THE LADIES OF ANSTEY

by J Horace Round

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This paper is an edited transcript of a set of Round's handwritten notes and draft texts held by the FMG library. The original papers do not form a coherent article, having many asides and discontinuities. Nevertheless we believe they may be of sufficient historical interest to present to our readers. Subsequent articles such as Paul Brand "New Light on the Anstey Case" (*Essex Archaeology and History*, **15**: 68-83, 1983); and Round "The Honour of Ongar" (*Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, **NS 7**: 142-152, 1900), probably cover similar ground.

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Although the Ansteys of Anstey, of whom I am about to speak, derived their name from a place situate in Hertfordshire, not in Essex, they seem to have had their origin in the latter county. They also acquired, by inheritance or purchase, sundry lands in Essex, upon which Morant's statements need considerable correction. Among their manors was Great Braxted, which they inherited from a Sackville, who made it his residence, I shall show, at least as early as the 12th century.

The origin and early history of the house have never, so far as I know, been properly worked out. Its chief title to fame is the well-known and unique narrative, by Richard de "Anesty", of his long lawsuit under Henry II, for the lands of his uncle, Wi de Sackville[1]. Strangely enough, however, neither his own paternity nor the identity of his uncle's seat has, so far as I am aware, been ever correctly stated.

In these days, we have always to remember, widows were not allowed to remain single for long, if they held lands "in their own right or in dower,"[2] even then, the matrimonial life of the elder Denise must have been unusually prolonged. So early as 1236 I have found her in a Lincolnshire fine,[3] when wife of Warin de Monte Caniso, claiming dower from Master Simon de Langeton, out of her previous husband, Walter de Langeton's estate at "Langeton" and "Sumerhuse". And yet she married, as we have seen, at least a third husband and actually lived on till 1304. Her known marriages, therefore, may be set forth as follows:

Walter de Langton=(1) Denise de Anesti (2)= Warin de Montchesney
(3)= Robert le Butiller

Beatrice de Beauchamp (widow of) = William de Montchesney, son and heir (died in his mother's lifetime).

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1 In their *History of English Law* (1895) Pollock and Maitland observe that "*The curious story told by Richard of Anesty has often been retold*", and cite three writers who have dealt with it (I, 137). No less a man than Glanvill, they remind us, *"had aided Richard of Anesty in his famous lawsuit"* (I, 141). In yet another place they speak of *"Richard de Anesty's memorable lawsuit"* as throwing light on *"the canon law"* with regard to marriage (II, 365). Yet there is no entry under "Anesty" in the index to that work.

2 See my *Rotuli de Dominabus* (Pipe Roll soc.)

3 *Lincs. final concords* (Massingford & Boyd) p.295, No. 248.

Among the Cambridgeshire deeds preserved in the Bod/eian library there is one relating to Waterbeach, which is dated early in the year 1263.[4] It is of some importance for the history of the elder Denise, who is therein styled *"Dionisia de Muntchenes lady of Anestie"*, appearing that her interest in that place was acquired through her marriage to a *"Robert le Butiller, formerly her husband"*, and then she was then holding it in dower. His brother, Richard le Butiller, rector of Mesdon, granted the tenement in Waterbeach, together with the manor of Meesden ('Mesdone") Herts for life. Her husband Robert had died in 1262.[5] It ws not till 1294 that she received permission to enfeoff there *"the sisters Minoresses of the Order of St Clare."* [6] Here then we have the explanation of an important Essex fine belonging to the summer of 1260,[7] to which *"Robert le Buttyller and Dionysia his wife"* are parties, as is also William *"de Monte Caniso"*, the son and heir of Denise. Great Braksted and Anesty are among the manors named. A few years later, another Essex fine[8] records that "*Richard* (sic) *le Botiller and Dionis de Monte Caniso"* put in their claim. Richard, I have shown, was brother and heir to her husband Robert; and she was holding of him, by a case tenure at Waterbeach, in dower, for her life.

[fragmentary texts]

?Quendon?, L.R. cxxix

When she had long survived her third husband, Denise is found as *"Dionysia de Montchesney (de Monte Canisio), lady of Anesty, widow," "endowing with a quarter of good wheat annually"* the new chapel of St Mary in St Paul's churchyard, *"over the heap of bones there buried"*.[9]

….of the reign was *"in the 21st year for the expedition to Galloway"*.[10] Stubbs, of course, is accurate in what he says on the subject.[11] The importance here of accuracy is due to the possible [resemblance] between a scutage for "Galway" and the preceding scutage, of 1172, for Ireland (Hibernie).

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4 *Calendar of charters and rolls*, p.672

5 *Cal. Of Ing*. I, 165, Farrers's *Feudal Cambridgeshire*, p.191

6 Farrers's *Feudal Cambridgeshire*, p.192

7 *Feet of fines for Essex*, I, 238 (No.381)

8 *Ibid*. p.263 (No. 1565)

9 *9th Report on Historical MSS*, App I, p.335. This deed is there dated by Mr (now Sir Henry) Maxwell Wyte as "1277-1283". On p.46a there is a similar bequest *"to the fabric of the chapel over the sepulchre of human bones in the churchyard of St Paul's"*. I take this to be *"the chapel of the Charnel House in St Paul's churchyard"* (p.55a).

10 *The Angevin Empire* (1903) p.252. The Galloway expedition, however, is rightly assigned, on p.231, to 1185.

11 *Viz*: in his preface to Benedictus and in his *Const.Hist*. (1874) I, 489.