Judith of Flanders

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Judith of Flanders (or **Judith of France**) (c. 843 – c. 870)[1] was queen consort of Wessex and countess consort of Flanders. She was the eldest daughter of the West Frankish King and later Holy Roman Emperor Charles the Bald and his wife Ermentrude of Orléans. Through her marriages to two Kings of Wessex, Æthelwulf and Æthelbald, she was twice a queen. Her first two marriages were childless, but through her third marriage to Baldwin, she became the first Countess of Flanders and an ancestor of later Counts of Flanders. One of her sons by Baldwin married Ælfthryth, a daughter of Æthelbald's brother, Alfred the Great. She was also an ancestor of Matilda of Flanders, the consort of William the Conqueror, and thus of later monarchs of England.

Contents

- 1 Queen of Wessex
- 2 Elopement with Baldwin of Flanders
- 3 Character
- 4 Children
- 5 Ancestry
- 6 Notes
- 7 References and further reading
- 8 External links

Queen of Wessex

In 855 King Æthelwulf of Wessex made a pilgrimage to Rome, and on his way back in 856 he stayed at the court of the West Frankish king Charles the Bald. In July Æthelwulf became engaged to Charles's daughter, Judith, who was no more than fourteen, while Æthelwulf was about fifty years old. On 1 October 856 they were married at Verberie in northern France.

The marriage was a diplomatic alliance: both men were suffering from Viking attacks, and for Æthelwulf the union had the advantage of associating him with Carolingian prestige. In addition, the wedding was considered an extraordinary event by contemporaries and by modern historians. Carolingian princesses rarely married and were usually sent to nunneries, and it was almost unknown for them to marry foreigners. Judith was crowned queen and anointed by Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims; in Wessex it was not customary for kings' wives to be queens, but Charles insisted that his daughter be crowned

Judith of Flanders	
A nineteenth-century depiction of Judith and her third husband Baldwin.	
Queen consort of Wessex	
Tenure	1 October 856 – 13 January 858 *(1st Time)* 858 – 20 December 860 *(2nd Time)*
Predecessor	Osburh
Successor	Wulfthryth; then Ealhswith
Countess of Flanders	
Tenure	13 December 862 – c. 870
Predecessor	No Previous
Successor	Ælfthryth of Wessex
Born	c. 843
Died	after 870
Spouse	Æthelwulf, King of Wessex (m. 856 – wid. 858) Æthelbald, King of Wessex (m. 858 – wid. 860) Baldwin I of Flanders (m. 861/62)
Issue	Baldwin II Charles Raoul
House	Carolingian dynasty (by birth)

	House of Wessex (by marriage)
Father	Charles the Bald
Mother	Ermentrude of Orléans

queen.[2][3] Although empresses had been anointed before, this is the first definitely known anointing of a Carolingian queen. In addition, West Saxon custom (described by Asser as "perverse and detestable") was that the wife of a king of Wessex could not be called queen or sit on the throne with her husband—she was merely the king's wife.[4]

The marriage provoked a rebellion by Æthelwulf's eldest surviving son, Æthelbald, probably because he feared displacement by a higher-born half-brother. However, father and son negotiated a compromise under which Æthelwulf received the eastern districts of the kingdom and Æthelbald the western. It is not known whether this meant that Æthelwulf took Kent and Æthelbald Wessex, or whether Wessex itself was divided.[2]

Judith had no children by Æthelwulf, who died on 13 January 858. He was succeeded by Æthelbald, who married Judith, his step-mother, probably to enhance his status because she was the daughter of the West Frankish king.[2] The marriage was condemned by Asser in his *Life of Alfred the Great*:

> Once King Æthelwulf was dead, Æthelbald, his son, against God's prohibition and Christian dignity, and also contrary to the practice of all pagans, took over his father's marriage-bed and married Judith, daughter of Charles, king of the Franks, incurring great disgrace from all who heard of it.[5]

Judith was still childless when Æthelbald died in 860 after a reign of two-and-a-half years.[5]

Elopement with Baldwin of Flanders

Following Æthelbald's death, Judith sold her properties in Wessex and returned to France. According to the *Chronicle of St. Bertin*, her father sent her to the Monastery at Senlis, where she was to remain "under his protection and royal episcopal guardianship, with all the honour due to a queen, until such time as, if she could not remain chaste, she might marry in the way the apostle said, that is suitably and legally."[6] Presumably, Charles may have intended to arrange another marriage for his daughter. However, around Christmas 861, Judith eloped with Baldwin, later Count of Flanders. The two were likely married at the monastery of Senlis at this time. The record of the incident in the *Annals* depicts Judith not as the passive victim of bride theft but as an active agent, eloping at the instigation of Baldwin and apparently with her brother Louis the Stammerer's consent.[7]

Unsurprisingly, Judith's father was furious and ordered his bishops to excommunicate the couple. They later fled to the court of Judith's cousin Lothair II of Lotharingia for protection, before going to Pope Nicholas I to plead their case. The Pope took diplomatic action and asked Judith's father to accept the union as legally binding and welcome the young couple into his circle – which ultimately he did. The couple then returned to France and were officially married at Auxerre on 13 December 862.

