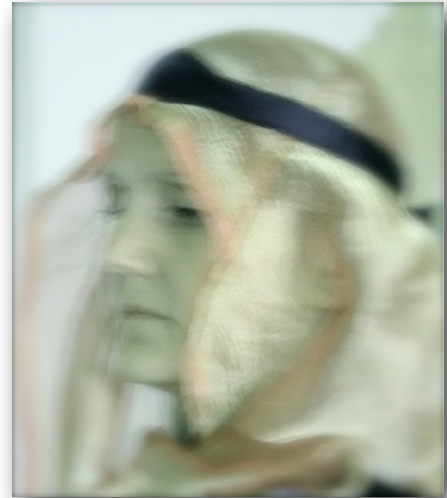


GREAT BOWDEN HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY

JUDITH AND WALTHEOF



Everyone has heard of the Battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest in 1066 but the effect of this clash of cultures and the strain of loyalties on individuals is less known.

This is an emotional story of passion, tragedy, treason and divided loyalties set in the tumultuous years following William the Conqueror's crowning in Westminster Abbey. Shakespeare may have missed an excellent plot but authoress Elizabeth Chadwick did not. The story of Judith, Waltheof and their daughter, Matilda is excellently told in "The Winter Mantle" from which many of these notes were extracted.

You may wonder what all this has to do with Bowden? There were two manors here at the time of the Domesday Book. The largest belonged to the King but the second manor belonged to Countess Judith and presumably before that to Earl Waltheof. Waltheof and Judith also held land nearby in Gumley, Lubenham, Stonton, Cranoe and Welham.

Judith was the daughter of Adelaide, Countess of Aumale, sister of William the Conqueror. Her father was Lambert II, Count of Lens who died around the time of her birth in about 1054. Her impressive pedigree on her father's side far outdoes that of her Uncle William of Normandy. (details on the back page).

Waltheof was the son of Earl Siward of Northumbria. Although Danish in origin he led Edward the Confessor's army against Macbeth in Scotland. Waltheof was possibly not the eldest son as he spent much of his youth at Crowland Abbey preparing for a life in the church. With the death of his father and presumably elder brothers he was denied the Earldom of Northumbria because of his youth. That may be the reason why he felt no allegiance to Harold II and did not fight at Hastings. The surviving Saxon earls forfeited their titles and land but Waltheof retained his lands and the Earldom of Northampton and Huntingdon. He was the last of the English Earl to hold office under the Norman kings.

He was, however, according to Elizabeth Chadwick, among the high-born hostages whom William took back to France in 1067 and it was there he first set eyes on Judith who was about 13 or 14 at the time. Judith and the ladies of the Norman Court in Rouen could not fail to be intrigued by the Anglo-Saxon lords. Waltheof, on the other hand, was completely smitten by Judith's beauty and promptly fell in love with her. Saxons wore their hair and beards long quite different to the cropped and clean shaven Normans. William's style of life was strict and fairly austere as was the court over which he ruled. They were used to the occasional goblet of wine unlike Saxon ways where alcohol flowed freely and the noise and bawdy drunkenness of the mead hall extended to the nobility and probably crossed

the sea to Normandy too. Accounts of Waltheof describe him as very tall, broad in stature and outgoing in personality.

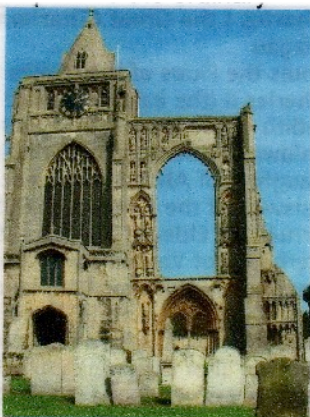
He took an oath of allegiance to William and followed him to England and supported him against an uprising in Exeter. After this campaign Waltheof may have asked for Judith's hand in marriage. From all accounts William refused and sent him packing back to his Midland manors.

Trouble was brewing in the North and the northern leaders supported by the King of Denmark rebelled against the Norman rule. Waltheof, influenced by his father's earldom and his Danish ancestors, joined them and was very much involved in the sacking of the Norman castle at York. However after the destruction of York the other supporters, particularly the Danes, melted away and carried their plunder back to Denmark. Waltheof had no alternative but to surrender to William and beg for mercy. William showed no mercy to his northern province and the harrying of the North which followed is well known. He took a more lenient approach with Waltheof.

"What will it take to ensure your allegiance to me" he asked. Waltheof, not known for making considered decisions, probably spoke from the heart. "Blood ties are the strongest", he said. "Very well, take Judith as your wife" said William. But this story is a tragedy not a romance and although Judith made a winter crossing of the Channel and they were married in Westminster in 1070 there was no happy ending.

