

shape of the spur is not that of the Norman period, before the rowel was introduced, nor is it that of the fifteenth century, when the rowel was affixed to a long spike. It must, therefore, either be in the fashion prevalent in the centuries following the Norman period, and before the era of the Wars of the Roses—that is, the fashion of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—or it must be a spur of the workmanship of the sixteenth or subsequent centuries.

Had the battle which took place here, and from the occurrence of which the site took its name, been one of a date historically so recent as the seventeenth century, I think we should have known more relating to it; and if the conflict was one of an earlier period, antecedent to the fifteenth century, it is remarkable that so little is known on the subject, and that, in fact, it is left to tradition alone to tell its scant story in the name of the field. The question what battle took place on this site is one meriting the attention of local antiquaries.

The other relic I have to exhibit is an ancient seal. The shield delineated on it is that of the Paget family, seated in this county (as appears by an ancient record which accidentally fell into my possession some years ago) as early as the reign of Henry the Sixth—there being then two freeholders, John and Thomas Paget, resident at Ibstock. The arms are—sable, a cross engrailed, argent: in the dexter chief an escallop of the second. The coat seems to me of an earlier reign than that in which the College of Arms was established, being one of the feudal age. The cross speaks of the crusader, and the escallop of the pilgrim, too clearly to be mistaken. The seal itself seems to be about two centuries old. The handle in the shape of a lion rampant, holding an escocheon in its fore paws, was probably the ancient crest of the family.

A second seal is also exhibited. It is of silver and more ancient date than the last. Perhaps some member of the committee acquainted with heraldry can decipher the arms, of which I am ignorant.

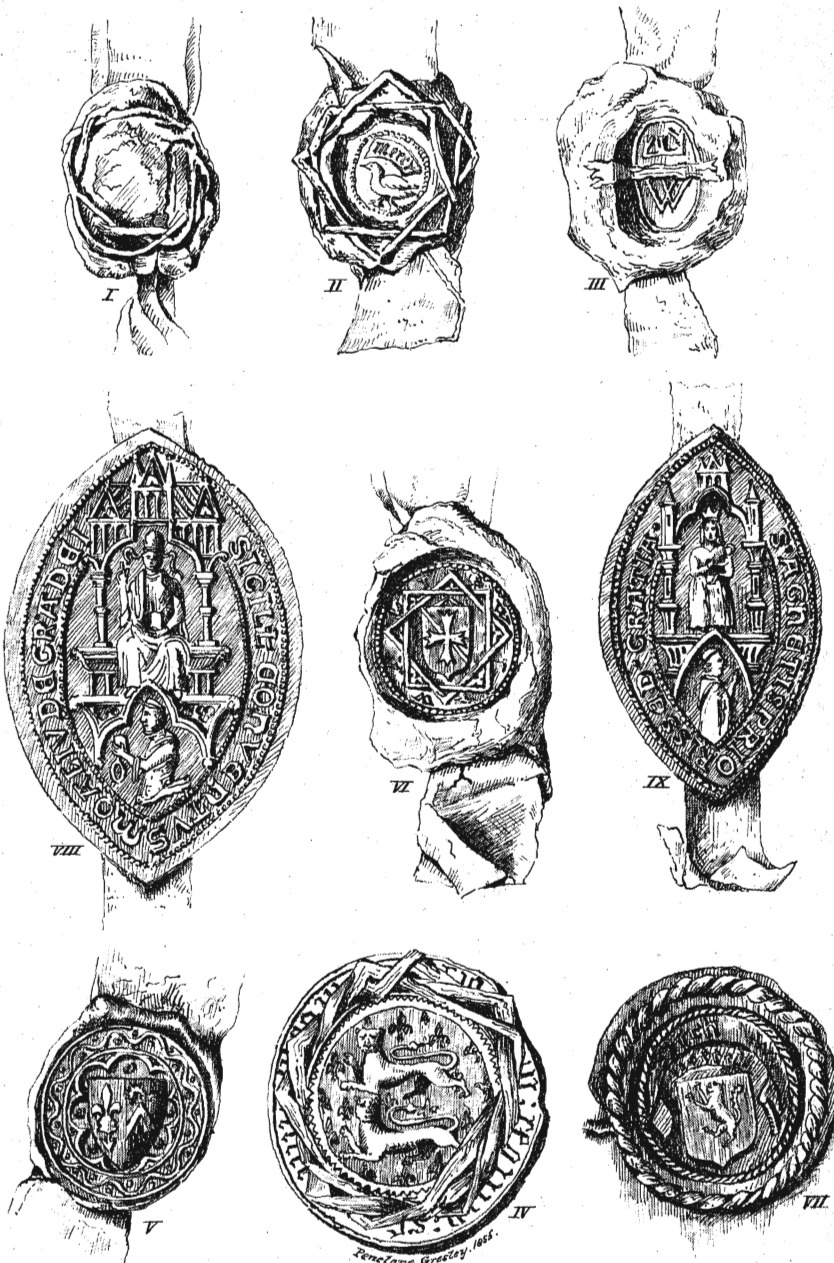
The Rev. J. M. Gresley then read the following paper