Baldwin was given the land directly south of the Scheldt, i.e. the Country of Flanders (albeit an area of smaller size than the county which existed in the High Middle Ages) to ward off Viking attacks. It is disputed among historians as to whether King Charles did this in the hope that Baldwin would be killed in the ensuing battles with the Vikings; however, Baldwin managed the situation remarkably well. He succeeded in quelling the Viking threat, expanded both his army and his territory quickly, and became a faithful supporter of King Charles. The March of Baldwin came to be known as the County of Flanders and would come to be one of the most powerful principalities of France.

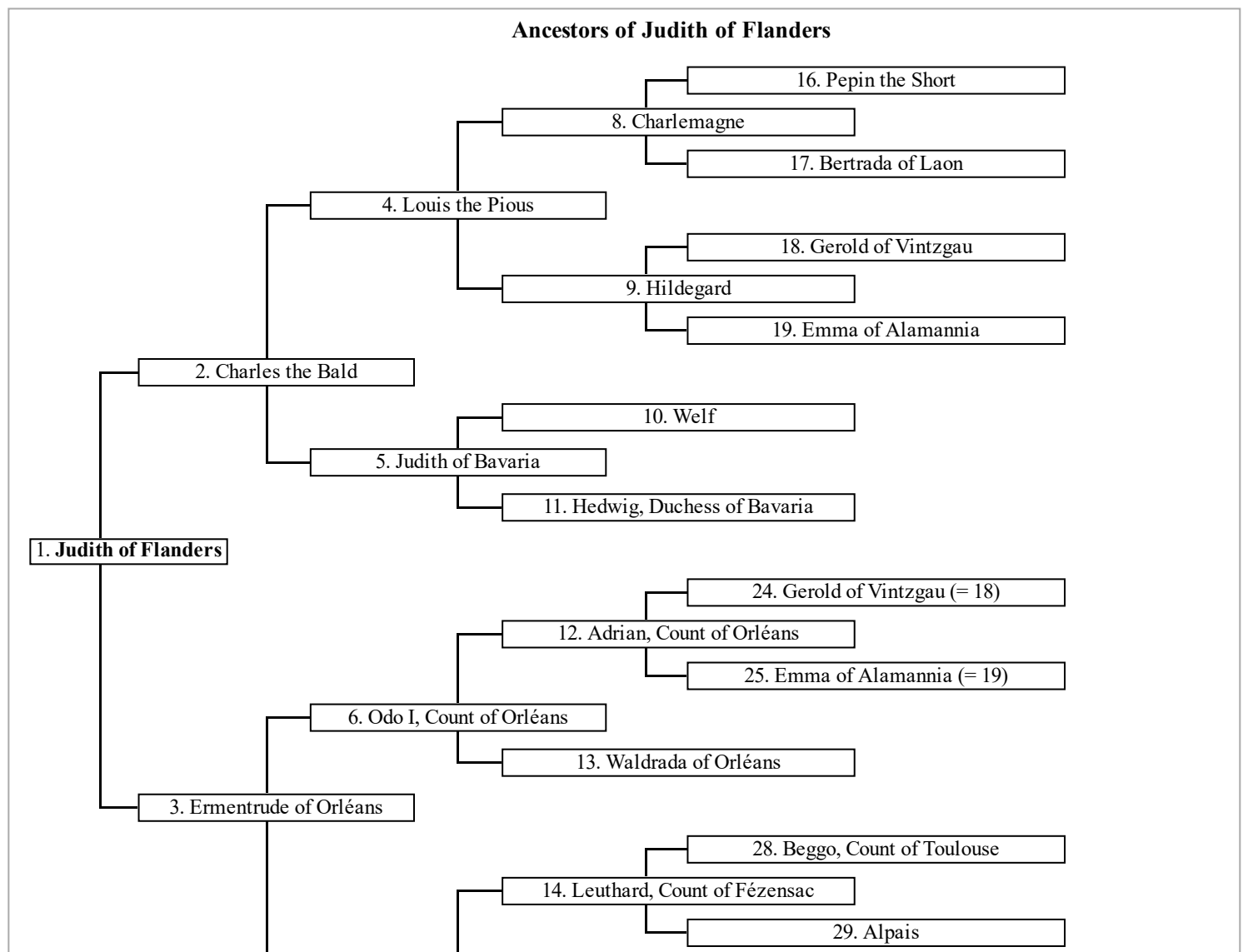# Character

In the view of Patrick Wormald:

