



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

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382
© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

NOTES ON SOME EARLY DOCUMENTS
RELATING TO THE MANOR, CHURCH AND
PRIORY OF BILSINGTON, KENT.

BY C. EVELEIGH WOODRUFF.

By the courtesy of our member, Dr. Gordon Ward, of Sevenoaks, I am enabled to offer to our Society a description, and, in some cases transcriptions of certain early charters and other documents which recently have come into his possession. They extend from the first half of the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, and, with one exception, viz., No. 18, they all relate to the manor, church, or priory of Bilsington. It was during the summer of last year (1928) that Dr. Ward brought the documents to Canterbury and, deposited them in the Chapter Library for my inspection, and, by a somewhat remarkable coincidence, only a few weeks later the British Academy published the Cartulary of Bilsington Priory, as their seventh volume of records of social and economic history. Miss N. Neilson, Ph.D., the editor of the above volume, has made use of a fifteenth century register-book, which doubtless was at one time the property of the prior and canons of Bilsington, but is now preserved in the library of the British Museum [Add. MS. 37018], and she has prefaced her transcript of the Cartulary by exceedingly able essays on the customs of the weald and marshland of Kent.

Four of Dr. Ward's charters can be identified as the originals of which copies were made in the fifteenth century; the rest are not included in the Cartulary and therefore form a short supplement to it. To many of the documents fine seals are attached which in some instances still retain their original silken bags.

1

[c. 1236]. Grant from Humphrey de Bohun (*Bohun*), Earl of Hereford and Essex, and Matilda his wife, daughter of the Countess of Eu, to John, son of Henry of Sandwich of all their manor of Bilsington,—with the exception of the military services which the grantors retain to themselves and their heirs, and a rent of two shillings which they have given to John of Snaves—to be held by the said John (of Sandwich) and his heirs or assigns—religious houses excepted—for the service of half a knights' fee. And, for the grant the grantee makes a cash payment of eight hundred marks.

Seals : (1) Circular of red wax, a shield of arms bearing a bend cotised between 6 lions rampant, *Bohun*.

(2) Oval of red wax, displaying a full length figure of a lady, wearing a long gown covering her feet, and a hat fastened with strings tied beneath her chin, and holding in her right hand a flower, and with a hawk on her left wrist.

