

## SOME NOTES ON THE EARLIER MUNICIPAL HISTORY OF PLYMOUTH.

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THE history of Plymouth may be conveniently divided into three sections: (a) Prehistoric and Legendary, extending down to the compilation of *Domesday*; (b) Uncertain and Fragmentary, dating from *Domesday* down to the incorporation of the existing borough by Act of Parliament in 1439; and (c) Consecutive, from 1439 onward to the present time. Of the second section, which covers upwards of 350 years, we know probably less than we do of the history of any town in England of equal importance over so long a period. There is but one single contemporary document among the Corporation archives within its range, though there are copies of several others, and there must once have been many. Probably the bulk perished when the "towne's evydyence" was destroyed by fire in an assault of the Western Rebels in 1548. And yet during these three centuries and a half Plymouth grew from a mere fishing hamlet to a port so famous that it took a principal part in the wars of the Edwards against France; that it was the rendezvous of a fleet of 325 ships in 1287; that it stood third on the list of contributories to the Calais fleet in 1346; and that in 1377 the poll tax returns assign it an assessed population of 4837, which would give a total of nearly 10,000—a number exceeded at that date in this kingdom only by the cities of London, York, and Bristol.\* I do not attempt, however, in the present paper to consider

\* The fact that a grant by King John to Alice, Countess of Warwick, to remain a widow during her pleasure, is dated at Sutton, by the hand of Hugh, Archdeacon of Wells (January 13th, 6 John, 1204), may point to one of the earliest connections of the town with national affairs.

the relations of Plymouth to the general national life, but rather to weave the threads of its early municipal history into as consistent a web as possible, in the hope that I may obtain additional light from other sources upon what are confessedly very obscure conditions.\*

We start with sufficient precision. *Domesday* records Sudtone (Sutton) as being part of the king's demesne, and appendant with Macretone (Maker) and Tanbretone (King's Tamerton) to the manor of Wachusetone (Walkhampton), the original head of what is now the hundred of Roborough.† Sutton was a small manor with land for six ploughs, with twenty acres of pasture, two of meadow, and worth 20s. a year, and its population is enumerated at one serf, four villeins, and two bordars. It was bounded on the west and north, as Plymouth is now, by Stanehvs (Stonehouse), the property of Robert the Bastard; and Stoches (Devonport), the property of Robert of Albemarle, whence its parochial name of Stoke Damerel. On the east its limits are not so clear. There were two manors of Modlei, which are identifiable with the modern Higher and Lower Mutleys—one of Contune (Compton Gifford), and one of Lisistone (Lipson), concerning all of which there is really no room for doubt. But in addition to these there appears among the fiefs of Judhel of Totnes a manor of Leuricestone, which stands in the record between the Mutleys and Weston Peveril, and which, I am compelled to hold, was one of the estates that lay contiguous to Sutton. The probability seems to be that as there have been recognized two Lipsons—Higher and Lower—Leuricestone has merged in the one, as Lisistone in

\* Nor do I here in any way deal with the nature and position of its presumed Saxon predecessor—Tamarworth.

† An important element in the consideration of the early history of the town, which I can only hint at here, is the fact of the existence down to a comparatively late period of traces of the ancient holding of the "mark," indicative of Teutonic settlement. This was first stated by myself in 1882 (*Trans. Plym. Inst.* vol. viii. pp. 196, 197), when I called attention to the occurrence of several references in ancient deeds touching properties in Plymouth, to "landscore" land, the point that seemed conclusive being that a certain field, which retained a very mixed and complicated ownership to the present day, was "lying in landscore." Since then other vestiges of this ancient tenure have come to light; and I find that what was known in Plymouth by the name of "landscore" was a strip of unenclosed land, and that a tenement which lay in landscore consisted of a series of these unenclosed "scores" or "shares." Such tenements are traceable in every quarter of the borough. One which was enclosed in the latter part of the seventeenth century went by the name of "Roper's piece." Of one landscore by the Laira the dimensions are given. It consisted of 136 yards of land at 36 feet the yard.

the other; but I have thought it also likely that the original limits of Leuricestone included what is now the Cattedown district of Plymouth, and even that its title may be compounded of that of the estuary of the Lary, and of an ancient name of this rocky headland—Hingstone. It seems clear at any rate that Cattedown and the land between it and the Lipson creek formed no part of the manor of Sutton; nor of Lipson, as now understood; though it does of modern Plymouth. Moreover, we can trace the history of every one of the Domesday manors, and account for them at the present day under their original names, with this single exception, unless Lipson is read; and it is precisely in the area that I have supposed Leuricestone to cover that we in later days find other manors existing, which certainly were not carved out of Sutton, or out of any other ancient manor in the neighbourhood, if we reject Leuricestone, and which, if that hypothesis is not accepted, cannot be found represented in *Domesday* at all—the manor of Radclyffe and the reputed manor of Sutton Pill, which is only mentioned in comparatively recent years; and in part probably the manor of Ulyetts, or Lulyetts Fee, or Lulyetts Parke.

Lulyett's Fee was held in the early part of the 17th century (of which period its manor court book is extant among the archives of the Plymouth Corporation) with a parcel of the manor of Lipson, and occasionally called "Ullett cum Lypson." The entries of properties show that it adjoined the modern Lipson on its eastern border, and extended south to what was anciently Sutton Prior, while Sutton Vautort certainly joined it on the west—Sutton Prior and Sutton Vautort or Vallertort being the two parts into which, somewhere in the twelfth century, the original manor of Sutton was divided. There was a third division bearing the Sutton prefix, but that was the *tything* of Sutton Raf; and this tything I identify to some extent with the manor of Radclyffe, which belonged in the reign of Henry VII. to the Edgecumbes. It may in part have been connected with Sutton proper; but records of manor courts of this and of subsequent reigns show that Radclyffe lay in the east of the borough (the position assigned by Leland to Sutton Raf) for one of the tenements was "Saltram Mill," while closes of land at Saltram are also mentioned; and this is shown to be the present "Little Saltram" by the description in a lease of the same period as being in the eastern part of Plymouth. The more modern Sutton Pill, which I take, in part at least, to represent Radclyffe, included portions, if not the whole, of Cattedown.

Sutton and Leuricestone practically therefore make up municipal Plymouth.

