

# WELSH CASTLE BUILDERS

THE SAVOYARD STYLE



JOHN  
MARSHALL

The Edwardian castles of north Wales were built by a Savoyard master mason, but also by many other artisans from Savoy. What is more extraordinary, is that the constables of Flint, Rhuddlan, Conwy and Harlech were also Savoyards, the Justiciar and Deputy Justiciar at Caernarfon were Savoyards and the head of the English army leading the relief of the sieges of Flint and Rhuddlan was a future Count of Savoy. The explanatory story is fundamentally of two men, the builder of castles, Master James of St George and Justiciar Sir Orthon de Grandson, and the relationship of these two men with King Edward I. But it is also the story of many others, a story that begins with the marriage of Alianor de Provence to Edward's father, Henry III, and the influx of her kinsmen to England, such as Pierre de Savoie.

It is impossible to understand the development of the castles in north Wales without an understanding of the Savoyards, where they came from and their impact on English and Welsh history. The defining work of Arnold Taylor in exploring the Savoyard history of Welsh castles is now many years past, and mostly out of print, it is time for the story to be revisited and expanded upon, in the light of new evidence.



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## The Savoyard Style

John Marshall



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# Abbreviations

## Archives

ACV	Archives cantonales vaudoises, Lausanne, Switzerland
ADI	Archives départementales de l'Isère, Grenoble, France
ADS	Archives départementales de la Savoie, Chambéry, France
AST	Archivio di Stato di Torino, Italy
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
CAC	Calendar of Ancient Correspondence Concerning Wales
CFR	Calendar of Fine Rolls
CPR	Calendar of Patent Rolls
CCR	Calendar of Close Rolls
CChR	Calendar of Charter Rolls
CChW	Calendar of Chancery Warrants
CWR	Calendar of Welsh Rolls.
LF	Liber Feodorum (Book of Fees (Fiefs))
RG	Rôles Gascons
TNA	The National Archives of the UK (TNA)

## Collected and Published Primary Sources

<i>Fœdera</i>	Thomas Rymer. 1816. <i>Fœdera, Conventiones, Litteræ, et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica Inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosvis Imperatores, Reges, Pontifices, bel Communitates</i> . Volume 1, London.
<i>La Finanza Sabauda</i>	Mario Chiaudano. 1933–7. <i>La Finanza Sabauda nel XIII sec.</i> 3 Vols Turin. Biblioteca Della Società Storica Subalpina.
Prests	E. B. Fryde. 1962. <i>Book of prests of the King's Wardrobe for 1294–5</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Wurstemberger	J. Ludwig Wurstemberger. 1856–9. <i>Peter der Zweite, Graf von Savoyen, Markgraf in Italien, Sein Haus und Seine Lande</i> . Vols 1–4. Berne: Stämpfle.

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- Giraldus Cambrensis* *Giraldus Cambrensis*, 1146?–1223?, George F. (George Frederic) Warner, James Francis Dimock, and John Sherren Brewer. *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*. London: Longman & co.; [etc., etc.], 1861–91.
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## A Note on Names

It was normal in previous years to anglicize the names of people and places of other lands for English-speaking readers, thus Welsh Dafydd became David and francophone Jacques became James; similarly place names like Conwy became Conway and Caernarfon became Carnarvon. In deference to the people involved in this story and modern readers who are by now more used to place names expressed in local languages, we will use names, as far as is reasonably possible, with which they would have self-identified, that is called themselves. The main protagonist of the story is known today in the UK as Master James of St George, but he is referred to in thirteenth-century English primary sources (when not done so in Latin) by the name of his mother tongue, Mestre Jakes de Seint George. Therefore, we will use the closest thing we have to *Mestre Jakes de Seint George*, the name he himself used, the modern French rendering of Maître Jacques de Saint Georges. Accordingly, Edward's right-hand man, rendered variously in English as Otto de Grandson and Otto de Grandisono will be restored to his francophone Othon de Grandson, his brother from William of Grandison to Guillaume de Grandson, John of Bonvillars to Jean de Bonvillars, William of Cicon to Guillaume de Cicon, Peter of Savoy to Pierre de Savoie and so on. Similarly, with Eleanor de Provence we will use the Provençal form of her name which she herself used in correspondence, Alianor. Similarly for Eleanor de Castile we will use the Castilian Leonor for Eleanor – if only to better distinguish all these Eleanors.

For place names, particularly relevant in Wales, will use Welsh names, not anglicized versions. When quoting directly from previous authors who used anglicized or latinized versions of these names we will quote the authors directly.

## A Note on Money

The main money in use in Savoy, France and the British Isles, and so the substance of this book was *livre*, *sol* and *denari*, varying in value by the issuing mints' silver content. In Latin this would be expressed as *libra*, *solidus* and *denarius*, rendered in French as *livre*, *sou*, *denier* and lastly rendered into English as pounds, shillings and pence – shortened in all three languages as l, s and d.

- No *libra*, *livre*, pound or *solidus*, *sou* or shilling coins were ever issued, they were simply a convenient accounting form.
- There were twelve (12) *denarius*, *denier* or pence in one (1) *solidus*, *sou* or *shilling*.
- There were twenty (20) *solidus*, *sou* or shillings in one (1) *libra*, *livre* or pound.
- And so, there were 240 *denarius*, *denier* or pence in one (1) *libra*, *livre* or pound.
- A further accounting form in use in England was the mark which represented two-thirds of a pound, and so thirteen (13) shillings and four (4) pence or 160 pence.

To help, on occasion, to give some meaning to quoted numbers, we have used the UK National Archives Currency converter. This has been done as a helpful guide and is in no way intended to be a statement of fact. The converter can be found online at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/), hereinafter abbreviated as TNA currency converter.

Medieval scribes, both in England and Savoy, expressed numbers, such as money, in Roman Numerals. However, we should note that they usually broke the “iv” rule, using *iiii* instead. Furthermore the last *i* is often rendered as a *j* to make numbers easier to read, hence four would be rendered as *iiij*. You will see numerous examples of this in the latin original texts, found most usually in the endnotes and appendices of this book.

## Without Whose Help ...

A stranger in a strange land, I am indebted to the help of many in the preparation of this book. In no particular order: Jean-Luc Rosset whose patient explanation of medieval Latin, of its origins and differences from classical Latin was quite simply invaluable. Monsieur Rosset is the source of much of the Latin translation from primary sources used in the coming chapters, which revealed a good deal of the human story of the dry accounting texts.

Thanks to Justin Favrod, a notable Swiss historian himself, the current owner of the Château de Saint-Prex, for allowing access to the castle built by Jean Cotereel. It was a rare privilege to sit in a window seat that may well have been utilised by the young Maître Jacques de Saint Georges.

Thanks to France Terrier, the former director of the museum of the Château de Yverdon, for allowing a thorough examination of the donjon tower at Yverdon. It was particularly satisfying to accompany her, along with other Swiss heritage guardians, to north Wales where we visited together the castles of Flint, Conwy, Harlech and Beaumaris. The discovery at Flint of a twin for the castle of Yverdon, provided an omega to the alpha.

Thanks to Joël Berchten, intendant du château de Lucens, who along with historian, Monique Fontannaz, provided access to the private castle at Lucens, and together we discovered 'something most unusual in the attic'.

Thanks also to the helpful contributions of those at Cadw in north Wales, of Kate Roberts and Chris Wilson who guided us around the castles in their care. Particularly though, the help of Siân Roberts for her insights at Harlech, and liaison with Cadw.

Thanks to Monsieur Guy Mattrat of Vanclans, France, who assisted in finding the three remaining steps that constitute all that is left of the Château de Cicon, origin of the *Famille de Cicon*.