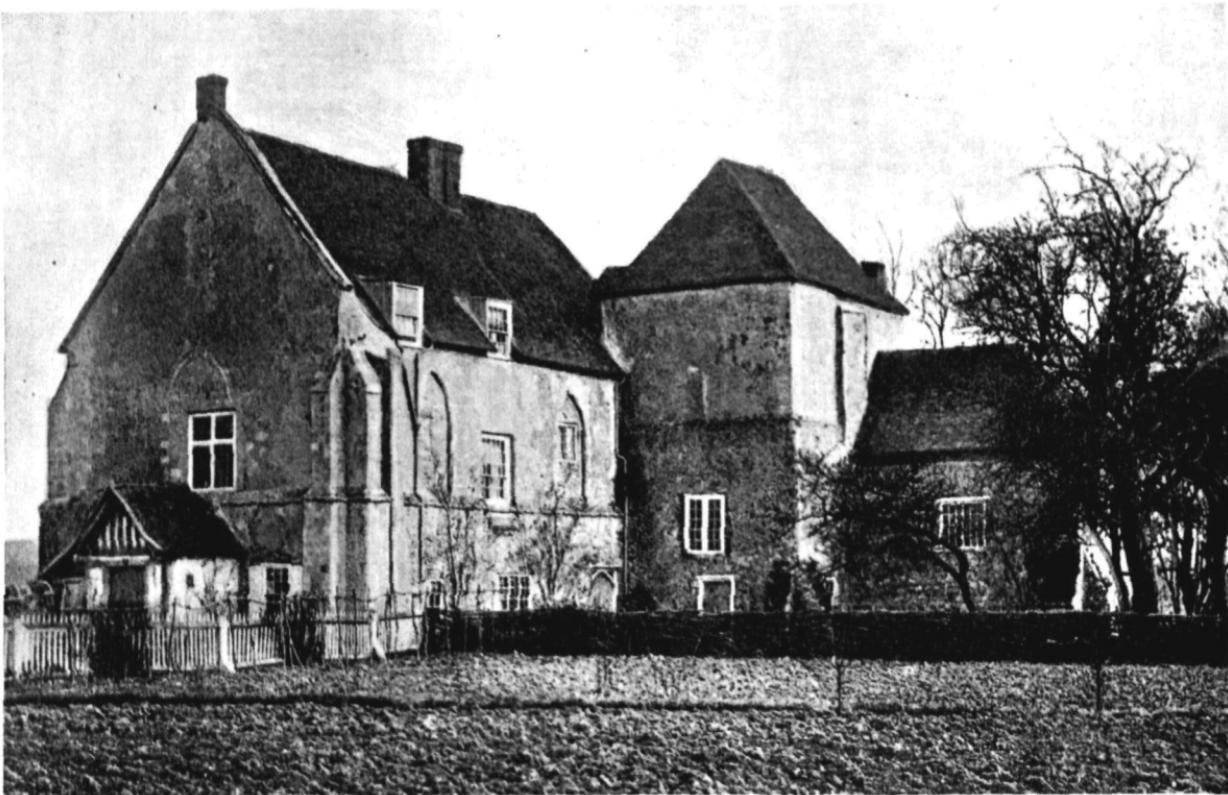
Legend : SIGILLUM COMITISSE AUGI.¹

* * * * *

Humphrey de Bohun succeeded his father Henry de Bohun as Earl of Hereford in 1220, and was created Earl of Essex in 1228, on the death of William de Mandeville, his mother's brother. Hasted does not mention the Bohun family in tracing the descent of the manor of Bilsington, but the connexion is explained by the return of an inquest—taken by the King's command in 1247 for the purpose of determining what part of the manor was given by the Earl of Arundel to the Count of Eu²—which found that William d'Albini, who died in 1193 as Earl of Arundel, gave one half of Bilsington, and seven knights' fees in Meiham (? Maytham in Rolvenden), Beindenne (? Biddenden) and Herbertindenne to his daughter Alice on her marriage with John of Eu, and that subsequently Matilda, the great granddaughter of the said John, carried the land in marriage to her husband, Humphrey de Bohun. The latter's grant to John of Sandwich is undated but since Archbishop Edmund—who was primate from 1234 to 1240—is one of the witnesses, it must have been executed between the above years.

¹ A woodcut of the seal of the Countess of Eu was published in the *Journal of the Archaeological Institute*, vol. xi, p. 367.

² *Bilsington Cartulary*, No. 170.



BILSINGTON PRIORY.

[No. 1 Transcript.]

Sciant presentes et futuri quod Ego Humfridus de Boun comes Hereford' & Essex', et Ego Matilda filia comitis Augi uxor Humfridi de Boun prenominati, dedimus concessimus & hac presenti carta nostra confirmauimus Johanni filio Henrici de Sandwych pro homagio & seruicio suo totum manerium nostrum de Bilsinton integre cum pertinentiis suis exceptis seruiciis militaribus remanentibus nobis & heredibus nostris & duobus solidis de redditu quos dedimus Johanni Snaues, sine ullo retinimento, sicut nos illud melius & liberius tenuimus. Habendum & tenendum supradicto Johanni & heredibus, suis uel eius assignatis, exceptis domibus religiosis, de nobis & heredibus nostris libere & quiete bene & pacifice jure hereditario in perpetuum, faciendo inde nobis & heredibus nostris seruicium mediatatis feodi unius militis pro omnibus, seruiciis consuetudinibus querelis sectis ex actionibus & demandis temporalibus ad nos uel ad heredes nostros de manerio prenominato pertinentibus. Et Ego Humfridus de Boun & Ego Matilda predicta & heredes nostri warantizabimus & deffendemus totum predictum manerium cum pertinentiis suis supradicto Johanni & heredibus suis uel eius assignatis contra omnes homines & feminas in perpetuum per predictum seruicium. Pro hac autem donacione concessione deffensione & warantizacione nostra & huius carte nostre confirmatione facta & recordata & sigillis nostris firmiter munita, dedit nobis sepdictus Johannes octo centum marcas sterlingorum in gersumam.

Hiis testibus, Domino Eadmundo Cantuar Archiepiscopo, Magistro Roberto fratre suo, Willelmo Talebot, Henrico de Wintreshelle, Galfrido de Sancto Leodegaro, Ricardo de Wokesheye, Henrico de Sandwych, Symone filio suo, Randulfo de Gosehalle, Ricardo Camerario, Johanne de Snaues, Johanne Chich de Cantuar', Willelmo Eadward de Sandwych, Henrico de Menstre, et multis aliis.

2

1242. This is a confirmation by Roger (de la Lee), prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, of two ordinances of Archbishop Edmund relating to the rectory of Bilsington. The first, which is dated 5 March, 1236, provides for the payment of a perpetual pension of 10 marks per annum to the prior and convent of St. Mary Boxgrave (Boxgrove near Chichester) from the rectory of Bilsington.

The second—which is dated 1237 (day and month not given)—decides a controversy between the prior and convent of Boxgrave and Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, as to their respective rights in the patronage of the church of *Bulsinton* in favour of the monks, on the ground that in the days of Archbishop Stephen, the clergy of the deanery of Lymne, assembled in chapter, had found that the patronage of the said church formerly belonged to the abbot and convent of Essey in Normandy, by whom it had been transferred to the prior and convent of Boxgrave, and, that the Earl of Hereford had sold, and publicly renounced all claim to the patronage of the said church, moreover, the archbishop had instituted two clerks to the benefice on the presentation of the prior and convent of Boxgrave, namely Thomas of Gosebech, and, after his death, one Thomas, a chaplain.

Boxgrove Priory was founded in the reign of Henry I as a cell of Essey. Since William d'Albini, the first Earl of Arundel, was a benefactor to Boxgrove, the latter house probably acquired the patronage of Bilsington rectory through him. In 1328, however, Boxgrove handed over the advowson to the prior and convent of Bilsington.¹

[No. 2 Transcript.]

A.D. 1242. Omnibus Christi fidelibus presens scriptum inspecturis Rogerus Prior ecclesie Christi Cant' & eiusdem loci conventus eternam in domino salutem. Noverit universitas vestra nos inspexisse cartam venerabilis patris nostri Edmundi dei gracia Cant' Archiepiscopi Priori & conventui de Boxgrava factam sub hac forma. Omnibus sancte matris ecclesie filiis presens scriptum inspecturis. Edmundus permissione diuina Cant' Archiepiscopus tocius Anglie Primas, salutem in domino. Nouerit universitas vestra diuine pietatis intuitu dedisse & concessisse ecclesie beate Marie de Boxgrava & monachis ibidem deo seruientibus decem marcas de ecclesia de Bulsinton nomine perpetui beneficii in perpetuum per manus Rectoris eiusdem ecclesie qui pro tempore fuerit annuatim percipiandas ad duos anni terminos, videlicet in die Purificaciones beate Marie quinque marcas & in die Pentechost' quinque marcas in quibus computabuntur decem solidos quos de eadem ecclesia prius percipere solebant annuatim. Statuimus autem ut defuncto eiusdem ecclesie

¹ Pat. R., 23 Septr. 2. Edw. 3.

