

The Career of William III de Briouze in the Reign of King John: Land, Power and Social Ties.

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Introduction

William de Briouze was one of the most prominent figures during King John's reign. His rise to power during the reigns of Henry II and Richard I reached its apex in the early thirteenth century and his persecution at the hands of John between 1208 and 1211 became a potent and bitterly remembered episode by both barons and chroniclers alike.¹ William's fortunes and misfortunes in tenure, politics and social ties are widely observable across an array of primary sources, from Exchequer records to chronicles. Yet, due to the mystery that surrounds the true explanation for his demise, Briouze remains an enigmatic and alluring figure for the historian to study. There are other reasons, however, which justify this interest. William de Briouze was one of the few characters to link many of the main themes and events that flowed through John's reign. William was a powerful baron in the Welsh March and Ireland but also a sizeable landholder in England. He was a confidant of John, helping him to the throne after the death of Richard² and accompanied his lord on the various expeditions to defend Normandy from Philip II Augustus.³ It was due to this loyalty that Briouze suffered the loss of his Norman lands in 1204. William was also party to the fate of John's opponent to the throne, Arthur of Brittany. William himself caught Arthur at Mirebeau in 1202 and handed him over to the king.⁴ As one can see, William de Briouze was a crucial member of medieval society but despite these observations, there has yet to be a comprehensive study of this baron.

This study will analyse William's life through the factors of land, power and social ties, with the aim of showing that his personal involvement in John's rule had great implications on each. Furthermore, the study will demonstrate that William represented a very unique stage in the history of the Briouze family. Chapter one will describe the history of William's landholding and the role his relationship with John played in this. It will also argue that William was the only Briouze to unite the family lands under one head of the family. Chapter two will assess more closely the personal relationship between William and King John, suggesting that William was the only Briouze to integrate wholesale into the king's court. Chapter three concludes the exercise with an assessment of the social network that surrounded William and the significance his political position played in informing this network. First, however, an evaluation of the primary sources available to the historian must be undertaken, followed by a brief outline of William de Briouze's character.

¹ W. L. Warren, *King John* (New Haven, 1997), p. 185.

² *Annales de Margan*, in *Annales Monastici: Vol I*, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London, 1864), p. 24.

³ William constantly accompanied the itinerant John and between March and April 1203, he witnessed charters in Pont-Audemer, Rouen, Moulineaux, Sainte-Barbe, Falaise and Verneuil. See *Rotuli Normanniae in Turri Londinensi Asservati Johanne et Henrico Quinto Angliae Regibus: Vol. 1*, ed. T. D. Hardy (Record Commission, 1835), pp. 83-89 & 93; *Calendar of Documents: Ireland, 1171-1251*, ed. H. S. Sweetman (London, 1875), nos. 175, 176 & 190, pp. 28 & 30; *Rotuli Chartarum In Turri Londinensi Asservati*, ed. T. D. Hardy, (Record Commission, 1837), p. 69.

⁴ *Radulphi De Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London, 1875), p. 138.

Though there is a wealth of diverse and valuable sources available to the historian studying William de Briouze there remain limitations. The majority of William's tenurial business can be observed through the dry and functional records of government. The pipe rolls, Book of Fees and the Red Book of the Exchequer are all invaluable to this study. King John's reign saw the first comprehensive logging and storing of the pipe rolls even though records were not produced for 1213 and 1215/16. Much debate has surrounded the rolls over their reliability and historical worth.⁵ Barrett, an advocate for the use of pipe rolls as evidence, viewed them as fundamentally incomplete records that failed to show the entire audit process. The pipe rolls, therefore, are unable to show a complete survey of landholding in the period. Barratt's view is corroborated by the need to supplement the pipe rolls with the Book of Fees and the Red Book of the Exchequer, both of which contain extra information on William's lands that the pipe rolls do not possess. However, it can be argued that the pipe rolls provide an accurate account of the information they do have, which despite the criticism is still vast.⁶ Furthermore, by supplementing the rolls with additional sources, one can have a fuller appreciation of Briouze's lands than if each source was taken separately.

The evidence from the exchequer is further enhanced by the *curia regis* rolls. These court documents reveal the importance of medieval justice within the baronage's daily life.⁷ They documented the litigation that William was involved in during John's reign, as well as the later years of Richard's reign. Through these documents one can identify which of William's lands brought the most legal dispute in court. Furthermore, they give a clear indication of the amount of litigation that took place after William's death showing that his son, Reginald de Briouze, played a key role.

Another important branch of administrative evidence is the royal charters that were issued concerning William. The *Rotuli Chartarum*, *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum* and *Patentium*, allow the historian to explore some of the causes and activities behind the financial goings-on of the Exchequer. These sources provide a different view of William as opposed to the Exchequer documents. Here, William can be seen as a prominent member of John's court and not just one of many who owed the king money for land and privilege. Again, one benefits from a comprehensive enrolment of these sources in John's reign, though the *Rotuli Clausarum* only started this process in 1204. A drawback to this evidence is that one cannot tell whether the orders in the charters were carried out in the way the king wished. Furthermore, the reasons why many of the grants were made is not explained. In summary, though each source has specific limitations in what it can impart to the historian, the combination of charter, exchequer and court evidence nevertheless provides a wealth of detailed evidence from which to study the career of William de Briouze.

Narrative accounts allow the historian to, as B. A. Lyon stated, add colour to the

⁵ For an introduction into this debate, see N. Barratt, 'The Revenues of John and Philip Augustus Revisited', in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S. D. Church (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 75-99; V. Moss, 'Normandy and England in 1180: The Pipe Roll Evidence', in *England and Normandy in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. Bates & A. Curry (London, 1994), pp. 185-197; P. Latimer, 'Early Thirteenth-Century Prices', in *KJNL*, pp. 41-73.

⁶ The accuracy of the pipe rolls can be seen in the account of Richard fitz Nigel, treasurer to Henry II, who outlined many of the procedures designed to ensure that no errors were recorded, including the chancellor's clerk checking for mistakes. Richard fitz Nigel, *Dialogus De Scaccario: The Course of the Exchequer*, ed. & trans. C. Johnson (Oxford, 1983), pp. 33-34.

⁷ For the use of court cases in building up the history of baronial families, see Daniel Lord Smail, 'Telling Tales in Angevin Courts', *French Historical Studies* 20 (1997), p. 184.

administrative records.⁸ They also allow the historian to read about events outside the direct business of government. Monastic annals were a good source in recounting the lives of barons. Some of these annals existed in Briouze territory, like Margam abbey which was in William's administrative authority in Glamorgan between 1202 and 1207.⁹ It is from these annals one can obtain reliable accounts of the events surrounding William's life.¹⁰ The Margam Annals themselves remain a contentious source. The nineteenth century historian M. Belmont did not support the view of Margam as a reliable centre for accurate historical information.¹¹ Likewise, Gransden only gave it a cursory evaluation in her masterful book on medieval historical writing, merely stating it's value lay in local affairs and that it's entries were 'very brief'.¹² It is also significant that the relevant entries of the annals were written in the 1230s and were not contemporary to William's life. However, despite these reservations, it is hard to disagree with Powicke's argument that Margam was a well connected abbey, which not only had direct links to William de Briouze but also King John.¹³ The king had graced the abbey with his presence both on the way to and from the 1210 expedition to Ireland where he captured Matilda de Briouze.¹⁴ The annals are accompanied by various chronicles like the *Brut Y Tywysogyon*, as well as the writings of Gerald of Wales, both of which were produced in or near to Briouze territory. This study, therefore, is fed by a body of primary narrative material which relates mainly to William's holdings in Wales, though the royal administrative documents allow for a broader look at William's other territories. Both the non-narrative and narrative sources have distinct methodological problems but on the whole the evidence can be considered reliable and accurate in its accounts.¹⁵

The use of a mixture of administrative and narrative records when researching William is best highlighted in the study of his decline. There are two main primary texts that recount William's demise. Roger of Wendover gave the fullest narrative account, stating that King John had been enraged by Matilda de Briouze's outspokenness in 1208 about the supposed murder of John's nephew, Arthur of Brittany, at the king's own hand.¹⁶ Wendover's date of 1208 for Matilda's outburst and the start of John's persecution seems an accurate one because all of William's

⁸ B. Lyon, *A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England* (New York, 1980), p. 217.

⁹ F. M. Powicke, 'King John and Arthur of Brittany', *English Historical Review* 24 (1909), p. 670.

¹⁰ For discussion on the surviving manuscripts of Margam abbey see Marvin L. Colker, 'The "Margam Chronicle" in a Dublin Manuscript', *The Haskins Society Journal* 4 (1992), pp. 123-148; R. B. Patterson, 'The Author of the "Margam Annals": Early Thirteenth-Century Margam Abbey's Compleat Scribe', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 14 (1991), pp. 197-211.

¹¹ Powicke, 'King John and Arthur of Brittany', p. 666.

¹² Gransden, A, *Historical Writing in England, c.550-1307* (London, 1974), p. 332.

¹³ Powicke, 'King John and Arthur of Brittany', pp. 666-668; F. M. Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy 1189-1204* (Manchester, 1913), pp. 465-466.

¹⁴ *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500 to 1286: Vol. II*, trans. Alan Orr Anderson (Edinburgh, 1922), p. 383; F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (Cardiff, 1977), pp. 204-205.

¹⁵ For discussion of methodological problems related to narrative sources, see H. White, *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987); G. M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997); Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London, 2005), pp. 88-108; L. Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on New Old History', *Past and Present* 85 (1979), pp. 3-24.

¹⁶ Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History 1170-1215 A. D. (V. II, Part I)*, trans. J. A. Giles (Felinfach, 1995), p. 248.

land and castles were confiscated in that year.¹⁷ The other major source for this event was a letter issued by John in 1210 and stored in the Black Book of the Exchequer. John's letter justified his actions against William and his family. In this open letter to his barons, John explained that it was William's failure to financially account for Limerick and nothing to do with Matilda, that was the cause of his expulsion from the realm and the capture of his wife and son.¹⁸ Comparing these two conflicting accounts show, therefore, that by using texts from different sources the historian can provide a much more balanced view of William's history, than restricting oneself to exclusively narrative or administrative accounts.

Before this study can start, one must briefly outline William de Briouze's personality because no study of an historical figure can proceed without some evaluation of that person's character. It is important to bear in mind the type of person William was, especially when assessing his relationships with other kin, colleagues and neighbours. Did William's personality have a part to play in his collection, consolidation and eventual loss of land and power? Unfortunately, this task is rendered almost impossible by the lack of evidence. However, the historian can afford brief glimpses through certain sources. The twelfth century writer, Gerald of Wales, wrote pointedly about William painting him as an 'exceedingly devout' man who prayed whenever and wherever he saw the cross of Christ. He was also kind and benevolent, always greeting even the lowliest commoner.¹⁹ However, it is common knowledge that Gerald wrote these observations under the shadow of William's immediate authority in Brecon and suppressed his initial harsh criticisms of Briouze in fear of reprisals.²⁰ William de Briouze would have been an ambitious and exploitative individual,²¹ whose time spent on the unstable borders of Wales and Normandy would have accustomed him to violence.²² For example, in 1175 William tricked Seisyll ap Dyfnwal, who had killed his uncle the earl of Hereford, to Abergavenny castle where he killed him and his followers then proceeded to kill Seisyll's seven year old son Cadwaladr.²³

The *Brut Y Tywysogyon* further testified to William's brutality by recounting his treatment of another of his Welsh tenants, Trahaearn Fychan. In 1197, Fychan was drawn by his feet on a horse through the streets of Brecon before being hanged. The *Brut* gives no explanation for this treatment.²⁴ It was actions such as these that caused

¹⁷ See Appendix X.

¹⁸ *Littera Regis Angliae, qua ordine narratur quam male se gesserat Willielmus de Breosa*, in *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cujuscunq[ue] Generis Acta Publica, Vol. I, Part I*, ed. T. Rymer (Record Commission, 1816), p. 107. [transcript courtesy of DJP].

¹⁹ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales/ The Description of Wales*, trans. L. Thorpe (London, 1978), p. 83.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²¹ Many historians identify these as traits of William. For a selection see Warren, *King John*, p. 108; J.C. Holt, *The Northerners* (Oxford, 1992), p. 185; Sidney Painter, *The Reign of King John* (Baltimore, 1949), p. 43.

