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THE COMMON SEALS OF DEVON.

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THE discussion of the origin of seals carries us back to the very earliest days of civilization. Seals have been used either for purposes of authenticity or security over a period to be reckoned by thousands rather than by hundreds of years. The book of Genesis mentions the royal seal of Pharaoh and the signet of Judah; and few things are more common than seals and their impressions among the antiquities of Assyria and of Egypt. In the former country seals appear to have originated; and even gem-engraving, to which we owe some of the most beautiful relics of the elder art, was practised at Nineveh. The cartouches which bear the royal name in the hieroglyphical inscriptions of Egypt appear clearly derivable from the form of a seal upon which the name of its possessor was engraven. References to seals abound throughout ancient writers. Pliny, who held against proof that the use of seals began with usury, speaks of their universal employment in his time throughout the whole civilized world as the sole means of authenticating documents—"Verily we holde in these daies a seale to be the best assurance in contracts that may be;" and exclaims—"O the innocence of the old world! What a heauenly life led men in those dayes when as there was no vse at all of seal and signet! But now we are fain to seal up our ambrie & hogsheads with our signets for feare we be robbed and beguiled of our meat and drinke."

Our own immediate predecessors, the Saxons, had little to do with seals. Edward the Confessor indeed had one, but the Saxons generally used the sign of the cross. The use of seals as a legal formality was introduced into this country by the Normans; and after the Conquest seals became what in great measure they still remain, component and necessary parts of nearly all legal documents. Originally only persons of rank, and corporations ecclesiastical or lay, had the right to adopt

seals. Those of individuals are called personal seals; those of corporations are the common seals of which this paper treats. There are other kinds of seals. Some have both obverse and reverse; and in order to prevent falsification counter or privy seals were introduced, at first put only on the backs of the larger seals, but afterwards frequently employed alone. In addition to the common seals of the abbeys, convents, and priories, abbots and priors often had special personal seals; and in civil corporations it was not unusual for mayors to possess seals of office distinct from those which were used to represent the entire corporation. Personal seals are now of comparatively little legal consequence; but official seals of various kinds are as much legal necessities as ever; and public acts of bodies corporate to be valid must bear their common seals. Where the deeds of private individuals require the formality of sealing, anything in the shape of a seal will answer the purpose. Indeed there was never the same precision about private as about official seals. In the middle ages the ancient intagli or camei were frequently adopted by individuals. Sometimes a man who had no seal of his own would borrow one of his neighbour; and there is extant a deed to which the seal of the priory of St. Germans is attached, because, as the executor says, it was better known than his own. There has been occasional laxity concerning official seals. Thus the sometime rector of a parish in Worcestershire, who claimed testamentary jurisdiction, used the seal of the customs of the city of Exeter, which had somehow fallen into his hands, instead of having one cut. So the corporation of Maidenhead have for their seal one which evidently was that of a private individual.

All manner of materials, from gems, to jet, ivory, wood, and glass, have been used for the matrices of seals. In the 12th and 13th centuries lead was commonly employed. Bronze and brass came next in order, and silver has been largely used. Mediæval seals are generally large and elaborate. As a rule those of a secular character are circular; those appertaining to ecclesiastics and females elliptical, or in the shape of a *vesica piscis*—pointed oval. There were other forms—the shield, the heater-shaped, or the quatrefoil; but these were exceptional.

The materials used for sealing are not less various than those of the matrices. Beckman* enumerates metals, *terra sigillaris*, paste, cement, common wax, and sealing-wax, or lac. Clay, chosen on account of its peculiarly tenacious character,

* History of Inventions: art. Sealing-wax.