Rectore qui fuerit, Prior & Conventus de Boxgraua nobis & successoribus nostris virum idoneum capellanum presentabunt qui in dicta ecclesia possit & velit perpetualiter residere qui de predictis decem marcis eis respondeat & omnia onera dictam ecclesiam contingentia subportet, prestito sacramento quod dictas decem marcas prefatis monachis supradictis terminis sine difficultate qualibet & conditione persoluet. Ut autem ea que in hac parte acta sunt a nobis & precediata ac statuta perpetuam obtineant firmitatem ea presenti scripto sigilli nostri apposictione munito duximus confirmanda. Dat' apud Sumalling III Non martii Pontificis nostri anno secundo. Preterea aliam cartam eiusdem Edmundi archiepiscopi sub hac forma. Omnibus sancte matris ecclesie filiis presens scriptum inspecturis, Edmundus permissione diuina Cant' Archiepiscopus & tocius Anglie primas salutem in domino. Nouerit uniuersitas vestra quod cum controuersia inter priorem & conventum de Boxgraua ex una parte & nobilem virum Humfridum comitem Hereford' ex altera super patronatu ecclesie de Bulsinton sub nostro examine fuisse mota post altercationes hinc inde propositas tum ex testimonio Capituli de lymenes tum ex mandato domini Regis sub hoc nobis directo auctentico etiam pie memorie Stephani predecessoris nostri scripto cognoscentes patronatus dicte ecclesie de Bulsinton ad abbatem & conventum de exaqvis de quorum dono dicti prior & conventus de Boxgraua eandem ecclesiam obtainere noscuntur de iure pertinere, quia supradictus comes Hereford' totum ius & clamum in supradicta ecclesia uendicabat pro se & pro heredibus suis dictis priori & conuentui de Boxgraua penitus remisit & quietum clamanit ac constitutis super hoc literis suis patentibus appellacioni pro se interposite renuncians quicquid iuris in sepe dictam ecclesiam habuit uel habere potuit in presencia nostra resignauit. Quia uero de predictorum prioris & conuentus de Boxgraua iure nobis constituit evidenter ad ipsorum presentacionem Thomam de Gosebech & post decessum ipsius Thome Ricardum capellanum admisisimus ad eandem ecclesiam & Rectores perpetuos in eadem canonice instituimus solutis supradictis monachis de Boxgraua decem marcis nomine perpetui beneficii singulis annis in perpetuum pecipiendis per manus ipsius Rectoris qui pro tempore ecclesiam rexit memoratam. Et ut futuris temporibus memoriter, teneatur presenti scripto sigillum nostrum duximus apponendum. Dat' apud Cant' anno gracie M° CC° tricesimo septimo Pontificatus

nostri anno quarto. Nos igitur prescriptas cartas & donationem ipsam sicut rationabiliter factam est quantum ad nos spectat confirmandam duximus, salua in omnibus Cant' ecclesie dignitate. In huius autem rei testimonium presenti scripto sigillum capituli nostri apposuimus. Actum est hoc anno gracie M° CC° quadragesimo secundo.

3

12 Sept. 1250. [B. Cart. No. 4.] Confirmation by King Henry III. of the gift by the heirs of Hugh sometime Earl of Arundel of the manor of Bilsington, which is held of the King in serjeanty, and the land belonging thereto in Poldre and four knights' fees in Meyham (? Maytham), to John Maunsel, provost of Beverley, as an endowment for the monastery of Augustinian Canons which the said John proposes to build at Bilsington.

* * * * *

John Maunsel or Mansel, the founder of Bilsington Priory, was held in high esteem by Henry III. who loaded him with ecclesiastical preferments. According to Matthew Paris, Maunsel was induced to found a religious house by the wise reflection that the royal favour was not hereditary nor worldly prosperity lasting.¹

Six years before the date of the present charter he had obtained the King's licence to receive the lands of the late Earl of Arundel in the manor of Bilsington²; but the foundation charter of his priory was not executed until June, 1253. It is printed by Miss Neilson (No. 1 B. Cart.) and from that source we learn that Maunsel granted to Prior William and the canons all that part of the manor of Bilsington which he had received from the heirs of Hugh Earl of Arundel,³ together with the said earl's lands in Polre, Gozenhall, and Ecche, which perhaps may be identified as Poulders in Woodnesborough, and Goshall and Each in Ash-next-Sandwich.

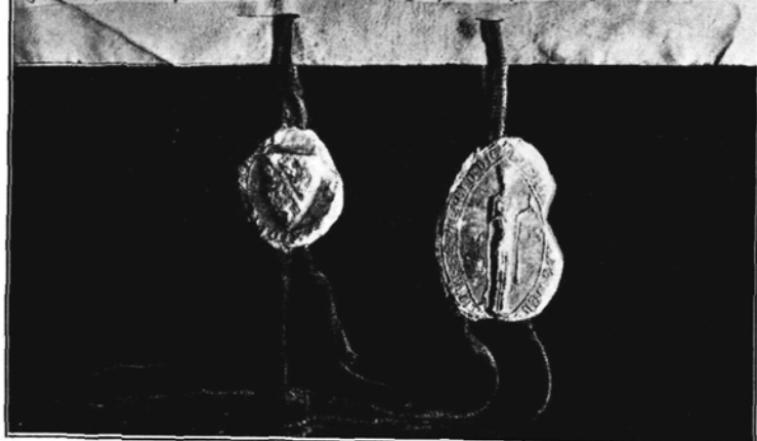
Great seal of England, and seal bag.

