

Robert de Rodelent

After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, having prevailed over King Harold, granted most of Britain to his victorious Barons. It was common to find a Baron, or a Bishop, with 60 or more Lordships scattered throughout the country. These he gave to his sons, nephews and other junior lines of his family and they became known as under-tenants. They adopted the Norman system of Surnames which identified the under-tenants with his holdings so as to distinguish him from the senior stem of the family. After many rebellious wars between his Barons, Duke William, commissioned a census of all England to determine in 1086, settling once and for all, who held which land. He called the census the Domesday Book, indicating that those holders registered would hold the land until the end of time. The lands and castle of [Rhuddlan](#) on the North Wales coast, then administered by Earl Hugh of Chester, were held by Robert de Rodelent, a kinsman of Duke William, who was recorded in the Domesday Book census of 1086. He was a kinsman and lieutenant of the Earl of Chester. Earlier, in the 1050s, Robert had been a squire at the court of King Edward the Confessor, by whom he had been knighted. From the Domesday book (1086) we learn that in return for an annual rent of 40 pounds, the Conqueror had granted him power over the whole of north Wales beyond the Clwyd; it was in this capacity that Robert made Rhuddlan the base from which he set out to exploit and consolidate the holding entrusted to him by the king in [Gwynedd](#), and from which he also took his surname. He was, as other sources show, one of the lords of first importance in the Conqueror's ruling councils. More interestingly, we know on good authority that it was Robert's father, Humphrey of Tilleul, who was put in charge of construction of the [motte](#) at Hastings, seen in progress in the Bayeux Tapestry, immediately after the Normans landed at Pevensey in 1066. De Rodelent is known to have enjoyed surrounding himself with French courtiers and often made them extensive grants of land. He was slain by some of his disaffected villeins in Wales, and died without legitimate issue.