ON ANCIENT SEALS WITH TWISTED RUSHES
AND STRAWS.

WHICH HE ILLUSTRATED BY DRAWINGS.

THE charter with its seal which I submit to your inspection, is from the very extensive collection of ancient documents in the possession of Sir Thomas Gresley, Bart., at Nether Seile, in this county. It is dated at Colton, Staffordshire, on the Tuesday next after the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, 21 Edward IV., (A.D. 1481). By this instrument, master William Gresley, rector of the church of Stoke, and Richard Gresley, gave and demised to John Gresley, knight, and Anne his wife, the manor of Colton,





- I. *William or Richard Gresley, 21. Edw. IV.*
- II. *Andrew Sperlynge? 1433.*
- III. *Thomas Halshey de la Wall, 1 Ric. III.*
- IV. *S. du conseil du roi en Normandie*
- V. *William Hayne, Chaplain, 17 Ric. II.*
- VI. *Johanna, daughter of Nich. de Rotherwell, 17 Edw. III.*
- VII. *Upon a letter from James IV of Scotland to Henry VIII, 1502.*
- VIII. *Common, or Chapter Seal of Grace-Dieu Priory, Leicestershire, 1240-1388.*
- IX. *Privy Seal of Agnes de Gresley, the first Princess, 1240-1268.*

with its appurtenances, &c., which they (William and Richard) lately had of the gift and feoffment of the said John Gresley, knight, To have and to hold [the said manor, &c.] to the aforesaid John Gresley, knight, and Anne his wife, and to their heirs and assigns for ever, of the chief lords of that fee by the accustomed services. In testimony whereof they (William and Richard) affixed their seals. Witnesses, Richard Bagott of Blyffeld, esq., John Bagott his son, John Egerton, esq., John Cawarden of Mavesyn Rydware, esq., Richard Norman de la Bulde, Richard Wygan of Colton, and others.

The manor of Colton became part of the possessions of the Gresleys of Drakelowe, Derbyshire, by the marriage of Sir Nicholas Gresley, knight, with Thomazine, daughter and heir of Sir Thomas Wastneis of Colton, temp. Edw. III. Their great grandson, the Sir John Gresley of this charter, married Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Stanley of Elford, Staffordshire. John Egerton, esq., the third witness, is probably the person of that name, of Wryn-hill, (son of Hugh Egerton,) who married Alice, one of the daughters of Sir John Gresley.* John Cawarden, esq., the fourth witness, is the name of the husband of Katherine, Sir John's sister.† William Gresley, the rector, and Richard Gresley, I have not been able to attach with certainty to the family pedigree,‡ but in all probability they were brothers of Sir John, and held Colton in trust.

