

ANIAN II (died 1293), bishop of St Asaph

Name: Anian
Date of death: 1293
Gender: Male
Occupation: bishop of St Asaph
Area of activity: Religion
Author: John Edward Lloyd

He was not the immediate successor of [Anian I](#), for in 1267 a certain John, of whom nothing is known, was consecrated to the see. By 5 January 1268 he was dead; on 24 September of that year it was announced that the royal assent had been given to the election of Anian, prior of the Dominican convent of Rhuddlan, as bishop of St Asaph. On 21 October he was consecrated at Southwark by archbishop Boniface and Walter of Exeter. A Welsh chronicle of the time, Pen. MS. 20, says 'Eynnnon' was known as 'the black friar of Nannau.' This connection with a well-known Merioneth site is supported by the fact that a close friend and executor of his will was the Dominican, Adam of Nannau. The epithet 'Schonaw,' bestowed upon him by [Godwin](#) and later writers, seems to be a corruption of this place-name, though solemn attempts have been made to find a home for it in the neighbourhood of Rotterdam. That Anian was a son of Ynyr of Nannau (*fl.* 1280) there is nothing to show, and it is most unlikely that he was ever confessor to Edward I.

The Pen. chronicle sums up Anian II as the best and stoutest upholder ever seen of the rights of his bishopric - a description fully borne out by the events of his career. At the time of his elevation, the diocese was, as the outcome of the treaty of Montgomery, entirely dominated by [Llywelyn ap Gruffydd](#). Prince and bishop were, at first, on amicable terms. On 1 May 1269, agreement was reached between them at Mold as to the maintenance of the ancient privileges of the see in the Middle Country. Anian was a party to the settlement between [Llywelyn](#) and [David](#) arrived at in the same year at Berriw, and also to the compact between [Llywelyn](#) and [Rhodri](#) executed at Caernarvon on 12 April 1272. On 30 October 1272 he appears as the prince's envoy to Henry III, then nearing his end, and is praised by the king as having well performed his task. But [Llywelyn](#)'s veiled hostility to the new sovereign brought about a change in Anian also. At the end of 1273 he wrote to Gregory X making charges against the prince, which, on 7 March 1274, were warmly denied in a joint missive of the Welsh Cistercian abbots, assembled at Strata Florida. Later in the year, on 19 October, a full assembly of the clergy of the diocese drew up, at the instance of Anian, a statement of the matters at issue between him and [Llywelyn](#). The quarrel went on during 1275; on 25 May of that year the prince wrote at length to archbishop Kilwardby, complaining of the attacks upon him and offering to accept any reasonable solution. As war became imminent, Anian turned to the king; on 8 November he obtained from him a confirmation of the ancient liberties of the see, repeated on 20 January 1276. He was present at the council which, at Westminster, on 12 November, declared [Llywelyn](#) a rebel, and, on his return to S. Asaph, issued, with his chapter, a detailed catalogue of grievances against him. During the ensuing struggle he was on the king's side, and he appears in the treaty of Conway (9 November 1277) as one of the royal councillors who are to escort the prince to Rhuddlan.

That treaty had the effect of removing almost the whole of Anian's diocese from the control of [Llywelyn](#) to that of the Crown. It was with Edward he had now to deal, and for some years their relations were cordial enough. He acted as one of the king's justices at Oswestry on 27 November 1277, and about the same time received a grant of arable land in the S. Asaph region of the annual value of £20, to be divided equally between him and the chapter, in compensation, most likely, for losses suffered during the late war. In the summer of 1281, bishop and king combined in an appeal to the Holy See for leave to remove the seat of the bishopric from the rural isolation of S. Asaph to the new royal stronghold of Rhuddlan - a proposal carried no further. The harmony did not last long. At the outbreak of the war in 1282, there was fighting between English and Welsh around Rhuddlan, which involved S. Asaph and the burning of the cathedral. Anian was beyond measure angry; he quitted the diocese and gave no further aid to the campaign, being the only bishop of the province of Canterbury who did not join in the excommunication of the Welsh rebels. Edward was not slow to retaliate; he ordered the confiscation of Anian's goods and, even after the fall of [Llywelyn](#), would not suffer him to return to his see.

The rupture lasted for more than two years; at last, the efforts of archbishop Peckham to restore peace were successful. In the summer of 1284 Anian consented to pay 500 marks as the price of the king's good will and further mollified him by withdrawing his opposition to the transfer of the abbey of Conway to the proposed new site at Maenan. Edward, in return, gave him the advowson of Rhuddlan.

Meanwhile he had waged many conflicts with less exalted opponents. From 1269 to 1272 he supported John Fitz Alan in his suit against Shrewsbury abbey for the patronage of Oswestry. In 1279 he was at odds with the prior of Chirbury, and in 1274 with the abbey of Valle Crucis, as to vicarages in the churches which it held in the district. A major conflict was that which Anian waged with the see of Hereford for episcopal authority in the region of Gorrddwr, which lay along the right

bank of the Severn from Montgomery to Alberbury. He was emboldened to put forward this claim by the success of [Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn](#) in 1263 in annexing this territory to southern Powys. Its recovery by Peter Corbet in 1276 did not daunt Anian; he carried on the strife for years, until at last bishop Swinfield won a final victory in 1288.

He died on 5 February 1293. His will, made at Chartham, near Canterbury, in 1288, shows him as the owner of considerable personal property. His very numerous bequests were, for the most part, devoted to religious and charitable purposes in his own diocese.

Author

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Sources

Ruth C. Easterling, [Anian of Nanneu, O.F.P. Prior of Rhuddlan, Bishop of St. Asaph, 1268-1293](#), *Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society*, v, 9-30

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Archaeologia Cambrensis, 1919, 181-7

Further Reading

NLW Archives: [Wynnstey Estate Records: Charters of the Abbey of Ystrad Marchell: Decree by Anian, bishop of St Asaph, \[1268x1292\]](#)

Wikipedia Article: [Anian II \(Bishop of St Asaph\)](#)

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