

### **Sir William de Anne (also known as William de Aune)**

A very useful blog about Edward II's reign by Kathryn Warner includes a biography of William de Anne appointed Constable of Tickhill Castle on 17 July 1312 with an income of 40 marks (£26/13/4) a year, a position he held for the rest of Edward II's reign. William was a close associate of Piers Gaveston, first Earl of Cornwall, and accompanied him on the first of Gaveston's three exiles. Gaveston was executed on 19 June 1312 by magnates, including the King's cousin, Thomas Earl of Lancaster, angry at his exclusive access to royal patronage. William's appointment to the Tickhill post, so soon after this execution, suggests the King was rewarding him for his support of Gaveston.

William was a trusted official: in 1313, when he was described as the King's Yeoman (in military terms the third rank below knights and squires), he went to Conisbrough Castle to remove the King's niece, Joan Countess of Surrey, and take her to the King (Joan had been put in an impossible situation by her husband, John de Warenne Earl of Surrey, who was living openly with his mistress); he was knighted by Edward II in 1322 after resisting the three weeks' siege of Tickhill Castle by the Earl of Lancaster's supporters; he acted as the King's spy in the north. Warner nevertheless describes William as a career extortionist and thief. What Warner does not mention is that Constables of royal castles were usually appointed for less than 2 years. Only after 1350 were Constables appointed for life. William's long spell in office at Tickhill Castle gave him opportunities to exploit his position as well as look after the King's interests. Much of Warner's blog is based on a detailed scrutiny of Calendars of Fine Rolls, Close Rolls and Patent Rolls.

Why is Warner so critical of William? The following is an indication of William's behaviour from 1321:

- William de Ryggewey of Chesterfield petitioned the King claiming William stole 16 pieces of lead and took them to Tickhill for his own use. (Beastall calls this petitioner Richard Riggeway.)
- William's brother-in-law William le Cook of Westside accused William of stealing a horse worth £2 and £5 in cash and other possessions worth 10 marks.
- The communities of Bassetlaw and Stafforth said William extorted over 2000 marks from them.
- Another complaint after Edward II's downfall in 1327 was that William stole malt and livestock from the parson of Misterton and maliciously indicted the parson. (Other complaints to Edward III in 1327 could have been listed by Warner, as William accompanied by several others also took property from Thomas de Kent of Doncaster to the value of £50 and from Hugh de Eland whose 4 horses, a bull, 12 cows, 80 sheep and 6 pigs worth £60 as well as mown grass and crops were stolen.)
- William also provided a safe haven for members of the Coterel gang at the royal estate at Gringley where he was bailiff. The twenty or so members of the gang were led by the Coterel brothers James, John and Nicholas who terrorized Debyshire, Nottinghamshire and surrounding areas through theft, kidnapping and murder. The Coterels were declared outlaws on 20 March 1331.

In spite of William's behaviour and losing his post at Tickhill Castle after Edward II was deposed, William found favour with Edward III and was made Constable of Caerphilly Castle from 1329 to 1330 then made Constable of Abergavenny Castle from 1331 to 1337. In 1328 Edward III also restored to William the office of tronage of wool in Boston which Edward II had conferred on him for life. This tronage gave William the right to levy a toll on wool weighed at Boston's tron, the public weighing machine.

Warner's biography of William ends with an admission that she does not know if William had any children or when he died. The Anne (Aune) family appears repeatedly in public records and the Annes were lords of Frickley from 1379 until the estate was sold in 1750 when Burghwallis became their principal seat, but whether they were directly descended from William is not clear. This blog is well worth a browse, if only to stimulate further enquiries into the life of William de Anne. *Blog: <edwardthesecond.blogspot.com/2009>*