was probably the first material employed ; and sealing-earth was used in Asia even in the time of Cicero, when wax was in vogue in Europe. The ordinary yellow wax was the first kind adopted. In the 11th and 12th centuries white was introduced, and towards the end of that period green became common. During the 13th century dark green was favoured ; but red and white were frequently used. According to Beckman, in Germany green was preceded by red. The wax was simply mixed with a little turpentine, and perishable as it may appear, there are seals in this material 600 years old as perfect as if impressed yesterday. Paste or wafers came in later ; and what is called sealing-wax, which is not wax, but lac—the old name sticking to a new substance—was introduced into Europe in the first half of the 16th century. Gold has been used for the impressions of seals ; and the seals or bullæ attached to the Papal decrees, whence they derive their name of bulls, are usually of lead. Seals are either affixed to documents *en placard*, or appended thereto by strips of parchment, cords, or threads of silk. The latter was the practice first followed in England. It is stated somewhere that it was usual in the infancy of charters to authenticate them by inserting in the wax a hair of the royal beard. As charters increased, however, the depilatory process became too rapid to be continued.

Stamps as distinguished from seals have of late years come greatly into vogue. In the time of Pliny the Asiatics used to smear their seals with ink, and impress them upon paper or parchment, as the stamps of the Post-office are affixed now. Other public bodies also follow the same plan. The great rival of the seal proper is however the embossing-press. When seals were seldom used it was of very little consequence whether the material of the impression was wax or lac ; but now that municipal seals are required to authenticate notices by the hundred, a more expeditious way than either is required. Moreover it is no easy matter to “take” a large seal in lac, especially when it is so large as that of the Bridge Trust at Barnstaple—the largest in the Two Counties, which might almost serve for a dessert-plate. Occasionally wafer is used ; less frequently the seal is stamped on leather, and the impression gummed on. In some cases woodcuts of the seals are similarly affixed to the documents, and authenticated by having the seal laid upon them. All these methods are followed in the West.

To the safe custody of seals the greatest importance has always been attached. The great seal of England, as every

one knows, is kept by the Lord Chancellor. His duties respecting it are little other than formal; but it was one of the duties of the French Chancellors to see that they attached the seal to no royal orders that were inconsistent with law or justice. In municipal corporations the seals are usually in the charge of the town clerk. This is the rule in Devon; but in Cornwall they are commonly in the keeping of the mayor.

This paper contains a description of the seal or seals of every existing municipality in Devonshire, and of those of all the extinct corporations, whether ecclesiastical or civil, of which any trace could be found, whether in the county, in London, or elsewhere. Some of the parliamentary boroughs extinguished in 1832 had no seals; several of the municipalities obtained new ones when the Municipal Reform Act was passed. In addition to the towns cited, Fremington and Lidford (the last a *Domesday* borough) are stated to have had a representation. Some of the local Boards of Health have chosen very appropriate devices for their seals. These are included in the list, which likewise contains a few seals of a miscellaneous character.

The dates of municipal incorporation given are chiefly those of royal charters. Feudal lords freely exercised powers of enfranchisement over the little communities that sprung up on their estates, so that to trace the origin of popular rights and privileges we have to go back to very much earlier dates than most of those quoted. When we find a borough returning representatives hundreds of years before it is stated to have been incorporated, we are not to assume that local self-government had no existence therein. Some powers, municipal in fact if not in name or always precisely in form, were exercised within the manors at the courts-leet and courts-baron; although those courts that remain are such mere shadows of authority that it is hard to think they were ever anything more.

A large proportion of the Common Seals of Devon are of considerable antiquity. Several yet in use date from the 17th, still more from the 16th century; some go back to the 13th. Of this last-mentioned period is the Exeter city seal, and also the seal of the Exe Bridge. The mayor's seal of Exeter is probably of nearly equal antiquity. The seal of the Barnstaple Bridge Trust may belong to the 14th century. The Totnes seal is probably of the 15th. Among the disused seals the matrices of which remain, the earlier of Dartmouth rank first, belonging to the 14th century; Plymouth's earliest

is of the 15th. Some of the seals are dated; but the dates are by no means always trustworthy. The seal of Crediton bears the figures 1469, which is unquestionably authentic. That of Bradninch is dated 1136; but although it has all the appearance, especially in the lettering, of antiquity, it certainly does not belong to the 12th century. There is an additional element of uncertainty in the fact that older seals have occasionally been very skilfully copied.

