



**Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny.**

**before 970 ~ 1024**

Father: Raoul (i) de Tosny.

Mother: (unknown).

Spouse: (unknown).

Children:

1. Roger (I) de Tosny (990-1042).<sup>1</sup>
2. Robert (I) de Tosny, later "de Belvoir" (?-1088).

Raoul (I) (ii) was certainly born before 970 and it may be that he was born as early as c.950.

Apparently, Raoul was the Standard Bearer of Normandy during the Burgundy campaign of 1003,<sup>2</sup> when a large Norman force joined the French King Robert II in his invasion of Burgundy. If this is true, then it would be the first of many occasions when a member of the Tosny family would undertake this singular duty.<sup>3</sup>

In 1013 or 1014, during a feud, Duke Richard II placed Nigel, vicomte of the Cotentin, Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny, and his son Roger (I) de Tosny, in charge of his strategically important and newly founded castle at *Tillières-sur-Avre*.<sup>4</sup> There, the

<sup>1</sup> Moore, James (2017) *The Norman Aristocracy in the Late Eleventh Century: Three Case Studies*, unpublished DPhil thesis submitted to Oxford University, (2017), 66. Gives the date of Roger (I)'s death as (c.1042-c.1044)

<sup>2</sup> Palgrave, Francis (1864) *The History of Normandy and of England, Volume III*, London: Macmillan, 115.

<sup>3</sup> The family of de Tosny were to become hereditary Standard Bearers of Normandy and it is said that their 'arms' signify this singular honour – *argent à une manche mal-taillée gules*. (In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century "Mort Dartu" {Vulgate Cycle} (93), we are told that Sir Lancelot sets off to fight in a tournament having borrowed another knight's plain white shield so that he could remain anonymous. But the daughter of the house, Elaine of Ascolat, has tricked him into wearing her 'favour' on it – a red sleeve.) A 'manche' (sleeve) has been a heraldic device since very early times and is born today in the personal arms of the Lord Lyon of Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> Tillières-sur-Avre was one of the most strategically important castles on the southern border of Normandy. Built just before 1013 by Duke Richard II of Normandy it was aimed at countering any threat to Normandy from the Kingdom of France, specifically from the County of Chartres. Although surmounted today by a 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion, it is still possible to see much of the ancient foundations and to admire the dominant vantage point that the castle enjoyed with clear view to the east, south, and west. [http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eure.gouv.fr%2Fcontent%2Fdownload%2F25178%2F168198%2Ffile%2FESSENTIEL\\_CONSEIL\\_99%2520Tilli%25C3%25A8res%2520sur%2520Avre\\_Ch%25C3%25A2teau\\_ZFSP.pdf%20](http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eure.gouv.fr%2Fcontent%2Fdownload%2F25178%2F168198%2Ffile%2FESSENTIEL_CONSEIL_99%2520Tilli%25C3%25A8res%2520sur%2520Avre_Ch%25C3%25A2teau_ZFSP.pdf%20) (accessed 12/4/2020).

three castellans defeated the forces of Odo II, count of Blois-Chartres, forcing him to come to an agreement with Duke Richard. This passage of history clearly illustrates the very high esteem that the duke had for the Tosny family since the castle at Tillières was on the very border of the Duke's territories<sup>5</sup> and its loss would have left his lands open to attack from his enemies on the other side of the River Avre. It was only some 30km south from the Tosny stronghold of Conches-en-Ouches.<sup>6</sup>

Some students aver that Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny had had hopes that, having successfully defended the Duke's castle, he would, as a reward, be given it for his own, but, in 1030 we see that it was Gilbert Crespin who had actually received it from the Duke and no reason seems to have been given as to why the castle was not granted to Raoul.

It seems reasonable to suggest that Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny did not enjoy the full confidence of Duke Richard II. He comes across in the annals as a man of significant courage and military ability whose strength of character was a force to be reckoned with – not a man to suffer fools lightly nor to tolerate those whose opinions did not agree with his own, no matter what their standing was in society! A man such as this would be bound to clash on occasion with the Duke whose own character was equally as aggressive. It comes as no surprise, then, to find that it is not long before we are told that Raoul was banished<sup>7</sup> from Normandy and we encounter him apparently leading an expedition into southern Italy.<sup>8</sup> It is very possible that Raoul, and the companions who accompanied him, set off intent on completing a Pilgrimage, but, even as pilgrims, they would have taken their weapons with them! Pilgrimage was an expensive pass-time and any opportunity to act as mercenaries *en route* was not to be spurned. In this way the pilgrim could work his way round various states and so help fund his religious expedition. It should also be remembered that in these times the vows taken by a knight were of a religious nature and that pilgrimages and military expeditions were thus often synonymous. We are not told exactly when Raoul left Normandy for Italy, but it must have been after 1013-1014. We are told that in the winter of 1015, Raoul was very much in the vanguard when a Muslim force attacked the city at *the Siege of Salerno*.