²² Timothy Reuter, 'Nobles and Others: The Social and Cultural Expression of Power Relations in the Middle Ages', in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations*, ed. A. J. Duggan (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 87-88. Reuter stated that brutality was a common feature of the medieval nobility but in border territories, with an unstable political scene and the constant threat of violence by native populations, this brutality was more acute.

²³ J. E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest: Vol. II* (London, 1911), p. 548; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, pp. 109-110.

²⁴ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Peniarth MS.20 Version*, trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1952), p. 79; *Brut Y*

the deep hatred of William de Briouze and his wife, Matilda de St. Valéry, by the native Welsh population a hatred that was still remembered as late as 1230.²⁵ As was stated before, the historian cannot profess to comment accurately on William de Briouze's character but the majority of sources we can call upon as trustworthy are unanimous in their portrayal of him as a powerful but ruthless individual.

Chapter One: Land.

This chapter will provide a detailed summary of how William de Briouze acquired and consolidated his landholdings to become one of the most influential and powerful men in the first half of King John's reign. For the purposes of later analysis, this chapter will also chart the fate of these lands in the years immediately following William's death in relation to his sons, Giles and Reginald de Briouze.

Though William de Briouze appropriated much land in King John's reign he had significant holdings before John's accession in 1199. These holdings were, on the

Tywysogyon: Red Book of Hergest Version, trans. T. Jones (Cardiff, 1955), p. 181.

²⁵ *Ann. Mon. I*, p. 38.

whole, accrued through family inheritance but some were from William's own speculation. First and foremost, William inherited the family *caput* of Briouze, which lay in the deep south of Normandy between Falaise and Domfront.²⁶ The *caput* was a valuable asset to the family enhanced by being located in one of the richest fiefs of the Angevin dynasty.²⁷ The Briouzes were significant benefactors there, especially at the priory cell of the abbey of Saint-Florent-les-Saumar.²⁸

The Briouzes had also, for a long time, been influential in Devon and Sussex.²⁹ In Sussex, Bramber was given to William I de Briouze by William the Conqueror as reward for his participation in the conquest, a grant that was duly recorded in the Domesday Book.³⁰ Bramber was a territory rich in towns and villages and the Briouze family administered Knepp, Washington, Findon, Steyning and Horsham among others as lords of that honour.³¹ There is no doubt that William I de Briouze was a trusted companion of the Conqueror to have received such vital lands so close to the king's centre of power in London.³² In 1186-1187, William III owed the Exchequer £20 for these Sussex lands, lands which by then had become the cornerstone of the Briouze holdings in England.³³

Lands in Devon had been another early acquisition for the Briouze family, though they were obtained through marriage rather than as a reward from the king. The acquisition of the barony of Barnstaple was attained through the marriage of William III's grandfather, Philip de Briouze, to Aenor daughter of Juhel de Mowbray, who had held the barony from the king since 1095.³⁴ After the death of Juhel and his son Alfred (the latter c.1139) Philip and Aenor acquired half of Barnstaple, which was worth twenty-eight knight's fees by the mid-1180s.³⁵ The second half of Barnstaple went to another of Juhel's daughters, who married Henry de Tracy.³⁶ The division of the honour between two heiresses later proved a problem for William III. Upon John's accession in 1199, William had to fight in court for his possession of his half against an unwilling Oliver de Tracy.³⁷ Barnstaple was to prove a costly but beneficial honour for the Briouzes. It was large and William II de Briouze owed 1000 marks for it in 1158³⁸, while the scutage alone in 1186/1187 was £28.³⁹

²⁶ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 20; Appendix III.

²⁷ Robert Fawtier, *The Capetian Kings of France: Monarchy and Nation (987-1328)* (London, 1966), p. 148.

²⁸ D. J. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Early Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 318.

²⁹ See Appendix I. Appendices I-IV provide maps of the Briouze lands discussed in this chapter.

³⁰ *Domesday Book*, 2, *Sussex*, trans. John Morris (Chichester, 1976), Ch. 13. Around the same time William I received these Sussex lands he also received the honour of Purbeck in Dorset. See J. A. Green, 'Family Matters: Family and the Formation of the Empress's Party in South-west England', in *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics*, ed. K. S. B. Keats Rohan (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 150.

³¹ For a comprehensive list of these Sussex lands see *Pipe Roll 12 John 1210*, pp. 60-62.

³² The circumstances under which William I received his Sussex lands are explained in J. A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 39.

³³ *The Red Book of the Exchequer: Part I*, ed. H. Hall, (London, 1896), p. 65.

³⁴ See Appendix VIII.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

³⁶ I. J. Sanders, *English Baronies: A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086-1327* (Oxford, 1963), p. 104.

³⁷ *Rotuli Curiae Regis: Rolls and Records of the Court held before the King's Justiciars or Justices*, Vol. II, ed. Francis Palgrave (Record Commission, 1835), p. 179. See also Appendix VIII.

³⁸ *Pipe Roll 2-3-4 Henry 1155-58*, p. 183.

³⁹ *Red Book Exchequer*, p. 60.

As well as the Devon and Sussex lands, William III inherited and expanded upon a vast territory in the March of Wales. Philip de Briouze had been the first to make acquisitions in this land, taking Radnor and Builth as early as 1095.⁴⁰ This acquisition was enhanced a generation later by the marriage of William II to Bertha, daughter of Miles fitz Walter, earl of Hereford.⁴¹ This marriage introduced many new Welsh lands into the Briouze domain. The lands included Brecknock, perhaps the richest of these new entitlements, which contained the castles of Blaenllyfni, Brecon and Pencelli.⁴² Abergavenny was also obtained through the marriage but did not come into Briouze hands until 1175, after the various bizarre and unfortunate deaths of the earl of Hereford and his immediate heirs.⁴³ Therefore, William III de Briouze was by no means a man of humble origin. He belonged by birthright to a powerful and fiercely independent Marcher society, who held significant English lands as well. However, the combined inheritance William III possessed made him unique among the Briouze family and distinct from his ancestors. William I, Philip and William II had all obtained and added land to the Briouze holdings but none had united them under one *caput generis* like William III had.

Though William inherited a considerable amount of land from his family, he did not relax his own ruthless speculation into new territory before John's reign. From his already strong Welsh base William annexed Elfael in 1195, which had remained weakened since the death of its ruler Einion o'r Porth in 1191.⁴⁴ This ambitious move caused dissent among the local native Welsh population and William built the castles of Colwyn and Painscastle to protect his newly landed interests, though Colwyn was subsequently razed in 1196.⁴⁵ Likewise, William obtained Kington an honour previously held by Adam de Port, who had forfeited it to the king in 1171.⁴⁶ Evidence suggests that William was not the first baron to have seisen of Kington after Port's forfeiture because William fitz Aldelm accounted for its scutage in 1175.⁴⁷ However, by 1194, William de Briouze had possession and owed £22 and 13s. for the privilege.⁴⁸ The pipe rolls also reveal that Briouze gained land in other parts of the country associated with the Port honour. He gained the lands of Stratton St. Margaret and Berewick in Wiltshire, where his lordship was acknowledged in the 1198 pipe roll. His possession of King's Arley in Staffordshire was similarly recognised a year earlier.⁴⁹

Another source of land acquisition for William, prior to John's reign, was through wardships of minor heirs. In 1190, he offered an appreciable 1000 marks for the temporary custody of the lands of the late Gilbert of Monmouth whose son, John of Monmouth, did not come of age until 1205.⁵⁰ Likewise, he sought the wardship of

⁴⁰ Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 21.

⁴¹ Painter, *The Reign of King John*, p. 41.

⁴² A comprehensive list of Briouze castles is provided in R. Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles 1154-1216', *English Historical Review* 74 (1959), pp. 249-280. Also see Appendix X.

⁴³ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, pp. 547-548. It was the death of Miles's heir, Henry, at the hands of Seisyll ap Dyfnwal that led to William III exacting a brutal revenge on the Welshman.

⁴⁴ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, p. 585.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 585.

⁴⁶ See Appendix II.

⁴⁷ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 44, p. 8.

⁴⁸ *Red Book Exchequer*, p. 114.

⁴⁹ *Pipe Roll 10 Richard 1198*, p. 71; *Pipe Roll 9 Richard 1197*, p. 140.

⁵⁰ *Pipe Roll 1 John 1199*, p. 218; Ralph Turner, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: William de Briouze*, www.oxforddnb.com, (16 November 2004). The Monmouth lands were sizeable and by 1212

Walter II de Beauchamp in c. 1197/8 when William II de Beauchamp died. Holden and Turner have stated that Briouze did not receive this wardship until 1202 but the pipe roll of 1199 already calls William to account for 14 marks for the lands.⁵¹ Furthermore, in 1201 William was called to account for the second scutage of King Richard that was owed for the Beauchamp fiefs.⁵² Therefore, there is clear indication in the Exchequer records that William held this ward before 1199. The wardship of Walter, who did not come of age until between 1211 and 1214, was profitable for William giving him Salwarpe and the forest of Feckenham in Worcestershire,⁵³ as well as one knight's fee in Berkshire.⁵⁴

Finally, William seems to have gained lands in Gloucestershire, namely the manors of Tetbury and Hampnett. These lands may have been obtained through his marriage to Matilda de St. Valéry. This seems the most likely scenario because both William and Matilda were in dispute over these estates with Thomas de St. Valéry, Matilda's brother, in 1199.⁵⁵

In the first half of King John's reign, 1199 to 1207, William was able to add to his landholdings considerably and this was due to him becoming a trusted *curialis* in John's court. William's relationship with John was on a more personal footing than the baron had had with previous kings. This period, therefore, represented a break from the normal patterns of land acquisition that William had previously been familiar with, in that all the land he received after 1199 was through John's personal patronage, rather than gained through the act of marriage or inheritance. The lands William gained in this period, combined with those he acquired on his own initiative in the 1190s, compounded his landholding status even further beyond that of his ancestors. The land gains were significant enough to ensure that William became one of the most extensive landholders in England.⁵⁶

A large portion of William's land acquisitions in this period was based in the localities where he already had landed interest. In the March of Wales, John gave William licence to considerably expand and consolidate his estates. In 1200, William was granted the right to take as much of the lands surrounding his barony of Radnor as he could. John expected William's expansion to be vast as he stated in the charter that William was to save Cardigan for him.⁵⁷ In 1202 John entrusted Glamorgan, the land of his former wife Isabel of Gloucester to Briouze.⁵⁸ This fief contained the castles of Llangenydd, Oystermouth and Swansea, all of which William controlled by 1203.⁵⁹ Around the same time as this grant William was also entrusted with Gower, an area west of Glamorgan for the fee of one knight.⁶⁰ Therefore, not only were these

they were worth 15 knight's fees. See *Liber Feodorum: The Book of Fees: Part I, AD 1198-1242*, ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte (London, 1920), p. 99.

⁵¹ Brock Holden, 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe, 1207-1216', *Albion* 33 (2001), p. 5; Turner, *ODNB: William de Briouze*, (16 November 2004); *Pipe Roll 1 John 1199*, p. 86.

⁵² *Pipe Roll 3 John 1201*, p. 84.

⁵³ *Pipe Roll 4 John 1202*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ *Pipe Roll 3 John 1201*, p. 200.

⁵⁵ *Rot. Cur. Reg.*, p. 177.

⁵⁶ Josiah Cox Russell, 'Social Status at the Court of King John', *Speculum* 12 (1937), p. 324. William appears top in a list of baronial *curiales*.

⁵⁷ *Rot. Chart.*, p. 66b; Painter, *Reign of King John*, p. 43.

⁵⁸ *Rot. Pat.*, p. 19b.

⁵⁹ Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles', pp. 271, 275 & 277.

⁶⁰ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, p. 620.

grants sizeable, they were also crucial to the maintenance of royal control on the frontier. It was significant that both Glamorgan and Gower had been in direct Royal hands since the 1180s.

Other lands near Wales came into Briouze's domain when he successfully fined for the custody of the lands of his son-in-law, Walter de Lacy, who was regularly abroad in Ireland or Normandy by 1201. As a consequence, William was granted significant holdings in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire and for the royal confirmation of this custody he paid one palfrey and 20 marks.⁶¹ In being granted these lands that were so crucial to the defence of the realm, William was shown to be a reliable and trusted servant of the king, like his great-grandfather William I de Briouze had been trusted with land by William the Conqueror. However, as one can see, William III was entrusted with much more.