¹ *Hist. Min.*, R.S. 968.

² *Pat. R.*, 28. Hen. 3.

³ Hugh d'Albini the fifth and last earl of Arundel died young without leaving issue, Mat. Paris says: *aestate juvenali vix metas adolescentiae pertransisset*, and his estates were partitioned between his three sisters.

Sacramentorum et sicut ex hoc mandato de bono Comiti Herford et alio. ex quo videlicet illi Comitatu Augusto
 Henrico de bono suorum deum concilium et habeat plena carta nostra confirmatum. Solendum sit hunc de Comitatu
 et bonorum et ducis suo loco manegimus item de bellumq[ue]m regis ex parte suis exercituum suorum velut condicione nobis
 regis misit et deinde fidei de voluntate suae de domino Iohanne de Brabant. sine illo recuero faciat nos illud inde et liberum tenui
 mus. Habendo et tenendo suuero Iohannem et heredem suum alias exercituum domini regnoscit. Ne nobis et heredibus illis licet
 regis in episcopatu[m] iuri habentia in pacem faciendo inde nobis inde missis suuera medicamenta scodi. Unde milites p[ro]p[ter]ea
 omnes suos coniunctus quiete secesserunt a terra et domini de tempore illius ad hunc tempore de manu proposito
 patribus. Et ex hoc mandato de bono et de suorum deum concilium videlicet ab omnibus et deinde eis toti pacem in aliis cum
 pacem huius suorum Iohannes et heredem suam acceperunt omnes homines et formaliter in pacem p[re]dictam suauit. Pro hec autem do
 nacione pacis suorum decesserunt et duxerunt ipsa et huius causa missis ostendit. Scilicet et recordata et sicut missis suis
 immunitate credere nobis heredes Iohannes et deo servit ecclesias et reliquias in domum suam. Unde totius eius omnia etiam
 amicarum et amicorum. Et anno octavo regni eius. Et anno calice. Henricus de Brabant. Galfridus deo Leodegarus.
 Et de Scoltheit. Et anno decimo regni eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius.
 Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius. Et anno etate eius.



GRANT. c. 1236.



SILK BAG FOR SEAL OF CHARTER, DATED 1250.



CHARTER, DATED 1250.

[No. 3 Transcript.]

12 Sept. 1250. Henricus dei gracia Angl' Dñs Hybern' Dux Normann' Aquit' & comes Andeg', Archiepiscopis, Episcopis, Abbatibus, Prioribus, Comitibus, Baronibus, Justiciariis, Vice-comitibus, Prepositis, Ministris & omnibus Ballivis, & fidelibus suis salutem. Sciatis quod cum dilectus & fidelis noster Johannes Maunsel prepositus Beuerlacencis in proposito habeat construere quoddam monasterium canonicorum regularium ordinis sancti Augustini in manerio suo de Bylsygon quod habet de dono heredum Hugonis quondam Com' Arundell & quod est de seriancia nostra ipsumque manerium & terram suam de Polre cum eorum pertinentiis & cum quatuor feodis militum in Meyham eisdem canonicis in predicto loco de Bylsygon deo & beate Marie perpetuum seruituris pia deuotione assignare, nos devotam intentionem suam in hac parte merito commendantes sic fieri concedemus & predictum manerium & terram predictam cum eorum pertinentiis, & cum feodis predictis memoratis canonicis & eorum successoribus in perpetuum pro nobis & heredibus nostris confirmamus. Hiis testibus, Willo de Valencia fratre nostro, Radulfo filio Nicholai, Paulino Peyur', Roberto Waleraund, Willo de Chaeny, Philippo Lunel, Stephano Bauzam, Rogero de Lokenton & aliis. Dat' Oxon' per manum nostram duodecimo die Septembr'. anno regni nostri tricesimo quarto [1250].

4

12 May, 1263. [B. Cart. No. 26.] Grant from King Henry III. to John Maunsell, treasurer of York of 100 acres of land in Polres which Sarra of Polres formerly held, but which had escheated to the King as *terræ Normannorum*, with a covenant that if at any time the right heirs should recover the said lands the grantee shall not be disseised of the same without receiving other lands of like value.

The lands, probably, had escheated to the crown in the time of King John who, after the loss of Normandy, seized the estates of his nobles who possessing lands on both sides of the channel preferred to be French rather than English subjects.¹

¹ For *terræ Normannorum*, see Pollock and Maitland's *History of English Law*, vol. i., p. 462.

[No. 4 Transcript.]

