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Isabella de Forz: A Woman in the Age of Baronial Reform and Rebellion,
1237-1293

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Abstract

Isabella de Forz (1237-1293), countess of Devon and Aumale and lady of the Isle of Wight, was the wealthiest noblewoman in thirteenth-century England. Isabella, who was of impressive lineage, became the heiress to the earldom of Devon following the death of her brother in 1262. Existing records provide a wealth of evidence regarding Isabella's life especially the years of her widowhood (1260-1293) and the extent of her power and influence within English politics. Isabella's allegiance was of great importance and she was very much involved in the events surrounding the Barons' War of 1263-1267. Much of the extant evidence relates to Isabella's defence of her lands and rights, a necessity for all noblewomen. In addition to this we find the countess engaged in numerous other activities, including intercession and religious patronage. A reconstruction of the countess' affinity not only offers insights into her position within society as well as her sense of self, but also informs us of the strength of the ties of lordship within thirteenth-century England. The chapters that form this thesis are designed to highlight the varying ways in which noblewomen were able to participate in politics and to discuss the activities, role and importance of one of the most influential women of this period. In doing so, this research will add to the existing scholarship on aristocratic women.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

Figures

Introduction 1

Chapter One - Family Background and Married Life 13

Chapter Two - The Countess as a Widow 25

Chapter Three - The Affinity of Isabella 42

Chapter Four - Religious Patronage 58

Conclusion 71

Appendix One 78

Appendix Two 84

Appendix Three 92

Appendix Four 99

Bibliography 104

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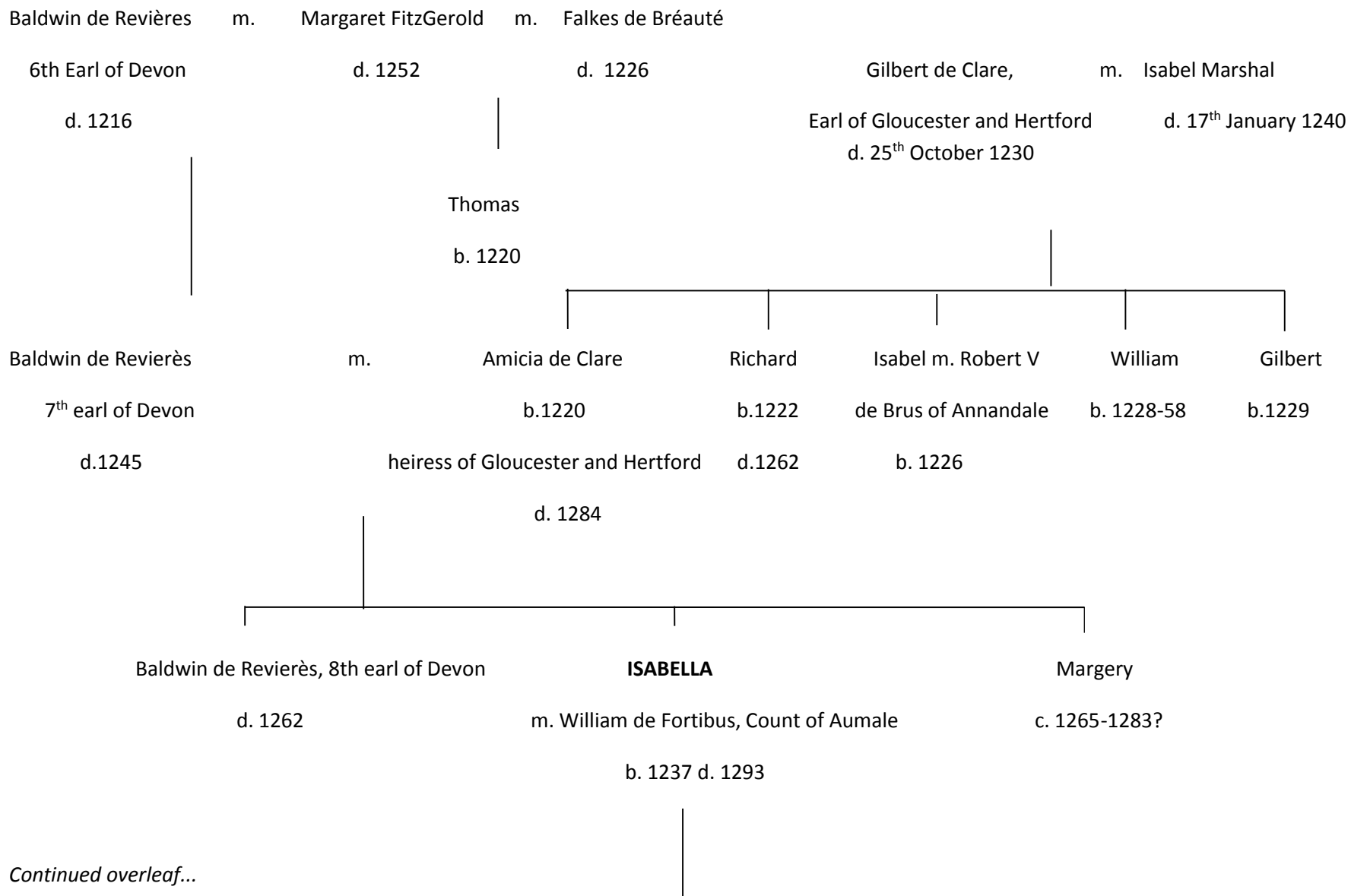
I would not have been able to complete this study without the constant help and encouragement of my supervisor Professor Louise Wilkinson. She has been the source of much inspiration, encouraging me to challenge existing historiography as well as my own findings and to develop my ideas. I would not have even been able to begin this study without the unconditional support and love of my mum. You are a true inspiration and words cannot describe how grateful I am for absolutely everything you have done for me, not just in the past year but in the entirety of my life. Massive thanks also go to the rest of my wonderful family for their unceasing support, love and encouragement. And, of course, my friends for providing much needed support, laughs and the numerous, all important, cups of tea (and the odd hot chocolate) along the way.

Note on place-names:

Unidentified place-names are written in italics.

Abbreviations

- Ann. Mon.* Luard, H. R, (ed.), *Annales Monastici, Vols. I-V* (London, Longman, 1864-9).
- CChR* *Calendar of the Charter Rolls* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903-).
- CCIR* *Calendar of the Close Rolls* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900-).
- CFR* *Calendar of the Fine Rolls, 1272-1307* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911).
- Calendar of the Fine Rolls of the Reign of Henry III* (2007-2011), available at www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar
- CPR* *Calendar of the Patent Rolls* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893-).



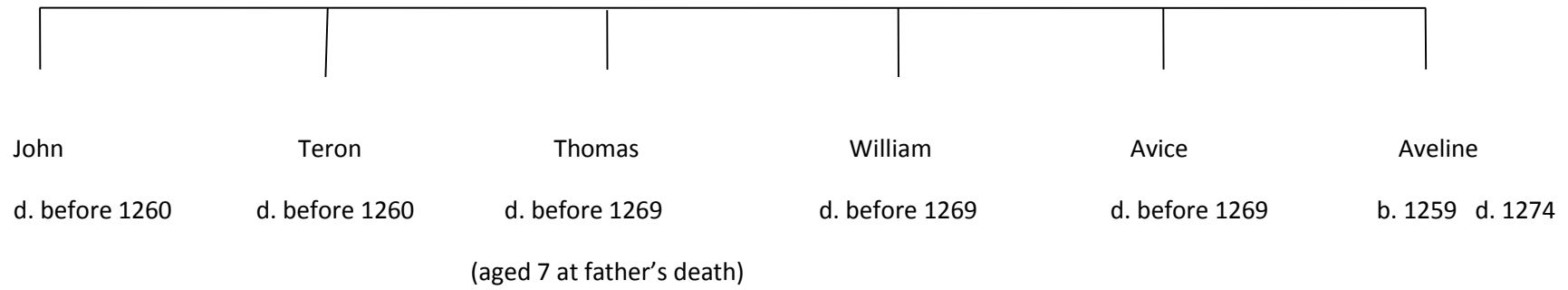


Figure One: Isabella de Forz's Family.



Figure Two: The counties in which Isabella de Forz held land.

Introduction

Isabella de Forz (or Fortibus), *suo jure* countess of Devon and Aumale and Lady of the Isle of Wight, was one of the wealthiest women, and indeed people, in thirteenth-century England.¹ Due to her vast wealth, Isabella was a highly influential woman and this is illustrated by her frequent interactions with the royal court during the reigns of both King Henry III (1216-1272) and King Edward I (1272-1307). It is, therefore, surprising that her political activities and influence, and also her life more generally, have not yet been studied in great depth. There is a large body of existing documentation available, including chronicles, charters, correspondence, estate records and royal government records, both legal and financial, that will enable this study to be undertaken. Through this research I intend to investigate the extent of Isabella's political power and influence on both a local and national level and how typical this was for a noblewoman of the thirteenth century. I shall also discuss how Isabella was able to exert her influence in local and national affairs before, during and after the Barons' War which took place between 1263 and 1267.

There is a distinct lack of historiography concerning thirteenth-century noblewomen's involvement in politics and although this is steadily increasing, there is a clear need for more in-depth research to be undertaken. The only book-length study of the life of a thirteenth-century noblewoman is *Eleanor de Montfort: A Rebel Countess in Medieval England* by Louise Wilkinson. Research by Emma Cavell on 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: The Shropshire Evidence', explores the positions of aristocratic widows living on the Anglo-Welsh border during the thirteenth century. This article discusses the expected and actual roles of noblewomen within politics, such as intercession on behalf of their tenants and estate administration, with a focus on individual women on the Welsh frontier.² It can safely be assumed that such roles were common to all politically active noble widows at this time, as is illustrated by case studies on the lives of other noblewomen. Research by Linda Mitchell in *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage and Politics in England, 1225-1350*, also discusses the lives of thirteenth century noblewomen in a series of case studies which offer points of comparison with Isabella.³

¹ The name Fortibus derived from Forz but both names are found within the records. B. English, 'Forz, Isabella de, *suo jure* countess of Devon and countess of Aumale', and 'Forz, William de, count of Aumale (*b.* before 1216, *d.* 1260)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn.), accessed 10th September 2013.

² E. Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier: The Shropshire Evidence', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 17, (2007), pp57-82.

³ L. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England, 1225-1350* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

The body of literature concerning the debate as to whether noblewomen were political agents or the political pawns of their male kin is constantly growing. Scholars such as Georges Duby and Doris Stenton emphasise the subordinate status of women and suggest that aristocratic women of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were merely political pawns of their male kin.⁴ In her study *The English Woman in History*, Stenton stated that following the Norman Conquest, women suffered a loss of independence in terms of landholding. This, according to Stenton, signalled the end of the 'rough equality' that existed between Anglo-Saxon men and women and the end of the 'independence' previously enjoyed by English noblewomen.⁵ This highly negative view of the position of aristocratic women thereby champions the belief that women had no role within tenurial lordship or a significant role within society in the centuries immediately following the Norman invasion. In the eyes of Stenton, the noblewomen's role was very much set within the domestic sphere.⁶ More recently, research has provided a revision of this view which demonstrates that women did actually wield power and influence both as wives of aristocratic men and widows. In her study *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm*, Susan Johns emphasised the central and important role of women within the family which she suggests acted as a 'unit of lordship' itself. Johns has argued that as mothers and wives women were able to exercise authority within their family units.⁷ Clearly this continued to be a way in which women held power and influence in the thirteenth century and beyond. Wilkinson has highlighted the fact that many noblewomen could exploit their status and wealth, as Isabella de Forz did, to allow them to influence political affairs on both a local and national scale.⁸ Jennifer Ward in her study, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*, demonstrates that noblewomen often ran estates in the absence, and indeed presence, of their husbands during marriage and into widowhood.⁹ As stated by Cavell women may not have necessarily had a more active role within politics in widowhood but a more visible one.¹⁰ It was essential that the estate continued to be run efficiently as it provided the main source of income for most families but also provided the inheritance for future generations.¹¹ It is clear from the records that Isabella was politically active as a wife but most notably as a widow; a

⁴ G. Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1997); D. M. Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957).

⁵ D. M. Stenton, *The English Woman in History* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), p28.

⁶ Stenton, *The English Woman in History*, pp29-30.

⁷ S. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in Twelfth Century England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp73-75.

⁸ L. J. Wilkinson, 'Women, Politics and Local Government in the Thirteenth Century', Henry III Fine Rolls Project, Related Papers (July 2013), pp2-3.

⁹ J. C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), p109.

¹⁰ Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier', p69.

¹¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*, p108.

result of her new status as an ‘independent figure’ within society.¹² This new status allowed noblewomen to be much more involved in politics than before. It should also be noted that the personality and tenacity of each individual could also determine, to a certain extent, whether a woman acted as either a political pawn or an agent in both marriage and widowhood.

Isabella was highly active throughout the Barons’ War and so frequently appears within the secondary literature concerning this period. The thirteenth century is a very significant period in English history as it saw the emergence of parliament as a powerful institution, made possible by the financial troubles of the crown which could only be resolved through the grant of taxes by parliament.¹³ The fact that the assembly could refuse to grant taxes, which it did continuously through Henry III’s reign, gave it a significant degree of power that had not previously been held. In 1258, it was decided that parliament, with two representatives from each shire, would meet three times a year to discuss the affairs of the realm. This marked the beginning of parliament as a fully entrenched part of English politics.¹⁴ The mid-thirteenth century also saw Simon de Montfort, Henry III’s brother-in-law and previously one of his favourite courtiers, ruling England in the king’s name. The fact that Montfort usurped the power of the monarch is extremely significant as this had never occurred before; this was the first English revolution.¹⁵ The life of the rebel leader and the major part he played within the baronial rebellion are described in John Maddicott’s biography, *Simon de Montfort* and David Carpenter’s *Struggle for Mastery*. The policies of Henry III and the resulting civil war had a major impact on English society and led to his son, Edward I (1272-1301), inheriting a kingdom with numerous deep-rooted issues. It was feared that civil war would erupt at any moment given the veneration of Simon de Montfort and the heavy fines the rebellious barons were expected to pay in order to regain their lands.¹⁶ Edward’s government also suffered from incredible financial weakness which, although a long-term problem, had been intensified by the civil war.¹⁷ Edward had, however, learnt from the mistakes of his father and set about to recover royal authority. It was within the rather difficult and complicated politics of this period that Isabella was involved.

¹² Ibid., p34.

¹³ D. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: The Penguin History of Britain 1066-1284* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p355.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp355-6.

¹⁵ A. Jobson, *The First English Revolution: Simon de Montfort, Henry III and the Baron’s War* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

¹⁶ Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p466.

¹⁷ Ibid., p466.

Isabella, as a noblewoman, was drawn into the political struggles of the time, and her involvement in some of these events is discussed within the secondary literature. Isabella's allegiance is discussed by Barbara English who illustrates the divide between Isabella, who supposedly very much supported the baronial cause, and her mother Amicia, who was a staunch royalist. It has been suggested that the difference in their political allegiances was, perhaps, a contributing factor for the intense dispute that erupted between the two women between 1265 and 1274 concerning the income of the family estates; the case, which is heavily recorded within the documents, was taken first to the king and then onto the exchequer court.¹⁸ As Frederick Powicke describes, the case was 'so important that only the king's council could deal with it'.¹⁹ The litigation between the two women was not properly resolved and, although Amicia and Isabella were reconciled, they never lived together again. Isabella's alleged political sympathies are illustrated by her correspondence with Eleanor de Montfort, the wife of the rebel leader, and the fact that Isabella was entertained at Odiham by her in April 1265.²⁰ Given its relatively frequent appearance within both contemporary sources and secondary literature, it is clear that Isabella's political allegiance was of exceptional importance. This will be discussed further within this study.

Another aspect of Isabella's life which frequently appears within the secondary literature is the question of her remarriage. Following her husband's death in 1260 and that of her brother in 1262, Isabella became an extremely wealthy widow. Isabella was only twenty-three years old when she was widowed and her relative youth made her an exceptionally attractive target on the marriage market. The countess' remarriage is discussed within Maddicott's biography of Simon de Montfort. At some point between the Battles of Lewes in May 1264 and Evesham in August 1265 Simon de Montfort's son, and namesake, managed to secure the rights to Isabella's remarriage. The widowed countess tried to hide from Simon the younger at Breamore Priory in Hampshire but was informed upon by the prior, who she then bribed to allow her to escape. Simon's pursuit was apparently so strong that he forced her to flee to Wales; in a later case she claimed that he had tried to abduct her.²¹ It is possible that Simon was encouraged by his mother who, as previously described, was in correspondence with Isabella between 1264 and 1265.²² The fact that Isabella was so highly sought after was shown again in 1268 when the rights to her remarriage were granted to Henry III's second

¹⁸ English, 'Forz, Isabella de'.

¹⁹ F.M. Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward Vol. II* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947), p708.

²⁰ L. J. Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort: A Rebel Countess in Medieval England* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), pp107-8.

²¹ J. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p325.

²² Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, p108.

son, Edmund, the earl of Lancaster. Although Isabella did not marry the earl, her daughter Aveline did; it seems acceptable to suggest that this would have had some impact on the countess' loyalties.²³

Isabella also appears frequently within secondary literature in discussions concerning Edward I's desire to purchase her vast inheritance from her, especially the Isle of Wight. From the death of Isabella's last surviving heir, Edward I continuously tried to encourage her to sell her lands to the crown; his actions are clearly visible within governmental records. This episode is discussed both in F. M. Powicke's study *Henry III and the Lord Edward* (1947) and Denholm-Young's 'Edward I and the Sale of the Isle of Wight'. It was not only the sheer quantity of lands that Isabella held but also their strategic importance that made Edward so desperate to secure them.²⁴ The marriage of Aveline, the only surviving daughter and therefore heiress of Isabella, to Edmund meant that the vast collection of lands would pass into the hands of the royal family. The death of Aveline in 1274, however, resulted in Isabella maintaining full control of her estates.²⁵ According to Powicke, Edward decided to strike at a time when Isabella was most probably, and quite understandably, emotionally weak. It is recorded that in 1276 he nearly persuaded Isabella to hand over to him the Isle and all of her other estates apart from four manors, Sevenhampton, Harewood, Whitlechurche, and Craft or Tiverton. For this, Edward offered Isabella 20,000 marks.²⁶ Despite Edward's rather sly attempts, the countess demonstrated her strength of character and refused to accept these terms. The sale of the Isle of Wight to Edward I on her deathbed is, perhaps, one of the most recorded events of Isabella's life within secondary literature and is described by David Carpenter as Edward's 'most spectacular coup'.²⁷ It seems that the deal had been under discussion for some time prior to Isabella's death as she had no real desire to preserve her extensive inheritance for her very distant heir and cousin, Hugh de Courtenay, the lord of Okehampton, Devon.²⁸ Isabella's 'territorial position', and in particular her holding of the Isle of Wight, was apparently considered by Edward to be far too powerful for a subject.²⁹ It could be questioned whether this would have been the case had the Isle been in the hands of a male subject.

²³ English, 'Forz, Isabella de'.

²⁴ Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, Vol. II, pp707-711.

²⁵ N. Denholm-Young, 'Edward I and the Sale of the Isle of Wight', *The English Historical Review* Vol. 44 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp433-4.

²⁶ Powicke, *Henry III*, p709; *CCIR, 1272-79* (London: His Majesty's Record Office, 1900), pp347-9.

²⁷ Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery*, p470.

²⁸ Denholm-Young, 'Edward I and the Sale of the Isle of Wight', p435.

²⁹ Stenton, *The English Woman in History*, p55.

Aside from these matters, little research has been carried out concerning Isabella's involvement and influence in both local and national politics. More extensive research has been undertaken regarding the countess' vast estates. Noel Denholm-Young's work *Seignorial Administration in England*, discusses in much detail the workings of Isabella's estates, including the officials who were responsible for them over the course of Isabella's long widowhood, the revenues generated and how this compared, in some instances, to the estates of the Bigod and Clare families. Mavis Mate's study 'Profit and Productivity on the Estates of Isabella de Fortibus' looks more closely at how revenue was gained from the various Forz estates and how these strategies were adapted to suit the turbulent economic climate of the later thirteenth century. Mate does raise some important questions as to whether the successful running of estates was predominantly the work of Isabella herself or that of her reeves.³⁰ *The Lords of Holderness* by Barbara English also discusses the lands which were held by Isabella by right of dower. These studies are, undoubtedly, very important, but it seems rather odd that a discussion concerning the power she gained from holding these extensive lands and how usual this was for a noblewoman has not yet been undertaken.

One of the key themes of this research is the ability of noblewomen to participate in politics and it is apparent that many of the ways in which they did so were similar, in some respects, to those of queens. The studies on Eleanor of Provence and Eleanor of Castile, written by Margaret Howell and John Carmi Parsons respectively, provide us with an idea of the extent to which a queen was able to exercise political power within marriage. Both noblewomen and queens acted as intercessors for those close to them and it is clear from contemporary evidence that Isabella did intercede on numerous occasions for officials and, most probably, tenants. It is possible that Isabella intervened when cases were brought against Adam de Stratton (her chief administrator, who rightly has a reputation for being exceptionally unscrupulous), after he was convicted for tearing the seal from a charter of Quarr Abbey in the Isle of Wight.³¹ It seems probable that Isabella did indeed intervene on his behalf as he was restored to the chamberlainship shortly afterwards. We will return to discuss Stratton's career later on. Both noblewomen and queens frequently acted as litigators.³² Perhaps one of the most well documented examples of Isabella's involvement in litigation, discussed above, is the dispute with her mother Amicia, the dowager countess of Devon, concerning the income of the family estates. Another important responsibility of noblewomen was the running of the

³⁰ M. Mate, 'Profit and Productivity on the Estates of Isabella de Fortibus (1260-1292)', *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 33, Issue. 3 (Wiley, 1980), p334.

³¹ N. Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration in England* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1937), pp81-2.

³² M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp265-6.

household in both the presence and absence of their husbands'.³³ The household was not only a setting in which the lord and lady could advertise their status but also a place where hospitality and entertainment could be provided for their visitors. Noble households were often centres of patronage and political influence just as the royal household was but on a more local level. It was common for noble men and women to provide hospitality for those who shared similar political views.³⁴ Both queens and noblewomen were also involved in the administration of estates within marriage which is illustrated by their attestation of their husbands' charters.³⁵ In widowhood, some women chose to take on the role of lord, as opposed to opting to remarry, which gave them greater authority than they would have ever held in marriage.³⁶ As well as this, widows were expected to continue to fulfil their husbands' military obligations, including the provision of knights for royal armies. Religious patronage was also an activity shared by noblewomen and queens; their benefactions reflected their own personal interests and familial loyalties.³⁷ Isabella's role as a religious benefactor will also be explored within this thesis.

The thirteenth century boasts a great wealth of records that will enable this study to be undertaken. The reign of Henry III saw a flourishing in monastic writing and these chronicles provide us with a valuable knowledge of the events of the period of baronial reform and rebellion and those following it.³⁸ These monastic histories include a combination of general and local history but it is clear that many writers were heavily preoccupied by events that affected their own monastic houses.³⁹ Despite the fact that many thirteenth-century chroniclers did not generally tend to acknowledge national events in their writings, or if they did it was in the light of their own interests, some chroniclers did have a deep interest in national affairs. Antonia Gransden suggests, however, that the baronial dispute with Henry III was the fuel for much historical writing; this is illustrated by the fact that many chronicles ended shortly after the turbulent events of the baronial rebellion had come to an end. For example, the Westminster version of the *Flores Historiarum* ended in 1265 and the Dover Chronicle in 1270.⁴⁰ The majority of these chronicles have strong baronial sympathies, as it was generally believed that the barons had a right to counsel the king and many contemporaries wanted to see Henry's overpowering favourites and foreign relatives removed from office. The

³³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p109.

³⁴ Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, pp112-116.

³⁵ Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p85.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p75.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p36.

