his sons apparently did. We have no record of his marriage to a certain Mathilde, but he apparently had three sons, Gilbert, John and Hugh ⁹, who appeared to have lived in England, although Fulquois was last seen, as a witness in an official document, in France in 1078. Of John, we have no information, Hugh has been quoted as marrying Emma de Lacy, daughter of Walter de Lacy (1036-1085), but this is probably untrue. Gilbert has three sons, Richard, Gilbert and Fulquois ¹⁰.

Richard, Gilbert and a cousin Hugh accompany Hugh de Lacy to Ireland with Henry II, in 1171, as mercenaries ¹¹. Hugh de Lacy, as Viceroy to King Henry, and with power to act

⁸ Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France - The County of the Perche 1000-1226 - Kathleen Thompson - Chapter 2 - The Perche in the making - Page 52.

⁹ We note that the Christian names of the sons have strong English connotations.

¹⁰ This generation of the English descendants of the De Nogent family raises uncertainty and confusion. We have two possibilities of the descent of the family to Sir William Nugent (xxx-1415), 9th Baron of Delvin.

¹¹ Let us not forget that the Rotrou family carved their future as courageous soldiers and administrators with a sound business acumen. Generations of the family were mercenaries on several occasions, looking for financial rewards. Life in England may not have been satisfactory to these De Nogent descendants. Adventure in Ireland may have been a solution. Results show that the adventure was to become a new life.

as would his liege, rewards his followers by appointing them Barons over confiscated Irish lands.

Gilbert, first Baron of Delvin, dies leaving no descent. His brother Richard becomes the second Baron of Delvin. Although the family will lose titles and lands through the marriage of Richards only child, a daughter, to the Tuite family, fate will play a hand in the future to reenstate the Nugent family to their rightful place.

Ireland has become their home.

The De Nogent family will find fortune and a new future in this country.