12 May, 1263. [B. Cart. No. 26.] Henricus Dei gracia Rex Ang' Dominus Hibern', Dux Aquitann' Archiepiscopis, Episcopis, Abbatibus, Prioribus, Baronibus, Justiciariis, Vicecomitibus, prepositis, ministris & omnibus ballinis & fidelibus suis salutem. Sciatis nos dedisse concessisse & hac carta nostra confirmasse dilecto & fideli nostro Johanni Maunsell Thesaurario Ebor' centum acras terre cum pertinentiis quas sarra de Polres aliquando tenuit in Polres & que fuit escaeta nostra de terris Normannorum. Habendas & tenendas de nobis & heredibus nostris predicto Johanni & heredibus uel assignatis suis faciendo nobis & heredibus nostris seruicium inde debitum. Et si contingat quod terra nostra Angl' & terre Normannorum sint communes & predictam terram in Polres rectis heredibus per pacem aut voluntatem nostram reddere voluerimus, non disseisiemur nec disseisiri permittemus predictum Johannem aut heredes vel assignatos suos de terra predicta, prius quam eis pro terra illa escambium fecerimus racionabile. Quare volumus & firmiter precipimus pro nobis & heredibus nostris quod predictus Johannes & heredes vel assignati sui habeant & teneant predictas centum acras terre cum pertinentiis in Polres libere quiete & integre cum omnibus libertatibus & liberis consuetudinibus ad terram illam pertinentibus, faciendo nobis & heredibus nostris seruicium inde debitum. [Et si contingat quod terra nostra Angl' & terre Normannorum sint communes & predictam terram in Polres rectis heredibus per pacem aut voluntatem nostram reddere voluerimus non disseisiemus nec disseisiri permittemus predictum Johannem aut heredes vel assignatos suos de terra predicta prius quam eis pro terra illa escambium fecerimus racionabile sicut predictum est. Hiis testibus Rogero Le Bigot comite Norff' & marescallo Angl', Philippo Basset Justiciario nostro Angl', Hugone Le (*parchment defective*), Willelmo de Wilton, Galfrido de Langeley, Waltero de Burges, Willelmo de Sancta Ermina, Galfrido de Percy et multis aliis. Dat' per manum nostram apud sanctum Paulum London' duodecimo die Maii anno regni nostri quadragesimo septimo].¹

5

1 Dec. 1359. [B. Cart. No. 178.] Grant of John Jekyn (with licence from King Edward III.) to the prior and convent of

¹ The clause beginning *et si contingat* and the names of the witnesses, except that of Roger Bigod are omitted in the Cartulary.

Bilsington of 62 acres of arable land, 9 acres of pasture and 1½ acre of woodland in the parishes of Lyde (Lydd) and Bilsington, with the reversion of another 2 acres of land in the latter parish, which William Coupere holds of the grantor for the term of his natural life. Dated at Lyde 1 December, 32nd Edward III. Witnesses : Edmund of Pasele, knight, Richard of Poundhurst, Thomas atte Capele, Hugh Colebrand of Romenal, William of Bolyngbroke, Richard of Meynyl, John of Hoke, Matthew of the More, and others.

Seal : an intaglio figure of a man of classical design. Seal bag of yellow silk.

6

3 Dec. 1386. [B. Cart. No. 180.] Letters Patent of King Richard II. confirming the licence in mortmain granted by his grandfather King Edward to John Lynot of Iveccherche, and Simon Clerk of Romene, to grant to the prior and convent of Bilsington 85 acres of arable land and 5 acres of pasture in the parishes of Lyde, and Saint Mariecherche in Romney Marsh, the said lands are of the clear annual value of 18s. 4d. and not held of the king in chief, as has been found by an inquest held by John Brode of Smethe, the King's escheator for the county of Kent. Dated at Westminster 3 Dec. 10 Rich. 2.

Great Seal.

7

12 June, 1437. Letters Patent of King Henry VI, dated 12 June, 1437, granting to Roger Erle, prior of Bilsington, a general pardon for all transgressions of and offences against the statute prohibiting the export of cloth, &c. of which he may have been guilty since the tenth year of the King's reign (1431); and also exonerating him from any claim which the King may have against him for the repayment of money which had come into the prior's hands in connexion with the French wars in the reign of the King's father, or for the return of the jewels which the latter had deposited with the Prior as security for the wages of his soldiers, and for their transport to Normandy.

That the Prior should have been guilty of a little smuggling is not surprising as the situation of his house on the edge of the marsh was particularly favourable for illicit trading overseas;

but it is extremely puzzling to learn that King Henry V. kept his war chest in such an insecure place as Bilsington Priory. Moreover, since Roger Erle did not become prior until 1435,¹ he could not have been personally responsible for what had taken place twenty-three years earlier.

The following is the text of the clause relating to the profits acquired by the prior during the French wars :

“ Perdonamus . . . eidem Priori omnimoda prestita guerrarum ac guerrarum vadia et tercias as terciarum tercias redemptionum prisonarum in guerra captorum et omnimoda lucrorum guerre pro viagiis domino Henrico nuper Regi Anglie patri nostro usque diem obitus sui per ipsum Priorem nuper debita, necnon omnimoda iocalia que fuerunt dicti patris nostri predicto priori pro securitate vadiorum guerre pro viagiis dicti patris nostri versus villam de Herflewe ac partes Francie et Normanorum liberata & nobis pertinencia sive spectantia nisi eidem Priori aliqua alia debita securitates regards demandas vel onera pro guerris ac guerrarum vadiis sibi ratione alicuius retinencie guerre cum dicto patre nostro vel alicuius alterius cause de guerra pro viagiis predictis competencia seu competitura, preterquam debita securitates regards demandas et onera sibi pro custodia Castri et ville Cales ac merchiarum ibidem tempore dicti patris nostri competencia de nobis vel heredibus nostris non exigat nec exigere possit in futuro quovis modo set quod nos et dicti heredes, nostri de debitis securitatibus demandis . . . si que fuerit erga prefatum Priorem quiete sumus et penitus exonerati imperpetuum.”

8

Letters patent of King Henry VI.—dated 22 June, 1452—granting a general pardon to the prior and convent of Bilsington for all offences &c. committed before Good Friday last past (April 7th).

