

= William Cragh =

William Cragh ( born ca . 1262 , died some time after 1307 ) , or William the Scabby ( cragh means " scabby " in Welsh ) , or William ap Rhys , was a medieval Welsh warrior and supporter of Rhys ap Maredudd , lord of the lands of Ystrad Tywi , in his rebellion against King Edward I of England . Captured in 1290 by the son of William de Briouze , the Cambro @-@ Norman Lord of Gower , he was tried and found guilty of having killed thirteen men . Cragh was executed just outside Swansea within sight of de Briouze 's Swansea Castle , twice , as the gallows collapsed during his first hanging . Lady Mary de Briouze decided for reasons unknown to intercede on Cragh 's behalf , and prayed to the deceased Bishop of Hereford , Thomas de Cantilupe , requesting him to ask God to bring Cragh back from the dead . Cragh began to show signs of life the day after his execution , and over the subsequent few weeks made a full recovery , living for at least another eighteen years .

The main primary source for Cragh 's story is the record of the investigation into the canonisation of Thomas de Cantilupe , which is held in the Vatican Library . Cragh 's resurrection was one of thirty @-@ eight miracles presented to the papal commissioners who in 1307 were charged with examining the evidence for Cantilupe 's saintliness . The hanged man himself gave evidence to the commission , after which nothing more is known of him . Cantilupe was formally canonised by Pope John XXII on 17 April 1320 .

= = Background = =

William Cragh was born in about 1262 in the Welsh parish of Llanrhidian , Gower , to Rhys ap Gwilym and his wife Swanith . Between 1282 and 1283 King Edward I of England waged a military campaign in Wales that concluded with his annexation of that country . One of Edward 's allies , Rhys ap Maredudd , found the post @-@ war settlement unsatisfactory and launched a rebellion against the king in 1287 . Edward 's vastly superior forces soon crushed the uprising , but Rhys ap Maredudd remained at liberty until his capture and execution in 1292 . Cragh probably took part in the rebellion on the Welsh side . He was apprehended in 1290 by the son of William de Briouze , the Lord of Gower , who was defending his father 's lands against incursions by the rebels still at large . Cragh was one of 14 prisoners captured by de Briouze , 12 of whom were subsequently released . He was taken to Swansea Castle , where he was held in the dungeons awaiting trial , accused of killing 13 men .

The law in Wales at that time permitted condemned men to atone for their crimes by making a payment to their victims . Cragh 's friends and family rallied round to offer 100 cows to de Briouze for his release , but the offer was refused . The substantial scale of the proposed compensation indicates that Cragh was an important man , although some witnesses described him as a thief rather than a rebel . Historian Jussi Hanska has suggested that de Briouze 's refusal to accept the offer strengthens the case for Cragh being a rebel , as there is no other convincing reason to explain why he should have opted to " decline good income just to hang a thief " .

Cragh pleaded innocence of the charges against him , but he was nevertheless found guilty and sentenced to be hanged .

= = Execution = =

Cragh was hanged on a hill about a quarter of a mile ( 400 m ) outside Swansea , in sight of de Briouze 's Swansea Castle , on Monday 27 November 1290 . He was executed along with another " malefactor " , Trahaern ap Hywel . Although the latter was dealt with by the town executioner , Cragh was hanged by one of his own relatives , Ythel Fachan , who was forced into that service by de Briouze . Trahaern ap Hywel was a large and powerful man who struggled a great deal as he was hauled up from the ground by his neck , causing the crossbeam of the gallows to break . Although the executioner , John of Baggeham , considered both men to be already dead when they fell to the ground they were nevertheless hanged again , " as an insult to their kin " , and because it was the usual custom that hanged men could not be removed from the gallows without the lord 's

permission . The execution took place early in the morning , and the two men were left swinging from the gallows . John of Baggeham reported that he cut down Cragh 's body at about 4 : 00 pm and sent it into the town at the request of William de Briouze 's wife , Lady Mary . It is unclear what became of Trahaern ap Hywel , but his body may have been buried by the gallows .