Their two seals, of red wax, were affixed to a single label: the lower one has been broken. That which remains (fig. 1) is of a peculiar character, and worthy of notice. It has a ring composed of three twisted rushes, encircling the impression, and embedded in the wax. In the *Archæological Journal*, January, 1851, p. 77, is an engraving of a very similar seal (fig. 2), and some account is there given of the practice of protecting seals by means of these rush rings, plaited paper, &c. The writer speaks only of their use as a protection to the impression. I will not dispute that such was one reason for using them, but I think that something more was intended. On the seal before us there probably never has been any impression worth protecting. Nothing can now be made of it, so inefficiently has its protector performed its duty. Moreover, at that period the art of seal-engraving was about at its lowest ebb, and seals were of comparatively little importance. Had the bird and the word *mercy* on the seal represented in the *Archæological Journal* been obliterated, it would not have invalidated the letter of attorney to which it was attached.

Among the charters of the Vicars Choral of Lichfield Cathedral is a bond for ten marks, dated July 6th, 1 Richard III., (A.D. 1483,) to be paid to master Thomas Heywood, Dean of Lichfield,

* Gresley Cartulary, p. 57, 60.

† Shaw's Staffordshire, vol. i., p. 180.

‡ Nichols' Leicestershire, West Gosc. Hund., p. 1009.*

by Thomas Halshey de la Wall, Staffordshire; the condition being that the said Thomas Halshey shall defend the said Dean "de quodam prato vocato Smalmedoo in dominio de Schenston in Comitatu Staffordie," &c. By the favour of the Rev. the Subchanter, I am able to produce a drawing of the seal attached to this bond (fig. 3. preceding page). It is of a very ordinary description, being an impression probably of a signet-ring of that period, engraved with the letter W crowned. Right across it, imbedded in the wax, upon which it had been laid before the seal was applied, is a single straw or rush. This, as you see, is positively injurious to the impression, instead of protective.

A drawing of another seal (fig. 4) copied from the engravings accompanying a valuable French work containing ancient Norman and Anglo-Norman charters,* exhibits a torse of twisted straws, not on the *outside* of the impression for protecting it, but imbedded in the wax where the inscription runs, and encroaching upon the field and its charges. This is described as "S. du conseil du roi en Normandie, entouré du torsade de paille, pour indiquer une saisie. (Tiré d'un sceau particulier.)"

The writer in the Archæological Journal ingeniously conjectures that these plaited rushes or straws may be so arranged in imitation of the interlaced squares and scroll-work which frequently ornament seals of the fifteenth century. (Fig. 5, 6.)

In connection with this subject I would notice some other charters among the evidences of the Vicars Choral of Lichfield. By one, dated the Tuesday after the Purification of the blessed Virgin Mary, 4 Edward III. (A.D. 1331), Richard, son of Richard Coylder, of Lichfield, gave to Robert de Evanene, priest, and to John de Aldebourgh, clerk, that place of land called Tuffynchecroft, in Lichfield, cum pert., which lay in Sondfordstrete. This, and five earlier charters relating to the same property, are tied together round the seal labels by a hair cord, and have also a rush wound three times round them, and tied.

By another charter, dated 15 Edward III., (A.D. 1341-2,) Nicholas de Teynturell, rector of the church of Lutterwych, gave to Nicholas de fferour of Lychfield, a cottage cum pert., in Robestrete. This charter and three more are tied together by a rush, wound round the vellum labels between the charters and their appendant seals

By another, 31 Edward III., (A.D. 1357-8,) Hugh de Goneston, of Lichfield, gave to Thomas de Admoneston, of Lichfield, and his heirs, one place of land, cum pert., in the field of Lichfield, called Oxebury. Also 34 Edward III., Simon de Blaby and Alexander de Creylefield, chaplains, gave to the said Thomas de A., a place of land described in the same words as in the preced-

* D'Anisy's Extraits des Chartes et autres Actes Normands ou Anglo-Normands qui se trouvent dans les Archives du Calvados, &c. 2 vols. Caen. 1834.

ing grant, with the addition that they had it of the gift of Hugh de Goueston. These two charters are tied together with a rush like the others I have mentioned.

