

Miles of Gloucester, 1st Earl of Hereford

Miles FitzWalter of Gloucester, 1st Earl of Hereford, Lord of Brecknock (died 24 December 1143) was High Sheriff of Gloucester and Constable of England.^[a]

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Biography

Miles was the son and heir of Walter of Gloucester, hereditary castellan of Gloucester and sheriff of Gloucester, by Berta, his wife.^[1] Miles's grandfather, Roger de Pitres, had been sheriff from about 1071, then was succeeded by his brother Durand, the Domesday sheriff, before 1083.^[2] Durand was succeeded by his nephew Walter of Gloucester, c. 1096, who was sheriff in 1097 and in 1105–1106.^[2] Walter was in favour with Henry I, three of whose charters to him are extant.^[3] Walter held the post of a Constable of England. Early in 1121 his son Miles was given the hand of Sibyl, daughter of Bernard de Neufmarché, the conqueror of Brecknock, with the reversion of her father's possessions.^[3] In the Pipe Roll of 1130 Walter is found to have been succeeded by his son,^[4] having died in or around 1126.^[5]

Miles was (from 1128 at least) sheriff of Gloucestershire, a justice itinerant, and a justice of the forest,^[6] and by 1130 was sheriff of Staffordshire.^[5] He had also (though the fact has been doubted) been granted his father's office of constable by a special charter.^[7] In conjunction with Pain Fitzjohn, sheriff of Herefordshire and Shropshire, he ruled the whole Welsh border "from the Severn to the sea".^[8]

On his accession, King Stephen set himself to secure the allegiance of these two lords-marchers, who at length, on receiving a safe-conduct and obtaining all they asked for, did him homage.^[8] It was at Reading that they met the king early in 1136.^[b] Miles is next found attending the Easter court at Westminster as one of the royal constables,^[9] and, shortly after, the Oxford council in the same capacity.^[10] He was then despatched to the aid of the widow of Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare, who was beleaguered in her castle by the Welsh and whom he gallantly rescued.^[11]

Meanwhile, Miles had married his son and heir, Roger, to Cecily, daughter of Pain Fitzjohn, who inherited the bulk of her father's possessions.^[12] In the same year 1136 Miles transferred the original house of Augustinian canons at Llanthony Priory, Monmouthshire to a site on the south side of Gloucester, which they named Llanthony Secunda.^{[13][14]}

Two years later (1138) Miles received, in his official capacity, King Stephen at Gloucester in May.^[15] He has been said to have renounced his allegiance a few weeks later,^[16] but careful investigation will show that he was with Stephen in August (1138) at the siege of Shrewsbury, and that his defection did not take place till 1139.^[17]

In February 1139 Stephen gave Gloucester Abbey to Miles's kinsman Gilbert Foliot at his request.^[18] In the summer of 1139, however, he joined his lord, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, in inviting Empress Matilda to England.^[19] On her arrival Miles met her at Bristol, welcomed her to Gloucester, recognised her as his rightful sovereign, and became thenceforth her ardent supporter. She at once gave him St. Briavels Castle and the Forest of Dean.^[17]

Miles's first achievement on behalf of Matilda was to relieve Brian Fitz Count who was blockaded in Wallingford Castle.^[20] In November (1139) he again advanced from Gloucester and attacked and burnt Worcester.^[21] He also captured the castles of Winchcombe, Cerne, and Hereford.^[22] Meanwhile, he was deprived by Stephen of his office of constable.^[23] He took part in the victory at Lincoln (2 February 1141),^[24] and on the consequent triumph of the empress he accompanied her in her progress, and was one of her three chief followers on her entry (2 March) into Winchester.^[25] He was with her at Reading when she advanced on London,^[26] and on reaching St. Albans Matilda bestowed on him a house at Westminster.^[27] He was among those who fled with her from London shortly after, and it was on his advice, when they reached Gloucester, that she ventured back to Oxford.^[28] There, on 25 July 1141, she bestowed on him the town and castle of Hereford and made him earl of that shire,^[29] as well as the forests of the Hay of Hereford and Trinela^[30] in avowed consideration of his faithful service. With singular unanimity hostile chroniclers testify to his devotion to her cause.^[22] He even boasted that she had lived at his expense throughout her stay in England.^[31]

As "Earl Miles" he now accompanied her to Winchester,^[32] and on the rout of her forces on 14 September 1141 he escaped, with the greatest difficulty, to Gloucester, where he arrived "exhausted, alone, and with scarcely a rag to his back".^[33] Towards the end of the year he was in Bristol making a grant to Llanthony Priory in the presence of the Empress Matilda and the Robert, Earl of Gloucester.^[34] In 1142 he is proved by charters to have been with the Empress at Oxford and to have received her permission to hold Abergavenny Castle of Brian Fitz Count.^[35] It is probably to the summer of this year that he made a formal deed of alliance with the Earl of Gloucester, and as a hostage for the performance of which he gave the Earl his son Mahel.^[17]

In 1143 his pressing want of money wherewith to pay his troops led him to demand large sums from the church lands. Robert de Bethune, Bishop of Hereford, withstood his demands, and, on the Earl invading his lands, excommunicated him and his followers, and laid the diocese under interdict.^[36] The Earl's kinsman, Gilbert Foliot (Abbot of Gloucester),^[37] appealed to the legate on his behalf against the bishop's severity.^[38] On Christmas-eve of this year (1143) the Earl was slain while hunting by an arrow shot at a deer.^[39] A dispute at once arose for possession^[39] of his body between the canons of Llanthony and the monks of Gloucester. The case was heard before the bishops of Worcester, Hereford, and St. David's, and was terminated by a compromise on 28 December. The Earl was then buried in the chapter-house at Llanthony.^[40]

