

Gundred, Countess of Surrey

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Gundred or **Gundreda** (Latin: **Gundrada**) (died 27 May 1085)^[1] was the Flemish-born wife of an early Norman baron, William de Warenne, 1st Earl of Surrey. She and her husband established Lewes Priory in Sussex.

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Life

Gundred was almost certainly born in Flanders, and was a sister of Gerbod the Fleming, 1st Earl of Chester.^{[2][3][4][5]} She is explicitly so called by Orderic Vitalis,^[6] as well as the chronicle of Hyde Abbey^[7] She was also sister of Frederick of Oosterzele-Scheldewindeke, who was killed c.1070 by Hereward the Wake.^[8]

Gundred married before 1070^[9] William de Warenne, 1st Earl of Surrey (d. 20 June 1088),^[1] who rebuilt Lewes Castle, making it his chief residence. Sometime between 1078 and 1082,^[10] Gundred and her husband set out for Rome visiting monasteries along the way. In Burgundy they were unable to go any further due to a war between Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII. They visited Cluny Abbey and were impressed with the monks and their dedication. William and Gundred decided to found a Cluniac priory on their own lands in England. They sent to Hugh the abbot of Cluny for monks to come to England at their monastery. Hugh was reluctant yet eventually sent several monks including Lazlo who became the first abbot. The house they founded was Lewes Priory dedicated to St. Pancras.^{[11][12]} Gundred died in childbirth 27 May 1085 at Castle Acre, Norfolk, one of her husband's estates, and was buried at the Chapter house of Lewes Priory.^{[1][12]} He was later buried beside her.^[13]

Tombstone

In the course of the centuries which followed, both tombstones disappeared from the priory. In 1774 Edward Clarke discovered Gundred's in Isfield Church (seven miles from Lewes), over the remains of Edward Shirley, Esq., who died in 1550. William Burrell had it removed on October 2, 1775, to St. John's Church, Southover, where it was placed on display.^{[14][15]}

In 1845, during excavations through the Priory grounds for the Brighton Lewes and Hastings Railway, the lead chests containing the remains of the Earl and his Countess were discovered and were deposited temporarily beneath Gundred's tombstone.^[14] In 1847 a Norman Revival chapel was erected by public subscription, adjoining the present vestry and chancel. Prior to re-interring the remains in this chapel, both chests were opened to ascertain if there were any contents, which was found to be the case. New chests were made and used, and the ancient ones

preserved and placed in two recessed arches in the southern wall. The Earl's chest has lost some lead. Gundred's chest remains in a good state of preservation. Across the upper part of the right arch is the name *Gvndrada*. Her tombstone is of black Tournai marble.^[16]

Family

The children of William de Warenne and Gundred were:

- William II de Warenne (d. 11 May 1138), buried in Lewes Priory.^{[2][17]}
- Reginald de Warenne, an adherent of Robert of Normandy.^{[2][13]}
- Edith de Warenne, married, 1stly, Gerard de Gournay, Lord of Gournay-en-Bray, 2ndly, Drew de Monchy.^{[2][13]}

Controversy on parentage

Legends based in part on late Lewes Priory cartulary^[a] suggested Gundred was a daughter of William the Conqueror by his spouse Matilda of Flanders,^[18] but this is not accepted by most modern historians.^{[19][20]} The early-19th-century writer Thomas Stapleton had argued she was a daughter of Matilda, born prior to her marriage to Duke William.^[21] This theory sparked a debate consisting of a series of published papers. It culminated with those of Edmond Chester Waters and Edward Augustus Freeman who argued the theories could not be supported.^{[22][23][b]} Nonetheless, some genealogical and historical sources continue to make the assertion that she was the Conqueror's daughter.^{[24][25][26][27]}

Notes


- a. The reference here to late Lewes priory cartulary is to copies of charters that date centuries after the originals and specifically those which had been altered or forged to add the desired evidence she was the daughter of royalty. For more information on these forged charters see: *English Historical Documents 1042-1189*, ed. David C. Douglas, George W. Greenaway, Vol. II (Oxford University Press, New York, 1953), p. 605; L.C. Loyd, 'The Origin of the Family of Warenne' *'Yorks Archaeol. Journal'*, vol. xxxi, pp. 97-113; and C. T. Clay, 'Early Yorkshire Charters', vol. VIII (1949), pp. 59.-62.
- b. For an extensive discussion regarding the participants of this nineteenth-century debate see : Victoria Chandler, 'Gundrada de Warenne and the Victorian Gentlemen-Scholars', *Southern History*, Vol. 12 (1990), pp. 68-81

