



## A Thirteenth Century Seal of Roger de Carsington.

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THE seal of which an illustration is here given, was found, not long ago, among "the *debris* of a long-forgotten house" at Haverfordwest. It is in the ordinary form of thirteenth century seals, and its date is very closely defined by the curious monogram of the two letters  $\mathfrak{A}$  and R which appears twice upon it. This monogram occurs upon the English coinage between the years 1248 and 1272 in the reign of Henry III\*. The seal is as thick as a farthing, and is of bronze or brass. The device, or badge, is a boar's head couped with the legend, " $\mathfrak{A}$ S[IGILLUM] ROGARI DE KERSINTVN  $\nabla$ ." It has a small ring or loop at the back, by means of which it could be suspended on a cord or chain.

Very little is known of the family of de Kersintun, Kersinton, Kersyntun or Kersington, as it is variously given, but it seems undoubtedly to have belonged to Carsington, in this county,

\* See *Hawkins' Silver Coins of England*, fig. 289, where its exact counterpart is given.

which in Domesday is rendered Ghersintune, and in all probability it was an offshoot of the family of de Hopton of Hopton. The name of de Kersinton, as is also that of de Hopton, is territorial. These two townships are adjoining manors, and were probably owned by the same lord (as they are to-day), who was de Hopton. The estates would be divided when a younger son became owner of Carsington and took the territorial name for his own; thus starting a new family. It was quite usual for the younger sons to assume a territorial description for their branch of the family. At first he would be known as "de Hopton de Kersinton"—we have evidence of this in a fine of 1324, in which "William de Hopton de Kersynton" was plaintiff\*—and gradually de Hopton would be dropped and de Kersinton only retained.

The branch would probably break off from the family of de Hopton about the beginning of the thirteenth century. In proof that the Kersinton in question was Carsington in this county we have mention in a fine of 1313 of Robert le Porter de Kersinton (for Carsington), Wirksworth. An early reported record of the family name of de Kersinton alone is a deed of Henry son of Ranulf de Alsop, illustrated in vol. viii., p. 100, of this journal, which is witnessed by Adam, William, Walter Nore and Reginald de K'sint (for Kersinton). From its palæography this deed, which is undated, has been assigned a date of about the middle of the thirteenth century, but it may be a little later. It is probable that the "William, son of Adam de Kersington," who with his father witnessed this deed, may be the "William de Hopton de Kersynton" who in the fine of 1324, mentioned above, was plaintiff against Henry, son of Robert de Alsop, concerning a messuage and lands at Carsington.

In 1302, Nicholas, son of Richard de Hopton, was plaintiff in a fine for certain lands at Carsington. He was probably a younger brother of Adam de Kersinton. This Nicholas, it is suggested, was the Nicholas de Kersinton who was Rector of

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\* See vol. xviii., p. 16, of this *Journal*.

Carsington, 1345-50.\* The advowson would belong to the de Hoptons, either of Hopton or Carsington. It is also quite probable that the Roger de Kersinton of the seal may have been the grandfather of William de Hopton de Kersinton of 1324.

In Pym Yeatman's *Feudal Derbyshire*, sec. vi., p. 237, we have the name of Walter de Kersington, 1251-2, and in sec. iii., p. 55, we find mention of Nicholas fil Roger de Kersington, 1276. There can be very little doubt that this Roger was the actual owner of the seal, for his date exactly corresponds with that of the seal.

So far as the writer is aware, these are the only records of this family.† There are no monuments, nor any remains at Carsington, either of the de Hoptons or de Kersingtons. With the exception of the seal and the names given above, nothing seems to be known of the family. It is a far cry from the little village of Carsington in the Derbyshire hills to Haverfordwest. The finder quaintly suggests that the seal was "lost by some of the folk who flocked to Milford (six miles off) to welcome Henry of Richmond." This, however, was at least two centuries too late, but at the date of the seal, between Haverfordwest, where it was found, and Carsington there was, nevertheless, an interesting little connecting link in their feudal history.‡

In 1199, King John conferred the manors and wapentake of Wirksworth and Ashbourne upon William Ferrers, Earl of Derby. As this included the lands subsequently held by Roger de Carsington, it transferred the military service of his predecessors from the Crown to the Earl. The Earl died in 1247, and was succeeded by his son William, who some years previously had married Sibilla, daughter of William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, whose stronghold was the castle of Haverfordwest.

\* *Notes on the Churches of Derbyshire*, by Dr. Cox, vol. iv., p. 517.

† Dr. Cox coincidentally supplies another on p. 111.—ED.

‡ The principal authorities from whom the following particulars are gleaned are Prof. Tout in "*Wales and the March in the Barons' Wars*," *Owens College Historical Essays*; and Dr. Cox in "Duffield Castle," vol. ix. of this *Journal*.

By her he had seven daughters and, by a second marriage, two sons. He died in 1254, and was succeeded by his elder son Robert, the last of the Ferrers, Earls of Derby. Meanwhile, in 1245, Anselm Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, died without issue, and the seven sisters of Earl Robert were amongst the numerous co-heirs to the earldom and estates of Pembroke. Henry III., however, retained the Castle of Haverfordwest in his own hands, and during the civil wars of Simon de Montfort, together with its neighbour, the great Castle of Pembroke, it became the centre of the Royal defence against both the Barons and the Welsh. Henry entrusted it to his half-brother William de Valence who, through his wife, was another co-heir to the earldom, and to which he eventually succeeded. In 1263, Earl Ferrers raised his Derbyshire retainers, including, no doubt, Roger de Carsington, who was certainly a contemporary, and joined the Barons in the sack of Worcester, suffering in return the demolition of his own Castle of Tutbury; thence, in the following year he took part in the defeat of the King's forces at the battle of Lewes. William de Valence was exiled from the country, and Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, another of the Marshall co-heirs, received the Castle of Haverfordwest and the custody of Pembroke, being made virtually lord paramount of all South Wales. But, immediately afterwards, he and Earl Ferrers conspired against Simon de Montfort, and Ferrers, whilst still ostensibly allied to Montfort, advanced his army into the heart of Wales. It was probably now that he executed that remarkable deed by which he transferred the whole of his feudal possessions, including the "Wapentake of Wirksworth and Ashbourne" and the suit and service of his vassals—of whom one was de Carsington—to his ally, the Earl of Gloucester. This would be to provide against possible failure on his own part, when, he trusted, his more powerful colleague might be able to preserve his possessions from escheat and retain the service of his followers. It may even have been when he already knew that Earl Simon was too strong for him, for he was arrested and thrown into prison.

Then it was, no doubt, that Roger de Carsington found his way, with the bulk of the Ferrers' retainers, to the banner of the Earl of Gloucester, at Haverfordwest; and where, we are told, that the following April, when William de Valence landed with one hundred and twenty men-at-arms and crossbowmen, Gloucester's bailiffs put no obstacle in the way of the men of Pembroke welcoming back their ancient lord.

That Roger de Carsington was there, the discovery of so very precious a personal appendage as his seal, goes far to prove; and the curious chapter of political and family circumstances which at this particular date, and for the only time in history, connected his feudal lord with so remote a place as Haverfordwest is evidence, in turn, of the identity of its owner. Did he ever return from the campaign? We know not—all we do know is, that this little seal is one of the very few relics we have of this ancient Derbyshire family.