*Domesday* in no way bears out the statement of Leland that "The chirch and much of the ground whereon Sutton now caullid Plymmouth was builded was longing to one of the Prebendes Titulo S. Petri and Pauli of Plympton, a collegiate church, alias *Capella libera dni Regis* before the Conquest." Sutton is set forth in the Great Survey as solely the king's; and the only entry that in any way could seem to favour Leland's view is that Robert the Bastard, who held Stonehouse, had two villeins in the land of the canons of Plympton. This, however, when closely examined proves nothing to the point. On the other hand there is good evidence of the date when the manor of Sutton was first alienated by the Crown. This led to its division; and that again to its attainment—indirectly—of municipal rights in the peculiar form which the history of its local self government assumed.

An Inquisition taken at Exeter before Salamon de Roffe and his associates, justices itinerant, on the octave of St. Martin 9 Edward I. (1281) sets forth *inter alia* that the manors of Sutton, Maketon (Maker), and King's Tamerton *cum filo aque de Tamer* were ancient demesne of the King, but had been given by Henry I. to Roger [elsewhere called Reginald] de Valletort by the service of a knight's fee and a half—that John de Vautort then held the manors of Sutton and Maketon, and Elias de Blakeston that of King's Tamerton, while Edmund Count of Cornwall *tenet filum aque* it did not appear by what warrant. And John and Elias came and said that they and their predecessors had held these manors before the time of Richard the King. The Abbot of Buckland held Buckland Monachorum, Bickleigh, and Walkhampton and the hundred of Roborough; while Robert Gyffard (whence Compton Gifford) held the manors of Egg Buckland, Compton and Haueknol (Honicknowle).

Moreover it was presented that the ville of Sutton belonged to the Prior of Plympton, with assize of bread and beer, and this right was allowed. The Prior claimed that these liberties had been enjoyed for many years, by charter of the lord Henry (Henry III.) father of the lord the King that then was.

Here is the first mention of Sutton as a ville, and it is thus evident that it must have assumed the status of a town in the modern sense somewhere in the earlier part of the thirteenth century. We shall note incidental proof of this as we proceed.

The succession of the Valletorts has never, so far as I am aware, been clearly made out. A Reginald de Valletort was, however, the most considerable Norman under-tenant in the neighbourhood at the time of the *Domesday* Survey, and held at that date both Lisistone and Macretone, with several adjacent manors, of the Count of Moreton; and the grant of Sutton was made in all probability to him early in the 12th century. The Prior of Plympton, it has been seen, did not date his claim to lordship of the ville earlier than the reign of Henry III.; so that the division of the one original manor of Sutton into the two subsequent manors, called after their respective lords Sutton Valletort (or Vautort or Vawter) and Sutton Prior, must have taken place somewhere between these periods. We cannot be much more exact.

Moreover the Priory of Plympton was refounded under the Norman rule by Bishop Warelwast in 1121, and if the collegiate church of Saxon times had no land in Sutton, it is further evident from this consideration that Sutton Prior must have originated subsequent to that date, at which time the undivided manor was in the hands of the King or of the Valletorts. So far as we can ascertain it seems to have been created wholly by the liberality of that noble house to the Priory, successive members making repeated grants, and thus gradually extending the conventual domains. The earliest of these now traceable is by Reginald de Valletort, of all his fishing rights, whether in Tamar or in Lynher, with the waters belonging thereto—*concurrentibus tractibus*—save and except the pool *sub aula de halton*. The copy of this grant in the "Black Book" of the Corporation of Plymouth is undated; but it was probably made not long after the manor passed into the hands of the Valletort family.

Still greater benevolence was shown by Ralph de Valletort, son and heir of Reginald, who granted to God and the church of St. Peter and St. Paul of Plympton and the canons there, in perpetual alms for the welfare of his soul and the souls of his ancestors and successors, a convenient place next Surepolam (*ad firmandum stagnum molendini et molendinum faciendum*) with right to erect a mill and mill dam, and all the mill toll of his manor of Sutton, with a suitable way thereto—that was to say by the corner of his garden of Sutton (*anglo gardini mei de Suthtona*) as anciently they were accustomed to go to the fishery of the canons at Surpole (*piscarium canonicorum de Surepola*).\*

\* Surpool extended northwards from what is now Millbay (so called from these very mills) over land long reclaimed.

This Ralph has been regarded as the grandson of the Reginald of *Domesday*, and as he was living in 1165 it seems likely that this was the case. The reference to the length of time during which the canons had held their fishery in Surpool would also appear to indicate that we are right in placing the grant of his father or grandfather very early in their ownership of the manor; for although there is an undated grant by John or Joel of Stanhust (Stonehouse) to the canons of free fishery *per totam terram meam*, Surpole, as an inlet from Millbay, has always been treated—though adjoining Stonehouse—as part of the Duchy rights under the honour of Trematon which the Valletorts held. Be this as it may, there are here two very important points. The grant gives to the Priory distinct manorial rights in connection with the mills at Millbay, which thereafter were appendant to the manor of Sutton Prior; and it shows that Ralph de Valletort made Sutton a place of residence. Nay, it even indicates to some extent the site of that residence; for the ancient road to Millbay from Plympton passed by what is now called Old Town Street, but in the middle ages was known as Old Town only, and is spoken of by Leland, under the name of Sutton Valletort, as the oldest part of Plymouth, but sore decayed. The point is important, too, as showing that in all likelihood the first real town in the modern sense at Plymouth grew up under the shadow of the residence of its Valletort lords.\* It is to this date also that I am inclined to assign the origin of the division met with subsequently as the tithing of Sutton Raf [Ralph], which is treated as distinct from either Sutton Vawter or Sutton Prior, and certainly in part, as I have already shown, and as Leland states, lay in the eastern quarter of Plymouth. But the ancient ecclesiastical district of Plymouth was a very wide one, comprising not only the old town parish of St. Andrew, but the more modern parishes of Stonehouse and St. Bude, and the existing tithings of Compton and Weston Peveril; and it is impossible to say with precision what were the boundaries of the tithing of Sutton Raf. It seems to be used in the *Nomina Villarum* (1314) as wholly or partially synonymous with Sutton Vawter; and perhaps then expressed the Valletort interest in Sutton, at this time vested

\* After much consideration concerning the *raison d'être* of the original Saxon Sutton, *South-town*, I feel tolerably certain that it must be associated with Weston [Peveril], *West-town*; and that the elder and more important settlement to which these places stood in relationship was at Stoke Damerel—the stocks or stokes being unquestionably places of exceptional importance as compared with the ordinary enclosure of the *tun*.

in one member of this family, as distinct from that of the Prior.\*

In this record Sutton Rauff appears as belonging to John de Dalecurta, Burgus de Sutton to the Prior of Plympton; Tavyton, Compton, and Ekkeboeland to the Abbot of Tavistock; Mewy, Stok Damarle, and Efford to Ricardus de Mewy.