In Devon, William asserted his presence further by gaining the custody of the heir to John of Torrington's estates, which amounted to seven fiefs.⁶² The death of Henry de Nonant in 1206 also led to William securing half of the barony of Totnes.⁶³ Briouze had previously been in conflict with Nonant over the boundaries of this honour and had claims to it that reached back to Philip de Briouze, his grandfather.⁶⁴ Nonant's death, therefore, allowed William to utilise royal favour to consolidate his position in that county.⁶⁵ Furthermore, between 1200 and 1202, William successfully fined for the land of Shoreham in Sussex.⁶⁶

These early grants consolidated William's already established position in the localities. However, 1199-1205 also saw him obtain territory in places where he had previously had none. The pipe rolls show that in the first six years of John's reign, William acquired two knight's fees in Warwickshire and Leicestershire⁶⁷ and it is highly likely that he obtained the custody of Buckingham castle in this period too.⁶⁸ Likewise, William received various rights over lands in Surrey due to the favour of the king. For example, John granted William the land of Paddington in the hundred of *Wudetun*, as well as one half of the village of Gomshall on the death of its previous lord, Alan Trenchemer in 1204.⁶⁹ Finally, the fine rolls show that William possessed the honour of Winton in Dorset by 1205.⁷⁰

William's acquisition of new territory was not confined in this period to England. In 1201, King John offered William the county of Limerick in Ireland and shortly after, in 1203, the city too.⁷¹ Henry II had offered Limerick to previous family members but William was the first to accept it. For this privilege William owed 5000 marks, where 500 marks was to be paid annually.⁷² It seems that William acquired

⁶¹ *Pipe Roll 3 John 1201*, p. 87; *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus in Turri Londinensi Asservati Tempore Regis Johanne*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy (Record Commission, 1835), p. 81.

⁶² *Pipe Roll 5 John 1203*, p. 43; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 48; Painter, *Reign of King John*, p. 44.

⁶³ Roger de Vautort II of Trematon in Cornwall had successfully bought the other half for 600 marks. See *Pipe Roll 9 John 1207*, p. 77.

⁶⁴ See Appendix IX.

⁶⁵ *C. R. R.: Vol. III: 5-7 John*, (London, 1926), p. 295.

⁶⁶ *Rot. Chart.*, p. 60; *Rot. de Ob. et Fin.*, p. 182; *Rot. Pat.*, p. 43.

⁶⁷ *Pipe Roll 4 John 1202*, p. 40; *Red Book Exchequer*, p. 150.

⁶⁸ Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles', p. 262.

⁶⁹ *Liber Feodorum*, pp. 65 & 66; Turner, *ODNB: William de Briouze*, (16 November 2004).

⁷⁰ *Rot. de Ob. et Fin.*, p. 318.

⁷¹ To see the change in John's offer to William, see *Pipe Roll 3 John 1201*, p. 87; *Rot. Chart.*, p. 84b against *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 181, p. 29. For a map of William's Irish lands, see Appendix IV.

⁷² *Pipe Roll 3 John 1201*, p. 87; *Pipe Roll 4 John 1202*, p. 141.

other lands in Ireland too. He had custody of Carrickfergus castle in Ulster and he also enjoyed the temporary custody of some of his Irish neighbours' lands. A letter patent from John on 16th September 1204, revealed that William had had the temporary custody of William de Burgh's land in Munster.⁷³ Likewise, upon the granting of Limerick to Briouze, Theobald fitz Walter and Philip of Worcester both of whom had lands in the north Tipperary and Limerick region, were ordered to relinquish their holdings to him.⁷⁴ Philip of Wigorn was also commanded to hand over his land to William, including the castle of Knocgrafan.⁷⁵

In the first three years of the thirteenth century, due to his close association with John, William was able to increase his presence in Normandy too. The threat of Philip II Augustus encouraged John to hand over land in the duchy to capable and trusted men and William was one such man. As has already been stated, William gained the custody of Walter de Lacy's English lands in 1202, however, he also fined with the king at the same time for the custody of Lacy's lands in Normandy, an offer that was granted by the king.⁷⁶ William was also given charge of strategic sites surrounding important Norman centres. For example, in 1203, John ordered Longueil near Rouen to be handed over to his faithful man.⁷⁷ This success in Normandy was short lived as William lost all his Norman land, including the family *caput* of Briouze in 1204. The loss of Normandy forced barons to decide their allegiance between John and Philip II. William was a constant companion of John during the defence of the duchy and naturally supported him at the cost of his Norman lands. The loss of a family *caput*, for any baron, would have been a disheartening blow but the decision to side with a generous lord and the majority of his landed wealth was a logical one for William to make.

William continued to enjoy favour from the king in the years immediately preceding his fall from grace. In Gwent in December 1205, William was re-granted the custody of the castles of Grosmont, Skenfrith, Abergavenny and Llantilio, which had been given to Hubert de Burgh who had then been captured abroad that year.⁷⁸ Two years later in 1207, William added Ludlow to his growing list of castles on agreement of his son-in-law, Walter de Lacy.⁷⁹

Though there were political considerations that dictated the granting of these lands and privileges, the underlying issue of the personal bond between John and William must not be overlooked. It was William's good relationship with John that allowed him to acquire these vast amounts of land. Therefore, William's career in John's reign demonstrates that 'aristocratic power and property was quintessentially "personal"'.⁸⁰ The variety of these lands allowed William, not only to strengthen his pre-existing position in his lands in the Marches and Devon but also, allowed him to exercise authority in new territories most notably Ireland. This elevated position gave William distinction from his ancestors but also his peers in both land and authority.

⁷³ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 230, p. 36.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 169, 170, p. 27; Goddard. H. Orpen, 'Motes and Norman Castles in Ireland: Part II', *English Historical Review* 22 (1907), p. 446.

⁷⁵ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 169, p. 27; *Rot. Pat.*, p. 16b.

⁷⁶ *Rot. Norm.*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96; Appendix III.

⁷⁸ These castles had gone to Hubert in 1200 when he replaced William as the sheriff of Herefordshire. See *Rot. Chart.*, p. 160b; *Rot. Pat.*, p. 57; R. F. Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales, 1218-1232', *English Historical Review* 87 (1972), p. 468; Painter, *Reign of King John*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ See Appendix X.

⁸⁰ Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), p. 410.

Not only had William united the Briouze legacy but he had also expanded it considerably.

1208 represented a sharp decline in William's fortunes and for the next two years he lost possession of all of his lands and power.⁸¹ His decline was compounded by the capture of his wife Matilda and his eldest son, William IV, in Ireland. John subsequently imprisoned them in Windsor castle where they starved to death in 1210.⁸² William himself died in France a year later as a landless exile.

From 1208 to 1213, William's land was widely distributed among those favoured by King John. However, John kept some Briouze territory in his own domain. The extensive Sussex estates, including Bramber and Knepp castle were kept by him, as well as Radnor, Hay and Brecon castle, which were surrendered by William himself.⁸³ John's acquisition of these Welsh castles was described in the statement he issued explaining and recounting his actions against Briouze. William had handed over these Welsh castles, according to John, as part repayment for the debts he owed to the crown.⁸⁴ It is within this source that one can also read how John obtained, by force, Carrickfergus castle in Ulster while pursuing Matilda de Briouze.⁸⁵ The castles of Totnes and Builth were also kept under strict royal control.⁸⁶

Despite John's initial requisitioning of Briouze's land, the large majority of William's landholding was distributed among the baronage. The Book of Fees, compiled in 1212, stated that John had possession of the Briouze honour of Tavistock in Devon but this was granted to Henry de Tracy in 1213, along with the whole of Barnstaple.⁸⁷ Before 1213, it is most likely that the Briouze's half of this barony was in the custody of Peter fitz Herbert.⁸⁸ This baron also gained from the redistribution of Briouze land in other areas. The fitz Herbert family had claims to Brecknock that went back to the mid-twelfth century.⁸⁹ William had already faced Peter's father, Herbert fitz Herbert, over land rights in 1199.⁹⁰ Peter continued the family's claims and proceeded against Briouze in 1206 for his third of Brecknock. However, the case was postponed for more than a year because William had essoined due to illness.⁹¹ However, with William's fall from grace, Peter fitz Herbert gained possession of his third of Brecknock which included the lordship and castle of Blaenllyfni.⁹²

The remaining Briouze lands in Wales went to a myriad of other men. The honour of Kington was acquired by Adam de Port, baron of Basing in Hampshire.⁹³ Adam de Port was not the same Port who had forfeited the honour in 1171 but was, in

⁸¹ For good accounts of the dispute see Painter, *The Reign of King John*, pp. 243-247; Powicke, 'King John and Arthur of Brittany', pp. 659-674; Holt, *The Northerners*, pp. 181-187.

⁸² *Ann. Mon. I*, p. 30.

⁸³ *Foedera*, p. 107.

⁸⁴ See chapter two.

⁸⁵ *Foedera*, p. 107.

⁸⁶ Allen Brown, 'A List of Castles', p. 259; T. F. Tout, 'Review of "The Welsh of Edward I by John. E. Morris"', *English Historical Review* 17 (1902), p. 557.

⁸⁷ *Liber Feodorum*, p. 97; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 137. For Tracy claims to Barnstaple, see Appendix IX; Turner, *ODNB: William de Briouze*, (25th November 2004).

⁸⁸ *Liber Feodorum*, p. 97.

⁸⁹ See Appendix VII.

⁹⁰ *Rot. Cur. Reg. II*, pp. 8 & 25.

⁹¹ *C. R. R.: Vol. IV: 7-8 John*, (London, 1929), pp. 98-99.

⁹² See Appendix X.

⁹³ *Pipe Roll 13 John 1211*, p. 234.

fact, a relation who had married William's sister Sibyl de Briouze.⁹⁴ Port also received the lands in Wiltshire and Staffordshire that were associated with Kington, namely Berewick, Stratton St. Margaret and King's Arley. Gower and Glamorgan went into the custody of John's trusted official Falkes de Bréauté,⁹⁵ though Gower soon passed to William Marshal in October 1213, before coming into the possession of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in 1218.⁹⁶ The Welsh also took control of a number of William's castles, Llywelyn gaining possession of Radnor and Painscastle.

The piecemeal lands that William had accrued outside of the family estates similarly found new lords or re-established old ones. The Lacy lands of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire, in 1208, went back to Walter de Lacy.⁹⁷ The villages of Gomshall and Paddington in Surrey were in the custody of Peter de Maulay by 1212, while the knight's fee in Berkshire dissipated between various owners.⁹⁸ The pipe roll of 1209, for example, stated that the sheriff there held some of the chattels of William de Briouze.⁹⁹ The honour of Limerick likewise went to a new owner and the Annals of Worcester stated that in 1208 Geoffrey Marsh had custody of it.¹⁰⁰

William's inheritance and the considerable amount of land he amassed during his time as *curialis* had well and truly dissipated into the baronage of England by 1212. The redistribution of land allowed John to reward his immediate followers, such as Bréauté and Maulay, with baronies that had been kept from his disposal by the Briouze inheritance. More importantly, the dispute damaged the power of the Briouze family and ended their close association with the kings of England, as well as their ability to attain land from them. However, upon his death, William left behind a family that was eager to reclaim the lands and the glory he once enjoyed. The move to reclaim this land by the Briouze family, between 1215 and 1220, was motivated by William's two surviving eldest sons Giles, bishop of Hereford and Reginald de Briouze.

The civil unrest King John faced between 1214 and 1216, provided an opportunity for the Briouze family to seek restitution of the lands that William de Briouze had lost some five years earlier. However, no family member would be able to emulate William's success in landholding again. Giles de Briouze, after being in exile in France since the interdict, returned to England in late June 1213 and became the first to try.¹⁰¹ Though the small peripheral lands that William had gained through wardship or speculation were largely irretrievable, the core family lands of Devon, Sussex and the March were legitimate targets for Giles.

Upon Giles's return, or soon after, John granted the restitution of Briouze land to the bishop. However, this promise failed to be honoured and Giles implemented a policy of harassment to regain the lands. Giles, seeing opportunity in the unrest of 1215, instigated rebellion in the March to pressurise John into restoring the Briouze

⁹⁴ See Appendix V.

⁹⁵ *Rot. Pat.*, p. 68b.

⁹⁶ David Crouch, *William Marshal: Knighthood, War and Chivalry 1147-1219* (2nd Edition, London, 2002), p. 118; Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales', p. 471.

⁹⁷ *Liber Feodorum*, p. 99.

⁹⁸ For Surrey lands see *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁹⁹ *Pipe Roll 11 John 1209*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Early Sources of Scottish History: II*, p. 384.