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<sup>5</sup> The southern border of Normandy in these parts was marked by the River Avre. Duke Richard II was the first to pursue a border policy which became a common tactic amongst his descendants for the next century and more. {Crouch, David (2007) *The Normans: The History of a Dynasty*, London: Hambledon Continuum, p.37.]

<sup>6</sup> The original fortress was constructed some distance to the west of Conches at a position near the source of the Rouloir River near *Étangs du Vieux Conches*. The ruins of the later massive Castle lie some 100m south-east of the parish church of St Foy in Conches-en-Ouches (48° 57' 41.0" N; 0° 56' 36.0" E).

<sup>7</sup> Exile was a common tool of punishment used by Duke Richard II (996-1026) and it reflects the old Scadinavian law of *Ullac* (ON *útlagr*). It is somewhat similar to the *outlawry* of English law. Usually, this punishment was reserved for serious crimes.

<sup>8</sup> Palgrave notes that in this era, "Normandy was overflowing with a military population, anxious for employment, and for plunder. It was the universal feeling that the land was not wide enough for them." Palgrave (1864), 116.

If Raoul did indeed set off on his 'banishment' with religious zeal as his motive then we should ask the question, "where was he destined?" The Holy Land is the easy answer and it may be that he had been enthused by the tales that had been told to him by pilgrims on their return to Normandy from those holy sites. Another contender must be Monte Gargano and the ancient Shrine of the Archangel St Michael that was incredibly popular with Normans of all classes. This saint seems to have been enthusiastically adopted by the Normans, as is evidenced by their building the massive Abbey of Mont St Michel off the Normandy coast near Avranches.<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, the Shrine at Monte Gargano was a much-favoured destination for Norman pilgrims who wished to strengthen their associations with the Saint who was, from ancient times, associated with the protection of 'soldiers'.<sup>10</sup> It is said that the holy banner of St Michel flew in front of every Norman army alongside that of the Duke himself. The third possible source of motivation was St Peter's in Rome. Apart from being a major pilgrimage site in its own right, it may have been that Raoul, feeling that he had been dealt with harshly by the Duke back in Normandy, may have wished to carry a petition to the Pope in person and lay before him the details of any grievance.

We must deviate a little here to deal with a matter that arises from the various chronicles of the time. In an essay, Mike Alley (Alley, 2014)<sup>11</sup> performs an analysis of the primary and secondary sources in order to determine 'the truth' of the first coming of Normans to the southern parts of Italy – what some have called, "the first phase of the Norman conquest." Of course, we have an immediate problem here in that we must decide what constitutes a 'conquest' as opposed to merely the age-old to-and-fro of merchants and pilgrims? The latter had been going on for generations. It is often commented that Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny's adventure marked the first step towards 'conquest', and a date of c.1015 is often given, but I would question this. We have no evidence that Raoul's incursion marked an invasion planned either by himself or his Norman companions. Indeed, it might be somewhat ridiculous to suggest that he was acting on behalf of the Duke in any sense at all – he had, after all, banished Raoul. Even if we accept that Raoul accepted some sort of commission from the Pope when he visited him in Rome, what followed would not, in any way, lend itself to being interpreted as a Norman 'conquest'.

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<sup>9</sup> Initially, according to a legend, [the archangel Michael](#) appeared in 708 to [Aubert of Avranches](#), the [bishop of Avranches](#), and instructed him to build a church on the rocky islet. The mount then gained strategic significance in 933 when [William I Longsword](#) annexed the [Cotentin Peninsula](#) from the weakened [Duchy of Brittany](#). From that point onwards the abbey buildings were a constant focus of donations from the Dukes of Normandy and many Norman aristocrats.

<sup>10</sup> This idea of Norman pilgrimages to Monte Gargano was challenged vigorously by Einar Joranson in 1948. [Joranson, E. 'The Inception of the Career of the Normans in Italy,' *Speculum*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul., 1948), pp. 353-396, 367.]

<sup>11</sup> Alley, M. (2014) *From arrival to Aversa: a Study of Norman Appearance and Expansion in Eleventh Century Italy*, essay published on the Academia website. [https://www.academia.edu/9025947/From\\_arrival\\_to\\_Aversa\\_a\\_study\\_of\\_Norman\\_appearance\\_and\\_expansion\\_in\\_eleventh\\_century\\_Italy](https://www.academia.edu/9025947/From_arrival_to_Aversa_a_study_of_Norman_appearance_and_expansion_in_eleventh_century_Italy)

There is an additional confusion in that in certain of the sources a second Norman knight is revealed, who is named variously Rodulphus,<sup>12</sup> Rudolf,<sup>13</sup> or Rodolf.<sup>14</sup> In the original version of Leo Marsicanus' *Chronicon*, he even names this individual as *Rodulfus Todinensis*. The question is, is this second individual one and the same as Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny? Marsicanus' *Chronicon* seems to suggest that he was, but we must remember that it was written almost one hundred years after the event.