In the long preamble, which is so characteristic of the piety for which Henry VI. is famed that it surely must have been his own composition, the King states that desiring to imitate the mercy of the divine Redeemer, “out of reverence to God and the most glorious Virgin Mary in whose name and honour our colleges are founded,”² he extends his mercy to all persons who

¹ Pat. R., 13. Hen. 6.

² Eton and King's, Cambridge.

lately have " offended against God our royal dignity and authority, and the peace of our realm," with the exception of those implicated in the murder of Adam, bishop of Chichester and William, bishop of Salisbury.¹

The pardon of course refers to the rising of the commons of Kent under Jack Cade, in which, apparently, the prior and convent of Bilsington were in some way involved, though W. D. Cooper in his article on Cade's followers in Kent (*Arch. Cant.*, Vol. VII., pp. 233 *et seq.*) mentions the abbot of Battle and the prior of Lewes as the only heads of religious houses who participated in the rebellion.

[No. 8 Transcript.]

Henricus dei gracia Rex Anglie & Francie & dominus Hibernie, omnibus Ballivis & fidelibus suis &c. . . . Sciatis quod non solum ob insignia merita subditorum & ligeorum nostrorum que nobis probitissimam fidem suam illesam incontaminatam servarunt, verum eciam nos attendentes quod ineffabilis divine prudencie sublimitas licet hominem ad imaginem & similitudinem sui conditum post lapsum eius in peccatum ac statum gracie a quo decidit nullatenus ex se aut suis viribus seu meritis, set sola dignacione divine propiciacionis & misericordie redire valentem restaurare reparareque decrevisset, non tamen ad opus ipsum tam grande perficiendum protinus & indilate procedent, duxit quinimmo post multas & longissimas labentis huius seculi etates ipso videlicet genere humano maiore sui ex parte in maligna digresso cum nemo de suis meritis gloriari potuisset, opus huiusmodi tam insigne tot & tantorum annorum curriculis expectatum, novissimis tandem temporibus censint consummandum cuius sacra vestigia pro nostre modicitatis viribus sequi sectarique cupientes, considerantes plerosque ligeorum ac subditorum nostrorum in diversis huius regni nostri partibus contra Deum & iusticiam ac contra dignitatem auctoritatem nostram regiam ac adversus tranquilitatem & pacem huius regni nostri & rei publice nobis commisso in nostri legumque nostrarum contemptum multipliciter offendisse quosdem videlicet enormia atque gravia

¹ Adam Moleyns, bishop of Chichester (1446-50) was murdered at Portsmouth as he was preparing to leave the country. His connexion with the party of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, murdered at sea off Dover, 2nd May, 1450 (*Paston Letters*, i, 124, 126) which was generally in favour of peace with France, is said to have been the main cause of his unpopularity. William Ayscough, bishop of Salisbury (1438-50) was murdered at Edynton in Wilts. He was secretary and confessor to the King.

alios leviora crimina atque delicta perpetrando et idcirco nostre serenitatis & castigacionis aculeos merito formidare debere, nos quanquam propter eorum multitudinem misericorditer cum eis agendis existimaverimus, non tamen precipiti vel immatura festinacione ad hoc duximus procedendum quinimmo remissionis huiusmodi ac perdonacionis nostre, largicionem & graciam adventui sacre diei paraceves, videlicet septime diei Aprilis ultimo preterite, decrevimus reservand' ut ea quidem die remissionis & indulgencie nostre largitatem impatiemur qua redemptor noster amplissimum & inestimabile sue miseracionis & indulgencie beneficium universo generi miro quodam & ineffabili liberalitatis & munificie sue modo decreverat largiendum, horum igitur pia and religiosa consideracione permoti ob Dei reverenciam gloriosissime virginis genitricis sue Marie in cuius laudem & honorem Collegiorum nostrorum fundaciones ereximus & in quam post deum totam spem nostram prefiximus, ac predicte diei paraceves universo generi humano, venerande ipsius redemptoris nostri quatenus sufficimus & valemus exemplum imitari volentes de gracia nostra speciali & ex certa sciencia & mero motu nostris dicto die paraceves perdonand' censimus remittend' & relaxand', ac in presenti perdonand' censemus remittend' & relaxand', necnon per presentes perdonamus remittimus & relaxamus priori & conventui ecclesie beate Marie de Bilsyngton . . . in comite Kancie, seu quibuscumque aliis nominibus censeatur omnimodo transgresiones offensas, mesprisiones, contemptus, & impetitiones per ipsos priorem & conventum ante predictum diem paraceves contra formam statutorum de liberatis' pannorum & capiciorum factos sive perpetratas unde punicio caderet in finem & redempcionem aut alias penas pecuniares seu imprisonmenta, statutis predictis non obstantibus.

Et insuper ex motu & sciencia nostris predictis perdonamus remisimus & rexalaxamus easdem priori & conventui sectam pacis nostre que ad nos versus ipsos pertinet per omnimodis prodicionibus murdris, raptibus mulierum, rebellionibus, insurrectionibus, felonias, conspiracionibus, cambipartiis, maumentensiis & imbraciariis, ac aliis transgressionibus, offensis, negligentias, extortionibus, mesprisionibus, ignorancias, contemptibus, forisfacturis, & deceptionibus per ipsos priorem & conventum ante predictum diem paraceves qualitercumque factis sive perpetratis, ac eciam utlagare si que in ipsos priorem & conventum hiis occasionibus seu earum aliqua fuerint promulgatae & firmam pacem nostram

