

SIR JOHN DALYNGRIGGE AND ROBERTS- BRIDGE ABBEY

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AMONG a number of medieval documents from the collection formerly made by Sir Thomas Phillipps which were sold at Sotheby's in June 1936 was the remarkable deed of which we are able, through the courtesy of the Local Committee of the National Trust for Bodiam Castle, to give a transcript and abstract. It was bought by the Local Committee for the Castle Museum because of its connexion with Sir Edward Dalyngrigge, the builder of Bodiam Castle. Sir Edward died in or before 1395 and was succeeded by his son Sir John Dalyngrigge, who had a distinguished career, representing Sussex in parliament on four occasions and being frequently employed on the king's business.¹ Sir John died on 27 September 1408, leaving a widow Alice, previously married to Sir Thomas Botiler, who herself lived until 1443.² By his will,³ dated the Tuesday (11 October) after the feast of St. Denis, 1407, and proved 19 November 1408, Sir John desired to be buried in the church of the Blessed Mary of the Abbey of Robertsbridge, beside the tomb of his father and mother. He made a number of small bequests to the churches of eight parishes in which he held property, and for the repair of the bridge at Bodiam and the roads leading to it; the bulk of his goods (his real estate passed to his nephew Richard) he left to his executors to dispose of for the welfare of his soul. These executors were Thomas Wallere, William Marchaunt, Richard Perrot, and William Bernys; the overseers of his will were his widow Alice and Thomas Sackville, who had married his sister.⁴ Thomas Wallere and William Marchaunt were probably lawyers, judging from their names

¹ *S.A.C.* LXII. 80.

² Lambeth, Reg. Arundel, pt. ii, f. 36.

³ *Ibid.* 83.

⁴ *S.A.C.* LII. 34.

occurring in legal settlements about this period.¹ The winding up of the estate appears to have been, as usual in the Middle Ages, a leisurely proceeding; but eventually there was evidently a very substantial sum to be disposed for the good of the testator's soul and most, if not all, of this was bestowed upon Robertsbridge Abbey. As a result, the document with which we are dealing was drawn up on 5 November 1421, between the Abbot, John,² and the convent of Robertsbridge and William Marchaunt and William Bernes as executors of Sir John. By this deed the monks testify to the 'great and notable' sum of money received by their house, and in return undertake to commemorate the anniversary of Sir John's death, 27 September, and to celebrate masses, of which particulars are given, for his soul and those of Sir Edward and Lady Elizabeth Dalyngrigge, his father and mother, Roger Dalyngrigge (from whom Sir Edward, probably his cousin, had inherited much of his property),³ and, after death, those of the Lady Alice and Sir Thomas Sackville. To ensure that the monks should remember their benefactor in their prayers, 4 marks (£2 13s. 4d.) were to be distributed among them yearly at his anniversary. The penalty of not carrying out the agreement was to be, not the censure of the Church, but a substantial fine of £20, because, as the Abbot cynically points out, 'in these days' most people are more afraid of a fine than of imperilling their souls. The final clause, that this agreement is to be sworn to by every abbot immediately on election and by every novice on profession, is additional evidence of the importance of this donation, of whose extent we are never likely to know the details.

In view of the unusual nature of this document, it is here printed in full, but for the sake of those who cannot, or do not care to, follow its involutions in the original it is preceded by an abstract in English. For assistance in transcribing and translating we are

¹ *Suss. Rec. Soc.* XXIII, nos. 2680, 2691, 2713, 2720, 2762, 2767.

² Presumably John Lonsford, who occurs in 1419: *V.C.H. Suss.* II. 74.

³ *S.A.C.* LXVIII. 77.

indebted to Sir Alan Moore, Bart., Mr. Ashton James, and Mr. Charles Clay, F.S.A.

Abstract

John Abbot of the Monastery of Blessed Mary of Robertsbridge and the convent send greeting to all sons of mother church. May devotion increase, and God recompense those who give to Him, thus turning earthly things to heavenly and transitory to eternal. It is good that money should be given to pious uses provided zeal for doing good is the cause.

Know that William Marchaunt and William Bernes of the counties of Sussex and Kent the executors of John Dalynngregg, lord of Bodyham, actuated by zeal for doing good have given a large sum of money to our house, where his body lies buried, for masses and prayers for his soul, Alice his widow and Sir Thomas Sackville having agreed thereto. We therefore ordain that in future two chaplains, either regular or secular, shall celebrate mass daily, with a special collect after the Communion, in our Abbey, one at St. Mary's altar and the other at St. Michael's, both for the souls of the said John, Sir Edward and Lady Elizabeth and Roger Dalynngregg, their relations and benefactors, and for the weal of the Lady Alice his widow and the executors while they live and for their souls when they die, and the souls of all the faithful departed. On the anniversary of Sir John's death, the 27th September, the service is to be with placebo and dirige, and a mass of requiem with bells the day following at the high altar according to the Cistercian use with the same solemnity as on the anniversaries of our founder.

