

# Le Stranges, Fitzalans and Stewarts: Shared Origins

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*The author notes the genealogies of the hereditary Stewards of Dol, Brittany, and their Stewart and Fitzalan descendants. He explores the origins of a collateral branch also descended from the Stewards of Dol, the family of Le Strange.*

It has been known for over 200 years that the Stewarts of Scotland and the Fitzalans of Norfolk and Arundel descend from Alan fitz Flaald, Sheriff of Shropshire in the reign of Henry I of England. We owe the modern understanding that the Sheriff of Shropshire came of a line holding the hereditary office of Steward (also called *dapifer* or seneschal) of Dol in Brittany to the groundbreaking work of J Horace Round published in 1899 and 1901. The earliest ancestor identified by Round was Alan *dapifer Dolensis*, active as Steward of Dol from or after 1076. In 2009 Dr Paul A Fox proposed additions and revisions to Round's pedigree [*The Stewarts* Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 2010, 249; and, a fuller version, *Foundations* (2009) 3 (1), 61]. Fox convincingly extends Round's work backwards in time by two generations.

## ***Hato and the sons of Hato***

To Fox we owe our understanding that the earliest known direct male ancestor of the hereditary Stewards of Dol was Hato, a Frankish warrior from lands under the suzerainty of the French Crown, probably from Maine on the eastern border of Brittany. Rivallon, called the *vidame* [*vice-dominus*] or Lord of Dol as secular protector of the Archbishopric of Dol, enlisted this Hato to serve as one of his knights. Hato was active in the service of Rivallon, Fox suggests, from 1013. As a knight of the *vidame*, Hato also had his place in the retinue of the Archbishop of Dol. When Hato witnessed a charter of Archbishop Junkeneus in the period after 1029 he was referred to as "our man Hato".

Fox's sources establish the existence and identity of two sons of Hato, Flaald fitz Hato and Hato fitz Hato, "fitz" meaning "son of". Around 1050 Hato and his son Flaald appear together as witnesses to a charter of Rivallon of Dol and Josselin of Dinan granting the tithes

of St Pern to the new priory of St Pern. Flaald and his father themselves made a donation to the same priory. This Flaald fitz Hato, apparently the older son of Hato, was first in the line of the hereditary Stewards of Dol. We can call him *dapifer* (1).

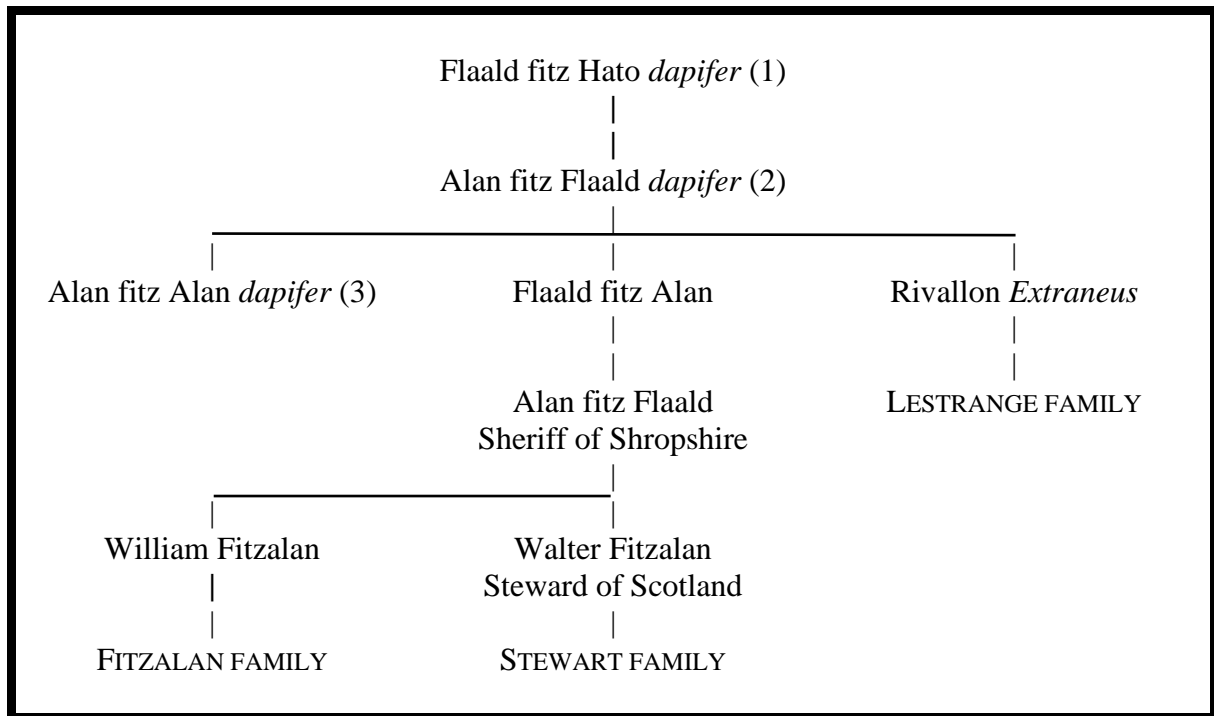
Flaald fitz Hato, first hereditary Steward of Dol, *dapifer* (1), died, or at least disappears from the record, by 1076. He was succeeded in the office of Steward of Dol by a son Alan, second in the line of hereditary Stewards of Dol. This is the “ALAN Dapifer [Dolensis]” at the top of Round’s “Origin of the Stewarts” family tree. Let him be called *dapifer* (2).