ei inde concidimus. Ita tamen quod stet recto in curia nostra si quis versus eos loqui voluerint de premissis seu aliquo premissorum perdonamus, eciam remisimus & relaxaminus eisdem priori & conventui omnimodas donaciones, alienaciones, perquisiciones, per ipsos de terris & tenementis de nobis vel progenitoribus nostris quondam Regibus Anglie in capite tentis, ac eciam donaciones & perquisiciones ad manum mortuam factas & habitas absque licencia regia, necnon omnimodas intrusiones, & ingressus, in hereditatem suam in parte vel in toto post mortem antecessorum suorum absque debita prosecuzione eiusdem extra manum regiam ante eundem diem parasceves factos una cum exitibus & proficuis inde medio tempore perceptis. Et insuper perdonamus &c. . . . eiusdem priori & conventui omnimodas penas ante dictum diem parasceves forisfacturas coram nobis seu consilio nostro Cancellario, Thesaurario, seu aliquo judicum nostrorum, pro aliqua causa & omnes alias penas tam nobis quam carissimo patri nostro defuncto ipsos priorem & conventum pro aliqua causa ante eundem diem parasceves forisfacturas, & ad opus nostrum levand' ac omnimodas securitates pacis ante eundem diem parasceves similiter forisfacturas, ac eciam tercias & terciarum tercias omnimodorum prisoniorum in guerra captorum nobis dicto die parasceves qualitercumque debitas pertinentes sive spectantes per eosdem priorem & conventum, necnon omnimodas transgressiones, offensas, mesprisiones, contemptus, & impeticiones per ipsos priorem & conventum ante eundem diem parasceves contra formam tam quorumcumque statutorum, ordinacionum & provisionum ante dictum diem parasceves factorum sive editorum de perquisitionibus, acceptacionibus, lectionibus, publicacionibus, notificacionibus & execucionibus quibuscumque, quarumcumque literarum & bullarum apostolicarum, ante diem parasceves & omnium aliorum statutorum, ordinacionum, & provisionum, pretextu quorum aliqua secta versus eosdem priorem & conventum per billam vel per breve de premuniri fact' seu alio modo quocumque pro aliqua materia ante eundem diem parasceves fieri valeat, quam quorumcumque aliorum statutatorum factos sive perpetratos, statutis, ordinacionibus & provisionibus illis non obstantibus. Proviso semper quod presens perdonacio remissio sive relaxacio nostra ad aliquem seu aliquos versus quem vel versus quos aliqua secta ex parte nostra aut alterius cuiuscumque per breve nostrum, aut per billam premuniri fact' in curia nostra coram nobis, aut aliqua alia curia nostra dicto die paraheves, aut aliquo alio die

citra festum Nativitatis Sancti Johannis Baptiste ulterius preteritum, & ante diem dictum parasceves, de perquisicionibus literarum & bullarum apostolicarum supradictarum contra formam statutorum ordinacionum & provisionum predictorum factis, aut de aliquibus aliis rebus priori & conuentui omnimodas penas & puniciones quas occasionibus predictis seu earum aliqua erga nos incurrere deberet ac omnes & omnimodas forisfacturas terrarum tenementorum reddituum possessionum bonorum & catallarum suorum quorumcumque nobis occasionibus illis seu earum aliqua pertinentes sive spectantes. Proviso eciam quod presens perdonacio nostra se non extendat ad aliquem illorum qui venerabiles patres Adam Cicestrensis & Willelmum Sarum episcopos seu eorum alterum nequiter interfecerunt, seu ad illum vell illas qui neci eorum vel alterius eorum quovis modo agentes faventes auxiliantes consciencientes vel procurantes exstiterunt. In cuius rei testimonium has literas patentes nostras fieri fecimus patentes, Teste me ipso apud Westmonsterium vicesimo secundo die Junii anno regni nostri tricesimo. [1452.]

Great Seal.

9

21 March, 1453. Licence of King Henry VI. to Joan, widow of Sir William Brenchesle, knight, who is seised of the manor of Bilsington, which she holds in chief of the King, and to John Fray, late chief baron of the exchequer, Thomas Hoo, and Richard Wakeherst, the younger (who have a reversionary interest in the manor on the death of Joan), to grant the said manor to Sir John Cheney, knight, and his heirs, to be held in trust for him by John (Kempe) cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas, bishop of Ely, Edmund, Duke of Somerset, Sir John Stourton, knight, Sir Robert Shotesbroke, knight, Sir Thomas Kiryell, knight, John Pympe, esquire, William Cheyne, of the county of Sussex, Ralph Seyntleger, Thomas St. Nicholas, John Rawe, William Apulerville (*sic*, for Apuldrefeld), Ralph Josselin, merchant, John Norton, and William Bigge, of Canterbury. Dated at Westminster, 21 March, 31st Hen. 6.

Great Seal.

Joan, the widow of Sir William Brenchley, a justice of the Court of Common Pleas, was the founder of a chantry Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral. The chapel was built between two

buttresses outside the south aisle of the nave; it was pulled down in 1786.

A Thomas Brenchesle was prior of Bilsington from 1389 to 1411.

10

28 Nov. 1474. Indenture of an award by Sir John Fogge, Knight, and Robert Forster, the arbitrators in a dispute between John Elryngton esquire, and Margaret his wife, and the prior and convent of Bilsington, as to the right of the former to receive from the latter a yearly rent of 12 quarters of salt, issuing out of 88 acres 3 roods and 10 perches of land in Lide (Lydd) "where sometime there was a saltcote." The arbitrators decided that the rent in kind should be commuted for a rent charge of 33s. 4d. payable to the said Margaret and the heirs of her body or in default of such to Sir Thomas Etchingham, Knight, and his heirs.