Thanks also to the owner of the Chateau de Grilly, Monsieur Jean-Jacques Piquet, for allowing access to his home, the origin of the *Famille de Grailly*. Also thanks to Monsieur Jean-Claude Gafner, intendant de la Cathédrale de Lausanne for providing access to the renowned western porch window and the cathedral's *triforium*. Also, thanks to Chris George and Mireille Rosselet-Capt for their help with Welsh forms, literature and mythology.

Thanks to my son, Sean, for spending his holidays in Switzerland delving deep into the byways to seek out long-gone castles in the undergrowth, and for adding his own insight to the developing story. Neither of us had any thought of this book, when visiting Conwy Castle, as we'd done many times previously, in 2014. Which

brings me to a thank-you to my late father, who was responsible more than most for my interest in history, and a first visit to the castles of north Wales back in 1968, when aged just four years I first set eyes upon Rhuddlan Castle.

And lastly, and mostly, thanks to my partner, Mary-Claude Dennler, without whose many hours of patience and fortitude trekking the wilds of the Viennois, the archives in Lausanne, Chambéry, Grenoble, and Kew, and castles too numerous to mention, this book would simply not have been possible. Her particular help in trying to make sense of Old French texts should be noted.

# Notable Savoyards in England

## The Comital Family

### *Pierre II de Savoie (1203–68), Count of Savoy*

The seventh son of Count Thomas I de Savoie and Marguerite de Genève, uncle to Queen Alianor de Provence of England and so great-uncle to King Edward I of England. He was likely born in Susa. In January 1236, Alianor de Provence, Pierre's niece, married King Henry III of England. On 20 April 1240, Peter was given the Honour of Richmond by Henry III who invited him to England about the end of the year, and knighted him on 5 January 1241 when he became known popularly as Earl of Richmond, although he never assumed the title of earl, nor was it ever given to him in official documents. From 1241–2 he was Castellan of Dover Castle and Keeper of the Coast. In February 1246 he was granted land between the Strand and the Thames, where Peter built the Savoy Palace in 1263, on the site of the present Savoy Hotel. It was destroyed during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. When Pierre's nephew, Count Boniface of Savoy, died without heirs in 1263, he became Count of Savoy and largely withdrew from English affairs.

### *Alianor de Provence (1223–4–25 June 1291), Queen of England*

The sister of Marguerite de Provence, Queen of France, Sanchia de Provence, Queen of the Romans and Béatrice de Provence, Queen of Naples. Born in Aix-en-Provence or Brignoles, she was the second daughter of Ramon Berenguer V, Count of Provence (1198–1245) and Béatrice de Savoie (1198–1267), the daughter of Thomas I de Savoie and his wife Marguerite de Genève. She was well educated as a child, and developed a strong love of reading. Her three sisters also married kings. Like her mother, grandmother and sisters, Alianor was renowned for her beauty. She was a dark-haired brunette with fine eyes. Although she was completely devoted to her husband, and staunchly defended him against the rebel Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester, she was disliked by the Londoners. Responsible for introducing many Savoyards to the English court.

### *Sanchia de Provence (1225–9 November 1261), Queen of the Romans*

A sister to Queen Alianor de Provence of England, sister-in-law of King Henry III of England and King Louis IX of France, aunt to King Edward I of England, wife to 1st Earl Richard of Cornwall, King of the Romans.

*Guillaume de Savoie (unknown–1239), Bishop Elect of Valence*

A son of Thomas I de Savoie and Marguerite de Genève, another uncle of Queen Alianor de Provence of England and so great-uncle to King Edward I of England. When already a Dean of Vienne, he was elected Bishop of Valence in 1224. He negotiated the weddings of Queens Marguerite and Alianor de Provence and was an adviser to Henry III of England. Between his religious roles and his family relations, his influence was noted from London to Rome.

*Boniface de Savoie (1217–18 July 1270), Archbishop of Canterbury*

A son of Thomas I de Savoie and Marguerite de Genève, yet another uncle of Queen Alianor de Provence of England and so great-uncle of King Edward I of England. He is not to be confused with his nephew, and fellow member of the House of Savoy, Count Boniface de Savoie, the son of Amédée IV. Boniface was the Prior of Nantua in 1232 along with holding the bishopric of Belley in Savoy. After the marriage of his niece, Alianor de Provence, to King Henry III of England, Henry attempted to have Boniface elected Bishop of Winchester, but was unable to get the cathedral chapter to elect Boniface. On 1 February 1241, he was nominated to the see of Canterbury, and was enthroned at Canterbury Cathedral on 1 November 1249. He clashed with his bishops, with his nephew-by-marriage, and with the papacy, but managed to eliminate the archiepiscopal debt which he had inherited on taking office. During Simon de Montfort's struggle with King Henry, Boniface initially helped Montfort's cause, but later supported the king. After his death in Savoy, his tomb became the object of a cult, and he was eventually beatified in 1839.

*Philippe I de Savoie (1207–16 August 1285), Archbishop of Lyon then Count of Savoy*

The eighth son of Thomas I de Savoie and Marguerite de Genève, once more, another uncle of Queen Alianor de Provence of England and so great-uncle of King Edward I of England. Philippe was born in Aiguebelle in Savoy. His family prepared him for a clerical career. He followed his brother Guillaume as Dean of Vienne and Bishop elect of Valence. In 1244, Pope Innocent IV fled from Rome, and Philip convinced his brother, Amédée IV, Count of Savoy, to let the Pope pass through Savoy. Philippe escorted the Pope to Lyon, and then remained with him to ensure his safety. Pope Innocent ensured Philippe's election as Archbishop of Lyon in 1245. When, against expectations, Philippe became the next heir for the County of Savoy, he gave his church offices up and married Adelaide, Countess Palatine de Bourgogne, on 12 June 1267. He became Count of Savoy in 1268, and in 1272 he also acquired Bresse.

*Amédée V de Savoie (4 September 1249–16 October 1323), Count of Savoy*

A son of Thomas, Count of Flanders, and household knight of King Edward I of England. Married to Sibylle de Baugé, bringing Bresse into Savoy. With the English army at Montgomery in 1277 in the First Welsh War before leading the

English army that relieved the siege of Rhuddlan in 1282 in the Second Welsh War. A son, Edward, born in 1284 and named after Edward I of England, would go on to be Conte Edward de Savoie in 1323.

*Louis I de Vaud (1249–1302), Baron de Vaud*

Son of Thomas, Count of Flanders, and household knight of King Edward I of England and Dean of St Martin Le Grand in London. His barony was created at the time of the succession of his brother Amédée V as Count of Savoy with the help of Queen Alianor de Provence of England and King Edward I of England.

## Savoyard Knights

*Sir Othon de Grandson (1238–1328), Seigneur de Grandson*

Othon was the most prominent of the Savoyard knights in the service of Edward I, King of England. He was a close personal friend of Edward, a career diplomat and envoy of the Crown. The son of Pierre, Lord of Grandson, the young Othon travelled to England, probably in the company of Pierre II de Savoie around 1252, certainly not later than 1265. There he entered the service of King Henry III and by 1267 was placed in the household of the Lord Edward. By 1267 he had been knighted, and in 1271, he accompanied his lord on the Ninth Crusade, where he served at Acre. Returning to England, he was a key household knight of King Edward I in his campaigns in Scotland and Wales, where he served as Justiciar of North Wales, based at Caernarfon Castle from 1284 to 1294. In 1278 he was served as Lieutenant of Gascony, along with Robert Burnell, Bishop of Bath and Wells, hiring Jean de Grailly as Seneschal and laying the foundations of the Treaty of Amiens (1279) which returned the Saintonge and Agenais to the Crown. During the second invasion of Wales in 1282–3, he narrowly escaped death at the battle of Moel-y-don before, in April 1283, taking the town of Harlech at the head of 560 infantry. He was appointed governor of the Channel Islands and in 1290 appointed a bailiff for each of the bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey, giving them civil powers to administer the islands.