¹⁰¹ *The Historical Collections of Walter of Coventry: Vol. II*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1873), p. 213.

inheritance.¹⁰² The rebellion, which occurred across most of Herefordshire and Brecknock allowed Giles and his brother, Reginald, to seize back pivotal lands in the March. In May of that year, Reginald was able to take the castles of Pencelli, Abergavenny, Grosmont and Skenfrith in just three days. Likewise, the castles of Hay, Radnor, Brecon, Builth and Blaenllyfni, the latter being hard won by Peter fitz Herbert in 1208, were surrendered to Giles.¹⁰³

Giles bolstered the strength of his cause by forming an alliance with rebels in other parts of the country. The Barnwell Chronicler noted for instance that Giles was among the rebels who marched to Northampton in mid-April 1215.¹⁰⁴ This alliance allowed the bishop to ally with a number of very powerful barons such as Geoffrey de Mandeville and Robert fitz Walter. Giles's strategy quickly paid off as John made peace with him and restored the core of the Briouze inheritance for 9000 marks.¹⁰⁵ John, no doubt, conceded to the agreement because 9000 marks was a sizeable payment into his war fund. This agreement, however, broke down when Giles died in late 1215. It is unlikely that Giles was able to fully resume control of all the Briouze lands in this short space of time. However, he seemed to have secured the lands of Herefordshire because William Marshal was immediately granted the right to control them upon his death.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Roland Bloet was granted Bramber including Knepp castle and Henry fitz Count was granted Totnes and the manor of Tetbury in Gloucestershire.¹⁰⁷

Reginald, who replaced Giles, did not maintain the good relationship his brother had established with the king and when John appealed for his help in 1216 Reginald, who had already reclaimed a lot of the March by force refused.¹⁰⁸ However, the death of John in 1216 led to Reginald reconciling with John's son Henry III in 1217. It was also in this year that the Briouze inheritance began to be restored. The lands that came into Reginald's possession were the family lands in Sussex, Gloucestershire and Devon (including parts of Barnstaple and Tavistock), as well as the majority of William's former Welsh territories namely Radnor, Builth, Abergavenny and Brecknock.¹⁰⁹ Reginald also regained the castle and city of Limerick and the lands of Munster that his father had held in the time of King John.¹¹⁰ Finally, he regained Gomshall in 1218.¹¹¹

Reginald de Briouze became the first of William's sons to properly possess his

¹⁰² Walter Clifford, sheriff of Herefordshire, reported in 1216 that the rebellion in the county had been solely caused by Giles. See Holt, *The Northerners*, p.35; Brock Holden, 'The Making of the Middle March of Wales, 1066-1250', *Welsh History Review* 20 (2000), p. 224.

¹⁰³ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Peniarth*, p. 90; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Collections of Walter of Coventry: II*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225; *Rot. Pat.*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁶ *Rot. Pat.*, p. 159; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 237b.

¹⁰⁷ For Bramber see *Rot. Pat.*, p. 160; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 222. For Totnes see D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), p. 35. For Tetbury see *Pipe Roll 10 John 1208*, p. 138.

¹⁰⁸ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Peniarth*, p. 93. John had been active in trying to win Reginald over to his side in 1216 but obviously to no avail. For John's attempts see *Rot. Pat.*, p. 184b.

¹⁰⁹ Portions of Tavistock and Barnstaple belonged to Robert, earl of Leicester through his marriage to Lorretta, William's daughter. Robert died in 1204 and Lorretta received these lands back after Reginald won restitution. She kept them until her death in 1266/7. See H. A. Doubleday & Lord Howard, *The Complete Peerage or a History of the House of Lords and all its Members from Earliest Times, Vol. VII* (London, 1929), p. 536.

¹¹⁰ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 814, p. 121.

¹¹¹ *Rot. Claus.*, pp. 348 & 405b.

father's land but he did not possess them in their entirety and the ones he did reclaim were constantly under threat from rivals. In the March, Briouze lands were continually threatened by Welsh princes and in other locations by family members.

A number of lands were distinctly absent from the Briouze restitution and many others were not wholly regained. Reginald faced difficulty over Barnstaple, for example, when Henry de Tracy refused to return parts of the honour.¹¹² Likewise, Henry fitz Count refused to return parts of Totnes.¹¹³ Reginald also faced opposition in Sussex when Matilda de Clare, William IV's wife, claimed rights over the lands of Bramber, Steyning, Knepp and many others, as well as the lands in Gloucestershire.¹¹⁴ The claims to these lands by family members became so complex that their ownership and status became 'far from clear'.¹¹⁵ To compound Reginald's inability to emulate his father's landholding, many of the castles that William had previously held, had found new custodians outside of the immediate family.¹¹⁶ Carrickfergus castle in Ulster was in the custody of William de Serland by 1223, while Blaenllyfni in Brecknock was returned to Peter fitz Herbert in 1217.¹¹⁷ The custody of the castles in Gwent that William de Briouze had secured in 1205 were also lost and returned to Hubert de Burgh in 1219.¹¹⁸ One cannot say that William III did not face such difficulties himself, as he had faced many claims on the family lands both before and during John's reign by families including the fitz Herberts. William had also faced similar troubles over Barnstaple that Reginald had experienced with the Tracy family. However, the difference between William and his son was that William could and did surmount these claims, whereas the dispute put Reginald into a far less politically strong position to do so.

Reginald's return to the king's peace under Henry III had also caused the native Welsh to campaign against him for his seemingly treasonous behaviour. Where once Reginald had been eager to support his Welsh neighbours in their fight against John and Henry III, in 1217 he abandoned them for the king in order to secure his own lands.¹¹⁹ Reginald's nephews, Owain and Rhys ap Gruffudd actively opposed their uncle, seizing Builth from him soon after his reconciliation with the king.¹²⁰ Llywelyn had also been enraged by Reginald's behaviour and ravaged Brecknock before seizing Gower and bestowing it to Rhys Gryg. During these campaigns Reginald surrendered to Llywelyn, submitting himself to the Welsh prince.¹²¹ This submission not only weakened the Briouze dominance in the Welsh March but it also allowed Llywelyn to keep a number of castles that had once been in the possession of the Briouze family, namely St. Clear's which he delegated to Maelgwn ap Rhys.¹²²

Reginald had little choice in this state of affairs. To remain opposed to Henry III

¹¹² *C. R. R.: Vol. VIII: 3-4 Henry*, (London, 1938), p. 365; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 376b.

¹¹³ *Rot. Claus.*, p. 376b; *C. R. R. VIII*, p. 226. Henry III was slow to remove loyal men like Henry fitz Count and Henry de Tracy from these lands, especially to benefit a baron who had recently rebelled against him. See Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 405b.

¹¹⁵ F. M. Powicke, 'Review of the "Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, 3-4 Henry III"', *English Historical Review* 54 (1939), p. 707.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix X.

¹¹⁷ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 1111, p. 169; Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales', p. 469.

¹¹⁹ For examples of Reginald's opposition to Henry III see Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, p. 20.

¹²⁰ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Peniarth*, p. 95.

¹²¹ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Hergest*, p. 217.

¹²² Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales', p. 470; see also Appendix X.

would have denied him the opportunity of reclaiming his inheritance in Sussex and Devon, as well as legitimising his lordship in the March. Opposition to royal power would have also kept him an outsider from a baronage that was increasingly reconciling with the new king. However, by legitimising the Briouze land that he had forcibly seized during the turmoil of 1215, Reginald alienated the Welshmen he had previously allied with. However, the difference between 1220 and say 1203, was that Llywelyn ap Iorwerth had become a far more formidable opponent.

Llywelyn was aware of the importance of politics and the damage that could be done through manipulating marriage and inheritance. Reginald had inherited his father's land to a sizeable opposition by other members of the nuclear and extended family. The son of William IV, John de Briouze, represented the greatest contestant and when he had come of age in 1218, had immediately started legal action to claim his right to the Briouze inheritance over his uncle.¹²³ Llywelyn played on these schisms to obtain more influence in the March and granted Gower to John to fuel his opposition to Reginald.¹²⁴ By 1227, when Reginald died, the Briouze lands had fractured between two owners. John de Briouze successfully gained the family lands in Sussex, as well as Gower. The larger share of the Welsh lands and the family baronies in Devon went to Reginald's son William V de Briouze.

Reginald's time as *caput generis* did not emulate that of his father's. Indeed, Reginald had managed to reclaim the old inheritance of the Welsh, Devon and Sussex lands, giving him the control of united territories that his grandfather and great-grandfathers had not enjoyed. However, there were some lands that William III had gained through wardships, expansion and John's grace that were never reclaimed. Furthermore, the core of Briouze lands were open to more claims of inheritance under Reginald because he was in a weaker political situation and could not rely on the king's support as his father had done. The case of John de Briouze and Matilda de Clare have already been mentioned but there was also a concerted effort by the St. Valéry family to claim inheritor's rights. For example, Henry de St. Valéry, Reginald's uncle, claimed rights in Sussex though the claims were later found false by the court.¹²⁵ The fate of William's land after 1211, therefore, reiterated his unique career. The lands that he acquired on his own initiative between the 1190s and 1207 enhanced his position above and beyond that of his successive family, who failed to copy his success. In other words, William III was the only Briouze to have everything.

The division of William III de Briouze's lands between his two grandsons in 1227 provides an opportune point at which to conclude this summary. William's importance and position both before and during the reign of King John, allowed him to remain uncontested as lord of the family estates. The dispute and his demise between 1208 and 1211 weakened the authority of his heirs, both in the eyes of the king and their peers. The death of William also caused the family to fracture between the claims of William's younger sons and the offspring of his eldest son. It also gave voice to the claims of various junior branches of the family.

¹²³ C. R. R. VIII, pp. 10-11; *Rot. Claus.*, p. 405b; J. C. Holt, 'The Casus Regis Reconsidered', *Haskins Society Journal* 10 (2001), pp. 169-170.

¹²⁴ John was Llywelyn's son-in-law. For Sussex lands see *Curia Regis Rolls VIII*, pp. 10-11 and Rev. T. Grantham, 'Historic Notices of Bramber Castle and of the Family de Briouze', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* V (1852), p. 152. For Gower see Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales', p. 471.

¹²⁵ C. R. R. VIII, pp. 8-9. Henry represented the English branch of the St. Valéry family, see Power, *The Norman Frontier*, p. 454.

The death of Reginald's son William V at the hands of Llywelyn in 1230 marked the end of Briouze hegemony over its lands.¹²⁶ Like so many other baronial families of the Middle Ages, the Briouzes eventually succumbed to the lack of male heirs.¹²⁷ When William V died with no sons to succeed him, the bulk of his holdings were split between four daughters. Maud took Radnor to her marriage with Roger de Mortimer. Isabel and Dafydd, son of Llywelyn took Builth, Eleanor and Humphrey V de Bohun took Brecon, while Eve and William de Cantilupe took Abergavenny.¹²⁸ The lands of Devon were likewise divided between the daughters and their husbands. Notably, Dafydd and Isabel secured parts of Totnes.¹²⁹ The oldest family lands of Sussex, as well as Gower, survived a little longer within the Briouze family. John de Briouze continued to possess these lands until his death in 1232 and his grandson, Sir William de Briouze, died in 1326 still carrying the title of lord of Bramber and Gower.¹³⁰

Chapter Two: Politics and Power.

The concept of land as the basis for political power in the Middle Ages is a well-established notion. In 1978, Leopold Genicot wrote that there was an established historiography already in place, which argued one of the primary concerns of all nobles in the medieval period was the exercise of power.¹³¹ Chapter one highlighted two major points concerning William de Briouze's land, which can also be applied to his power. First, William's acquisition of land in John's reign, as well as the enhancement of his status was largely due to royal favour. Secondly, this favour was developed through personal ties with the king and therefore, William's success was due to a personal relationship with John rather than some form of right to being a magnate of the highest status. In terms of power, it was William's personal relationship with John that enhanced his position in the king's court, as well as his influence in the localities. Therefore, it is this relationship that explains why William was more successful than his successors in terms of power and position in the king's court.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one will outline what William's powers were both before and during King John's reign. Part two will argue that the personal relationship William had with the king ensured his uniqueness among the Briouze family. Part three will use the dispute between William and John to show that negative personal politics also contributed to William's distinctiveness in terms of

¹²⁶ For a good summary on William V's death see J. J. Crump, 'Repercussion of the Execution of William de Braose: A Letter from Llywelyn ap Iorwerth to Stephen de Segrave', *Historical Review* 73 (2000), pp. 197-212. For primary sources on the affair see *A Letter from Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Wales, to Stephen de Segrave*, http://www.ku.edu/carrie/ms_room/jjcrump/intro.html (22nd April, 2005).

