

SEALS OF THE PRIORY OF STOKE-BY-CLARE.

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A few years ago, the Society published in their Proceedings (see Vol. XX, p. 265) a short article by me, on a seal of a Prior of Stoke-by-Clare, from a silver matrix in the possession of Lord Loch, and now I am able to offer both illustrations and a short description of two impressions of seals connected with the same religious community, which have been kindly sent me, by Mr. E. A. B. Barnard, F.S.A., Secretary of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society; he having discovered the same attached to a charter among the muniments belonging to St. Catherines College, in Cambridge. The aforesaid charter is dated 1302, and it has two pendant seals, which are herewith illustrated; and both of them are undoubtedly connected with the Priory, founded for Secular canons at Clare about 1044, but removed to Stoke by Richard de Clare in 1124 and then in 1415 converted by Edward Mortimer, Earl of March, into a College of Secular Priests. Hence the name to-day Stoke College.

First of all I will describe these seals, and then give an account of the deed to which they are attached, and how they were connected with it, and what it is all about.

(1). A large ovoid impression of a seal, which measures $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length and is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. The design on it consists of a representation of St. John Baptist (to whom the Priory was dedicated), artistically clothed with what appears to be a camel's tail, the end of it passing upwards over his left shoulder. He is seated on an ornate throne, and is holding with the right hand a circular disc $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter, on the which disc is represented the Agnus Dei, with the face of the animal turned towards the sinister. This is the usual emblem or symbol of the Baptist. The edge of the impression on which should be the legend, is much damaged (as the illustration of it shows) and it has been most kindly examined for me by Mr. H. S. Kingsford of the Society of Antiquaries, and he thinks that it runs thus "SIGILLVM SCI JOHANNIS BAPTISTE DE CLARA ET STOKE," and Mr. Kingsford adds "It is a very unusual representation of St. John Baptist. I cannot recall another example of his being shown seated on a throne, and I like the naive way in which the camel's tail twists itself about him."

(2). A small ovoid impression of a seal $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length and 1 inch wide. The design of it represents a figure standing, full face, beneath a triple canopy, dressed in a robe which reaches to the ground, there is something on the head, and the arms are by the side, with hands outstretched holding an animal face to the sinister; which has every appearance of being a lamb, and therefore it must again be a representation of the Agnus Dei, John Baptist's usual symbol, although certainly the shape of the figure, the arms, and the dress are very



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feminine in appearance. The legend of the impression is fairly legible, and runs "S'PRIORIS D'STOKES." Why it should be "Stokes" I do not know.

Now as to the date of the two seals, which gave us these impressions. The larger one is evidently of a much earlier date than is the smaller. Mr. Kingsford dates the one with the Saint seated on a throne as belonging to the first half of the 13th Century. He says "the throne is a little more elaborate than on Henry III's Great Seal made in 1218, and not so swaggar as that on the second Great Seal which was made 40 years later. So I should be inclined to date it about 1230." As to the smaller seal, it was undoubtedly the one in use by the Priory in 1302, when the charter was sealed, but it is quite probable that it had been in use some time, as the design is typical of the latter part of the 13th century.

It seems necessary to say somewhat about the deed to which the seals are attached, even though Mr. Barnard has supplied us with such a good photograph of it, the only defect in it, that the last line is missing, the end of the parchment being turned over it. It tells us that the charter was signed at Stoke, on the sabbath day after the Feast of St. James the Apostle 1302.

The subject matter of the document is an agreement between the Abbess and Convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Waterbeach in the diocese of Ely on the one part, and the Prior and Convent of Stoke in the diocese of Norwich on the other part, concerning some land or money connected with what is called "the fee of Bloundel," claimed apparently by both of these religious institutions.

Now a cell to the Monastery of Ely was established at Waterbeach as early as 1160, in a small island called "Elmeneye," but was shortly after removed to Denney, both in the parish of Waterbeach, and in the following century it was occupied by the Knights Templars, who then owned the manor of Waterbeach. In 1293 an Abbey for Minoresses of the Order of St. Clare was founded in Waterbeach by Dionysia de Monte Caniso, or MOUNTCHENSI, and there seems to be some little doubt as to when it was finally established. I have received from the Librarian of Ipswich Library an extract from Dugdale's Monasticon, Vol. VI, pl. 3, relating to this institution, which I think is worthy of reproduction here, in that there is a difficulty in translating the word "Abbam" of the charter, which could be used for either "abbot" or "abbess."

"The lady Dionysia de Monte Canisio, or MOUNTCHENSI, A.D. 1293, built here, to the honour of the Piety of the blessed Virgin Mary and St. Clare, this Abbey. Tanner says, she had a grant of the manor of Waterbeche, and licence to found a house of religion therein, ten or eleven years before; but the Minoresses were not resolved upon till 22 Edw. I. The Nuns here were removed about A.D. 1348, as has been already mentioned, by Mary Countess of Pembroke, to a religious House of the same Order, then lately founded by her at Denney in Cambridgeshire. JOANNA DE NIVERNIIS

occurs Abbess of Waterbeche in 1294 ; and JOANNE DE TRENGE, t. Edw. III. The advowson of the Church of Regewell in Essex was granted to this House in the 24th Edw. I."*

The portion of land was in the parish of Redeswelle in Essex wherein as stated the family of Monte Caniso was interested, and everything appears to have been amicably settled.

