

# Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke

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**Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke** (of the first creation), Lord of Leinster, Justiciar of Ireland (1130 – 20 April 1176) was a Welsh-Norman lord notable for his leading role in the Norman invasion of Ireland. Like his father, Richard fitz Gilbert has since become commonly known by his nickname **Strongbow** (Norman French: *Arc-Fort*) which may be a mistranscription or mistranslation of Striguil.

## Contents

- 1 Cognomen
- 2 Career
  - 2.1 Dispossession of the King of Leinster
  - 2.2 The re-taking of Leinster
- 3 Marriage and children
- 4 Legacy
- 5 Ancestry
- 6 See also
- 7 Notes
- 8 References
- 9 External links

## Cognomen

Richard's cognomen **Strongbow** has become the name he is best known by, but it is unlikely that he was called that at the time. Cognomens of other Cambro-Norman and Norman lords were exclusively Norman-French as the nobility spoke French and, with few exceptions, official documents were written in Latin during this period. The confusion seems to have arisen when Richard's name was being translated into Latin.<sup>[1]</sup> In the Domesday Exchequer annals between 1300 and 1304 (over 120 years after his death) it was written as "*Ricardus cognomento Stranghose Comes Strugulliae* (Richard known as Striguil earl of Striguil)." This chronicler erroneously has attributed Stranghose (foreign leggings) as a cognomen, where it is much more likely a variant spelling or mistranscription of Striguil, which is called Strangboge, Stranboue or Stranbohe in other transcriptions. It is in the fourteenth century that we have Richard's name finally rendered as Strongbow "Earl Richard son of Gilbert Strongbow [earl of Shropshire]."<sup>[2]</sup>

## Career

Richard was the son of Gilbert de Clare, 1st Earl of Pembroke and Isabel de Beaumont.<sup>[3]</sup> Richard's father died in about 1148, when he was roughly 18 years old, and Richard inherited the title 'count of Strigoil' Earl of Pembroke. It is probable that this title was not recognized at Henry II's coronation in 1154.<sup>[4]</sup> As the son of the first 'earl', he succeeded to his father's estates in 1148, but was deprived of the title by King Henry II of England in 1154 for siding with King Stephen of England against Henry's mother, the Empress Matilda.<sup>[5]</sup> Richard was in fact, called

### Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare



An image of the seal of Richard de Clare.

<b>Born</b>	1130 Tonbridge, Kent, England
<b>Died</b>	20 April 1176 (age 45/46) Dublin, Ireland
<b>Resting place</b>	Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.
<b>Other names</b>	Strongbow ( <i>Arc-Fort</i> )
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Aoife Ní Diarmait
<b>Children</b>	Gilbert de Clare, 3rd Earl of Pembroke Isabel de Clare, 4th Countess of Pembroke
<b>Parent(s)</b>	Gilbert de Clare, 1st Earl of Pembroke Isabel de Beaumont

by his contemporaries Count Striguil, for his marcher lordship of Striguil where he had a fortress at a place now called Chepstow, in Monmouthshire on the River Wye.<sup>[6]</sup> He saw an opportunity to reverse his bad fortune in 1168 when he met Diarmait Mac Murchada, the deposed King of Leinster.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Dispossession of the King of Leinster

In 1167, Diarmait Mac Murchada (Dermot MacMurrough) was deprived of the Kingdom of Leinster by the High King of Ireland – Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair. The grounds for the dispossession were that Mac Murchada had, in 1152, abducted Derbforgaill, the wife of the King of Breifne, Tiernan O'Rourke (Irish: *Tighearnán Ua Ruairc*). To recover his kingdom, Mac Murchada solicited help from the King of England – Henry II. The deposed king embarked for Bristol from near Bannow on 1 August 1166.<sup>[8]</sup> He met Henry in Aquitaine in the Autumn of 1166. Henry could not help him at this time, but provided a letter of comfort for willing supporters of Mac Murchada's cause in his kingdom. However, after his return to Wales, he failed to rally any forces to his standard. He eventually met the count of Striguil (nicknamed "Strongbow") and other barons of the Welsh Marches. Mac Murchada came to an agreement with Richard de Clare: for the Earl's assistance with an army the following spring, he could have Aoife, Mac Murchada's eldest daughter in marriage and the succession to Leinster.<sup>[9]</sup> As Henry's approval or license to Mac Murchada was a general one, the count of Striguil thought it prudent to obtain Henry's specific consent to travel to Ireland: he waited two years to do this.<sup>[10]</sup> The license he got was to aid Mac Murchada in the recovery of his kingdom of Leinster.<sup>[5]</sup>

## The re-taking of Leinster

Mac Murchada and Richard de Clare raised a large army, which included Welsh archers and arranged for Raymond FitzGerald (also known as Raymond *le Gros*) to lead it. The force took the Ostman towns of Wexford, Waterford, and Dublin<sup>[a]</sup> in rapid succession between 1169 and 1170.<sup>[11]</sup> Richard de Clare, however, was not with the first invading party and arrived later, in August 1170.<sup>[12]</sup>