¹²⁷ Scott. L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England: Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics, 1217-1327* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 18-19.

¹²⁸ See Appendix VI. Also, Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 8.

¹²⁹ Crump, 'Repercussion of the Execution of William de Braose', p. 207.

¹³⁰ Hon. Vicary Gibbs, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom: Vol. II* (London, 1912), p. 302. For a family tree of the Briouzes from John de Briouze, see William Durrant Cooper, "The Families of Braose of Chesworth and Hoo", *Sussex Archaeological Collections* VIII (1856), p. 102.

¹³¹ Leopold Genicot, 'Recent Research on the Medieval Nobility', in *The Medieval Nobility: Studies on the Ruling Classes of France and Germany from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Amsterdam, 1978), p. 28.

power.

William's power and authority, both before and during King John's reign existed on a national, as well as a local footing and it was William's power in the localities that ultimately helped him attain national responsibilities. In terms of local authority, William inherited a considerable amount from his family lands, especially in the form of jurisdiction. In Briouze he had the power to summon people to attend pleas concerning the duke.¹³² He also exercised strong jurisdictional power in the Welsh March where his authority ran in accordance with the *lex Marchiae* and was not constrained by English law.¹³³ This Marcher autonomy was most evident in 1199 when William claimed to have certain jurisdictional rights over and above the authority of the sheriff of Herefordshire and the king with concerns to Bredwardine castle.¹³⁴

The combination of land and local authority in English, Marcher, Norman and Irish counties meant that William was crucial to the centralising government of the king and his exercise of national power. The large amount of castles that William was custodian of, by 1208, ensured that he acted as an administrator and a defender of the king's will in the localities.¹³⁵ William's importance to the king was evident before John came to throne, mainly due to the sheer size and breadth of his family inheritance. In Richard's reign William was sheriff of Herefordshire between 1192 and 1199.¹³⁶ Richard I and his advisors perhaps thought that William's status as a prominent member of the local elite in the March would result in a greater return of taxes for the king in that region.¹³⁷ Furthermore, William was a justice itinerant in Staffordshire in 1196, his appointment most likely due to his acquisition of King's Arley in that county. Also, he was present at the royal court where he witnessed royal charters.¹³⁸ William was successful under Richard and this can be seen in how he was able to keep his shrievalty for the majority of Richard's reign where as most others, including William Brewer, had lost theirs in 1194-5.¹³⁹ However, even before Richard's reign, William de Briouze was already ensconced in royal affairs as Henry II had sent him to Ireland, as one of his *familiares regis*, to administer Wexford in the 1170s.¹⁴⁰

These powers William held were territorialized in the respect that they were

¹³² *Rot. Norm.*, p. 20. For a description of the pleas that concerned the duke see Daniel Power, 'Angevin Normandy', in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill & Elizabeth Van Houts (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 69.

¹³³ Kevin Mann, 'The March of Wales: A Question of Terminology', *Welsh History Review* 18 (1996), p. 13.

¹³⁴ *Rotuli Curiae Regis: Rolls and Records of the Court held before the King's Justiciars and Justices, Vol. I*, ed. Francis Palgrave, (Record Commission, 1835), p. 426.

¹³⁵ See Appendix X.

¹³⁶ Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, pp. 578 & 580. See also, R. R. Heiser, 'Richard I and his Appointments to English Shrievalties', *English Historical Review* 112 (1997), pp. 8, 11 & 12.

¹³⁷ *Pipe Roll 2 John 1200*, p. 240.

¹³⁸ William witnesses, for example, a grant to William de Redvers by King Richard to have the third penny of Devon. *The Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon, 1090-1217*, ed. Robert Bearman (Exeter, 1994), p. 200.

¹³⁹ R. V. Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia, 1988), p. 74. Many Sheriffs lost their position because of their persecution of the Chancellor, William de Longchamp, during Richard's absence from the kingdom.

¹⁴⁰ L. Hays & E. D. Jones, 'Policy on the Run: Henry II and Irish Sea Diplomacy', *The Journal of British Studies* 29 (1990), p. 307.

based upon his landholding. In relation to national power, for example, William interacted with the court of Richard I as the sheriff of Herefordshire, a county where he had numerous holdings including the honour of Kington. Furthermore, the close political relationship between John and William was facilitated by the king granting lands to his baron. In local terms, William exercised authority and familiarised himself with the politics of landholding in the places where he held land. This, in turn, territorialized his relationship with the other litigants, attorneys and judges by basing his relationships with them around land and land disputes. Such relationships were not always consensual or advantageous. Much of the local politics William was involved in was hostile and involved cases against his claim to land.

To summarise, the nature and form of William's power remained relatively unchanged even during John's reign. His authority was largely inherited from his family estates and existed on two levels. The first was at local level, where he was involved in the carrying out of the king's business but also, active in local politics. Furthermore, William had fostered these inherited powers in the reigns of Richard and Henry II. Secondly, it can be summarised that the powers William enjoyed were intimately linked to his landholding, which informed the nature of his political dealings. In all of these ways, William's power was not remarkable. The inherited nature of his power meant that he was little different from his ancestors and the ways in which he exercised his authority was typical of his peers. However, with the accession of John in 1199, one is able to observe a closer relationship between William and the king of England, a relationship that was far more politically advantageous for William than he had previously experienced.

In John's reign, William exploited royal favour to increase significantly the power he already enjoyed and become a confidant of the king. It would have been impossible for William to gain the lands of Glamorgan and Gower, or the custody of the vast lands of Walter de Lacy, if he had not been close to King John. Furthermore, it had been William's status as John's *familiaris* that had seen him gain significant responsibilities over territories in Normandy between 1200 and 1204.

There is no doubt that these increases in land would have brought associated increases in local and central authority. However, John's favouring of William and the baron's subsequent success in the political arena was far more evident in the court cases of the period. If one looks at the land disputes William was involved in during John's reign, one can observe the presence of royal favour. There is no doubt that William was able to claim his rights in Totnes in 1206 much more successfully with the king's backing, than if he had not had it. Indeed, it was likely that William resurrected this dormant claim because he knew he had the king's favour. Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that William's success in cases was also attributable to his skills in legal disputes, skills which he had accrued over a long career. For example, William often used the tactic of *essoin* to prolong or delay court judgements. In 1206, William successfully postponed a plea against him by Peter fitz Herbert, who claimed a third of Brecknock as his right.¹⁴¹ William *essoined*, claiming illness, and the case was not brought before the court again until more than a year later.¹⁴² Such tactics were not unique to William and were widely practised among the baronage. However, William was not always so careful to make excuses. In the same year as the fitz Herbert case, Briouze did not even *essoin* from a plea in Surrey but simply failed to

¹⁴¹ C. R. R. IV, pp. 98-99.

¹⁴² C. T. Flower, *Introduction to the Curia Regis Rolls, 1199-1230 AD* (London, 1944), p. 381.

turn up, even though he had been demanded.¹⁴³ Therefore, though William was adept at dealing with these disputes, his position as a close confidant of John's gave him confidence in litigation and allowed him to utilise the system to his fullest advantage.

Such confidence and security in litigation was not open to William's son Reginald. By looking at the content of Reginald's dealings in court, one cannot deny that he was aggressive in his defence of Briouze territory but he lacked the support of a king whom he was on close terms with. For example, in 1220 Totnes was kept in the king's hands when Henry fitz Earl, the defendant whom Reginald was trying to regain the honour from, failed to attend the proceedings.¹⁴⁴ Such a state of affairs would not have occurred in William's time and the relative ease with which William was able to gain Totnes in 1206, highlights the difference between his personal power in court in the early 1200s and the diminished status of his offspring in the same arena. Similarly, John de Briouze could not exercise too much influence while his Uncle Reginald was still alive. When Reginald died and the Briouze lands were divided again, John obtained only Gower and Bramber making him unable to compete with the great earls of England as his grandfather had done.

Furthermore, the rise of litigation against William in John's reign, such as the dispute with Amice of Mumby over lands in Berkshire, or Emma, the widow of William Magni, both of which were a direct result of William's increase in landholding, gave him far more political exposure than his forebears had.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the quality and quantity of William's power set him apart from his ancestors. William I de Briouze had enjoyed only limited favour from William the Conqueror and both Philip and William II de Briouze were powerful barons but no Briouze had been on such close terms with a king than William III had. William was essentially a Marcher baron who had become a crucial member of the king's court but still maintained his position and presence in the localities and it was this situation that made him unique among his family.

Analysis of William's increase in power cannot be mentioned without some sort of questioning of John's motives for favouring this baron so. An obvious answer can be gleaned from the Margam annals, which stated that William played a leading role in ensuring John's crowning as king.¹⁴⁶ Although the Margam annalist stands alone in his account of William's supposedly pivotal role in this event, William was certainly present at the death of Richard in Chalus and to argue he had some involvement in John's accession, whether great or small, would not be unreasonable. Therefore, John would have recognised these actions and duly rewarded William with land and power when he came to the throne. William's service was also rewarded throughout the reign and can be seen in how certain land grants John gave out to William were specific responses to the baron's loyalty. For example, Briouze's acquisition of the custody of Hubert de Burgh's castles in Gwent and the granting of Gomshall in

¹⁴³ *Curia Regis Rolls IV*, pp. 115, 135 & 206. The case concerned William's right to present a candidate to the church of Ewhurst, which was challenged by the prior of Ewhurst.

¹⁴⁴ *C. R. R. VIII*, p. 226.

¹⁴⁵ For the Mumby case, see *C. R. R.: Vol. I: Richard I-2 John* (London, 1922), p. 170; *C. R. R.: Vol. II: 3-5 John* (London, 1925), p. 20; *Rot. Cur. Reg., I*, p. 257. For Emma's case, see *C. R. R.: Vol. I: Richard I-2 John* (London, 1922), p. 164. There were other disputes William was involved in during John's reign, they included a dispute with William of Lancing, who claimed Lancing and Buncton in Sussex, as well as a case involving the land of Mortehoe in Devon. See *C. R. R.: Vol. V: 8-10 John* (London, 1931), p. 27; *C. R. R. III*, pp. 318-319 respectively.

¹⁴⁶ *Ann. Mon.: I*, pp. 24-25. However, Roger of Howden does not mention William's role nor places him among the important figures at John's coronation. *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden: Vol. II AD 1181 to AD 1201*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London, 1853), pp. 457-459.

Surrey in 1205, were stimulated by the desire for John to compensate William for the loss of his Norman territories in 1204, while supporting the king against Philip II.

There is no doubting either that by rewarding William with power in the localities, John was also benefiting himself. In granting these lands, John was using Briouze to balance and oppose prospective enemies. For example, Wales was in a fractious state in 1199 and John needed loyal supporters in the March to keep the native princes in check.¹⁴⁷ The expansion of William into places such as Radnor and Builth in 1200 meant that Gwenwynwyn and Madoc, the princes of Powys, were contained within a boundary composed of Briouze to the south and Ranulf, earl of Chester, to the northeast. Likewise, William Marshal was granted the earldom of Pembroke in 1200 partly because of his claims through marriage but also because it suited John to check the expansion of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth into Deheubarth.¹⁴⁸ There is no doubt either that the presence of Briouze in Ireland was designed to maintain adherence to royal will within a country whose barons were often unruly, although William himself seemed to cause friction with the king there in c. 1206.¹⁴⁹ This practice of balancing faithful men against those the king wished to limit was a common practice among the Angevin kings as a whole. For example, Henry II had granted Hugh de Lacy the county of Meath in Ireland to balance the increasing powers of Strongbow in the 1170s.¹⁵⁰

Whatever the reasons behind John's favouritism for William, the relationship was based upon trust. During the first half of John's reign, William was party to the most intimate business of government and was given great responsibility in defending the realm's border with Wales, as well as having the consent of the king to expand there.¹⁵¹ It was factors such as these that prove John personally trusted Briouze and did not just reward him according to the ties of lord-vassal.

Despite the observations on this personal relationship, it can be argued that W. L. Warren's view that Briouze in relation to power and authority was made by John, is not entirely accurate.¹⁵² Indeed, John considerably enhanced William's powers but he was nevertheless a powerful baron in his own right. This was evident in July 1199, less than two months into John's reign, when William claimed that neither the king, the sheriff or justice could infringe upon his liberties in the March.¹⁵³

So far this chapter has focussed on the positive aspects of William de Briouze's political power. However, his decline between 1208 and 1211 represented a negative aspect of his political career which equally contributed to his distinctiveness among his peers and family. The dispute arose from personal political reasons and therefore was specific to William's career. These personal political reasons that made the dispute so unique can be demonstrated through why it was William who was chosen

¹⁴⁷ Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', in *KJNI*, p. 276; Holden, 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe', p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ Crouch, *William Marshal*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁴⁹ Painter, *The Reign of King John*, pp. 240-241.

