

THE SEALS OF THE CLUNIAN MONASTERY OF BERMONDSEY.¹

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MY thanks are due to the Council of the British Archaeological Association for permission to reprint this Appendix to "The Priory of La Charité-sur-Loire and the Monastery of Bermondsey," which was first published in their Journal in 1926, and again in my *English Ecclesiastical Studies* (S.P.C.K., 1929).

The earliest known seal of the monastery is attached to a grant made by Prior Constantine and the convent, *circa* 1184-6.² The colour is green, the shape round, and the original size $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches; it is broken round the edge. The design is the Saviour sitting on a seat with an open book in his left hand, and his right hand raised in blessing. The legend is [SI]GILLVM SCI SAL[VATORIS]. (Plate XXVII, No. 1.)

The Seal of Prior John is attached to a grant made by the prior and convent to Adam of Stratton, dated 1271.³ The colour is white, glazed, the shape a pointed oval, and the size about 2 inches. The design is under a trefoil arch, the flight into Egypt; a servant with baggage on his shoulder leading the way; the Virgin and Child riding on an ass and St. Joseph bringing up the rear, with his left hand upraised; above the Virgin's head a star; under a niche or housing in the base

¹ I wish to record my thanks to the late Mr. R. C. Fowler, F.S.A., for giving me access to the Card Catalogue of Seals at the Public Record Office; to Mr. Hilary Jenkinson, F.S.A., for having casts made of these seals in the special department at the Record Office, and to Mr. H. S. Kingsford for some help in describing the seals. They are reproduced again by request of Mr. Hilary Jenkinson.

² Ancient Deed, A.S. 396, Public Record Office.

³ *Ibid.*, A.S. 397, Public Record Office.

the head of a figure now broken away, probably the prior. The legend is ✠ S' JO[HANNIS PRIORIS] DE B'MVNDE SEYA. (No. 2.)

This subject, though a favourite with sculptors and glass workers¹ is very rare on a seal.² The young man leading the ass is called Salomé in the Apocryphal Gospels.³

The Seal of Prior Henry is attached to a deed of the prior and convent, dated 1274.⁴ The colour is white, varnished, the shape a pointed oval, and the size about 2 inches when whole. The design is the Saviour sitting on a seat under a trefoiled canopy with a book in his left hand and his right hand raised in blessing; on either side of the head a star and a crescent; under an arch in the base the head of a prior. The legend is . . . ORIS S . . . [BE]RMUNDESE[YA]. (No. 3.)

The counter seal is glazed white, the shape round, the size $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. The design is the Virgin and Child seated on a throne. The legend is ✠ MATER DEI MEMENTO MEI. (No. 4.)

The seal of the monastery is attached to a deed of the prior and convent, dated 1356.⁵ The colour is bronze green, the shape round, the size about $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches when whole. The design is the Transfiguration, the Saviour holding a book and standing on a mount between Moses represented with horns and holding a book, and Elias, also with a book; in the base the three Apostles; from the Saviour radiate four rays, and on either side of his head are a star and a crescent. The legend is SIGILL' : EC[CL]IE : SALVATORIS : DE : BERMVNDESEYE.⁶ (No. 5.)

The subject of the Transfiguration is rare on a seal; it occurs also on the thirteenth-century Seal of Faversham Abbey, but represented differently.⁷ The subject may have

¹ E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle en France*, pp. 258–62.

² I am indebted to Mr. Hunter Blair, F.S.A., for the information that it occurs on two Durham Seals, No. 1002 and 1003 *Secretum* (*Archæologia Æliana*, 3rd ser., Vol. VIII, p. 66 and Plate II).

³ Didron, *Christian Iconography*, ed. E. J. Millington and M. Stokes, II, 301, 302.

⁴ Ancient Deed, A.S. 324, Public Record Office.

⁵ *Ibid.*, B.S. 328; cf. *Cal. of Letters Close*, 1354–60, p. 378.

⁶ The N is reversed.

⁷ *Victoria County History of Kent*, II, 141, plate facing p. 114.

been suggested to the monks of Bermondsey by the fine representation on the tympanum ¹ of the twelfth century at their mother house, the Cluniac priory of La Charité on the Loire, near Nevers. The feast of the Transfiguration was celebrated in Cluniac monasteries with the same honour as the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary except for one difference ²; and a sermon on the Transfiguration preached by Abbot Peter the Venerable (1122-57) is among his printed works.³ On the seal the horns on the head of Moses are very noticeable; they represent the rays of light from the face of Moses after his interview with God (Exodus xxxiv. 29). They are shown on an English Illuminated Psalter of the second half of the twelfth century,⁴ and they are also found on a statue on the destroyed door of St. Benigne at Dijon, of the second half of the twelfth century. These two examples are the earliest known to Monsieur Mâle,⁵ and he attributed the horns of Moses to the liturgical drama of the Prophets.

The counter seal is bronze green, the shape round, the size $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The design is a half-length figure of the Saviour blessing with his right hand and holding up the orb and cross in his left. The legend is ✠ EGO : SVM : VIA : VERITAS : ET : VITA★. (No. 6.)

A loose Seal of the monastery.⁶ The colour is orange, the shape round, the size 3 inches. The design is the Saviour standing among clouds in glory between Moses represented with horns, and Elias; the field sown with stars and a sun dexter, a moon sinister above; in the base the three Apostles.

¹ R. Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, Plate VI, facing p. 92.

² *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, ed. Marrier et Duchesne, p. 1356. (Statutes of Abbot Peter the Venerable, cap. V.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1231.

⁴ G. Warner, *Reproductions of Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1903, Plate 13, from MS. Lansdowne 383, fol. 15.

⁵ E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux du XII^e siècle en France*, pp. 146, 147, 217.

⁶ Loose Seal H. 82, Public Record Office. This seal is also attached to an indenture for the foundation of Henry VII's Chapel in the Muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster; cf. Wilkinson, *Londina Illustrata* (1819-25), Vol. I, plate between pp. 110-13. In the casts made recently from the Westminster impression, the lower portion of the border is missing, leaving the legend incomplete; CLX, 11, 12, British Museum Seals.



1



2



3



4



5



6

SEALS OF BERMONDSEY



The legend is Sigil[um] comune monasterii Sancti Saluatoris de berm[un]desey. (Plate XXVIII, No. 7.)

The counter Seal is orange, the shape round, the size $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches. The design is the Saviour seated on a rainbow with His right hand raised in blessing and holding up the orb and cross in His left; on either side an angel holding a shield of arms, dexter France modern and England, quarterly sinister England; the field sown with stars and a large sun dexter, a moon sinister; in the base an abbot with two monks on each side, the field foliaged. The legend is [P]er virtutem sancte crucis salua nos Ire saluator. (No. 8.)

The counter seal is slightly larger than the seal and may be dated about the beginning of the fifteenth century.

A fragment of seal No. 7 is attached to a deed of the abbot and convent, dated 1429,¹ with, as a counter seal, a fragment of No. 6.

¹ Harl. 44 A, 16 (British Museum). The priory was raised to the status of an abbey in 1399, R. Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, p. 56.