Walter de Valletort also gave the Priory the island of *St. Nicholas, cum can[al]iculus*; (*sic*) and probably there were other grants of which no records now remain. Only upon one occasion, so far as we are aware, was the harmony between the Valletorts and the monks broken, and that was when—in the middle, or more probably the latter part, of the twelfth century—a dispute arose between John de Valletort and the Prior of Plympton as to the right of presentation to the benefice of Sutton. The point was gained by the Prior, who claimed that his predecessors had exercised the right of presentation as early as the reign of William Rufus. But we may regard the Priory of Plympton as having been the one centre in late Saxon and early Norman days of the religious life of this corner of Devon, and the benefice as distinct from the manor of Sutton had a much wider field of operation, as we have already seen.† In after years we shall find Valletorts and Priors making common cause against what they regarded as Royal usurpations.

It was but a little later than this, if we may trust Leland (and unquestionably he had access to authorities no longer extant) that Sutton began to develope from the “mene thing as an Inhabitation of fischars,” which he recalls as its status in the reign of Henry II. (1154-89). He asserts that all who had built houses in Sutton Prior since the reign of that monarch took licence of the Priory of Plympton as their chief lord. The town, however, must have increased more rapidly than the “Litle and Litle” he assigns, or otherwise we should never find it in another century (1298) called upon to send representatives to Parliament, and in less than another four-score years the most populous port in the provinces, Bristol only excepted, and this notwithstanding repeated assaults and devastation by the French.

The establishments of markets are excellent landmarks of progress; and the first market grant for Plymouth was unquestionably made in the reign of Henry III., though

\* Subsequently with two Valletort lords the distinction between Sutton Valletort and Sutton Raf would become natural and necessary.

† A patent, 3rd Henry IV., calls the living Sutton-Plympton.

the dates are somewhat uncertain. The Hundred Rolls of Edward I. state that the Prior of Plympton *habet libertatis ut assisas panis et cervisie et theolonea in villa de Sutton*, by charter of Henry III. Elsewhere the grant is said to have been made 38th Henry III. (1253) and to be of a Thursday market with a fair of three days at the festival of John the Baptist. Some fifty years since this charter was sought for on behalf of the Corporation but without success. In the forty-second year of the same monarch Baldwin de l'Isle had a grant for Sutton of a Wednesday market and a fair of three days at the feast of the Ascension. Henry's grant to the Prior was believed to have contained particular liberties. Baldwin de l'Isle is Baldwin de Redvers, the last Redvers Earl of Devon, lord of Plympton, who does not previously appear to have had any connection with Plymouth. We cannot believe that the two grants applied to the same place or jurisdiction, for they are made to two different authorities and in an inconsistent fashion. No town in those days of the size of Sutton would need a market two days following. Had the second grant been made to a Valletort in respect of Sutton Vawter, all would have been clear enough; and we should have been helped somewhat to understand certain apparent contradictions with regard to the market site, one of the spots alleged being within Sutton Prior and the other in Sutton Vawter. And as a reference to the Patent Rolls shows that the grant to Baldwin included manorial rights, possibly a dismemberment, if not a transfer, of Sutton Vawter was made in his favour.\*

Year by year through the reign of Henry III. and the two first Edwards Sutton Prior continued to grow and flourish, until it either excited the attention of royalty, or the inhabitants sought to cast off the convent yoke. A movement commenced in the penultimate decade of the 13th century which never slackened long together for just 150 years, until its end was achieved. The inhabitants were determined to assert their independence and be kept in leading-strings no longer.

By writ from the King to the Sheriff of Devon, *circa* 1317, Nicholas of Cheigny, William of Chivelston, and Nicholas of Tewksbury, were appointed commissioners to enquire by a jury in the presence, if so desired, of the Prior of Plympton, John de Vautort of Clyst, and John de Vautort of Modeton, touching the property of the King in the town of Sutton, and a peti-

\* Can Lulyett's be a corruption of L'Isle's? It certainly has a personal origin, and Courtenay rights were saved under the charter 1439-40.

tion by the burgesses of Sutton to be granted at a yearly rent certain waste places belonging to the Crown there. In opposition to this the Prior and the two Valletorts declared that the King had no lands in the town, and that he had no right to make Sutton a free borough and grant thereto a fair and market, the Prior being lord of two parts of the same town, and having a fair and market by royal charter, and the Valletorts being lords of the other third.\* Further, that Sutton was within the hundred of Roborough, of which the Abbot of Buckland was lord. So the said Prior and the two Valletorts declared that the town was wholly theirs and none of the King's, and prayed the King not to grant franchise nor any other thing there.

Nevertheless upon an inquisition held before Robert Bondyn, Sheriff of Devon, at Exeter, "die dominica in festo Sancte Trinitatis anno regno Regis Edwardi ximo" [Edward II., 1318], on the oaths of John Gifforde, William Kemell, Walter of Colrigg, Vincent of Wyneston, Alan de Lydeton, John of Sergeuill, Thomas Collinge, John Adam, Robert Raffe, Ralph Cocke of Brendon, Martin the Clerk, and David Attewill, it was found that the kings of England before the foundation of the ville of Sutton had a piece of waste land near the port of Plymouth, five perches long and one perch broad; and a certain other piece of land *in retractio maris*—in the withdrawal of the sea—containing six acres of land, where a certain house of the town was built—at which places the King's ancestors by their bailiffs held their courts; and that fishing boats of the said ville and other places were accustomed to resort thither to dry their sails and nets, and expose their fish for sale—paying the King a rent of 12d. and a penny on each basket of fish there brought. Moreover, that the proceeds amounted to £4 annually.

This then shows the existence of a fishing village of Sutton to be long antecedent to the foundation of the town of that name; and it indicates moreover the existence of certain market rights in the King's demesne, prior to and contemporary with those granted to the Priory. The royal right, recognised by the jury are practically those which formed part first of the Earldom and then and now of the Duchy of Cornwall in connection with Sutton Pool—"the port of Plymouth" in its original sense.†

\* At an earlier date it was the third that belonged to the Prior and the two thirds to the Valletorts.