> The marriage [between Æthelwulf and Judith] is generally notorious for Judith's scandalous subsequent behaviour: on Æthelwulf's death, she married Æthelbald, his eldest son, in express defiance of the ecclesiastical prohibition...; and not content with that, she eloped with Baldwin of Flanders when Æthelbald was dead. But Judith, like most ninth-century Frankish princesses, was a cultivated lady; and it is a reasonable guess that she brought with her to the court where the young Alfred was growing up some of the culture as well as the aura of the Carolingian monarchy.[8]

Children

By her third husband, Baldwin I of Flanders, Judith's children included:[9]

- Charles (c. 864/865 – died young). Ostensibly named after Judith's father, Charles the Bald.
- Baldwin II (c. 865/867 – c. 10 September 918). Succeeded his father as Count of Flanders. Married Ælfthryth, daughter of Alfred the Great.
- Raoul (*Rodulf*) (c. 867/870 – murdered 17 June 896). Became Count of Cambrai around 888, and was killed by Herbert I of Vermandois in 896.

Ancestry

Ancestors of Judith of Flanders

- 1. **Judith of Flanders**
  - 2. Charles the Bald
    - 4. Louis the Pious
      - 8. Charlemagne
        - 16. Pepin the Short
        - 17. Bertrada of Laon
      - 9. Hildegard
        - 18. Gerold of Vintzgau
        - 19. Emma of Alamannia
    - 5. Judith of Bavaria
      - 10. Welf
      - 11. Hedwig, Duchess of Bavaria
  - 3. Ermentrude of Orléans
    - 6. Odo I, Count of Orléans
      - 12. Adrian, Count of Orléans
        - 24. Gerold of Vintzgau (= 18)
        - 25. Emma of Alamannia (= 19)
      - 13. Waldrada of Orléans
    - 14. Leuthard, Count of Fézensac
      - 28. Beggo, Count of Toulouse
      - 29. Alpais

7. Engeltrude of Paris

Notes

1. Judith's date of birth is uncertain. Janet Nelson in her Online DNB article on Æthelwulf (http://www.oxforddn b.com/view/article/8921/39264?docPos=1) dates it after 843, but the entry for Judith in *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain* states that she was around fourteen when she married Æthelwulf in 856. It is also not known when she died. Nelson gives the date as c. 870, but also says that if she was alive in the 890s she may have arranged her son Baldwin's marriage to a daughter of Alfred the Great.
2. Janet L. Nelson, *Æthelwulf*, Oxford Online Dictionary of National Biography, 2004 (http://www.oxforddnb.co m/view/article/8921/39264?docPos=1)
3. Williams et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain*
4. Stafford 1981, pp. 139–42; Story 2003, pp. 240–42.
5. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge eds., *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life and Other Contemporary Sources*, Penguin 1983 (2004 reprint), p. 73
6. Geary, Patrick J. Women at the Beginning: Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006),p. 52
7. Geary, op. cit., p. 53
8. Wormald, p. 142
9. *COUNTS of FLANDERS [863* (http://fmg.ac/Projects/ MedLands/FLANDERS,%20HAINAUT.htm#Baudouin Idied879A)-1128 in: Foundation for Medieval Genealogy (FMG)] [retrieved 27 May 2016]

References and further reading

- Entry on Judith in "Women at the Beginning" by Patrick J. Geary on Google Books (https://books.google.co m/books?id=SP0sSi8iHK4C&pg=PA51&dq=judith+of+flanders&ei=2Us8SZjtHaeGzgTcoLmeBA#PPA52, M1)
- Women in England in the Middle Ages By Jennifer C. Ward on Google Books (https://books.google.com/bo oks?id=mpOxVF58dIgC&pg=PA120&dq=coronation+queen+judith&ei=q048SenoBJPqyQS-0oHSBA)
- Stafford, Pauline (1981). "Charles the Bald, Judith and England". In Gibson, M.; Nelson J,; Ganz, D. *Charles the Bald*. Oxford. pp. 137–151.
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- Wormald, Patrick (1982). "The Ninth Century". In Campbell, James. *The Anglo-Saxons*. London, UK: Penguin Books. ISBN 9780714821498.
- Story, Joanna (2003). *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia, c. 750– 870*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate. ISBN 0-7546-0124-2.

External links

- Judith 1 (http://www.pase.ac.uk/jsp/ASC/person.jsp?personKey=3419) at Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Judith_of_Flanders&oldid=748053186"

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