Care has been taken in the following details to distinguish between seals which have been described from the actual impressions and those described at second-hand. The authorities for the latter are in every instance cited, and the inscription given in small capitals. Where the descriptions are by the writer, the legend will be found either in large capitals or black letter, according to the original. It has been attempted to show details and eccentricities, pointing or other. The crosses however vary in design. The measurements are those of the actual impressions.

ASHBURTON.

BOROUGH.—Ashburton, though never a municipality, commenced to send representatives to Parliament so early as the 26th Ed. I., although it afterwards intermitted. The Reform Act of 1832 deprived it of one of its members; that of 1867 took away the other. The seals held by the portreeves of the two manors in which the town lies, bear for device the arms of the borough—a church with a spire-steeple; in the dexter chief the sun in splendour, in the sinister a crescent; at the dexter end of the church a teazle, at the sinister a saltire; legend, with roses between each word—**SIGILLVM BVRGI DE AYSHEBERTON**. The seals are circular, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter. The sun and moon are said to refer to the mineral wealth of the district; the teazle (called by Browne Willis, in *Notitia*, a tree, and by Berry, in *Encyclopædia Heraldica*, three ears of corn) to indicate the woollen trade; the saltire is explained by the dedication of the parish church to St. Andrew. The motto of the arms, not on the seals, is “*Fides probata coronat.*”

BARNSTAPLE.

BOROUGH.—Barnstaple is entered as a borough in *Domesday*, and has been represented in Parliament from the earliest date. The two seals now in use are modern, but reproduce the old devices. They are both circular, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch diameter. One bears a castle, triple-towered, masoned proper. Legend, **Sig : praet : et : Sen : Munique : apud Barumenses.** 1836.

The other, a swan, with the inscription, **Sigil : Senat : Municipalis apud Barumenses.** 1836. The mayor uses a small oval seal like the last; and the town clerk a square one with rounded corners, bearing the castle.

In the *Visitation* of 1620 a triple-towered castle is given as the arms of the borough, and a seal bearing that device is mentioned, having the legend **SIGILLUM : BURGI : PAROCHIE BARNESTAPOLIE.** A swan seal is also noted, its legend being **SIGILLUM COMMUNE BURGI ET PAROCHIE.**

The seals used immediately prior to 1836 exhibit the same devices, but the inscriptions are different. They are circular, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch diameter. The legend of the castle one is **SIGILLVM · AD · ARMA · PRO · MAIORE · ET · CORPORACIONE · VILLE · BARVM.** The swan seal has **SIGILLVM : COMMUNE : BURGI · BARNSTAPOLIE.***

There are likewise two court seals, oval. The first bears a shield of arms surmounted by a crown. Quarterly—first and fourth, England and Scotland impaled; second and third, France, England. Legend: **SIGIL : CVR : RECORD de CORP · BARV.** The other bears a shield of arms surmounted by a crown of *fleurs-de-lis*. Quarterly—first and fourth, France and England quartered; second and third, Scotland, Ireland. Legend: **SIGIL · REGAL · CVR · BARV.**

BRIDGE TRUST.—The seal of this body is the largest official seal in use in either Devon or Cornwall. It is circular, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches diameter. The device is a bridge with six arches and water below. At the dexter end of the bridge is a church with a steeple; at the sinister end a Calvary cross ornamented with a kind of running leaf pattern, and bearing a staff, from which floats a pennant charged with a cross. Between the cross and church an eagle displayed. Legend: **✠ Sigillvm : longi : pontis : ville : barnestapolie . in comit : Devonie.**

NEWPORT.—Westcote [*View of Devon*, p. 294] says he had seen the name of a mayor of this part of Barnstaple 8th Henry IV.; but no trace of a seal can be found. Could the swan seal of the borough have thus originated?

ST. MARY MAGDALENE PRIORY.—[*Monasticon Exoniensis*, supp. p. 18.] Seal, oval. The Magdalene under a canopy, with kneeling figure in exergue. Legend: **SIGILL · PRIORATVS · S · MARIE. MAGDALENE BARNESTAPOLIE.**

PILTON PRIORY.—The seal of this religious house is one of the finest in the county. It is circular, and has both obverse and reverse. The obverse shows three elaborate canopies.

