

TWO NOTES ON GUERNES DE PONT SAINTE-MAXENCE :
VIE DE SAINT THOMAS

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I. ADAM OF CHARING

THERE are certain minor unexplained figures who emerge at different points in the story of Thomas Becket. One such figure is Adam of Charing. Guernes relates that the Archbishop in the interval between the Councils of Clarendon and Northampton (January-October, 1164) tried to leave the country by putting to sea from Romney, Kent, but was prevented since the crew, claiming that the wind was contrary, put the vessel back to port.

Quant furent luinz en mer e empeinz e siglé,
Li notunier k'i ierent unt ensemble parlé
E Adam de Cherringes : dient k'il sunt desvé,
Ke l'enemi le rei unt del país geté ;
E il e lur lignage erent desherité.

Vie de Saint Thomas, ed. Walberg, 1922, lines 1361-1365.

(Guernes tells how when they had progressed a long way out to sea that the sailors, with Adam of Charing, talked together, deciding that they must be fools, for they had brought the king's enemy out of the country, and that they and all their kin would be dispossessed.)

It is possible to recover a number of facts about Adam of Charing. A letter among the *Epistolæ Cantuarienses* gives a hint of his profession and status. This collection of correspondence recounts the story of the epic struggle arising from the project initiated by Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury (1185-1190) for establishing a secular college at Hackington, near the Cathedral city. The monks, who saw in the college a rival cathedral, fiercely resisted the scheme. One point at issue as the battle developed, was control of jurisdiction over tenants of the priory of Christchurch. The question was raised at a meeting between Baldwin and the monks in 1189. The Archbishop called in Adam of Charing who is mentioned without introduction, being apparently a figure too familiar to require explanation. Adam was asked by Baldwin how the matter should be ordered, but returned an evasive reply, probably being unwilling to offend either faction. He answered that there were knights in the county senior to himself who knew well enough all about it. The cathedral Sacrist then interjected: "Oh indeed! What are you talking about? Weren't you there

watching at Hollingbourne, when two countryfellows were put on trial-by-battle before me for a theft, and I had the loser hanged, acting as Justice for the monastery? And you yourself have often pleaded in our court."¹ It sounds from the above as if Adam must have been a lawyer by profession. He was occupant of the manor of Charing (Kent)² and may be found in possession of other ground in the county.³ He consequently appears to have been a member of the knightly, landowning classes, a point borne out by his territorial name, usually a sign of rank at the date.

A few details concerning his family can be recovered. His father is named Ivo of Charing, while Adam's son bore the same name.⁴ Apparently the younger Ivo did not survive his father, since a list of Adam's heirs does not include him.⁵ These heirs, presumably kinsfolk, are listed as Robert de Champaine and wife, with Isabella of Hardres and William her son, the last two evidently being members of the great Kentish family dwelling at Upper Hardres until the mid-eighteenth century.

Soon after Becket's final flight from England (November, 1164), Adam of Charing is found in trouble with the Crown, fairly serious judging from the amercement, the heavy sum of one hundred marks.⁶ Whatever the offence may have been Adam was soon restored to the confidence of the King. Upon Becket's departure Henry seized the property of the See of Canterbury, putting in agents of his own to administer it. Some of the funds were spent on royal business. In the year 1166-1167 the sum of £20 was expended on repairs to the city walls of Canterbury, carried out under the supervision of a board of four, comprising the Prior of St. Augustine's Abbey, Adam of Charing, John FitzVivian (named not long afterwards as Provost of Canterbury) and John the Provost.⁷

Becket did not suffer in silence, and from his retreat across the Channel launched anathemas upon his foes. Early in 1169 he

¹ *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*, R.S., Vol. II. (*Epistola Cantuarienses*, ed. Stubbs), p. 309.

² Pipe Roll, 7 John, p. 117. See below.

³ Saltman: *Life of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1951.) Appendix, document no. 52. Grant by Theobald to Adam s. of Ivo of Charing of a sheepfold in Tenham, Kent. See Pipe Roll, 9 John, p. 36.

⁴ Warner and Ellis: *Facsimiles of Royal and other Charters in the B.M.*, vol. I, no. 57.

⁵ Pipe Roll, 9 John, p. 36.

⁶ Pipe Rolls, 11 Henry II, p. 105; 12 Henry II, p. 112; 13 Henry II, p. 200.