† Edward II., in the eighth year of his reign (1315), granted Thomas de Genely the custody of the castle and town of Trematon, with "the water

Another inquisition, taken by Matthew de Clynedon in the same year, indicates more clearly the character of the proprietorial rights in Sutton, and locates the two main divisions. The town of Sutton was upon the coast of the port of Plymouth, but no part of it stood upon the King's soil. A certain portion of the town north of the said coast was upon the soil of the Prior of Plympton, and the Prior had assize of bread and ale and rents to the amount of £14 9s. 6½d., and so had had them from time immemorial, and there were free tenants. Another part of the town, south of the said coast, was upon the soil of John de Vautort, but the said John received nothing therefrom, save certain rents to the amount of £11 16s. 6d.; and his tenants did suit to his court twice in the year. In this part of the town the Abbot of Buckland had assize of bread and ale. The port of Plymouth belonged to the king, and rendered yearly £4 into the Exchequer; and Matthew de Clynedon found that it would neither prejudice the king nor any others if Sutton were made a free borough, and the inhabitants free burgesses, saving the service to the lords.

It is evident that the sense we must here attach to the words "Port of Plymouth," is "Harbour of Sutton Pool," otherwise the description, strained in any case, becomes absolutely unintelligible; for while Sutton Prior undoubtedly lay mainly to the north of this inlet, Sutton Vautort, though partially it might be regarded as south, was essentially west. And south of the port of Plymouth in any larger sense we have only the Channel. However, the way in which the word south is applied in this inquisition is clearly enough indicated, by the use of the phrase Southside of the immediate south-western border of Sutton Pool; and ancient deeds show that tenements here were comprised within the manor of Sutton Vawter.\*

The rights of the Priors and their brethen were questioned on various occasions, but were always successfully defended, whether against the Crown or the Earldom and Duchy of

of Sutton; and subsequently in the same reign we find the town described as *Sutton villa super Costera Portus de Plymouth*. The "port of *Plymmue*" is mentioned as early as 1254. Edward III., in the fourth year of his reign (1331), granted Thomas Coppeare, valet of his chamber, the custody of the water of Sutton, as in the county of Devon, at a rent of £4; and in the following year repeated the grant as in the county of Cornwall.

\* Sutton Prior was of course carved out of what was originally all Sutton Vawter by repeated grants; and essentially neither manor lay, in modern parlance, in a ring fence.

Cornwall, though the Convent had to submit to pay a fee farm rent into the Exchequer. John de Eltham, who succeeded to the earldom of Cornwall in 1328, claimed the fishery of the waters of Plymouth as ancient demesne; but a jury found that the privileges of the Prior and his tenants were conferred by the charter of Henry III. So in the time of the Black Prince there was another inquisition concerning the right to Sutton Pool; and here the Prior established a claim to certain quays, though the Pool proper continued to form a part of the Duchy estate. I confess that I have some doubts myself of the charter of Henry III. going much, if at all, beyond the grant of a market, and these repeated proceedings on the part of the Crown do appear to indicate some peculiarity in the title of the religious lords of Sutton.

The earliest reference to a governing body at Plymouth with which I am acquainted is the address of a writ by Henry III. (1254) to the bailiffs of the port of Plymouth (Plymmue), among others; but this general allusion is no absolute proof that any such authority existed. The first clear evidence that there was a local governing body is contained in a letter dated May 31, 1289, in which the *Bailiffs and Commonalty* of Plymouth write to the King that having been ordered to get ready a ship to transport men at arms and horses upon service, they had prepared the *Michel*, of Plymouth.

There are extant a number of writs addressed during the 14th century to persons in authority in Plymouth, which indicate still further the existence of the germs, at least, of municipal government. Then in 1326 the "Bailiffs of Plymouth, with the Port of Sutton," were directed to seize all suspected persons and letters; but this proves very little, for a similar writ was directed to the bailiffs of Yalhampton (Yealmpton) and of Newton Ferrars. Again, in 1344 the bailiffs of the "ville de Plumuth" were directed to send two inhabitants acquainted with shipping to London to advise the King and Council; similar directions being sent to Bristol, Hull, the chief Cinque Ports, Exeter, and Dartmouth, while Portsmouth was only directed to send one. In 1358 Walter le Venour, of "Plimmouth," and others, were ordered to detain three ships there and at Dartmouth, to transport Oliver, Lord de Clissons, and men-at-arms, to Brittany. It is worth notice that John Venour is elsewhere mentioned as mayor in 1377, so that it is at least possible that Walter occupied a somewhat similar office; and we know from other

sources that the family were of considerable local note. In the following year (1359) the bailiffs of Plymouth are directed, with others, to raise a subsidy of 6d. for the defence of the realm. In 1364 they are ordered to take steps to forbid the export of precious metals; and in 1372 the bailiffs of "ville de Plymouth" are the first mentioned in a writ addressed to the western ports to stay ships and men.

In 1369 the mayor and bailiffs are ordered to send two sufficient men to Westminster conversant with mercantile affairs. This was in October; and in the December following, the same, with Thomas Fishacre, John Sampson, and Robert Pilche, are ordered to provide ships and men for the defence of the realm. This is the earliest mention I can find of the office of mayor. In May, 1374, William Noytour, master of the *Trinity* of Plymouth, is ordered to come to London to advise the Council.

These writs to mayors and bailiffs and the like, are in addition to many others, either addressed to unspecified authorities, or to the collectors of customs and subsidies—as in 1347 to the collectors of subsidies in *portibus villarum de Plummuth*, and all other places upon the water of Tamar. From 1287, when it was made the rendezvous of a fleet of 325 vessels, which sailed under the Earl of Lancaster for Guienne, down to the date of the incorporation, in 1439, not a decade passed in which such writs were not sent to Plymouth on matters connected with the sea service (occasionally we may note them year after year); and its position in the West is clearly marked by two points—its sending 26 ships and 603 men to the siege of Calais in 1346, Fowey, Yarmouth, and Dartmouth alone exceeding it in the kingdom; and its supplying, in 1399–1403, 10 ships and barges to the service of the Admiralty, the highest number of any port in the entire list.

The "White Book" of the Corporation contains the copies of several ancient deeds made by a town clerk of the 16th century, because they mentioned the names of divers mayors of Sutton Prior and of Plymouth prior to the Act of Incorporation; with references to ten other "auncyent dedes . . . by the which it is manyfest that Sutton Pryors and sythyns by the nomynation of Kyng Henry the Sixte named the burgh of Plymouthe, was a town of auncyent name and hadd yerelie an officer chosen by the name of P'positus or Custos ville de Sutton Pryors, whiche then dyd rule and governe vnder the Kynge." These deeds were dated 8th, 10th,

and 16th Edward II., and 42nd Edward III. It is noticeable, however, that in the deeds actually recited the word mayor is almost always used, and that prepositus and mayor were by no means identical terms, though the offices were very much akin. The existence of a prepositus in Plymouth so early as the commencement of the 14th century is certain, for Richard the Tanner held that office for Sutton in 1310; but Maurice Berd, 1370, is the first *mayor* whose name has been preserved.

