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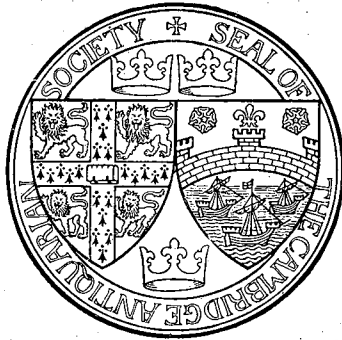
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
PROCEEDINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

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THE MUNIMENTS OF QUEENS' COLLEGE.

By Rev. J. F. WILLIAMS, M.A.

(Abridged from a paper read 27th April, 1925.)

The Muniment Room at Queens' occupies the normal position of a medieval treasury, immediately over the gateway. It is a fine room, covering the whole of the space over the archway, and measuring internally 20 feet by 12 feet. It is paved with XV century tiles and has a vaulted ceiling which shows some peculiarity of construction. The springers are of freestone, and apparently it was originally intended that the ribs of the vaulting should be of freestone as well. This however was never carried out, and brickwork ribs were inserted, causing an awkward joint where springers and ribs come together.

Until about 1898 the original College chest was kept here, but it has now been removed to the Library. It is a fine XV century chest, just over five feet in length, with a coved lid, and is strengthened by the customary iron bands. It is secured by a large lock in the centre, in addition to which, by means of a bar and two staples, further provision is made for two other locks.

The early documents in the possession of the College seem to have been kept in this chest and in a XVII century oak press still in the Treasury until about 50 or 60 years ago, when Mr Searle went through the whole collection in preparation for his "History of Queens' College." He seems to have found the documents in a very dirty and confused state, and in order to prevent their condition becoming still worse, he roughly sorted them out according to the properties to which they refer, and packed them up in large biscuit tins, bound up with red tape and sealed with the College seal. There were 65 of these tins altogether, and all were tightly packed with documents. During the past few years the whole of these documents have again been examined and calendared, and this paper is a brief attempt to indicate the nature of the collection. From the accompany-

ing table, in which the documents have been roughly divided up according to their nature and the properties to which they belong¹, it will be seen that altogether there are over 5500 documents prior to the year 1600 in the possession of the College. As is the case, I think, with most Cambridge colleges, the bulk of the property held by 'Queens' lies in the eastern counties. Cambridgeshire alone is responsible for over 3000 of these documents, most of which come from Eversden, Haslingfield, Oakington and Fulbourn. It will be noticed that the Oakington estate brought with it practically no early charters at all, but as though in compensation for this an unusually fine collection of rolls of various description seems to have been handed over with the property when it was bought by the College in 1560. I have not yet had time to examine them closely, but there seem to be four separate series:

First there are 27 rolls containing the yearly accounts of various manors belonging to Crowland Abbey, Oakington among them. They begin in the year 1267² and run on intermittently till 1322. Being well cut and closely rolled they are for the most part in very good condition.

Secondly there is a collection of account rolls presented yearly to the Abbey by the bailiff of Oakington, starting in 1319 and running on, with some gaps, till 1428.

A third series consists of the somewhat similar account rolls of the collector at Oakington, dealing with the rents due to the

¹ As is always the case with regard to collections of documents like this, it is sometimes difficult to decide in which particular section certain individual documents should be placed. For instance the Bumpstead and Haverhill charters are constantly interlinking, though I have no doubt that a closer examination than I have yet been able to give them will show definitely under which property each should eventually be grouped. Consequently the figures may be liable to slight modifications when the documents are more critically examined, though the total will remain the same.

² It is possible that one roll may be still earlier, viz. 1254. As these rolls are dated by the regnal years of the Abbots of Crowland, in the case of two Abbots bearing the same Christian name, it is sometimes difficult without close examination to decide which is meant.

Queens' College, Cambridge—Documents Prior to 1600.

COUNTY	PROPERTY	CHARTERS					ROLLS, &c.						
		Centuries					Accounts	Rentals	Manor Court Rolls	Terriers	Letters	Other Papers	Total
		n. d.	xiii.	xiv.	xv.	xvi.							
BEDFORD CAMBS.	OAKLEY	—	—	19	57	28	—	1	—	4	—	1	110
	CAMBRIDGE. The College, &c. St Botolph's, &c.	3	2	35	123	24	81	—	—	1	6	7	190
ESSEX	BARTLOW	—	—	21	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	189
	BURWELL	2	—	8	13	36	—	—	—	3	—	—	29
	CHESTERTON, COMBERTON, and COTON	1	—	6	28	21	—	—	—	1	—	—	62
	EVERSDEN	59	23	290	227	244	1	15	1	4	—	5	57
	FULBOURN	11	13	168	106	47	1	8	—	—	—	1	869
	HASLINGFIELD	67	32	360	178	50	1	1	—	—	—	3	355
	OAKINGTON	1	—	—	—	25	240	24	370	1	4	10	706
	PAMPISFORD	3	4	44	31	15	—	—	—	7	—	—	675
	SWAFFHAM PRIOR	3	8	77	31	13	4	8	1	2	—	2	108
	WEST WICKHAM	3	1	83	45	8	1	—	—	3	—	—	149
HERTS. HUNTS. KENT LINGS. LONDON	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	2	15	19	12	6	18	1	2	2	6	143
	HELION BUMPSTEAD	39	18	83	158	150	1	—	—	—	—	—	50
	STAMBOURNE	1	—	9	32	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	483
	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	—	19	7	3	—	3	—	—	—	1	57
	PELHAM FURNEAUX	5	3	10	19	9	—	—	—	—	—	4	34
	ABBOTSEY	18	3	34	44	13	—	—	—	—	—	4	50
	St Nicholas COURT, THANET	—	—	—	5	30	2	15	2	—	—	2	133
	WHAPLODE and HOLBEACH	2	2	193	—	—	1	—	—	11	3	17	67
	BERMONDSEY	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	198
	BLACKFRIARS	—	—	—	10	72	3	8	—	—	—	4	66
NORFOLK NORTHANTS.	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	—	6	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	82
	CREATON	1	—	20	32	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	9
SUFFOLK	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	1	1	5	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	56
	CAPEL St MARY	25	8	101	17	11	6	26	—	3	—	6	203
	HAVERHILL	29	3	59	99	39	7	—	—	1	—	1	238
	VARIOUS PARISHES	6	—	20	9	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	38
VARIOUS UNIDENTIFIED WILLS	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	1	8	8	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	21
	VARIOUS PARISHES	1	1	6	18	9	—	—	—	3	—	—	38
	VARIOUS PARISHES	—	—	6	23	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	38
		285	124	1701	1401	987	347	143	375	56	16	77	5512