*Sir Jean de Bonvillars (Unknown–1287), Constable of Harlech Castle*

Likely son of Sir Henri de Bonvillars, châtelain for Pierre II de Savoie at the Château de Rue. He was brother-in-law to Othon de Grandson. Knight of King Edward I's household and deputy Justicier of North Wales to Othon de Grandson from 1284 to 1287. On 2 April 1277, he was bearer of a letter to Othon de Grandson who was besieging Dolforwyn Castle. He was at Chester in September 1277. Revisited Savoy in 1278, was at Evian on 22 March 1279. With Othon de Grandson in Wales in 1282 when latter was commanding forces based on Montgomery. In 1283 he was sent to Wales, in 1284 he was described as Othon de Grandson's Knight Companion. He oversaw the construction of Conwy Castle. Constable of Harlech Castle from 1285 to his death by drowning, probably during siege of

Dryslwyn in south Wales, between July and November 1287. Married to Agnès de Bevillard (likely sister of Othon de Grandson) who held on to the Constable of Harlech role until succeeded by Maître Jacques de Saint Georges in 1290.

*Sir Guillaume de Cicon (Unknown–1310–11), Constable of Conwy Castle*

From Cicon near Vanclans, fifteen miles (twenty-four kilometres) north of Pontarlier in the Jura. Introduced to King Edwards service by Othon de Grandson. First mentioned 13 November 1276 when he came to England with a message from Othon de Grandson to King Edward I. With the army in south Wales in 1277. Constable of Rhuddlan Castle between February 1282 and May 1284 including the period of the Siege of Rhuddlan. First Constable of Conwy Castle from its construction until his death in 1310 or 1311.

*Sir Pierre de Champvent (Unknown–circa 1303), Steward to King Henry III and Chamberlain of the Royal Household to Edward I*

Son of Henri de Champvent and Helviz, brother of Guillaume and Othon de Champvent, both Bishops of Lausanne, a cousin of Othon de Grandson. Steward to King Henry III, he was knighted in 1259, serving as a knight of the royal household, then in 1269 Sheriff of Gloucestershire and Constable of Gloucester Castle. Later under Edward I he was again a steward before becoming a chamberlain of the Royal Household to King Edward I. Fought in the Welsh wars, and later in Scotland.

*Sir Gerard de St Laurent (Unknown–1282), Constable of Flint Castle*

With King Edward I and Othon de Grandson on crusade, in Acre from 1271 to 1272. One of King Edward I's inner circle. Fought in the First Welsh War. First Constable of Flint Castle from 1277 to 1281. Died in 1282 possibly in the Welsh attack on the castle. Had been in Chillon during the 1260s.

*Sir Jean de Grailly (Unknown–1301), Seneschal of Gascony*

Jean was born at Grilly near Gex on the shores of Lac Léman in the County of Savoy. He probably travelled to England during the reign of Henry III of England in the entourage of Pierre II de Savoie. In 1262, he was already a knight in the household of Prince Edward, the king's heir and future King Edward I of England. In 1263, he had attained the status of a counsellor to the young prince. He was made Edward's Seneschal in Gascony from 1278. In 1279, Jean travelled to Amiens and to England to negotiate the Treaty of Amiens, which ended the state of war between Edward of England and Philip III of France and returned the Agenais to English control. Jean de Grailly eventually fell short of funds for his activities, since his expenses need approval from the Exchequer before he could receive his salary. He took to exploitation and illegal exactions from the peasants, whose complaints eventually reached the ears of Edward I. He was removed from office sometime between June 1286 and Spring 1287. Led a French force alongside the English led by Othon de Grandson at the Fall of Acre in 1291.

*Jean Cosyn (possibly de Gofyn or Gousyn or de Grandson), Squire*

A *cosyn* or cousin of Othon de Grandson, he was a squire in the service of King Edward I of England, assigned in 1283 as being jointly responsible for Harlech during early construction and prior to the appointment of its first Constable, Jean de Bonvillars. Noted again in 1304.

*Ebal II de Mont (circa 1230–68), Constable of Windsor Castle*

Born as a younger son of Ebal I de Mont and his wife, Béatrice, Ebal II was first noted in 1237. Better known in English records as Ebulo de Montibus, Ebal II de Mont had travelled to England by 1246. A household steward and knight of King Henry III of England granted much land in England. By 1256 he was part of the Savoyard circle of the Lord Edward (possibly steward), later King Edward I. A witness for King Henry at the Mise of Amiens, where he swore for the king's good conduct in accepting King Louis XIV's arbitration. Left England with Queen Alianor and Pierre II de Savoie and active in attempting to raise an army loyal to the Crown. Rewarded for his loyalty by being made Constable of Windsor Castle.

*Ebal IV de Mont (unknown – circa 1317), Constable of Stirling and Edinburgh castles*

Son of Ebal II de Mont and Joan de Bohun, a Savoyard servant of King Henry III of England, whose family hailed from Mont-sur-Rolle in the Pays de Vaud above Lac Lemán. Ebal II had been latterly the Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle from 1266. Ebal IV began as a squire in the service of King Edward I of England, assigned with Jean Cosyn de Grandson as being jointly responsible for Harlech from 1283, during early construction and prior to the appointment of its first Constable, Jean de Bonvillars. He was close to Leonor de Castile, married Lady Elizabeth de Clinton possibly through her intervention. Fought in Scotland in 1300 and obtained land there. Later he became Constable of Stirling and Edinburgh castles.

*Pierre d'Estavayer (unknown–1322), Lord of Tipperary*

Nephew of Othon de Grandson, in the service of King Edward I as a household knight. Given the Lordship of Tipperary in 1290 by his uncle with whom he served at Acre in 1291. His brother, Guillaume d'Estavayer, became Archdeacon of Lincoln in 1290.

*Sir Arnold de Montagny*

Another kinsman of Othon de Grandson in the service of the English crown.

## Savoyard Clerics

*Pierre d'Aigueblanche (Unknown–1268), Keeper of the Wardrobe then Bishop of Hereford*

Born at Aigueblanche, of the *famille de Briançon*, Lords of Aigueblanche, in Savoy, he was initially a clerk to Guillaume de Savoie and came to England with the wedding party of Alianor de Provence. He entered the service of King Henry III,

becoming first Keeper of the Wardrobe in February 1240 then Bishop of Hereford in 1241. As a diplomat and envoy, he was in regular employment by the English crown, he helped to arrange the marriage of Earl Richard of Cornwall to Sanchia de Provence and later the Lord Edward to Leonor of Castile. He became embroiled in King Henry's attempts to acquire the kingdom of Sicily for Henry's son Edmund. During the anti-Savoyard period of the Second Barons' War, he was arrested briefly in 1263 by the said barons, before being mostly restored to his lands after the Battle of Evesham.

*Guillaume de Champvent (circa 1239–1301), Bishop of Lausanne*

Son of Henri de Champvent and Helviz, brother of Pierre de Champvent, in the household of both King Henry III and Edward I of England, also brother of Othon de Champvent, also Bishop of Lausanne.

*Gerard de Vuippens (circa 1260–5–17 March 1325), Bishop of Lausanne*

Son of Ulrich de Vuippens and Agnès de Grandson, sister of Othon de Grandson, he was accordingly his nephew. Moved to England to become firstly a sub-deacon at the Priory of St Leonard in Stamford, then a pastor at Greystoke in Cumberland. He went on to become a sub-deacon in Richmond and canon at York before taking on a key diplomatic role with King Edward I during the difficult negotiations with King Philippe IV of France over Gascony. Left England to become firstly Bishop of Lausanne from 1301 until 1309 when he moved on to become the Bishop of Basel until his death in 1325.