³⁸ A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England I, c.550-1307* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p404.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp406-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p407.

authors were quite careful not to question the power of the king but found scapegoats, usually his counsellors, for his failings. The writers of Edward I's reign, however, often wrote in support of their king, some much more so than others. This could often depend on the abbey's proximity to Westminster and whether it received the patronage of the king.⁴¹ Many of Edward's later policies provoked strong feelings and are commented upon within the chronicles. These included his dispute with the baronage in 1297 concerning the confirmation of charters, the taxation of the church (which the chroniclers saw as a battle between the church and state), Anglo-Scottish relations and, to some extent, the Welsh campaigns.⁴²

In spite of their religious preoccupations and concern with their own houses, the chronicles are, undoubtedly, of vast importance in providing information on the events of the reigns of both Henry III and Edward I. There is little evidence of Isabella within these histories; this should not come as surprise as women are rarely mentioned within these sources.⁴³ Isabella does, however, appear within the Osney chronicle in the discussion of the imprisonment of Adam de Stratton following his state trial.⁴⁴ Adam de Stratton has, quite rightly, a reputation as one of the most unscrupulous moneylenders of the period and was Isabella's chief administrator, 'clericus scaccari', until 1286. Prior to this, Adam had illegitimately removed the seal from a charter belonging to the abbey of Quarr on the Isle of Wight; the ongoing battle between the abbey and Adam is recorded well within the chronicles and was almost certainly a contributing factor to his eventual downfall.⁴⁵ Adam had remained in Isabella's service following this episode but it would seem that his repeated offences put an end to this. Stratton's trial in 1289 saw him lose all of his possessions and his position in the exchequer. He was also put on trial for felony, twice. In 1292, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for the remainder of his life.⁴⁶ In this episode Isabella is described with all of her, rather impressive, titles 'comitissa Insulæ et domina Devonæ, tunc etiam comitissa Ambermarliæ', 'countess of the Isle and Lady of Devon, then also countess of Aumale'. This rather negative episode is one of the few references to Isabella within the chronicles.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p457

⁴² *Ibid.*, p441.

⁴³ W. Stubbs (ed.), *Chronicles of the Reign of Edward I and Edward II, Vol. I* (London: Longman and Co., 1892), p80.

⁴⁴ *Ann. Mon.*, Vol. IV, (London: Longman, 1864), p321; Grandsen, *Historical Writing*, p429.

⁴⁵ *Ann. Mon.*, Vol. III (London, Longman, 1866), p249.

⁴⁶ R. C. Stacey, 'Adam of Stratton (d.1292x4)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 16th October 2013.

⁴⁷ *Ann. Mon.*, Vol. IV, p321; Stacey, 'Stratton, Adam of (d.1292x4) '.

Despite the lack of references to Isabella within the chronicles, she appears very frequently within governmental records concerning the eventful years of her widowhood. Plentiful evidence is found of the interactions between Isabella and the crown in the close, patent, liberate, fine and charter rolls, and inquisitions miscellaneous. The close rolls, which record instructions from the king conveying orders to his subjects, which would often concern matters of great importance, contain substantial evidence of Isabella's dealings and interactions with the royal court.⁴⁸ The patent rolls record letters issued open (patent), expressing the king's will on various matters of public concern, including letter of protection, appointments to office and other issues touching the royal prerogative; once again Isabella features frequently within these.⁴⁹ The liberate rolls are an enrolment of writs to the treasurer and barons of the exchequer authorising the expenses of the state from the royal treasure.⁵⁰ Fine rolls are a series of records which document offerings of money to the king or his justiciar in return for charters, privileges, writs and pardons, and grants, very often, of land.⁵¹ The charter rolls are enrolments of royal charters that, for the most part, are grants of lands, liberties and privileges to individuals, towns and religious communities and also grants of fairs and markets, free warren and hundreds. The inquisitions miscellaneous, which run from 1218 to 1485, are inquisitions into a variety of cases but mainly concern rebellions against the King. The inquisitions concerning the baronial rebellion of Simon de Montfort are extremely thorough and record the names and possessions of the persons involved.⁵² When used in combination, these documents provide significant evidence of Isabella's contact and dealings with the royal court and will be used here to illustrate the extent of her political activities and influence.

Further evidence of Isabella's life and political activities is provided by contemporary records of landholding and services owing to the crown, many of which are published in the *Red Book of the Exchequer* and the *Liber Feodorum*, more commonly known as the *Book of Fees*. Other exceptionally valuable sources are the *Inquisitions Post-Mortem*. These inquisitions were conducted before a crown official, usually an escheator after the mid-1240s, with the purpose of identifying all properties of the deceased and evaluating which properties should be taken into the king's hands by

⁴⁸ 'Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Close Rolls', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3614>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁴⁹ 'Chancery and Supreme Court of Judicature: Patent Rolls', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3626>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁵⁰ 'Chancery: Liberate Rolls', National Archives Catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3622>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁵¹ 'Chancery: Fine Rolls', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3620>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁵² 'Chancery: Miscellaneous Inquisitions', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3703>, accessed 17th January 2014.

right of wardship or marriage or through escheat.⁵³ By studying the inquisitions of Isabella's family members, and that of her husband, it is possible to identify the lands each of them held and which of these were transferred to Isabella upon their deaths. Using these records, an idea of the extent of lands held by Isabella and her family members can be gained. The pipe rolls are a further important Exchequer document of value to this study. Until the end of the thirteenth century the pipe rolls record the sum that the sheriff of each county paid to the King for the income from his rights and lands within that county. The rolls also record outstanding debts to the crown up until 1270.⁵⁴ The Curia Regis rolls, now known as the Plea and Essoin Rolls of the Bench, are yet another important contemporary source. These rolls allow us to trace the progress of legal cases brought before the King's court.⁵⁵ Finally, there are the feet of fines; these were the royal court's copies of tripartite agreements known as final concords. These agreements were used to terminate disputes concerning property brought before the king's court until about 1272; following this they were made before general eyres within the individual counties.⁵⁶

Vital sources for this research are those documents produced by Isabella's own administration. Seven of Isabella's acta to secular beneficiaries are now held at the National Archives and within the collections of local record offices. Many of Isabella's charters recording benefactions to religious houses are preserved in the cartularies of these institutions with a number of original charters surviving at the National Archives. These documents provide us with a valuable insight into the countess' patronage which will be explored fully in a later chapter. Estate records will also provide a major source of information for this study. Given the extent of Isabella's lands, there is a great collection of account rolls preserved at the National Archives which provide details about the day to day management of her estates and the activities of her officials. I do not intend to use these records in an attempt to re-evaluate Isabella's estate administration but to discuss the influence she was able to exercise as a result of her landed wealth. This will be achieved by examining the men

⁵³ 'Chancery: Inquisitions Post-Mortem', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C3690>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁵⁴ 'Exchequer: Pipe Office: Pipe Rolls', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C6749>, accessed 17th January 2014.

⁵⁵ 'Court of Common Pleas and King's Bench, and Justices Itinerant: Early Plea and Essoin Rolls', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C10030>, accessed 22nd January 2014.

⁵⁶ 'Court of Common Pleas, General Eyres and Court of the King's Bench: Feet of Fines Files, Richard I – Henry VII', National Archives catalogue entry, <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C5391>, accessed 17th January 2014.

who belonged to the countess' affinity and their origins and what this can tell us about the operation of lordship within Isabella's estates.

Through the analysis of these sources I hope to uncover the role that Isabella played within thirteenth-century English politics. This study will be divided into sections in order to illustrate the different arenas in which Isabella was active as an aristocratic woman. Firstly, Isabella's family background, her marriage to the count of Aumale and the various attempts to gain her hand in marriage once she had been widowed will be discussed. Following this, the impact that widowhood had on Isabella in terms of her increased visibility and role on the political scene will be explored. Isabella's massive wealth that she gained from her lands and estates, which were far greater than those of the majority of noble widows, and the strategic importance of these lands will also be considered. The individuals who made up her affinity will also be discussed. Finally, I shall consider the countess' religious patronage and the insights that this provides into Isabella's spiritual interests and her personal sense of identity.

Chapter One – Family Background and Married Life

Isabella de Forz, born in July 1237, was the eldest daughter of Baldwin de Revières, seventh earl of Devon, and Amicia, eldest daughter of Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester and Hertford. The Revières (also Reviars or Redvers) family originated from Reviars (Calvados, northern France) but their estates predominantly lay in Néhou and Vernon by the end of the eleventh century. The Revières family was, perhaps, the most important and influential family within Devon during the eleventh century.⁵⁷ Richard de Redvers had been a key supporter of Henry, son of William the Conqueror. When the Prince later became King Henry I in 1100, Richard's loyalty was rewarded with the grant of the Isle of Wight and massive estates in Devon, Dorset and Hampshire (these were later known as the honours of Plympton, Christchurch and Carisbrooke).⁵⁸ This grant of lands led to a significant increase in Richard's wealth and his position within the English landholding community.⁵⁹ Richard's son, Baldwin de Revières, was to inherit these lands, although he was sent into exile and the lands were seized by King Stephen as a result of his involvement in the siege of Exeter. Following this, Baldwin fled to the court of Geoffrey of Anjou, whom he assisted for three years, and, then, after a short time in captivity, Geoffrey's wife, the Empress Matilda, created Baldwin the first earl of Devon in 1141.⁶⁰

Baldwin died in 1155 and was succeeded by his son Richard. Between the years of the first earl's death and that of Isabella's brother in 1262, there had been seven more earls of Devon. Between 1155 and 1216 alone there had been five new earls of Devon. This illustrates in what rather rapid and unfortunate succession the earls died. The importance of the family within English society is demonstrated by the fact that several of these earls were either betrothed or married to notable heiresses, although these did not bring any landed benefits for the earls. For example, Baldwin, the third earl of Devon, was married to Denise, daughter of Raoul prince of the Déols whose lands passed onto her second husband Andrew de Chesnes. The fifth earl of Devon, William, married Mabel, daughter of the count of Meulan and there is no evidence to show that she brought any landed benefits to the marriage. The marriage of the sixth earl of Devon, also called Baldwin (Isabella's grandfather), to Margaret, daughter of Warin fitz Gerold, did, however, bring with it the

⁵⁷ R. Bearman (ed.), *Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon, 1090-1217* (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1994), p2.

⁵⁸ R. Bearman, 'Revières [Reviars, Redvers], Baldwin de', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 30th January 2014.

⁵⁹ Bearman (ed.), *Charters of the Redvers Family*, p22.

⁶⁰ Bearman, 'Revières, Baldwin de'.

potential to increase the Redvers estates.⁶¹ Unfortunately, Baldwin died in 1216 before Warin himself and as a result the lands, which lay primarily in Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Suffolk, were not passed into the hands of the Redvers family.⁶² Margery and Baldwin only had one son, also named Baldwin, before his somewhat untimely death. This son was Baldwin, later the seventh earl of Devon, Isabella's father.

Like his father, Baldwin the seventh died at a relatively young age in 1245 but his marriage to Amicia, the daughter of the earl of Gloucester and Hertford by Isabel Marshal, can be said to have been quite a successful one. Amicia's father, Gilbert de Clare had inherited upon the death of his father, Richard, the earldoms of Gloucester and Hertford, in addition to the honours of Tonbridge and Clare, and the vast Gloucester estates which included the lordships of Glamorgan and Gwynllŵg in the Welsh March. It was within the lordship of Glamorgan that the majority of Gilbert's power and authority was centred and therefore his energies were focused mainly on preserving his territories in the Welsh uplands. The exceptional influence of the Clare family in medieval England is illustrated by the fact that both Gilbert and his father were two of the twenty-five barons appointed to enforce Magna Carta in 1215.⁶³ The match between Baldwin and Amicia was instigated by her father, who offered the king 2000 marks for the marriage and the custody of some of the Redvers estates throughout his minority.⁶⁴ Together Baldwin and Amicia, who were only divided by an age gap of two years, had at least three children: Baldwin, Isabella and Margery. Isabella's brother became the eighth earl of Devon although he too died in relative youth and with no issue in 1262, leaving Isabella as the sole heir to the mass of the Redvers estates.⁶⁵ Margery is known to have been a nun at Lacock, as is seen by a grant made by Isabella to the abbey for the protection of her sister's soul and that of her mother.⁶⁶ Initially, Amicia and Isabella had quite a successful relationship but, they came to blows over the income gained from the family estates and perhaps also their political allegiances; this led to a fairly troubled relationship from the end of 1267 until Amicia's death in 1284.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Bearman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, pp13-16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p26.

⁶³ T.A. Archer, Rev. M. Altschul, 'Clare, Gilbert de', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edn. (Oxford University Press, 2004) and R. E. Treharne, *Documents of the Baronial Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp105-7.

⁶⁴ M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p33.

⁶⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post-Mortem, Vol. I* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904), pp172-176.

⁶⁶ K. H. Rogers (ed.), *Lacock Abbey Charters* (Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society, 1979), p111.

⁶⁷ It was quite common for a mother and daughter to litigate against each other in regards to dower when the daughter was an heiress. It has been suggested that this did not affect their relationship but it would seem

Isabella having been born in 1237, was married to William de Forz III, the count of Aumale, at around the age of eleven or twelve; this was the canonical age of consent for girls.⁶⁸ William and Isabella, as is recorded in the annals of Tewkesbury, were married either at the end of 1248 or at the very beginning of 1249; the precise date is unclear.⁶⁹ The Forz name originated from one of two places named Fors in Poitou and the title came from the small comté of Aumale in Normandy. William was the son of William de Forz (II) and Aveline, the daughter of Richard de Montfitchet of Stansted, Essex. William's father had somewhat fickle allegiances and changed sides more often than most during the reigns of King John and Henry III.⁷⁰ William's constantly wavering loyalties and the power and influence he held as a prominent landholder have led him to be described as one of the 'most serious threats to the stability of England' during Henry III's minority.⁷¹ Little is known about William III's life before his marriage but it seems likely that he was given by his father as a hostage to the king in 1216. Prior to his marriage to Isabella, William had been married to Christina, one of the daughters of Alan of Galloway and his wife Margaret. Again, it is unknown when William and Christina were married but it was certainly before 1235.⁷² In 1236 it is recorded that an attempt had been made to deprive Alan's three daughters, Helen, Devorguilla and Christina, of their inheritance and it is known that Christina was married to William when this occurred.⁷³ Through her parents Christina was coheir of Galloway and also had an interest in the earldom of Chester but, none of these were retained by the Forz family upon Christina's death.⁷⁴ William and Christina, as well as the other coheirs, had been persuaded by Henry III to give up their claim to the earldom of Chester in return for lands elsewhere.⁷⁵

The marriage of Isabella and William held many benefits for both parties but it is unknown as to which family instigated the match. Thirteenth-century practice deemed it essential for countesses

relations were strained for the rest of their lives. The records for this case illustrate, however, that the dispute between Amicia and Isabella continued for years and up to the end of Amicia's life. This case will be discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis, 'The Countess as a Widow'. 'L. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England, 1225-1350* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p30.

⁶⁸ G. E. Cokayne, *Complete Peerage, Vol. IV*, (London: Lady Catherine Press, 1913), p323; J. C. Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500' in *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), p63.

⁶⁹ *Ann. Mon., Vol. I* (London: Longman, 1864), p137.

⁷⁰ B. English, 'Forz, William de, count of Aumale (1191x6 - 1241)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷¹ B. English, 'Forz, William de, count of Aumale (1191x6 - 1241)'.

⁷² *Ann. Mon., Vol. III*, p143.

⁷³ H. R. Luard (ed.), *Chronica Majora, Vol. III* (London: Longman, 1876), pp364-5.

⁷⁴ R. D. Oram, 'Alan, lord of Galloway (b. before 1199, d. 1234)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁵ *CChR, 1226-57* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903), p262.

and earls to marry members of other comital families or, better still, royalty.⁷⁶ William's father, William de Forz II had inherited vast lands through his own mother, Hawisa the countess of Aumale, who had previously been married to William de Mandeville, the earl of Essex. William de Forz's English lands included the honours of Holderness and Skipton in Yorkshire and Cockermouth in Cumberland, in addition to many other manors scattered across England. In previous years the comté of Aumale in Normandy had also been in the hands of the Forz family but this was lost to the French before William II came to inherit.⁷⁷ The English lands were then passed onto his son, William III, and some of these later became part of Isabella's dower lands. Isabella was herself a very wealthy heiress in her own right and has been described by Margaret Labarge as 'the greatest matrimonial prize in England' following her widowhood.⁷⁸ As with all noble marriage negotiations, the wealth and lineage of the prospective husband or bride were important points of consideration. As a result of the focus on wealth, it seems that the age of the two parties was not necessarily a cause for concern and many noble couples had a significant age gap. For example, upon the celebration of Eleanor de Montfort's first marriage to William Marshal, she was only nine years old; her husband on the other hand was in his mid-thirties.⁷⁹ In the case of Isabella and William, he was twenty years her senior.

Despite the rather large difference in age, it could be said that Isabella and William's marriage was quite successful. This is illustrated by the fact that together they had six children during the eleven or twelve years they were married. The fact that Isabella was, at most, twelve years old, upon marriage and only twenty-three upon her husband's death highlights the remarkable pace at which she had her children. In addition to this, it is quite probable that conjugal relations were delayed until she was a few years older or that Isabella, like many young brides, did not become nubile at least until the age of fifteen.⁸⁰ This was the case for Isabella's own mother, Amicia, who was betrothed at the age of six in 1226 but the marriage was not consummated until 1235 when she was fifteen years old. She had her first child, Baldwin, in 1236.⁸¹ Isabella, like her mother, may not have begun conjugal relations until she was fifteen and this makes the fact that she had six children by the age of twenty-three even more extraordinary. It is likely, however, that Isabella, as was standard

⁷⁶ J. Peltzer, 'Marriages of the English Earls in the Thirteenth Century: a Social Perspective' in *Thirteenth Century England*, Vol. XIV (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), p74.

⁷⁷ English, 'Forz, William de (1191x6-1241)'.

⁷⁸ M. W. Labarge, *A Baronial Household of the Thirteenth Century* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1965), p10.

⁷⁹ Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, pp25-6.

⁸⁰ Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power', p66-7.

⁸¹ M. Altschul, *A Baronial Family in England: The Clares, 1217-1314* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p32-3.

practice for the nobility, used wet nurses which allowed her to recover her fertility quite rapidly after giving birth and henceforth allowed her to become pregnant again.⁸²

All of Isabella's children predeceased her. Although this is, admittedly, sad, it was not unusual for families to lose a large number of their children given the high level of infant mortality in this period. Recent studies have shown that as many as 25% of medieval children died within the first year of life, 12.5% between the ages of one and four and 6% between the ages of five and nine.⁸³ The de Lacy family suffered similar losses to those experienced by Isabella and William. Henry and Margaret lost two sons by the year 1292, leaving their daughter, Alice, as the sole heir.⁸⁴ Two of Isabella's sons, named John and Teron, died during their father's lifetime but the precise dates of death are unknown.⁸⁵ A third son was Thomas who, it has been noted, was only just about to turn seven when his father died.⁸⁶ Again, it is unknown exactly when Thomas died, but it is likely to have been before 1269; therefore he would have only been sixteen upon his death. Isabella's last born son, William, is also known to have died before 1269 but, again, the exact year of his death is unknown.⁸⁷ Upon her husband's death Isabella was granted the custody, but not the marriages, of both Thomas and William which were granted, along with the wardship of the lands belonging to William de Forz, to Edward, Henry's eldest son on 18th October 1260.⁸⁸ On 28th June 1261, however, Edward sold both the wardship of the marriage of the heirs and lands of William de Forz to Isabella and her mother Amicia.⁸⁹ William and Isabella also had two daughters, the first of whom was Avice, or Amice as she is referred to in *The Complete Peerage*. Once again, little is known of Avice other than that she, like her two brothers, had died unmarried before 1269.⁹⁰ The final daughter was Aveline, who was born during 1259. Following the deaths of all of her siblings, Aveline became the sole heir to the Forz inheritance. In August 1263, Henry III granted to his second eldest son, Edmund, Isabella's relief as well as the rights to her marriage or the fine should she desire to remain single.⁹¹ Edmund's right was reinforced again on 20th November 1268 and in the following year his marriage to Isabella's

⁸² Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, pp5-6.

⁸³ N. Orme, 'Childhood in Medieval England, c.500-1500' (University of Exeter), http://www.representingchildhood.pitt.edu/medieval_child.htm, accessed 15th February 2014.

⁸⁴ Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women*, pp105-7.

⁸⁵ English, 'Forz, Isabella de'.

⁸⁶ *Inquisitions Post-Mortem Vol. I*, pp132-3.

⁸⁷ It seems probable that Isabella's loss of children was a result of the high levels of infant mortality in this period.

⁸⁸ *CPR, 1258-66* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1910), p97.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p161.

⁹⁰ Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage Vol. IV*, p323.

⁹¹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p275.

daughter Aveline was negotiated with Eleanor of Provence.⁹² The marriage of Edmund and Aveline took place in 1273 but she died one year later, apparently whilst giving birth to twins, at the age of fifteen.⁹³ Although all of Isabella and William's children died at a young age, the fact that they had so many suggests that William was eager to secure the succession to the Forz inheritance, especially as he was thirty-two years old upon his marriage to Isabella. Upon his death, it would have appeared that he had succeeded but the loss of all children but one by 1269 altered this quite dramatically.

The success of the marriage between Isabella and William can also be evaluated by other means. William was a very loyal supporter of Henry III to whom he performed homage shortly after the death of his father in 1241. As a result of this homage, William was given all of the lands that his father had held of the King in-chief.⁹⁴ Over the course of his career William frequently received gifts and concessions from Henry probably due to his unfailing loyalty. In 1245, William received the right to have a fair at his manor of Pocklington, in York, on the vigil of the feast of St. Margaret and two days after.⁹⁵ Previously, in October 1241, Henry allowed William to pay off the debts that he owed to the crown at a rate of £40 pounds a year, with £20 pounds being paid at each exchequer at Easter and Michaelmas, until the debts had been fully paid.⁹⁶ In October 1250, £100 worth of William's debt (£400. 3s. 3d.) to the king was pardoned on the condition that he pay £50 at both the exchequer of Easter and Michaelmas until the remainder of the debt had been paid. It is probable that his marriage to Isabella, an heiress of high birth, was also a reward for his loyalty.⁹⁷

William was frequently absent from the great household and from England on royal business, meaning that he and Isabella were often separated for long periods of time. In July 1253 William had paid 100 marks towards the cost of Henry's crossing to Gascony and in July 1255, he was there himself with Edward, the king's son, potentially acting as a surety for debts owed to the crown by Hugh de Vivon, the seneschal of Gascony.⁹⁸ In October of the same year William was in Carlisle on embassy and also in that year, by the pleasure of the King, was appointed sheriff of Cumberland and

⁹² *CPR, 1266-72*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1913), p358.

⁹³ It is likely that this was a grand wedding as Henry himself ordered that twenty pounds of 'good bread' be purchased for the occasion in March 1269. *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls, 1267-72* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964), p71; English, 'Forz, Isabella de'; Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), p246.

⁹⁴ *CPR, 1232-47* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), p258; *CFR, 1240-41* available at www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/calendar, no. 655, accessed 1st November 2013.

⁹⁵ *CChR, 1226-57* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903), p253.

⁹⁶ *CFR, 1240-1*, no. 748, accessed 1st November 2013.

⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Portraits*, p23.

⁹⁸ *CFR, 1254-5*, no. 618, accessed 1st November 2013; *CPR, 1232-47*, p23.

keeper of the castle of Carlisle; he held these positions until his death.⁹⁹ William was very valuable to Henry in that through his inheritance and his first marriage to one of the daughters of Alan of Galloway, he had connections and influence within Scotland; this made him a useful mediator between the two kingdoms. Barbara English has argued that due to his position as a great northern baron William had no choice but to be highly involved within government.¹⁰⁰ This is obvious from the contemporary records which illustrate that he was frequently involved in Scottish affairs.¹⁰¹ It also seems to have been quite a common occurrence for William to have been on the continent for royal business as, in October 1258, he and others were granted protection by the king whilst they were away from England on his service.¹⁰² William died abroad at Amiens whilst on the king's business.¹⁰³ The prominence of the count of Aumale within the royal court is also highlighted by the fact that he was appointed one of the king's counsellors under the provisions of Oxford of 1258 and that he witnessed fifty-five of Henry's charters.¹⁰⁴ In some years William only attested to one or two of Henry's charters which is suggestive of his absences on royal business. For example, between the years 1256-1258 he is quite strikingly absent, only attesting once in either year, probably because he was on the continent. The prominence of Henry's hated relatives and friends at the royal court during these years is glaringly obvious by the frequency in which they appear in the witness lists. In 1259, the year prior to his death, William witnessed a total of a twenty-six charters, quite a number, and this is likely to be due to his appointment as one of the king's councillors under the Provisions.¹⁰⁵ This is further highlighted by the fact that in December 1259 he was in Paris with Henry for which service he was granted protection in October.¹⁰⁶ Had William survived past the year 1260, it is likely that he would have remained as one of Henry's most trusted councillors, together with the earl of Gloucester, Peter of Savoy and John Mansel.¹⁰⁷

During William's frequent absences, Isabella would have been expected to ensure that the household continued to run smoothly. The roles that noblewomen were expected to fulfil during such absences were laid out in the various pieces of conduct literature written in this period.

