

chains, with small staples at the ends of them, are suspended. Also four third brass Roman coins; two of them of Constantius and Crispus.

Mr. T. Nevinson exhibited a door of an Aumbrey in oak, containing a representation of a winged person, perhaps S. Michael, surrounded by dragons' heads, intertwined with foliage. The carving is rude in execution, and appears to be probably of the thirteenth century. The iron hinges upon it are good, and worthy of imitation.

Mr. Ingram produced, for more minute inspection, some objects of curiosity lately exhibited at the public meeting of the Society. They are the property of John Marriott, Esq., of Beeby, and were found four or five years ago, about two and a-half feet below the surface of an old grass field in that parish, when being drained. They consist of a necklace, three fibulæ, and three hooks-and-eyes, from a Saxon interment. The bones were reduced to powder, but a few teeth were preserved. The necklace consists of seventy beads, varying in size from a peppercorn to one and a-half inch in diameter, and of various shapes. The largest are of glass, or crystal, and amber; the smallest, of semi-transparent blue glass. Others are like red pottery inlaid with yellow and green; white, ornamented with red and blue; or black, with yellow and red. The two largest of the fibulæ are above four inches long. The hooks-and-eyes are of silver, the part for sewing them to the dress being large.

The Rev. J. M. Gresley read the following Paper, containing Abstracts of several Charters relating to Gracedieu Priory, Leicestershire, not noticed by either Dugdale or Nichols. He also exhibited some of the original documents, two of them from among the evidences of Lord Ferrers, who had kindly lent them. One has a large fragment of the Common seal remaining appendant. Mr. Gresley produced drawings of the Privy seal of the first Prioress, and of the Common or Chapter seal of the House; the former from the print of it in Nichols' Leicestershire,* the latter, hitherto, we believe, unpublished.

GRACEDIEU PRIORY.

THE Priory of Gracedieu, in Latin "de Gratia Dei," was founded about 24 Hen. III. (A.D. 1239-40,) by lady Roesia de Verdun, of Alton Castle, Staffordshire, for Nuns of the Order of St. Augustine. It is not my intention here to repeat its fortunes and misfortunes, which may be found in the works of Nichols and Potter, but to

* West Gose. Hund. Pl. lxxxvii., fig. 3.

mention some documents relating to it not to be found in our county histories, nor in the Monasticon.

The first four are very meagre abstracts of charters formerly among the evidences of my own family, a member of which, Agnes de Gresley, was the first prioress of the house. These I have taken from a manuscript in the Cheetham Library, at Manchester, frequently referred to by Nichols as "the Gresley Chartulary," being a collection of breviates of documents connected with that family, written probably late in the reign of Elizabeth. They are as follows:—

I. Between Agnes de Gresley, prioress of Grace-dieu of Belton, and sir William de Wasteneys of Osgodthorpe. An. 1262. (fol. 38.)

II. 1264, between the prioress of Grace-dieu and sir Thomas Wasteneys, before sir Martin de Littlebury, justice of our lord the king. At Turlington; Witness, Alan de Trenggiston. (fol. 33.)

III. Of the time of Henry the Fifth or Sixth.* Margaret Zouch, prioress of the holy and undivided Trinity of Grace-dieu, has received from William de Gresley, esq. (fol. 53.)

IV. "The second year of the regne of K. Richard the Third betwene Elizabeth Shyrbourne prioress of the Blessed Trynitie of Gracedieu & her co'vent, & John Gresley, knight, lord of osgathorpe, afore Katharen Hastings, lady of Hastings, wedow, Thomas Kebell, and others. The prioresse claymeth a yearly rent, the w^{ch} dame Rose of Verdun had of the gyfft of Willm Wasteneys, knight." (fol. 60.)

These documents appear to relate to the same thing, namely, a payment from Osgathorpe to the prioress, granted originally by William de Wasteneys, lord of Osgathorpe, the heiress of whose family, Thomazine, married, temp. Richard the Second, sir Nicholas de Gresley, whose heirs thus became liable to the payment.

