

ON THE ARCHIVES OF ROCHESTER.

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By the kind courtesy of the Mayor and Corporation of Rochester, I have been permitted to make an examination of the municipal archives of their city. With one exception, they furnish but little material for remark till we arrive at the sixteenth century. That exception is in the case of the charters granted by our early kings to the citizens. The city is in possession of only three such instruments previous to the fifteenth century, and these are of the years 1228, 1266, and 1377. There is this curious circumstance in connection with these charters. Any one taking up a history of Rochester, even that published last year, good as it is in very many respects, would think that I had done injustice to the collection, and omitted a charter of a much earlier date than those I have named. In Phippen's account of the City Charters reference is made to one granted by Henry II. in the year 1165. But in this work, which follows all preceding works, the instrument has been assigned to the wrong reign. Instead of its being, as it is endorsed, of the twelfth year of Henry II., which would make it of the year 1165, as reported, it belongs

<sup>1</sup> Read at the meeting of the Archæological Institute at Rochester, 4th August, 1863.

to that of Henry III., which makes it of the year 1228. The correction in this case was made when the corporation muniments were thoroughly examined some years ago, on the occasion of the disputed title to some prescriptive rights. There is, however, an early charter to the city, of which the evidence exists only in the National Repository. Upon the Charter-roll of the reign of Richard I. there is enrolled a charter to the town of Rochester, in the year 1189, of which the original is not now in existence. By this charter, we obtain evidence of a remarkable privilege granted to the citizens of Rochester, of which no notice is to be found in the histories of the place. The charter contains a release by the king to the inhabitants of the enforcement of a toll levied upon persons passing through the town, and bound for the crusades. The right of "Pa-age," or passage-money, from travellers would appear to have then belonged to the inhabitants of the town, although there are now no evidences of it. Henceforth they were not to demand this right, and the Royal Exchequer would make compensation for any loss they might sustain in the town of Rochester, or rather the king promised to make an allowance at the Exchequer of the amount that would have been received from that source. *The Third Crusade had just been proclaimed by the Emperor Frederic I., and in a few months afterwards Richard I. united his forces with those of Philip Augustus of France, and followed the Emperor on that expedition which cost him so dear in every way.*

For the purpose of encouraging the muster of those who were to form a large portion of his army, the king prohibited the levy of this tax. The tax appears to have been a penny for a horseman, and a halfpenny for a *footman*, upon those signed with the Cross, who should pass through Rochester towards the sea. I need scarcely say, that records of the reign of Richard I. are not com-

mon, and there are no means of showing to what extent the privilege was used in the year it was granted, or for three years afterwards. In the fourth year of the same reign, however, it appears, from the great roll of the Exchequer, that the sum of 28*s.* 3*d.* was claimed by the town on account of the remission of the toll, and in the next year the amount was 47*s.* 7½*d.* Estimating the number of Crusaders who passed through Rochester on their route to join the army fighting for the Holy cause by these payments, and allowing one horseman to four men on foot, we get the numbers of 84 horsemen, and about 520 men on foot, in the year 1192; and 142 horse, with 860 footmen, in the year 1193. We may fairly assume that the enthusiasm for the Crusades had considerably cooled down during the interval, so that these numbers must not be considered as representing a fair estimate of those who passed eastward when the privilege of going toll-free through Rochester was first granted,

The charters subsequently granted by various sovereigns—Henry VI., Edward IV., Henry VIII., Edward VI., and others—are all well known, and, valuable as they, of course, are to the city, I need not enlarge upon them, as they have been already fully discussed.

The archives of the city of Rochester are perhaps richest as regards the accounts of the expenditure of the mayors. Extracts from these have been given in several histories of the city, and they will be found to range from the time of William Myngham, "the first mayer as for the cety," in the year 1460, to the latter part of the seventeenth century. They are very curious as illustrations of the manners and customs of the times, and of the contrast between the present and past state of things. They have not, however, been methodically worked, and the extracts which have been taken from them seem to have been culled chiefly with the intention to amuse.