That monk of our house whose duty it is to celebrate the mass of Our Lady at her altar is to be one of those two to celebrate for Sir John, and none of our successors is to be bound to appoint any other at that altar.

All our monks in future shall pray for the souls of the above. On each anniversary 4 marks of the convent's money shall be distributed among our monks at the direction of the Abbot.

If we or any of our successors fail to keep these arrangements for 15 days or fail to pay the 4 marks we shall pay 20 shillings to the convent within a month of such failure.

We and our successors promise faithfully on the word of a priest to keep these regulations, and not to attempt to procure licence from the Holy See or the King of England or the heads of our order or in any other way to cancel the above arrangements.

Each succeeding abbot, before the convent swears obedience and before his installation, and each novice before taking his vows shall swear to keep the above, and we subject ourselves and our successors to the jurisdiction of the abbot of Boxley, our visitor, and each year at his visitation he is to inquire and proceed against us canonically if we violate the above. And as in these days most men fear more the loss of their goods than the endangering of their souls, we bind ourselves to perform the above and pledge all the convent's goods to the abbot of St. Mary's by the Tower of London in £20 sterling to be paid the next Michaelmas if in our visitation we or our successors are found wanting in this matter or if our successors do not swear in the above way to keep them for ever.

This deed is to be read in full chapter every anniversary to the whole House.

In witness the common seal of our house is appended. Dated in our chapter house 5th November in the 9th year of Henry V. (1421).

Uniuersis sancte matris ecclesie filiis ad quos hoc presens scriptum tripartitum peruenerit Johannes permissione diuina Abbas Monasterii beate Marie de Ponte Roberti et eiusdem loci Conuentus Salutem in domino sempiternam et seincere deuocionis continuum incrementum. Maiestatis diuine inscrutabilis celsitudo illorum merita condigno premio recompensat, qui domus dominice sic amplificant facultates ut terrena in celestia et transitoria in eterna felici comersio [*sic*] transferrant et commutent; uigor equidem exigit equitatis quod bonorum largicio piis usibus perpetuo titulo applicata, quatenus processerit ex zelo feruide caritatis eatenus firmitatis perpetue robore muniatur ac iugi et continue memorie commendetur. Hinc est quod uestre uniuersitati patefacimus per presentes quod cum

dilecti nobis in christo Willelmus Marchaunt et Willelmus Bernes de Comitatu[ibus] Sussex (et Kancie)¹ testamenti christianissimi Militis Domini Johannis Dalynngregge nuper Domini de Bodyham executoris ac honorum suorum administratores nobiles et fideles spiritu ducti feruentissime caritatis et zelo deuocionis accensi intensis desideriiis affectantes dicti testatoris animam missarum et aliarum precum suffragiis pro uiribus releuare tanquam salubrium et piorum illius nobilissimi et deuotissimi Machabei operum sectatores saluberimi [*sic*] similiter et sequaces ad dei laudem et honorem sui que cultus et obsequii in Monasterio nostro predicto in quo corpus dicti Johannis decencius est humatum ampliacionem ac eiusdem Johannis anime salutem pariter et leuamen ex assensu uoluntate et consensu nobilissime et deuotissime domine Domine Alicie dudum consortis sue et dilectissimi amici et confratris sui Domini Thome Sakeuyle Militis quandam magnam (et notabilem)¹ pecunie summam nobis et Monasterio nostro predicto de denariis ipsius sui testatoris elemosinarie dederint et premanibus realiter soluerint intuitu caritatis ad dicti Monasterii nostri releuacionem et (bonorum)¹ nostrorum incrementum (non modicum)¹ (stipendii monachorum)^c. Nos igitur (Johannes)¹ prefati Abbas et Conuentus pias et deuotas ipsorum executorum et aliorum predictorum intensionem in hac parte efficaciter contemplantes attendentes quos et de facto experimentaliter cencientes dictam summam nobis sic exhibitam et solutam nobis et Monasterio nostro predicto quamplurimum fructuosam et summarie profuturam et uolentes proinde ac sinceriter affectantes dictis eorum piis desideriiis pro nostre possibilitatis modulo condigne pariter respondere in opere pietatis nullis astricti compulcionibus sed ex mera libera et spontanea uoluntate nostra ac pura et sana consciencia excitati ut benefactoribus nostris de beneficiis nobis exhibitis ante Tribunal districti iudicis tuciolem ualeamus reddere rationem, ex unanimi consensu uoluntate et assensu nostris uolumus concedimus et ordinamus ac firma fide promittimus necnon nos et successores nostros efficaciter obligamus per presentes ad duos capellanos Monachos uel seculares diuina singulis diebus in eadem Abbacia unum uidelicet ad altare beate Marie et alterum ad altare sancti Michaelis cum speciali collecta secta et post communionem pro animabus dicti Johannis precipui benefactoris nostri ac domini Edwardi et Elizabethae (et Rogeri Dalynngregge)¹ parentum et benefactorum suorum necnon pro salubri statu domine Alicie prelibate ipsorumque executorum quamdiu uixerint et pro animabus suis cum ab hac luce migrauerint necnon animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum ex nunc imperpetuum celebraturos inueniendum ac ad anniuersarium eiusdem Johannis exnunc singulis annis die uicesimo septimo mensis Septembris quo die ipse uiam uniuerse carnis est ingressus cum Placebo et Dirige prout in ordine Cisterciensi est usitatum una cum Missa de Requiem in crastino ad summum altare cum tanta solemnitate sicut anniuersarium primi et precipui fundatoris nostri tam in diuinis obsequiis quam in campanarum pulsacio-