V. Among the charters bequeathed in 1827 to the British Museum by Adam Wolley, Esq., of Matlock, Derbyshire, is one relating to Grace-dieu,† dated in the 53rd year of king Henry III., (A.D. 1263.) It is an agreement between Agnes de Gresley, prioress, and the convent, and Matthew de Chyneton (Kniveton, in Derbyshire,) before sir Gilbert de Preston, justiciary, and others, then at Derby; setting forth that as the entire land which Walter de Strettone formerly held of the house of Grace-dieu in the towns

* This appears to be an error: at any rate she was prioress 1 Hen. VIII.

† Wolley Charters, No. 6, 28. This agreement is mentioned in Nichols' Leicestershire, West. Gosc. Hund., p. 651.

of Bradlege and Surstant* had devolved into the hands of the said Matthew, and to Norman de Bigham and Henry de Hessebury, for homage, rents, and other services, the said prioress had conceded for herself and her successors that the said Matthew and his heirs might have the whole of the said land of the house of Gracedieu of Belton, freely and entirely as Walter de Strettone held it; rendering thence annually to the said prioress and convent twenty silver pennies annual rent at Bradelege, at the Feasts of St. John Baptist and St. Martin, for all services, &c., except those to the principal lord of the fee. And for the greater security, the said William bound the whole of his tenement at Bradlege and Surstant to the aforesaid prioress and convent, that they might be able to distress the said Matthew, his heirs, and assigns, as often as they should fail in the payment of the rent. In witness the parties alternately affixed their seals; these being witnesses,—sir Henry de Beo, knight, sir Peter de Too and Peter de Bakepuz, knights, Haytrop de Osomstone, Robert de Strettone, Richard Fitz Herby, Thomas Fitz Herbert of Somersall, and Richard his brother, and others.

No seal remains.

VI. Among some "Ecclesiastical Charters" published in 1840 by the Camden Society (p. 66) is one which the editor ascribes to "probably about A.D. 1250:"—Agnes de Grisele, prioress de Gratia Dei, and the nuns of the same place, by the unanimous consent of their whole chapter, concede to John de Verdun, their advocate, and his heirs, that whensoever any prioress of their house shall quit her office, they will not elect a successor without his license; and that when they shall have elected a successor, they will present her to the said John for him to present. And that if the said John or his heirs shall happen to be in parts beyond sea, that then the seneschal of the said John, or the constable of Alton, shall be in place of him. In testimony whereof, to this writing "our seal together with the seal of our chapter" is appended. Witnesses, sir Thomas de Chawrthe, sir William de Wasteneys, sir Robert de la Warde, Robert Malishonerise, Robert de Stapeltone, Ricard de Navisby, and many others.

You will observe in this charter that two seals are mentioned,—the privy-seal of the prioress, and the common seal of the chapter. It appears, however, from the editor's note, that only one was actually appended, but not which of them.

This John de Verdun was the son and heir of the foundress and her husband Theobald de Boteler; but he kept, it appears, his mother's name. It was probably after her death in 1248 that this charter was made, confirming his mother's rights to him as their founder and patron.

* Sturston, a hamlet of Ashbourne, Derbyshire.

VII. The editor mentions another instrument which illustrates the preceding charter. It was then in the same collection of documents, but is now in my possession, and before you. It is addressed to the illustrious and noble sire [domino] John Merbiry, esq., by his devoted bead-women, lady Alice Mortun, sub-prioress, and the convent of the house or priory of the Holy Trinity of Grace-dieu, of the Order of St. Augustine, informing him of the death of lady Margaret de Rempstone, late prioress, on the 2nd of April, 1418: that lest the priory should too long lament its widowhood, they had elected in the chapter-house as her successor lady Alice Dunwych, their treasurers, a woman provident, discreet, and learned, to be commended for her good deeds, of lawful age and legitimate birth, circumspect in both spiritual and temporal affairs, of the Regular Order of St. Augustine, professed in their house, and able to defend the rights of the priory: which said Alice, thus canonically elected, they presented to his reverence by William Sumpter, their messenger in the Lord for this purpose, humbly beseeching him to grant his assent to the said Alice, and to direct letters patent concerning all these things to the reverend father in Christ lord Phillip, by the Grace of God bishop of Lincoln, their diocesan. Given in their chapter-house, under their common seal, on the 8th day of the month and A.D. aforesaid.

A fragment of the seal remains.