¹⁵⁰ Hays & Jones, 'Policy on the Run', p. 307.

¹⁵¹ For discussion on the relationship between kings and frontier barons, see Judith Green, 'Lords of the Norman Vexin', in *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J. O. Prestwich*, eds. J. Gillingham & J. C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1984), p. 47.

¹⁵² Warren, *King John*, p. 185.

¹⁵³ *Rot. Cur. Reg. I*, p. 426. William's retort came in relation to the court's intervention in affairs regarding the castle of Bredwardine in Herefordshire, see *The Victoria County Histories of England: Herefordshire: Vol. I*, ed. William Page, (London, 1908), p. 361.

by John to be treated in this way but also, the severity of his treatment.

The dispute between William and King John was a result of a deterioration in their personal relationship and was directly linked to William's presence at the king's court. F. M. Powicke believed Wendover's account that John hounded William into exile and starved his wife and son because of his knowledge of the fate of Arthur of Brittany.¹⁵⁴ When Matilda accused John of his nephew's murder her loose tongue, in Powicke's view, all but sealed the fate of the Briouze family. Powicke based his belief not only on the account of Wendover but also, the Margam Annals, which he stated was party to privileged knowledge. This knowledge was attained by John staying at the abbey in 1210, both before and after his expedition to Ireland to capture Matilda.¹⁵⁵ Without access to the king's court, neither William or Matilda would have known about the fate of Arthur. Furthermore, it was William who had been entrusted with the secret and not another *curialis*.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the dispute and William's subsequent decline was distinctive because it derived from William's personal involvement in the king's affairs, an involvement that no member of the Briouze family had enjoyed, either before or after William.

Powicke's view on the decline remains a contentious one and many other theories exist which argue for different explanations for William's decline. For example, Holt took the view that the reasons John himself had given in his letter provided more accurate reasons for the dispute. John stated that Briouze had failed to repay his debts and Holt argued that the letter was witnessed by too many important people to be a fabrication.¹⁵⁷ Holt's theory is bolstered by strong evidence. In 1206, William had proffered ten bulls and ten cows to avoid travelling to Scotland to escort King Alexander to the English court, a proffer he had still not paid by 1208.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, in the pipe roll of 1207 the Exchequer calculated that William still owed £2865 6s. 8d. for the honour of Limerick which he had been granted in 1201.¹⁵⁹ This boldness in defying the conventions of the court and king had been shown much earlier and one only has to point to William's reaction to John's involvement in the affairs at Bredwardine castle, in 1199, to see William's impudence when dealing with the king.¹⁶⁰

On the other hand, Brock Holden disagreed with Holt and argued that his fiscal explanation was flawed by the fact that John did not recoup William's debt from his estates after his exile and death. This is convincing as Holt failed to explain why, despite William offering 40,000 marks, John ordered Matilda to account for the money in Ireland.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, Holden stated that the death of Arthur was an open secret and would have caused little trouble for John if Matilda had publicised it in her outburst. Therefore, Powicke was also wrong in his view. Instead, Holden stated that

¹⁵⁴ Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, pp. 467-468.

¹⁵⁵ Powicke, 'King John and Arthur of Brittany', p. 668.

¹⁵⁶ It is highly likely that William Marshal was also party to the fate of Arthur but he did not divulge the secret. See Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy*, p. 468.

¹⁵⁷ Holt, *The Northerners*, p. 186.

¹⁵⁸ For the original proffer see *Pipe Roll 8 John 1206*, p. 64. For William's failure to pay the fine see *Pipe Roll 10 John 1208*, p. 72, as well as A. L. Poole, 'Review of the Great Roll of the Pipe for the Tenth Year of the Reign of King John, i.e. the Year Ending at Michaelmas 1208', *English Historical Review* 64 (1949), p. 393.

¹⁵⁹ 'Willelmus de Braiosa debet MM et DCCC et lxx li. et vij s. et viij d. pro habendo honore de Limerich'. See *Pipe Roll 9 John 1207*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁰ *Rot. Cur. Reg. I*, p. 426.

¹⁶¹ *Foedera*, p. 107.

William was removed because he was becoming too powerful in the Welsh Marches and, therefore, becoming a threat to John.¹⁶²

Regardless of the varying interpretations by historians, each view underlines that the dispute was caused by personal political activities in the king's court and, therefore, each interpretation reiterates the uniqueness of William's decline. The financial situation over Limerick would not have occurred if William had not been favoured by John and granted the honour in 1201 and 1203. Similarly, discussion has already been made in part two of this chapter that William's confidence in litigation and perhaps his failure to repay debts to the Exchequer was caused by his favoured status. It is likely that William thought that because of his relationship with the king, he could avoid his debts at the Exchequer more readily. Even Holden's argument is based around William's increase in Marcher lands, an event that was intimately linked to John's favour of him.

The severity of William's treatment at the hands of John is another indicator of personal factors causing the dispute. Clearly, John did not have to resort to such a severe punishment of William. In 1207, Briouze had already been limited without violence by being replaced in Glamorgan by Falkes de Bréauté.¹⁶³ Rowlands stated that the severity of William's removal was because Gwenwynwyn, his counter-balance in the region, submitted to John in October 1208.¹⁶⁴ However, this fails to acknowledge that William's decline had already begun by this date and the argument still remains that John could have reduced William's power without the severity in which he carried out his persecution. There must have been an additional factor, therefore, in the cause for William's severe treatment other than simply his landholding or his failure to repay debts. The severity of William's treatment can be explained, therefore, by his direct involvement in the king's court and the knowledge he had of Arthur of Brittany's fate.

By 1208, John had openly maltreated his most powerful *curiales* but Briouze had remained unchecked in this way.¹⁶⁵ Though John had balanced William in the localities with various barons, such as the Burgh family and native Welsh princes, the king had yet to enforce his personal authority over him.¹⁶⁶ John's opportunity to subjugate William came at a critical time. In 1208, Pope Innocent III had placed an interdict on England leaving John open to attack from his barons. The heightened sense of paranoia caused by the pope's order would have ensured that John was eager to suppress any signs of insubordination. Wendover's account of Matilda's comments about Arthur was made at a time when the king was already ensuring baronial obedience by demanding hostages from the leading barons.¹⁶⁷ This is proof in itself that John was concerned with keeping the faith of his men during the crisis. An

¹⁶² Holden, 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe', p. 10.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 241; Turner, *ODNB: William de Briouze*, (16 November 2004).

¹⁶⁴ Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', p. 281

¹⁶⁵ John had harassed William Marshal in 1207, causing the earl to flee to his Irish lands, see Crouch, *William Marshal*, p. 116. John also denied Ranulf, earl of Chester his ex-wife's land in 1201, see Painter, *King John*, p. 27. Ranulf's ex-wife was Constance of Brittany and her land was the honour of Richmond.

¹⁶⁶ As stated in chapter one, William was replaced as sheriff of Herefordshire by Hubert de Burgh, who was also granted the custody of his castles northeast of Abergavenny. Likewise, Briouze's expansion was checked in the west of Wales by the significant landholdings of William Marshal. John used the Burgh family to the same effect in Ireland, where he upheld the rights of William de Burgh to lands that were aggressively sought by Briouze. See *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, nos. 145 & 230, pp. 24 & 36. For Angevin policy of checking and balancing barons, see Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship*, p. 55.

¹⁶⁷ Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History*, pp. 247-248.

outburst by Matilda at this crucial time would have required a strong and authoritative response by John. The king, therefore, had a decision either to ignore the outburst and risk being seen as weak in the face of baronial insubordination, or use the Briouzes as an example to other barons of how he would deal with dissension among his *curiales*. Matilda's outburst gave John a reason to remove William from power, the time at which she did it dictated the severity of this removal. There is no doubting either that William's impudence in relation to Bredwardine castle in 1199, the Irish troubles of 1206 and his various failures to repay debts made it easier for John to move against him.

Whether one believes this interpretation or not, it is hard to deny that the decline of William de Briouze was a unique event, which was specific to William's own career. This uniqueness, which can be seen in the causes for and the severity of William's decline, show that no other member of the Briouze family could have suffered the same fate. Furthermore, though John had harassed several of his other *curiales* during his reign, the severity and totality of William's demise was unprecedented among his peers. The decline, as well as the actions of his sons, Giles and Reginald between 1214 and 1217, ensured that none of William's immediate successors could re-establish a close and trustworthy tie with either King John or Henry III. The dispute effectively put the Briouze family outside of the immediate circle of the king. Therefore, though the personal nature of William's power and authority made him the most powerful Briouze in history, this power also made him unique in a negative way by facilitating his rather distinctive downfall.

Chapter Three: Ties of Kinship, Profession and Lordship.

Social ties among the baronage were intimately linked to the extension and maintenance of landholding, as well as the exercise of power. The ties William de Briouze had with his contemporaries can be seen as various orbits.¹⁶⁸ There was the orbit of kinship which was dictated by blood relationships. There were also the orbits of profession¹⁶⁹ and lordship, which were more dependent on William's personal career and landholding. All of these orbits, when compiled together made up a large network of association that surrounded William. This chapter will first identify the people that made up William's network, followed by a brief discussion of the dynamics of that network. The third part of the chapter will then analyse in depth how William's network acted during his decline (1208-1211).

First, however, the problems inherent with studying social networks in the medieval period must be stressed. First, kinship among the baronage was widespread and the majority were related to each other by even the most distant connections. This makes it hard for the historian to assess the true nature of kin groups. Holt highlighted this problem when he stated that although fourteen out of the twenty-five barons who witnessed Magna Carta were related to the Clare family, some were so remotely linked that they could not have been considered part of the family group.¹⁷⁰ This state of affairs applied to the Briouzes as well. I have tried to resolve the issue in this chapter by distinguishing between the immediate and extended kin group. Though many distant relations of William existed which I have not mentioned, these relationships I deem too insignificant in relation to the activities of the Briouze family to discuss here. Another problem that faces a study such as this is the lack of evidence on emotional ties. The lack of private letters and documents means that one cannot access this personal aspect of relationships in the medieval period.

During his life and career William not only fostered a personal tie with King John, he cultivated many others including an extensive kin group. There were the important figures of his wife Matilda and their sons and daughters but also many kin related through marriage. Among his sons-in-law were Hugh de Mortimer and Walter de Lacy both from powerful Marcher families, as well as Gruffudd, the son of the

¹⁶⁸ Thierry Rentet argued that an individual's social network could be seen through a number of orbits that surrounded them. A good analogy of this idea would be the different layers of an onion surrounding its core. See Thierry Rentet, 'Network Mapping: Ties of Fidelity and Dependency Among the Major Domestic Officers of Anne de Montmorency', *French History* 17 (2003), pp. 109-127.

¹⁶⁹ In terms of profession, the meaning here relates to William's contacts while present at the king's court or pursuing the king's business elsewhere.

¹⁷⁰ J. C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England III: Patronage and Politics', in *Colonial England, 1066-1215*, ed. J. C. Holt (London, 1997), p. 225.

Lord Rhys and Robert, earl of Leicester.¹⁷¹ His daughters-in-law, likewise, came from high stock. Matilda, William IV's wife, was the daughter of Richard de Clare, earl of Hertford, while Reginald's wives were the daughters of William Brewer and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth respectively.¹⁷² William also had various cousins and extended kin in high positions. Walter de Clifford was William's second cousin and by 1208 the sheriff of Herefordshire, while his nephew was William, earl Ferrers and his brother-in-law, Adam de Port.

Outside the family unit William developed relationships with his peers and the 'new men' of the court.¹⁷³ His presence at the king's court brought him into close contact with *curiales* like William Brewer and Geoffrey fitz Peter.¹⁷⁴ The similarity in these men's political and tenurial interests meant they co-operated with each other at court and regularly witnessed John's grants of land to one another. For example, Brewer fined with the king for wardship of lands in Wiltshire in 1204 which Briouze witnessed.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, William's duties in the localities fostered strong partnerships with the Lacys in Ireland, especially Hugh, as well as various families on the March. The most observable of these ties was with William Marshal. Briouze had extensive contact with Marshal in Ireland and Wales but also at the king's court.¹⁷⁶ Such alliances were strengthened through marriage and the marrying off of William's daughter to the earl of Leicester, as well as the marrying of Reginald to Graecia Brewer must have been politically motivated. Therefore, Briouze's high position in the king's service allowed him to cultivate influential friends and relatives among the earls and barons in the wider realm.