## **Savoyard Builders, Masons and Artisans**

*Maître Jacques de Saint Georges, Master of the King's Works in Wales*

He is documented as the son of a Master stonemason, Jean, very likely to be identified as Jean Cotereel, the master of works for the Cathedral of Lausanne and town of Saint-Prex. His recorded work in Savoy includes castles at Yverdon, Voiron, La-Côte-Saint-André, Saint-Laurent-du-Pont and Saint-Georges-d'Espéranche in addition to works at Romont, Gümmenen, Salins, Châtel Argent, Montmelian and likely Chillon. But his worldwide renown is a product of the work he carried out in north Wales for King Edward I of England, the UNESCO-listed castles of Caernarfon, Harlech, Conwy and Beaumaris, plus Aberystwyth, Flint and Rhuddlan and amongst other likely works at Caergwrle, Denbigh, Dolywyddelan and Criccieth. He came to England with his wife Ambrosia, where they were later joined by their likely son, Giles.

*Master Giles de Saint Georges*

He is likely the son of Maître Jacques de Saint Georges and Ambrosia, noted as building the Tower at Saxon for Count Philippe I de Savoie before moving to England and being recorded at Aberystwyth and Harlech.

### *Tassin de Saint Georges*

He is also a likely son of Maître Jacques de Saint Georges and Ambrosia, also noted as building, with his brother, the Tower at Saxon for Count Philippe I de Savoie, but unlike his brother remained in Savoy. A stonemason he is noted for works at Falavier, Treffort and Saint-André amongst others.

### *Jean Francis*

A stonemason, but never described as a master mason, he is first recorded as working for Jean de Mézos at Conthey and Saillon both for Pierre de Savoie, also likely at Brignon as part of the same works. He is later noted as working again for, the now Count Pierre II de Savoie at Chillon, before moving to England. Working for Maître Jacques de Saint Georges, he is recorded at Conwy, where he built the Mill Gate of the castle walls, before last being recorded at Beaumaris, a career of spanning some forty years. It is most likely the affinity of Conwy's town walls with those at Saillon that is attributable to Jean Francis.

### *Adam Boynard*

He is first noted as 'Beynardus, King of the Ribalds' at Saxon, working for Giles and Tassin de Saint-George before moving to Wales and working for Maître Jacques de Saint Georges at Harlech. He stayed in Harlech, becoming a burgess of the town, before enduring the siege of 1294 during the Madog rebellion.

### *Albert de Menz*

A stonemason, likely from Le Mintset formerly Menze near Martigny-Combe in Valais, not far from La Bâtiatz. He is recorded as building a number of features at Harlech, including a chimney and window mullions.

### *Guillaume Seyssel*

A mason, almost certainly from the town of Seyssel on the Rhône between Geneva and the Lac du Bourget, recorded as working at Conwy alongside Jean Francis.

### *Gillot de Chalons*

A mason, his likely origin would either be Chalon-sur-Saône in the Franche-Comté (in the late thirteenth century a part of Savoy) or more likely Chalon, Isère, just eighteen miles (twenty-nine kilometres) south-west of Saint-Georges-d'Espéranche in the Viennois. He most likely worked at Rhuddlan, where a tower carried his name for a while, before moving on to Conwy.

### *Stephen the Painter*

A painter of English or Savoyard origins, he is noted as carrying out various assignments in Savoy and England. Notably at Chillon and Saint-Laurent-du-Pont in Savoy and later in Wales, the King's Chamber at Rhuddlan Castle. His

work is undocumented at Chillon but survives, his work is documented at Saint-Laurent-du-Pont and Rhuddlan but does not survive.

*Guy de Vercors*

A stonemason from the Vercors Massif above Grenoble, in what was the Dauphiné adjacent to Savoy. He is recorded as working alongside Maître Jacques de Saint Georges at both Montmelian and Saint-Georges-d'Espéranche before moving to Wales and being recorded as working again at Rhuddlan.

*Jean Picard*

A stonemason recorded as working at Conwy, his family name remains a common one to this day in the Pays de Vaud.

*Master Manasser de Vaucoulers*

Not a Savoyard, but one who found employment in England as a result of links with Geoffrey de Geneville. He is recorded as working at Caergwrle with Maître Jacques de Saint Georges before going on to be responsible for the castle ditch at Caernarfon, where he became a town bailiff.

## Prologue

**I**t was a cold November morning in the year of our Lord 1307 as an old man walked along the hillside, making his way past the grazing sheep toward a hilltop from which he could take in the view. Stumbling a little, he arrived at the crest and rested upon his walking stick; the cold wind was blowing in from the Irish Sea once more. He looked out at the vista before him, to his right he could see the estuary of the River Dee, behind it the Wirral peninsula where he'd heard that the Vikings had made their home centuries before. The cold Irish Sea wind blew hard against the old man's face as he surveyed the horizon. On a clear day he could see for thirty miles, but today was grey and the clouds scudded in from the murky sea. Turning to his left, he knew, behind these foothills that were now his, lay the wilds of Snowdonia. The old man closed his eyes and memories began to flood back like water overflowing a cup. Sure, these Welsh mountains could be fearsome indeed, but he remembered the view from the Petit Saint-Bernard, as the Tarentaise and Savoy and the Viennois lay open toward the horizon, over 7,000 feet below. He pursed his lips; he could still taste the wine of the Viennois and the warm breezes coming up the Rhône. Memories of the lakes and mountains of his early years, these Welsh hills had become his home now, but he smiled to himself when he remembered his real home. For the old man was not Welsh, or even English; the old man was from far-off Alpine Savoy. He remembered the hills, the mountains, the Great Lake ... ah, the Great Lake, he'd worked on a castle there once. A marvellous, beautiful castle by the Great Lake, the castle at Chillon. He smiled to himself at the thought, of how building castles had brought him so far from home.

For the old man was none other than Jacques de Saint-Georges, Maître Jacques de Saint Georges, the English had called him. He chuckled to himself at how these Norman English mangled his language, but they had paid him well and given him a blank canvas upon which to paint the dreams he'd had as a young man back in distant Savoy where it all began. As he turned his back to the north-westerly wind, he made his way back to the Manor House at Mostyn, given to him by his friend, and began to turn his thoughts back to the beginnings of his long journey to north Wales.

As the old man settled by the warming fire, he reflected that he was all alone now; his one-time patron, King Edward, had passed away, his good friend from Savoy, the knight Othon de Grandson, had lately returned to his lands, and sadly, so sadly, his loving wife Ambrosia had passed.

Thoughts turned to the day, to events, that had brought him so far, and the meeting that had brought them together, that beautiful day in southern France, in the year of Our Lord 1273. The trumpets blew and the heralds cried for the arrival of visitors from afar, on their way home from taking the Cross and Crusade ... what a time it was.

## Chapter One

This story will be of Welsh Castle Builders: The Savoyard Style, for the old man was from the County of Savoy. But where and what is Savoy, it's not easy to find on the map, many have written of it as French, or Italian, or Swiss, but it is none of these, it is Savoy.

The County of Savoy had grown from the wreckage of a number of post Roman Empire kingdoms that had established their rule of the mountainous lands of the Jura and Alps. Originally the Franks had dominated, conquering the First Kingdom of Burgundy in 534 only to see what had become by then the Carolingian Empire divided into three by the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The westernmost kingdom would become West Francia and later still France, the easternmost kingdom ultimately the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire. But the Middle Kingdom would be Lotharingia, named after its founder. This Middle Kingdom would itself be divided north from south, and it is the southernmost lands that stretched from the Jura by way of the Alps to Provence and the azure sea which will concern us. The lower kingdom has been known by a number of names; the Kingdom of Arles, the Kingdom of Arles and Vienne, the Arelat and lastly the name we shall use, the Second Kingdom of Burgundy. Geographically it encompassed mostly the course of the River Rhône, ethnically it was a Romance kingdom, linguistically it spoke what we now call Arpitan in the mountains and a form of Occitan further south. This Second Kingdom of Burgundy remained independent until 1033 when it was absorbed into the Empire, the dying last King of Burgundy, Rudolf III, sent his crown and regalia to Konrad. It was henceforth generally accepted that the Emperor was King of three Kingdoms, of Germany, of Italy and of Burgundy. The Kingdom failed ultimately for want of a centralised state, Saracen incursion and the failure of Rudolf III to provide an heir. Into the power vacuum of the failed Second Kingdom of Burgundy strode the Savoyards.