With his death in 1143, Miles was succeeded by his son and heir, Roger.^[17] Roger died without an heir twelve years later in 1155 so the Earldom of Hereford became extinct, but the shrievalty of Hereford and Gloucester passed to his brother Walter. On the death of the latter and two other brothers without issue the family possessions passed to their sisters, Bertha through her marriage bringing Abergavenny to Braose, but Margaret, the eldest sister, taking the bulk (*Liber Niger*) to the Bohuns afterwards (1199), in recognition of their descent from Miles, earls of Hereford, and constables of England.^[41]

Assessment

John of Salisbury classes him with Geoffrey de Mandeville and others who were *non tam comites regni quam hostes publici*. The charge is justified by his public policy; but the materials for appraising his personal character do not exist.^[42]

Family

In 1121, Miles married Sibyl de Neufmarché, daughter of Bernard de Neufmarché, Lord of Brecon and Nest, granddaughter of Gruffydd ap Llywelyn.^[43] Miles and Sybil's children were:

1. Margaret of Hereford,^{[5][44]} married Humphrey II de Bohun, by whom she had issue.
2. Bertha of Hereford,^[45] married William de Braose before 1150, by whom she had issue.
3. Roger Fitzmiles, 2nd Earl of Hereford.^[46] Hereditary Sheriff of Gloucestershire until 1155.
4. Walter de Hereford^[46] died after 1159 in the Holy Land. He was hereditary Sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1155–1157 and High Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1155–1159.
5. Henry Fitzmiles Henry of Hereford,^[44] died 12 April 1165. He succeeded to the title of Baron Abergavenny in 1141/42.
6. William de Hereford.^[44] He died before 1160 without issue.
7. Mahel de Hereford,^[44] died October 1165 at Bronllys Castle, Breconshire, Wales, mortally hurt when a stone dropped from the tower during a fire; died without issue. Buried at Llanthony Priory.
8. Lucy of Gloucester,^[47] married Herbert FitzHerbert of Winchester, Lord Chamberlain, by whom she had issue. Buried at Llanthony Priory.

Notes

- a. In some sources Miles's name is not translated from the Latin **Milo**
- b. "[This is known] from two charters there tested, one of which was printed by Madox (*History of the Exchequer*, p. 135), by which Stephen confirms to Miles, '*sicut baroni et justiciario meo*', the shrievalty of Gloucestershire, the constablership of Gloucester Castle, and the 'honour' of Brecknock" (Round 1890, p. 438).

1. Cokayne 1926, pp. 451–452.
2. Morris 1918, p. 154, n. 62.
3. Round 1890, p. 438 cites *Duchy of Lancaster: Royal Charters*.
4. Round 1890, p. 438 cites *Rot. Pip.* 31 Hen. I.
5. Walker 2012, "Gloucester, Miles of".
6. Round 1890, p. 438.
7. Round 1890, p. 438 cites *Dugdale MSS*.
8. Round 1890, p. 438 cites *Gesta Stephani*, p. 17.
9. Round 1890, p. 438 cites Rymer, *Fœdera*, new ed. i. 16.
10. Round 1890, p. 438 cites Rich. Hexham, p. 149.
11. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 13.
12. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Duchy Charters*.
13. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Mon. Angl.* vi. (1), 127, 132.
14. Ward1995, p. 107.
15. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* ii. 105.
16. Round 1890, p. 439; Norgate 1887, p. 295.
17. Round 1890, p. 439.
18. Round 1890, p. 439; Norgate 1887, pp. 493, 494.
19. Round 1890, p. 439; Norgate 1887, pp. 294, 295.
20. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 59.
21. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 119.
22. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 60.
23. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 121.
24. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 69.
25. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 130; *Will. Malm.* p. 743.



26. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Add. Cart. pp. 19, 576*.
27. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Duchy Charters*, No. 16.
28. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 132.
29. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Fœdera*, i. 14.
30. Francis Beaufort Palmer (February 2007), *Peerage Law in England* (http://openlibrary.org/books/OL9452596M/Peerage_Law_in_England), Lawbook Exchange, ISBN 9781584777489, 1584777486 See Appendix, p242; also Theophilus Jones (1805), *A history of the county of Brecknock* (http://openlibrary.org/books/OL14012583M/A_history_of_the_county_of_Brecknock.) (A history of the county of Brecknock. ed.), Brecknock: Printed and sold by Wm. & Geo. North ... for the author; and sold by J. Booth ... London. p67
31. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 133.
32. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 79
33. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Cont. Flor. Wig.* p. 135.
34. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Mon. Angl.* vi. 137.
35. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Duchy Charters*, No. 17.
36. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gesta*, p. 102; *Mon. Angl.* vi. (1), 133.
37. Knowles, Brooke & London 1972, p. 52–53.
38. Round 1890, p. 439 cites Foliot, Letters, No. 3.
39. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Symeon of Durham* ii. 315; Gervase, i. 126; *Gesta*, pp. 16, 95, 103.
40. Round 1890, p. 439 cites *Gloucester Cartulary*, i. lxxv; Foliot, Letters, No. 65.
41. Round 1890, p. 440.
42. Chisholm 1911, pp. 479.
43. Roderick 1968, p. 5.
44. Lundy 2011, p. 10257 cite *Cokayne 2000*, p. 21
45. Lundy 2011, p. 10257 cite *Cokayne 2000a*, p. 457
46. Lundy 2011, p. 10257 cite *Cokayne 2000*, p. 20
47. Cawley 2012 cites *Dugdale 1823*, p. 615

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Peerage of England		
Preceded by Second Creation	Earl of Hereford 1141–1143	Succeeded by Roger Fitzmiles

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