

Seal of Ralph de Mortimer, appended to a Grant to the Monks of Worcester. In possession of Sir Edmund A. Harley Lechmere, Bart.

Original Documents.

CHARTER OF CONFIRMATION BY RALPH DE MORTIMER OF A GRANT TO THE MONKS OF THE PRIORY OF WORCESTER.

Communicated by SIR EDMUND A. HARLEY LECHMERE, Bart.

IN the contributions to the history of Medieval Seals, that have been given from time to time in this Journal, attention has been directed to certain peculiarities in the practice of sealing, observable in our own country and on the Continent, and especially to various usages in regard to the attachment of the seal to the document. In these diversities it may probably be of no avail to seek any established rule of local usage: the object sought in each case would obviously be to ensure the conservation of the seal, and to obviate any risk of its becoming detached from the instrument. The precaution adopted in the present instance has seemed to claim special notice, no similar example of sealing having, so far as we are aware, been hitherto described.

The document under consideration was brought before the Institute at the Worcester Meeting, through the kindness of Sir Edmund Lechmere, Bart., by whose influential exertions and generous encouragement the success of that gathering was mainly promoted. Amongst many favours conferred by him on the Society on that occasion, the friendly liberality with which he threw open, for the enrichment of the local Museum, his ancestral muniments, and also the stores of Antiquity and Art in his possession, will be gratefully remembered. In the collection of documentary evidences that have descended to Sir Edmund, as we believe, amongst his evidences connected with Hanley Castle, the grant to the Monks of Worcester, now for the first time published, was viewed with much interest.¹ That venerable relic with the massive seal of Ralph de Mortimer had, on a previous occasion, been brought under the notice of the Society of Antiquaries by Mr. Evelyn P. Shirley, but its connection with the Benedictine Priory of Worcester had not, so far as we are aware, been ascertained. The following particulars are given in the *Archæologia*.

“ Mr. E. P. Shirley exhibited a Charter of the twelfth century, from the muniments of the Lechmere family. It is a confirmation from Ralph de Mortuo Mari of a grant of land in Wribbenhall, co. Worc^t, made by Turstinus to the Monks of a monastery not specified. The peculiarities of this charter consist, first, in its being signed with a cross by each of

¹ Catalogue of the Museum formed at Worcester during the Meeting of the Archaeological Institute, 1862; p. 49.

the persons who made and confirmed the grant, a practice of very rare occurrence ; and, secondly, in the seal being suspended by a thin label, not, as usual, from the foot of the charter, but from the middle of it. It is believed that this is the only instance hitherto known of such a singular mode of attaching the seal being practised in England, although something similar exists in the collection of charters in the Hotel de Soubise, at Paris."²

Through the friendly assistance of Sir Thomas Winnington, to whose knowledge of the history and antiquities of his county we have been frequently indebted, the situation of the lands to which the subjoined document relates has been satisfactorily identified, and we have been enabled to ascertain that the grant, "ad victum monachorum," was made to the monks of Worcester. "Wribbenhall," as Sir Thomas informs us, "is a township in the parish of Kidderminster, situate opposite to Bewdley, on the Severn, and really forming part of the latter town." Nash does not give any account of it. The name *Beuleou*, found in an endorsement on the document in possession of Sir Edmund Lechmere, is not unlike Bewdley ; that place, however, according to the statement of Leland, did not exist before *t.* Henry VII. ; the name has always been supposed to have been a corruption of *Beau lieu*. Bewdley is in the parish of Ribbesford, the Norman church of which still exists, situate a mile lower on the river. The church of Worcester holds property at the present time in Kidderminster parish, adjacent to Wribbenhall, namely, Eymone ; and Ribbesford once belonged to the Priory.

In the Register of the Priory of St. Mary's, Worcester, the valuable record of the revenue of that monastery towards the close of the thirteenth century, for which we are indebted to the Ven. Archdeacon of London, under whose editorial care it has been published by the Camden Society, the following entry is found regarding the grant of Wribbenhall.³

"De Wrubenhale.—Quidam homo Thurstinus nomine dedit nobis Wrubenhāl : Radulphus⁴ de Mortuo-Mari seniore concedente et confirmante, sicut carta ipsius testatur ; succedente tempore Rogerus de Mortuo-Mari cepit eam ad feodo firmam. Unde Priori et conventui fidelitatem juravit, et relevium dedit, et obligavit heredes suos sicut carta ipsius testatur ad faciendum Priori et conventui fidelitatem, et ad dandum relevium pro tempore, et ad solvendum singulis annis, in festo S. Martini, xx. sol."

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that Ralph de Mortimer, here designated *senior*, was probably the great Norman noble who came over with the Conqueror, and obtained a grant of Wigmore, with extensive possessions in Herefordshire and adjacent parts of the Welsh Marches. The connection of that powerful family with Shropshire has been set forth by Mr. Eyton in his History of that county, vol. iv. p. 196.

