



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

ON THE LOCALITY (NEAR DOVER) OF KING JOHN'S ACT OF VASSALAGE TO THE POPE.

BY JOHN WARD, C.B.

KING JOHN made his submission to the Papal Legate Pandulph on the 15th of May, A.D. 1213, thereby surrendering to the Pope the Kingdom of England and Lordship of Ireland, in the house of the Knights Templars, near Dover; and he then put into the Legate's hands a Charter recording the act, which is dated "*apud domum militum Templi juxta Doveram xv die Maii anno regni nostri decimo quarto.*"

Matthew Paris (a monk who wrote in the thirteenth century) relates in his Chronicle the royal act above-mentioned, stating that King John's submission was made *apud domum militum Templi juxta Doveram*, as mentioned in the Charter. See the *Latin Chronicle* of Mat. Paris, London, 1640, edited by William Watts, in two vols. folio, vol. i. p. 197. The first edition of Mat. Paris was published A.D. 1571.

The historian John Stow (who lived in the sixteenth century) states in his annals that, on the occasion of the surrender of the Crown to the Pope, "King John and Pandulph, with the nobles of the Realme, came together *at the house of the Knights of the Temple by the Towne of Dover.*" See Stow's *Annals*, edited 1631, p. 171. The first edition of Stow was published in 1573.

The same transaction is referred to by William Lambarde in his *Perambulation of Kent*, first edition, London, 1576. He says the Templars' house at Dover was erected after the time of the Conquest, and was suppressed, with other houses of that Order, in the reign of King Edward II (A.D. 1312). He adds, p. 132, that Matthew Paris putteth him in mind

that in that Temple King John yielded his realme tributary to the Pope. "There standeth yet," says Lambarde, in notes to his book, not published until after his death, "upon the high cliffe between the town and the peere (as it were), *not far from that which was the house of Templars*, some remain of a tower now called Bredenstone, which had been both a *pharos* for comfort of saylors, and also a watch-house for defence of the inhabitants." From which it is clear that the ancient house of the Templars near Dover stood upon a part of the western heights then called Bredenstone-Hill, which was among the possessions of the Knights of that Order.

Although the Order was suppressed by the Pope, and its possessions were given to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John in the reign of Edward II, it does not follow that the house was then pulled down; and indeed it would seem to have been standing in the reign of Henry VIII; for a view of Dover taken at that period has been preserved in the British Museum among the Cottonian MSS., *Augustus*, i., vol. i., No. 22 (which is about six feet in length), and according to a modern print* struck off from that drawing, a large house then standing on the western heights may without much doubt be identified as the *domus militum Templi*. It stood at some distance west from the Bredenstone, and almost in a N.S. line with Archcliffe-chapel, which was near the site of the present Archcliffe fort.

The locality of the *domus militum Templi justa Doveram* is thus pretty clearly ascertained to have been upon the western heights. As to the assertions of Rapin, Lingard, and other modern historians, that the King's act of vassalage was made *in a church at or near Dover*, it is needless to add that those assertions rest upon no other authority than the passages above quoted, and the fact that ruins of a round church still exist on the western heights. A plan of the ruins is given in *Archæologia Cantiana*, XI., 45.

* "Dover, 1838. Published by Thomas Rigden, Book and Printseller, and sold in London by J. R. Smith, 4 Old Compton Street, Soho."