* The *ma* in *arma*, *ma* in *maiore*, and *ne* in *corporacione*, are conjoined.

Under the central, the Virgin crowned and sceptred, with divine infant in right hand; under the side canopies, angels. Legend, with double roses between each word, **Virgo rogo pro me totum semper tibi Do me.** The reverse has also three canopies. Under the central the supposed founder, Athelstan; on the dexter side an escutcheon with bird displayed suspended to a tree; on the sinister a similar escutcheon with the arms of Athelstan, saltire gules and azure, on a mound a cross bottonny crowned or. Legend: **Hoc Athelstanus ago quod presens signat imago.** There are roses and floriation between each word. [*Monasticon*, p. 245, also figured.]

PILTON LEPROSORS' HOSPITAL.—The seal of this hospital, dedicated to St. Margaret, is mentioned in the *Monasticon*, p. 246; and in the *Archæologia*, vol. xii. It is oval, the device a cross slightly bifurcated at top, and pointed beneath. The matrix was in the possession of Mr. Incedon, who, writing to *Archæologia*, says that the legend could be read upon the matrix, and not upon the impression. He gives it as SIGILL LEPROSORS' BEAT MARGARET DE PYLTON. Oliver has—SIGILL · LEPROSOR · BEATE · MARGARETE · DE · PYLTON. [*Monasticon*, p. 246.]

BEREALSTON.

Although this place was a parliamentary borough from the 27th Elizabeth until 1832, it had neither corporation, arms, nor seal. Local enquiry failing to obtain any trace of the latter, the indentures of return in the Public Record Office were inspected, and it was then found that it never had any. It appears to have been the custom for all the consenting electors to sign and seal individually.

BIDEFORD.

BOROUGH.—Bideford was chartered by Elizabeth in 1574, and the present seal dates from three years later. It is circular, 1½ inch diameter. Device, a bridge with one full and two half arches. A ship is making an impossible passage of the arch, her stern not through, and her mast rising above the bridge on the other side. Legend: + SIGILLVM · COMMVNE · DE · BEDIIFORDE · 1577. Some impressions remain of a much older seal, which shows the greater antiquity of the borough. This is also circular, 2½ inches diameter. The device is a bridge of four arches; a building with bell-turret on the dexter side; a chapel with spire on the sinister; upon a Maltese cross in the centre, raised on a shaft, the Virgin and Child. The ground is filled in with sprigs. Legend: **Sigillum villa de bydeford in Com Devon.** Un-

questionably the device is intended to represent Bideford Bridge, which was constructed about the middle of the 14th century, and a small reproduction is the seal of the present Bridge Trust. In subject, though not in character, it is very similar to the seal of the Barnstaple Bridge Trust. From its great interest it has been selected for illustration.

BRADNINCH.

BOROUGH.—Bradninch was granted by Henry I. to his natural son Reginald, who died 1175, and is still appendant to the Duchy of Cornwall. John, in 1208, gave it the same liberties and free customs as Exeter, and it was incorporated by James I., in 1604. It returned members to Parliament in the reign of Edward II. Oliver [*Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 13] gives as the seal an eagle displayed, with the legend, + SIG · COMI REGINALDI DE BRANEIS. This is incorrect. The seal is circular, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter, and, whilst the device is an eagle displayed on an escutcheon, the rest of the field being diapered; the inscription, in very old characters, is—
* SIGILLVM BVRGI DE BRADNEYS * 1136. This is probably intended for the date of a grant, or of an older seal; for the one described is clearly not of such antiquity.

BRIXHAM.

LOCAL BOARD.—The seal of the Brixham Local Board is one of the most interesting among the modern seals of Devon. It is circular, 2 inches diameter, and represents Brixham's great historical event—the landing of William of Orange. Above, in the field, are the words, LANDING OF THE PRINCE OF ORANGE, 1688; and in the exergue his motto, I WILL MAINTAIN.

BUCKFASTLEIGH.