A few hints are given in records of grants of land by the Priory of Plympton. The earliest we have of these is by John [de la Stert], Prior of Plympton, 15 Edward III. (1342), to Robert, son of William the Spicer, of Sutton, and Alice, his wife, of a tenement in Billabiri Street, south of one belonging to William of Northcote, and extending sixty feet to the east to a way leading towards the market of Sutton, and a way leading from Bilbury Street towards the Oldtowne. The only other with a date is by John Prior of Plympton, 10th Richard II. (1387), to Ade Blogge, and Isabella, his wife, of a tenement at the hill in Sutton Prior, east of the stalls and south of the pillory, with survivorship, at a yearly rent of 36s. 8d. The undated grants are all in the name of John Prior of Plympton, probably de la Stert above. There is one of an acre and a half of land in Sutton, near Martock's Well, to Margery Stilman and her heirs; a second of an acre and a half *apud le heuedlonde*, north of the middle of the hyauedlond, to John of Stoke; another of an acre and a half near the heauedlonde, south of the middle, to Robert of Whitelegge; and a fourth of three acres and a half to William Berde, of Sutton, next the field held by William Cocke, and a piece of waste adjoining (*eodem wastu sub salistu maris*).

As William Berd was prepositus of Sutton in 1313, we have here some clue to the date of this last document. Again, John Austen was his colleague in the representation of Sutton in Parliament, and John Austen appears among the witnesses to Margery Stilman's grant. The grants of the land at the heauedlonde were apparently somewhat anterior, as the first is said to have afterwards been the property of Robertus Sope, who took to wife the daughter of John of Stoke; and Robert the Soper was member in 1310, as William of Stoke had been in 1298. The heauedlonde at first would seem to be represented by the field still called the Headlands; but that conclusion is negatived, not merely by the fact that this was part of the manor of Lulyett's Fee, but

from the entry, *Postea Robtus Sope qui duxit in uxorem fil Johis de Sok & vendidit terr in Cart que est sup la howe vbi molendinum ventritim Mauricii Prigge sit.*

The distinctive character of the divisions of those days is shown in the oldest deed at present in possession of the Corporation of Plymouth, 1381 (4th Richard II.). It is a release by William Okelegh, of "Plymouth," to William Wrouke of the same place, of a tenement and garden in "lo ward de Sutton Vautort." It is dated at Sutton Vautort, and witnessed by Robert Hill, William Honiton, John Bull, and others. This William Honiton is elsewhere named as mayor in this very year, but does not appear as such in the deed. A point to which attention may specially be directed here is the use of the phrase "lo ward de Sutton Vautort" \* at this early date; for it is fairly equivalent to the division which afterwards existed for centuries under the Act-Charter—"Old Town Ward."

Some sort of independent action in the inhabitants was assumed and acknowledged definitely early in the fourteenth century; for market rights were acquired by the burgesses in 1311. In that year there was a final concord and agreement on the morrow of the feast of St. James, between the Prior and Convent of Plympton, and the Burgesses of the Commonalty of the town of Sutton, in the presence and by the

\* Before the incorporation of the town the territorial divisions were of course proprietorial; but this phrase "ward of Sutton Vautort" naturally led to the inquiry how far the ward divisions of later days represented the earlier manors. Leland mentions the four wards of the town in his day as being Old Town, Venners, Vintry, and Lower; and this division is practically retained at the present day in the Land Tax assessment. There is no doubt also that it represents the original arrangement; for each ward had the care and defence of one of the four towers of the "castel quadrate," by which the town was defended. As the town grew the outer boundaries of the wards, which were purely urban in their character, would be modified; but there is no reason to assume any internal modification while the number remained unchanged. There is every reason to believe therefore that the old internal ward boundaries, which can be traced back to the 17th century, were practically those that had existed from the beginning, and that the division was made then, as it continued later, by drawing lines as nearly as the thoroughfares allowed east and west and north and south, intersecting at the point where the Free Library now stands. The manorial distinctions must therefore have been disregarded; for while Old Town did in the main represent Sutton Vawter, and Venner's Ward also in part, yet they both included portions of Sutton Prior.\* Vintry, however, was almost wholly in Sutton Prior, the only exceptions that I know of being the premises at Southside, in Sutton Vawter; and Lower Ward, though certainly in later days consisting largely of Sutton Raf, must then have been chiefly representative of Sutton Prior likewise.

\* Property in Old Town passed to the Corporation under the transfer of the manorial rights of the Priory.

mediation of the Bishop of Exeter, the Lord Hugh de Courtenay, Peter Abbot of Buckfastleigh, the Lord Thomas de Cilecestre, Knight, and others. A stone cross had been erected in a certain place within the borough of Sutton, and certain stalls for the sale of fish, flesh, and other victuals. These, with the Church of Sutton, are stated to belong to the Prior and Convent; while the burgesses had no right to erect others without license, which however they had done. The controversy is settled by the burgesses having let to them eighteen stalls, at 1d. each per year—to be paid on their behalf by the prepositus for the time being—and agreeing not to put up any more, either in that place or any other spot within the borough, without due license. As the burgesses had no seal, Richard the Tanner, prepositus, put his. Somewhere within the next half century, however, a corporate authority must have gained a more definite existence, probably in the division of Sutton Vawter, for a deed of 1368 has a seal with a ship for device, and the legend *S. communitalis ville de Sutton super Plymmvth*, a designation assumed, as we shall see, to be distinct from Sutton Prior. The deed is that by which Stonehouse is conveyed from the Bastards to the Durnfords, and the Commonalty of Sutton were sufficiently important to be called in as witnesses.