nibus consuevit transactis temporibus celebratum celebrandum et obseruandum imperpetuum; Prouiso semper quod unus Monachorum nostrorum ad Missam beate Marie in eadem Abbacia ad predictum altare sancte Marie celebrandam de cetero intitulus et assignatus unus predictorum duorum capellanorum existat; Quodque nos seu successores nostri ad aliquem alium capellanum diuina ad idem altare beate Marie pro statu et animabus predictis celebraturum inueniendum colore presencium nullatenus teneamur aut aliquialiter obligemur: ut eciam omnes et singuli monachi Monasterii nostri predicti decetero pro animabus dicti Johannis Domini Edwardi Elizabethe (et Rogeri Dalynngregge)¹ parentum ac benefactorum suorum necnon pro salubri statu Domine Alicie prelibate ipsorumque executorum quamdiu uixerint et et [*sic*] pro animabus suis cum ab hac luce migrauerint necnon animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum eo deuocius exorent et orare specialius teneantur eorumque memoria inter eos recencior habeatur quo ipsi et eorum quilibet pro eorundem Johannis Edwardi Elizabethe (et Rogeri)¹ parentum ac benefactorum suorum animabus necnon pro salubri statu Domine Alicie prelibate ipsorumque executorum quamdiu uixerint et pro animabus suis cum ab luce hac migrauerint necnon animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum se specialius senserint recreatos. Nos Abbas antedictus ex consensu Conuentus nostri prelibati uolumus et concedimus ac per presentes statuimus et ordinamus pro nobis et successoribus nostris quod exnunc singulis annis die anniuersarii predicti dicta missa de Requiem solemniter ut premittitur celebrata quatuor Marce inter ipsos Monachos nostros de bonis exitibus et proficiis Monasterii predicti secundum discrecionem Abbatis in Abbacia nostra predicta pro tempore existentis realiter exhibeantur et fideliter persoluantur imperpetuum. Et si contingat quod absit quod nos seu successores nostri in inuencione dictorum duorum Capellanorum diuina ad altaria predicta pro statu et animabus predictis in forma predicta celebraturorum per quindenam aut in celebracione et obseruacione anniuersarii predicti dicto die uicesimo septimo mensis Septembris seu eciam in distributione et solucione predictarum quatuor marcarum inter predictos Monachos Abbacie predictae eodem die anniuersarii predicti defecerimus Nos Johannes Abbas antedictus ex consensu Conuentus nostri supradicti uolumus concedimus statuimus et ordinamus pro nobis et successoribus nostris predictis quod pro quolibet defectu huiusmodi nos et successores nostri Abbates Monasterii predicti uiginti solidos inter Conuentum nostrum predictum infra unum mensem quemlibet defectum huiusmodi immediate sequentem pro animabus prefati Johannis Domini Edwardi Elizabethe (et Rogeri Dalynngregge)¹ parentum et benefactorum suorum necnon pro salubri statu Domine Alicie ipsorumque executorum quamdiu uixerint et pro animabus suis cum ab hac luce migrauerint et animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum distribui faciemus et realiter ministrari et hoc tocians pro perpetuo quociens aliquem huiusmodi defectum contigerit euenire. Nos insuper Johannes Abbas antedictus et omnes et

