

Samples from The Akashic Records

We know from the records that John Marshal's troops were devoted to him and had immense respect and loyalty towards him. They'd fight to the last man. I asked why this was?

Alison: He's very fair with the men. He doesn't allow back-biting in his domains. He always pays them. If any money comes in then the first priority is to pay the men in full before anything else comes out. No laxity is permitted with the equipment it's all kept in good order. No one is allowed to slack on the job and no bad atmosphere is allowed. Everyone must do their job to the utmost. Even the auxiliary people have to theirs well. For example the cooks have to provide good food. He goes to the kitchens and sees to it personally that people do their jobs properly to the last detail. If a cook serves badly prepared food then the cook knows about it. He doesn't allow any pilfering. He's not ever so affectionate with the men but in comparison to other employers he looks after his men and their families. It's not a brilliant deal by modern standards but if something happens to the breadwinner, his dependants are not slung on the heap. They're given something to survive. Wounded soldiers are helped out. All his retainers and cooks are ex soldiers who can't fight any longer. The bottom line is that his men have respect for him. They wouldn't get a better deal anywhere else. There's no point in leaving him.

William D'Ypres was one of King Stephen's mercenaries and fought against John Marshal during a battle in 1141 when John was fighting a rearguard action to help the Empress Matilda escape from Winchester when it was overrun by Stephen's army. The confrontation between D'Ypres and John and came at the abbey of Wherwell which guarded an important river crossing. I asked to see this scene and here is part of it, from the viewpoint of William D'Ypres.

As Alison accesses the moment, she starts gasping rapidly for breath in distress. Oh, this is someone with breathing difficulties. Gasp, gasp. He's inside his armour, puffing and panting. He's hot, thirsty, having to think on his feet. He's having to try and separate his mind from his body, keep the former working although he's heaving for breath. He's on a horse and the ground is hard under its hooves.

Gasp, gasp. He's having to charge again at the opposition. This might be the last time. He might be able to do it this time. Oh God, thank God, I've got an easy one to knock off. Have to find shade, can't carry on like this. He's under a tree now, and he's got a vantage point, looking down a little and he can see what's happening. The younger ones are still going at it. He's feeling his age; I get the impression he's not a youngster. His mind's clicking in now and speeding up. He's recognising different people and what they're doing. He's getting a strategic idea of what's going on. He spots a group of men who are underworking and sends a knight to bring them back. He has a plan now. He regroups the returned men and sends them into the middle of the fighting group where it's more difficult. No lances, but short weapons – swords, maces etc. He's hoping to split the group in the middle and this is what he does. The ones on the left are taken captive and rounded up. John is in the other group and he is fighting like a madman. He stands out from the crowd so powerfully is he fighting. D'Ypres watches him intently. He's very unemotional, working things out. He thinks that the contingent he has sent down is not going to hold John, but on the other hand if John, who is fighting on the edge, breaks free, he can come round and encircle his attackers – that's a real danger. The answer is to go up higher. He can't put more men into the fight because he can only release a few men from guarding the prisoners. His own men seem a lot more knackered than the opposition.

I broke off to ask D'Ypres opinion of John because they would have known each other at court and this will affect the way I develop the story. Friend or foe, outside of battle?

D'Ypres respects John. He recognises his qualities and his abilities at court. D'Ypres is not so outgoing. He's quieter, more self-contained and he hasn't got the family background to be more outgoing. He's a real tactician, a thinker. He's quite a neutral person, likes to be objective. He sees things from the centre and has no axe to grind. A decent sort of guy.

Back to Wherwell. Alison pants. He seems to have some sort of medical problem. **(I wondered if he was asthmatic).** He's been climbing stairs and it's really, really puffed him out. He's

struggling, trying to keep his thinking tackle going. Oh God, oh God! **Alison is puffing and wheezing now and has to back off slightly as D'Ypres is totally wound up, the adrenalin kicking in as well as the chest condition.**

Oh, he's directing everybody – has to, he's in no condition to fight himself. There are spears and lances all around. What's he doing now? (D'Ypres thoughts on John) God, they're still fighting back, they won't give up. D'Ypres knows he has to take John with the men he's got. Then he has a brainwave. If he can contain John within the abbey walls, it will be a good thing. They won't protect John, they'll contain him. Gasping continuously, he asks his men to pull back to give John and his men the leeway to reach the abbey....

And to finish, a piece from The Time of Singing, The birth of Ida and Roger's first child and their reactions. Circa 1182

Alison: I'm with Ida at the birth. It's a slow, painful process. **(Alison exhales hard).**

It feels like rising water, feels like cleansing. She's saying 'wash me, wash me again.' They're helping the baby out. The head and the shoulders are out. Seems to be taking ages. The midwife is saying 'Caution, caution, not too fast.' Ah, the cord's around the baby's neck. That's why it's taking a long time. They've managed to pull the cord over his head. The birth's a lot more easy once they've done that. He's out, but he's blue. They're bathing him in what looks like warm milk, trying to bring him around. He has soft gold hair, wizened features. One eye opening now. He's staring to whimper. The women gently wrap him up. Back to Ida. She's glad that he's okay, but she's much more fixed on her own emotions and they are quite solid. They're not the extreme, exuberant emotions that often accomplish childbirth. Her emotion is solid like rock, like a wedge. It comes from having to be strong. Please God that it's all right, Thank God that it's all right. I've been vindicated, thank God. I've been welcomed back into the enclave of virtuous women. Thank God. She is so relieved. When she looks at little Hugh she gives a smile of satisfaction, but it's not a big emotion. It's softer than that, more centred.

Having seen Ida's reaction to the birth of Hugh, I now asked to see Roger's reaction to the birth of his firstborn child.

Alison: Breathes in and out majestically. Puffs out chest. Oh, I can feel all of his spirits rising. His shoulders are up, cheeks are out. This is virility! 'Yessss! I knew it would be a son – no less than the King – hah hah!.' There's definitely an element of competition there. I can see a naked little baby, arms and legs all flailing about in the crib. It's been left naked so it can be presented to him for inspection. It's been turned all around so that he can see it's a healthy boy. It's a beautiful baby too, to say it's newborn. Not all lanky and skinny, but you can see the muscles on it. Ida's in bed. She's got a head-dress on – blue and white. She's well supported by lots of bolsters. There are two midwives. Ida is wearing a gown with a kind of white yoke and then the main body is blue cheese-cloth stuff. Then she covers up to her waist. She's looking quite pink and well. She's very happy with shining eyes and she's looking at Roger, proud to have done her duty for him, and he keeps smiling at her as well. It's quite formal though. He says 'You have done well my wife. Keep well and I will see you when you come out of your seclusion.' **(Alison is sad and surprised here, but I say that confinement for women in pregnancy was often just that and a man's presence in the birthing chamber had taboos surrounding it.** Oh, he has a gift for her. It's beads – amber beads with a silver-wrought cross, and in the middle of the cross there is another amber stone. But he doesn't give it to her personally, but to the midwife to give to her. Ida says she will wear it always.

I am feeling shivers down one side. Oh, he doesn't want to leave her. He's playing a role in the chamber that is nothing like his natural feelings. He feels bereft, leaving them. But then some friends arrive and they break out the booze and have a wassail and a drink, which helps to cheer him up, but half of him is still with the baby and Ida. He can't wait until she comes out of confinement so he can be with her again. His friends are saying 'It will soon pass, very soon pass. You have a wife and a healthy son and you've done right by them.'