

FITZOSBERN, WILLIAM (died 1071), earl of Hereford, lord of Breteuil in Normandy

Name: William Fitzosbern
Date of death: 1071
Gender: Male
Occupation: earl of Hereford, lord of Breteuil in Normandy
Area of activity: Royalty and Society
Author: Ceinwen Hannah Thomas

Kinsman and friend of king William I. He was the first to urge William to invade England, and became the 'prime agent' in its conquest; he was mainly responsible for establishing Norman rule on the Welsh border and for conquering Gwent. He became earl of Hereford early in 1067 and his vigorous attacks on the border country brought about an alliance between [Bleddyn](#) and [Rhiwallon ap Cynfyn](#) of Powys and the Mercian English in 1067, which lasted until the Mercians finally submitted in 1070. He overthrew [Maredudd](#) and [Rhys ab Owain ab Edwin](#) of Deheubarth and Cadwgan ap Meurig of Morgannwg (c. 1070), built castles at Wigmore, Clifford, Ewias Harold, Monmouth and Chepstow, and conquered Gwent. Though he earned a reputation for severity in England, he was conciliatory to the Gwentian Welsh, allowing many to retain their lands on the favourable terms granted by [Gruffydd ap Llywelyn](#), and the Welsh reeves (*meiri*) were not displaced. Before his last departure from the country, he came to terms with [Maredudd ab Owain](#) by granting him the vill of Ley. To stabilize his defensive system of border castles, he attached chartered boroughs to them, attracting settlers by granting favourable conditions, e.g., he granted his French tenants at Hereford the very liberal 'laws' which he had given to Breteuil. These 'laws' became the prototype of the charters granted by many Norman lords to their boroughs, and they had an immense influence in Wales since Hereford was regarded as a model borough. He was killed in battle at Cassel, 20 February 1071, and buried at Cormeilles in Normandy.

Author

Ceinwen Hannah Thomas

Sources

Freeman, *The history of the Norman conquest of England, its causes and its results* (1867-79), iv, 66-72, 103-6, 111, 126, 241-3, 502-4

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

The English historical review(1900), 74, 76, 302-3, 305-8, 313, 317-8

J. E. Lloyd, [A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest \(London 1911\)](#), ii, 374-6, 444

The Text of the Book of Llan Dâv(Oxford 1893), 277-8

The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1899-1900, 148-50

see also Edward Arthur Lewis, *The Mediaeval Boroughs of Snowdonia a study of the rise and development of the municipal element in the ancient principality of North Wales down to the Act of Union of 1536*(London 1912)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William FitzOsbern, 1st Earl of Hereford](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q1244579](#)

Published date: 1959

Article Copyright: <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/> 

to life in Wales and beyond.

Find out more on our [sponsorship page](#).