Savoy is a land of lakes and tall mountains, towering peaks and glistening blue waters; set amidst the Alpine passes, it sits astride the ancient routes from the balmy Mediterranean lands of the classical world to the colder, darker world of the north. The name Savoy, in French *Savoie*, Italian *Savoia*, comes from the Latin *Sapaudia* – which came from a Celtic name for the *Pays de Sapins* – Land of the Fir Trees.<sup>1</sup> Mountain passes were the *raison d'être* of Savoy, the source of its wealth and therefore the very essence of its being. The Grand Saint-Bernard, the Petit Saint-Bernard, the Mont Cenis – these were the routes of pilgrims to Rome since classical antiquity, the *Via Francigena*.<sup>2</sup> The mountain passes lead, quite literally, to heaven, not so much passes as cracks in the mountain wall that separates Italy

from Europe. If you needed to travel between where men spoke French and where men spoke Italian, then you needed to travel through the lands of the Savoyards.

Savoy stretched across the Western Alps, in an arc from the Mediterranean to the Gotthard central massif of what is now Switzerland, a fief bounded by the territorially expansive Kingdom of France to the west and north-west, and by the quarrel between Holy Roman Emperors and Popes to the north, south and east. There was contrast between the fertile lands of Provence, the Rhône Valley, the Pays de Vaud and the high mountain passes covered for much of the year in snow and ice. Whatever the fertility of the land, it is noted throughout for its stunning natural beauty, vineyards producing the most wonderful wines, pasture supporting livestock in abundance; it might be said of Savoy that it encompassed a garden of Eden.

In the thirteenth century and before, the County of Savoy was a fief of the Holy Roman Empire – it was not to become a Duchy until 1310<sup>3</sup> – the empire that, in the view of Voltaire, was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire<sup>4</sup> – therefore the Count of Savoy was a vassal of the Hohenstaufen Holy Roman Emperor also King of Burgundy, but as Voltaire might have understood, that gave the Count a high degree of latitude for movement and independence. This means, for example, a Count of Savoy would be able to develop his own international foreign policy and alliances independent to a large extent of imperial policy. So, within the titular Kingdom of Burgundy, itself within the empire, emerging counties enjoyed considerable freedom. By example, Provence, to the south-west, went so far as to leave the empire in 1246, when acquired by the Angevins.<sup>5</sup>

So as we've seen Burgundy had been independent until 1033 when it was absorbed into the empire. By then it was generally accepted that the emperor was king of three kingdoms: of Germany, of Italy and of Burgundy.<sup>6</sup> Counts and Counties had grown in the declining Carolingian state. *Comes*, companions of the emperor, had been granted lands in return for service in place of paid officials and administrators – the beginnings of feudality.<sup>7</sup> So it was with Savoy; the founder of the House of Savoy was Humbert I de Savoie. He was granted lands as a reward for service, in Maurienne, the Aosta Valley and the Upper Rhône Valley (or Valais) by the emperor Konrad II when he'd inherited Burgundy in 1033.<sup>8</sup> Humbert I became the first Count of Savoy, and thus the land granted to him became the County of Savoy. These imperial grants to a loyal supporter secured key passes through the Alps, controlling trade between Italy and Western Europe, which would be the core of Savoy power for centuries.

Count Thomas I de Savoie was the Count of Savoy from 1189 until 1233. He was named for the murdered Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket. In May 1195, he gathered a group of knights and lay in wait for Marguerite de Geneva (daughter of the Count of Geneva), who was being transported to France for her forthcoming marriage to King Philippe II Auguste. Marguerite was by all accounts a beauty of some distinction, no doubt she would have to have been to embolden a Count of Savoy to attempt the kidnap of a future Queen of France. So struck so assuredly

by cupid's bow, the Count and his knights hid themselves in the Albarine Valley for the beautiful Marguerite to pass. Upon kidnap, Marguerite went willingly with the count the short distance to the little parish church at Rossilon in the Cluse de Hopitâux by the fast-flowing Furans, where the two were immediately made count and countess. Their family comprised no less than at least eight sons and two daughters, perhaps more. In order of appearance Marguerite would give birth to the boys: Amédée at Montmélian in 1197, Humbert circa 1198, Aymon circa 1200, Guillaume circa 1201, Thomas at Montmélian in 1202, Pierre at Susa in 1203, Philippe at Aiguebelle in 1207, and Boniface at the Château de Sainte-Hélène du Lac circa 1207; and the girls: Béatrice circa 1205 and Marguerite circa 1212. Giving birth to the Savoyard dynasty, was for Marguerite no doubt, a full-time occupation.

The County of Provence<sup>9</sup> bordered Count Thomas of Savoy's lands to the south; it was the fabled land of the troubadours, of wine, song and courtly love. The beauty of the landscape attracted these roving players who gave the county the title by which it was known across Europe – the Land of Song. Thomas was looking for a southern ally in his fights to secure more land in the Piedmont and to support his rivalry with the County of Albon; therefore, the marriageability of his daughter Béatrice came to the fore. The Fourteen-year-old Count of Provence, Ramon Berenguer<sup>10</sup> was bewitched by the beauty of 12-year-old Béatrice (Figure 1.0). They married not long after the betrothal, thus uniting the ruling families of Savoy and Provence.

The ongoing Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars in southern France had taken their toll on Ramon's resources, as had a growing family. It had not taken long for a family to appear, sons not surviving long, before a string of daughters was born by Béatrice for the Count of Provence: Marguerite was born in 1221, Alianor in 1223, Sanchia in 1228 and lastly Béatrice, probably in 1231.<sup>11</sup> The girls spent their childhood moving between the principle castle at Tarascon on the River Rhône, midway between Arles and Avignon, and the summer residence at Aix-en-Provence, and also at Ramon's newly built castle at Brignoles, built in the year of Alianor's birth;<sup>12</sup> daughters of such fame that Dante Alighieri would later write of them in his *The Divine Comedy: Paradise Canto IV*. Ramon and Béatrice had appointed troubadour and poet Romeo de Villeneuve as their tutor.<sup>13</sup> Dante encountered Justinian in the sphere of Mercury, who described Romeo de Villeneuve as 'the shining light' responsible for their good fortune in life, saying:

Four daughters had Count Ramon Berenguer,  
Each of them a Queen, thanks to Romeo,  
This man of lowly birth, this pilgrim soul.<sup>14, 15</sup>

With their grandmother Marguerite de Geneva, and mother Béatrice de Savoie<sup>16</sup> being noted for their charm and beauty, we can't be entirely astonished that the four daughters growing to maidenhood in the Land of Song and courtly love would become the most eligible young ladies in Christendom. Matthew Paris did

not spare the eulogies, later, in 1254, describing their mother Béatrice as Niobe and suggesting that ‘among the female sex throughout the world, no other mother could boast of such illustrious fruit of the womb as could she in her daughters’.<sup>17</sup> Not surprising then, either that very soon the crowned heads and hearts of Europe would come a calling in Provence.

Marriage with Provence brought the House of Savoy closer within the gravitational pull of one of the era’s defining struggles, that between two French families, for the soul of France, the Capetian rulers of France and Plantagenet rulers of England. The Plantagenets still held much of southern and western France. So, it would be no surprise that a King of England, Duke of Aquitaine might seek the hand of a Provençal lady. For, King Henry III of England, the prize would be the second-eldest daughter, Alianor. The negotiations began in June 1235, not so much with the Count of Provence, but also with two of the uncles of the bride,<sup>18</sup> Amédée and Guillaume de Savoie.<sup>19</sup> Henry reminded them that earlier his father John had been betrothed to a lady of the House of Savoy, Alais, daughter of Humbert III in 1173.<sup>20</sup> Now was a time to begin the alliance of England and Savoy anew – an alliance of mutual interest against the strength of the expansionist Capetian regime,<sup>21</sup> confirmed by letters of 22 June 1235.