In conclusion, I must tender my thanks, first of all to Mr. Barnard for letting me see, and also describe two such interesting impressions of seals ; then to the Master and Fellows of St. Catherines College for allowing me publicly to describe such treasures from their muniment room, and then lastly to those who helped me elucidate the many conflicting points connected with the impressions and the deed, viz., Mr. Kingsford, Mr. V. B. Redstone, and Mr. Chubb, the Chief Librarian at Ipswich. For those who cannot manage to read the charter, a translation of it is added here.

This is an agreement made between the abbess and convent of the monastery of the B.V.M. of Waterbech in the diocese of Ely on the one part and the Prior and convent of stok in the diocese of Norwich on the other part that the said abbess and Convent shall pay to the said Prior and convent or his duly appointed attorney in the parish church of redeswelle which the aforesaid abbess and convent have to their own use by the gift of the lady Dionisia de monte Caniso the patron of the said church and by Confirmation of the Apostolic See five shillings annually on the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle from the revenues of the said church of Redeswelle for a certain portion of tithes which the aforesaid Prior and Convent received from the fee of Bloundel in the said parish of redeswelle by the gift of the lords of that fee at some time Moreover by pretext of the tithes of that fee of the revenues or by whatever other reason soever in the aforesaid parish of redeswelle nothing other than the aforesaid five shillings annually could be exacted in future from the said abbess and convent by the Prior and convent aforesaid Which payment of five shillings indeed the aforesaid abbess and convent promised in good faith should be made fully and without delay at the agreed term And to this THEY bound the whole revenues of their church of redeswelle aforesaid under penalty of paying five shillings to the building of St. Paul's Church, London, if they should cease in the payment of the said money at the above named place and time. And the aforesaid Prior and Convent of Stok have remitted the whole action, right and claim which they had at any time of which they could have in future in the tithes of the fee of Bloundel aforesaid to the revenues of the abbess and convent of Waterbech aforesaid in perpetuity Nevertheless there was full satisfaction to the said Prior and Convent concerning the five shillings

*"Compare Tanner's References relating to this Abbey, NOTIT. Monast. Cambr. XXVIII. Among Ducarel's Excerpts from the Lambeth Registers, MS. Brit. Mus. Vol. VI, p. 322, is Pope Innocent the VIth's Bull confirming the transl. of Waterbeche to Denney, dated Avignon, 4th id. May A.D. 1359."

Hec est conuencio facta inter abbatem et conuentum monasterii beate marie virginis de Garbich et hinc dicitur quod ex una parte et pro parte
et conuentu de stoby et hinc dicitur quod ex altera videlicet quod eadem abbas et conuentus soluent eadem pro parte et conuentu vel suo proprio aduocato
in causa pachtali de pedestalle quoniam predicta abbas et conuentus hinc in pro parte et conuentu ex donacione beate Dionie de monte ambo eidem conuentui
patris et ex confirmacione beate apostolicis quibus solidos annuatim in festo sancti Michaelis apostolice de pueris et alie eadem de pedestalle
pro quam portione decimarum quoniam predicta pro parte et conuentu de feodo de bloundek in eadem pachtali de pedestalle per donacionem dno quoniam
illius feodi aliquo tempore precepit sed quod preceptum illarum decimarum de feodo illo puenientem seu quoniam alia occasione de eadem in
predicta pachtali de pedestalle nichil aliud quam predicta quoniam solidi annui ab eisdem abbas et conuentu per pro parte et conuentum antea eos exigere
poterit infra quatuordecim annos que solucioem quoniam solidorum dno statuto plenam et sine dilacione aliqua faciendam predicta abbas et conuentus bona
fide promiserunt et ad hoc omnes puenit eadem sue predicta de pedestalle in cuiusque manu devenient. Illigatur sub pena quoniam solidorum
ad fabricam eadem sancti pauli londoni solucioem et in solucione dicitur fame assuequuntur loco et dno super dicitur et predicta pro parte et conuentu
de stoby promiserunt omnem actionem suam et clamorem quod aliquo tempore habuerunt seu habere poterunt infra quatuordecim annos de feo
do de bloundek super dicitur puenientibus abbas et conuentu de Garbich predicta missam dno tamen eisdem pro parte et conuentu de predicta quoniam
solidis per predicta abbatem et conuentum annuatim ut super dicitur est plene fuerit satisfactum. Et ut hec conuencio composicio et ordinacio rata et firma
maneat ppetuo pro super dicitur videlicet abbas et conuentus de Garbich et de et successoribus suis omnes et pro parte et conuentu de stoby et de et
successoribus suis hinc scripto denotato unanimum assensu sigilla sue communitatis hinc inde apposuerunt. Dat apud stoby die calata xxij post
calendas ianuarii. Mon. ad o. o. o.

annually by the aforesaid abness and convent as above stated. And in order that this agreement composition and ordinance may remain in force for ever the above named parties namely the Abbess and Convent of Waterbech on behalf of herself and all her successors and the Prior and Convent of Stok on behalf of himself and his successors by common consent have affixed the seals of their communities to this writing indented Given at Stok on the Saturday next after the feast of St. James the Apostle 1302.

N.B.—I presume the seals of the Abbess and Convent of Waterbeach were affixed to another and a similar document, one of which was retained by either party.