⁷ Pipe Roll, 13 Henry II, pp. 201-202. John the Provost is without doubt Provost of the city of Canterbury. John FitzVivian is named as taking part, as Provost, in one of the miracle stories connected with the cult of Becket. (*Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, R.S., ed. J. C. Robertson, vol. II, p. 138, among the *Miracula sancti Thome*, of Benedict of Peterborough).

announced that he had excommunicated Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, and published a list of others amongst his enemies, whom he proposed likewise to excommunicate, on the next Ascension Day, unless they should have reformed in the meantime. The names given in the list are those of Geoffrey (Ridel), Archdeacon of Canterbury, Robert the Vice-archdeacon, Richard of Ilchester, Richard de Luci, William Giffard and Adam of Charing.¹ Their specific sins are not quoted, though Adam must have been doubly in disgrace for his intervention on the boat off Romney (if Becket saw through the excuse), and for his activities in spending archiepiscopal revenues on royal concerns, though if his service on the board for repairing the city wall were one of his offences, then it is odd that his colleagues are not named in the list. Perhaps they are included under Becket's general heading of "those who by order of the lord king, or from their own temerity, have occupied our possessions or those of our clerks," and are, in consequence likewise to be cut off from the faithful.

Becket was murdered December 29th, 1170. All his enemies from the King downward, capitulated, Adam of Charing among them. In the town of Romney, close to the sea on which many years before he had offended the Saint, Adam founded a leper hospital, in honour of the martyrs SS. Stephen and Thomas of Canterbury.²

Various instances may be found where Adam of Charing is discovered taking part in public life. In 1176 the Abbey of St. Augustine at Canterbury won a signal victory over its tenants in the Isle of Thanet, who had asserted that they ought not to attend the chief court of the abbey at Canterbury to plead or undergo judgment. In the county court of Kent it was adjudged that they must in fact henceforth attend the chief court. Nearly one hundred witnesses attest the record of the judgment, among them Adam of Charing and his son Ivo.³ Henry II made further use of Adam to administer church property, as he did in the case of the endowments of the See of Canterbury during Becket's exile. In 1161 the King intruded the dissolute and faithless Clarembald into the abbacy of St. Augustine's. He never received consecration, which Becket very properly refused to him. At the end of Clarembald's misrule Henry II (1174) put in Adam and John FitzVivian to take charge.⁴ They collected abbey revenues, and paid over lump sums into the royal treasury. Allowance was made for the support of the monks, but much money was used for the King's

¹ *Materials for the history of Thomas Becket*, R.S., vol. VI (*Epistles*). No. 488 (Becket to the clergy of London); and cf. no. 494 (Becket to Rotrou, archbishop of Rouen); no. 502 (Becket to William the subprior and the chapter of Canterbury)

² *Monasticon*, vol. VI, p. 640.

³ Warner and Ellis, *Facsimiles of Royal and other Charters in the B.M.*, vol. I, no. 57.

⁴ Pipe Roll, 20 Henry II, pp. 1-2.

business. Adam and John supplied clothing to royal pensioners quartered in the abbey; they laid in big stocks of provisions for Canterbury and Dover Castles, and conducted further operations on the city walls. Later on Adam served on a board carrying out works at Hastings Castle.¹

In the year 1184-85 Adam acquired property in Canterbury. There was a moneyer named Lambin Frese, who had built for himself a great stone house in Stour Street in that city, backing on to the river. In or before 1180 Lambin committed some crime and fled from justice, whereupon the crown confiscated his holdings.² Adam bought them up for 20 marks, paid off in instalments.³ The great stone house owed ground rent to Canterbury Cathedral, and Adam may be found responsible for the rent in lists of tenants of the priory. The extensive and detailed survey of Cathedral property in Canterbury drawn up about 1200 gives him as paying rent "for ground of Lambin Frese where he built himself a stone house on the Stour."⁴ However, the rent roll of cathedral property compiled only a year or two later gives the Sheriff of Kent as tenant, so it appears that the property had again reverted to the crown.⁵ A possible interpretation of this reversion to the crown in the person of its agent may be implicit in certain entries in the Pipe Rolls. Adam was dead by Michaelmas, 1207, for during the financial year ending at that date his heirs were negotiating with the Sheriff "to have the land which the same Adam held *hereditarie* the day he died."⁶ In the year 1204-5 Adam is found purchasing from the crown the right to have seisin of the manor of Charing, whence he had been disseised by Archbishop Hubert, for the sum of £100 and a palfrey of Gascony.⁷ In the account for the next year an entry to the same transaction may be found, followed by the note *vic. pro eo*, that is, the Sheriff is acting for him, suggesting that his death may have taken place already.⁸ If the Sheriff is undertaking business for him, it may be assumed that the same Sheriff would take over some at least of his property, and this in fact appears to have happened.

¹ Pipe Roll, 28 Henry II, pp. 88, 106.

² Pipe Roll, 26 Henry II, p. 148.

³ Pipe Roll, 31 Henry II, p. 233; 32 Henry II, p. 191; 33 Henry II, p. 208, etc. This great stone house became early in the thirteenth century the Poor Priests' Hospital, and, much reconstructed, survives to this day.

⁴ Chapter Archives, Canterbury Cathedral, Register H. fol. 225r. This survey is of outstanding importance for the study of the early English borough. It contains a schedule of names of tenants, their rents, with a detailed description of their holdings, complete with measurements. It occupies ff. 218-229 of Register H.