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2. *Early Yorkshire Charters*, ed: William Farrer, Charles Travis Clay, Volume VIII - The Honour of Warenne (The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1949), pp. 40-46
3. F. Anderson, *Uxor Mea: The First Wife of the First William of Warenne*, Sussex archaeological collections, Vol. 130 (Sussex Archaeological Society, 1992) pp. 107-8
4. Elisabeth van Houts, 'Epitaph of Gundrada of Warenne', *Nova de Veteribus, Mitel-und neulateinische Studien fur Paul Gerhard Schmidt* (K.G. Saur, Munchen Leipzig, 2004), p. 372
5. P. Anselme de Sainte-Marie, *Histoire de la maison royale de France et des grands officiers de la Couronne*, V.6 (Estienne Loyson, 1674), p. 26
6. Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, Translated by Thomas Forester, Vol. ii, (Henry G. Bohn, London, MDCCCLIV (1854), p. 49
7. Hyde Abbey, *Liber Monasterii de Hyda: Comprising a Chronicle of the affairs of England*, (Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, London, 1866), p. xcvi. *Note: the anonymous Hyde chronicler identified two of Gundred's brothers, Gerbod, Earl of Cheter and Frederick.*

8. Elisabeth van Houts, 'Frederick, Brother-in-Law of William of Warenne', *Anglo-Saxon England*, Vol. 28 (1999), pp. 218-220
9. Elisabeth van Houts, 'The Warenne View of the Past 1066-1203', *Anglo-Norman Studies XXIV, Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2003*, Vol. 26 (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2004), p. 104 & n. 8
10. *Early Yorkshire Charters*, ed: William Farrer, Charles Travis Clay, Volume VIII - The Honour of Warenne (The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1949), p. 4
11. B. Golding, 'The Coming of the Cluniacs', *Anglo-Norman Studies III; Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1980*, Vol. iii (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 65, 67
12. *Early Yorkshire Charters*, ed: William Farrer, Charles Travis Clay, Volume VIII - The Honour of Warenne (The Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1949), pp. 50-55
13. G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. xii/1 (The St. Catherine Press, London, 1953), p. 495 note (b)
14. Elisabeth van Houts, 'Epitaph of Gundrada of Warenne', *Nova de Veteribus, Mitel-und neulateinische Studien fur Paul Gerhard Schmidt* (K.G. Saur, Munchen Leipzig, 2004), p. 367
15. Thomas Walker Horsfield; Gideon Algernon Mantell (1824). *The History and Antiquities of Lewes and Its Vicinity*. J. Baxter. p. 116.
16. Elisabeth van Houts, 'Epitaph of Gundrada of Warenne', *Nova de Veteribus, Mitel-und neulateinische Studien fur Paul Gerhard Schmidt* (K.G. Saur, Munchen Leipzig, 2004), pp. 366,368-9
17. G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. xii/1 (The St. Catherine Press, London, 1953), pp. 495-6
18. George Floyd Duckett, 'Observations on the Parentage of Gundreda, Countess of Warenne', *The Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal*, Vol. ix, Part xxxiii, 1885, pp. 421-437 Note: *Sir George Duckett, Bart., was the leading proponent of the theory that Gundred was the daughter of William the Conqueror and Matilda*
19. G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*, vol. xii/1 (The St. Catherine Press, London, 1953), p. 494 note (j)
20. David C. Doulgas, *William the Conqueror* (University of California Press, 1964), p. 392
21. Stapleton, Thomas, 'Observations in disproof of the pretended marriage of William de Warren, Earl of Surrey, with a daughter begotten of Matildis, daughter of Baldwin, Comte of Flanders, by William the Conqueror, and illustrative of the origin and early history of the family in Normandy', *The Archaeological Journal* 3 (1846):1-26 Note: *despite the confusing title Stapleton's theory was that Gundred was a daughter of Matilda of Flanders by an earlier marriage.*
22. Edmond Chester Waters, 'Gundrada de Warenne', *The Archaeological Journal*, Vol. xli (London, 1884), pp. 300-312
23. Edward A. Freeman, 'The Parentage of Gundrada, Wife of William of Warren', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (Oct., 1888), pp. 680-701
24. *American Biography; a New Cyclopedic*, Vol. ix (The American Historical Society, New York, 1921)p. 276
25. *Colonial Families of the United States of America*, ed. Nelson Osgood Rhoades, Vol. VII (Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1966). pp. 319, 347
26. Rene Beckley, *Ancient Walls of East Anglia* (Terence Dalton, Ltd., Lavenham, Suffolk, 1979), p. 66
27. Charles Cooper, *A village in Sussex: the history of Kingston-near-Lewes* (I.B. Taurus, London, 2006), p. 44

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External links

- The Lewes Priory Trust Photo Gallery (copyrighted images) (http://www.lewespriory.org.uk/photo_gallery)
- The Gundrada Chapel, Southover Church, Lewes, East Sussex (<http://www.southover.org.uk/history/gundrada.htm>)
- Tomb of Gundred in 1787 The Gentleman's Magazine (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ZaVJAAAAYA-AJ&pg=PA380&lpg=PA380&dq=gundred+daughter+of+william+the+conqueror&source=bl&ots=zpGC429G9V&sig=juxp7CbG4ttftfIDTZU35nLJc-s&hl=en&sa=X&ei=2N34UK2-Jcqw0AGyrIEo&ved=0CFAQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q&f=false>)

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