The accounts of the first mayor which I have named, and from which extracts are given in the History of Rochester, printed in the early part of this century, have not passed under my notice. They appear to have presented matter for curious extract as to personal expenditure, the proceedings of the corporation at the time, and the changes in domestic manners and customs. There are several accounts of a similar nature of a later period, from which, following the examples which have been given, I have made some extracts, which may not be found devoid of interest. The first entry refers to a *mace*, which was made for the corporation in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Delivered to the goldsmythe of Strowde 24 ounces of sylver  
at v<sup>s</sup> the ounce towards the mackinge of the greate mace.  
vj<sup>li</sup>.

Payed for golde to guilte the mace. 26<sup>s</sup>.

Payed 17 October 1591 to the Gouldsmyth of Stroude for the  
mackinge of the mace. 36<sup>s</sup>.

Payed for the mackinge of the iron for the greate mace. 2<sup>s</sup>.

I need scarcely say that the present mace is not that alluded to in this account. This was made in 1661, "Mr. John Mabb being then mayer."

There are, I believe, but few instances of corporation maces now existing of an earlier period than the Restoration. During the civil wars the necessities of one side or the other appropriated the plate which belonged to public bodies of any political connection.

In the year 1592 we have the entry—"Payed to the Quenes Maiesties players, by Mr. Wilkinson, maior, his appoyntement, 20s.;" and in the same year there are entries showing that the pound was moved on to the common on the 28th of August.

The next entry shows the commencement of a practice which has only very lately been condemned, which

was much in vogue a few years since, and has almost died out; it shows the change in public taste.

6 Feb. 1640.—Edmond Rolffe and John Alewoorth musicones were sworne this day Freemen of this citty, and are in regard their freedoms were given them freely by the citty, they do promise in liewe thereof to play throughe the Citty every mornyng upon theire lowde musicke called the weightes betweene Hollautide and Candlemas as is usually done in the Cittyes of London and Canterbury.

In 1641-2, we find evidences of Charles I.'s visit to the city in these curious entries, which show that he was received with due honour.

Sente one of purpose for a foote cloth when the Kinge was here. 8<sup>s</sup>.—Paid for horse-hire. 3<sup>s</sup>.—Paid to one to carry yt backe. 7<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>.

Payde at the Crowne when wee mett to atende y<sup>e</sup> King. 3<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>. Paid for a horse and man to meete the Kinge and give knowledg. 2<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>.

Given Mr. Clarke's man for my horse to ryde beefore y<sup>e</sup> Kinge. 2<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>.

For y<sup>e</sup> Kinges barge. 10<sup>s</sup>.

In the next year is an entry showing that the Queen-Mother, the widow of the great Henry IV. of France, passed through Rochester, probably on her road to embark at Dover with her daughter, the Princess Mary.

Paid when wee attended to meete the Queene Mother. 13<sup>s</sup>/4<sup>d</sup>.

In the same year are also the following:—

Paid to two salmonds sent to Sir Thomas Walsingham and a basket to carry them. 1<sup>l</sup>. 7<sup>s</sup>. 6<sup>d</sup>.

Paid and given to see the man w<sup>th</sup>out hands, by consent. 5<sup>s</sup>.

Paid to the borsholder for punishing reoges. 2<sup>s</sup>/8<sup>d</sup>.

Paid to Richard Iyve for curinge a man hurt when the fire was at y<sup>e</sup> Crowne. 1<sup>s</sup>/10<sup>d</sup>.

Paid to the goldsmith for tipping the constable's staves. £1. 5<sup>s</sup>.

Paid to W<sup>m</sup> Paske for a horsehyre to meet the Prince of Orange. 2<sup>s</sup>/8<sup>d</sup>.

In the year 1644-5—

To Tho. Alchyn & Atwaters for repairinge the pest howse.  
£2. 17<sup>s</sup>. 10<sup>d</sup>.

To a smith for iron worke for the corne measures. £1. 0<sup>s</sup>. 8<sup>d</sup>.  
Given y<sup>e</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> of Aprill 1645 unto 6 of y<sup>e</sup> Lord of Warwick his  
trumpeters. 10<sup>s</sup>.