Five Seals. Of the priory seal only a fragment remains. John Elrington was treasurer of the King's household, constable of Windsor Castle, and bailiff of Winchelsea. His wife, Margaret, was a daughter and one of the co-heiresses of Sir Thomas Etchingham of Sussex. In 1485 a pardon was granted to Margaret Elryngton widow, late wife of Sir John Elryngton, knight, for all alienations &c. of land without the royal licence, and for all debts and arrears due to the King.¹

11

20 April, 1475. Deed of agreement by which the prior and convent of Bilsington (in accordance with the award made in No. 10), agree to pay to Margaret the wife of John Elryngton, daughter and heiress apparent of Sir Thomas Etchingham, Knight, a yearly rent of 33s. 4d. in lieu of 12 quarters of salt.

Two seals. One has a tun suspended by a ring, and perhaps the letter L, for Elrington.

12

20 April, 1475. Grant from the prior and convent of Bilsington to Robert Forster and John Elryngton, senior, brother (*sic*) of John Elryngton, the husband of Margaret, of the rents and

¹ Pat. R., 2. Ric. 3.

services of 88 acres 3 roods and 10 perches of land in Lide, in exchange for a rent of salt issuing out of the said lands.

Three seals. (1) A lion rampant, (2) a man with a hawk on his wrist (?) *Forster*, (3) a tun on a ring, *Elrington*.

13

20 Nov. 1539. Confirmation of Thomas (Goldwell), prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, of a grant by Archbishop Thomas (Cranmer) to Sir Anthony Seyntleger and his heirs, of the house or site of the lately dissolved priory of Bilsington,¹ together with all lands pertaining thereto and the rectory of the church of Bilsington, for a yearly rent of £70 payable to the Archbishop and his successors.

14

30 Oct. 1576. Exemplification, made 30 Oct. 1576, of a fine levied in the Court of King's Bench in the year 1568, whereby Sir Warham Seyntleger, knight, William Seyntleger esquire, Sibilla his wife, and Nicholas Seyntleger, gent. convey to Francis Barnham the Manor of Bilsington, which is said to contain 10 houses, 100 acres of arable land, 270 acres of pasture, 350 acres of woodland, 400 acres of marshland, and rents amounting to £16, in the parishes of Bilsington, Lydd, Romney, Brookland, Bressel, Newchurch, St. Mary's, Willesborough, Ruckinge, Hinxhill, Aldington, Tenterden, Mersham, Eastry, Woodnesburgh, and Sandwich.

Great Seal of Queen Elizabeth.

15

19 Feb. 1582. Release from Thomas Cheynie of West Woodley, Berks., and Thomas Cheynie his son and heir to Alice Barnham, widow, late wife of Francis Barnham alderman of the City of London, deceased, and Martin Barnham son of the said Francis Barnham of all their right, &c. in the manor of lower Bilsington.

16

2 Dec. 1598. Royal licence, to Martin Barnham, esquire, to convey to Sampson Lennard esquire, and Sir Henry Lennard,

¹ The P. and C. surrendered their house 28 Febr., 1536.

knight, the manor of Nether Bilsington, which is now said to contain 100 acres of arable land, 100 acres of pasture, 300 acres of woodland, 600 acres of marshland, and rents amounting to £10 per an.

Great Seal.

17

16 Jan. 1645. Indenture leading the uses of a Fine of Recovery, &c. of the manors of Lower and Upper Bilsington in fee to Robert Barnham esquire.

18

7 Feb. 1684. Patent of King James II. to Sir Thomas Walcott, knight, for a judgeship to be held during the King's pleasure. (See Foss's *Judges of England*, vol. VII., p. 278.)

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

A circumstance of unusual interest is that three of the Charters have the original textile bags for their Seals attached to them.

No. 1, A.D. 1242. The material of this bag has a warp of cotton thread, only the woof being of coloured threads of yellow, white, crimson and pale red, with a slight admixture of gold thread. But the whole is too much worn and faded for the pattern to be distinguishable. No date nor provenance, therefore, can safely be assigned to it.

No. 2, A.D. 1250. This, though tattered and worn to shreds, and mounted, to protect it, on white linen, is a very remarkable specimen of silk fabric of the finest and most delicate texture possible. The ground, now a rich cream-colour, is so faded that it is impossible to say what it originally was, but it may be conjectured to have been of crimson or of madder-red dye. The pattern shows up in golden brown with a sparing introduction of gold thread, which has tarnished to a bronze hue. The ornament consists almost exclusively of abstract geometrical forms—

interlaced circles and squares, and a tiny scroll of conventional leafage ; but the most interesting detail consists of double-headed eagles displayed, which rather resemble parrots than eagles. On the thick part of each of their wings is a little Greek cross. This design, not being found in either of the standard works on textile ornaments (Fischbach or Dupont-Auberville), adds another design to the known repertory of ancient damask patterns. It appears to be of Byzantine or Siculo-Saracenic origin, and may date even from the twelfth century.

No. 3, A.D. 1359. This is a self-coloured bag of gamboge yellow silk, with a diaper pattern of five-lobed leaves. The bag is small, and it appears to comprise but a fraction of the design. What there is of it resembles a detail from the pattern illustrated on plate 54 of Fischbach, who describes it as a Venetian fabric of the fourteenth century.

A.V.

NOTE.—Special thanks are due to Dr. Gordon Ward, the owner of the charters, for depositing his valuable property in the rooms of K.A.S. at Maidstone Museum long enough to enable the seal-bags to be inspected and described.—ED.