Abbey. There are 149 of these rolls, which start in 1340 and go on till 1522.

Lastly there is a fine series of manor-court rolls beginning as early as 1291 and running on till 1528, though here again some years are missing.

Taken as a whole, these rolls, dealing as they do with one particular manor over a period of some 250 years, are of extraordinary interest and value, and the College may be congratulated on possessing them.

Outside Cambridgeshire the chief groups of documents have to do with Helion Bumpstead, Essex; Whaplode, Lincolnshire; and Haverhill and Capel, Suffolk. Capel has a nice series of XV and XVI century rentals.

The wills range from that of Adam de Kyngeston, citizen and fishmonger of London, dated 1348, to that of President John Stokes, who in 1568 bequeathed to the College a considerable property in Oakley and Clapham, near Bedford.

As to the earliest document in the collection, it is difficult at present to say anything quite definite. There are no less than 285 early undated charters, and a more thorough examination and comparison will probably result in fairly close approximate dates being given to many of them. Perhaps the most noticeable of these early charters is a royal grant by King Henry II to Roger de Beauchamp of certain lands in the township of Reed, Suffolk. It is not dated, but from internal evidence it must be placed between 1172 and 1181. To it is appended a somewhat damaged specimen of the second Great Seal of Henry II.

Among the undated charters are several grants of land in Bumpstead and the neighbourhood bearing early seals of the earls of Oxford; and quite early in the XIII century is an interesting grant by Eustache Bishop of Ely, appropriating the church of St Botolph's, Cambridge, to the Prior and Canons of Barnwell, to which the episcopal seal is attached. Eustache was bishop of Ely from 1198 to 1215, so this deed must lie between those two dates.

There is a good series of foundation charters and other documents referring to the beginnings of the College and its early

benefactions, many of which will be found printed in full in Searle's History.

Naturally in a large collection of documents like this, there are to be found a good many seals of considerable interest. The Great Seals of most of the sovereigns of England from Edward I to Queen Elizabeth occur, and among other royal seals are those of Queen Margaret of Anjou, the first foundress of the College: George Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward IV, who seems to have been a benefactor of the College, though no details of his benefactions have come down to us: Richard Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III, a great patron of the College in his time, though all his benefactions ceased when he fell in 1485: and Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, a kindly friend to Queens' as well as to her own Colleges, Christ's and St John's.

Other fine seals represented are those of Ann Duchess of Buckingham (1466); Edward Duke of Buckingham (1505); John Earl of Worcester (1453); Archbishop Chichele (1442); Bishop Hugh de Northwold of Ely (c. 1250); St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury (1496); Battle Abbey (1483); Barnwell Priory (1354, 1474); and others; while there are many other smaller seals of much interest, on several of which interesting merchants' marks occur, ranging in date from the middle of the XIV century to Elizabethan times. Quite a number of instances occur, too, especially during the XV century, where certain little twists of grass or reed have been worked into the wax of the seal, generally surrounding the device, though sometimes taking other forms. It has been suggested that this was intended to preserve the seal from damage, while others say that it was to help to make a good impression in the wax¹. There is also the possibility that the custom may have originated at a time when delivery of seisin was a real thing, and that the grass or reed, having been actually plucked from the land in question and preserved in the seal, was looked upon as a proof that possession had been granted. There are one or two cases in our collection where instead of a grass plait a leaf has been used in this way.

¹ *Vide* H. S. Kingsford, "Seals" [Hints for Students of History], p. 18.

On a Swaffham Prior document, dated 1450, all the five seals have been embedded in wisps of hair or tow, giving the document a somewhat curious appearance.

Such is a brief outline of the very interesting collection of documents preserved in the College treasury at Queens'. It is typical, no doubt, of what is to be found in most other college treasuries, and in the case of the older and larger colleges their muniments may be far more extensive and varied. In the aggregate Cambridge must be extraordinarily rich in records such as these. From a *legal* point of view they are now, of course, perfectly worthless—mere waste paper in fact, and in too many cases (not here but elsewhere) they have been treated as such. But as first-hand records of English history in its more intimate forms, whether we make use of them in some special branch of study—palaeography, economics, place-names, or whatever it may be, or whether we simply come to them as students of local history in general, these somewhat forbidding-looking and usually very dusty documents, are in every respect quite priceless.