There is reason to believe that Ralph de Mortimer had a son of the same name, grandfather of Hugh de Mortimer, the spirited opponent of

² Archæologia, vol. xxxi. p. 475. This communication was made April 18, 1844.

³ Registrum sive liber irrotularius et consuetudinarius Prioratus B. M. Wigorn., with an Introduction and Notes by W. Hale Hale, M.A., Archdeacon of London.

Camden Society. The entry occurs at f. 20 b. in the rental of the Priory, A.D. 1240. In the rental of 1253 the following is found,—"*Molendinum. Wurbenhal'. In festo S. Martini xx. sol.*" Ibid. f. 150 b.

⁴ *Sic* in the printed text.

Henry II. on the death of Stephen. From similarity of name it is probable that the two Ralphs may have usually been taken for one and the same person. May not the distinctive description *senior* have referred to such a son then living and well known? It may deserve notice that the first Ralph appears in the pedigree given by Mr. Eyton, vol. iv. p. 196, as having had only one wife, but the document under consideration mentions wives—"uxorum mearum;" and whilst it states that the grant was with the assent of his sons, no allusion is made to any daughter, whilst in the pedigree we find Hawise married to the Earl of Albemarle. The document that we have been enabled by the kindness of Sir Edmund Lechmere to place before our readers may probably be ascribed to the early part of the twelfth or to the close of the eleventh century, and be a grant by the companion of the Conqueror very late in his life. In any case it is an early example of sealing by a subject.

Amongst sub-tenants of Ralph de Mortimer the name of Turstinus repeatedly occurs; Mr. Eyton has stated his opinion, that he may have been identical with the person called Turstin de Wigmore in certain passages of the Domesday record; it is plain that he was a person of great connections and wealth at the period, and it has been supposed by genealogists that he was ancestor of the great Herefordshire family of Lingen.⁵ According to some authorities he has moreover been identified with Turstin Flandrensis, elsewhere called Turstin Fitz Rollo, or Turstin Fitz Rou le Blanc, who bore the gonfanon of the Conqueror on the battle-field of Hastings. We must, however, refer the reader who may care to investigate these intricate points of history to the volumes so carefully elaborated by our friend, above cited.

Amongst the witnesses of the subjoined grant to the monks of Worcester, we find—"Bern' Oxpac,"—probably the person whose name occurs in certain evidences cited by Mr. Eyton, in his account of Brompton Brian; Bernard, son of Ospac, written also Unspac, appears in connection with that portion of Shropshire History.⁶ Bernard Fitz Unspac occurs *inter* 1074—1135, and succeeded to Kinlet, with other estates in Shropshire, Herefordshire, and elsewhere; Brien his son was Lord of Kinlet *circa* 1157-8. Mr. Eyton has remarked that we have in the mention of his name as "Brienus Unspac," in a Precept of Henry II., that may be ascribed to that date, an early instance of the name of an ancestor being adopted as the surname of a family without the usual word *filius* or *fitz*. Hist. Salop, vol. iv. p. 242. In the name, however, of the witness to the subjoined instrument, "Bern' Oxpac," we have a still earlier example of such an usage.⁷

A. W.



Ego Radulfus de Mortuo Mari concedo terram de Wrubenhalla, que est in estimatione unius virge, liberam ab omni servitio seculari, excepto geldo si contigerit, ad victum et dominium monachorum, sicuti Turtinus [*sic*] eam donat cum filio suo Girardo. Hoc, quia de me

⁵ Eyton, Hist. Shropshire, vol. v. p. 74; vol. xi. p. 333.

⁶ Ibid. vol. iv. pp. 241, 244.

⁷ See Mr. Eyton's Pedigree of Brompton of Kinlet, Hist. Shropshire, vol. iv. p. 244.

The seal of John de Bronton, who died *circa* 1221, noticed *ibid.* p. 247, bears the legend—*Sigillum Johannis Uspac de Bronton*, showing that the real name of the family had not been lost.

feodio^s est, concedo pro anima mea, et uxorum mearum, et dominorum et filiorum et parentum meorum. Hoc mea [L. s.] propria manu confirmo  assensu filiorum et hominum meorum, ut sit firmum et stabile in perpetuum. Ego vero Tustinus [sic] licencia domini mei confirmo mea  manu. Testes sunt Bern' Oxpac, Gislebertus, Johannes, filii Ebrardi, Ebrardus de Dontona, Rogerus, Walterus, Radulfus, Balduinus, Rogerus.

Endorsed, in a hand that may be nearly contemporary:—Radulfus de Mortmari de uurebehala ;—and also, in a much later hand : De terra de Wrubenhalle juxta locum qui dicitur Beuleou.

The seal, of circular form, is an unshapely mass of white wax ; the device is a lion passant ; the following letters of the legend may be decyphered—SIGILLVM . . DVLEI D . . . MARI. The dimensions of the parchment are 6 in. by 3½ in.

^s *Sic* in the original charter.