At length we reach more definite ground. Edward III., towards the close of his long reign, conferred upon the inhabitants of Sutton what was essentially a charter, and was so regarded. On the 24th November, 1374, he directed letters patent to William Cole, Stephen Durneford, John Sampson, Roger Boswines, Robert Possebury, Geoffrey Couche, John Weston, William Trevys, William Gille, Maurice Berde, William Bourewe, jun., and Humphry Passour, as burgesses of the borough of Sutton. Being mindful of the damage and disgrace that might happen to the town and the country adjacent by invasion of the enemy, in default of good rule, and being willing to provide for its defence and safety, and fully confiding in the fidelity of the men above named, the king assigns them jointly and severally to survey all defaults in the town and port thereof whereby dangers might arise; to procure the same to be amended; to cause the men of the said town to be arrayed, so that they should always be ready and prepared to meet their enemies; and to do and execute such other things as might be necessary to provide for the safety of the same town. Moreover the mayor and bailiffs, and all and singular

the inhabitants of the town, were to be obedient and aiding in the performance and execution of these premises.

It seems to me that we have here a recognition of the existence of the two rival divisions of Sutton Prior and Sutton Vawter. Had the mayor and bailiffs possessed full authority, the orders should have, in due course, been addressed to them; and as from other sources we gather that the twelve men named were inhabitants of Sutton Prior, the corporate body recognized in these letters must have had jurisdiction in Sutton Vawter, which had by this time escheated to the Crown. We shall see, however, that under cover of this quasi-charter, the effort was made to bring the whole town under one jurisdiction; and hence probably it was that in 1378 Richard II., for the purpose of fortifying the town (which was then in great danger, and not enclosed or fortified with walls or turrets or otherwise), made a grant of customs duties for the purpose to "the mayor, bailiffs, honest men, and commonalty," while in 1383 an order was directed in his name to the mayor and bailiffs against the exportation of provisions.

In 1384 we find William Cole, Thomas Fishacre, Geoffrey Couche, and Humphry Passour licensed by Richard II. to alienate six acres of land held of the King in chief to the Friars Minors; and three of these men, it will be seen, were of the twelve commissioned to take steps for the defence of the town under the letters patent of ten years previously.

In the same year, moreover, the Royal rights to toll of fish taken in the sea water of Sutton Plumpmouth, and Tamar, and sold in Plymouth, were enforced against certain fishermen, by whom they had been sought to be evaded.

All this points to definite action on the part of the Crown and of the inhabitants to bring the whole town under one municipal government; and it will be noticed that the name chosen to combine Sutton Prior and Sutton Vawter was Sutton upon Plymmouth, thence Sutton Plymouth, and finally, when union and incorporation were completed, the Plymouth without the Sutton as now.

Fortunately the records of the controversy between the Priors and their tenants have preserved for us a description of the old manorial government of Sutton Prior; and the most interesting notice of the early municipal history of Plymouth is contained in the finding of an inquisition taken by order of the King on the complaint of the Prior of Plympton, 8th Richard II. (1385). It was held at "Ekebok-

land," on the Wednesday next after the feast of the Holy Trinity, before Walter Cornu and Richard Gripston, on the oaths of Peter Whitelegh, Stephen Lautroun, William Wyneslond, Ralph Bytheyes, David Treweman, Richard Wylberton, Thomas Stanton, William Worston, William Lake, Thomas Boyes of Hareston, Thomas Cut, and William Godegrome. They found that the Prior of Plympton and his predecessors from time immémorial had been lords of Sutton Prior, and accustomed to hold a Munday Court with assize of bread and beer and weights and measures, with jurisdiction over transgressors, and authority over millers, bakers, butchers, sellers of wine and hydromel, and cooks, and those who made bread outside the town and carried it therein to sell. That in this Court, held by the Prior's Seneschal, at the first sitting next after the feast of St. Michael yearly, twelve tenants of the same Prior, in the said town, were sworn to determine and choose a Prepositus of the same Prior and town, and him so chosen to the said Seneschal immediately to present, whereupon, having taken his corporal oath before the said Seneschal, the said Prepositus should from that time forth of the said Court be head, receiving for the Prior all debts, amerciements, fines, reliefs, and perquisites of the said Court, and all other like profits of the same Prior at the same place well and faithfully collecting and levying; and immediately after the end of his year of office well and faithfully accounting for the same to the aforesaid Prior in the Priory of Plympton. Moreover, all other things to his office of Prepositus belonging, without favour he should do and execute, in all respects as had been accustomed, holding the sittings of the Court aforesaid under the licence of the Prior, and all else that a Mayor in the aforesaid town should do, or as had been accustomed from remote times.

And now (said the jury) Humphry Passour, cunningly and falsely plotting subtly to usurp the rights of the lord King and to make himself Mayor of the aforesaid town, instead of John Sampson, recently-chosen Prepositus—that is to say, in the Court held on Monday next after the feast of St. Michael last past, in the said Court elected, presented, and sworn to the said office—him to amove, and the said Prior and Church of the apostles Peter and Paul of Plympton maliciously to disinherit in this part, the aforesaid John before the lord King and his Council of divers offences and misdemeanours assailed and accused. Moreover, under cover of a certain brief of the lord King to the bailiffs and honest men of the said town of Sutton Prior by the name of the town of "Sutton Plymp-

mouth," certain burgesses of the said town Humphry Passour to the office of Mayor of the same town chose and elected, admitting him as such and obeying him in that office, and themselves to him in all things touching the said office submitting and obeying, whereas they would not allow the said John to enter and exercise his office. And in the King's Chancery the said Humphry Passour fraudulently, under colour of the brief of the lord King, sought to set himself in the mayoralty of the said town without the Court of the Prior, not being chosen before the Seneschal of the aforesaid Prior (whereas the mayoralty of the town with the Mayor of the same ought not so to be allowed to be); and the removal of the aforesaid John from the office and exercise of the said Prepositure he procured and made, and the same office of Mayor, without sufficient authority and warrant, he for a long time has occupied and at present occupies—that is to say, from the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul last past; and John Martyn, the Seneschal of the said Prior, he has prevented from holding the Monday Court by force of arms from the aforesaid feast; and has held it himself without the licence of the said Prior by his own authority, exercising all the rights of the said Prepositure, and up to this time has continued to do and perpetrate other enormities and injuries, and as many and as grievous deeds as lay in his power. And further the jurors aforesaid say under oath that never was there Mayor in the aforesaid town of Sutton Prior before the aforesaid feast of the Conversion of St. Paul last past, neither ought there so to be, nor used there to be but a Prepositus until the day when the aforesaid Humphry caused himself to be chosen Mayor of the aforesaid town of Sutton Prior.