And so it was that the County of Savoy became linked with the Kingdom of England, when the beautiful young Alianor became betrothed to Henry. Alianor was crowned amid much pomp and circumstance at Westminster Abbey on 20 January 1236.<sup>22</sup> England had once more a King Henry and a Queen Eleanor on the throne. Matthew Paris, related a dazzling ceremony of ‘nuptial festivities’ of ‘flags and banners’ and ‘wonderful devices’, of citizens ‘dressed out in their ornaments’ and of a ‘splendid ceremony’,<sup>23</sup> the choir singing *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus, Christus imperat*, imploring the Almighty to give good health and long life to the Queen of the English.<sup>24</sup>

Soon England was rejoicing in the birth of a son to King Henry and Queen Alianor – that thing to which all monarchies of the time aspired above all others – a royal baby, an heir, born on the night of 17 June 1239.<sup>25</sup> The young prince was to be the first King of England since 1065 to carry an English name, named for the saintly penultimate Anglo-Saxon King of England, Edward the Confessor. Perhaps we shouldn’t be entirely surprised by Henry’s veneration of Edward, obviously because they shared a sincere piety, but also because Henry was the first English king since Edward’s time to be raised exclusively in England.<sup>26</sup> Edward would be a break with the recent past for the French-speaking Anglo-Norman Plantagenets – harking back to an earlier age, an English King of England, a new Arthur.

Firstly, Alianor had brought her uncle, Guillaume de Savoie, to London;<sup>27</sup> he’d been heavily involved in arranging her marriage to Henry and had become his chief counsellor.<sup>28</sup> But Guillaume had died, probably murdered whilst away in Rome.<sup>29</sup> Then Henry had managed to get another uncle, Boniface de Savoie, raised to the see of Canterbury. But it would be a visit by a further uncle, Thomas,

Count of Flanders, that would be the catalyst in bringing the greatest Savoyard influence to London: yet another uncle, Pierre de Savoie.

Pierre de Savoie, lately struggling with matters in Savoy,<sup>30</sup> had indeed been distracted, as Eugene Cox said, by riches elsewhere. Much before Boniface had been confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury or even set foot in England, Pierre had responded to his brother Thomas, Count of Flanders' advice that preferment awaited in England for those Savoyards prepared to serve King Henry – the famous chronicler Paris disapproved.<sup>31</sup>

Henry's benevolence toward his uncle soon flowed, too freely for Matthew Paris to abide happily in St. Albans. Pierre received from Henry the Honour of Richmond,<sup>32</sup> an 'Honour' being a lucrative collective estate, but wisely did not use the title Earl for himself.<sup>33</sup> In time many more garlands would be hung around the neck of the queen's uncle, amongst the most lucrative being the Honour of the Eagle, the lands of Lewes, Pevensey and Hastings on England's strategic south coast. There would be a palace too, Henry granting Pierre land by the Strand, where the name lives on as the Savoy Hotel. Richmond had previously been held by his late brother Guillaume, so this was perhaps merely keeping it in the family. The Honour of Richmond comprised a vast and wealthy landholding of 199 manors in 1086, centred upon the 'good castle, fair and strong' built by the Breton, Alan Rufus, on land granted to him by William the Conqueror.<sup>34</sup> The land was centred on a goodly portion of what is now North Yorkshire, called Richmondshire, with the castle of Richmond at its heart, but also valuable land scattered across the length and breadth of eastern England, in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>35</sup> The Honour of Richmond was worth some £1,200<sup>36</sup> annually to Pierre de Savoie; in modern terms that's £875,000.<sup>37</sup> An example of how the interests of the Savoyard brothers might line up can be found in the port of Boston in Lincolnshire: it was attached to the Honour of Richmond by what was known as the Richmond Fee. By the time of Pierre's acquisition of the honour, Boston was handling over a third of England's wool exports, much of it from Yorkshire estates including Pierre's, to destinations such as Flanders. The Count of Flanders had been, since 1237, Pierre's brother Thomas, and since 1239 Thomas had recognized Henry as his suzerain. Around a quarter of Pierre's entire Honour of Richmond income came from Boston, some £333 or nearly a quarter of a million pounds in today's terms.<sup>38</sup> So we have wool grown on Savoyard estates shipped through a Savoyard port to a Savoyard land to be woven into expensive tapestries and sell throughout Europe – good business!

Pierre de Savoie used his influence and status in England to grow his influence and status in Savoy, especially his landholding and number of subject vassals. Pierre went on to widen his net of vassalage to encompass many families of the Pays de Vaud.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most important to our story will be the *famille de Grandson*; the castle at Grandson lay toward the southernmost point of Lac Neuchâtel, on the northern bank, in the shadow of the Jura. The castle itself had been constructed

on a rectangular ridge of glacial moraine overlooking the lake. Ebal IV had been Lord of Grandson until his death in 1235; his fief also included Belmont and La Sarraz. He had been granted the lands by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa 'to build in the territory of the Noires-Joux, houses, villages, villages and castles, without any other reserve than that of immediate suzerainty of the empire'.<sup>40</sup> Ebal had divided his lands amongst his first three sons,<sup>41</sup> Henri receiving Champvent (only five miles from Grandson), Girard getting La Sarraz and finally Pierre inheriting Grandson itself. Pierre de Grandson and Henri de Champvent had been friends of Pierre de Savoie (with his links to England) since at least 1234 and had both acted on his behalf in the region.<sup>42</sup> Cousins would be born in the castles of Champvent and Grandson, whom Pierre de Savoie would take to England and all would play a key part in the service of the English crown, Othon son of Pierre<sup>43</sup> and Pierre son of Henri.<sup>44</sup> We're not certain of Othon's date of birth, but Swiss academics have speculated with some accuracy the year 1238 or soon thereafter,<sup>45</sup> making him around the same age as England's Prince Edward.<sup>46</sup>

And so the two young cousins, Othon de Grandson and Pierre de Champvent, travelled the road northward through the Jura and Burgundy to England and fortune, very soon after their fathers became vassals of Pierre de Savoie. The move followed Pierre's usual *modus operandi* of extending his influence in the Pays de Vaud: approaching a family in need of money and protection with the offer of same in return for becoming his vassal. Part of the deal would be the chance for the new vassals' children to enjoy advancement in England, using Pierre's royal patronage. This acquisition of allodial<sup>47</sup> tenure as a means of extended fiefdom began in France during the tenth century, spread south of the Loire in the eleventh and would now be practised by the Savoyard in Vaud.<sup>48</sup>

Bernard Andenmatten describes this acquisition of Vaudoise nobility as vassals of Savoy as solving 'the problems of a small aristocracy badly in need of money.'<sup>49</sup>,<sup>50</sup> The Savoyards were growing rich and influential through their possession of the alpine passes, but the nobles of Vaud lacked this advantage. David Carpenter had estimated that between 1236 and 1272 lands in England were granted to thirty-nine Savoyards, and additionally forty received money pensions, but more plausibly Swiss historian Jean-Pierre Chapuisat, recorded more than 300 names enjoying English largesse;<sup>51</sup> Pierre often took with him the second-eldest male child, those who would not inherit being a perennial problem in the days of primogeniture.

A good example would be young Ebal II de Mont, second son of Ebal I de Mont and his wife Béatrice who held the castle at Mont-le-Grand,<sup>52</sup> today's Mont-sur-Rolle on the road from Lausanne to Geneva above Lac Léman.<sup>53</sup> The eldest son, Henri stood to (and indeed did) inherit the family castle; Ebal was taken to England by Pierre, along with Grandson and Champvent to go into service with the English court, Champvent becoming a steward in Henry III's household from 1256.<sup>54</sup> Othon de Grandson, as an eldest child, was perhaps a noted exception.

