Despite his surname, Alfred of Lincoln was active in the south and south-west of England and especially in Dorset. He can be identified with Alfred of Wareham, in Dorset, named as a witness to a deed in favour of Spalding priory by Ivo Taillebois, husband of Lucy, daughter and heiress of Thorold of Lincoln (Monasticon, iii. 217, no. vii, datable 1087 × 1092). In 1091 he witnessed immediately after the sheriff of Dorset in the diploma for Bishop John of Bath (W2/000; Regesta 314–15). From early in Henry I’s reign he served the king outside Dorset. So, in 1101 or 1102 Alfred of Lincoln was named as enforcing officer in a writ in favour of the monks of Winchester (0000, Regesta 603), in which Richard de Redvers was ordered to restore to the monks a quarry on the Isle of Wight, and Alfred was to do this if Richard did not. In a writ-charter for Abingdon (000, Regesta 615, datable 1102 × 1110), the waste land of Welford (Berks) was given to the abbot of Abingdon, ‘just as Croc the huntsman and Alfred of Lincoln showed him’; Alfred and Croc are witnesses to the act as well as participants in the livery of seisin. In Dorset, he is named alongside Bishop Roger of Salisbury in a writ of Henry I for Abbotsbury (000, Regesta 754, datable 1102 × ?1107), in which the two are ordered ‘sicut iusticiarii mei’ to keep and maintain the monks of Abbotsbury, and he attested the act with Croc the huntsman. In all three contexts Alfred acts in a senior capacity. He does not appear
anywhere as sheriff, and Nicholas Karn sets out the case that from a
certain point he was the king’s justice in Dorset, a county in which Roger
of Salisbury was the presiding bishop. It is, however, impossible to find
any key dates for Alfred’s career. He was still alive at Michaelmas 1130,
when his danegeld exemption in Dorset was £6, a sum exceeded only by
the bishop of Salisbury and the earl of Gloucester, and he owed £3
proffered for a life interest in the manor of Pulham in Dorset (PR 31
Henry I, 15–16). The evidence for his career is reviewed by N. Karn,
‘Secular power and its rewards in Dorset in the late eleventh and early
twelfth centuries’, Historical Research 82 (2009), 2–16.

Karn, 10, rejected the connexion made by R. E. G. Kirk with
Alfred of Lincoln, tenant in chief in that county in 1086, and was surely
correct to do so. It is, however, possible that Alfred, ‘nepos Turoldi’, to
whom King William I had given three tofts in the city of Lincoln (DB, i.
336va; § C23), is our Alfred. He would have been cousin to Lucy, and
this explains his witness to her husband Ivo’s act, in which he was
named as Alfred of Wareham, while in Dorset he was always Alfred of
Lincoln. Wareham was a royal borough, and the move may be an early
reflection of Alfred’s serving the king as early as c. 1090.

Alfred built up a substantial estate in eastern Dorset, where in
1086 he had nothing. He succeeded to the lands of Hugh fitz Grip, who
had been sheriff of Dorset (N. E. Stacy, ‘Henry of Blois and the lordship
of Glastonbury’, EHR 114 (1999), 1–33, at p. 30). Karn argues that
Alfred must have married Hugh’s widow Hawise before appearing as
Alfred of Wareham, but that is not necessarily so. The marriage may
have followed his joining the king’s service. The writ-charter below
shows that Alfred himself purchased land at East Holme, close to
Wareham, from Grimbald, one of the king’s physicians.

He appears as ‘Aluredus de Nichol’ (i.e. Lincoln) in the witness
list of an elaborate deed of gift to the monks of Glastonbury by Robert de
la Haie and his wife of the church of Bassaleg (Monasticon, iv. 633–4),
datable 1100 × 1105. Robert was a man of Robert fitz Haimo, and it
appears that Alfred too may have formed an association with him, for he
gave land in Purbeck to Robert fitz Haimo’s foundation at Tewkesbury
(0000, Regesta 847).

