

William II 1087-1100 - A summary

- As has already been said, William II has been portrayed as a bad king, a nasty piece of work.
- The only chroniclers during William II's reign were monks and they were among the very few who could read or write.
- However, William and Ranulf Flambard were very effective tax collectors and this hit at the Church's pocket.
- Yes William II was extravagant with money and this apparent waste of money upset many in the Church particularly when they realised it was the taxes that they had paid.
- William's appearance offended many. He didn't conform to the ideal example of a king, such as his father and later his brother Henry I. He had long hair, wore brightly coloured clothing.
- The chroniclers criticised him for his social life. He never married and had no children. Marriage and producing heirs was seen as a duty for a monarch. He had a number of mistresses. It is interesting to note that the chroniclers conveniently turned a blind eye to the antics of Henry I. He had twenty two (22) illegitimate children, but that appeared acceptable because he was married and had produced an heir to the throne!
- In simple terms, William II did not fit what the pious, sober old men of the Church believed a king should be like. In modern day vernacular, " his face didn't fit"
- William wanted to establish the total authority of the monarchy, but to do so he had to weaken the power of the Church. The Church would not allow this to happen.
- Let Eadmer, a monk at Canterbury have the final word. He said about William II " even the wind and seas obey him. In war and in the gaining of territory he enjoyed such success that you would think that the whole world was smiling upon him"