As a concluding commentary upon these observations, I will read a paragraph from the Rev. R. C. Trench's Lectures "On the Study of Words," p. 8. He says,—“It is a signal evidence of the conservative powers of language, that we may oftentimes trace in speech the records of customs and states of society which have now passed so entirely away as to survive nowhere else but in these words alone. For example, a ‘*stipulation*,’ or agreement, is so called, as many are strong to affirm, from ‘*stipula*,’ a straw, because it once was usual, when one person passed over landed property to another, that a straw from the land, as a pledge or representative of the property transferred, should be handed from the seller to the buyer, which afterwards was commonly preserved with, or inserted in, the title deeds.”

June 25th, 1855.

THE Rev. J. M. Gresley, in the chair.

The previous minutes having been read, great satisfaction was expressed at the proceedings of the Architectural Societies at their meeting held at Peterborough in May. In consequence of their visit to Croyland Abbey, an address had been drawn up to the Marquis of Exeter, the noble proprietor of the ruins of that monastery, requesting his lordship to take some steps for their preservation, several portions being in a very precarious condition. It was also stated that the marquis intended to remove that unique curiosity, Croyland bridge, which is at present disused and in no one's way. If this report be true, surely the inhabitants of the place will do what in them lies to rescue so interesting a relic from destruction.

The Rev. E. P. Cooper, vicar of Little Dalby, Capt. C. T. Freer, Messrs. T. C. Browne, W. Millican, and W. Latham, were elected members.

The chairman expressed his regret that the expected designs for the new church at Blackfordby were not ready to be laid before the committee. The fact was, that an unexpected objector to its erection had appeared in the person of the present possessor of the great tithes of the place, and (presumed) owner of the chancel, Sir Charles Abney Hastings, Bart. But his opposition would prove perfectly harmless, if the building committee, who had received such liberal promises of assistance, should only have moral courage sufficient to persist in their righteous intention. There is a considerable space of consecrated ground adjoining the old chapel-yard, recently given by T. Stokes, esq., upon which it

might be built, and the old chancel might be left as an interesting ruin by the side of it.

Mr. Thompson exhibited a denarius of Antoninus recently found at the Friars, Leicester. He stated that at Medbourne in this county, ancient coins are so frequently turned up in the fields by swine that they have got the name of "pig-money." Mr. Paget mentioned that a coin of Trajan had lately been found in a drain in a field of his at Humberstone.

Mr. Ingram produced a Recovery deed of the thirtieth year of Elizabeth, with a fine impression of one of her seals attached to it.

The chairman suggested that it was very desirable that at future meetings *each member* present should make it a rule to endeavour to exhibit at least *one* object of curiosity or antiquity, rather than for this part of the business of the day to be left optional and uncertain. He also (as secretary) requested that a short account *in writing* might be brought with each object exhibited, in order that the report of the meeting prepared by the secretaries might in this respect be accurate. These suggestions met with the approval of all present.

Mr. Thompson gave the following description of three narrow chambers, one above another, attached to the south side of the tower of the ruined church of Ulverscroft Priory:—

CELLS AT ULVERSCROFT PRIORY.

It seems that the policy of the Roman Catholic Church, with regard to the encouragement of recluses and the adoption of reclusion, was in the earlier ages of its history more of a voluntary character than it has been in later times. Archdeacon Churton informs us* that in the ancient monasteries—such, for example, as those mentioned by patristic authorities—all was self-imposed suffering. Saint John Climacus (who, in the sixth century, was abbot of the monastery founded by the emperor Justinian at the foot of Mount Sinai) speaks of a religious establishment, which he had visited, wherein extreme hardships and great anguish of mind and body were endured by its inmates; the place inhabited by the votaries was called the "house of penitents." They were, however, all from choice inmates of the solitary chambers which they occupied. Ecclesiastical antiquaries show clearly (says the archdeacon) that St. Benedict never contemplated imprisonment for disobedient monks; the words of the rule, like the more ancient Eastern rules, prescribed expulsion. The change from the voluntary system of inclusion and expulsion for disobedience, to compulsory imprisonment, seems to have taken place subsequently to

* "On the Remains of Penitential Cells and Prisons connected with Monastic Houses," a paper in the volume of the Northamptonshire and other Architectural Societies for 1853.