The younger William de Briouze visited the house in Swansea to which Cragh 's corpse had been taken that evening , and what he saw convinced him that Cragh was dead . Describing the scene some years later he recalled that :

His [ Cragh 's ] face was black and in parts bloody or stained with blood . His eyes had come out of their sockets and hung outside the eyelids and the sockets were filled with blood . His mouth , neck , and throat and the parts around them , and also his nostrils , were filled with blood , so that it was impossible in the natural course of things for him to breathe ... his tongue hung out of his mouth , the length of a man 's finger , and it was completely black and swollen and as thick with the blood sticking to it that it seemed the size of a man 's two fists together .

Witnesses reported that Cragh had voided his bowels and bladder while hanging from the gallows , which was considered at that time to be a sign of death .

= = Resurrection = =

Historian Robert Bartlett has commented that " one of the largest uncertainties in the whole story of the death and resurrection of William Cragh is why Lady Mary [ de Briouze ] interceded for him " , but intercede she did . John of Baggeham , when questioned about her motivation 18 years after the event , could only reply that " Lady Mary had sought the body of this William , he did not know why " . Before the execution she had asked her husband to spare the two condemned men , but he had refused . Then on hearing that Trahaern ap Hywel was dead , and believing that Cragh was still alive , she once again asked that he be handed over to her , but de Briouze delayed until he was convinced that Cragh was also dead . Then " he granted him [ Cragh ] to the said lady , such as he was , and ordered him to be taken down from the gallows " . Lady Mary had " a special devotion " to Thomas de Cantilupe , the deceased Bishop of Hereford , and in her own words , upon hearing of Cragh 's death , " on bended knee , she asked Saint Thomas de Cantilupe to ask God to restore life to William Cragh " .

Cantilupe had died in Italy on 25 August 1282 ; his flesh was buried in that country after having been boiled from his bones , which were taken back to England . Cantilupe 's tomb at Hereford Cathedral soon became the centre of a " pilgrim cult " , and miracles began to be attributed to him . Lady Mary sent one of her ladies @-@ in @-@ waiting to measure Cragh 's body with a length of thread , which implied a promise to offer to the saint a candle the length of the person on whose behalf the saint was being asked to intercede should the intercession be successful , a common practice during the medieval period .

Cragh 's recovery began the day after his hanging , but it was some time ? one witness said 15 days ? before he was able to stand unaided . That he did not recover more quickly cast doubt on the validity of the miracle , as miracles were supposed to be immediate , but " partial miracles " could be explained by the " lukewarm faith of those who had made the vow " . Once sufficiently recovered , Cragh was summoned to appear at Swansea Castle , before Lord and Lady Briouze . The chaplain , William of Codineston , was also present . Cragh explained , " with great fear and apprehension " according to the chaplain , that as he was being taken to the gallows he prayed to Thomas de Cantilupe to save him . His fear resulted from his concern that he might be executed again , and he had good reason to be worried . Although those who survived were usually pardoned , it was not unknown for them to be hanged again . Between the time of his hanging and his appearance at the castle Cragh may have convinced himself that he had been saved by Cantilupe , or he may simply have decided that it would be prudent for him to go along with the story for his own safety . Cragh went on to claim that as he was hanging from the gallows a bishop dressed all in white appeared , and saved him either by supporting his feet or by replacing his tongue in his mouth .

Once he was sufficiently recovered Cragh undertook a pilgrimage to Hereford , accompanied by Lord and Lady Briouze , to thank Cantilupe for restoring his life . He walked barefoot on the three

@-@ day trip , wearing the rope he had been hanged with around his neck . The rope was left at Cantilupe 's shrine , after which Cragh said that he would make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land , although there is some doubt as to whether he subsequently even left Wales . Jussi Hanska has suggested that Cragh may have invented the pilgrimage story to escape from his companions .