From the sources one can also see a strong relationship between William and the tenants of the various lands he held. Richard of Coombe, one of William's English tenants, represented him as an attorney during the Amice of Mumby case in 1200 to 1201.¹⁷⁷ The Baskervilles, a prominent Devon and Marcher family also had close ties of vassalage to William.¹⁷⁸ There were many other tenants who regularly met with Briouze in terms of lord-vassal ties, men like William Burghill, Ralph fitz Peter¹⁷⁹ and Richard of Ambrelege¹⁸⁰ but space limits the detailing of them here.

As one can see from the above, William's network was large and diverse and this was caused mainly by his position in the king's favour. His acquisition of lands through John's patronage allowed William to become lord to many men in different locations. None of William's ancestors or successors could claim such a diverse array of tenants across a wider geographical spread than William III could. Likewise, his high status as John's *familiaris* meant that he could establish bonds with powerful earls at court and in the localities, to secure high status marriages for his children. No other Briouze could have claimed to liaise with so many powerful *curiales* either.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix V.

¹⁷² *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Peniarth*, p. 91.

¹⁷³ Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 2, 229-250. Reynolds stated that ties of profession were fostered at county and royal court level and were therefore intimately linked with the exercise of jurisdiction.

¹⁷⁴ William witnessed John's charters regularly alongside such men. For selection see *Rot. Chart.*, pp. 39, 66b, 67, 68b, 76, 79b; *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 175, p. 28.

¹⁷⁵ *Rot. de Ob. et Fin.*, p. 229.

¹⁷⁶ *Rot. Chart.*, p. 68b.

¹⁷⁷ *C. R. R. III*, p. 295.

¹⁷⁸ *C. R. R. IV*, p. 120; *Rot. Cur. Reg. I*, p. 426.

¹⁷⁹ *C. R. R. VIII*, p. 309.

¹⁸⁰ *C. R. R. I*, p. 254; *Rot. Cur. Reg. II*, p. 177.

The relationships William had with his contemporaries often existed in more than one orbit.¹⁸¹ William Burghill, for example, did not only interact with William as his tenant but he also related to him in a professional capacity as his constable when he was sheriff of Herefordshire.¹⁸² Likewise, Walter de Clifford was William's cousin but he interacted with him in a professional capacity as well. For example, Clifford was charged with ensuring that William received Hubert de Burgh's castles in Gwent in 1205.¹⁸³ Therefore, the social relationships that William de Briouze involved himself in were not restricted to one type, instead William made contact with contemporaries on a number of different social levels.

The dynamics of William's relationships were typical of the age. Bonds were utilised for political and tenurial advantage by both William and the other parties. In relation to political advantage among the family, the protection of ancestors' rights not only strengthened the familial bonds between William and his sons but it also ensured inheritance rights and the maintenance of family property.¹⁸⁴ For example, William's sons-in-law, Robert, earl of Leicester and Walter de Lacy, witnessed the charter granting William Limerick in 1201.¹⁸⁵ The political advantages of having powerful family were also evident in family members acting as pledges for each other during fines with the king. William stood pledge for earl Ferrers in 1199 for a sizeable 1000 marks when Ferrers was fining for lands in Northamptonshire.¹⁸⁶ This political support was reciprocated and William used kinship to his advantage too. In the 1190s, it was William's relatives from the Mortimer family who protected his interests in Radnor against the Lord Rhys.¹⁸⁷ Likewise, Walter de Lacy protected William's interests in Ireland when he was absent.

Vassals also found it politically beneficial to support William and this was most easily done through witnessing the various grants he gave to churches and monasteries in his territories.¹⁸⁸ Men like Robert de Baskerville, William Burghill and William de Waldeboef witnessed Briouze's grants to churches in Brecknock and this gave them spiritual, as well as political rewards.¹⁸⁹ In terms of political reward, William could favour these men and support them in their own acts. For example, Briouze witnessed the donations of Ralph de Baskerville to the Church of St. John in Brecon and acted during a dispute involving Nesta de Baskerville's claim to

¹⁸¹ For discussion of multiple identities in the Middle Ages, see H. M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066-c.1220* (Oxford, 2003), p. 71.

¹⁸² *Pipe Roll 9 Richard 1197*, p. 194; *Pipe Roll 1 John 1199*, p. 214; Brock Holden, 'The Making of the Middle March', p. 221.

¹⁸³ *Rot. Pat.*, p.57.

¹⁸⁴ Constance M. Rousseau, 'Kinship Ties, Behavioural Norms and Family Counselling in the Pontificate of Innocent III' in *Women, Marriage and Family in Medieval Christendom: Essays in Memory of Michael M. Sheehan*, C. S. B., eds. Constance M. Rousseau & Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, 1998), pp. 325, 333-336; Constance Brittain Bouchard, "*Those of My Blood*": *Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Pennsylvania, 2001), pp. 135 & 154

¹⁸⁵ *Rot. Chart.*, p. 84b.

¹⁸⁶ *Rot. de Ob. et Fin.*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd, *History of Wales*, p. 581.

¹⁸⁸ For the importance of monastic houses in facilitating local social networks, see Emma Cownie, 'Religious Patronage and Lordship: The Debate on the Nature of the Honor' in *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics*, ed. K. S. B. Keats-Rohan (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 133 & 139.

¹⁸⁹ *Archaeologia Cambrensis: The Journal of the Cambrian Archaeological Association XIV* (1883), pp. 157-158.

Bredwardine castle.¹⁹⁰

Outside court politics, the dynamics of the Briouze kin network were typical of the age. The network was selective but flexible and the practical kin group seemed to lie within the immediate family.¹⁹¹ It was Matilda de Briouze and William IV who gave their 'counsel and consent' to William's grants in Brecknock before 1208.¹⁹² Similarly, it was William IV and Reginald who supported their father when he openly rebelled in Wales before fleeing to Ireland.¹⁹³ This immediate kin group seemed to extend, in the political sense, to William's son-in-law Walter de Lacy, who was entrusted with jurisdictional rights in William's lands. A letter patent of King John's in 1204 alluded to the fact that Walter may have been holding the city of Limerick for Briouze while he was absent.¹⁹⁴ Despite this reliance on the immediate family unit, baronial families were very aware of their extended kin network, as well as their heritage. If one looks at the *curia regis* rolls for evidence, one can see that the fitz Herbert and Tracy families used their heritage to claim lands against the Briouzes.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, William was very aware of his claims to Totnes through his grandfather, Philip.¹⁹⁶

Another trend which the Briouzes followed was that marriage was the primary way in which land and power was acquired and maintained in baronial families.¹⁹⁷ It is important to remember that the initial acquisitions of lands in Devon and the Marches by the Briouzes were through marriage. It was important for the head of the family to supervise marriages to gain the optimum political benefits from the union. William was no exception and closely arranged the marriages of his children, especially that of his eldest son to Matilda de Clare.¹⁹⁸ William's own marriage to Matilda is harder to explain in these terms. Matilda came from the St. Valéry family which had considerable authority and possessions in Ponthieu and the county of Eu in Normandy. Their lands in England were located in counties where Briouze had little or no interest, such as Middlesex, Oxfordshire and Berkshire.¹⁹⁹ It would be fair to speculate, however, that the marriage would have boosted William's status in Normandy and likewise the St. Valérys in England and Wales.

The practical kin group was predominantly located in the areas where William was most resident. For example, the presence of Walter de Lacy in William's affairs as witness to his charters or custodian of his Irish castles, must have had some basis in

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165; *Rot. Cur. Reg. II*, p. 175.

¹⁹¹ For extensive discussion of medieval kin groups and their nature see, Stephen D. White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints: The Laudatio Parentum in Western France, 1050-1150* (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 89, 95-113; Amy Livingstone, 'Kith and Kin: Kinship and Family Structure of the Nobility of Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Blois-Chatres', *French Historical Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 419-458; Bouchard, "Those of My Blood", pp. 3-5; & 157; Holt, 'Patronage and Politics', pp. 232-242.

¹⁹² *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, pp. 155-156.

¹⁹³ *Foedera*, p. 107.

¹⁹⁴ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 235, pp. 36-37.

¹⁹⁵ For the fitz Herberts see Sanders, *English Baronies*, pp. 8-9; *C. R. R. IV*, pp. 98-99. For the Traceys see *Rot. Cur. Reg. II*, p. 179.

¹⁹⁶ *C. R. R. III*, p. 295.

¹⁹⁷ For good studies of marriage see Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, pp. 15, 22, 33-36; Georges Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France* (Baltimore, 1978); J. C. Holt, 'Feudal Society and the Family in Early Medieval England, IV: The Heiress and the Alien', in *Colonial England, 1066-1215*, ed. J. C. Holt (London, 1997), pp. 245-269.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England: The Clares 1217-1314* (Baltimore, 1965), p. 46.

¹⁹⁹ *Red Book of the Exchequer*, pp. 25, 31 & 51; Power, *The Norman Frontier*, pp. 56, 221, 248 & 454.

Walter's location near to William's bases of power in Wales and Ireland. The same can be seen in how William Marshal, Briouze's neighbour in the March, had the closest relationship with him rather than any other *curialis*.²⁰⁰ Tenants also witnessed William's grants in the locations where they had landed interest.

Of course, not all relationships were positive ones. The land disputes William was involved in created enemies as much as it fostered alliances among tenants and peers. Furthermore, not all kin were close. Walter de Clifford, for example, supported John rather than his cousin during their quarrel. Also, Thomas de St. Valéry, William's brother-in-law opposed William over certain family inheritance.²⁰¹ In fact, kinship and inheritance were not always harmonious. Matilda de Clare represented a particularly vigorous claimant against Reginald when William's lands were being divided between his family.²⁰² Similarly, Loretta de Briouze wife of Robert, earl of Leicester exercised power as a widow, by frustrating baronial ambition to land when she retained parts of Barnstaple and Tavistock until her death in the 1260s.²⁰³ In terms of these conflicts, as well as the fact that all of William's bonds were formed and motivated by the desire to augment land and power holding, his social network did not differ from those of other barons. However, in its quantity and quality, no other baron outside the earls could perhaps claim to be equal to William. In 1208, his network was faced with what Bloch termed 'the paradox of vassalage'.²⁰⁴ The men that had positively associated with William through kinship or other channels had a fundamental decision to make between their loyalty to the king or William de Briouze.

As already stated, William's network was unique among the Briouze family both in its diversity and in terms of numbers. What was even more unique, however, was that William's decline put this network to the ultimate test. Such a stark decision about loyalty had not been faced by the magnates since the loss of Normandy. What is interesting for the historian is that many of these decisions can be seen in the primary evidence.

J. C. Holt stated that during and after John's persecution of William de Briouze, there was 'no sign that there had been open or covert opposition'.²⁰⁵ Painter, in the 1940s, suggested that opposition to William's treatment manifested itself much later during the rebellion of 1215.²⁰⁶ Painter's view has some weight when one recognises the activities of Giles and Reginald de Briouze alongside other Marcher barons during the unrest. Painter and Holt's arguments suggest that Briouze was not popular enough to warrant any opposition to the king in 1208 or, more likely, that obligations to the king and the realm were more important than the loyalty to a baron. However, both these views though not inaccurate, fail to appreciate the large amount of support William received from his network of social relationships during his dispute with John. Admittedly, no one actively rebelled against John's decision to remove William

²⁰⁰ Marshal had also been the sheriff of Sussex before 1205, which would have brought him into contact with Briouze in the localities. See Sidney Painter, *William Marshal: Knight-Errant, Baron and Regent of England* (Baltimore, 1933), p. 147.

²⁰¹ *Rot. Cur. Reg. II*, p. 177.

²⁰² *C. R. R. VIII*, p. 11.

²⁰³ For discussion on the power of widows, see Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century*, pp. 140-150.

²⁰⁴ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society: Vol. I: The Growth of Ties of Dependence* (London, 1975), pp. 233-236.

²⁰⁵ Holt, *The Northerners*, p. 81.

²⁰⁶ Painter, *The Reign of King John*, p. 250.

but many aided the baron and some to the extent of not complying with the king's wishes.

