

Task 1 – Mary de Briouze

1. What was the occupation and social status of your chosen witness?
Mary was William de Briouze's wife and therefore a wealthy noblewoman but she was also a woman with independent means from the Manor of Weaverthorpe, in Yorkshire, that is believed to have been part of her dowry. She was from a wealthy Baronial family from Northern England.
2. What is their relationship to the 'hanged man'?
Mary had no relationship with William Cragh, other than through the events surrounding his hanging. William had been involved in a local uprising against her husband, and had been arrested for his part in it, along with another man. They had captured and burnt the castle of Oystermouth.
3. What was their involvement in the events surrounding the miracle?
Whilst it is not known why, Mary and her ladies prayed to St Thomas de Cantilupe to intervene in the hanging of Cragh, after begging her husband to save him was refused. She observed the hanging from the castle and sent one of her ladies to 'measure' Cragh after his death. When she heard of his recovery, she cooked a broth herself and sent it to Cragh, as he was unable to eat during the first few weeks of his recovery. She later accompanied Cragh to Hereford Cathedral and later appeared as a witness before the representatives of Pope Clement V, investigating the 'miracle' of Cragh's recusitation.
4. How did they use the space in medieval Swansea?
Medieval Swansea was encircled by town walls, within which stood Swansea Castle, with its own walls and dungeon. Within the curtain wall stood a newer castle, built between 1284-90. This castle contained a hall on the first floor with basements below and was used for business and entertainment. There was a hill outside the city walls, on which the gibbet stood, insight of the castle and opposite one of the castle gates was Wind Street, the site of the weekly markets, twice yearly fairs, entertainments and religious celebrations. Swansea lies on the River Tawe and The Strand is the port area where maritime activities and trade took place. Within the city walls was the Church of St. Mary's which was patronised by the De Briouze family and the hospital of the Blessed St. David of Swegnar, where six chaplains cared for the sick and infirm of the community. There were also houses within the walls, whilst outside lay further housing, the town ditch and the Chapel of St. John.
5. How reliable and how valuable do you think their testimony is?
As a noblewoman, Mary was reliant on the accounts of others and had limited first hand observations of the events that took place. However, she did speak to Cragh himself and heard his own account of events. When questioned by the popes representatives she appeared to answer honestly about what she had seen and herself and what she had been told by others. She was challenged during questioning, denying any collusion and as a noble woman, her testimony would have been of value to the enquiry. However, as she was praying to St Thomas de Cantilupe to save Cragh's life, it could be argued that she was in favour of his Canonisation.