Here we find that the patronage of the priory had passed from the Verduns to John Merbury, esq. Theobald de Verdon, the last of that name, dying in 1316, left three daughters, of whom Margery, the youngest, born 1310, married, for her third husband, sir John Crophull, knight, of Sutton Bonnington, Nottinghamshire, who died 1384. In 1356, it was found to be of no damage to the king or any other, if the king gave leave to sir John de Crophull, knight, and Margaret his wife, to enfeoff Ralph de Crophull, parson of Cottingham, and Richard de Makkeley, clerk, in the advowson of the priory de la Grace-dieu.* They had a son and heir, sir Thomas Crophull, whose daughter and heir, Agnes, married first sir Walter Devereux, by whom she had a son, Walter Devereux. She afterwards became the second wife of sir John Merbury, knight, and died 1435 seized of the advowson of the priory.†

The second Walter Devereux above-named, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter and heir of the said sir John Merbury by a former wife, left a son, Walter, who married Anne, sole daughter and heir of William lord Ferrars, of Chartley, and was summoned to parliament as lord de Ferrars. Their grandson, Walter Devereux, appears to have been the patron of Grace-dieu priory at the time of its suppression by king Henry the Eighth; for the visitors

* Nichols' Leicestershire, West Goscote Hund. p. 652.

† Ibid, pp. 639, 640, 652. Guthlaxton Hund., pp. 117, 147, where Thomas Crophull is said to be "cousin and heir" to Sir John Crophull.

of the monastery, doctors Leigh and Layton, say,—“Fundator, dominus Ferys.”*

VIII. By the Harleian charter, 44, D. 51, which is without date, the prioress and convent of Grace-dieu conceded and confirmed for ever to God and the church of the blessed Martial of Neuheus [Lincolnshire], that toft in the village of Limberge, which they had of the gift of Alice le Roch; which said toft lay near the toft of Hugh Fitz Lamber on the west side, according as was more fully set forth in the charter which the said abbot and convent had of the aforesaid Alice. In testimony whereof they appended their seal. Witnesses, Robert vicar of Kernigton and dean of Fordburgh, Lucar de Fontibus, John de Keleby, Hugh de Senerby, Geoffrey de Kilmholm, and others.

A large portion of the seal remains in good preservation.

IX. I have two other charters (hitherto, I believe, unnoticed) to mention, both of them from the evidences of lord Ferrers at Staunton Harold, and which, by his kind permission, I am able to submit to your inspection.

They are both of the same date, Nov. 10th, 1 Hen. VIII., and therefore probably relate to an arrangement of property by which both parties were accommodated. One of them witnesses that Margaret Zowche the prioress, and the convent of Grace-dieu, conceded to Ralf Shyrley, knight, one virgate of land, with a toft and a croft in the ville and fields of Staunton Harolde, namely, that virgate, &c., which Alan, son of Richard Staunton by his charter aforetime gave them in pure and perpetual alms; to have and to hold the said virgate, &c., for ninety-nine years, rendering thence yearly to the prioress and convent one peppercorn, if demanded. In testimony whereof, to one part of these indentures remaining in the possession of the said Ralph, the prioress and convent affixed their common seal; and to the other part remaining in the possession of the said prioress and convent, the said Ralph affixed his seal. Given in their chapter house, November 10th, 1 Hen. VIII.

A portion of the common seal remains.

X. The other indenture made between the same parties witnesses, That the said Ralph Shyrley has conceded to the said prioress and convent and their successors, one half virgate of land, with tofts, and crofts, and appurtenances in the ville and fields of Osgathorpe, formerly John Herbert's, called “herbertes thing,” and of old called “Reignolds londe;” To have and to hold the said

* Nichols' Leicestershire, West Gosc. Hund. p. 652. Nicholas's Synopsis of the peerage, vol. i., p. 230.

half virgate, &c., for ninety-nine years, rendering thence annually to the said Ralph and his heirs one peppercorn, if demanded, and to the chief lord of that fee the accustomed rents and services thence due. And if it should happen that the said prioress and convent should be hindered in the profitable possession of the said half virgate, &c., by the said Ralph, then the said Ralph grants that it shall be lawful for the said prioress to enter upon one virgate of land, &c., [viz., that leased to sir Ralph by the preceding instrument] and to repossess and enjoy it. In testimony whereof the seals of the parties were appended to each part of the indenture, as in the former instance. Given at Staunton Harold, November 10th, 1 Hen. VIII.