Given y<sup>e</sup> butler of Cobham when y<sup>e</sup> buck was killed. 2<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>.  
Given y<sup>e</sup> 18 of July 1645 to y<sup>e</sup> keeper for his fee for y<sup>e</sup> buck.  
£1. 0. 0.

Paid for flower & butter & egges & suett & pepper & for making  
y<sup>e</sup> pastyes. 2. 6. 6.

Paid to good-wife Taylor for backing y<sup>e</sup> pastyes. 2<sup>s</sup>/6<sup>d</sup>.  
Spent y<sup>e</sup> 22 of July 1645 at y<sup>e</sup> Crowne upon Mr Littleton y<sup>e</sup>  
Lord Pembroke gentleman. 4<sup>s</sup>.

Paid for wine and cakes & bread & beare & cheese when I went  
y<sup>e</sup> bounds of the Citty. 9<sup>s</sup>/4<sup>d</sup>.

Paid y<sup>e</sup> 15 of August 1645 which was spent by Mr Ward my  
deputie at Stroud fayre. 6<sup>s</sup>.

Paid y<sup>e</sup> 8 of August 1646 for the Sessions dinner. £5. 4<sup>s</sup>. 5<sup>d</sup>.

A fuller examination of these accounts would bring to  
light many other curious entries.

There is a book containing the proceedings of the  
Admiralty Court of the city of Rochester, in the reign  
of Queen Elizabeth, to which I will next allude. At  
the commencement are the oaths of the officers of the  
Court and the fishermen, concluding with this versified  
exhortation in support:—

“Let every man that takes an othe in godly feare observe y<sup>e</sup>  
same

So shall he at the dreadfull day acqyute himself thereof from  
blame

But he y<sup>t</sup> careles, takes an othe, without regard y<sup>e</sup> same  
to kepe

Shall yt bewayle, but suer to late, when he ys in y<sup>t</sup> lake  
so depe.”

It is full of curious particulars relating to the condition  
of the river Medway, and the great interests involved

in the proper execution of its police. In it are recorded presentments of the improper forming of weirs; of unlawful fishings; of infringements of various regulations relating to the management of the oyster-beds; of acts of trespass, assault, and felony committed on the river; of inquiry to be made if a certain man came truly by a "payer of tiltes, the newe sett nett and y<sup>e</sup> gounde he brought into this cyttye;" that a "ffyshe ryall, called a sturgeon, leapte into one of the Quenes Ma<sup>tyes</sup> ship botes rodinge within this libertye, and was from thens taken out by boatswayne Lambe, and not presentyd to M<sup>r</sup> Mayor, secundum, etc.," so he was fined 6*d*.

The following entry is a singular one, relating, as it does, to the finding of the body of a man in the river, "with braslettes on his armes:"—

Court held at Sheerness, 21 June 1592.—"Also they presente that abowte . . . laste Richarde Hamon & . . . Robinson of Upchurch toke up w<sup>th</sup>in this libertyes, abowte Harrye Johannes Lan<sup>e</sup> one man drownyd callyd . . . Hancocke caryed by John Scoler, w<sup>ch</sup> . . . Hancocke by reporte had braslettts on his arms and diverse other goods and money wherof the jurye knowythe not the certentye, w<sup>ch</sup> thinge they say was presentyd in Mylton Courte beinge taken up in the channell. A youthe at Rochester key reportyd that Hancocke had braslettts on his armes. Inquirat?" &c.

At the end of the book are the indentures of apprenticeship to persons in business in the city, including master gunners and boatswains of H.M. ships. These are to provide the apprentice "in the ende of the sayd terme with all manner tooles and instruments belonginge to the sayd arte of shotinge w<sup>th</sup> great ordinance, informing him in his sayd arte after the best manner he can, may, or knoweth."

Of the ordinary indentures, I subjoin two examples—one to a sempstress, the other to a barber; the first for fourteen years, the latter for nine years.

