

1227/1231 LETTER OF ANSELM CRASSUS

Document Ref.: CCL REGISTER B fo. 392r, 393r, 400r, s.xiv

Source: Canterbury Cathedral Archives

Language: Latin

Date: Between 1227 & 1231

TEXT TRANSLATED

To the venerable and friend in Christ, dearest Lord John son of Geoffrey, Anselm Crassus Treasurer of Exeter [sends] greetings and is ready to serve you with willing devotion. Know that one day [when] on the death of her husband Everard Chole we visited Amicia de la More in the manor of Moreth', she told us that a man named William Thann, her husband who had married her, when he was setting out on a journey with his lord William de Traci to the Holy Land, made her swear on the Gospels that all his land with its appurtenances that his lord William de Traci gave to the same William Thann for his homage and service, be assigned to the perpetual possession of blessed Thomas the Martyr and the Convent of Christ Church Canterbury.

However on the death of the aforesaid William on pilgrimage in the Holy Land, the same Amicia took another husband, namely Everard Chole by whose impediment the will and desire of her first husband William Thau{or n}n was not fulfilled. However, the said Amicia wishing to provide for the salvation of his {or her?} soul has resigned into our hand all that land with its appurtenances of her first husband William in accordance with the intention of the said William Thau{or n}n by delivery of her cap for the Convent of Chris Church Canterbury to be seised [of it] by us.

We are truly anxious to provide for the benefits of the needs of the convent of the said church according to the will of the said William Thau{or n} and have acknowledged happily seisin of the said land on behalf of the same Canterbury Priory, and have restored to the same Canterbury Priory all the [documentary] instruments of the same land entrusted to us by the said Amicia.

In testimony of which thing we have made the present letters and have sealed our seal'.

COMMENTARY

What is the provenance of this document?

The source is the letters of Anselm Crassus, treasurer of Exeter, informing John Fitz Geoffrey, that:

- He visited Amicia de la More, widow of Everard Chole, at Moreton[hampstead] 'Moreth' is assumed to be Moretonhampstead viz.:

Cotton MS Vitellius D IX, ff 24–182 (grant in cartulary of St Nicholas Priory), in the British Library shows land held by Amicia and Cole is in Moreton[hampstead].

Amicia's first husband was the liege man of William de Tracy, lord of Moreton – see post 'Who was William de Tracy?'

The addressee, John Fitz Geoffrey, was lord of Moreton Manor 1227-1258 – see below.

- Amicia told him that her previous husband, William Thann, setting out with his lord William de Tracy for the Holy Land, had made her swear to award all his land obtained from William de Tracy to the blessed Thomas and the convent of Christ Church Canterbury. See Tracy's similar grant of Doccombe Manor to Canterbury

Canterbury Cathedral Archive CCA-DCc-ChAnt/D/20 in Doccombe Documented – Grants.

- Following her husband's death on the pilgrimage, Amicia remarried & her second husband, Everard Chole, stopped her from making the grant. Now she has surrendered all William Thann's land to Anselm so he may grant seisin to the convent of Canterbury. 'Now' can be dated between 1227/8 and 1229/1231 – see below on Crassus and Fitz Geoffrey.

2] There is a copy in CCL ms Register B fo. 392r, 393r, 400r, s.xiv

With thanks to Professor Nicholas Vincent for these points in his article in *'Bischofsmord im Mittelalter'* p.269 ed. by Natalie Fryde & Dirk Reitz, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2003.

Who was Anselm Crassus.

Anselm le Gros Crassus (fn. 9) Kinsman and former clerk of earl William Marshal I, Treasurer of Exeter by May 1204 (EEA XII 306).

Elected bishop of St Davids after January 1229 and consecrated before 13 July 1231 As bishop. he consolidated the financial framework of the chapter (St Davids Acta nos. 104-6). D. March 1247 (Brut Peniarth Text p. 203a; Brut Peniarth Transl. p. 107; cf. Brut Red Book pp. 240-1 and Chron. Maj. IV 647, both giving year only).

Buried at St Davids (J. Leland, Collectanea (Oxford, 1775) I (2) 322). Vacant bishopric granted to custodian 2 Apr. 1247 (Close Rolls 1242-7 pp. 506-7).

With thanks to:

Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300: Volume 9, the Welsh Cathedrals (Bangor, Llandaff, St Asaph, St Davids). Originally published by Institute of Historical Research, London, 2003.

St David's Episcopal Acta 1085-1280 ed. J. Barrow (South Wales Record Soc. XIII 1998 p 11-12.

Who was the addressee?

John Fitz Geoffrey was the son of Geoffrey fitz Peter, fourth earl of Essex, justiciar of England (d. 1213), and his second wife, Aveline, daughter of Roger de Clare, earl of Hertford. In 1227 John fitz Geoffrey gave the king 300 marks to have seisin of the lands that had descended to him by right of inheritance from his father after the death of his childless brother William on Christmas Day 1227. (Fine Rolls of 11 HENRY III 28 October 1226-27 October 1227 Membrane 5 &) The lands included the manor of Moreton (Close Roll 11 Henry III 1227).

Where is the land mentioned in the letter?

Unfortunately, we do not know. There is no other separate possession in Devon in the Canterbury Cathedral Archives. Did it become part of the Doccombe estate or did John Fitz Geoffrey block the alienation of another part of Moreton manor to Canterbury? No formal confirmation of the grant by either Fitz Geoffrey or the King has been found.