⁹⁹ English, 'Forz, William de, (b. before 1216, d. 1260); *CFR, 1255-6*, no. 2, accessed 1st November.

¹⁰⁰ B. English, *The Lords of Holderness, 1086-1260: A Study in Feudal Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p52-3.

¹⁰¹ *CPR, 1247-58* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), pp421, 441.

¹⁰² *CPR, 1258-66*, p54.

¹⁰³ Luard (ed.), *Flores Historiarum Vol. II, 1067-1264*, p450.

¹⁰⁴ M. Morris (ed.), *The Royal Charter Witness Lists of Henry III (1216-1272) from the Charter Rolls in the Public Record Office, Vols. I and II* (Chippenham: Antony Rowe Ltd., 2001); *CPR, 1258-66*, pp62-118.

¹⁰⁵ Morris, *The Royal Charter Witness Lists of Henry III*.

¹⁰⁶ *CPR, 1258-66*, pp58, 108-118.

¹⁰⁷ Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, p166.

Perhaps the best and most famous example is that of Christine de Pisan, a fourteenth/early fifteenth century writer who, rather unusually for a female, gained fame as an author within her lifetime.¹⁰⁸ This was partly due to the fact that her father was Thomas de Pizzano, astrologer, physician and trusted advisor of King Charles V of France.¹⁰⁹ Christine, in her work *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* (also known as *The Book of the Three Virtues*), written in 1405, outlined the idealised daily routine of a noblewoman whilst her husband was absent from the household. According to Christine, the morning should start off with prayers and masses in the chapel, followed by the distribution of alms, listening to petitions and, if she was responsible for government in her husband's absence, attending council or meeting with officials and councillors. Having had dinner, which was the main meal of the day, she would retire to her chamber where she would work or rest with other ladies or perhaps spend time in the garden. She would then have supper and say her final prayers before she went to bed.¹¹⁰ The extent to which this daily routine was followed by aristocratic women is unknown but it is more than probable that these activities did form part of a normal day for a noblewoman of the thirteenth century.¹¹¹

The varying roles of noblewomen during the absence of their husbands have also been discussed by Jennifer Ward in her study, *Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*. Perhaps one of the most important roles of a noblewoman during the absence of her husband, and in some instances in his presence, was to ensure that the household continued to run efficiently.¹¹² This was by no means an easy task as a noble household could be quite large; one such example is the household of Eleanor de Montfort which consisted of 207 members in 1265.¹¹³ It is almost certain that Isabella played a crucial role, as was the norm, in ensuring that the household did continue to function smoothly but, we cannot be certain of the extent of her activities. The evidence that could be gained from a household roll of the Forz family would be immense but, sadly, no such document survives. Despite this, the witness lists of Isabella's acts do give us an insight into who may have been prominent members of her household. Having looked through the witness lists of Isabella's charters, all of which date from her widowhood, it can be seen that there was a certain group of men that

¹⁰⁸ This is, admittedly, a little late for this study but it can be safely assumed that the daily routine laid out by Pisan here could also be applied to that of a noblewoman living in the thirteenth century.

¹⁰⁹ S. Lawson (ed.), *Christine de Pisan: The Treasure of the City of Ladies or the Book of the Three Virtues* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p17.

¹¹⁰ Lawson (ed.), *Christine de Pisan: The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, pp59-62.

¹¹¹ Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, pp51-60.

¹¹² Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p109.

¹¹³ Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, p110.

witnessed on a regular basis and the importance of these men, and other witnesses, and the roles that they fulfilled will be discussed further on in this study.

Noble wives were expected to identify with their husbands' allegiances and it seems that Isabella did so.¹¹⁴ If she did not, there is no evidence of her actions against him within the surviving contemporary records. After her husband's death, Isabella was able to express freely her own personal allegiances in one of the most important periods in English history. During her marriage it is likely that Isabella entertained guests and communicated with those who worked closely with her husband at the royal court. Noblewomen were not only restricted to the relations and kin of their husbands but were able to have their own circle of relations and friends. It was through friendships with other noble men and women that patronage networks were formed and women were able to exercise and increase not only their own personal influence but also that of their families.¹¹⁵ Having looked at the messenger and gift accounts of Eleanor of Provence dating from 1252-3, there is no evidence that Isabella was in contact with the queen at this time.¹¹⁶ It is known, however, that Isabella was in contact with Eleanor in later years in regard to the marriage of their children and other matters.¹¹⁷ Due to the lack of surviving evidence, it is unclear with whom Isabella corresponded during her marriage.

In addition to the communication with and entertainment of other nobles, noblewomen were expected to ensure that the family estates continued to be run in an efficient manner.¹¹⁸ The fact that women were trusted with such duties in the absence of their husbands would suggest that they had experience of doing so in his presence. During William's frequent absences, it is likely that Isabella would have met with officials to discuss the administration of the Forz estates. It has been questioned by Mate as to whether the profit gained from Isabella's estates during her long widowhood was predominantly down to her own personal hard work or that of her officials. This is an issue to be discussed within a later chapter but, it must be mentioned here that it is highly likely that Isabella gained knowledge regarding estate administration throughout the duration of her marriage.

¹¹⁴ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p102.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p107.

¹¹⁶ TNA: E 101/349/7, E 101/349/13, E 101/349/18.

¹¹⁷ *CChR, 1257-1300* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1906), pp121-2.

¹¹⁸ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p108.

Another key role undertaken by noblewomen was the dispensation of patronage to religious houses and the foundation of new ones.¹¹⁹ Evidence would suggest that this was undertaken both jointly with their husbands and as individuals. Studies regarding other noble couples show that it was quite common practice for them to make joint grants or to witness each other's charters. This would suggest that they shared a close relationship and importantly that the wife was a 'key political player'.¹²⁰ If we had evidence of this for Isabella and William, a further idea of the success of their relationship may have been gauged. Rather frustratingly, the number of William's surviving charters is small and there is no evidence of Isabella standing witness to any of these. It should be noted William's charters are, for the most part, confirmations to religious houses. He was heavily involved with the religious houses associated with the earls of Aumale, including Thornton and Meaux.¹²¹ In addition to this, all of Isabella's surviving charters date from the years of her widowhood and so, obviously, William was not able to stand as witness. No light can therefore be shed on Isabella's relationship with her husband in this way. Despite this, Isabella made a large number of grants to religious houses intended for the protection of his soul.¹²² Perhaps these grants illustrate that Isabella and William had a successful and loving relationship but, it should be noted, it was also convention for a noble widow to commemorate the soul of her late husband.¹²³ Although it is probable that Isabella acted as the executor of her husband's will, it was common for noblewomen to fulfil this role. It is, however, curious that there is no extant evidence that Isabella performed this role on her husband's behalf.¹²⁴

Isabella's marriage to the earl of Aumale fulfilled social expectations. The number of children that the countess had in a relatively short marriage would perhaps be suggestive of a successful relationship despite William's frequent absences. During these absences it is likely that Isabella, as was seemingly ordinary for the majority of noble wives, became more involved in the running of the household and estates. The lack of evidence concerning joint religious patronage is a little frustrating, but it would seem that it was not unusual for noble couples to undertake this together. Although the extent of the success of their marriage is questionable, it would seem that, for the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p143.

¹²⁰ S. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, pp84, 87.

¹²¹ W. T. Lancaster (ed.), *Abstracts of Charters and other documents in the chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains in the West Riding of the county of York* (Leeds: J. Whitehead and Sons, 1915), p60; K. J. Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory: an edition of the Coucher Book and charters*, (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2009), p140.

¹²² This will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4.

¹²³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p149.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p34.

most part, it was a happy one. Having considered Isabella's family background and the role that she fulfilled as William's wife, I shall now turn to look at the role she played in the politics of the thirteenth century and the influence she was able to exert as a wealthy, widowed, countess.

Chapter Two – The Countess as a Widow

Following the death of both her husband and brother, and her inheritance of two great earldoms, Isabella was thrust into the increasingly volatile English political sphere and became one of the most influential women within England. It has been suggested by Susan Johns that widowhood was, due to the change in legal status, the most ‘powerful phase’ of a noblewoman’s life during the late twelfth century.¹²⁵ It would be acceptable to say that this remained true for women of the thirteenth century.¹²⁶ Upon widowhood a woman transformed from a *femme covert*, meaning a woman ‘covered’ by the authority of her husband, to a *femme sole*, a woman who was ‘uncovered’. Once widowed, a noblewoman became an independent legal figure and was, as a result, able to plead in the courts in her own right rather than having to go through her husband.¹²⁷ The contemporary records show that Isabella was herself a very active litigator throughout the entirety of her thirty-three year widowhood and was involved in numerous, rather lengthy, cases concerning her lands. Widowhood also meant that women became property holders in their own right and therefore became the heads of households and the managers of estates. This was, in the majority of cases, an extension of the activities undertaken during marriage.¹²⁸ It was probably the same for Isabella whose husband, as discussed above, was frequently absent from the household. In her new position as head of the household, Isabella would have been fully responsible for the decisions made about family relationships as well as those concerning her lands and estates. The retention of these rights was, however, only possible if the woman chose not to remarry; if she did, all of her rights would be transferred to her new husband.¹²⁹ As it is known, Isabella did not remarry and therefore retained her newly gained rights and authority; it was this power that allowed her to play such an active role within thirteenth-century English politics. This chapter will discuss the relationship that Isabella had with both Henry III and Edward I by looking at her interactions with them throughout their reigns, the frequency in which she appeared at the royal court and the business she transacted whilst she was present. The contemporary records also show that Isabella was in quite regular contact with Henry’s queen, Eleanor of Provence, and so this relationship will also be explored. The independent legal status Isabella gained as a widow enabled her to be highly active within English politics and it is these activities, and their significance, that will be discussed here.

¹²⁵ S. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power*, p72.

¹²⁶ Cavell, ‘Aristocratic Widows and the Welsh Frontier’, pp69-75; Mitchell, *Portraits*, p9.

¹²⁷ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, pp2-3, 34.

¹²⁸ Cavell, ‘Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier’, p69.

¹²⁹ Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, p63.

Upon the death of her husband, Isabella held land in dower and this was added to upon her inheritance of the earldom of Devon. Isabella's lineage and her position as heiress to a wealthy earldom made her quite the catch on the marital market. It is likely that her hand in marriage was desired by a number of noblemen but there is no evidence of who else may have sought her hand other than the rebellious Simon de Montfort junior.¹³⁰ It was quite common for wealthy noble widows to be abducted.¹³¹ In the worst scenarios a woman would be raped and, rather disturbingly, the victim would then have been forced to marry her attacker.¹³² This was supposed to serve as a punishment for the perpetrator but it seems that the feelings of the victim were not considered in this apparent solution. The rather unfortunate Alice de Lacy (d.1348) was abducted and raped twice within her lifetime. In the second instance she was forced to marry the rapist, one Hugh de Frene; luckily for Alice he died just one year after their marriage.¹³³ Both of these abductions are recorded within the chronicles and place the blame on Alice, as is to be expected given their male authorship. Isabella was also very nearly abducted but luckily for her, the abductor failed to succeed.

Following Simon's victory at the Battle of Lewes in May 1264 he seized full control of the English government and sold the rights to Isabella's remarriage to his son, Simon de Montfort junior; these rights had been granted by Henry III to his son Edmund two years previously.¹³⁴ As discussed above, it was common for royal officials and relatives to be rewarded with marriage to a noblewoman and it was clearly Simon's desire to enhance his son's personal wealth and career. Between the Battle of Lewes in 1264 and the Battle of Evesham in August 1265, Simon de Montfort junior allegedly chased Isabella across the country 'with horses and arms' so that he would be able to capture and marry her. She later claimed that he had forced her to flee to Wales.¹³⁵ Although it is possible that Simon was working on his own, it is more likely that he was heavily encouraged by his mother, Eleanor de Montfort who, it can be seen from her household accounts for this year, was in contact with Isabella prior to the Battle of Evesham. Isabella, who according to Denholm-Young allegedly supported the baronial cause, was exchanging letters with Eleanor throughout the spring of 1265 and was entertained by her at Odiham in April.¹³⁶ The political situation at this time was quite unpredictable and the evidence does not allow us to say with any certainty that she was either a royal or baronial

¹³⁰ This is discussed immediately below.

¹³¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p15.

¹³² Mitchell, *Portraits*, p120.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp108-113, 120-1.

¹³⁴ *CPR, 1258-66*, p275.

¹³⁵ M. Prestwich, *Henry III and the Lord Edward, Vol. II* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947), p708.

¹³⁶ B. Botfield, *Manners and Household Expenses of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, (London: William Nicol, 1841), pp15-16, 32-33.

supporter. It could be suggested therefore that Isabella was playing her cards very close to her chest and that her loyalties were probably quite fluid in order to protect her estates and lands. Isabella was not the only noblewoman in contact with Eleanor who was corresponding with a number of baronial and comital wives and widows in 1265 before Evesham.¹³⁷ If Isabella was indeed leaning to the baronial side at this time, it is quite possible that Simon junior's attempted abduction led her to sway back to the royalist fold. It is unlikely that any other noblemen attempted to abduct this wealthy heiress; there is no evidence within the contemporary records in any case, given the fact that the rights to her marriage had been granted to the king's son. Following the battle of Evesham, which resulted in the deaths of Simon de Montfort and his eldest son Henry, Henry III regained control of the English government.

After the death of her brother in 1262, on 17th August 1263 three of Henry's most trusted relatives and advisors, John de Warenne, earl of Surrey, William de Valence, Henry's half-brother and Hugh Bigod, Warenne's half-brother stood as Isabella's sureties.¹³⁸ Wilkinson has raised some important questions as to why these men decided to support Isabella's succession to the earldom. The fact that these men in particular stood as her sureties is rather interesting and it is more than possible that she had met these men through her husband who was, like Warenne, Valence and Bigod, very close to the king. This is highlighted by the fact that William and these men often stood witness to the same charters.¹³⁹ Although it is possible that these men stood as sureties through friendship, it is equally possible that they were persuaded by Isabella or by Henry himself.¹⁴⁰ That these men stood as her sureties makes the question of Isabella's allegiance even more complicated. As a result of the grant of her inheritance, Isabella was summoned to do homage to the King at the next parliament for seisin of all lands and tenements held by her brother, the earl of Devon. In this instance Isabella did not attend. On 12th May 1264, two days prior to the battle of Lewes, whilst Simon de Montfort had seized control of English government, Isabella was summoned again to do homage for her lands at the next parliament which was to be held on 1st June. In the meantime, the sheriff of Hampshire was ordered to take Isabella's lands into his hands and was only to restore these to her once she had attended.¹⁴¹ This order was, however, subsequently withdrawn. An agreement was eventually made between Henry and Isabella, whereby she agreed to pay one hundred marks a year to the exchequer until her debts, including those of her ancestors, had been

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp15-16, 32-33.

¹³⁸ *CFR*, 1262-3, no. 713, accessed 1st November; Wilkinson, 'Women, Politics and Local Government', p1.

¹³⁹ M. Morris, *The Royal Charter Witness Lists of Henry III (1216-1272)*.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkinson, 'Women, Politics and Local Government', p2.

¹⁴¹ *CCIR*, 1264-8 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), p112, 118.

paid in full; Edward reinforced this agreement following the death of his father.¹⁴² Whatever the reason for these men standing as Isabella's sureties, the mere fact that they did is an indication of the level of her political power and influence within the royal court.

The records suggest that the relationship between Isabella and Henry only truly began to flourish following Simon's downfall. It is likely that the relationship between Isabella and the de Montforts would have suffered even if they had won the Battle of Evesham, given Simon junior's attempted abduction. Although Isabella did not openly state where her loyalties lay, Edward would have wanted this exceptionally wealthy woman to be on side. Isabella's vast inheritance included the Isle of Wight, a strategically important piece of land; having a royalist in control of the island would reduce the risk of invasion and give the king some peace of mind. In February or March 1266, Henry appointed Isabella to defend the Isle from the 'king's enemies and rebels' who were 'holding out at sea'. Henry also called upon the men of the Isle, both secular and religious, to assist Isabella with the defence of the island or risk losing their lands and possessions if they did not.¹⁴³ Given Isabella's 'reluctance' to display her allegiances, it is possible that Henry had some doubts about the extent of her loyalty. This is illustrated when on 4th June 1267, he asked that she hand over Carisbrooke castle to John de Insula whom he had appointed as keeper of the peace and protector of the island against the king's enemies. He promised that the castle would be restored to her once the threat of invasion was over and, perhaps as a reward for her compliance, granted Isabella simple protection for one year.¹⁴⁴ In September of the same year, he asked that she accept his keepers, Matthew de Columbers, Ralph de Gorges, Alan de Plogenet and Reynold de Molis, to, once again, ensure the protection of the Isle. These men had taken an oath to both Henry and Isabella stating, that they would not cause any damage to the Isle or to any of Isabella's goods but keep the island for the king and for Isabella and her heirs. They also promised that they would allow Isabella's bailiffs to remain primarily responsible for the administration of the Isle. Once the threat of invasion was over, these men were to restore fully the lands to Isabella and were not to try and claim any part of the Isle on the basis of this keepership.¹⁴⁵

The agreement clearly illustrates that both Isabella and Henry had concerns about each other. It may indeed have been that Henry doubted the loyalty of Isabella and her bailiffs. Evidence would

¹⁴² *CCIR, 1264-8*, p212; *Calendar of the Liberate Rolls, 1260-1267* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), p202; *CCIR, 1272-79* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900), p101.

¹⁴³ *CPR, 1258-66*, p659.

¹⁴⁴ *CPR, 1266-72*, p67; *CPR, 1258-66*, p602.

¹⁴⁵ *CPR, 1266-72*, p156.

suggest, perhaps, that Henry's concerns were well founded, as previously in November 1266 Isabella's serjeants and bailiffs in Northumberland and York, together with those of the bishop of Durham, had opposed his son, Edward, and his bailiffs from receiving the aid that he had granted them. As a result of this, Henry ordered that all the bailiffs within these counties give their assistance to Edward's serjeants, John le Moyne and Stephen de Jarum, to try and prevent those of Isabella and the bishop from doing so.¹⁴⁶ Isabella, on the other hand, may have been concerned that the king's appointees might not return control of the island. An entry within the *Patent Rolls* shows that Isabella need not have worried as Henry kept his word; two months later he ordered his bailiffs to return the keeping of Carisbrooke to Isabella and they were told not to meddle in affairs there henceforth.¹⁴⁷ The fact that the island was fully restored to Isabella would have probably helped to cement her loyalty. The protection of the Isle of Wight seemingly continued to be a major source of concern for both Henry and Isabella as in May 1271 she appointed with the consent of the king, John de la Ware, her steward, to act as her attorney, and have the ability to appoint others, whilst she remained there to keep the peace.¹⁴⁸ Clearly then Isabella's holdings, but especially the Isle, made her an important member of the landholding community and thereby brought her into close and frequent contact with the royal court.

As aforementioned, Isabella's status as a widow allowed her to pursue litigation in the royal courts. The case against her mother, which began in 1267, is one of the few areas of Isabella's life that has previously been discussed. In 1261, the two women had effectively bought from Edward the remaining two thirds of Holderness, the other third had been granted to Isabella as dower, with the liberties, escheats and knights' fees for the sum of three thousand marks. In addition to this, Isabella and her mother also bought the rights to the marriage of Isabella's eldest son, Thomas, and his heirs.¹⁴⁹ Following this, the two women lived together, but quarrelled over the income gained from these lands. Denholm-Young suggested that the two women had previously had a dispute regarding their political allegiances and perhaps their relationship was soured as a result.¹⁵⁰ In December 1267, it was ordered that John le Breton investigate and make enquiries into the dispute and return his inquisition to the king. John was required to audit the accounts of Holderness, to assign Isabella her dower out of these lands, knights' fees and advowsons of the churches and to partition equally the lands. In May the following year John de Raygate, the king's escheator beyond the Trent, with the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp1-2.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p165.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp537, 601.

¹⁴⁹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p161.

¹⁵⁰ Denholm Young, 'The Yorkshire Estates of Isabella de Fortibus', pp410-15.

assent of both women and each of their chosen serjeants, was appointed to make the partition following Breton's inquisition.¹⁵¹

The problem remained very much unsolved for a number of years. In May 1268, John le Breton appointed two men, Bernard de Areingnes and Thomas de Leleie, on Henry's behalf to ensure that the wapentakes and bailiwicks of Holderness were kept 'safely'; in other words, to ensure that both countesses kept to this divide. It was also ordered that if a dispute arose between the two women this would be controlled by Areingnes and Leleie until Henry could come to a decision.¹⁵² In February 1269 it was apparent that these arrangements had not worked as Amicia complained to Henry that her daughter, or rather her officials, were not allowing her to have access to her rightful share and that Breton's inquisition had been inadequate.¹⁵³ As a result of Amicia's complaints, Henry appointed two more men, Richard de Middleton and John de Oketon, to go forth, inspect the previous inquisition and report back to him with their findings; he also asked that the sheriff of York provide jurors for this inquisition.¹⁵⁴ Although Amicia and Isabella were formally reconciled they did not live with each other again and, it would be quite incredible if this dispute did not affect their relationship in some way.¹⁵⁵ The significance of this dispute is clearly illustrated by the length of time over which it continued and the considerable involvement of the king and his officials. It is likely that this dominated much of Isabella's attention throughout Henry's reign.

Entries within the contemporary records show that through her contact with Henry, Isabella also began to build up a relationship with the queen. In 1266 Isabella and Queen Eleanor made a joint grant of lands to Maud, the wife of John de Chirchehull, who was an enemy of the king and in prison. It was claimed by Isabella and Eleanor that the lands Henry had granted to Maud, which were intended to sustain her throughout the duration of her husband's imprisonment, were actually insufficient for this purpose.¹⁵⁶ It is quite possible that both women felt compassion with Maud's plight. Eleanor and Isabella added to the lands Maud already held in Churchill and Peopleton, Worcester, with a grant of two virgates of farm in Broughton Hackett, which John had previously held, and one more virgate on another farm also in Broughton Hackett. Maud was to hold these

¹⁵¹ *CPR, 1266-72*, pp276, 281.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p296.

¹⁵³ N. Denholm-Young, 'The Yorkshire Estates of Isabella de Fortibus', *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. XXXI (John Whitehead and Son Ltd., Leeds, 1934), p410.

¹⁵⁴ *CCIR, 1268-1272* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), pp24-5; *CPR, 1266-72*, pp375-6.

¹⁵⁵ *CCIR, 1268-72*, p54.

¹⁵⁶ *CPR, 1258-66*, p546.

lands, as John had previously, until he was released from prison.¹⁵⁷ The connection between Maud, Isabella and Eleanor is not clear from the record evidence but they were possibly linked through tenancy or neighbourhood.