Pierre would call by the castles of Grandson and Champvent en route from Savoy to England, over late-night firelight stirring the boys with tales of potential

daring do if they were to come north with him – it’s certainly an attractive picture.<sup>55</sup> The cousins’ arrival in England was not documented; we can only attach an approximate date for Grandson, that he was probably in England at some point in the 1250s,<sup>56</sup> perhaps by 1252. We have a number of clues toward the date, firstly noting that the Lord of Grandson became a likely vassal of Pierre de Savoie by 1251.<sup>57</sup> We see their fathers, Henri de Champvent and Pierre de Grandson, amongst Pierre de Savoie’s entourage, witnessing charters at this time.<sup>58</sup> Which leads us to the second clue: in the summer of 1252 Henry III agreed for a pension to be paid to Pierre de Grandson, though the reason for the grant is unspecified. That the grant of a pension appears on the same page as a gift to English-based Savoyard Ebal II de Mont of two bucks from the royal forest and that both appear beneath Pierre de Savoie cannot be unconnected.<sup>59</sup>

King Edward in later years, referring back to Othon de Grandson’s arrival in England, when later bestowing Lordship of the Channel Islands upon him on 25 January 1277, to ‘*Otonis ... on account of his intimacy with the king, and his long and faithful service, from an early age*’.<sup>60</sup> Edward’s dating of his friendship with Othon to his ‘early childhood’ would suggest during at least his minority when coming to England, and so perhaps at least before 1255.<sup>61</sup> Sara Cockerill, in her biography of Leonor de Castile, ventured 1247, and for lack of evidence to the contrary this is as good a date as any.<sup>62</sup> The key element in dating the age of the relationship between Edward and Othon is ‘*primeva etate nostra*’ or French ‘*depuis notre tout jeune âge*’ and English ‘from our earliest years’. So, we can see that young Othon de Grandson went immediately into Prince Edward’s household and service; they would be lifelong, faithful friends.<sup>63</sup> Edward himself later gave toy castles and siege engines to his sons to play with as boys,<sup>64</sup> and it is not too far a leap of the imagination to suggest that he did so because he’d had them himself. We can therefore further hypothesize that Edward and Othon played these games together as boys, sieges of castles, heroic battles – except for Edward and Othon these childhood games would begin a lifetimes journey of adventures together, they would besiege real castles, build grand castles, fight heroic defences together – all of the adventures that medieval boys might wish for. Whilst we cannot be certain of the year of Grandson’s move to England, we can be more certain that his cousin, Pierre de Champvent, had arrived by 1252. On 20 June 1252 Champvent was being given five marks to buy a horse by Henry III of England.<sup>65</sup> Champvent went into Henry’s service as a steward – a decade later Henry referred ‘to his beloved and faithful Peter de Chauvent’.<sup>66</sup>

Both Othon and Pierre would be joined in England, at some stage, by their brothers, both named Guillaume. Guillaume de Champvent would pursue a career in the church, becoming dean of St Martin-le-Grand in London in 1262, ultimately becoming Bishop of Lausanne. Grandson would be joined in England later by his younger brothers, Guillaume and Henri.<sup>67</sup> Guillaume de Grandson was born in 1262, and would be placed into the household of the Lord Edward’s younger brother, Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster, who had been born in

1245. So, the two brothers in the service of the two brothers. Henri de Grandson, like his cousin Guillaume de Champvent would pursue a church career ending in the Bishopric of Lausanne. The wider *famille de Grandson* would also see much of England, particularly a network of cousins and in-laws, including the Bonvillars, Estavayers and Vuippens. The seeds of Savoyard influence sewn by the comital family were being widely expanded upon by the Grandson clan.

Another young Savoyard taken to England by Pierre at this time was Jean de Grailly, from the Château de Grilly, overlooking the shores of Lac Léman between Gex and Divonne. Jean would serve the English crown for some time, mostly overseas, but for now, like Othon, he was placed into Edward's service. Pierre's offer of riches in England even went so far as the Champagne region of France, where he recruited young Geoffrey de Joinville, brother of Saint Louis's biographer Jean de Joinville. Geoffrey would become known in England as Geoffrey de Geneville. The link between Champagne and Savoy was the younger brother of both Geoffrey and Jean, Simon de Joinville, who was Lord of Gex, within Pierre's lands above Lac Léman, close to Geneva. It is within this period that we see a proliferation of documents in England sealed by the Savoyard coterie around Pierre: all royal stewards and servants, the aforementioned Pierre de Champvent and Ebal II de Mont<sup>68</sup> but also Imbert Pugeys<sup>69</sup> and Imbert de Montferrand.<sup>70</sup> Queen Alianor had taken great care to surround her prized asset, the heir to the throne, with Savoyards – Edward's household was largely from Savoy, including the aforesaid Ebal II de Mont and Geoffrey de Geneville.<sup>71</sup> Huw Ridgeway described the Savoyards surrounding Edward as an 'embryonic colonial service';<sup>72</sup> no wonder Matthew Paris wasn't happy.

Edward's main source of revenue as a boy (1244–54) was the Honour of Eu, Eu being a coastal town in the extreme north of Normandy. A list of names of its custodians is revealing: Bernard de Savoie (1244–7), Pierre de Geneva (1247–9) and Pierre de Savoie himself (1249–54).<sup>73</sup> A 1252 issue of the charter granting Gascony to Edward carries this annotation: '*Ista carta missa fuit Petro de Sabaudia*' or 'This charter has been sent to Peter of Savoy.'<sup>74</sup> Cox wrote of the degree to which Pierre de Savoie was leading the cordon that surrounded Queen Alianor and Prince Edward, and so controlling the kingdom, describing Pierre as 'a kind of regent for his great-nephew'.<sup>75</sup> It became normal, not only for such acts to be witnessed by the Savoyard, but copies to be sent for safe keeping to Pierre's archives, some of which have survived to the care of the UK National Archive.<sup>76</sup> A kind of regent are strong words indeed, but given Henry's perceived weakness and perhaps the threat of his Lusignan half-brothers, it helps us to understand Alianor's defence of her personal and the wider Savoyard position, and also the hostility of natives such as Matthew Paris. Pierre de Savoie held the wardship of the heir to the English crown; Edward was in the words of Carpenter 'the rock on which Savoyard fortunes were founded'.<sup>77</sup>

If we want to understand how much of a Savoyard rock Edward was, we need to go no further than his escape from Montfortian custody in early 1265, during the

hiatus between the battles of Lewes and Evesham, in the Second Baronial War that would engulf England. When Edward escaped custody to plot Montfort's downfall at Evesham, it was to Ludlow Castle that he went. For lovers of a good plot, Ludlow was the home of Geoffrey de Geneville, who'd married its heiress, Maude de Lacy. Lacy had been previously married to another protégé of Pierre de Savoie, Pierre de Genève. As we said earlier, Geneville was the younger brother was Simon de Joinville, Lord of Gex. Yet the lordship of Gex was a fief of the now Count Pierre II de Savoie. The plot was likely orchestrated from Flanders by Alianor and Pierre, based with a largely Savoyard invasion army that never came. Also with Alianor and Pierre in this abortive invasion force were also a number of notable Savoyards temporarily exiled from England, including influential Pierre de Champvent and Ebal II de Mont.<sup>78</sup> Edward securing the defeat of Montfort himself rather than by a foreign invasion being a wiser course to take. It should come as no surprise that it would be to a Savoyard-held castle in England that Edward went upon his escape; the Savoyards had protected their investment.