No seal remains upon the vellum label, nor is there any appearance of one having ever been affixed to it.

From the documents now enumerated we learn the names of four prioresses of Grace-dieu not recorded by Nichols nor in the *Monasticon*.

Margaret de Rempstone, died 2 April, 1418.
 Alice Dunwich, elected 8 April, 1448.
 Elizabeth Shyrbourne, 2 Ric. III.
 Margaret Zowche, 10 Nov., 1 Hen. VIII.

I observed that to the charter printed by the Camden Society the seal of Agnes the prioress and the seal of the chapter are both said to be appended. Of these seals, but from other charters, I have brought drawings.* It is plain, from the early English character of the architecture of the canopies upon them, and from other seals of acknowledged date, that they are both coeval with the foundation of the priory. They are very similar in general design, being oval in shape, with a seated figure under a canopy, and below this a person kneeling. On the seal of the prioress is the Blessed Virgin with our Lord. On that of the chapter is (apparently) a bishop; his right hand is uplifted, as giving the benediction; a book is in his left, and on his head seems to be a mitre, the *infulæ*, or pendant bands of which, appear on each side above the shoulders. Below him, under a second canopy, is a kneeling figure, which we should expect to represent Roesia de Verdun, with her charter of foundation in her hand; but the person has the appearance of an ecclesiastic.

The drawing of the seal of the prioress is copied from a print in the rare volume of Nichols' *Leicestershire*,† who took it from a charter then in the possession of Lord Ferrers, but which I could not meet with at Staunton when I searched for it last summer. The other of the chapter or common seal, hitherto I believe unpublished, is from a drawing by Howlett in my possession, taken in

* Vide Nos. 8 and 9 Plate facing page 21.

† *West Goscote Hundred*, pl. lxxxvii, fig 3.

1823, from an impression in red wax attached to the deed of the surrender of the priory in the Augmentation Office, dated Oct. 27th, 30 Henry VIII., A. D. 1538; with some deficiencies supplied from the impressions to lord Ferrers' and the Harleian charters, and from a cast by Mr. Doubleday.

December 31st, 1855.

E. B. HARTOPP, Esq. in the chair.

Letters were read from Sir Henry Dryden, Bart., Mr. M. H. Bloxam, and the Revs. J. L. Petit, and G. A. Poole, expressing their gratification on being elected honorary members of the society.

Mr. Warren Lindley was elected a member; and Mr. Alfred Ellis added to the committee.

A vote of thanks was passed to the Council of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, for a present of their volume of Papers and Report for the year 1855.

A Memorial was read and signed, addressed to the Treasury respecting the sale of the important collection of London Antiquities formed by Mr. C. Roach Smith, and now to be disposed of. It was stated that they had been offered to the Treasury for £3000.; but the purchase having been declined, they are now to be dispersed by public auction. The object of the memorial was to urge the importance of the entire collection being secured for the benefit of the nation.

It having been explained that Mr. Gresley's Paper upon Croyland Abbey could not accompany the Report, &c., of the Society in the collected volume of "Transactions," a resolution was passed that, with the writer's permission, it should be printed for the members in accordance with Rule 15.

The committee meetings in future were fixed for half-past twelve o'clock.

The Rev. R. Burnaby exhibited a rosary of glass beads and metal, and a small crucifix of mother-of-pearl.

Mr. T. Nevinson exhibited an ancient pair of oak bellows, having a coat of arms with supporters, helmet, and crest carved upon one side of them, apparently foreign.

Mr. Gresley produced a massive gold signet ring, weighing 16dw. 17gr., engraved with a cross, and the letters **R. S.** It was discovered in 1847, during the excavations for the Syston and Peterborough railway, on the site of the Benedictine Nunnery at Stamford. The navy who found it sold it to a brother labourer for sixpence, by whom it was disposed of again for ten shillings.

Mr. Gresley also exhibited an heraldic manuscript volume containing drawings of the armorial bearings and seals of the town of