Another situation in which Isabella and Eleanor were in close communication was the negotiation of the marriage of their children. Upon the death of her last remaining sibling, Aveline was, like her mother, the heiress to two great earldoms and Eleanor, in an attempt to ensure that her second son Edmund had a fitting place within the 'social structure' of England, was determined to secure his marriage to Aveline.¹⁵⁸ The rights to Aveline's marriage were divided between her mother and her grandmother, with one thousand pounds being paid to each woman. Eleanor was so eager to secure the marriage for Edmund that she paid the full amount for him as he did not have the resources to do so himself. The terms of payment to Isabella are set out in the charter rolls of the year 1269. It was stated that Eleanor would pay Isabella in two five-hundred pound instalments, the first of which was to be paid a month after Easter and the other by November of the same year. In this part of the agreement, the Lord Edward, William de Valence, Philip Basset, Alan la Zouche, Matthew de Columbers, John de Curtenay and Ralph de Gorges stood as sureties to ensure that Eleanor would make this payment and promised to make the payment if she failed to do so. In the event that Eleanor failed to make her payment, Isabella was able to demand the full amount, at any time, from any of these men or their heirs.¹⁵⁹ In this agreement, Edmund also gave surety that he would espouse Aveline accordingly and that he would provide her with four thousand pounds if he chose to 'abandon' her in order to marry another woman. The above men also stood as sureties for this part of the agreement; if Edmund failed to make this payment to Isabella then they would, again, pay the full amount. The amount that each man was expected to pay in such an eventuality was also laid out.¹⁶⁰

The terms of payment to Amicia were far more relaxed than those to Isabella and this was probably, as Howell suggests, due to their friendship.¹⁶¹ The agreement set out that Eleanor would pay Amicia the sum of money within the next three years but also more specifically listed from which lands and manors the money would come.¹⁶² This agreement was witnessed by a number of different men. The contrasts in the payment arrangements imply that Isabella was perhaps more

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p546.

¹⁵⁸ Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, p244.

¹⁵⁹ *CChR, 1257-1300* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916), p121.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p122.

¹⁶¹ Howell, *Queenship*, pp244-5.

¹⁶² *CPR, 1266-72*, p358.

concerned about receiving payment for her daughter's marriage than Amicia was. Despite this, it can be suggested that Isabella was probably primarily concerned with the welfare of her daughter as is illustrated by the clauses designed to ensure Aveline's financial security in the event of a divorce.

The negotiation of Aveline's marriage was not the only time at which Isabella and her mother were both present at the king's court. Previously, in July 1264 they had both been granted safe conduct until Michaelmas of the same year to travel to the king in London, together with their 'households, horses, harnesses and goods'.¹⁶³ It is clear that Isabella, who was potentially accompanied by her mother, was also present at the royal court in 1266 to issue the grant she made with Queen Eleanor to Maud de Chircheshull at Westminster in February.¹⁶⁴ It is known that Henry and Isabella were in communication throughout 1267 as in July she was ordered to allow the keepers of the king's works at Westminster to have thirteen men from her farm at Stratton to assist in the continued construction of the abbey.¹⁶⁵ At this time Adam de Stratton, who later became Isabella's chief administrator, was keeper of the works at Westminster.¹⁶⁶

Upon the death of Henry III in 1272 he was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward. Edward's actions and communications illustrate that he, like his father, understood the power and influence that Isabella held within England and in English politics. It is likely that he and Isabella had previously come into contact at the royal court, most notably in the negotiations regarding Edmund and Aveline's marriage. An entry within the patent rolls illustrates that in 1269 Edmund and Isabella had exchanged lands. In this agreement, Isabella gave Edmund lands in Cambridge, Huntingdon, Somerset and Dorset in exchange for lands that expanded her holdings in York and Cumberland.¹⁶⁷ It is possible that Isabella and Edward's paths may have crossed here and the beginnings of a working relationship were established.

The contemporary records of Edward's reign show that Isabella was heavily involved in politics on numerous levels; this was made possible by her position as landholder and lord. Isabella was a highly active litigator and this is apparent when looking at her activities during the 1270s. In July 1275, Isabella was locked in conflict with Gascelin le Brut of Ghent who had come before the king at Kempton and demanded that Isabella pay him three hundred pounds. The grounds on which he claimed this sum are not specified. Isabella was, however, apparently otherwise engaged as she did

¹⁶³ *CPR, 1258-66*, p333.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p546.

¹⁶⁵ *Liberate Rolls, 1260-7*, p285.

¹⁶⁶ Stacey, 'Stratton, Adam of'.

¹⁶⁷ *CPR, 1266-72*, pp382-3.

not appear at court and Gascelin was given a date upon which he was to return at Michaelmas.¹⁶⁸ Also in 1275, Isabella was involved in a case against Maud de Lacy, the countess of Gloucester. In 1249 or 1250 Maud had agreed to grant the manor of Navesby, in Northamptonshire, to Isabella and her husband William; this had previously formed part of Maud's *maritagium* and was now to form part of Isabella's. As Mitchell states, it is unknown as to whether Maud actually approved of the grant at the time but she waited until 1275 to sue Isabella for the manor.¹⁶⁹ Isabella nearly lost the case when Maud claimed the manor on the basis that she had defaulted; but Isabella later produced the agreement and Maud was fined for attempting to sue on a false claim.¹⁷⁰ Later in 1277 Isabella was involved in a dispute concerning the church of Brigham which had arisen between Antony Bek and Roger de Seiton. It was ordered that Antony was to hold the church at the presentation of Isabella and that Roger was not to dispute the decision.¹⁷¹ The advowson of the church had been granted to Isabella and her heirs by Thomas de Hothwayt who was married to one of the heirs of John de Brigham.¹⁷² This case of litigation was rather costly to Isabella who paid out a total of £14, 11 ½ d. and a further 66s. 8d. to Beatrice de Louther for relinquishing her claim.¹⁷³

Perhaps one of the most lengthy cases in which she was involved was that brought against Adam de Stratton, her chief administrator, by the abbot of Quarr, touched upon earlier in this study. Adam was a royal clerk and already had an association with the Redvers family; he had acted as attorney for Isabella's brother in the last two years of his life as well as being one of the executors of his will. It is, therefore, more than likely that Isabella would have come into contact with Adam at some stage prior to her brother's death. Following Baldwin's death, Adam began to work for Isabella in various positions, and continued to do so until his downfall in 1286. His activities were mainly centred at the exchequer and, in the mid 1260s he became chamberlain of the receipt and Isabella's deputy; she now held the position of hereditary chamberlain of the exchequer from her brother.¹⁷⁴ In 1276 she granted this chamberlainship to Adam in fee, together with the manor of Sevenhampton

¹⁶⁸ *CCIR*, 1272-9, p242.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p256.

¹⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Portraits*, p36.

¹⁷¹ *CPR*, 1272-1281 (London: His Majesty's Record Office, 1901), p254.

¹⁷² H. R. Luard, *Calendar of Inquisitions Post-Mortem Vol. V* (London: His Majesty's Record Office, 1908), p202; TNA: SC 1/18/29.

¹⁷³ E. Gemmill, *The Nobility and Ecclesiastical Patronage in Thirteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp172-3.

¹⁷⁴ Stacey, 'Stratton, Adam of'.

and the hamlets of Worth and Cricklade; this grant was confirmed by Edward who had only just recently granted her these lands.¹⁷⁵

The beginning of the end of Adam's career with Isabella began with his destruction of a charter of liberties belonging to the abbey of Quarr. According to an inquisition following the complaint of the abbot, he had been ordered to present the charter of liberties at Carisbrooke for inspection by Isabella and Adam. Having seen the value of the charter, Adam allegedly tore the seal from it in an attempt to disinherit the abbey of its rights. Upon Adam's denial of this action, the sheriff was asked to present thirty impartial knights, and included in this number were Thomas de Evercy and Richard de Affton, who would be able to pass judgement on this; they confirmed that Adam had in fact torn the charter.¹⁷⁶ It was judged that Adam should be sent to prison, although thanks to the intercession of Isabella he was not, and that the charter should remain in its torn state. The charter of liberties was enrolled on the roll of charters for the seventh year in May 1279.¹⁷⁷ Following this episode, the abbey was taken into the king's protection but this did not prevent Adam from continuing to harass the abbey. In September 1281 a commission was granted by the king to Robert Fulconis and Philip de Hoyvile to investigate the 'injuries and oppressions' done to the abbot by Isabella or her bailiffs and men after the abbey and its possessions had been brought under the protection of the crown.¹⁷⁸ Following this inquisition, William de Brayboef was appointed to the custody of the abbey in an attempt to put an end to this.¹⁷⁹ Despite these intentions, it is known that this was not the case, as in 1283 the abbot complained to the king once again that he and his men were being mistreated by Isabella - this was most probably Adam. A commission of oyer and terminer was granted whereby Ralph de Hengham, John Kirkeby, Nicholas de Stapleton and John de Lovetot were appointed to hear the abbot's troubles. The abbot complained that Isabella continued to persecute his men and damage the abbey's possessions. Isabella had allegedly injured the abbot's men at Cosham, Newport and Staplehurst, taken three horses worth the value of ten marks and taken goods from Staplehurst, Cosham and *Roubergh*.¹⁸⁰ This case would have consumed much of Isabella's time as it is evident that she was in frequent contact with the royal court concerning the matter.¹⁸¹ An agreement between the abbey of Quarr and the countess regarding the frankpledge of the abbey's tenants

¹⁷⁵ TNA: E40/4820, E 40/4865.

¹⁷⁶ *CChR*, 1257-1300, pp211-2.

¹⁷⁷ *CCIR*, 1272-9, p560; *CPR*, 1272-81, p314.

¹⁷⁸ *CPR*, 1272-81, p474.

¹⁷⁹ *CPR*, 1281-92 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), p39.

¹⁸⁰ *CPR*, 1281-92, p102.

¹⁸¹ G.O. Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of the King's Bench*, Vol. I (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1936), pp120-124.

illustrates that this too had caused a rift between them.¹⁸² As a result of this case, Isabella had a troubled relationship with the abbey of Quarr. The end of the dispute, which Isabella officially won, is recorded in the abbey's cartulary for the year 1285.¹⁸³ Adam ceased to work for Isabella in 1286 and, shortly afterwards, was put on trial for the numerous offences he had committed throughout the duration of his career.¹⁸⁴

Intercession was one of the key political activities in which noblewomen could be involved.¹⁸⁵ As a wealthy and politically powerful heiress, it would have been common for tenants to seek Isabella's assistance if they found themselves in an awkward or difficult situation. For example, in April 1269, she pardoned Alexander le Clerk of Harewood for the death of Stephen le Marchaunt of York.¹⁸⁶ It is likely that this was the case for Robert de Stodere of *Ravenser Odd*, Yorkshire, who was pardoned of his outlawry for robbery at the instance of Isabella in May 1277.¹⁸⁷ Further evidence of Isabella's status as a powerful landholder within thirteenth-century English society can be gained from the records of debts she was owed by various people within the close rolls. In 1274 it was recorded that Thomas de Heyham owed her a sum of twenty marks, whilst in 1276 she was owed twelve and a half marks by Robert Bardolf which was to be levied, in default of payment, from his lands and chattels in Suffolk and Buckingham.¹⁸⁸ A much larger sum of two hundred pounds was owed by Eustace de Hacche who, in 1290, acknowledged that this debt should be levied, on default of payment, from his lands and chattels in Warwick.¹⁸⁹ Quite what these debts were owed for is unclear.

Despite the power that Isabella was clearly able to wield, it must not be forgotten that she still had an underlying duty to the crown that needed to be fulfilled. In December 1276 she was summoned, with ten other women, to provide the knight service that they owed to the crown. As lords, these women were expected to provide men for the king's army. Included in this summons were other notable and wealthy widows including Agnes de Vescy, Dervoguilla de Balliol and Elena la Zouche.¹⁹⁰ Isabella's stature is perhaps reflected by her name being the first of the list. At this time Edward also asked for the service of the abbot of Ramsey, nineteen other abbots, the prior of

¹⁸² TNA: E210/8905; Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of the King's Bench, Vol. I*, p124.

¹⁸³ S.F. Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey* (Newport: The Isle of Wight County Record Office, 1991), p11; Sayles (ed.), *Select Cases in the Court of the King's Bench, Vol. I*, p128.

¹⁸⁴ T.F. Tout (ed.), *State Trials of the Reign of Edward the First* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1906), pp85-9.

¹⁸⁵ Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier', pp70-1.

¹⁸⁶ *CPR, 1266-72*, p331.

¹⁸⁷ *CPR, 1272-81*, p208.

¹⁸⁸ *CCIR, 1272-79*, pp121, 350.

¹⁸⁹ *CCIR, 1288-96* (London: His Majesty's Record Office, 1904), p149.

¹⁹⁰ TNA: C 54/94; *CCIR, 1272-79*, p410.

Coventry and four abbesses. In this summons, it is possible that Edward was reasserting his authority upon his return from crusade but also that he needed this service for his Welsh army.¹⁹¹ In November 1278, it is recorded that Isabella paid a fine of one hundred marks for the two and a half knights that she was to provide for Edward's army in Wales for that year.¹⁹² In 1282, it is recorded that she again paid a fine, this time of 125 marks, for the service that she owed to the king's Welsh army. Half of this amount was to be paid at St Peter de Vincula and the other at Michaelmas.¹⁹³ In October 1277, perhaps due to her good service, Isabella's carts and those of Adam de Stratton, amongst others, were exempted from a charge of ½ d. per cart for carrying merchandise upon entrance into the town of Nantwich, Cheshire, until Easter. The right to levy this charge had been granted to the town by Edward in order to contribute to the costs of the repairs that needed to be made to the roads and bridges there.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps one of the most significant events of the 1270s for Isabella was Edward's attempt to purchase all of her inheritance. He was well aware of the strategic importance of the Isle of Wight but also the considerable wealth and influence that Isabella enjoyed as a result of her landholding. Following the death of Aveline in 1274, Isabella was in full control of the Isle and the mass of lands that made up her inheritance. Edward apparently found this unacceptable and he managed to persuade Isabella to agree to the first phase of his plan in 1276. As laid out in this agreement, Isabella was to sell all of her lands to Edward apart from four manors, Sevenhampton, Whitchurch, Harewood and Craft, for the sum of 20,000 marks. He would then enfeoff all of these lands back to her for her lifetime. Following this sale, Isabella's dowers, escheats and fees could not be extended or exchanged. Within this agreement, Edward granted to Amicia, Isabella's mother, the manor of Buckland with the hamlets of Cullompton, Willand and Bickleigh which she was to hold of the gift of Isabella.¹⁹⁵ In another draft of the agreement Isabella was also able to keep the service of Henry Trenchard and Richard Affton for one knight's fee. It was also stated that Isabella was able to do as she pleased with the four manors that she was to keep. In 1276 Isabella was locked in two cases concerning the manors of Navesby and Craft which she was attempting to claim; if she won either or both of these manors she was expected to give them to the king in exchange for the manor of Tiverton. If she won neither of these, was found to have no legitimate claim or died during the cases,

¹⁹¹ M. Prestwich, 'Edward I (1239-1307)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁹² *CPR, 1272-81*, p282.

¹⁹³ *CCIR, 1279-88* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902), p174.

¹⁹⁴ *CPR, 1272-81*, p233.

¹⁹⁵ *CCIR, 1272-79*, p347.

she or her heirs were to exchange lands with Edward so that they could hold Tiverton.¹⁹⁶ Despite Edward's attempts to capture Isabella whilst she was at an emotional low after the death of her last surviving child, the countess, showing her strength of character, did not go through with the agreement. If Edward had been successful in his aim, it could be expected that Isabella's involvement within English politics would have been lessened considerably. It was only at the end of Isabella's life that Edward was able to purchase any of her lands. In 1293 as Isabella was travelling from Canterbury she was taken ill at Stockwell near Lambeth. Whilst on her deathbed, Isabella ordered her lady of the bedchamber to seal a charter which confirmed the sale of the Isle of Wight to Edward.¹⁹⁷ It seems that Isabella was not too concerned about preserving the whole of her inheritance for her very distant heir Hugh de Courtenay.¹⁹⁸ Eventually then, Edward did achieve his aim of securing the Isle of Wight, a matter with which he was concerned with from the early years of his reign.

Throughout the 1280s, Isabella continued to be highly active within the English political sphere, as is seen by her involvement in two rather lengthy cases of litigation. Denholm-Young argued that Isabella had an 'unusually litigious temperament' but it could be suggested that this was due to her position as the wealthiest female landholder in the country.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, the reformers involved with the Provisions of Oxford and Westminster between 1258 and 1259 had encouraged people to bring cases before the itinerant justices and this was continued and extended into the 1270s. This led to increasing access to the central courts and, by extension, an increased knowledge of politics.²⁰⁰ In addition to this, it should also be stated that there is plentiful evidence that many other noblewomen were also involved in numerous litigation cases. Margaret de Burgh, countess of Kent, whose activities have been explored by Susanna Annesley, was involved in nine cases between 1243 and 1250; this would suggest that Isabella's own involvement should not be considered especially unusual for a countess.²⁰¹ In 1280 she brought a case to court against Edmund, the earl of Cornwall, concerning the ownership of the wood at Swindon. In May 1280 a commission of oyer and terminer was granted to Thomas de Sodington, whom Isabella and Edmund both agreed before the king that

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p348.

¹⁹⁷ *CPR, 1292-1301* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1895), p41.

¹⁹⁸ Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward I*, pp710-11.

¹⁹⁹ Denholm-Young, 'Edward I and the Sale of the Isle of Wight', p433.

²⁰⁰ P. Coss, 'Bastard Feudalism Revised', *Past and Present*, Vol. 125 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp47-50.

²⁰¹ S. Annesley, 'The Countess and the Constable: An Exploration of the conflict that arose between Margaret de Burgh and Bertram de Criel', *Fine of the Month*: July 2008, <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-07-2008.html>, accessed 9th June 2014.

he should investigate the dispute. Isabella claimed that the wood was hers by right as it pertained to the manor of Harewood but that it had been usurped by Edmund's father, Richard, king of Almain.²⁰² Records suggest that this was a complex case as three years later in October 1283 a W. de Burneton was appointed to assist Thomas with the inquisition.²⁰³ The reason for this appointment was due to the fact that in January 1283 Edmund had complained that Thomas' inquisition contained some 'doubtful points' that he requested be investigated in more detail. This was clearly a bitter battle as in 1284 yet another commission was granted to Burneton and Sodington. It was claimed that some men had 'placed themselves in the roads and passes in the wood' and injured Isabella's bailiffs who were on their way to the commission that was to decide the outcome of this case, to be held before the justices at Knaresborough. As a result of their injuries, Isabella's men were unable to attend the inquisition. It is clear that the men who were responsible for injuring Isabella's bailiffs belonged to Edmund, suggesting that he was aware that the wood did not rightfully belong to him.

Isabella was also involved in a case with the king concerning the wood at Lymington.²⁰⁴ In June 1281, it was ordered that the steward of the New Forest, in which Lymington wood lay, take the wood into his hands without destruction or sale. Also in June, a commission was granted to Geoffrey de Pycheford and Walter de Kancia to investigate who had the legitimate right to the forest. Isabella claimed that she had acquired seisin of the forest through Henry III, together with the inheritance she acquired following the death of her brother in 1262. It was ordered that if Isabella's claim was found to be correct it should be investigated by what means she held it and how long this had been so. Edward, it would seem, believed that the wood had been seized into the hands of his father by the justices of the forest in 1268.²⁰⁵ It is possible that an order to the sheriff of Southampton in July 1283 to stop disturbing Isabella in respect to the liberties she held within the county, which had been claimed by the king and then adjudged to her, relates to this case.²⁰⁶ It can be seen from the discussion of the cases above that Isabella was involved in litigation against some of the most high profile members of English society but, the records show that she was also involved in cases against various other people. For example, in April 1282, she was involved in a case against Reginald, son of

²⁰² *CPR, 1272-81*, p409.

²⁰³ *CPR, 1281-92*, p90.

²⁰⁴ TNA: SC 8/276/13777. Isabella's petition to Edward I.

²⁰⁵ *CPR, 1272-81*, p472.

²⁰⁶ *Calendar of Chancery Warrants preserved in the Public Record Office: 1244-1326* (London: His Majesty's Record Office, 1927), p10.

Stephen de Lodelawe that took place before the king concerning a debt of six pounds.²⁰⁷ The relationship between Isabella and Reginald is unknown.

Throughout the 1280s Edward was careful to reward Isabella with the lands that were owed to her by right. For instance, in January 1284 he ordered Henry de Bray, the escheator beyond the Trent, to deliver to Isabella the manors of Thorle and Breamore in Hampshire which, it was uncovered by an inquisition, her mother had held in dower out of Isabella's inheritance.²⁰⁸ In December 1287, he ordered Thomas de Normanvill, his escheator beyond the Trent to permit Isabella to hold the knights' fees that had previously been held by her husband as part of her dower. The same order was given to Henry de Bray, who was now Edward's escheator south of the Trent.²⁰⁹ Likewise, in 1288 Eustace de Hacche, one of Edward's adherents, was ordered to deliver to Isabella the lands of *Cokedik* and Gedney because they belonged to her through the assignment of dower from the lands of her husband.²¹⁰ Similarly in July 1292, Edward ordered his escheator beyond the Trent, one Malcolm de Harle, to deliver to Isabella the manors of Pishiobury (Hertford), Newham, South Lambeth (London), Freshwater, Wroxall (Isle of Wight) and Christchurch (Hampshire). It had been discovered by an inquisition that Margaret de Redvers, the countess of Devon, had not held any of these manors from the king in-chief but as a gift from her husband Baldwin; as Baldwin's heir, these lands also fell to Isabella.²¹¹

Throughout his time as king, Edward granted Isabella numerous rights and gifts which perhaps illustrate a successful working relationship or that Edward was trying to ingratiate himself with Isabella. In June 1281, Isabella's land was exempt from a charter 'diswarrening' the lands and wapentake of Holderness. By this act Isabella was the only person allowed to hunt on these lands apart from the king himself.²¹² Another charter by Edward in June 1281 to all the knights and freemen in Holderness gave them permission to enclose their lands and make rabbit-warrens.²¹³ In addition to this, on 10th August 1290 Edward ordered his justice of the forest south of the Trent to provide Isabella with four oak trees that could be used for timber from within the wood of *Haneleye*, as a gift.²¹⁴ In September 1292, he ordered the steward of the New Forest, John son of Thomas, to

²⁰⁷ *CCIR*, 1279-88, p182.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p250.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p497.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p503.

²¹¹ *CCIR*, 1288-96, p236.

²¹² *CChR*, 1257-1300, p252.

²¹³ G. V. Orange, 'The Cartulary of Meaux: A Critical Edition', PhD Thesis, no.178.

²¹⁴ *CCIR*, 1288-96, p98.

allow Isabella to take sixty deer 'of all sorts' from the forest at any time throughout that year as he had previously taken that number from her manor at Burstwick, York.²¹⁵ Contemporary records also show that Isabella was granted numerous privileges by Edward throughout her widowhood, most notably quittance of common summons in varying counties. These were granted to her in Surrey in 1272, Dorset in 1288, Cumberland in 1292 and York in 1293.²¹⁶ In April 1293 it was also ordered that her attorneys be accepted in all pleas before the justices of the next eyre in Kent.

As the above evidence suggests, Isabella was an exceptionally important member of thirteenth-century English society and this is demonstrated by her intense involvement within political affairs both locally and nationally. It is plain to see that in her widowhood Isabella was certainly a figure of political agency. Her husband's link with Henry III's court enabled her to become acquainted with some highly influential individuals with whom she continued to correspond following William's death. Her inheritance of two wealthy earldoms meant that Isabella was able to assume a highly authoritative position within English society. This position allowed her to build up personal links with both King Henry and Edward, as well as Eleanor of Provence. Clearly Isabella's holding of the strategically important Isle of Wight was just one of the matters that brought her into frequent contact with the royal court under both Henry III and Edward I. Perhaps Edward was more concerned with this due to his wars with France; throughout the vast majority of his reign he sought to bring the Isle of Wight into the crown's possession. Isabella frequently appointed attorneys to travel to the royal court whilst she remained on the island to ensure that it remained secure. As a result of her choice to remain a widow Isabella was able to bring cases, of which there are numerous examples, to court against people from all levels of society including the king himself. Isabella's importance within English politics is illustrated through the numerous gifts, rights and privileges that she was granted by both monarchs. The record evidence also shows that, through her position as landholder and lord, Isabella's tenants, and sometimes her officials, looked to her to intercede on their behalf when they were involved in a difficult situation. Through the study of Isabella's extensive political activities as a widow, it is clear that she blurred, quite significantly, the typical gender stereotype. Isabella only decided to transfer her estates to Edward upon her death when she had no direct heir to inherit them and therefore it can quite reasonably be suggested that the countess of Devon and Aumale was by no means a political pawn.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p242.

²¹⁶ *CCIR*, 1268-72, p536; *CCIR*, 1279-88, p535; *CCIR*, 1288-96, pp271, 311.