In the earliest of the primary sources, the *Chronicon Sancti Petri Vivi*, Adémar de Chabannes records that Rodolf led his band of Normans to Rome, and had an audience there with Pope Benedict VIII (18 May 1012 – 9 April 1024). Following this the Normans are said to have advanced on Apulia with the tacit agreement of the Pope. After initial successes, we are told that the Normans had an encounter with “the Rus” (Varangian Guard) when “they were defeated, laid low and wiped out, and a great number of them were led off to Constantinople, where they spent the rest of their lives in prison...”<sup>15</sup> In the same paragraph of the *Chronicon*, Adémar says that,

*“Item Nortmanni, duce Rotgerio, in auxilium Christianorum in Hispaniam prosecti, innumeros Sarracenorum deleverunt et civitates et castella ab eis abstulerunt multa.”*<sup>16</sup>

Alley suggests that Rodolf, “sought advice from Pope Benedict VIII upon reaching Italy on how best to be of service to his Church.”<sup>17</sup> If we accept, for a moment, that this was indeed Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny, then I think that this suggestion falls quite wide of the mark and that it was much more likely that Raoul would have been supplicating the Pope in the matter of his banishment from Normandy.<sup>18</sup> It would have taken the Pope some time to gather all of the information that he would have required on such a matter and it is possible that he sent Raoul to Apulia so as to keep him occupied at a sufficient distance from Rome, (a band of Norman knights with nothing to do might have been a threat to civil order within the Sacred City), but not so far that the Pope could not communicate with him readily.

<sup>12</sup> Leo Marsicanus (1100-1105) *Chronicon Monasterii Casinensis*.

<sup>13</sup> Adémar de Chabannes (1028) *Chronicon Sancti Petri Vivi*.

<sup>14</sup> Rodulfus Glaber (c.1038) *Opéra*.

<sup>15</sup> Adémar de Chabannes (1028) *Chronicon Sancti Petri Vivi*, J. Chavanon (ed.) (Paris, 1897), pp. 177-8. This defeat is what has become known as the Battle of Cannae (1018).

<sup>16</sup> (Ibid., 204) “Also, Norseman, under the leadership of Rotgerii, went to the aid of the Christians in Spain and, in the pursuit of an innumerable multitude of the Saracens, have taken away from them, and destroyed, many towns and villages, and their cities.” It is tempting to suggest that this refers to Roger (I) de Tosny who went into exile at the same time as his father Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny. Roger set off *on Crusade* to Spain and was afterwards called “de Hispania” in memory of his achievements. That Adémar tells the two stories together is illuminating.

<sup>17</sup> Alley (2014), 13.

<sup>18</sup> This interpretation is supported somewhat by Glaber, “...he[Rodulf] fled with all those he could take with him to Rome, where he explained his position to Pope Benedict.” Rodulfus Glaber, *Opéra*, J. France, N. Bulst & P. Reynolds (eds. & Trans.) (Oxford, 1989), pp. 96-99.

Because of the nature of the sources the whole question of the identity of Rodolf/Rodulfus becomes very confused and even Alley's work does not find a definitive solution.

Joranson is happy to accept that the "Rodulfus Todinensis" mentioned by Leo Marscianus is, indeed, one and the same person as Raoul (I) (ii) de Tosny who he calls "Rodulf of Toëni" or, simply, "Rodulf."<sup>19</sup> Joranson also accepts that Raoul's arrival, along with some forty companions, constituted the first organised 'emigration' of Normans into southern Italy. However, he considers that the *causa* of this group was "that of refugee men-at-arms in search of employment in their profession," rather than any pilgrim zeal.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Joranson doubts that Raoul, when he determined to direct his course towards Italy, had any intention to go farther south than Rome itself.<sup>21</sup> Raoul was, after all, a stateless person – an outlaw, vulnerable to all who might come against him. At the forefront of his mind would have been the thought of how to gain the 'protection' of a new over-lord and who better than the Pope who was superior to the duke who had outlawed him?

Raoul certainly embarked on a career which gained him notoriety, respect and glory, and which allowed him to regain a measure of the respect that he had enjoyed under his old master in Normandy.

There may have been a number of reasons why both Raoul and his son were given permission by the Duke of Normandy to return to their patrimony but both men found the prospect of returning 'home' too tempting to refuse. It is difficult to know exactly when they returned however, we find that Raoul died at Guerny in 1024. Also, Roger (I) de Tosny must have returned at roughly the same time since he married the Norman lady, Godehildis (Godeheut), about 1025.

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<sup>19</sup> Joranson, E. 'The Inception of the Career of the Normans in Italy,' *Speculum*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul., 1948), pp. 353-396, 373.]

<sup>20</sup> (*Ibid.*), 373.

<sup>21</sup> (*Ibid.*), 373.