

.....A KING MEETS HIS FATE

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William Rufus (1056-1100), son of William the Conqueror and second Norman king of England, met a strange and violent death in the New Forest in the thirteenth year of his reign. His Elder brother Richard, had also died there in a boyhood hunting accident. The night before his death William Rufus dreamt that during a routine bloodletting the stream of his blood reached to heaven, blotting out the daylight. That same night a monk also dreamt that William had entered a Church in his usual insolent manner and seizing the crucifix from the altar, had begun to gnaw at Christ's arms. The figure kicked William. making him fall backwards, and flames and smoke came out of his mouth, rising to reach the stars. The King dismissed the report with a laugh.....

More dreams that day were reported.....Perhaps shaken by the omens, William did not venture outdoors until late afternoon on 2 August. He died at Sunset. Churchmen, who loathed William Rufus, saw his death as a divine punishment. There was also speculation that he was killed by resentful Saxon peasants - the New Forest had become an exclusive hunting ground for the King since William the Conqueror had driven the people from their woodland villages. Others say the King was killed by agents of his younger brother, the future Henry I. Contemporary accounts say William Tirel, one of his closest friends, accidentally shot the king - his arrow guided by a higher power.....