Hubert Walter and the governance of England

* Born (probably West Dereham, Norfolk) 1140? 45?
* He was nephew of Ranulf de Glanville (who had been Henry II’s justiciar). He was educated in his household.
* Hubert Walter was made Archbishop of Canterbury in May 1193.
* December 1193 he was made chief justiciar.
* In 1195 he was made papal legate.
* When John tried to join forces with Philip against his brother he claimed that Richard was dead and tried to claim the throne. Not many believed him and John agreed to a truce. The deal was brokered by Hubert Walter.

Hubert at the Crusades

* He went with his uncle Ranulf to Acre in 1190. (Before Richard got there). The deaths of the other leaders left him in effective control of the beleaguered English force in the winter and spring of 1190-1.
* He became a good negotiator, administered a central fund to pay soldiers and provided for the destitute. He even led forays against the Muslims.
* When Richard got there he became his close adviser, acting as his chief negotiator with Saladin and leading the first group of crusaders allowed to visit the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.
* After he heard Richard was captured he visited Germany in 1193 and supervised the collection of the ransom. His reward was to become archbishop of Canterbury and the justiciarship.

As Justiciar

* ‘Elastic powers’ but two specific functions: the control of royal finances and the administration of justice.
* As a finance minister he was very successful.
* He raised the ransom (100,000 marks). Scutages were extracted in 1195 and 1196; tallages on royal demesnes, including towns, in successive years from 1194; levies on wool were imposed on monks; and in 1194 a new land tax, the carucage, was instituted.
* He also raised huge sums to pay for wars in Wales and France.
* He linked his two roles by raising money from fines (often levied as security for good behaviour)
* He gained a reputation for his knowledge of legal custom.
* He kept formal records of legal and financial business

Other royal involvement

* He had to pacify the realm after the turmoil of Richard’s absence, the opposition to Longchamp and the rebellion of Prince John.
* He directed some military operations at the sieges of Marlborough (1194); the Welsh campaigns of 1196 and 1197.

Archbishop of Canterbury

* Contemporaries felt he put his secular demands before his ecclesiastical ones.
* However, he was an energetic ecclesiastical judge.
* He did not see a problem in having the two jobs. (In a way Hubert was what Henry II had hoped Becket would be).
* Hubert was no theologian and religious leader but he was very thorough in dealing with church business.
* He did have a spiritual life. In 1193 he adopted the habit of an Augustinian canon at Merton priory and insisted on being whipped by Carthusian monks.

Under John

* He reluctantly supported John becoming King but became chancellor as a reward.
* He used his talents in the chancery and became more active in diplomacy.
* His relations with John cooled after the defeat in France in 1204. He dissuaded John from the 1205 campaign – perhaps he started to feel the administrative and political costs were too high.

In government

* He instituted efficient government record-keeping of lawsuits and official correspondence.
* In many ways Hubert Walter was in charge – if someone tried to go over his head and seek King John – they were liable to be punished.
* He stopped John’s plans for invading France in 1205.

Legacy

* Regarded as not a great scholar but had a clear mind and huge capacity for work.
* He was a brilliant administrator.
* He knew how things, and people, worked; he knew what he and his masters wanted.
* He showed to Richard and John his skill and became indispensible.
* He built up a network of contacts in government service and unlike his potential rival – William Longchamp – did not dabble in politics on his own account. He was always loyal.
* However, he was also ‘corrupt’ and made profits from a variety of sources e.g. the sale of wardships. He lived lavishly and ostentatiously and was very wealthy when he died.
* In 1196 when two prominent citizens accused him of being corrupt the King ordered an inquiry but then one of the men (William Fitz-Obert) was executed for resisting arrest and the other (Abbot Robert) died 5 days after eating with Hubert.
* He was ruthless when he needed to be.
* He provided the king with money and solutions to problems which made him invaluable.

He died in 1205.

John Gillingham on Hubert Walter

* Archbishop of Canterbury, papal legate and chief justiciar – head of both ecclesiastical and secular government.
* Highly regarded.
* J.C Holt calls him ‘one of the greatest royal ministers of all time’.
* C. R Cheney wrote ‘as good a head as the English church could expect to have’.

David Carpenter on rule under Richard

* Hugh de Puiset, bishop of Durham who was the new justiciar (appointed for the money he offered) – clashed with William Longchamp, Bishop of Ely who was Richard’s chancellor and protégé.
* Also gave ‘extradordinary’ favours on his brother John (who also wanted to be his heir). Made him Lord of Ireland – married him to Isabella which gave him Welsh lands – also 6 castles and control of 7 English counties.

Also read:

Huscroft and Tyreman’s ‘Who’s Who’ on this topic.

Questions:

* Who was Hubert Walter and what was his role during the reigns of Richard and John?
* Why is Hubert Walter so significant in the reigns of Richard and John?
* How successful was he in government?
* Why was he successful?
* What was the legacy of Hubert Walter?

1. Assess the contribution made by Hubert Walter to the governance of England, 1189 to 1199. (45 minutes)