⁵ lb. fol. 6r., in a rentlist occupying ff. 1-15.

⁶ Pipe Roll, 9 John, p. 36.

⁷ Pipe Roll, 7 John, p. 117.

⁸ Pipe Roll, 8 John, p. 51.

2. HENRY II'S PENSION OF TWENTY MARKS TO HARBLEDOWN HOSPITAL

After the murder of Becket King Henry made a belated act of penance to express his contrition. On July 12th, 1174, he came in sight of Canterbury. A mile outside the city stood the leper hospital of St. Nicholas, Harbledown, founded a century before by Lanfranc. Here the King dismounted to pray before starting to go humbly on foot to the tomb of his old enemy. Guernes describes the scene :

Juste Cantorbire unt leprus un hospital

Pres une liwe i ad del mustier principal

Dunc descendi li reis iluec, a Herbaldun,
E entra el mustier e ad fait s'oreisun ;
De trestuz ses mesfaiz ad requis Deu pardun.
Pur amur saint Thomas ad otrié en dun
Vint marchies de rente a la povre mesun.

(ed. Walberg, lines, 5921, 3, 6-5930.)

(Near Canterbury the lepers have a hospital about a mile from the cathedral. So the king got down there, at Harbledown, and went into the chapel [see below] and prayed. For all his misdeeds he asked pardon of God. For the love of St. Thomas he granted in gift twenty marks' worth of income to the poor almshouse.)

The hospital still stands, though the poor lepers have long since given place to aged citizens. The *mustier* where the King prayed for forgiveness seems to be the hospital chapel, still very much as it was in 1174. From here the King walked down to St. Dunstan's church on the outskirts of Canterbury, and thence barefoot to the Cathedral, where he subjected himself to a tremendous scourging at the hands of the monks. On returning to London he issued a charter confirming the grant of twenty marks (£13 6s. 8d.) to Harbledown Hospital in a charter, which by one of the tragedies of our age, has perished only within the last few years.¹

Know ye, said the king, that I have granted in perpetual alms . . . to the lepers of Harbledown twenty marks in rent per annum to be taken from my revenue in Canterbury until I shall assign the same to be received elsewhere . . .

¹ It was destroyed with the rest of the hospital muniments in the great air attack on Canterbury, 1st June, 1942. It is printed in Duncombe and Battely: *Three Archiepiscopal Hospitals, 1775* (*Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica*, No. XXX), p. 205, and in *Monasticon*, vol. VI, p. 654.

Payment of this grant to the hospital was started immediately and the Pipe Roll shows that 66s. 8d. was paid out even for the quarter of the financial year in which the grant was made (July-September, 1174).¹ Thenceforth the annual render of £13 6s. 8d. may be traced regularly in the royal accounts. Though Henry said that the payment was to be made out of his income in Canterbury until another source should be found, this original arrangement was never disturbed.

In 1234 Henry III granted Canterbury to its citizens in fee farm, allowing them to collect crown revenue in the city (profits from courts, stallage, rents of houses and so forth) for an annual lump sum of £60 to be rendered at the Exchequer.² The citizens were made responsible for the allowance to Harbledown Hospital, a like sum being remitted from the £60.³ The archives of the city of Canterbury run in bulk from the fourteenth century. For generation after generation this payment may be discovered in every annual account. The historians of the hospital remark that it was still being paid in 1775.⁴

An enquiry addressed to the Borough Treasurer of Canterbury has evoked the reply that every year on the 10th October the Corporation pays to Harbledown Hospital the sum of £13 6s. 8d.⁵

¹ The accounts for Kent for 1173-4 are not to be found in the Pipe Roll for 20 Henry II (see explanation, P.R., 20 Henry II, p. 1). They are, however, to be found with those for the next financial year (Pipe Roll, 21 Henry II). *Infirmis de Herbolduna Lavi s.7 viii d.de quarta parte anni de elemosina regis.* See Pipe Roll 21 Henry II, p. 208; 22 Henry II, p. 205; 23 Henry II, p. 202, etc.

² H.M.C., IX, app. i, p. 166.

³ The schedule of royal rights in Canterbury drawn up apparently before the granting of the charter of 1234 specifies 20 marks as due to Harbledown; the amount has by some process become identified with income from stallage. See H.M.C., IX, app. i, p. 173. The date 45 Edward III given there is an interpolation in the original MS. The names of the witnesses to the inquisition (Reginald of Cornhill, Henry of Ospringe, John f. Terry, etc.) point to a date c. 1230.

⁴ Duncombe and Battely: *Three Archiepiscopal Hospitals*, p. 175.

⁵ It seems that the conservative city treasurer in the mid-eighteenth century disregarded the calendar changes of his day and went on paying at old Michaelmas. It was not known in the Treasurer's department that the payment originated with Henry II. It was classed in the accounts as tithe.