If this finding be strictly accurate, then, as we find mayors of Sutton mentioned nearly twenty years prior to the enquiry, it follows that they must have been mayors of Sutton Vawter. The absolute accuracy of the finding is, however, not quite certain; for the term mayor had been used of the chief officer of Sutton Prior antecedently to that date, though of course it may have had no authority. John Sampson, the prepositus, will be noted as one of the twelve, put in commission with Passour.

The proceedings did not end with the inquisition; for in 1386 we find Passour rejoining in defence of his right to the mayoralty that at various times during the reign of Edward III., and during the reign of the present King, for the space of twenty years, mandates had been sent both under the King's privy seal and by his letters patent to the mayor of

the town, under the name of the mayor of the town of Sutton Plymouth, and had thus appointed the inhabitants to have a mayor. However, judgment was given against Passour and his friends, "because it has not been the custom for a mayor to govern in the town of Sutton Prior."

The point to be specially noticed throughout this controversy is that everything turns upon Sutton Prior, and that no judgment is given in respect of Sutton Vawter, which, though termed a hamlet in the act of Incorporation, is frequently called a town in earlier documents, and on some occasions even takes precedence of Sutton Prior; and it is a significant fact that from the time of the opposition raised by the Johns de Valletort of Clyst and Moditon in 1318 to the creation of the borough as a free community, we have no evidence of any further opposition on behalf of the owners of Sutton Vawter. All the difficulty is with the Priory of Plympton and in respect of Sutton Prior. There thus seems to be good reason for believing that the older town had acquired and maintained its claim to corporate rights, and that the line which the Plymouth Reformers of this day took was that of extension and comprehension. Thus it is that in 1411—stimulated by the destruction of 600 houses in a French invasion in 1403—we find the inhabitants of Sutton Prior and Sutton Vawter jointly petitioning for incorporation—the right to elect a mayor, and to levy dues and tolls for defence; the answer being, "Let the petitioners compound with the lords having franchises before the next Parliament, and report having made an agreement." The present incorporation of the town within its existing boundaries was, as already stated, effected in 1439 by Act of Parliament, which seems to have been needful to carry out legally the arrangements made with the Prior of Plympton. No other rights of government were recognized by this statute as existing in the town; but there were saved out of the provisions of the Act the rights of Sir John Cornewail, Lord of Faunhope, to the Duchy property held under lease by him, and out of the provisions of a subsequent charter his rights as specified within the borough, and those of Thomas Courtenay, Earl of Devon. No one seems to have succeeded, unless the Courtenays, to the claims set up by the Valletorts; and the Priory had suffered so severely by the French inroad that it was probably well disposed to surrender on terms.

The prayer of the Act is in what I cannot but regard as

somewhat significant words, that the town of Sutton Prior, the tithing of Sutton Raf, parcel of the Hamlet of Sutton Vautort (commonly called Plymouth), with a parcel of the tithing of Compton, should be a free borough incorporate with *one* Mayor and *one* perpetual Commonalty. The Act made no provision for the election of any officer besides the mayor, and the creation of fresh burgesses; and its chief provisions, beyond the general powers given by incorporation, were for the acquisition of the manorial rights of the Priory (saving only the advowson of St. Andrew and three messuages which was never to be parcel of the borough), by the Mayor and Commonalty, under terms to be arranged; and for the satisfaction of the Abbot of Buckland for the loss of his Hundred jurisdiction.

On the 25th of July following, however (1440), Henry VI. followed up the Act by a Charter, which gave power to elect a Recorder and a Coroner, made the Mayor and Recorder justices of the peace, conferred the right to hold pleas and to exercise criminal jurisdiction, and to have and hold a Merchants' Guild, "with all and singular the appurtenances to a Merchants' Guild, as the Mayor and Bailiffs of our city of Oxford jointly and severally better and more freely have and hold, or may have and hold." Moreover there was a fresh market grant—a market on Monday and Thursday, and two fairs of three days annually, at the feast of St. Matthew the Apostle, and the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul—the latter, be it noted, the time of year assigned to Passour's "usurpation," and a curious coincidence, if nothing more.

I would call particular attention to the passage referring to a Guild Merchant, for this reason, that either here or in the continuance of a pre-existing custom does it seem most probable we must look for the origin of the form the Corporation assumed. The Charter mentions only the Mayor, Recorder, Coroner, and Commonalty; but within half a century we find mention of the "twelve and twenty-four"—the aldermen or masters and common councilmen—who formed the sole executive down to the year 1803, when the Commonalty successfully asserted their right to choose the Mayor. It was not indeed until the charter of Elizabeth, in 1600, that the "twelve and twenty-four" had the recognition of authority; and my own impression is that they were a modified survival of a pre-existing administrative body. The peculiar way in which the mayor was elected until the Commonalty obtained the power, by a jury of 36 chosen by four alfurers or affeerers—two appointed for the

Aldermen, and two for the Commonalty, 18 by each—recalls the method of electing the prepositus, and may also have been a survival.

There remains among the Plymouth muniments a copy of the Act-Charter in the vernacular—or rather of its earlier portion, written certainly not later than the reign of Henry VII., but which differs so remarkably in some points from present translations of the same Act that it has occurred to me as possibly, in part at least, an original draft :

"Knowe ye that wher as the towne of Sutton pryor and the thythyng of Sutton Raf and parcellys of the hamelet of Sutton vautor whech towne tethyng and pcellys Comynly be callyd and namyd Plymouth and a sertayne of the tethyng of Compton wythyn the Cowtye of deuynshere beyng and sett so ny to the stronds and costys of the see and soo many and soo greate and soo Comyn applying of fletys of Shyppys and of vessels aswel of Enymys as of others yn the port of the same towne tethyng pcellys of the hamelet and tethyng of Compton lying that fro time to time hyt hath be that the towne tethyng and pcellys aforesaid a fore thys tyme of x tymys yn gretter ptye of the same for the faute of Co—— and aswell the same yn tymes of oure nobyll executors often broke and distreuyth and aswell the ynhabitans of the same of theyre goods and catellys nyghtly and dayly Spoylyd and many of theym of the ynhabitans by the same enymyes take and lede to the owte contryes and there kepte yn to the tyme that they had made fennans and Ravnson and they were yn harde kepyng p'sament and vnderful kept yn geuys stocks and other wayes and other evyll losts and vnpyfytabye not lytyll to the same towne Tethyng and pcellys of the hamelett and of the Tethyng of Compton and to the ynhabytance of the same yn tymys past eu' and were hade and many ither yn tymes to Time they doth but yf relef fortifyng and betteryng of the towne tethyng and pcell aforesaid the other remedy be vyded be howfull by the apetycyon to us yn our plement beyng at Westmyster the xijth daye of Noueber last past holden" and then it is enacted "for the Rest of the malys of oure enymys theryn dayes applying and for the saluacion of the Towne tethyng and pcellys aforesayd and that the ynhabytance of the same the Rather that the townetethyng and pcellys aforesaid be fro hensforthward a fre Borough In corporat of one Mayer and of one Comynaltie for eu' and hytt shalbe callyd the borowgh of plymouth . . . and that the aforesaid borowgh By the makys and boundys vnder wretyn all tymes that ys to Wete bytwyne the hyll callyd the Wynderygge by the Banke of Sowre pole a yens the North on the grete dyke otherwyse callyd the greate decche and fro thens ayens the North vnto Stoke dam'le flete and fro thens by the stronde of the same flete vnto mylbroke brygge ynclewdyd and fro thens to the yate of thorne hylle pke