In May 1171, Diarmait Mac Murchada died and his son, Donal MacMurrough-Kavanagh (Irish: *Domhnall Caemanach mac Murchada*), claimed the kingdom of Leinster in accordance with his rights under the Brehon Laws. Richard de Clare also claimed the kingship in the right of his wife. At this time, Strongbow sent his uncle, Hervey de Montmorency, on an embassy to Henry II. This was necessary to appease the King who was growing restive at the count's increasing power. Upon his return, de Montmorency conveyed the King's terms – the return of Richard de Clare's lands in France, England, and Wales as well as leaving him in possession of his Irish lands.<sup>[13]</sup> In return, Richard de Clare surrendered Dublin, Waterford, and other fortresses to the English king.<sup>[14]</sup> Henry's intervention was successful and both the Gaelic and Norman lords in the south and east of Ireland accepted his rule;<sup>[15]</sup> Richard de Clare also agreed to assist Henry II in his coming war in France.

## Marriage and children

By an unknown mistress, Richard de Clare fathered two daughters:

- Aline de Clare,<sup>[b]</sup> she married William FitzMaurice FitzGerald, baron of Naas<sup>[16]</sup>
- Basilia de Clare, she married Robert de Quenci, Constable of Leinster<sup>[16]</sup>

On about 26 August 1171 in Waterford, Richard de Clare married MacMurrough's daughter, Aoife MacMurrough (anglicised as "Eva").<sup>[17]</sup> Their children were:

- Gilbert de Clare, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, a minor who died in 1185<sup>[18]</sup>

- Isabel de Clare, 4th Countess of Pembroke, who became Countess of Pembroke in her own right in 1185 (on the death of her brother) until her own death in 1220.<sup>[19]</sup>

King Henry II had promised Sir William Marshal that he would be given Isabel as his bride, and his son Richard I upheld the promise one month after his ascension to the throne. The earldom was given to her husband as her consort.<sup>[20]</sup> Marshall was the son of John the Marshal, by Sibylle, the sister of Patrick, Earl of Salisbury.

Richard de Clare died in June 1176 of some type of infection in his leg or foot. He was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Dublin with his uncle-in-law, Lawrence, Archbishop of Dublin, presiding. King Henry II took all of Strongbow's lands and castles for himself and placed a royal official in charge of them. He guarded well the inheritance of Isabel. Eve was given her dower rights and possibly held Striguil [Chepstow] as part of those dower rights until the Welsh rebellion of 1184/85. There is a record of Eve confirming a charter in Ireland in 1188/89 as "comtissa de Hibernia".<sup>[21]</sup>

Richard de Clare's widow, Aoife, lived on and was last recorded in a charter of 1188.

There are no known extant records of the personal lives of Richard de Clare and Eve. We know that this young red-haired son of Gilbert de Clare Earl of Pembroke survived the years of being deprived of his rightful inheritance. He took the gamble that Dermot MacMurchada offered. He conquered and re-constituted his inherited lordship of Leinster, married the golden-haired Eve, and re-gained the respect of king Henry II. Two interesting questions arise for which there is no known extant contemporary records. Did Richard de Clare perhaps meet the man who would be his daughter's husband in the 1173 rebellion of the young King Henry? Would Richard de Clare have approved of the knight William Marshal who married his daughter Isabel and not only regained all the land, castles and titles that Richard de Clare should have inherited, but added greatly to them?<sup>[21]</sup>