M<sup>d</sup> that this 29<sup>th</sup> daye of September anno regni Domine Elizabeth nunc reginæ 22<sup>do</sup> Elizabeth Morgan of Rochest<sup>r</sup> wydowe in the presence of me and diverse others hathe verye willinglye & w<sup>th</sup> the consente of her dowghter undernamyd put & bounde ov<sup>r</sup> her dowghter Maryon Hudson aforsayd unto M<sup>rs</sup> Alyce Tyler widowe of Rochest<sup>r</sup> aforsayd sempst<sup>r</sup> as an apprentice & servante w<sup>t</sup> her sayd M<sup>rs</sup> to dwell abyde & tarye from this presente feaste day of S<sup>t</sup> Michaell tharchangell unto the full ende & terme of Fowertene yeres from hensforthe nexte & imedyatly folowinge fully to be complete and endyd. In consideracion wherof the sayd M<sup>rs</sup> Alyce Tyler dothe promyse covenant & grante to fynde the sayde Maryon duringe all the sayd terme sufficiente & mete apparell, meate, drinke & all other necessaryes as well in sycknes as in helthe. And also to teache the sayd Maryon to make & sowe all & all manner suche coates w<sup>t</sup> the nedell as she herself can doo the beste & redyest w<sup>t</sup> mete and resonable correctyon yf nede be. And further also in the end of y<sup>e</sup> said terme of fowertene yeres to paye and give unto the said Maryon Hudson fortye shillings in money, one good & mete gounde or upper garmente, two pettycotes, three smockes, three apernes, three coyfes, three shadowes w<sup>h</sup> doble in hose & showes of eche two payer. In wytnes wherof to this recorde therof made as well y<sup>e</sup> said M<sup>rs</sup> Alice Tyler as the sayd Maryon Hudson & her mother aforsayd have setto ther severall markes the day & yere abovesayd. 1590.

Robertis Shawe is apprenticed to John Christfylde, barber. He is—

“ After the manner of an apprentize w<sup>t</sup> him to dwell from the feast of S<sup>t</sup> Michael next cominge unto & for the full ende & terme of nyne yeres then next ensuinge and fullye to be compleate. By all w<sup>ch</sup> sayd terme the sayd Robte Shawe apprentize to the sayd John Christfylde as his m<sup>r</sup> well & faythfullye shall serve, his secretts shall kepe, his comaundements lawfull & honeste every where shall doo &c. And the sayd John Chrystfylde in the misterye w<sup>ch</sup> he usethe after the best manner that he can or may shall teache & enforme or cawse to be toughte & enformyd as moche as to the sayd misterye belongyth or in any wyse appertaynyth & in dewe manner to chastyze him ffyndinge unto his sayd servante meate drinke lynnen wollen

hose shoes & all manner things to him necessarye or belonginge to an apprentize of suche a mysterye And in recompence of his good service at thende of his sayd terme to geve unto his sayd servante doble apparell, the one for workinge dayes and a better for holye dayes, two combes, one aperne, one payer of syssers and the case to put them in instrum<sup>ts</sup> fytt and belonginge to one of such a mysterye. And the sayd Robt doth also for himself covenante & promyse at the end of his said yeres to become jorneyman unto his sayd m<sup>r</sup> for one whole yere nexte folowyng, for the w<sup>ch</sup> yeres service the sayd John Christfyld dothe lykwyse on his parte covenante and promyse to paye unto the said Roberte eight pence of currante money weklye duringe that yere.—In witness &c. 11 Sept<sup>r</sup> 35 Eliz. 1593.”

Besides the documents I have particularly referred to, the collection now in the custody of the Town Clerk includes many MSS. containing details illustrative of the early condition of Rochester and its inhabitants. Of these, I would specify the “Chamberlain’s Accounts;” the “Constats,” or Rent-rolls of the Corporation; the Rolls of the “Sessions,” and “Views of Frankpledge;” together with the Bills for Corporation expenditure. There is no list or calendar of them.