ayenst motley pkelane and fro thens vnto lypstone brygge ynclewedyd and fro thens by the seestronde to the lary poynt To the Catte to henstone fyse store and Est kyng and fro thens to the said hylle callyd Wynderygge as the mkys and bonds eu<sup>r</sup> were that be derectyd and fyxed fully and opynly schewyth.

The metes and bounds as given here differ so materially in some points of expression, though the general effect is the same, from the language of the Act of Parliament, that I give the latter passage as copied by myself from the original roll: "Inter montem vocat Wynrigg p ripam de Sourpole vsus boriā usque ad le grete dyche alias dict' le grate dicke et exinde itum vsus boriā ad Stokedamarleflete et abinde p litus eiusdem flete usque ad Millebroke brigge inclusive et deinde vsus orientam p le middeldicke de Houndescom usque ad Houndescombrigge inclusive et abinde usque ad Thornhilpark exclusive et deinde usque ad Lypstonbrigge inclusive et abinde p litus maris continue usque ad le lare, ad le Catte de Hyingston Fysshtore et Estkyng, et abinde usque dict' montem de Wynrigg." We must see, I think, here that the vernacular version has an independent authority of some kind.

It is difficult to understand the use of the term "parcel of the hamlet of Sutton Vawter"—for the whole of that manor seems included—unless there is some reference here to the sore decay of the older town noted by Leland. It may be however that both in this case and in that of the tithing of Compton, no portion of which as at present recognized forms part of the municipal borough of Plymouth, the omission and inclusion may have been of the very slightest, and soon forgotten, for the purpose of the rectification of the boundary, which followed the natural lines of coasts and watercourses wherever practicable; and only at two places crossed from one such point to the other. One of these was on the verge of Sutton Vawter, next Stonehouse, the other next Compton. Moreover as Leland places Sutton Vawter on the north, giving Sutton Prior the "middle and heart" and Sutton Ralf the east; and as he states that the oldest part of Plymouth in his day was north and west, and some thereof sore decayed, it is probable that Sutton Vawter extended much further up the hill and along the ridge between Surpool and Stoke Damarel Fleet [Stonehouse Mill Lake] than implied in the later use of the word "Old Town." We have also recorded the existence of a spot called "The Vawters" on this ridge, closely adjoining Stonehouse, which aids a similar inference.

A copy of a curious agreement made on the 28th August, 1440, between William Keterigge, Mayor of Plymouth and the Commonalty of the same, and the Prior and Convent of St. Germans, sets forth that Richard Trenode, merchant of Bristol, and Thomasia Venour, widow of William Venour, formerly of Plymouth, and sister of the said Richard Trenode, had been at great expense and labour to have Plymouth made a corporation of "one Mayor and Commonalty." In recognition of this the Mayor and Commonalty, to keep the same Richard and Thomasine in perpetual remembrance as their principal and special benefactors, bound themselves to the Prior and Convent, to maintain a chaplain to say mass daily at the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the Church of St. Andrew, for the souls of Richard Trenode, Alice his late and Joan his present wife, William Venour and Thomasine his widow, for their children, for Richard Trenode and Donisia his wife, father and mother of Richard Trenode, for John Venour and Joan his wife, parents of William Venour; and for the souls of all others, for which Richard Trenode, William and Thomasine Venour were bound to pray.

As another means of remembrance—equally, as the result has proved, *unperpetual*—one of the wards of the borough received the name of Venar Ward; and this was in that part of Sutton Prior which lay immediately west of Sutton Pool, in which locality some of the family at least had lived. We are not in any way told what Trenode and his sister did; but as expense was involved as well as trouble, probably the passage of the Act, after a fashion well understood in those days, was smoothed. The Venours were unquestionably people of standing; for one was mayor in 1377—John, probably the father of William—and their efforts need not have been confined to the finally successful effort.

The following names of mayors and headmen prior to the full incorporation have been preserved: 1310, Richard the Tanner, prepositus of Sutton; 1313, William Berd, prepositus; 1318, Richard Tannere, prepositus; 1325, Edward of Northcote, prior's prepositus; 1370, Maurice Berd, mayor; 1377, John Venour, mayor of Sutton Priors; 1381, William Honyton, mayor; 1383, Humphry Passour, mayor of Sutton Priors; 1384, John Sampson, prepositus; 1395, Walter Crocker, mayor of Sutton Priors; 1397, Richard Row, mayor; 1398, Walter Dymnick or Dymcock, prepositus; 1397, Henry Boon, mayor of Plymouth; 1399-1403 (?), William Pollard, mayor; 1408, William Bentle, mayor; 1412, William Rogherne, mayor of Plymouth; 1413, William

Bentley, mayor of Sutton; 1414, William Boon, mayor of Plymouth; 1418, William Bentley, mayor of Sutton Priors; 1439, William Totwell (the old form of spelling the modern Tothill), prior's portreeve of Sutton.

Though we have here only twenty mayoralties for a period of over a century and a quarter, it is probable from the repetitions preserved that several of these mayors and prepositors held office still more frequently, the range of choice being narrow. Moreover, the fact that between each of Bentley's three recorded mayoralties five years elapsed, seems to point to the existence of a select body—as of aldermen—from whom the choice was made in turn, and is fair collateral evidence of the existence of organized corporate authority.

The good standing of some of these early mayors is shown also by one of them having been chosen to represent the borough in Parliament—William Berd, in 1313; while John de Honeton, no doubt father or grandfather of William Honyton, was elected, probably for Sutton, in 1311. From other sources we learn that several others were also men of wealth for those days.