Chapter Three – The Affinity of Isabella de Forz

As has been illustrated, Isabella's lands led to her being significantly involved in English politics on both a local and national level. The estates of Isabella de Forz have been discussed in much detail in past years by numerous scholars. The most extensive works are those by Denholm-Young who wrote two separate studies regarding the countess' estates, *Seignorial Administration* and 'The Yorkshire Estates of Isabella de Fortibus'. Within these works Denholm-Young discusses in great detail the administration of the Forz estates including the varying roles of her officials. Although Denholm-Young did make some attempt to reconstruct Isabella's household and affinity, he does not explore this concisely nor does he discuss what this may suggest about the level of her influence within English society and, by extension, what this may tell us of the role of women in politics. In addition to this, he was only able to uncover thirty-six of Isabella's charters.²¹⁷ Mavis Mate has also discussed the administration of the estates of Isabella de Forz. 'Profit and Productivity on the Estates of Isabella de Fortibus' considers the profits that Isabella acquired from her vast lands and the strategies employed to ensure that profits remained stable with the changing economic climate. Mate raises some interesting points for consideration regarding the extent to which Isabella herself should be considered responsible for the productivity of her estates. It is more than likely that Isabella was involved in administration given the experience gained during her marriage.²¹⁸ Isabella's estates in Holderness, Yorkshire, which she attained following the death of her husband, are also discussed in Barbara English's study, *The Lords of Holderness*, a history of the lands of Holderness under the earls of Aumale ending with the 'rule' of Isabella. The focus of these studies on the countess' estates within Yorkshire and the Isle of Wight reflects not only the volume and quality of records for these areas, but also the importance of these lands in terms of their contribution to her wealth and authority. None of these studies have attempted to fully reconstruct Isabella's affinity which I now intend to do.

Isabella de Forz held lands in at least twenty-one separate English counties: Bedford, Cambridge, Cumberland, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Hampshire, Hertford, Huntingdon, Kent, Leicester, Lincolnshire, London, Northampton, Oxford, Rutland, Somerset, Suffolk, Sussex, Wiltshire and Yorkshire, as well as the Isle of Wight. This is quite an extraordinary number. In Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and

²¹⁷ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, p18; Denholm-Young, 'The Yorkshire Estates of Isabella de Fortibus'; Mate, 'Profit and Productivity'; English, *The Lords of Holderness*. The estate records regarding the manors and lands held by Isabella in Cumberland, Essex, Hampshire, Hertford, Northampton, Oxford and Wiltshire are also discussed, although to a lesser extent.

²¹⁸ Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier', p69.

Yorkshire she held significantly more land than in other counties. We have records for the estates in many of these counties and in some instances these span almost the entirety of Isabella's widowhood. The records for the Yorkshire estates are quite possibly the most extensive and well-preserved together with those of the Isle of Wight.²¹⁹ The records relating to the honours of Christchurch and Plympton are far less extensive and full than those relating to the Forz lands in the north. For Plympton the only extant records are those for the period 1293-1297 and for Christchurch the period 1296-1300; to this end, these records are not of especial use to this study.²²⁰ There are also issues regarding the general conservation of records. One such example of this is the record covering the period of November 1287 to November 1289 of Isabella's manor of Borley, Essex, which is both badly worn and affected by gall and thereby virtually unreadable.²²¹ The majority of the estate records, however, remain remarkably well intact.

As a result of the above works, the records of Isabella's estates have already been extensively studied. The aim of this chapter is not then to undertake another critical analysis of the estates and administration of the Countess of Aumale and Devon, but a discussion of the wealth that Isabella acquired from these lands and the power she was able to wield as a result. This can be achieved through the reconstruction of Isabella's affinity using the names of those men who feature most frequently within the witness lists of her acta. Within this chapter, the roles that these men fulfilled both before and during their service to the countess will be explored and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship that each of them shared with her. This will enable us to see why these men were in her service. It is clear that in some instances they were members of her affinity through tenurial links. For others it would seem that this is not the case and first observations would suggest that Isabella was, perhaps, actually chosen as a lord by some of the men that appear within the witness lists of her acta. It is equally possible that they were recruited to her service by her personally. It can also be seen that many of those who only witnessed a small number of charters were actually some of her most active estate officials. The estate records are, of course, still of importance to this chapter as they allow us to trace the activities of those men who were within the inner and outer circles of her affinity. Such a reconstruction of the countess' retinue will contribute to our understanding of the power and influence that she actually wielded within thirteenth-century

²¹⁹ TNA: SC 6/984; SC 6/1077; SC 6/1078; SC 6/1079.

²²⁰ TNA: SC 6/829/27; SC 6/978/18; SC 6/978/19.

²²¹ TNA: SC6/837/2.

English society and will therefore offer further insights into whether Isabella should be regarded as a political pawn or player to be developed.

To assist our understanding of Isabella's attractiveness as a lord we must first look at her annual income. Isabella held dower rights in the earldom of Aumale and she also held the earldom of Devon and the Isle of Wight by right of inheritance; as a result she became one of the wealthiest people, not to mention women, within thirteenth-century English society. Based on an analysis of the surveys published in the *Book of Fees*, and on the records of Isabella's inquisitions post mortem, Michael Altschul has calculated that Isabella was, towards the end of her life, the fifth wealthiest noble within England with an annual income of £2500.²²² This total was only dwarfed by those of four earls: Edmund, the earl of Cornwall whose annual income was around £5-6000 before his death in 1300, Thomas the earl of Lancaster who, in 1313-14, received an income of around £7-8000, Gilbert the Red, the earl of Gloucester who received £4-5000 a year and Roger Bigod, the earl of Norfolk whose annual income stood at £4000 upon his death in 1306.²²³ Such a comparison of income highlights Isabella's remarkable standing within English society.

Isabella's retinue was essential to her exercise of lordship. As well as reflecting her position within society, it was there to enforce the countess' authority in her absence. For these reasons it is vital that an attempt is made to reconstruct it. Similar studies have been undertaken by both David Crouch and Keith Stringer in order to reconstruct the affinities of William Marshal, the earl of Pembroke (d.1219) and David, the earl of Huntingdon (d.1219), respectively.²²⁴ As Stringer illustrates, the men within the inner circle of the earl's affinity originated from varying levels of society but few of these men were of exceptional status.²²⁵ It should also be noted that a third of the earl's affinity, of both the inner and outer circles, were his tenants who, chiefly, derived from the honour of Huntingdon. Stringer also found that many of the men of the earl's affinity also shared similar interests or that they had come into his service with the hope of advancement.²²⁶ William Marshal was allegedly one of the very first men to form an affinity not based on traditional ties of lordship but on political interest.²²⁷ Similar parallels can be drawn when the origins of the men that

²²² Altschul, *A Baronial Family in Medieval England*, pp205-6.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp205-6.

²²⁴ D. Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in Angevin Europe, 1147-1219* (London and New York: Longman, 1990); K. J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152-1219* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985).

²²⁵ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p161.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp161-165.

²²⁷ Crouch, *William Marshal*, pp133-4.

formed Isabella's affinity are considered. For this study I shall use the model presented by Stringer who, in his reconstruction of the affinity of the earl of Huntingdon, suggested that the frequency with which people witnessed charters reflected their standing in the earl's affinity. According to Stringer, those men who witnessed six times or more should be regarded to have been within the inner circle and those who witnessed four or five times in the outer circle.²²⁸ Anybody who witnessed three or less times are to be considered as 'insignificant' in terms of their place within the affinity.²²⁹ These people should not, however, be considered less significant in every sense, as it is clear they were still of importance to Isabella.

A total of forty-two of Isabella's acta have been found for the purposes of this study.²³⁰ Of this number, only ten are addressed to laymen, with the remaining thirty-two being addressed to ecclesiastical houses. Given the comparatively small number of acta Isabella made concerning laymen, there are several men within the witness lists who mainly stood witness to ecclesiastical benefactions.²³¹ The greater preservation of charters to religious institutions should be expected; the ecclesiastical archives were much more stable than the record collections of private individuals and families.²³² Unfortunately due to issues of preservation, parts of the witness lists featured within some of these charters are difficult, and in some instances impossible, to read. As a result, the extent to which certain members of Isabella's affinity attested to her charters is not always easy to ascertain. Furthermore, there may have once been records in existence which would have shed further light on the roles of the men discussed here and their relationship with Isabella.²³³ Unfortunately, this is a problem that cannot be solved and we must, therefore, work with the records that do survive.²³⁴

Mercifully, the extant evidence is plentiful enough to enable us to reconstruct the membership of Isabella's affinity, even if this is a little distorted. It is perhaps easiest to reconstruct which of these men were within the inner circle of her affinity. Of the eight men of the inner circle, Jordan de Kingeston, one of Isabella's most prominent tenants in the Redvers estates, attests with the highest frequency. His name indicates that he came from the small village of Kingeston situated on the Isle of

²²⁸ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, pp155-158.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p155.

²³⁰ See Appendix Four.

²³¹ These men include: Jordan de Kingeston, Richard Affton, Henry Trenchard, Thomas de Evercy, John de Sancta Elena and William de Sancta Martino. These men are discussed immediately below. See Appendix Two.

²³² Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p152.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p150.

²³⁴ Excluding multiple copies of the same charter, recorded in different locations, there are forty-two readable witness lists.

Wight.²³⁵ He held the manor of Kingston in addition to half a fee and a fourth part of a fee in Wippingham, together with the prior of the Maison Dieu, Portsmouth, a hospital for the relief of the poor.²³⁶ Kingston's importance is highlighted by the nineteen attestations he made to Isabella's acta; he was more often than not the first named within the list.²³⁷ This, rather impressive, number reflects the prominence of Kingston within Isabella's household and therefore the regard with which he was held by her. It is obvious that he held power and authority in the south of England within the Redvers estates as in 1280 he was created sheriff of Hampshire by Edward.²³⁸ Similarities between Isabella's affinity and that of the earl of Huntingdon are shown here. The most frequent witness to the earl's charters was Robert Basset, a tenant and man who had a close association with John over a long period of time.²³⁹ Obviously then it was not unusual for tenants with a close personal connection to be prominent members within their lord's affinity.

Sir Richard de Affton is another man in Isabella's inner circle. He too was one of Isabella's tenants on the Isle of Wight and one of her many stewards.²⁴⁰ It is clear from his name that he was associated with the small hamlet of Affton situated on the Isle. He held one fee in Affton and a twelfth part of a fee in *Celerton*. Richard witnessed a total of seventeen charters.²⁴¹ It would seem that Affton had a long association with the Redvers family as he had previously been the steward of Isabella's brother and had acted as one of his executors in 1262, together with Amicia, the dowager Countess of Devon and Adam de Stratton.²⁴² The importance of Affton is further signified by the fact that in 1276 he was one of only two men that were to remain in Isabella's service in the draft agreement of the surrender of all of her inheritance to Edward I.²⁴³ Affton had an enduring career; in 1291 he was acting as sheriff of Hampshire, a position he held until December 1294, and his importance on the Isle of Wight is also symbolised by the fact that in 1297 he was acting as the guardian of the Isle.²⁴⁴ The importance of Kingston and Affton within Isabella's affinity is

²³⁵ W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Hampshire, Vol. V* (London: Archibald Constable, 1912), pp249-251.

²³⁶ *Liber Feodorum: The Book of Fees, commonly called Testa de Nevill, Vol. II* (London: H. M. S. O, 1920-1931), pp1303, 1306; W. Page and H. A. Doubleday (eds.), *A History of the County of Hampshire, Vol. II* (London: Archibald Constable, 1903), pp206-208.

²³⁷ See Appendix Three.

²³⁸ *Calendar of the Fine Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Vol. I, 1272-1307* (London: H. M. S. O, 1971), p127; H.C. Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales* (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1963), p54.

²³⁹ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p158.

²⁴⁰ *Liber Feodorum*, pp1303, 1306.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp1303, 1306. See Appendix Three.

²⁴² Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, pp17-18.

²⁴³ *CCIR, 1272-79*, p348.

²⁴⁴ Maxwell-Lyte (ed.), *List of Sheriffs*, p54; Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, pp17-18.

demonstrated by their attestation to charters relating to lands spread over the entirety of the country. Unlike Kingeston though, Affton appears to have played a role within English politics in addition to his service to Isabella. For example, in November 1276, he was granted protection for one year as he was going to Ireland as Edward I's envoy.²⁴⁵ He was in Ireland again in 1286 when he appointed Hugh Picard as his attorney for two years.²⁴⁶ Perhaps as a reward of his service, Affton was given two bucks from the forest of Ashley in Hampshire of the king's gift in 1292.²⁴⁷

Henry Trenchard is yet another prominent member of Isabella's retinue. Henry was, like Affton, an important island tenant, holding one fee of the countess in Shalfleet, Chessel and *Watchingwell*. It is clear that he too was held in high regard by the countess; he was the only other man who was to remain in her service in the proposed surrender of her inheritance to Edward.²⁴⁸ Trenchard's prominence in the south is mirrored by the thirteen acts to which he stood witness, all of which were related to the lands that Isabella held within this part of the country.²⁴⁹ Interestingly, eleven of Trenchard's attestations were of Isabella's grants to religious houses, the majority of which concern Christchurch Priory. The remaining two attestations that he made were to the charters granting rights and liberties to the burgesses of Newport and Lymington.²⁵⁰ Trenchard, who is known to have been dead by Michaelmas 1290, predeceased his mistress but it would be reasonable to assume that he would have continued to serve Isabella faithfully until her own death had this not occurred.²⁵¹ Henry was succeeded by his son John and the family continued to be under Isabella's lordship.²⁵² Clearly the Trenchards also continued to be of importance as John features within the witness list of Isabella's grant of a rent of eleven shillings to Walter de Feringford and his wife in 1292. The Feringfords were also Isabella's island tenants and held half a fee of the countess in Freshwater.²⁵³ It would seem that Trenchard was not overly involved in national politics but, in 1274, it is recorded that he was travelling overseas on the king's service and in 1288 was granted quittance of the common summons in Sussex.²⁵⁴ Interestingly, Trenchard was also involved in a litigation case against Isabella's mother, Amicia, in 1278. It was alleged that her men had broken into his lands at Chessel

²⁴⁵ *CPR, 1272-81*, p171.

²⁴⁶ *CPR, 1281-92*, p237.

²⁴⁷ *CCIR, 1288-96*, p240.

²⁴⁸ *CCIR, 1272-79*, p348.

²⁴⁹ See Appendix Three.

²⁵⁰ TNA: E 210/8908; E. King, *Old Times Revisited in the Parish and Borough of Lymington, Hampshire* (London: Simpkins, 1900), pp230-1.

²⁵¹ *Liber Feodorum*, p1301; TNA: SC6/984/12.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p1304.

²⁵³ TNA: E 210/8903; Isle of Wight Record Office: AC95/32.12; *Liber Feodorum*, p1303.

²⁵⁴ *CPR, 1272-81*, p54; *CCIR, 1279-88*, p534.

and driven away thirty of his oxen to her manor of Thorley and had imprisoned one of his men until Trenchard had paid a one hundred mark ransom for his release.²⁵⁵ It is possible that this case stemmed from the dispute between Isabella and her mother.

Sir Gilbert de Knovile stood witness to ten of Isabella's charters.²⁵⁶ As sheriff of Devon and a judge, he was a man who held lands and wielded significant power in the south of England, especially in Somerset and Devon.²⁵⁷ Although he was not one of the countess' tenants, it is apparent that he faithfully served Isabella until her death; he witnessed both the quitclaim of the Isle of Wight and the manor of Honiton. The record evidence highlights the large and important role that Knovile played within English politics both during and after Isabella's lifetime. In July 1273 he was granted simple protection for one year as he was travelling overseas on the king's business.²⁵⁸ Similarly in July 1277 he was granted protection as it was noted that he was in Wales on the king's service.²⁵⁹ Knovile was then heavily involved in English politics and it is apparent that this service to the crown was appreciated as in December 1293, it is recorded that he was granted the manor of Honiton which Isabella had quitclaimed to Edward I in November. This grant was extended further in 1297 with the grant of the advowson of the church of the manor; at the time of the grant, Knovile was once again travelling overseas on the king's business.²⁶⁰ Knovile's importance within English society is further shown through his appearances within the witness lists of the king's charters.²⁶¹ Interestingly he also features within the witness list of a release of John de Hastings, lord of Abergavenny, whereby the church and bishop of Llandaff, William de Bruce, received the advowsons of seven other churches situated in Wales.²⁶² Knovile was then an important man within thirteenth-century politics and it is intriguing that he was such a crucial member of Isabella's affinity. It is possible that both Isabella and Knovile had heard of each other's respective capabilities. As David Carpenter suggests, lords sought 'good service' and knights and officials sought 'good lords'.²⁶³ This principle of 'reciprocal obligation' was apparently key to successful lordship and this seems to be the case here.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁵ *CPR, 1272-81*, p283.

²⁵⁶ See Appendix Three.

²⁵⁷ *CCIR, 1279-88*, pp356-7.

²⁵⁸ *CPR, 1272-81*, p11.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p221.

²⁶⁰ *CPR, 1292-1301*, pp58, 304.

²⁶¹ *CChR, 1257-1300*, p264; *CPR, 1281-92*, p53.

²⁶² *CCIR, 1279-88*, p366.

²⁶³ Carpenter, 'Debate: Bastard Feudalism Revised, II', pp185-7.

²⁶⁴ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p165.

Sir Thomas de Evercy, a man who features within Isabella's witness lists on eight occasions, may also be regarded to have been in Isabella's inner circle.²⁶⁵ Evercy was also one of Isabella's greatest tenants within her southern estates; as is noted in a survey of the tenants of Carisbrooke castle in 1287-1290, he held one fee of Isabella in East Standon and Wode, Isle of Wight.²⁶⁶ Of the eight attestations he made, seven were of grants and confirmations to religious houses; the only attestation that he made to a grant to laymen was that to the burgesses of Newport.²⁶⁷ Once again, there is little evidence that Evercy had any further involvement within English politics beyond his role within Isabella's affinity. One of the very few references to him in addition to his attestations to Isabella's acta is a grant by Queen Eleanor to a Sir John de Weston and Christina his wife of the manor of Middleton, on the Isle of Wight, in 1280. This grant was also witnessed by numerous other island tenants including John de Insula, Robert Glammorgan, Thomas de la Haule and William Spileman, all of whom were knights.²⁶⁸ This supports Crouch's statement that knights formed an important part of a noble's affinity.²⁶⁹

William de Sancto Martino (of St. Martin's) stood witness to eight of Isabella's acta.²⁷⁰ He too was an island tenant, holding half a fee and a fourth part of a fee in Alvington, Shide, Northwood and Fairlee.²⁷¹ He was the archdeacon of Rochester which may explain why seven of his attestations were of religious benefactions to the houses at Christchurch, Carisbrooke and Quarr. The other attestation he made was to the grant of liberties to the burgesses of Newport. William is seldom referred to within the contemporary records but there is an interesting entry within the close rolls. In 1274, the sheriff of Southampton was ordered to deliver William from Winchester castle and to allow his household to depart from Winchester castle without delay. It would seem that William had been accused of causing a disturbance within the city.²⁷² An entry within the *Fine Rolls* shows that he had died before June 1291 when it was ordered that his lands be taken into the king's hands and then for these to be delivered to his son Reynold who had done homage for them.²⁷³

²⁶⁵ See Appendix Three.

²⁶⁶ *Liber Feodorum*, p1305; TNA: SC 2/202/13.

²⁶⁷ TNA: E 210/8908.

²⁶⁸ *CChR, 1257-1300*, p234.

²⁶⁹ Crouch, *William Marshal*, p135.

²⁷⁰ See Appendix Three.

²⁷¹ *Liber Feodorum*, p1305; Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Hampshire Vol. V*, pp197-202, 268-271.

²⁷² *CCIR, 1272-79*, p72.

²⁷³ *CFR, 1272-1307*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911) pp294-5.

Sir John de Sancta Elena (of St. Helen's) is also a prominent figure within Isabella's witness lists and it is probable that he originated from St. Helen's on the Isle of Wight.²⁷⁴ John, who witnessed charters on seven occasions, had previously been a member of the baronial faction, together with John fitz John who makes one fleeting appearance within the countess' witness lists.²⁷⁵ It is noted within the charter rolls that in 1264 John was in fact constable of Windsor castle.²⁷⁶ It would appear that John de Sancta Elena, although not a tenant of the countess, had been a long-serving and faithful member of Isabella's household, but acquired the position of steward relatively late on in his life and career.²⁷⁷ An entry within the fine rolls for 1293 shows that Isabella had rewarded him for his service with the manor of Crowell, Oxford.²⁷⁸

The final member of the inner circle is John de Insula, another tenant of the Isle.²⁷⁹ In total he held two parts of two fees in Briddlesford and Hamstead, a fourth part of a fee in Shanklin and an eighth part of a fee in Whippingham from Isabella. De Insula's dominance in this area is highlighted by the fact that he was selected to hold the custody of the Isle of Wight for the Lord Edward in 1267.²⁸⁰ He made six attestations to Isabella's acta in total, four of which were of grants to religious houses and two to lay beneficiaries which also relate, for the most part, to Isabella's lands lying within the south of England.²⁸¹ It is possible that John was a relation of Jordan de Insula who also stood witness to two of Isabella's acta, one confirmation and one quitclaim, to Carisbrooke Priory.²⁸² It would appear that John was, like Knovile, an important and influential man within thirteenth-century English politics. He is recorded within the contemporary records as the keeper of Chute forest in Wiltshire. The bailiwick of Chute forest had previously been held of Matthew de Columbers of the king in-chief for the total of ten shillings, but in 1281 this was transferred to John and his wife Nicholaa.²⁸³ Columbers, who in 1281 was appointed to the office of the chamberlainship of the king's wines, was also obviously a man of some significance in the counties of Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire.²⁸⁴ There are numerous occasions in the records in which Insula is ordered by the king to

²⁷⁴ TNA: SC 2/202/13.

²⁷⁵ TNA: E 40/4604.

²⁷⁶ *CChR, 1257-1300*, p51.

²⁷⁷ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, p137.

²⁷⁸ *CFR, 1272-1307*, p327.

²⁷⁹ *Liber Feodorum*, pp1301-3, 1306.

²⁸⁰ *CPR, 1266-72*, p67.

²⁸¹ See Appendix Three.

²⁸² S. F. Hockey, (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, (Isle of Wight: Isle of Wight County Record Office, 1981), pp161-64.

²⁸³ *CCIR, 1279-88*, p104.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 42, 47, 60, 145.

give timber or deer to men for varying purposes.²⁸⁵ It is also clear that he held influence within the north of England. In 1305 he, together with numerous other men, was appointed by Edward to collect the fines and ransoms of felons in the counties of Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancaster, Nottingham, Derby, Warwick, Leicester and Lincoln. Also in 1305, he was appointed with the constable of Knaresborough castle to carry out an inquisition into the theft of deer from the king's parks there.²⁸⁶ Throughout the latter half of the thirteenth century increasing numbers of knights were employed as 'justices of assize, gaol delivery and oyer and terminer'.²⁸⁷

The fact that the eight men of Isabella's inner circle were either her tenants of the Redvers estates or otherwise important men from within the locality, again highlights the importance of her natal heritage to her. That the majority of these members were mainly derived from one region should not by any means come as a surprise as the same can be said of the affinity of Simon de Montfort.²⁸⁸ Unlike Montfort, though, Isabella's affinity contained a greater number of men. As has been illustrated, a majority of the men who served as members of Isabella's inner circle also played a crucial part within English politics more generally and this highlights the countess' standing within English society at this time. The prominence of the men of Isabella's inner circle is perhaps best shown by their presence at her deathbed at Stockwell whereupon she quitclaimed the Isle of Wight and the manor of Honiton to King Edward I. Jordan de Kingeston, Gilbert de Knovile, and Richard de Affton were all present to witness their mistress' quitclaim of the Isle of Wight. Had Henry Trenchard also still been alive, it would be reasonable to assume that he too would have been present. It would be plausible to suggest that, in addition to their duty, these men were also important to Isabella on a much more personal level.²⁸⁹

It can be seen that Isabella's inner circle consisted mainly of men who served her with great diligence and who also held considerable power and influence within the southern estates. We must now turn to the five men who are likely to have formed the outer circle of her affinity. The first man is John de la Ware. La Ware was not one of Isabella's tenants and had previously been the steward of John de Warenne, the earl of Surrey, and had fought alongside Simon de Montfort at the bloody

²⁸⁵ *CCIR*, 1288-96, pp173, 179, 295, 357.