Alfred himself began an association between his family and the
Cluniac monks of Montacute priory when he gave the tithe of Okeford
Fitzpaine (Dorset) (Cil. Montacute, 123–5, no. 8). The land at East
Holme was given to Montacute priory by Alfred’s son, Robert of
Lincoln, for the foundation of a dependent cell (Ctl. Montacute, 160–61, no. 118; VCH Dorset, ii. 80).

Writ-charter granting to Alfred of Lincoln in fee the land of East Holme (Dorset), just as Grimbald the physician sold it to him. March 1107 × 1122

CARTULARY COPY: Bodl. MS Trinity College 85 (s. xiii/xiv), Montacute cartulary, fol. lviii (now fol. 71v) (‘Carta Henrici regis de concessione terre Holne’) [B].

PRINTED: T. Bond, ‘Holme Priory’, Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club 11 (1890), 145 [from B]; [J. Batten & T. S. Holmes], Two Cartularies of the Augustinian Priory of Bruton and the Cluniac Priory of Montacute, Somerset Record Society 8 (1894), 167 (English abstract) [from B]; Regesta, ii. 349 (no. clxi) [from B]; N. Karn, ‘Secular power and its rewards in Dorset in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries’, Historical Research 82 (2009), 2–16 (at 14–15) [from B].

CALENDAR: Regesta 1369.

HENRICUS rex anglorum rogero episcopo Saresberie et warin(o) uic(ecomiti) et omnibus baronibus francis et anglis de dorseta salutem. Sciatis quod concedo Aluredo Lincolie habere in feodo terram de Holna, sicut ei uendidit Grimaldus medicus. T(estibus) rogero episcopo Saresberie et ran(ulfo) cancell(ario) et Willelmo Tanc(ar)uilla et Iohanne Baioc(ensi).

Apud Wyntoniam.

Henry king of the English to Roger bishop of Salisbury and Warin the sheriff and all his barons French and English of Dorset greeting. Know that I grant to Alfred of Lincoln to have in fee the land of Holne just as Grimbald the physician sold it to him. Witness Roger bishop of Salisbury and Ranulf the chancellor and William de Tancarville and John of Bayeux. At Winchester.

DATE: While Ranulf was chancellor, from the beginning of 1107 until his accident after Christmas 1122, and after the king’s return to England in March or April 1107.

ADDRESS: The shire court of Dorset.

WITNESS: Roger, bishop of Salisbury, Ranulf the chancellor, William de Tancarville, chamberlain, and John of Bayeux, chaplain.

PLACE: Winchester.

CONTEXT: Alfred of Lincoln built up an estate in eastern Dorset, which can only be defined as it was later held by his successors (VCH Dorset, ii. 80). The purchase of land from Grimbald was part of this process. East Holme was held as just over two
hides by Walter de Clavill in 1086 (DB, i. 82v; § 41. 3), whose main holdings were in Devon. Why the land did not go to his heirs is unclear, but it may have reverted to the king’s control and been granted as a reward for service as physician to Grimbald. The king now endorses a transaction between two royal servants. Grimbald, however, was a clerk, and therefore whatever had been given to him would naturally revert to the Crown. The point of the king’s writ-charter is to allow Alfred to hold in fee the land that he had bought from Grimbald, and, despite ‘just as Grimbald the physician sold it to him’, it should probably be understood that Grimbald had held by service and not in fee. The ‘sicut’ clause must be taken to refer to the land and not also to the terms. The absence of any Quare uolo clause is noteworthy.

This deed has survived because this property was later given to Montacute priory for the foundation of a cell, with the result that the document was preserved in its archive. It appears to have been one of the sources used in drawing up 000, Regesta 734 for Montacute. The interests of the priory in the area of Wareham are reflected in a writ of Henry II (H2/1830), 1163 × 1172, which follows the present writ-charter in the cartulary, ordering the earl of Gloucester and his bailiffs at Wareham to allow the monks and their man at Wareham to have the liberties they had in the time of Henry I.