

Ranulf de Blondesville, the sixth Earl of Chester (1172 – 1232)

Anglo- Norman, born in Powys,
succeeding at nine years to the title.
Your mother from Evreux smiled,
as, later, your Breton wife would,
when you reached your majority.
Arms, a garb of golden wheat,
set on azure twill,
borne down the ages by Cheshire gentry.

Remarried to a Norman wife,
with confidence reborn,
urged on by the wily Welsh,
you flirted with rebellion.
King John changed your mind by
threatening lost estates.
So you became the King's champion,
keeping the Welsh hordes at bay,
making peace with the Pope and
standing by John at Runnymede
to seal the Magna Carta.

After the King's death, your power
and influence increased.
You collected High-Sheriffdoms with
remarkable ease: Lancashire, Staffordshire, Shropshire.
A fleeting thought about the Regency was swiftly dismissed,
and you marched with King Henry against the Barons and
Louis of France.
At Lincoln the royalists prevailed and you were made its Earl
by a grateful King.

Next you embarked on the Fifth Crusade.
Fulfilling an earlier pledge, you sailed to Egypt
and the Nile.
Despite an offer from the Sultan: Jerusalem,
Bethlehem, Nazareth and parts of Gallilee,
political infighting led to stalemate.
The journey home was forlorn.

Your final years were full of wise advice and counsel,
but you also found time to build some castles,
including Cheshire's own at Beeston.

You died aged sixty.
Your heart and viscera were removed,
the rest of your body buried in St. Werburghs.
Not blessed with children, your estate was divided
between your four sisters.
John, your eldest sister's son, became
the seventh Earl in 1232.
May you continue to rest in Chester's peace.

Neil Patten