Judith and Waltheof moved to Northampton and had at least two daughters. The eldest was Matilda, named after the Queen. However, Judith could not settle to Anglo-Saxon ways and the marriage was not a happy one. Waltheof again supported William in a campaign against the Scots and for this he was rewarded with the Earldom of Northumbria.

In 1075 discontent amongst some of the Norman nobility with the lands that they had been given after the Conquest led to a rebellion. Waltheof took no part in this but he knew about the conspiracy and kept quiet. When the uprising was put down he fled with the others to France but on the advice of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, returned to England to seek forgiveness once again from William. This time it was in Winchester. William hesitated long enough over Waltheof's punishment for some schemers amongst his court to act. Waltheof is Saxon they said and should have a Saxon punishment. The Norman punishment for treason was banishment; the Saxon punishment was execution. Waltheof was beheaded on St Giles Hill in Winchester on 31st May 1076. Some say that Judith had betrayed him but she probably confirmed to her uncle that he had known about the conspiracy thinking that Waltheof would be banished and out of her life.



The 14th century ruins at Crowland Abbey in the Fens.

William regretted his decision almost immediately and granted a horrified Judith permission to remove her husband's body to Crowland Abbey in the Fens. There he was buried with a magnificent tomb and silken pall. To the ordinary people he had been a great leader, and a kindly person, and they came in their droves to visit his grave. He was a martyr to them and miracles were said to have taken place at his graveside.

Judith retired to Northampton and with her daughters took over the earldoms of Huntingdon and Northampton. The earldom of Northumbria was removed on Waltheof's death. For 11 years all was quiet and then after the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 and William I died in 1087, his second son, William Rufus came to the throne. For some reason William II decided to strip his cousin Judith of her lands in Northampton and Huntingdon and give them to Simon de Senlis, who according to Elizabeth Chadwick had known the family well in the past. Simon turned up at Northampton and offered to marry Judith so that she could retain her title. She refused and thereafter disappears into obscurity. However her daughter Matilda decided, there and then, that she would keep the lands within the family and married Simon herself, probably without her mother's permission.

Postscript. *Simon and Matilda had a son and named him Waltheof. After Simon's death Matilda married David, King of Scotland and had several children with him in her 40s. Waltheof (junior) did pursue a life in the Church and became Abbot of Melrose in Scotland after being denied the see of York by King Stephen of England. According to the Scotichronicon, written in the 15th century, he miraculously fed 4000 peasants who were camped around the abbey for three months during the famine of 1148, sparing nothing to aid the starving. For this Waltheof was revered as a saint and buried at Melrose where his tomb too became a shrine for pilgrims.*

Pedigree of Judith of Normandy

Earlier Merovingian Kings of the Franks

Dagobert I King of the Franks 603-638

Clovis II King of Neustria & Burgundy

Theuderic III King of the Franks -691

Daughter = Bertha m Martin of Laon

Charibert of Laon – 747

Daughter = Bertrade of Laon 720-783 m Pepin III (the Short) of the Franks 714-768 (son of Charles Martel and Pepin II)

Charles I the Great (Charlemagne) King of the Franks 742-814 m Hildegard of Vizgau

Louis the Pious of the Franks 778-840 m Judith of Bavaria 800-843

Charles II (the Bald) of France 823-877 m Irmentrude of Orleans bef 830-869

Judith of the West Franks 843-870 m Baldwin I (Iron Arm) of Flanders died -879

Baldwin II (the Bald) of Flanders c865-918 m Elftrude of England c868-929, daughter of **Alfred the Great of England and Wessex** 849-899 and

Ealswith of the Gaini died 905

Arnulf the Elder of Flanders c900-965 m Adele of Vermandois c 910-958 (daughter of Herbert II of Vermandois and Luitgard of Paris)

Daughter = Hildegard of Flanders died 990 m Dietrich II of West Friesland c905-988

Arnulf I of west Friesland and Ghent died 993 m Luitgarde of Luxemburg died 1005 (daughter of Siegfried I of Luxembourg 917-998 and Hedvig of Norgau 935-992)

Baldwin III of Boulogne c976-1033 m Aleida

Eustace I of Boulogne 1004-c1033 m Maud of Louvain (daughter of Lambert I of Louvain and Gerberga of Lower Lotharingia c975-after 1018)

Lambert II of Lens von Boulogne died c 1054 m Adeliza of Aumale and Normandy 1029- bef. 1090 (daughter of Robert the Magnificent of Normandy 999-1035 and Harlette of Falaise c1011-1050 and sister to **William the Conqueror**, their maternal grandfather was Fulbert, tanner from Falaise.)

Judith of Lens and Normandy, Countess of Northumbria, Northampton and Huntingdon c1054 – after 1086

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