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Richard of Fountains

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Richard of Fountains († 30 Apr 1139)

1. Name variants: –

2. Places: St. Mary's, York, Fountains

3. Biography: R. was prior of the Benedictine community of St. Mary's, York. When Cistercian monks arrived in Yorkshire in 1132, R. led a group of St. Mary's monks who sought to join them. Procrastination by his abbot, Geoffrey, led to R. appealing to Archbishop Thurstan of York. When Abbot Geoffrey barred the archbishop's entry at St. Mary's and attempted to apprehend R. and his supporters, the reformers fled with Thurstan. R. and his group founded the new abbey of Fountains, at Skeldale near Ripon. R. was confirmed as abbot there in December 1132. R.'s community appealed to the Cistercians for guidance and, in 1135, was accepted as a daughter house of Clairvaux. Although very poor in its early years, Fountains' recruitment of wealthy novices helped secure the abbey, and R. oversaw the foundation of three daughter houses. Richard became an important figure in ecclesiastical diplomacy: he accompanied the papal legate Alberic on his visitation tour in England in 1138 and travelled with him to Rome in 1139 to act as Thurstan's representative at the Second Lateran Council. R. died in Rome and was buried there. His enduring legacy was the foundation of one of the earliest, largest, and most important Cistercian houses in the north of Britain. He is not to be confused with his successors, abbots Richard II († 1143) and Richard III († 1170) of Fountains.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: –

b. Liturgical commemoration: 14 Apr (PASCUAL 2019, 142)

c. Patronage: –

d. Attributes: –

5. Fontes: Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary of Fountains, ed. J. R. WALBRAN, Durham 1863, 1, 1–73.

6. Literature: H. LEYSER, Richard [Richard of Fountains], in: ODNB 2004; L. G. D. BAKER, The Foundation of Fountains Abbey, in: Northern History 4 (1969), 29–43; G. COPPACK, English Heritage Book of Fountains Abbey, London 1993; J. WARDROP, Fountains Abbey and its Benefactors, 1132–1300, Kalamazoo 1987; D. BAKER, The Genesis of English Cistercian Chronicles. The Foundation History of Fountains Abbey, in: ACi 25 (1969), 14–41 and ACi 31 (1976), 179–212; F. R. de PASCUAL, Nuevo Menologio Cisterciense, 2019, 142.

7. Illustrations: –

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