The disappearance of the first hereditary Steward from the record may be not unrelated to the fact that in 1076 Archbishop Juhel of Dol was deposed in an event generally termed the siege of Dol. [*The Front Cover illustration is a scene from the Bayeux Tapestry depicting an earlier siege of Dol, in 1065, when Harold Godwinson (Harold of England) joined William of Normandy (William the Conqueror) to support Rivallon of Dol’s rebellion against Duke Conan II of Brittany. The scene shows Conan escaping by sliding down a rope.*]

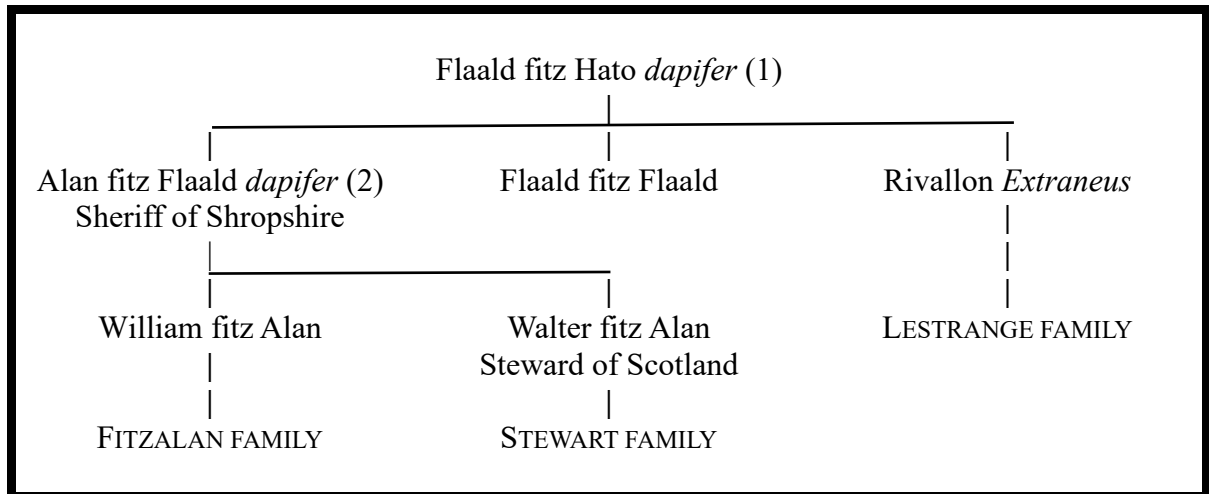
### ***Different interpretations***

At this point, as we move forward in time, interpretations diverge. The essential difference is as follows: Fox postulates that Alan *dapifer* (2) was one and the same as the Alan fitz Flaald who was created Sheriff of Shropshire by Henry I of England in 1103; whereas Round postulates that the Alan fitz Flaald who was created Sheriff of Shropshire by Henry I in 1103 was a grandson of Alan *dapifer* (2). The competing interpretations are illustrated in the simplified family trees below. The author’s personal preference is for the Round tree: but the purpose of this article is not to resolve the issue between Round and Fox. The purpose is to start from common ground and to trace the line of descent of the family that came to be known, in England, as Le Strange.