²⁸⁶ *CFR*, 1272-1307, p527.

²⁸⁷ Carpenter, 'Debate: Bastard Feudalism Revised, II', pp182-3.

²⁸⁸ Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, pp61-62.

²⁸⁹ H. Hall (ed.), *Red Book of the Exchequer*, (Nendeln: Kraus, 1965), pp1020-1022. As well as the men of the inner circle of her affinity, there were also other of Isabella's greatest tenants and officials present, including Robert Glammorgan and Roger Gardino. These men were in addition to the king's own officials and key members of English society including the Bishop of Durham and Walter Langton, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield.

Battle of Evesham in 1265.²⁹⁰ Within the six years in which he served Isabella as steward he stood witness to five charters, three to religious houses and two to other parties. It is interesting that John la Ware came into Isabella's service only for the period between 1268 and 1274 and it is quite possible that he had heard of her capabilities as a lord and chose to enter into her service.²⁹¹ It is equally possible that she had heard of his abilities as a steward and sought his service. Whatever the reason, it would seem that he was a trusted steward who frequently had large sums of money passing through his hands; he also acted as Isabella's attorney within the king's court.²⁹² It should also be noted that La Ware was also involved in the exchange of property between Isabella and Prince Edmund in 1269.²⁹³ Obviously La Ware was a highly valued member of Isabella's affinity; his name regularly features at the beginning of witness lists.²⁹⁴ His position is, perhaps, also indicated by the fact that the number of charters to which he stood witness also matches the number of some of those who had been in her service for far longer periods of time.²⁹⁵ It is not particularly clear why La Ware left Isabella's service after this short period, but he died shortly afterwards.

Robert Glammorgan is another member that we shall consider here. Glammorgan was one of Isabella's greatest tenants on the Isle of Wight, where he held part of a fee with John Passelewe, another of Isabella's tenants, in Humberston.²⁹⁶ He also held from Isabella one fee in Wolverton, *Hardley*, Landguard and *Scottlesford* and one fee and a sixth part of a fee in the manors of Mottistone and Barton.²⁹⁷ Glammorgan appears within the countess' charters on five occasions and perhaps most importantly in the quitclaim of the Isle of Wight.²⁹⁸ In the years following Isabella's death, Glammorgan becomes much more visible within the contemporary records and it is obvious that he was increasingly involved within English politics in these years. In September 1295 he and G. de Roubury were granted a commission to investigate who had been fishing in the stew ponds and cut the nets belonging to Anthony Bek, the Bishop of Durham, at Midhurst, Sussex.²⁹⁹ In 1296, he was also involved in two commissions regarding the theft of deer in Sussex and Essex.³⁰⁰ In 1300 he

²⁹⁰ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, pp75-6.

²⁹¹ A. Harding, *England in the Thirteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p153.

²⁹² *CPR, 1266-72*, pp537, 601.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp382-3.

²⁹⁴ TNA: E 328/38; E 40/4604.

²⁹⁵ See Appendix One and Two.

²⁹⁶ *Liber Feodorum*, pp1302, 1304, 1305-6.

²⁹⁷ *Liber Feodorum*, pp1304-1306; Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Hampshire, Vol. V*, pp156-170.

²⁹⁸ See Appendix Three.

²⁹⁹ *CPR, 1292-1301*, p165; L. F. Salzman (ed.), *A History of the County of Sussex, Vol. IV*, (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1905), pp74-80.

³⁰⁰ *CPR, 1292-1301*, pp257-8.

and two others were appointed to hear any complaints against Magna Carta and the Forest Charter of Henry III in Hampshire and to punish any offenders through 'imprisonment, ransom or amercement'.³⁰¹ A year later he was appointed to levy, collect and pay the fifteenth in Hampshire that had been granted to the king.³⁰² It is clear from these activities that Glammorgan was a man who wielded significant power in this county, but it should be noted that it was not uncommon for estate officials to be involved in local commissions for the crown.³⁰³ Glammorgan may well have been recognised by Edward as a man of authority but, again, this may be a reflection of the increasing use of knights in the fulfilment of such tasks.³⁰⁴

Sir William de Esturs was also of the outer circle of Isabella's retinue. Esturs was a knight and tenant of Isabella who enjoyed lands and influence within the southern estates and on the Isle of Wight.³⁰⁵ Esturs held from Isabella the manors of Gatcombe, Whitwell and Calbourne by service of suit of court every three weeks at Newburgh.³⁰⁶ He too stood witness to five of Isabella's acts, all of which were grants or confirmations to religious houses.³⁰⁷ The majority of these houses, Quarr, Carisbrooke and Christchurch, are again located in the south of England which reflects his standing within the Redvers estates. There is little evidence of Esturs within the contemporary records which would suggest that he, like other of Isabella's tenants, was not greatly involved in national politics. In any case, William had died one year before Isabella as is illustrated by an order to Malcolm Harle, the king's escheator beyond the Trent, in October 1292 to assign the dower to William's late wife, Agnes, upon her taking an oath that she would not remarry without license.³⁰⁸

The final member of the outer circle is John de Insula, the rector of Shalfleet, Isle of Wight. The four acts to which John stood witness all relate to lands or religious houses in Hampshire or on the Isle, therefore demonstrating that he too was a man who possessed some degree of authority on the Isle of Wight.³⁰⁹ Other than the attestations he made to Isabella's acts, there is little record evidence of the rector playing any further part in English politics. There is, however, an interesting entry within the patent rolls of the year 1280 regarding the priory of St. Swithin's, Winchester. It states

³⁰¹ Ibid., p516.

³⁰² Ibid., p613.

³⁰³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p134.

³⁰⁴ Carpenter, 'Debate: Bastard Feudalism Revised, II', pp182-3.

³⁰⁵ *Liber Feodorum*, p1302.

³⁰⁶ *Liber Feodorum*, p1302; H. R. Luard (ed.), *Calendar of Inquisitions Post-Mortem Vol. III*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), p8.

³⁰⁷ See Appendix Three.

³⁰⁸ *CCIR, 1288-96*, p244.

³⁰⁹ See Appendix Three. It is quite possible that there were more members of the outer circle but it is difficult to uncover due to limited extant evidence.

that John, together with 'two of the more discreet monks of the priory' was to receive all of the goods and chattels of the priory in return for his support of the prior and convent. Any surplus money was to be put towards the payments of the priory's debts.³¹⁰

The composition of Isabella's affinity tells us a great deal. The majority of men who have been identified as members of Isabella's affinity, in both the inner and outer circles, originate from her southern estates. Interestingly, just under two-thirds of these men were also her tenants. Although this does illustrate the ties of lordship, it is more than likely that they too were aware of the potential advantages of being allied to such a person.³¹¹ It should also be stated that these tenants were obviously skilled men because, as Maddicott notes, 'feudal tenure by no means determined membership'.³¹² The remaining men were probably there, as Carpenter suggests, from a desire for good lordship and Isabella's for good service. Here it should also be noted that although more than half of the men within Isabella's affinity were her tenants, she was unlikely to be able to find the desired service by 'relying exclusively on...hereditary tenants'. This explains the presence of other influential men within her affinity.³¹³ Despite this, it is clear that Isabella still valued and was satisfied by the service of her hereditary tenants and that she shared a successful working relationship with them. This suggests that the ties of lordship within thirteenth-century England were still of some importance. It is also clear that Isabella had a good relationship with the wider nobility who originated from the lands surrounding her estates and beyond. It is likely that they wanted to associate themselves with her and she with them. It would be absurd to suggest that a woman who held so much power and was so deeply involved in the politics of the period would not have been aware of the importance of associating with men who also held authority in the same counties.

Finally then, we come to the category of men who witnessed three or less of Isabella's acta. Although these men may be insignificant in that they were not key members of her affinity, the record evidence shows that these men were still important to her. Within this group are a large number of Isabella's officials. One man was Robert Bardolf who was steward of the household in 1284 for a period of six years and had also acted as an auditor of estate accounts.³¹⁴ Bardolf stood witness to three of Isabella's acta including an agreement made between Isabella and the abbey of

³¹⁰ *CPR, 1272-81*, p376.

³¹¹ Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon*, p165.

³¹² Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort*, p61.

³¹³ The exceptions were Gilbert de Knovile, John de Sancta Elena and John de la Ware.

³¹⁴ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, p137.

Quarr, and a confirmation to Quarr Abbey and Bolton Priory.³¹⁵ William Radston (or Rodestone) who over his lifetime acted as one of Isabella's household stewards, receiver-general and, when not in office, auditor of accounts, witnessed two of Isabella's charters to the priories at Bolton and Breamore.³¹⁶ Robert Dimmock was also a steward and occasionally involved in the audit of the accounts also witnessed two of Isabella's charters.³¹⁷ The importance of the constable of Carisbrooke castle is shown by the fact that the various men who held this position over the course of Isabella's widowhood also appear within the witness lists. Hugh de Manneby who was constable in 1270 and John de Pagrave who was constable between 1274 and 1276 both appear once, whilst John de Hardington who held this position between 1278 and 1290 appears twice.³¹⁸ The acts to which Hardington and Manneby stand witness do, however, solely relate to Quarr and Carisbrooke priories situated on the Isle.³¹⁹ Similarly, John de Pagrave witnessed the grant of rights and liberties to the burgesses of Newport, also on the Isle of Wight. This would suggest that their influence was mainly centred here. Walter de Rumbridge, a man who over the course of his career was involved in the audit of accounts and was also appointed to the position of deputy chamberlain of the exchequer, also appears within Isabella's witness lists on two occasions.³²⁰ Similarly, Ralph de Bray, who for a time held the position of deputy chamberlain of the exchequer, appears in the witness lists twice to grants and confirmations to Lacock Abbey.³²¹ Roger de Writele, Isabella's bailiff of the hundreds of *Worth*, Cricklade and Sevenhampton, also features within the witness lists on one occasion in the grant that Isabella made to Robert Abyndon and his heirs.³²²

It is interesting to note that in addition to the many officials who attested Isabella's charters, many of the witnesses to three or fewer charters were her tenants. Of these tenants, John de Heynou and Thomas de la Haule attested three times, Matthew de Columbers, Walter Bernard and Geoffrey de Insula (the brother of William Esturs) twice and John Passelewe, Sir John Mautravers, Sir William Spileman, Adam de Cumpston, Odo de Compton, William la Clive, Jordan de Insula, William la

³¹⁵ TNA: E 210/8905; Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, no. 45; Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no. 41. See Appendix One and Two.

³¹⁶ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, pp17-18, 138; TNA: E 328/38; Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, no. 455.

³¹⁷ Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, no. 455; Lancaster (ed.), *The Cartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains*, no. 91.

³¹⁸ TNA: SC 6/984/2; E 210/8908; SC 6/984/8.

³¹⁹ Hockey (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, no. 230; Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no. 41; TNA: E 210/8905. See Appendix One and Two.

³²⁰ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, pp16, 138; TNA: E 40/4604; King, *Old Times Revisited*, p231.

³²¹ Denholm-Young, *Seignorial Administration*, p179; Rogers, *Lacock Abbey Charters*, nos. 453, 454.

³²² TNA: E 40/4830; J. L. Kirby (ed.), *The Hungerford Cartulary*, (Chippenham: The Wiltshire Record Society, 2007), no. 1150.

Vavasour, Hugh la Vavasour, John de la Brigg, William de la Mare, Robert de Aurifabro, Walter de Leoun, Walter Bernard, Walter de Upton, William de Coskeville and Ralph de Wolverton, all attested once.³²³ It should be stated that all of these men were her tenants from the Redvers, as opposed to Forz estates. The record evidence shows that many of these men were in fact quite notable tenants, some of whom were obviously related; this again tells us a great deal about the ties of lordship. The remaining witnesses, although not her tenants, predominantly held lands within the south of the country. Only a few men featured within the witness lists originated from the northern Forz estates; one such man is Thomas de Norreys who held lands within Yorkshire.³²⁴ This again reflects the small number of *acta* which Isabella issued concerning these lands in comparison to those of her southern estates and thereby the importance of her inheritance to her.

As has been illustrated, Isabella held a vast expanse of lands within England and it is obvious that she wielded much power and authority as a result. Many of the men who formed her close affinity either originated, or were her tenants, from the Redvers estates; this would suggest that ties of tenurial lordship were still in place during the thirteenth century. This could also be said of those tenants who stood witness to a minimal number of her charters. It should be noted that the remainder of men within her affinity were notable characters who also originated from areas in which she held lands. Men such as Gilbert de Knovile and John la Ware were highly active within national politics and it is a sign of Isabella's power and authority that they were members of her affinity. It also highlights the desire of each respective party to have the service of, or be in the service of, the other. Denholm-Young seems to use the fact that some of the men who served Isabella had previously been in the baronial party to suggest that this was also a reflection of her own political sympathies. The evidence that Isabella was indeed a baronial supporter is though, as discussed, somewhat lacking. It is possible, and probably more likely, that these men chose to be under the lordship of Isabella because of her capabilities and power in the areas in which they too held control rather than her political allegiances. In this conclusion he undermines the respect which Isabella held as a capable and powerful lord.

³²³ *Inquisitiones Post-Mortem, Vol. III, no.14.*

³²⁴ *Liber Feodorum, p1199.*

Chapter Four – Religious Patronage

Isabella's lands enabled her to fulfil her role as a religious patron; perhaps one of the most important roles of a thirteenth-century noblewoman in both marriage and widowhood. Religion was central to the everyday life of the entirety of medieval society but this was especially so for noblewomen. Prayers and almsgiving were a central part of a noblewoman's daily routine as is illustrated in Christine de Pisan's *Treasure of the City of Ladies*.³²⁵ Religion and charity were regarded as fitting ventures for a noblewoman to be involved with and women became immersed, some more fully than others, within these throughout the duration of their lives and some even more so in widowhood.³²⁶ It was quite common for noblewomen to enter into the religious life once they had become widowed and some even became abbesses. This was the case for Ela Longespee, the countess of Salisbury, who founded Lacock Abbey in 1230, entered into it in 1237 and became its first abbess in 1239.³²⁷ The roles that these women fulfilled as abbesses were similar to those of widows who ran their households and estates. Isabella de Forz did not, however, enter into the religious life; it is more than likely that she was aware of the remarkable position of authority and influence that she held within English society.

Isabella was an active religious patron but was not a founder of any new religious houses; the flurry of foundations which had occurred during the twelfth century did not continue into the thirteenth.³²⁸ Religious patronage did, however, predominantly remain the preserve of the higher nobility during the thirteenth century; the vast majority of benefactions to religious houses continued to be made by widows or heiresses in their own right like Isabella de Forz. There is much less evidence of the religious patronage of the lesser nobility within this century and this was likely to have been largely due to the high costs involved.³²⁹ As religious patrons, noblewomen confirmed previous benefactions, made new ones and sometimes were the founders of new houses both during marriage and in widowhood in order to commemorate the souls of their husbands and other family members.³³⁰ Isabella, as an heiress in her own right, was a benefactor of numerous religious

³²⁵ Lawson (ed.), *Christine de Pisan*, pp59-62.

³²⁶ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p143.

³²⁷ J. C. Ward, 'Ela, *suo jure* countess of Salisbury (b. before 1190, d. 1261), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn., <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47205>, accessed 17th March 2014.

³²⁸ J. C. Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment: the Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066-1314', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 32, (1981), p446.

³²⁹ L.L. Gees, *Women, Art and Patronage from Henry III to Edward III, 1216-1377*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002), p8.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp7-8.

houses which were associated with both her own and her husband's families; this was standard practice and was to be expected.³³¹

As previously discussed, there is no evidence of Isabella making grants to religious houses within her marriage. Neither is there any of her making joint benefactions with her husband, although it is highly likely that she did as this was a fairly standard practice.³³² In her widowhood, though, Isabella was associated with varying religious orders which had links to both her natal and marital families. These were Christchurch Twynham Priory (Dorset), Breamore Priory (Hampshire), Quarr Abbey, Carisbrooke Priory (Isle of Wight), Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory, Meaux Abbey, Thornton Abbey (Lincolnshire), Lacock Abbey (Wiltshire), Torre (Devon) and Montebourg (France). Of these houses Quarr, Fountains, Meaux and Lacock were of the Cistercian order, Christchurch and Breamore the Canons Regular, Carisbrooke the Dominican Friars, Lacock and Bolton the Austin Canons and Torre the Praemonstratensians also known as the White Canons.³³³ The twelfth century saw the new orders rise in popularity, particularly the Cistercians and Augustinian Canons which were predominantly associated with the men at court.³³⁴ The fact that Isabella's family were associated with these houses reflects their social standing within English society but also a desire to be involved in religious movements that were held in such high regard.³³⁵ Although not all of these religious houses received Isabella's patronage, those that did benefitted from it in numerous ways, whether it be through the confirmation of previous grants or new grants of rights, lands and liberties. Isabella made many more confirmations than she did new grants.³³⁶ It is more than likely that this was due to financial reasons; there was no cost involved in a confirmation as there was in a new grant. The religious houses that received new gifts were probably those which held the most importance for Isabella. Having looked at the geographical location of the various religious houses that we are certain received Isabella's patronage, there is a strong southern bias, with five out of the eight being located in the south, only two in the north and one in France.³³⁷

In return for the benefactions made to religious houses, a nobleman or woman could expect to have prayers said for their soul and those of their families. The protection of the soul was a primary

³³¹ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p153.

³³² *Ibid.*, pp143-149.

³³³ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London: Sam Keble, 1692), pp91, 92, 95, 141, 149, 170, 217, 239; W. Page (ed.), *A History of the County of Yorkshire, Vol. III* (Folkestone: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1979) pp195-199.

³³⁴ Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment', p439.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p439.

³³⁶ See Appendix Four.

³³⁷ See Appendix Four.

concern of the medieval population and it was believed that prayers would help to lessen the length of time a soul would spend in purgatory.³³⁸ The vast majority of Isabella's own grants and confirmations were made for the protection of her soul and those of her family members. Sixteen of Isabella's grants and confirmations, two at Quarr, three at Lacock Abbey and eleven at Christchurch priory were made for the protection of her husband's soul.³³⁹ Although the commemoration of the husband's soul was considered one of the principal duties of a noblewoman, this could also be indicative of a loving relationship as was suggested in the discussion of Isabella's marriage.³⁴⁰ Isabella also made grants for the protection of the souls of her siblings. Two of the grants that Isabella made to Lacock Abbey were also made for the protection of her brother's soul and one for her mother and her sister who had been a nun at the abbey.³⁴¹ Isabella also made numerous grants for the protection of the souls of her children, all of whom she outlived. A confirmation of the liberties and possessions of the priory of Christchurch Twynham was made for the souls of her sons William and Thomas, as were two more grants and confirmations also intended for the protection of Aveline's soul.³⁴² It is acceptable to suggest that these benefactions convey Isabella's sense of loss. Another of Isabella's grants to the priory was also made for the salvation of the souls of all of her children. In addition to this, the countess made grants intended for the protection of her own soul and those of ancestors in general.³⁴³ These grants highlight the important duty of those on earth to ensure the salvation of the souls of their family members.

A number of the religious houses that received Isabella's patronage were those associated with her natal family. The cartulary of Christchurch Priory shows that it was a regular beneficiary. The priory had come into the possession of the Redvers family when Richard was rewarded for his loyalty to King Henry I with the honours of Christchurch, Plympton and Carisbrooke, along with the Isle of Wight.³⁴⁴ It was Richard's son Baldwin who first introduced regular canons to the priory.³⁴⁵ Following this, the Redvers family became religious patrons of Christchurch, a tradition which Isabella continued and might well have been sustained by her children had they survived. Isabella

³³⁸ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p149.

³³⁹ Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no. 5; Rogers, *Lacock Abbey Charters*, nos. 454, 455; K. A. Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary* (Winchester: Hampshire County Council, 2007), nos. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 207, 266, 268.

³⁴⁰ Lawson (ed.), *Christine de Pisan*, pp59-62; Wilkinson, *Eleanor de Montfort*, pp58-9.

³⁴¹ Rogers (ed.), *Lacock Abbey Charters*, nos. 453, 454, 455.

³⁴² Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, nos. 43, 266, 268.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 51.

³⁴⁴ Bearman, 'Revières, Baldwin de'.

³⁴⁵ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London: Sam Keble, 1692), p149.

was actively involved in the priory's affairs and this was probably due to her significant influence within the county.

Isabella made five confirmations of rights to Christchurch priory. In 1272 she confirmed all of the rights that had previously been granted to the abbey by Baldwin, the first earl of Devon.³⁴⁶ In Michaelmas 1274 she made a confirmation to the abbey that upon the death of the prior she would send an officer with stewards to protect the abbey and its possessions. These men were not to allow any 'sale, waste, damage or exaction' to occur to any of the priory's possessions and were only able to claim 'reasonable maintenance'. Within this confirmation Isabella also set down that the canons of the priory were to receive all of the fines imposed on the men within her courts.³⁴⁷ In 1273, Isabella confirmed the vast grants, liberties and rights that had been granted to the priory by her brother Baldwin.³⁴⁸ In the following year, she confirmed again the abbey's possessions given by various benefactors, including her brother and Hawise, the daughter of Baldwin, the first earl of Devon.³⁴⁹ Isabella's other confirmations to the canons included the right to hold the fines of their men and tenants issued at her courts with the exception of common fines and tithingpenny and, the right, during a vacancy, to collect all the revenues from their men both within and outside of the priory and use them as they deemed appropriate - this was to end upon the election of a new prior.³⁵⁰

In addition to the confirmations of rights and grants previously given to the priory by her ancestors and other benefactors, Isabella also gave the priory numerous gifts of her own.³⁵¹ These included a rent of five marks and ten shillings that it had previously paid to Margery de Redvers, Baldwin's widow, and another of six shillings and three pence which had previously been paid by the master of the works.³⁵² Another interesting grant to the priory was the right to catch all types of fish, in any season, under Isabella's weirs along the rivers Stour and Avon. The only exception to this being that if a salmon was caught it was to be immediately handed over to Isabella's manorial officials.³⁵³ This could be due to the fact that salmon was a relatively expensive fish and was a

³⁴⁶ Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, no.43.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 45.

³⁴⁸ TNA: E 328/38.

³⁴⁹ Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, no. 44.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, nos. 46, 47.

³⁵¹ See Appendix Four.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, nos. 49, 147.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, no.50.

preserve of the wealthy.³⁵⁴ The importance of the preservation of the soul is reflected in Isabella's grant to the abbey of the tithes of rabbits caught on the manors of Thorley and Christchurch.³⁵⁵ The grant of tithes to a church from a grantor's demesne lands was quite common within the twelfth century and continued to be so into the thirteenth century.³⁵⁶ It is stated that this grant, made for the soul of Isabella's husband and children, was essential for the support of those who had taken religious vows so that they could 'perform their divine offices more zealously'.³⁵⁷ Between the years 1268 and 1272, Isabella also granted a license and confirmed to the priory the land of North Hinton, Hampshire, which had been given to them by Eustace de Wythchurche. This was to be held freely apart from the service they owed to Isabella and her heirs.³⁵⁸ The countess also witnessed a grant of lands to the priory from her heir, Hugh de Courtenay. It is possible that through this grant, Hugh was attempting to secure his position as Isabella's heir.

Despite their troubled relationship, Isabella was also a benefactor of Quarr Abbey as the earls of Devon had been since William de Vernon, the fifth earl of Devon, had become a patron, c.1191.³⁵⁹ The end of the quarrel between Isabella and the abbey is recorded within the abbey's cartulary and was apparently settled within the church of St. Martin in 1285 which she held by inheritance.³⁶⁰ The fact that this may have affected their relationship is highlighted by the small number of confirmations, only two, which Isabella made to the abbey. The first was made around 1270 and was, again, a confirmation of all the grants of her ancestors but she also gave the abbey two mills of Christchurch and Holdenhurst.³⁶¹ The second, made between 1272 and 1279, was a further confirmation of the grants of her ancestors.³⁶²

Carisbrooke priory, also situated on the Isle of Wight, was another beneficiary of the patronage of the Redvers family. It would seem that the priory had previously enjoyed good relations with the family, having received the patronage of William de Vernon amongst others.³⁶³ It would seem that this relationship changed slightly with Isabella's succession, possibly because the countess was in residence here much more often and for longer periods of time than any of her ancestors had

³⁵⁴ D. Serjeantson and C. M. Woolgar, 'Fish Consumption in Medieval England' in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T. Waldon (eds.), *Food in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp125-6.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no.51.