The immediate family, naturally, provided the greatest amount of support. As already stated, William IV and Reginald had accompanied their father when he tried to reclaim the three castles in Brecknock and Radnor that he had handed over to John in 1208.²⁰⁷ Matilda also acted as a vital intermediary between her husband and the king, as did William's nephew the earl Ferrers and his brother-in-law, Adam de Port.²⁰⁸ The desire by men like Ferrers and Port to act in this capacity showed their willingness to involve themselves in a volatile political situation for William's benefit. Walter de Lacy also participated in William's defence by facilitating his escape to Ireland. Walter was one of the three magnates mentioned by John who had harboured William and contravened their loyalty towards their king.²⁰⁹ Not all kin were so supportive of William though, especially members of the extended family. The Clares, Cliffords and Llywelyn ap Iorwerth were all absent from William's cause between 1208-1211.²¹⁰ The Mortimers even helped John in his campaign against the Briouzes. Roger de Mortimer, Annora de Briouze's father-in-law, sent soldiers with John to Ireland in 1210 for example.²¹¹

What was more crucial for William and interesting to the historian was that the bonds William had fostered at the king's court, as well as in the localities, also proved useful to him during the dispute. William Marshal harboured the Briouze family in Ireland in 1209 before passing them into the care of Walter and then Hugh de Lacy.²¹² It is interesting to note that John's statement mentioned that *multi alii amici* came to John's court to act on William's behalf alongside Matilda, Ferrers and Port.²¹³ Many of William's tenants also gave their support to their lord. The pipe roll of 1210 stated how William's tenants in Radnor, Abergavenny and Brecon fined with the king not to cross to Ireland to aid his expedition.²¹⁴ John was particular in distancing William's vassals from their lord by making them swear fealty to Gerard d'Athée and make them promise not to return to Briouze's service.²¹⁵ This was proof that John was concerned that William's tenants had a greater loyalty to their lord than to their king. This was especially the case in the Welsh territories where the community was close knit and bound as much by loyalty as by law and political needs.²¹⁶ Some tenants were loyal enough to suffer the consequences of their support. Richard of Coombe, for example, lost his lands in Somerset and Dorset for joining William in Ireland. These lands were only restored to him when the dispute ended in 1211.²¹⁷ Therefore, during the dispute some of the closest allies William had made through his exercise of personal power, both in the localities and at John's court, had proved their loyalty to

²⁰⁷ *Foedera*, p. 107.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁰⁹ *Foedera*, p. 107. The other two named men were William Marshal and Hugh de Lacy.

²¹⁰ Richard de Clare and Llywelyn later rebelled in 1215, Richard claiming that he opposed John because of the murder of William IV. See Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England*, p. 30.

²¹¹ Holden, 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe', p. 3.

²¹² Crouch, *William Marshal*, p. 116.

²¹³ *Foedera*, p. 107.

²¹⁴ *Pipe Roll 12 John 1210*, p. 147.

²¹⁵ *Rot. Pat.*, p. 86b; Holden, 'The Making of the Middle March of Wales', p. 224.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215; For discussion on lord-vassal ties relying on loyalty as much as law, see H. M. Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders and Thugs: The Gentry of Angevin Yorkshire 1154-1216* (Pennsylvania, 1993), p. 19.

²¹⁷ *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, no. 413, p. 68.

him.

The dynamics of a kinship network, as highlighted in section two of this chapter, would suggest that men had political, as well as social concerns when acting in the dispute. It is fair to argue that the lack of rebellion between 1208 and 1211 was partly due to baronial desires to keep on good terms with the king. Furthermore, some barons may have kept out of the dispute because the decline of William would have been politically or tenurially beneficial for them.²¹⁸ Even those that helped William may have had political motives. For example, William's fate was closely linked to the fate of his family. If he declined in power, so would other members of the family unit. Therefore, it was in the interests of their future political authority that his sons defended their father's position, not loyalty to the kin group. This argument has found its way into the wider context of the 1215 rebellion. Historians like Rowlands stated that baronial revolt in relation to Briouze's demise was more to do with the fact that barons did not gain from William's decline, rather than any sentiment of kinship or emotional bonds.²¹⁹ Holden argued that William's Welsh tenants rebelled in 1215 because of new financial exactions and foreign officials, rather than any injustice done against Briouze.²²⁰ On the other hand, the *Brut Y Tywysogyon* echoed the popular opinions of the chronicles by suggesting that rebellion was more to do with John's failure to recognise rights established by Henry I and Edward the Confessor.²²¹

Unfortunately, there is no way to confirm why men acted the way they did during the dispute. One cannot say for certain that William's support was due to loyalty rather than political motives. Painter stated that it was 'impossible to distinguish clearly between actions based...on personal reasons and those that stemmed from...political considerations'.²²² One even has to wonder whether the personal and the political were not one of the same thing. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that there was a genuine loyalty towards William among members of his network, regardless of the political implications. For example, Walter de Lacy suffered not only the disfavour of John for his support of William but also, he was disseised of his lands and exiled.²²³ Likewise, Hugh de Lacy was forced to flee his Irish lands.²²⁴ Therefore, the supporting of William was not a politically advantageous act. Barons, kin and tenants risked their position in the king's court, as well as the possession of their lands for the sake of William.

The above analysis shows that although William was a 'broken reed' in 1208, this did not mean that his network of contacts abandoned him.²²⁵ Furthermore, this core support was partly composed of men who were only associated with William through his personal power. Hugh de Lacy and William Marshal, for example, were associates through William's presence at court and as an authority figure in the localities. However, it was unlikely that these men would have acted in this way if they had not

²¹⁸ Walker suggested this in relation to William de Burgh, see Walker, 'Hubert de Burgh and Wales', p.466-467.

²¹⁹ Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', p.286.

²²⁰ Holden, 'The Making of the Middle March of Wales', p. 225.

²²¹ *Brut Y Tywysogyon: Hergest*, p. 201.

²²² Painter, *The Reign of King John*, p. 226.

²²³ *The Continuation of William of Newburgh's History to AD 1298*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I: Vol. II*, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1885), p. 511; *Ann. Mon. I*, p. 30; *Cal. Docs. Ireland*, nos. 596 & 962, pp. 93 & 145

²²⁴ *Ann. Mon. I*, p. 30. Hugh was also deprived of the earldom of Ulster. See Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, pp. 22 & 306.

²²⁵ Lloyd, *History of Wales*, p. 632.

had close personal ties to William as well. It is highly likely, for example, that William cemented his relationship with Marshal during their defence of Normandy. Therefore, William was distinct among his family because he could rely upon a base of powerful earls and barons, established on personal interaction, who were not available to his offspring. This can be seen in how William was the first Briouze to have good personal contact with Irish magnates and though Reginald reclaimed Limerick in 1217, he did not have a close ally who could rank as high as William Marshal or Hugh de Lacy.

William ultimately failed in the political arena because the support he was given would only go so far. His supporters acted within the constraints of custom and law. To actively rebel with William would have had been risking too much for any baron. William de Ferrers and Adam de Port had tried to salvage William's position but even they had to recognise that the law was paramount and witnessed John's statement condoning his actions against William.²²⁶ William received the most fervent support from his wife and immediate family but this was not enough to secure his political longevity.²²⁷ The lack of serious and sustained support from the significant magnates of the realm therefore ensured William's demise.

Conclusion

William de Briouze was a powerful and landed baron, in this respect he was not remarkable. Like his contemporaries, William used the king's patronage to gain more land and authority and like any of his ancestors or offspring, he belonged to a well

²²⁶ John's actions against William were not illegal. The king exiled him according to the laws of the exchequer and he legitimised his actions with baronial consent. See Holt, *The Northerners*, p. 191 & J. C. Holt, 'The Barons and the Great Charter', *English Historical Review* 70 (1955), pp. 4 & 16.

²²⁷ Holt, 'Patronage and Politics', p. 233.

connected family. However, Briouze was remarkable in the way he achieved his success through personal factors. It was William's personal involvement in the king's court that made him unique among the Briouze family in terms of career, the size and variety of his landholding and the quality of his social ties. Similarly, William's personal relationship with John ensured that he became a more powerful baron than any of his peers, equalling the earls in all but title.

Chapter one highlighted how William's individual career allowed him to have seisen of all the lands acquired piecemeal by his ancestors and even expand them further. Similarly, the severity of the dispute in 1208 ensured that none of his successors were able to emulate his landholding, let alone reclaim all that William had acquired. Chapter two analysed William's exploitation of royal favour to highlight that he was the only member of the family to fully integrate into the king's court and become one of the closest aides to a monarch. Chapter three compounded this view with evidence to suggest that William's social network and the dynamics of that network were facilitated via close personal ties with men who William came into contact with through his participation in court and the diverse and sizeable territories he held in the localities.

William's dispute with King John, which led to his decline, also made him distinctive among both the baronage and his family. It was a fate that no other contemporary suffered. The dispute fundamentally stemmed from William's personal relationship with John and had a great impact on his landholding, power and social network. In relation to land and power, the study showed how the decline was caused by William's participation in court politics and the deterioration of his personal relationship with King John. However, it also demonstrated that William's treatment allowed John to exercise authority himself, as well as increase the power and landholding of other barons. In relation to kinship and other personal bonds, the dispute was used to observe how William's network, especially those who were affiliated to him through his activities for the king, reacted to his maltreatment. Furthermore, throughout the study, the dispute was used to reiterate William's uniqueness by showing how it deprived his successors of the benefits of being close to the king.

Relying on the dispute as a testing ground, stimulates the question of what if the dispute had never happened? What if William had lived in peace with the king and died of natural causes in 1211, or even died defending Normandy in 1203? Would his successors have had an equally if not more successful career? It can be argued that William would still have remained a unique figure among the Briouzes because of the nature of his landholding. William's inheritance was composed of too many conflicting marriage alliances to be united for long. Claims to William's family lands were already evident during his own lifetime from the fitz Herbert, Nonant, Tracy and the St. Valéry families, let alone the mass of claims against the lands he acquired through his own initiative. Such claims meant that William's landholdings were unlikely to have passed wholesale to his successor.

Furthermore, whenever William's death would have occurred, it still would have left a number of competing branches of the family. If William IV had lived, he would have faced claims against his inheritance by people with ancient entitlements to the land, including the St. Valéry family as Reginald discovered in 1219.²²⁸ One must also not forget the growing power of Llywelyn and the impact this would have had on Briouze lands both in the March but elsewhere, through the Welsh king's blood ties to

²²⁸ *Curia Regis VIII*, pp. 8-9.

the family.²²⁹ Furthermore, the trend in the thirteenth century to favour a fairer distribution of inheritance over the stricter patrilineal descent of the twelfth, meant that upon William III's death, his lands would have been distributed between a number of his sons.²³⁰ Indeed, this process was evident in how both Giles and Reginald shared the family's Welsh castles in 1215. The distributing of these lands among the many would have decreased the power and personal ties each son would have had in comparison to William III, both in terms of quantity and quality. Therefore, by posing this question of virtual history one can demonstrate that even without the dispute of 1208, William III still occupied a powerful position in land and authority that was rare among the family both past and future.

The decline of William is a famous case and has often been used to explain the Magna Carta crisis of 1215.²³¹ However, this study has demonstrated that the demise of William had much wider implications. Though I do not wish to detract from William's importance in relation to the events of 1215, his decline contributes greatly to understanding how a baron involved himself with the king and to what extent land played a role in this relationship. Furthermore, it must be stressed that William's decline is also important in assessing the role and nature of the medieval family, as well as recognising the importance of women in national politics. Assessment of relationships outside of the kin network, namely with other barons and tenants and to what extent land or political situations informed these relationships, can also be studied.

Therefore, the work presented here is not just a biographical study. By looking at William de Briouze's history one can observe other figures of the period. Studying William's life brings into focus the history of his wife Matilda and their children but also, King John, William Marshal, Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, Hugh and Walter de Lacy and many other lesser knights and tenants. Through William's involvement in marriages, war and government, the historian can observe the activities of *curiales* like William Brewer and Geoffrey fitz Peter, as well as the Clare and Mortimer families. The list could go on. William de Briouze's history is therefore rich and can be put to a number of diverse historical uses. By familiarising oneself with this history, the historian is able to appreciate established trends of the medieval period but also plot the life and career of an immensely unique and interesting individual.

²²⁹ See Appendices V and VI.

²³⁰ Bouchard, "*Those of my Blood*", p. 178.

²³¹ Painter, *The Reign of King John*; Holden, 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic Fringe', pp. 1-24; Rowlands, 'King John and Wales', pp. 273-287.