### J H ROUND FAMILY TREE, SIMPLIFIED



### DR P FOX FAMILY TREE, SIMPLIFIED



#### *Alan dapifer, Flaald and Rivallon*

Among the charters of the Abbey of St Florent de Saumur is one that records a grant by Alan *Sinischallus* [seneschal] of bread-bakery rights to a cell of the Abbey of St Florent at a place called Mezuoit near Dol. The grant is dated by Round “*ante* 1080”. Fox’s researches allow us to assign the grant to the period 1076—1080.

Alan *Siniscallus* was the *dapifer* of Dol. He appears in the document with his brothers Flaald and Rivallon. Alan *Siniscallus* made the grant with the consent of his brother Flaald, implying that Alan *Siniscallus* had no heir of his own body and that his younger brother Flaald was, at the time of the grant, his presumptive successor. Also implied, obviously, is the fact that both Alan *Siniscallus* and his brother Flaald were of full age, that is at least 21 years of age, when the grant was made. In consideration of the grant the youngest brother, Rivallon, was received by the monks into their community. The implication of this is, first, that the older brothers, Alan *Siniscallus* and Flaald, were exercising *quasi* parental responsibility for Rivallon who was still in his minority, it may be very much younger than the two older brothers, and, secondly, the corollary, that the father of these three brothers was dead, corroborating, if that be necessary, the fact that Alan *Siniscallus* had stepped into his dead father's shoes in the hereditary office of *dapifer*.

### ***Alan fitz Flaald and Rivallon Extraneus***

Moving forward in time four decades or thereby—and ignoring the niceties of the Round/Fox discussion about the family in the intervening period—we find Alan fitz Flaald, Sheriff of Shropshire, recorded as having made a grant, *ante* 1122, to the Abbey of St Florent de Saumur of the church of Sporle, in Norfolk. The church is granted “with all its tithes... and the land of two ploughs, one in Sporle and the other in Mileham; and wood for building and fuel and pasture everywhere for their flocks with his own...”

Alan fitz Flaald had been invested by King Henry I of England with the barony and honour of Mileham in Norfolk, then in the king's hands, very soon after Henry's accession to the throne in 1100. At the great court held at Windsor on 3 September 1101, Alan witnessed two charters for Norwich Cathedral Priory, one of which confirmed his previous donation of the church and tithes of Langham within the honour of Mileham. In about 1103 the king granted the hereditary Sheriffdom of Shropshire to Alan fitz Flaald.

Alan's grant of the church of Sporle to the Abbey of St Florent was witnessed by, among others, two lay persons called Rivallon, one being *Rivallonus monachorum famulus* and the other being *Rivallonus Extraneus*. The *monachorum famulus* was a servant of the monks. *Extraneus*, literally “the stranger” or “the outsider”, can mean “not of the blood” or “of half blood”, possibly the offspring of a second or subsequent marriage. In this context it may mean simply the Rivallon who, to distinguish him from the other Rivallon, is “not a member of the community”. But, since the name, in its Anglo-French form “Le Strange” stuck for all future

generations, *Extraneus* looks like an identifier of wider significance. Could it mean, with reference to the man's history, "who no longer belongs to the community"? The question is asked because it is generally assumed that *Rivallonus Extraneus* is the same Rivallon who was accepted into the community in 1076—1080 at the time of the Mezuoit bakery grant.

The presence of Rivallon *Extraneus* would be particularly appropriate if he were both a kinsman of the donor and a lay associate of the community.

### ***The Le Strange Family***

Apparently Rivallon *Extraneus* had left the monks of Mezuoit, near Dol, and moved from Brittany to Mileham near Norfolk to join Alan fitz Flaald and his family about 1112 and probably remained there. Rivallon *Extraneus* became the Anglo-French name "Roland Le Strange".

It was after the Sporle grant by his kinsman that Roland Le Strange was personally favoured by King Henry I: he made a prestigious marriage with Maud (Matilda) Le Brun, eventual heiress of Hunstanton Manor, Norfolk from her father Ralph fitz Herluin de Hunstanton, a Domesday tenant. Roland's marriage took place, it seems, between 1122 and 1131. The first son of the marriage, Johannes *Extraneus*, John Le Strange I, was born in 1132. There followed a line of John Le Stranges.

There is a deed in the Muniments Room at Hunstanton Hall executed by John Le Strange IV, before he died in 1275, which offers proof that Roland was an ancestor of four successive John Le Stranges, the first of whom appears in public life as early as 1155, so that, as Eyton points out, Roland Le Strange must have lived at least as early as the reign of Henry I. This tends to support the line of descent from the Stewards of Dol outlined above.

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