³⁵⁶ Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment', p430.

³⁵⁷ Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, no. 51.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 266, 268.

³⁵⁹ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum Vol. I*, p92; Bearman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, pp113-120, 136-7.

³⁶⁰ Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no. 41. See Chapter Two for Breamore Priory.

³⁶¹ Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no.360; Hanna (ed.), *The Christchurch Priory Cartulary*, no. 207.

³⁶² Hockey (ed.), *The Charters of Quarr Abbey*, no.5.

³⁶³ Bearman (ed.), *Charters of the Redvers Family*, p118.

previously been.³⁶⁴ Isabella was not quite as generous a patron to Carisbrooke as she was to others which would indeed imply that the relationship between the priory and Isabella was a difficult one. This is highlighted by the fact that in 1279 Edward ordered Isabella to stop molesting Richard, the prior.³⁶⁵ Two years later the dispute between Isabella and Richard was apparently at an end, but it is probable that this had some effect on her future relationship with the priory as it had at Quarr.³⁶⁶ It would seem that they also came into difficulties regarding the road that ran through the priory. In April 1270, Isabella renounced her claim to the right of way which ran through the courtyard of the priory but it would seem that she did not keep to this.³⁶⁷ In 1285 Isabella granted them a license to 'hold' the road that ran through the priory from north to south, which suggests that this had not previously been the case, and to build another one, forty feet long, which was to be situated to the west of the priory. This was to prevent people from wandering through during both the day and night.³⁶⁸ Further evidence of a troubled relationship is, perhaps, shown by the fact that in May 1281, Isabella renounced any claim that she held to the custody of the priory during a vacancy; she continued to hold the rights of the advowson of the church and the desmense.³⁶⁹ It is quite possible that she, or perhaps more plausibly Adam de Stratton, who had been harassing the priory during these years, had exploited the income of the house during a previous vacancy.³⁷⁰

Despite these difficulties, Isabella did make several confirmations of the priory's rights. It would appear that she did not make any grants of her own to the priory. In 1264 she confirmed two grants of Isabella, daughter of Ranulph of Bashley, and all the grants and lands that had previously been given to them by her ancestors. For these confirmations the prior Andrew le Cornu gave Isabella ten marks.³⁷¹ It would seem that Isabella did in fact have a good relationship with Andrew. At some point between the years 1264 and 1277 she made an exchange of ten acres of land within the field of Carisbrooke in return for another ten acres within the same field.³⁷² The difficulty in relations would appear to have commenced in the years in which Isabella began to live on the Isle on a permanent basis.

³⁶⁴ Carisbrooke was, however, chosen as the principal residence of the Redvers family. It has been suggested that this was due to the strength of lordship on the island. Bearman (ed.), *Charters of the Redvers Family*, p43.

³⁶⁵ Hockey (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, no. 220.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 226.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 230.

³⁶⁸ *CPR, 1281-92*, p199.

³⁶⁹ Hockey (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, no. 227.

³⁷⁰ *CChR, 1257-1300*, p211-2; Stacey, 'Stratton, Adam of'.

³⁷¹ Hockey (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, no. 219; V. C. London and D.M. Smith, *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales: Vol. II, 1216-1377* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p150.

³⁷² Hockey (ed.), *The Cartulary of Carisbrooke Priory*, no. 229.

Breamore priory was another religious house to which Isabella had strong personal associations; it had been founded by her ancestor Baldwin de Redvers and his uncle Hugh. Isabella's father, Baldwin, had been buried at the priory and it is therefore possible that she considered it a place of sanctuary.³⁷³ She had, after all, chosen to flee and go into hiding here during Simon de Montfort junior's abduction attempts. A study by Emma Cavell has examined and reviewed the burial places of thirty-three Shropshire women. Cavell notes that twelve of the women were buried in locations connected with the woman's natal family, whereas fourteen were buried in locations connected with their husband's family.³⁷⁴ For the most part, women who were buried in places connected with their marital families were still married at the time arrangements were made for their burials, whilst it was more common for widows to be buried in places associated with their natal family.³⁷⁵ It seems this pattern can also be applied to Isabella, who chose to be buried at Breamore.³⁷⁶

There is no extant cartulary for Breamore priory but surviving documentary evidence does show that the house did receive Isabella's patronage, perhaps quite regularly. At a point following the death of her mother she granted to the churches of St Mary and St Michael at Breamore, for the souls of her father, mother and brother, the tenement and land that had once been held by a John Gauefrey.³⁷⁷ Evidently, Isabella felt a strong personal connection to the priory.

Torre abbey was also a beneficiary of Isabella's patronage, although not to any great extent. The cartulary features only one charter in which Isabella confirmed and quitclaimed the whole of Aveton Gifford (Devon), which the abbey held by the gift of Peter FitzMatthew and his brother John, for the protection of her soul and those of ancestors and successors. It is uncertain who these men were. As a result of this charter, Isabella was only to retain the suits, services and wards that belonged to her from the fees of the manor of *Hurdstoke*.³⁷⁸ The date of this grant is also unknown. Despite the lack of surviving cartularies, a few surviving charters to different religious houses allow us to gain a further insight into the extent of Isabella's patronage. Montebourg abbey, France, which was founded by Isabella's ancestor Richard de Redvers, was the receiver of her patronage on at least one occasion.³⁷⁹ The charter, whose date is unknown, granted to the abbey the manors of *Loders*,

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p319.

³⁷⁴ E. Cavell, 'The Burial of Noblewomen in Thirteenth-Century Shropshire', in *Thirteenth Century England*, Vol. XI, pp175-6.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p176.

³⁷⁶ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, Vol. IV, p323.

³⁷⁷ TNA: E 328/325; *CChR, 1300-1326* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1908), p3.

³⁷⁸ D. Seymour (ed.), *The Exchequer Cartulary of Torre Abbey* (Torquay: Friends of Torre Abbey, 2000), no. 229.

³⁷⁹ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage* Vol. IV, pp310-11.

Ayemue, Wolveleye, Appeldurcombe and Wyke Regis and one hundred shillings' worth of land from the manor of Wroxall on the Isle of Wight. It is possible that Isabella did make additional grants to this abbey but no evidence has been found.

Isabella, as aforementioned, was also a patron of Lacock abbey, founded by Ela Longespee, countess of Salisbury. Lacock was a house of Augustinian canonesses and it is more than likely that Isabella dispensed her patronage to this foundation because her sister was a nun there.³⁸⁰ Her mother had also been a patron of the house and it is quite possible that Amicia patronised this abbey in order to allow Margery to enter the house.³⁸¹ The exact date of this grant is unknown, but Amicia continued to live until early 1284 which would suggest it dates from this year or one shortly following this.³⁸² It is also unclear when Margery died but it was possibly before or near to the death of her mother. Isabella confirmed Amicia's grant of the manor of Shorwell, situated on the Isle of Wight, to the abbey in 1265.³⁸³ In 1265 Isabella also quitclaimed to the abbey all suit of courts, ward and relief that were due to her from Shorwell.³⁸⁴ The abbey also received a grant of all ameracements of Isabella's men at the manor, apart from those due to her which arose from the 'trespasses' of the abbess and her bailiffs. As a result of this grant, the abbess' men were to come before Isabella's bailiffs at Carisbrooke twice a year in view of frankpledge.³⁸⁵ According to a list of fees pertaining to Carisbrooke castle in 1287-1290, the abbess of Lacock held one fee of Isabella of the manor of Shorwell and one virgate of land in Walpen.³⁸⁶

Isabella, probably through the awareness of her duties as a widow and perhaps affection, also dispensed patronage to those religious houses founded by and associated with the earls of Aumale. It is quite probable that Thornton abbey, Lincolnshire, a house of Augustinian canons, founded by her husband's ancestor William le Gros, the first earl of Aumale in 1139, was a beneficiary of her patronage.³⁸⁷ It seems plausible that Isabella, as part of her duty as a widow, made benefactions to the church at Thornton in order to protect her husband's soul but there is no evidence of this. The records show that William de Forz, like his ancestors, was a patron of this religious house and made a grant of numerous lands to the canons of the church of St. Mary there for the salvation of his soul

³⁸⁰ Rogers (ed.), *Lacock Abbey Charters*, no.455.

³⁸¹ Ward, 'Fashions in Monastic Endowment', p436.

³⁸² *CCIR, 1279-88*, p250.

³⁸³ Rogers (ed.), *Lacock Abbey Charters*, no. 453.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 454.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 455.

³⁸⁶ *Liber Feodorum*, p1305.

³⁸⁷ Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum, Vol. II*, p201.

and those of his mother and father. It is likely that Isabella was also involved in the patronage of this abbey and continued to do so following William's death as he chose to be buried there, just as William le Gros and his father had been.³⁸⁸

Bolton priory in Yorkshire, the home to Augustine canons, was also a beneficiary of the earls of Aumale and another house with which Isabella was concerned. William de Forz was an active patron of the priory as can be seen by the grant and confirmations that he made to the canons there.³⁸⁹ In 1257 he granted to the priory seven acres of land situated in Silsden in exchange for five acres of land in Embsay and a parcel of land in the park of Ley. This exchange was made on the condition that any escaped animals belonging to either the priory or the earl would be returned without any dispute.³⁹⁰ Isabella continued to be involved with the priory following her husband's death through the confirmation of gifts. For example, she confirmed to the canons the mills of Harewood with all their liberties and free customs in addition to a place called 'Milnegreene', including the ditch and waterways, pools and rights. She also granted a license for the right of the priory to extend these pools and waterways as they found necessary; given the often remote locations of religious houses, it was essential for them to have a reliable water supply.³⁹¹ The countess also confirmed to the canons the vill of Wigton and Brandon, with their appurtenances, one messuage, one toft and two carucates of land in Weeton and Healthwaite, with their appurtenances, one messuage and nine bovates, with all their appurtenances situated in Rawdon, six burgages in Harewood and numerous other lands and rights.³⁹² The exact dates of these confirmations are unknown.³⁹³

Isabella was also involved with Fountains abbey in Yorkshire, a religious house of the Cistercian order that had also been the recipient of the patronage of the earls of Aumale. William de Forz had made several grants and confirmations to this abbey throughout his lifetime, including the vill of *Crostwayth*, with the advowson of the church, and all its appurtenances.³⁹⁴ He also made two confirmations. The first was of all the lands and possessions which the monks held, of his fee, from Alice de Romilly.³⁹⁵ The other was a confirmation of Kilnsea, with all its appurtenances, together with any right he held in *Marhgamora* and all the lands and tenures which they held of his fee in Craven.

³⁸⁸ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, Vol. I, pp353-5.

³⁸⁹ Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, nos. 34, 39.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 279.

³⁹¹ The date of this confirmation is unknown. Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, no. 454; M. Aston, *Monasteries in the Landscape* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2000), p24.

³⁹² Legg (ed.), *The Lost Cartulary of Bolton Priory*, no. 455.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, no. 455.

³⁹⁴ Lancaster (ed.), *The Chartulary of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains*, no. 69.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 70.

Within this confirmation, William also granted to the monks free transit for their carts and cattle through all of his lands, excepting his meadow and corn, in addition to forty cartloads of dead wood a year and twenty cartloads of wood a year for their ploughs.³⁹⁶ Isabella, as with Bolton, continued to be involved with the patronage of Fountains abbey through the confirmation of previous grants of lands and rights.³⁹⁷

Of all of the religious houses associated with her husband's family, Meaux (also in Yorkshire) was probably the one with which Isabella continued to have the most involvement in her widowhood. The abbey, also of the Cistercian order, was founded by William le Gros, the earl of Aumale and Lord of Holderness. The abbey was established around the mid twelfth-century but the exact date appears to be in dispute.³⁹⁸ Although it would seem that William de Forz made no grants to the abbey himself, there is evidence that he, like his father, was concerned with the affairs of the abbey.³⁹⁹ For example, he was involved in the termination of a dispute regarding a gift, or sale, of five bovates of land in Tharlesthorp given to the abbey by Robert Constable; he received one hundred and sixty marks for this land to use on crusade with King Richard. Robert died whilst abroad and was succeeded by his brother, William's, line; it was his grandson, another William, who later disputed the holdings of Meaux that had been previously been granted by Robert.⁴⁰⁰ The disagreement was settled in 1258, thanks to the persuasion of William de Forz and he was the first listed witness to the final concord that confirmed Robert's grant to the abbey.⁴⁰¹ It would seem that Isabella was involved with the abbey's affairs in a similar way. In May 1276 she ordered Robert Hildyard, her bailiff in Holderness, to ensure that the monks had 'peaceful possession' of their pastures in Billeshull and Salts Ho.⁴⁰² She also apparently initiated an agreement between Robert de Barton, the abbot of Meaux, and Saer de Sutton regarding the abbey's rights to have pasture at Salts Ho for 368 sheep and four plough-beasts, probably oxen. This agreement made between 1280 and 1286 was later used as proof of the abbey's pasture rights in this area.⁴⁰³ The fact that Isabella was an active participant in the affairs concerning several of the religious houses linked to William's

³⁹⁶ Ibid., no. 6.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., no. 91.

³⁹⁸ Dugdale, within the *Monsticon Anglicanum*, states the year of foundation as 1136 whilst within *Complete Peerage* the date is stated as 1150. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum Vol. II*, p95; Cokayne, *Complete Peerage Vol. I*, p353.

³⁹⁹ Orange, 'The Cartulary of Meaux: A Critical Edition', no. 224.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., no.89.

⁴⁰¹ The East Riding of Yorkshire Archives: DDCC/93/1.

⁴⁰² Orange, 'The Cartulary of Meaux', no. 406.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., no. 229.

family could be both a sign of her conforming to medieval expectation and a devotion to her husband's family.

A further understanding of William and Isabella's religious patronage can be gained from the chosen burial places of their children. That of John, the first of Isabella and William's children to die in infancy is, sadly, unknown.⁴⁰⁴ Teron, is completely neglected by Cokayne within *The Complete Peerage*; it is likely that he was unaware of Teron's existence and his life is, therefore, a new discovery. Wherever John and Teron were buried, it is likely that both William and Isabella were involved in deciding the location. The places of rest for the remainder of their children, apart from Aveline, would have been decided by Isabella following her husband's death. Thomas, who had been the heir to the earldom of Aumale before his untimely death, was buried in the church of the black friars at Stamford. Similarly, his brother William was also buried at the church of the black friars but in Oxford, where he had died. The burial of both Thomas and William within Dominican friaries is interesting.⁴⁰⁵ The popularity of the friaries was booming in the thirteenth century due to the spiritual appeal of these communities and the social respectability that the orders received as a result of the patronage of the kings of England and Scotland.⁴⁰⁶ It would seem that Isabella, as the sole surviving parent and ultimately the person to decide the resting places of her children, was conforming to popular fashion amongst the noble community through the interment of her children within these houses.⁴⁰⁷ In contrast, Amice, Isabella's first daughter, was buried in Meaux abbey, a religious house to which she was connected through her father.⁴⁰⁸ The fact that Isabella chose for her daughter to be buried here could be suggestive of her desire to maintain the links she had with Meaux. The only place of burial over which Isabella might well have had little influence was that of Aveline who, as the wife of Edmund, earl of Lancaster, was buried within Westminster Abbey.⁴⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that Isabella was not buried with any of her children. Perhaps it was because they were all buried in different locations that she chose not to favouritise one or that the connections she felt to her natal family were too strong.

It is clear then that Isabella was a benefactor to a diverse range of religious orders. The vast majority of these houses were either of the Cistercian order or varying canons and the burials of two

⁴⁰⁴ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage*, Vol. IV, p323.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p323.

⁴⁰⁶ J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p120.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p120.

⁴⁰⁸ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage Vol. IV*, p323.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p323.

of her children in friaries reflect her concern with the 'fashions' of the period. The number of benefactions that Isabella made to each individual religious house highlights the importance which each of these held for her. This importance is even more evident when we consider the houses to which she made new grants. The religious houses of which Isabella was a more frequent and generous patron were those related to her natal kin and it is clear that she felt stronger personal ties to her family, from whom she received the majority of her lands, rather than to her husband's. If further proof was needed, Isabella's personal ties with both Christchurch and Breamore are highlighted by the fact that both priors stood as Isabella's executors.⁴¹⁰ Evidently Isabella's sense of identity was largely derived from her natal kin and this is reinforced by the order of titles, countess of Devon and Aumale. The importance of the protection of the soul in this period is highlighted by the fact that the vast majority of Isabella's benefactions were made for the souls of various family members. And finally, Isabella's patronage of and involvement with these religious houses reflects her power and social standing within English society as the wealthiest noblewoman within the country.

⁴¹⁰ *CPR, 1292-1301*, p585.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to uncover the life of Isabella de Forz, the countess of Devon and Aumale and Lady of the Isle, with particular emphasis on her political career. Although it is difficult to measure the extent of Isabella's political activities and influence within marriage, we can assume that the countess was politically aware as a result of her husband's position within the royal court and her own position as a member of a major comital family. It can also be safely assumed that she shared the same responsibilities as other married noblewomen, such as Eleanor de Montfort, about whose life we now have considerable knowledge. Extant records highlight Isabella's extensive political activities throughout the duration of her widowhood and the analysis of her affinity and her religious patronage has provided an all important insight into the countess' level of power and influence within thirteenth-century England. These have enabled us to decipher whether we should regard Isabella as a political pawn or agent.

Isabella's impressive lineage and subsequent marriage to the earl of Aumale meant that she was inevitably going to have some involvement in English politics during her life and career. Although there is no solid evidence of this from the years of her marriage, it can be supposed that Isabella would have been involved in activities similar to those undertaken by other noble wives during this period. Through her husband's position as a prominent member of Henry III's inner circle, it is more than likely that Isabella was able to make connections with other great magnates of the day. This may be an explanation as to why John de Warenne, William de Valence and Hugh Bigod stood as her sureties in 1263.⁴¹¹ As the wealthiest woman in England in widowhood she was, perhaps, involved in politics to a greater extent than other noblewomen, especially in holding the Isle of Wight. Isabella's political activities are also reflected in the lives of numerous other noblewomen. For example, it was not uncommon for a nobleman to be absent from the household which provided his wife with an opportunity to take up the role of estate administrator and head of the household. This gave women the opportunity to gain more experience in the likely possibility that they would eventually become widowed. The patronage of religious houses was also undertaken by the majority of noblewomen; this was partly due to social expectation but also personal piety, the extent of which depended on the individual and the scale of the resources at their disposal.

As has been illustrated, the marriage of Isabella to William de Forz was by no means a love match but it is possible that affection did develop over the course of their relatively short marriage despite

⁴¹¹ *CFR*, 1262-3, no. 713, accessed 1st November 2013.

the significant difference in age. This is, perhaps, emphasised by the fact that they had a relatively large number of children in a short length of time. With a large number of offspring it would have seemed that the succession of the Aumale estates was secure but clearly this was not the case. The loss of all of her children apart from her last surviving daughter, Aveline, by 1269 drew the countess into the centre of English politics. Isabella's wealth was clearly visible to the noble community and the opportunity to marry her only heir would have been desired by a number of families. The arrangement of her daughter's marriage to Henry III's second son, Edmund, obviously led to an increased interaction with the royal court. It should not be forgotten that it was Isabella who, as the heiress to one earldom and a dowager countess with extensive dower rights in another, was initially supposed to marry the prince.⁴¹² By choosing to remain a widow two points are very clear. First of all, Isabella was obviously aware of her position as one of the wealthiest women within England and the authority she held as a result and, secondly, the numerous opportunities and privileged position that could be acquired by her daughter upon marrying into the royal family. Ultimately, this failed as Aveline died one year after the marriage had taken place.

Throughout the duration of her marriage Isabella was probably involved in politics but it was in her widowhood that she came to the fore as estate administrator, religious patron, intercessor and, perhaps most importantly, a defender of her landed property and rights. Her possession of the Isle of Wight, as has been illustrated, drew Isabella into national politics on a regular basis in both the reigns of Henry III and Edward I. Henry knew of the strategic importance of the Isle and this was a matter with which the countess was involved in throughout the duration of his reign. As is suggested, Henry did, perhaps, doubt the extent of Isabella's loyalties but of this we cannot be certain. In Edward's reign the Isle continued to involve Isabella within national politics. Edward's attempt to secure the countess' inheritance highlights the extent of her wealth but also the political importance of the lands that she held. Landholding and lordship were two of the most important ways in which women could be involved in politics but the incredible wealth that Isabella held and the particularly strategic importance of the Isle enabled her to be, perhaps, more involved than others.

The records of legal cases brought before the royal justices demonstrate the unceasing necessity for noblewomen to defend and pursue their property rights within widowhood. The varying litigation cases in which Isabella was involved show that women did not only have cases brought against them but that they too initiated cases. The cases in which Isabella was involved saw her lock

⁴¹² *CPR, 1258-66*, p275.

horns with some of the most influential members of English society including the earl of Cornwall and the king himself.⁴¹³ Again, Isabella's prominent position within the country may have exacerbated her involvement but this was certainly an experience shared by many thirteenth-century noblewomen. It was difficult enough for women to secure their property rights upon their widowhood but evidently they needed to defend them throughout their lifetime. Susanna Annesley has explored the life of Isabella, the countess of Arundel, who, in 1252, was involved in the defence of her rights to a wardship in Norfolk against King Henry III.⁴¹⁴ Some parallels can be drawn here between this case and that of Isabella de Forz in the defence of her rights regarding the wood at Lymington which the king also unjustly claimed.⁴¹⁵ The case between Isabella and her mother Amicia illustrates that it was even essential for noblewomen to defend their property from family members. The countess continued to be involved in the defence of her property rights up until the end of her life when she eventually sold the Isle of Wight and the manor of Honiton to Edward I, as previously discussed.⁴¹⁶

Through her role as lord, Isabella's officials, and quite possibly some of her tenants and neighbours, looked to her to intercede on their behalf when they were involved in a difficult situation. This activity was widely undertaken by widows and Cavell's research has shown that this was certainly the case for many widows located within Shropshire.⁴¹⁷ There is also plentiful evidence of Isabella's intercession within the records concerning both local and national politics. Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Adam de Stratton who caused many difficulties for the countess throughout the duration of his career as her official. Isabella's support for such a notorious individual is perhaps a reflection of a need for her authority to be enforced in certain areas but also of her appreciation of Stratton's abilities.

Isabella established ties and potentially a good working relationship with both Henry III and Edward I; perhaps that between Edward and Isabella was more successful. He was careful to grant her the lands to which she was entitled, but it likely that this was a result of his desire to gain control of her inheritance.⁴¹⁸ Through her presence at the royal court Isabella became associated with

⁴¹³ TNA: SC 8/276/13777; *CPR, 1272-81*, pp409, 472; *Chancery Warrants Vol. I, 1244-1326*, p10.

⁴¹⁴ Isabella was almost an equally formidable character as the countess of Aumale. S. Annesley, 'Isabella countess of Arundel's confrontation with King Henry III', *Fine of the Month: August 2009*, <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-08-2009.html>, accessed 9th June 2014.

⁴¹⁵ TNA: SC 8/276/13777; *CPR, 1272-81*, p472; *Calendar of Chancery Warrants preserved in the Public Record Office: 1244-1326*, p10.

⁴¹⁶ Hall (ed.), *Red Book of the Exchequer*, pp1020-1022.

⁴¹⁷ Cavell, 'Aristocratic Widows and the Medieval Welsh Frontier', pp70-1.

⁴¹⁸ *CCIR, 1279-88*, pp250, 497; *CCIR, 1288-96*, p236.

Henry's wife and Edward's mother, Eleanor of Provence, and clearly it was quite common for powerful countesses to be in communication with the queen.⁴¹⁹ It was important for the royal family to maintain contacts with influential members of society.