## Legacy

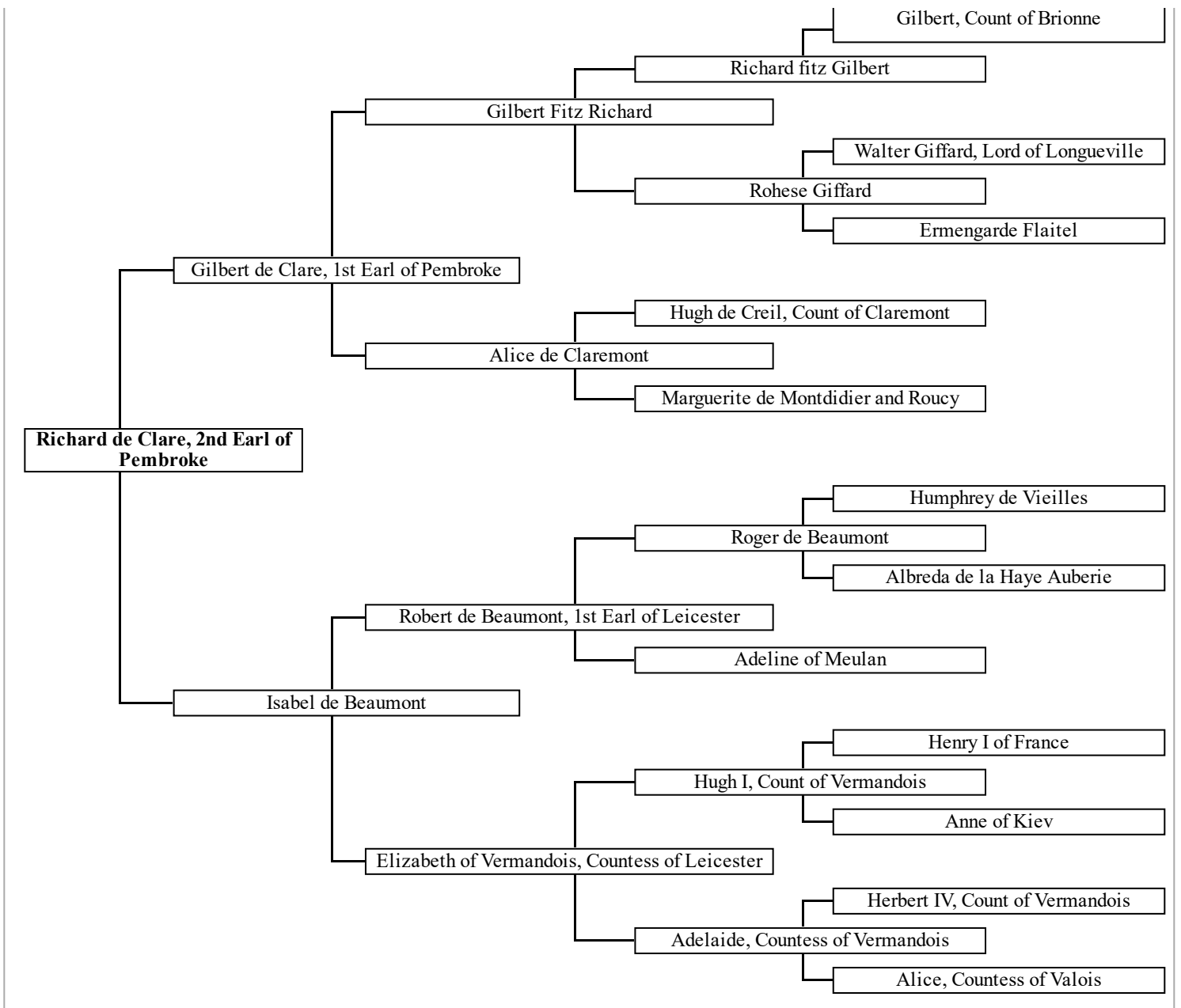
Richard de Clare was the statesman, whereas Raymond was the soldier, of the conquest. He is vividly described by Giraldus Cambrensis as "His complexion was somewhat ruddy and his skin freckled; he had grey eyes, feminine features, a weak voice, and short neck. For the rest, he was tall in stature, and a man of great generosity and of courteous manner."<sup>[22]</sup> He was first interred in Dublin's Christ Church Cathedral where an alleged effigy can be viewed.<sup>[22]</sup> Richard de Clare's actual tomb-effigy was destroyed when the roof of the Cathedral collapsed in 1562. The one on display dates from around the 15th century, bears the coat of arms of an unknown knight,<sup>[23]</sup> and is the effigy of another local knight. Richard de Clare was buried in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin within sight of the cross according to an eye witness, Giraldus Cambrensis. There is little evidence to support the tradition that he was buried either in St Edan's Cathedral, Ferns,<sup>[24]</sup> Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford or Dominican abbey, Kilkenny. References to 'de Clare' being buried in Gloucester cathedral refer to his father, while those to 'Strongbow' in Tintern abbey refer probably to Walter or Anselm Marshall, both of whom died in 1245.

Richard de Clare is an ancestor of the American Bush political family.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Ancestry



*The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife* (1854) by Daniel Maclise, a romanticised depiction of the union in the ruins of Waterford



## See also

- Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London; New York: Longman Press, 1995) pp. 6, 281, 287, 289
- The Song of Dermot and the Earl
- De Lacy
- Kilkenny Castle

## Notes

- a. These were *longphorts* where the Viking raiders settled, marrying Gaelic women and slightly acculturating to Gaelic customs (such as naming practices, MacGiollamhuire, MacTurkill, etc.), Dublin being the most famous. See: James F. Lydon, *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to Present* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 21.
- b. Aline was born well before her father married Eve (Aoife), daughter of Dermot. That both she and her unnamed sister were illegitimate is indicated by the fact that neither inherited anything from their father's great holdings. See: Cokayne, *CP*, X, Appendix H, 103

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24. John Finlayson, *Inscriptions on the monuments, mural tablets &c, Christ Church Cathedral* (Dublin: Hodges, Foster, & Figgis, 1878), p. 66 notes no more than a 'fearful malediction ... pronounced against him by a Bishop of Ferns' citing King's Church History, ii, 622 and Haverty's 'History of Ireland', p. 256.
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## External links

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- Ancestral to George W Bush (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jan/27/usa.angeliquechrisafis>)

<b>Political offices</b>		
Preceded by <b>New creation</b>	<b>Justiciar of Ireland</b> 1173–1176	Succeeded by <b>Unknown</b>
<b>Peerage of England</b>		
Preceded by <b>Gilbert de Clare</b>	<b>Earl of Pembroke</b> 1148–1168	Succeeded by <b>Gilbert de Clare</b>

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