= = Papal investigation = =

Richard Swinefield , Cantilupe 's successor as Bishop of Hereford , wrote to Pope Nicholas IV in a letter dated 19 April 1290 proposing the bishop for canonisation , but it was not until 1307 that an investigation into Cantilupe 's saintliness was initiated by Pope Clement V. For the canonisation process to succeed , convincing evidence of miracles that Cantilupe had performed since his death had to be presented , one of which was that William Cragh had been brought back from the dead by the bishop 's intercession . Three papal commissioners were appointed to conduct the inquiry : William de Testa , a papal tax collector in England , Ralph Baldock , Bishop of London , and William Durand the Younger , Bishop of Mende .

The investigation opened in London on 14 July 1307 . The first three of the nine witnesses to Cragh 's hanging to be heard were Lady Mary de Briouze , William Codineston , and the younger William de Briouze ; his father had died in 1291 . The commissioners were naturally curious about the details of the execution , because if Cragh had not actually been killed then there could clearly have been no miracle . William de Briouze was in no doubt that the hanging had been properly conducted , and pointed out it was customary that " if any subterfuge or trickery were discovered ... then the executioner himself would be hanged in turn " . He added that any deception could be ruled out because of the hatred that he and his father had for Cragh , whom he described as " the worst of malefactors " . The same point was made by William of Codineston : " the lord de Briouze and his justices , officials , and servants hated William Cragh very much and rejoiced greatly at his hanging and death " .

For the convenience of other witnesses the commission moved to Hereford , where it resumed on 18 August 1307 . The other six testifying to Cragh 's execution included the hanged man himself , despite William de Briouze 's stated belief that he had died of natural causes about two years earlier . The official language of the proceedings was ecclesiastical Latin , but Cragh spoke only Welsh , therefore two Franciscan friars from Hereford ? John Young and Maurice of Pencoyd ? were recruited as translators . Cragh is identified in the commission 's records by his Welsh name , William ap Rhys , " of the parish of Swansea in the diocese of Saint Davids " . Of the eight other witnesses called , five testified in French and three in English . In his evidence Cragh stated that he believed himself to have been about 28 at the time of his hanging , and that his last conscious memory as he was dangling at the end of the rope was of the noise made by the crowd when Trahaern was hanged beside him . He denied his earlier story of having seen a vision of a white @-@ clad bishop while he was hanging from the gallows , and instead claimed that the Virgin Mary had appeared to him on the morning of his execution , accompanied by " a lordly figure " she introduced as " St Thomas " , who she said would save him from the gallows . Under questioning Cragh said that he presumed the figure to be Cantilupe because he had been on pilgrimage to Cantilupe 's shrine in Hereford , and because on the day of his imprisonment he had " bent a penny ... to the honour of Saint Thomas so that he should liberate him " . After hearing his testimony the commissioners physically examined Cragh , to confirm that he was indeed the man who had been hanged 18 years earlier . Although they found no marks around his neck they did discover some scarring on his tongue , according to Cragh caused by him having bitten it while hanging .

The investigation was conducted in an inquisitorial style ; witnesses were not expected to make statements but only to respond to questions asked of them . Bartlett has observed that some of the questions asked by the commissioners were rather leading . During Cragh 's interrogation , for instance , he was asked if " in his country after the time of his hanging , it was publicly and commonly ascribed , and still is ascribed , to a miracle performed by the merits of the Lord Saint Thomas that he obtained and recovered life after the hanging " . Cragh of course had no motivation other than to answer " yes " , which he did .

= = Aftermath = =

Nothing more is known of Cragh after his testimony to the papal commission in 1307 . Thirty @-@ eight posthumous miracles attributed to Thomas de Cantilupe were examined by the commissioners and submitted for consideration by the pope and his advisors . Twelve were rejected after further analysis , including Cragh 's resurrection , but no reasons were recorded . Pope John XXII formally announced Cantilupe 's canonisation on 17 April 1320 , thirty @-@ eight years after the new saint 's death .