The notion that Isabella's landed wealth enabled her to be active within English politics is illustrated further by looking at the persons of her affinity. It is obvious from the reconstruction undertaken here that the Redvers inheritance held much importance for Isabella in terms of the sense of her identity. Many of the men within the inner and outer circles of Isabella's affinity were her tenants of the Redvers estates, or otherwise important members of society from within the locality. The same can be said of the men who occasionally stood witness to her charters. This evidence suggests that the ties of lordship were still in place, although it may be, as suggested, that these had indeed 'loosened'.⁴²⁰ The presence of prominent men of English society within her retinue is a clear indication of the extent of Isabella's authority and capabilities as a lord. She was evidently able to attract the men that she desired to her household so as to receive the best service possible.⁴²¹ As is stated by Ward, the countess shared a 'two-way relationship' with the members of her affinity. Whilst these men were able to offer her the skills required to run her estates and also acted as her officials, she offered fees and livery but also other potential benefits, such as lands.⁴²² Women such as Isabella and Elizabeth de Burgh who possessed influence within the royal court were also in a position to advance the careers of their retinue. Despite this, it must be remembered that although Isabella was able to offer lordship she could not offer military glory; this seemingly did not matter for the wealthiest of noblewomen.⁴²³ That many of the men within the inner and outer circles of Isabella's affinity went on to fulfil royal duties would, again, suggest that she was able to attract officials of the highest calibre to her household.

In addition to this, much can be gleaned by looking at the religious houses which received her patronage. The importance of Isabella's natal inheritance in its contribution to her sense of identity is illustrated by her benefactions. This significance is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that she chose to be buried at Breamore, the same location as her father. Despite her chosen place of burial,

⁴¹⁹ CPR, 1258-66, p546; S. Annesley, 'Isabella countess of Arundel's confrontation with King Henry III', *Fine of the Month*: August 2009, <http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/month/fm-08-2009.html>, accessed 9th June 2014.

⁴²⁰ D. Crouch, *William Marshal*, p138. The debate of Bastard Feudalism will not be discussed here due to word limitations. Having studied the men that made up Isabella's affinity it would seem that the old ties of lordship were still in place but that new non-feudal connections were also being formed.

⁴²¹ Carpenter, 'Bastard Feudalism Revised, II', pp185-7.

⁴²² Ward, *English Noblewomen*, pp134-5.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, pp134-5.

it should be noted that in her widowhood Isabella continued to be involved in the religious houses associated with her husband's family, such as Meaux and Fountains. Obviously this was partly due to the duty of noblewomen to commemorate the lives of their family members and husbands, but it is also probable that she continued to do so out of affection.⁴²⁴ This is arguably illustrated by the burial of her daughter Amice at the abbey of Meaux.⁴²⁵ Other than the patronage of houses associated with her or her husband's family, it is also clear from her benefactions that she conformed to popular fashion amongst the nobility.⁴²⁶ The friaries received respect as a result of their royal patronage and Isabella's involvement with them is a reflection of her position within thirteenth-century English society.⁴²⁷ To suggest that Isabella was more than conventionally pious is difficult as she was fulfilling a duty to commemorate the lives of her loved ones as were numerous other wives and widows.

It is clear from the contemporary evidence that Isabella's political sympathies were of significant importance. In holding the Isle the countess would have been able to pose a serious threat to the stability of the kingdom had she decided to openly place her allegiance with the barons. Prior to this study it seems to have been generally accepted that Isabella was a strong supporter of the baronial cause and her loyalties have often been used as an explanation of the dispute that occurred between herself and her mother.⁴²⁸ The question of Isabella's allegiance is still a difficult one. Isabella was obviously aware of the fluid political situation and as the wealthiest woman in the country she would have wanted to associate herself with those who held power. As a woman who had so much to lose, however, she would have been cautious not to demonstrate any strong allegiance at a time when the political situation was so volatile. Although Isabella did not openly display her allegiance to either side, her reacceptance at the royal court, if that is what it should be termed, is illustrated by her communications with Eleanor of Provence in the late 1260s.⁴²⁹ It would have been too risky not to have such a powerful woman on side. Her interactions with the royal court remained constant throughout Edward's reign, particularly in the defence of her landed wealth. The strength of Isabella's actual sympathies for the baronial cause can be doubted but it is clear that she was able to exploit the political situation to her own advantage.

⁴²⁴ Gees, *Women, Art and Patronage*, pp7-8.

⁴²⁵ Cokayne, *Complete Peerage Vol. IV*, p323.

⁴²⁶ J. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain*, p120.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, p120.

⁴²⁸ Denholm Young, 'The Yorkshire Estates of Isabella de Fortibus', pp410-15.

⁴²⁹ *CPR, 1258-66*, p54; Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, p244.

Isabella was obviously a fairly forceful woman who was well aware of her rights, the evidence of which is clear from the number of litigation cases in which she was involved for the defence of her lands. That she was involved in rather long drawn out disputes with both her mother and with Edmund, the earl of Cornwall, one of the most powerful men of the thirteenth century, is further proof that she was certainly nobody's fool. Her determination and strength of character is also illustrated by her ability to fend off Edward I until her death. Despite Edward's numerous attempts to secure Isabella's estates throughout her widowhood, she did not concede until she was lying on her deathbed. As suggested at the beginning of this thesis, the tenacity and vivaciousness of each individual noblewoman could dictate the extent of her involvement in politics on both a local and national level. Isabella was certainly a very strong-minded woman.

Isabella's political activities, the administration of estates, involvement in litigation and religious patronage are mirrored within the lives of numerous other noblewomen as ventures they were expected to undertake. Despite this, the wealth and influence that the countess wielded led her to have an increased and intense involvement in politics that was not experienced by others. Clearly her strength of character also influenced the extent of her involvement. Had she not been connected with two wealthy earldoms, it is questionable that she would have been so actively involved in English politics on both a local and national scale. Isabella de Forz, the countess of Devon and Aumale and Lady of the Isle, was certainly a political player in the thirteenth century.

Appendix One: Witnesses to the secular acta of Isabella de Forz.

NAME	Person/ beneficiary	Source of Information⁴³⁰	Number Witnessed
John fitz John	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife	TNA: E 40/4604	1
William Marmium	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife	TNA: E 40/4604	1
John la Ware	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	2
Jordan de Kingeston	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Agreement with Quarr Abbey The Burgesses of Newport Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 TNA: E 210/8905 TNA: E 210/8908 Red Book of the Exchequer AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight p. 230/1	6
Jordan la Ware	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	2
Gilbert de Knowile	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Agreement with Quarr Abbey Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	TNA: E 40/4604 TNA: E 210/8905 Red Book of the Exchequer	5

⁴³⁰ Here the archive or book containing the record is listed together with the respective reference or page number.

	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline	Red Book of the Exchequer AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight	
John de Insula	Agreement with Quarr Abbey	TNA: E 210/8905	1
John de Insula - rector of the church of Shalfleet	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 Charters of Lymington, p231.	2
Gilbert de Chalfunte	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	2
John de <i>Compaillers</i>	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife	TNA: E 40/4604	1
Walter de Rumbridge	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 40/4604 Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	2
Gilbert de Bestenore	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife	TNA: E 40/4604	1
Thomas de Clavile	Roger de Chilham and Margery his wife ? Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 40/4604 TNA: E 210/8908	1 / 2?
Henry Trenchard	Burgesses of Newport Burgesses of Lymington	TNA: E 210/8908 Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	2
Richard de Affton	Agreement with Quarr Abbey Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline	TNA: E 210/8905 AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight	4

	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red Book of the Exchequer	
	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red Book of the Exchequer	
Robert de Glamorgan	Agreement with Quarr Abbey	TNA: E 210/8905	2
	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red book of the Exchequer	
Walter de Langton	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red book of the Exchequer	2
	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red book of the Exchequer	
Thomas de Evercy	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
John de Heynou	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red book of the Exchequer	2
	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	
Robert Bardolf	Agreement with Quarr Abbey	TNA: E 210/8905	1
Philip <i>Tangele</i>	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red book of the Exchequer	2
	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red book of the Exchequer	
Roger de Gardino	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red book of the Exchequer	2
	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red book of the Exchequer	
Bishop of Durham	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red Book of the Exchequer	2
	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red Book of the Exchequer	
Richard de Walgrave	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red Book of the Exchequer	1
William Neutone	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	Red Book of the Exchequer	2

	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton	Red Book of the Exchequer	
John de Hardington, constable of Carisbrooke castle	Agreement with Quarr Abbey	TNA: E 210/8905	1
John de Sancta Elena	Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline	AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight	1
John Trenchard	Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline	AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight	1
John Passelewe	Walter de Feringford and his wife Aveline	AC95/32.12 - Isle of Wight	1
Adam de Stratton	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
Roger de Writele	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
John Walrand	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
Walter Frary of Down Ampney	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
Robert le Chanue	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
Geoffrey de Morleye	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
Walter de Upton	Robert de Abyndon and his heirs	1150 - Hungerford Cartulary	1
William de Spileman	Burgesses of Lymington	Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	1
Eustace Purcher	Burgesses of Lymington	Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	1

Henry N_	Burgesses of Lymington	Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	1
Simon de <i>Gruewoode</i>	Burgesses of Lymington	Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	1
John de <i>Badesle</i>	Burgesses of Lymington	Charters of Lymington, pp230-1.	1
Hugh/ Hugh la Vavasour	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
Walter Bernard	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
Geoffrey de Insula	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
Thomas de la Haule	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
William Esturs	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
John de Pagrave	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
William de Sancto Martino	Burgesses of Newport	TNA: E 210/8908	1
Sir Robert de Alba Marle	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Sir John de Alba Marle	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Sir Ralph de Chaluns	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Sir Ralph Ruffus	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Sir Nicholas la Bastard	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Walter de Linham	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Ralph de Linham	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1

William de Coleford	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
William le Albe of Radeford	Burgesses of Plympton	Charter Rolls - 1285, p. 304	1
Walter de <i>Louen</i>	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 – Somerset Record Office	1
Humphrey le <i>Kael</i>	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1
Hamundo ???	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1
Robert de la Lynde	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1
John de <i>Eusatchii</i>	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1
Philip ???	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1
Ralph Burnel	Adam Boce	P/PH/hbs/1/6 - Somerset Record Office	1

Appendix Two: Witnesses to the religious acta of Isabella de Forz.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Abbey/Priory</u>	<u>No/catalogue reference of charter witnessed</u> ⁴³¹	<u>Total number witnessed</u>
Sir Matthew de Columbers	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir Geoffrey de Fanencourt	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir John Bretaske	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir John de Montalt	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir John de Kernet	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir Adam de Cumpton	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir John de Brummor	Lacock	453, 454	2
Jordan de Kingeston	Lacock	453, 454, 455	13

⁴³¹ The numbers in this column refer to the number of the charter in the respective abbey's cartulary or is otherwise the reference for the charter in the National Archives, The Somerset Record Office, East Riding of Yorkshire Archives or Isle of Wight Record Office catalogues.

	Christchurch Carisbrooke St. Nicholas Chapel, Carisbrooke Castle Quarr Breamore Montebourg	43, 147, DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38) 229, 230, E 210/8904 5, 41, E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III) E 210/8901	
Eustace Fouchier	Lacock	453, 454	2
Gregory the marshal	Lacock	453, 454	2
Jocelin de Barnevile	Lacock	453, 454	2
Ralph Brae	Lacock	453, 454	2
Richard de Farnhull	Lacock	453, 454	2
Sir Richard de Affton	Lacock Bolton Christchurch Fountains Quarr	455 454, 455, 44, 50, 51 (also E 210/8906/ii), 266, 268, 91 5, 41	13

	Breamore St. Nicholas Chapel, Carisbrooke Castle	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III) E 210/8904	
Sir Robert de Glamorgan	Lacock Quarr Carisbrooke	455 41 E 210/8904	3
Sir William de Esturs	Lacock Carisbrooke Quarr Christchurch	455 230 5 DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38)	4
Odo de Cumpston	Lacock	455	1
Geoffrey de Insula	Lacock	455	1
William de la Clive	Lacock	455	1
William de Godeshull	Lacock	455	1
William le Vavasour	Bolton	454, 455,	2
Robert Plumpton	Bolton Fountains	454, 455 91	3
Alexandro de Ledis/Leedes	Bolton	454, 455,	2
Robert Bardolf	Bolton	454	2

	Quarr	41	
Thomas de Weston	Bolton	454	2
	Fountains	91	
Geoffrey de Monte Alto de Lethelay	Bolton	454, 455	3
	Fountains	91	
William de Langfeld	Bolton	454	1
John de Maichlay	Bolton	454	1
John de Sancta Elena	Bolton	455	6
	Christchurch	50, 51 (also E 210/8906/ii), 147	
	Fountains	91	
	Breamore	E328/325 (also Charter Rolls)	
Simon Ward	Bolton	455	1
William de Radston	Bolton	455	2
	Breamore	E 328/325	
Robert Dimmock	Bolton	455	2
	Fountains	91	
William de Langfeld	Bolton	455	1
Richard de Wigdon	Bolton	455	1
John la Ware	Christchurch	43, DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38)	3

	Montebourg	E 210/8901	
Henry Trenchard	Christchurch Carisbrooke	43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 266, 268, DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38), E 210/8907 230, E 210/8904	11
William de Sancto Martino	Christchurch Quarr St Nicholas Chapel Carisbrooke Castle	44, 45, 46, 47, E 210/8907 5 E210/8904	7
Thomas de Evercy	Christchurch Carisbrooke Quarr Montebourg	45, 46, 47, E 210/8907 229 5 E 210/8901	7
Sir John Mautravers	Christchurch	49	1
Sir John de Wooton	Christchurch Breamore	49 E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	2
Gilbert de Knovile	Christchurch Quarr Fountains	50, 51 (also E 210/8906/ii), 147 41 91	5
John de Insula	Carisbrooke Lacock Montebourg Quarr	230 455 E 210/8901 5, 41	5

John de Insula - Rector of the church of Shalfleet	Carisbrooke Christchurch	230 DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38)	2
Jordan de Insula	Carisbrooke	229	1
William de Traci	Carisbrooke	229	1
Ralph de Wolverton	Carisbrooke	229	1
John de la Brigg	Carisbrooke	229	1
Robert Aurifabro	Carisbrooke	229	1
Thomas le Noreis	Carisbrooke	229	1
William de Coskeville	Carisbrooke	229	1
William de la Mare	Carisbrooke	229	1
Hubert de Conilly	Carisbrooke	230	1
Hugh de Maneby, constable of Carisbrooke Castle	Carisbrooke	230	1
Benedict de Monton	Carisbrooke	230	1
John de Stigela	Carisbrooke	230	1
Thomas de la Haule	Quarr Montebourg Abbey	5 E 210/8901	2
James de Hautone	Quarr	5	1
Robert de Brus	Quarr	41	1

Hugh de Courtenay	Quarr	41	1
John de Hardington – constable of Carisbrooke Castle	Quarr	41	1
Roland de Erle	Fountains	91	1
William de Rythre	Fountains	91	1
Robert de Furneas	Fountains	91	1
William Stepham/ Stopham	Fountains	91	1
William Hertlyngton	Fountains	91	1
Richard de Stokkeld	Fountains	91	1
William, son of Henry de Farnelay	Fountains	91	1
William de Castelay	Fountains	91	1
Sir Edmund Spigurnel	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
Thomas de Raudewyne	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
Richard de Bukesgate	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
Ralph de Boelaund	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
William de Buttsthorn	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
John de Avene	Breamore	E 328/325 (also Charter Rolls Vol. III)	1
Robert Makerel	Christchurch	DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38) E 210/8907	2

John de Buttethorne	Christchurch	DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38), E210/8907	2
Jacob (James) de Hampton	St Nicholas Chapel Carisbrooke Castle	E 210/8904	1
John de Heynou	St Nicholas Chapel Carisbrooke Castle	E 210/8904	1
Eustace Purcher	Christchurch	E 210/8907	1
Walter Bernard	St. Nicholas Chapel Carisbrooke Castle	E 210/8904	1
Thomas de Clavile	St Nicholas Chapel, Carisbrooke Castle	E 210/8904	1
Simon Plumton	Christchurch	DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38)	1
Jordan la Ware	Christchurch	DD/CN/29/1 (also E 328/38)	1

Appendix Three: Witnesses to all of Isabella de Forz's acta and number witnessed.

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Number of charters witnessed:</u>
John fitz John	1
William Marmium	1
John de la Ware	5
Jordan de Kingeston	19
Gilbert de Knovile	10
John de Insula	6
Gilbert Chalfunte	2
John de <i>Compaillers</i>	2
Walter de Rumbridge	2
Gilbert Bestenore	1
Thomas de Clavile	2/3?
Henry Trenchard	13
Richard de Affton	17
Robert Glamorgan	5
Walter Langton	2
Thomas de Evercy	8

Sir John Mautravers	1
Sir John de Wooton	2
John de Heynou	3
Robert Bardolf	3
Philip <i>Tangele</i>	2
Roger de Gardino	2
John de Hardington	2
John de Sancta Elena	7
John Trenchard	1
John Passelewe	1
Adam de Stratton	1
Roger de Writele	1
John Walrand	1
Walter Frary of Down Ampney	1
Robert le Chanue	1
Geoffrey de Morleye	1
Walter de Upton	1
William de Spileman	1
Eustace Purcher	2

Henry N_	1
Simon de Gruewoode	1
Walter Bernard	2
John de Badesle	1
Hugh la Vavasour	1
Walter de Louen	1
Humphrey le Kael?	1
Hamundo ?	1
Robert de la Lynde	1
John de Eustachii	1
Philip ?	1
Ralph Burnel	1
Sir Matthew de Columbers	2
Sir Geoffrey de Fanencourt	2
Sir John Bretaske	2
Sir John de Montalt	2
Sir John de Kernet	2
Sir Adam de Cumpton	2
Sir John de Brummor	2

Eustace Fouchier	2
Gregory the marshal	2
Jocelin de Barneville	2
Ralph Brae	2
Richard de Farnhull	2
William de Esturs	4
Odes de Cumpton	1
Geoffrey del Idle	1
William de la Clive	1
William de Godeshull	1
William le Vavasour	2
Robert de Plumpton	3
Alexandro de Ledis/Leedes	2
Thomas de Weston	2
Geoffrey de Monte Alto de Lethelay	3
William de Langfeld	2
John de Maichlay	1
William de Radstone	2
Robert Dimmock	2

William de Sancto Martino	8
Jordan de Insula	1
William de Traci	1
Ralph de Wolverton	1
John de la Brigg	1
Robert Aurifabro	1
Thomas le Noreis	1
William de Coskeville	1
William de la Mare (le Matre?)	1
Hubert de Conilly	1
Hugh de Maneby	1
Benedict de Monton	1
John de Stigela	1
Thomas de la Haule	2
James de Hautone	1
Robert de Brus	1
Hugh de Courtenay	1
Roland de Erle	1
William de Rythre	1

Robert de Furneas	1
William Stepham/ Stopham	1
William Hertlyngton	1
Richard de Stokkeld	1
William, son of Henry de Farnelay	1
William de Castelay	1
Sir Edmund Spigurnel	1
Thomas de Raudewyne	1
Richard de Bukesgate	1
Ralph de Boelaund	1
William de Buttethorn	1
John de Avene	1
Robert Makerel	2
John de Buttethorne	2
Jacob (James) de Hampton	1
William Neutone	2
Bishop of Durham	1
Richard de Walgrave	2
Simon Plumton	1

John de Insula, rector of Scaldeflete	4
Jordan la Ware	3
Sir Robert de Alba Marle	1
Sir John de Alba Marle	1
Sir Ralph de Chaluns	1
Sir Ralph Ruffus	1
Sir Nicholas la Bastard	1
Walter de Linham	1
Ralph de Linham	1
William de Coleford	1
William le Albe of Radeford	1

Appendix Four: The Acta of Isabella de Forz.

<u>Source</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Confirmation</u>	<u>Grant</u>	<u>Quitclaim</u>
Carisbrooke cartulary – No. 219 + 231. Also E210/8920ii	Confirmation of grants to the abbey by Isabella, daughter of Ranulph of Bashley	1264	confirmation		
No.229	Grant of 10 acres of land in the field of Carisbrooke in exchange for another 10 acres.	1261x1277		grant	
No. 230	Renunciation of claim to the right of way through the priory	April 1270			quitclaim
Quarr cartulary – No. 5	Confirmation of all the rights granted to the priory by her ancestors	1272x1279	confirmation		
No. 41	Notification of the end of a dispute between the abbey and Isabella	1285			
No. 360	Confirmation of all grants made by her ancestors	1270	confirmation		
Fountains cartulary – No. 91	Confirmation of <i>Staynburn</i> and <i>Ryghton</i>	1263x1293	confirmation		
Hungerford Cartulary – no 1150	Quitclaim of the lands of Robert de Abyndon	20 March 1278			quitclaim
Torre cartulary – No. 91	Quitclaim of the whole of Aveton	1263x1293		grant	quitclaim

Lacock cartulary – No. 453	Confirmation/quitclaim of the manor of Shorwell	1263x1293	confirmation		quitclaim
No. 454	Quitclaim of rights due to her from the manor of Shorwell	13 January 1265			quitclaim
Bolton cartulary - No. 454	Confirmation to the priory of lands in Harewood	17 Aug 1263- 10 Nov 1293	confirmation		
No. 455	Confirmation to the priory of lands in Harewood.	17 Aug 1263- 10 Nov 1293	confirmation		
Christchurch cartulary – No. 43	Confirmation of all the possessions that were granted by Baldwin, earl of Devon and his son, Richard.	1272	confirmation		
No. 44	Confirmation of possessions	29 Sept -13 Oct 1274	confirmation		
No. 45	Liberties during vacancies	29 Sept -13 Oct 1274	confirmation		
No. 46	Liberties concerning amercements	29 Sept -13 Oct 1274	confirmation		
No.47	Liberties concerning its officers during vacancies	29 Sept -13 Oct 1274	confirmation		
No. 49	Remission and quitclaim of a rent of 5m and 10s	1292x1293? (Possibly 1263x1292)			remission and quitclaim
No. 50	Grant of rights to fish	1292x1293		grant	
No.51 also E210/8906/ii (also	Grant of the tithes of rabbits	14 Dec 1292		grant	

CChR 1300-1326 pp226-7).					
No. 147	Quitclaim of a grant of 6s. 3d. to the priory	1262x1293 - possibly 1292-3			quitclaim
No. 207	Confirmation of lands to Quarr Abbey	1263x1293	confirmation		
No. 266	License to hold Hinton	1272x1293		grant	
No. 268	License to hold North Hinton	1262x1278	confirmation		
No. 1324 + Red Book no.79.	Quitclaim of the Isle of Wight	9 Nov 1293			quitclaim
Meaux Cartulary no. 225	Grant of the protection of the abbey's pastures	6 May 1276		grant	
TNA: E 40/4604	Grant of lands and tenement in Meriston to Roger de Chilham and his wife	1260x1272		grant	
TNA: E 210/8901	Grant/ confirmation of lands to Montebourg abbey in England and Normandy	1263x1293	confirmation	grant	
TNA: E 210/8904	Grant of rents to St Nicholas Chapel, Carisbrooke.	1263x1293		grant	
TNA: E 210/8907	Grant of rights of fines in Isabella's courts of hundreds to Christchurch Priory	1274		grant	
TNA: E 210/8908	Grant of liberties to the burgesses of Newport	1263x1293		grant	

AC95/32.12 – Isle of Wight record office also TNA: E210/8903	Grant of 11s rent to Walter Feringford and his wife in Bowcombe	1263-1293 - possibly April 1292?		grant	
T\PH/hbs/1/6 – Somerset Record Office	Grant and confirmation to Adam Boce of an acre at Cruk			grant	
DD/CN/29/1 – Somerset Record Office	Confirmation of lands and liberties to the priory of Christchurch		confirmation		
TNA: E 328/38	Confirmation of all the grants made to Christchurch priory by her brother, Baldwin		confirmation		
TNA: E 328/325	Grant of lands and tenements to Breamore priory			grant	
DDCC/135/3 - ERY Archives	Sale to William Hamelton – the sale of the marriage of John, son of Saer de Sutton	2 Dec 1291		grant	
Charters of Lymington p.231	Grant and confirmation of the liberties of the burgesses of Lymington		confirmation	grant	
Charter Rolls - 1285	Confirmation of the liberties to the burgesses of Plympton	June 1285	confirmation		
Red book of exchequer no. 80.	Quitclaim of the manor of Honiton to Edward I				quitclaim
TOTALS:			19	16	9

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