singuli Monachi Monasterii nostri predicti firma fide et in uerbo sacerdotii promittimus ad premissa omnia et singula modo et forma predictis futuris successiuis temporibus adimplenda et fideliter obseruanda quodque nichil a sede apostolica nec a Rege Anglie nec eciam ab aliquibus superioribus nostris ordinis Cisterciensis seu a quouis alio cuiuscumque gradus status dignitatis uel preeminencie fuerit impetrabimus nec in futuro procurabimus aut sciemus quomodolibet impetrari quo premissa aut aliqua premissorum in aliquo subtrahantur: Et quod quilibet Abbas in Monasterio nostro predicto decetero de nouo creandus priusquam Conuentus obedienciam sibi fecerit uel ipse in eodem Monasterio installetur singulique nouicii antequam in eodem ad professionem admittantur consimili iuramenti uinculo astringantur quod ordinationem predictam in singulis suis articulis firmiter et illese pro suis uiribus manutenebunt et obseruabunt imperpetuum, Subicientes nos et successores nostros in hac parte (? ad) iurisdictionem et cohercionem Uenerabilis patris Abbacis de Boxeleye pro tempore existentis uisitoris nostri ut annuatim in uisitacione sua semel de premissis diligenter faciat inquisitionem et contra nos canonicè procedere et nos de huiusmodi reatu periuirii arguere et animaduersione condigna iuxta regularem exigenciam discipline punire ualeat si ordinationem predictam inuenerit uiolatam uel in aliquo diminutam. Preterea quia quamplurimi his diebus plus temporalium rerum dispendium quam animarum suarum metuunt detrimentum, Hinc ut temporalium amissionis timor adimpleat quod fidei promissis perimplere prinitus se sponndit, Nouerit uniuersitas uestra prelibata nos prefatum Abbatem et Conuentum de Ponte Roberti et successores nostros teneri et per presentes firmiter obligari Ac nos et successores nostros ad omnia et singula premissa in forma prelibata pro perpetuo tenenda et obseruanda necnon omnia bona nostra tenore presentencium firmiter obligamus Abbati beate Marie iuxta Turrim London' et successoribus suis Abbatibus loci illius in uiginti libris sterlingorum soluendis in festo sancti Michaelis proximo futuro sub condicione subsequenti uidelicet quod si in uisitacione predicti uisitoris nostri sufficienter inueniri poterit et probari quod nos seu successores nostri huiusmodi duos Capellanos diuina ad altaria predicta singulis diebus pro statu et animabus predictis in forma predicta celebraturos non inuenerimus aut anniuersarium predicti Johannis Domini Edwardi Elizabethe (et Rogeri Dalynreg)¹ parentum et benefactorum suorum dicto uicesimo septimo die mensis Septembris modo et forma predictis non tenerimus et celebrauerimus aut nos dictus Abbas de Ponte Roberti et successores nostri predicti huiusmodi quatuor Marcas inter Monachos Abbacie (nostre)¹ predictæ (nostre)^c quolibet die anniuersarii predicti Johannis Domini Edwardi Elizabethe (et Rogeri Dalynreg)¹ parentum et benefactorum suorum minime soluerimus nec solui fecerimus aut eciam pro quolibet defectu premissorum uiginti solidos inter Conuentum nostrum predictum infra unum mensem quemlibet huiusmodi defectum immediate sequentem ut

premittitur distribui non fecerimus et realiter ministrari, Aut si aliquis Abbas in Monasterio nostro predicto decetero (et de)¹ nouo creandus ante obedienciam sibi de Conuentu prestandam aut installationem suam in eodem Monasterio suo faciendam aut aliquis nouicius ante professionem suam vel saltem in professione sua huiusmodi iuramentum de premissis obseruandis non fecerit tunc predicta uerba obligatoria sua semper uirtute permaneant et si sic tunc omnino suis careant robore et effectū. Et ne obliuio aboleat quod caritatiua instituit gratitudo uolumus et ordinamus quod omni anno die anniuersarii predicti presens ordinacio in nostro Monasterio in omnium fratrum nostrorum presencia perlegatur. In quorum omnium premissorum testimonium atque fidem commune sigillum domus nostre presentibus apposuimus. Data in domo nostra Capitulari quinto die Mensis Nouembris Anno regni Regis Henrici quinti post conquestum Anglie Nono.

Words in brackets with '1' at the side are interlined in the original. Those with 'c' are cancelled.