## Chapter Two

Six years earlier, in 1259, Pierre de Savoie had been furthering his interest in the Pays de Vaud when he met with Richard, King of the Germans, at Mere Castle (Dorset) in December, gaining approval for the acquisition of Gummenen<sup>1</sup> and Yverdon. On his return to Vaud, he purchased, for 500 *livres Viennois*, the *seigneurie* of Yverdon, which was described in the sale as encompassing ‘a watercourse, with a mill and fishing rights, twenty *livres* of land, a *péage* and a “certain man”’.<sup>2</sup> Thus enters our story the *Villeneuve* of Yverdon, where Pierre de Savoie will build a castle, beginning the recorded career of the future builder of the castles of north Wales. The very beginning of the career of Maître Jacques de Saint Georges is a direct consequence of the career of Pierre de Savoie in England.

A little earlier, in 1258, he had purchased the fief of Rue from the Count of Geneva, another *seigneurie* in the region of Moudon and Romont that would strengthen his hold in the region north of Lausanne. First châtelain for Pierre at Rue was Henri de Bonvillars,<sup>3</sup> whose son Jean would marry into the Grandson family and become heavily influential in English affairs in the coming decades.<sup>4</sup> The *famille de Bonvillars* had been involved with the *famille de Grandson* for some time, having together witnessed charters in the twelfth century.<sup>5</sup>

To know who would build castles for Pierre in Savoy and later for Edward in Wales, we are indebted to their accountants for the answer, as they kept records of payments made to the builders and artisans – meticulous records of who did what, what they were paid, and when. It is from these accounts, many of which survive in Savoyard archives, now kept in Turin, Chambéry and elsewhere, and English ledgers held at the National Archive in Kew, that we can trace the story of the great castles in Wales. It is upon these primary sources that much of our story will be based.

Accounts for Pierre de Savoie for 1261 relate that ‘Maître Jean the mason ... came from his home to Yverdon’ working upon the castle there with ‘his son Maître Jacques’. The latter was sick during some of this time, both working under the auspices of the ‘custodian’ Pierre Mainier.<sup>6</sup>

A further entry for the much later period of 1265–7 suggests Maître Jacques is no longer working with his father;<sup>7</sup> one last entry relating to the castle at Yverdon is dated to the period 1 April 1269 to 15 August 1269 and is simply: ‘Maître Jacques the mason, ten *livres*’.<sup>8</sup>

And so we meet *Magistro Jacobo* or Maître Jacques as he would have been known in Yverdon, and his father Maître Jean – but who were they and where had they come from? There was a Maître Jean Cotereel<sup>9</sup> who had built the great cathedral

at Lausanne<sup>10</sup> and, from 1234,<sup>11</sup> the fortified burgh of Saint-Prex (Figure 1.1) where he became castellan.<sup>12</sup> Jean Cotereel was the son of the previous architect at Lausanne Cathedral,<sup>13</sup> and of English ancestry,<sup>14</sup> and likely the father of Maître Jacques.<sup>15</sup> That Maître Jacques de Saint Georges was the son of two generations of architects, and that they may well have been of English origin is to join together the theories of Bony, Grandjean, Wilson and Taylor, but is there strong evidence to support joining their theories together?

Amongst the problems we have, are the lack of personal records, birth and death certificates with which we are most familiar today. Furthermore, the habit of attaching surnames or family names had not yet fully evolved – it was more common to attach their job title or place of birth as a family name. For these reasons it is impossible to prove with empirical proof this statement; however, we can perhaps pass a lower test, that of reasonable doubt.

The name Cotereel gives rise to the interesting idea that Jean Cotereel may well have been of English ancestry, which given the theory that he is to be identified as the father of Maître Jacques, suggests that in the years before the Savoyards came to England, the English had come to Savoy. The name is unknown in the Pays de Vaud and Savoy;<sup>16</sup> its origins lay in Normandy and thence to England.<sup>17</sup> Bony, Grandjean and most recently Wilson have pointed to the undoubted English architectural styles of the Notre-Dame de Lausanne linking it to Canterbury.<sup>18</sup> This plausibly constructs an English ancestry for Maître Jacques which may well answer some of the questions raised as to his absorption of styles from the Anglo-Norman milieu.

The parental link between the first anonymous English architect and Jean Cotereel is documented in the Lausanne cartulary. But the parental link between Cotereel and Jacques rests on the notion that Jean Cotereel is to be identified as the same Maître Jean documented in Savoyard archives as building Yverdon, the known father of Maître Jacques.

Firstly, we have two facts which are made clear from the record: the first name and the occupation of the two men – they were both Johns and both master builders.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, we can also establish that their lifespans were broadly aligned, we know that Maître Jean of Yverdon disappears from the archival records from the year 1265. Whereas for Maître Jean of Saint-Prex the archives show that he is no longer living by the year 1268. We can also say that in the early part of the 1260s they are both very much alive and can be found in the Savoyard records, both with their names attached to castles under construction, at Yverdon in May 1261 and at Saillon between 24 June 1261 and 2 February 1262 – both times in the pay of Pierre de Savoie.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, we can say that the approximate years of death may well be the same – the lack of a death certificate will never permit definitive proof, but the archival records support a suggestion that they may well be one and the same man. So, we have two men who have the same name, the same occupation and who die around the same time. Another piece of circumstantial positive evidence is the 1234 grant

of land to Jean Cotereel at Saint-Prex, that refers to an eldest son.<sup>21</sup> This infers that not only did the two men share a name, a profession, a likely death year – but also shared the blessings of a son. There is a tantalizingly human piece of potential evidence, that the Jean of Saint-Prex is the Jean of Yverdon – that is that Saint-Prex lies on the *Via Jacobi*, that runs from Lake Constance to Geneva by way of Saint-Prex. What could be more natural in the pious thirteenth century than for Jean to name his eldest son Jacques? It is entirely impossible to be certain, but nevertheless when one adds the circumstantial evidence together, perhaps it is the final piece of the jigsaw.

Taylor goes on to point to evidence in the architectural ground plan of the *ville-neuve* at Yverdon, which bears many similarities with that of Saint-Prex: that is, a small walled town, with water defences, a castle in one corner and three main internal thoroughfares. What he doesn't do is point to the fact that these attributes of Saint-Prex and Yverdon could also be attached to towns in distant north Wales – to Conwy and Beaumari, to some degree, also be attached. Taylor pointed out the link between Saint-Prex and Yverdon, Keith Lilley that between Conwy and Beaumaris, we can connect them by adding the similitude between the concept of the town plan of Yverdon with that at Conwy thus creating a chain of towns linked by the career of Maître Jacques de Saint Georges.<sup>22</sup> So, given these Maître Jacques connections, that Jean Cotereel is known to have been responsible for Saint-Prex, the prima-facie evidence is of the built environment of four towns in Vaud and Wales pointing to a connection.

A further architectural link was one we found deep in the cellar of the castle at Saint-Prex, a feature that will become common throughout the castles built during the life of Maître Jacques. The castle at Saint-Prex is much changed; only an original tower remains. However, beneath the new works there survives the original cellar, which is part-divided by a doorway beneath a shallow segmented head with no keystone. We will find this feature later at Yverdon, Chillon, Saint-Georges, Harlech and Beaumaris.

However, one possible objection could be that the work at Yverdon was carried out under the auspices of a man identified as Pierre Mainier. Surely the architect of the great cathedral in Lausanne would not be working beneath another on a project like the castle at Yverdon? What this leads us to is a need to understand the hierarchy within thirteenth-century building works, and the Latin terms used to describe those involved by the accountants of the time. It had been thought that Pierre Mainier was the architect of Pierre de Savoie's works in Savoy; he was described as 'the real architect and military engineer of Peter II' and 'The general master of works of the count' by Albert Naef and those that followed.<sup>23</sup> This was an orthodoxy that Taylor quite correctly challenged.<sup>24</sup>

There are a number of terms applied by the clerks in Savoy, and in England too, that have been commonly misinterpreted. Some clarification would be helpful. Firstly a word applied to Mainier, '*custos*' which can be most simply translated as 'one who takes care of' or 'one who is guardian'.<sup>25</sup> Then we have '*clericus*', which