The next collection to which I will refer is that of the Bridge Wardens.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the fine picturesque bridge which formerly spanned the Medway, as a part of the great high-road between the capital and the coast, is tolerably well known. Still, we have no detailed accounts of its actual building, and the attribution of it to Sir Robert Knolles might be more completely made out. One would expect to find more direct evidence than that usually given. Of the early wooden bridge there are no accounts existing, though several interesting particulars relating to it

<sup>1</sup> The Corporation of the Bridge Wardens was established by a statute passed upon the petition of Sir Robert Knolles and Sir John de Cobham, in the reign of Richard II., and confirmed by a further statute passed in the 9th year of Henry V. (A.D. 1421-2), by which a seal was granted to them.

are to be found in the 'Textus Roffensis';—but I am able to bring to notice a short document, deposited in the Public Record Office, which has been hitherto unnoticed, and which refers to that early structure.

It is called an "Account of the Wardens of the Passage of the Water of Medway at Rochester," in the 13th and 14th years of Edward III. (A.D. 1339–40). It is for a period of 24 weeks and 4 days, beginning on the 14th October, "on which day the bridge of the said city was broken down," to the 18th of the same month, "when they had the commission of the Lord the King to keep the said passage, and to collect the money arising therefrom; and from that same day to the third day of April in the 14th year, on which day the bridge was made and repaired." It records receipts amounting to £25. 12s. 3½*d.*, and an expenditure of £7. 17s. 4*d.*, chiefly in the hire of a great boat for carrying over carts, horses, men, etc., with oars, cords, and other tackle for it, and the wages of four mariners working it. Timber and cables for two "bridges" cost 3s. 6*d.*, and wheels for the same 14*d.* These were conveniences for landing and embarking.

The muniments of the Bridge Wardens, now deposited in their strong room, commence with a roll of work for the bridge (the structure only lately removed) in the sixteenth year of Richard II. (A.D. 1392–3), the very year after its completion; and these accounts continue, in the shape of books, with but few intermissions, to the present time. They have also numerous deeds and other documents relating to the administration of the property charged with the sustentation of the bridge, and among these will be found many curious particulars illustrative of the times to which they belong, including many local details existing nowhere else.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a deed of the time of Henry VII. the Crown Inn is styled "the Crown on (over?) the hope."

Their collection also comprises a fine MS. of Roger Manwood, the great legal writer of the time of Elizabeth, who therein "discoursed" upon the "ancient wooden and present stoned bridge." Time has not sufficed for me to make more than a cursory examination of these documents. A specimen of the entries, showing how repairs at the bridge were carried on, may not be without some interest, especially as it shows the peril of the work, and records an accident such as was probably of frequent occurrence. In the account for the 11th and 12th years of Henry IV. (A.D. 1409-1411) it is entered—

"Item, paid to ten tide-men for driving piles for twelve tides, and to two for helping them for one tide, each taking for the tide 3*d.*; of which one tide was upon Sunday after vespers, and there came a great tempest of wind and rain, and eight men were plunged into the water and were very nearly drowned ('et furount ben pres noye'), and therefore they had besides as a reward in firing, bread, verjuice, and wine, 22*d.*"

The Title Deeds and Accounts of Cobham College are also in the custody of the Bridge Wardens, to whom the administration of their property was confided at the time of its foundation in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. They are, of course, purely local in character and interest.

Perhaps some of the most valuable and interesting documents relating to Rochester are the few accounts of the ancient Priory of St. Nicholas (which occupied the site of the present Cathedral establishment), now in the custody of the Dean and Chapter, and which must be but little known. The Society of Antiquaries has complete copies of these accounts, which have perhaps never seen the light since they were made about a century ago. Having been courteously permitted to examine the originals, I can speak to their great fidelity

and completeness; but I must content myself with simply giving a note of their existence, as they are too full of local particulars for me to attempt to give extracts from them. They consist of an account of a "cellarer," and two of a "camerarius ecclesie," in the reign of Richard II.; a similar account in the reign of Henry V.; two accounts, that of an "infirmarius ecclesie," and an "elemosinarius," in the reign of Henry VI.; that of the Prior filling various offices, in the reign of Henry VIII.; and a long Court Roll of the reign of Edward III., apparently of all the tenants of the monastery. I may perhaps be permitted to commend these transcripts to the attention of those who are interested in the locality; and, in conclusion, express my cordial and grateful thanks to all the custodians of the various documents I have thus noticed for their kind courtesy and obliging attention.