ABBEY.—This seal is given by Oliver [*Monasticon*, p. 373] as representing the Virgin crowned, with infant on left arm, under an elaborate canopy. Legend: s · CONVENTVS · BVC · FESTRIE.

BUCKLAND.

ABBEY.—Oliver describes three seals appertaining to this house. [*Monasticon*, pp. 382, 387, also figured.] The first, pointed oval, in use in 1310, has for device the Virgin and Child; underneath the word AMICIA, the name of the Countess of Devon who was the founder, and a shield with a lion rampant. Legend: SIGILLVM · ECCLESIE · LOCI · SCI · BENEDICTI · DE · BOCLAN. A second seal is blazoned, quarterly, argent and

gules, a crosier in bend, the arms of the abbey. A third is oval. A right hand grasps a crosier, which passes through the letter A, and from which is suspended an olive-branch. Legend: S · COMVNE ABBIS ET CONVENT SCI BENEDICTI.

CANONSLEIGH.

PRIORY AND NUNNERY.—[*Monasticon*, pp. 224-225.] The seal of the priory was oval, and bore the Virgin and St. John. Of the legend the only words remaining are—MARIE · ET · SCI · IOHIS · EVAN. In 1284 it was converted into a nunnery, and the device was then changed to that of the youthful St. John, with lamb and cross, resting upon a medallion, under a canopy.

CHURCHILL.

PRIORY.—A seal, supposed to be that of the priory of Churchill, East Down, is engraved in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lii. p. 113. It is a pointed oval, represents the Virgin and Child under a canopy, with a priest on each side and a demi-priest below. The legend (black letter) is S · OFFICII PRIORIS · COUENTS CHOR ORDINIS CARMELITA.

CORNWORTHY.

PRIORY.—The remains of the single impression of the seal of this house known to Oliver [*Monasticon*, p. 236] were imperfect, showing only the door of the tower of an ancient church with two tiers of windows above.

CREDITON.

BOROUGH.—Crediton, once an episcopal see, and afterwards a borough (it sent representatives *temp.* Edward I.), is now neither; but the old borough seal is in possession of the charity feoffees. It is a pointed oval 2½ inches × 1½ inch. Device, a bishop in full vesture with crook in left hand, right raised in benediction; and the date, two figures on each side, 1469. Legend: THE · SELLE · OF · THE · BOROWE · TOWNE · OF · CREDYTON. Mr. A. Edwards, of Crediton, suggests that the figure may be intended for Bishop Bothe, lord of the manor of Crediton at the date given. This seal has been selected for illustration.

COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS.—Oliver [*Monasticon*, p. 79] says of an impression to a deed dated 1534, that the seal of this corporation was circular, showing Christ on a Calvary cross, two angels above and two at feet, in attitude of adoration. Legend: S · ECCLIE · SANCTE · CRVCIS · DE · CRIDITONE. In the "Supplement," however [p. 12], he says of another

impression, date 1448, that the device was the cross, with the emblems of the four evangelists, and not angels, as had been supposed; and gives as the legend + SIGILL · SANCTE · CRVCIS · DE · CRIDINĪ. This seal he figures.

CHURCH CORPORATION.—Seal circular, 1½ inch diameter. The Saviour, with aureola, holding mound and cross in left hand, right raised in benediction. Legend: * SIG · XII · GVBER · BONOR · ECLE · S · CRVCIS DE · CREDITON · 1674.

DARTMOUTH.

BOROUGH.—Dartmouth is a very ancient borough, and commenced to return representatives to Parliament in the reign of Edward I. The Reform Act of 1832 took away one, and that of 1867 the other. There is a tradition that the right to elect a mayor was given by John; but Edward III. seems to have been the first incorporator. There are three seals, two ancient and one modern, of which the last only is used. They each contain the arms of the town. The earliest, and in all likelihood the original one, is circular, 1½ inch diameter. It represents a boat on the waves, therein a king (said to be intended for Edward III.) bearing a *fleur-de-lis* headed sceptre. There is a crescent on the dexter side, and the field is dotted with what may be intended for stars. Legend: * S' + MAIORIS + DE + CLIFSTONE + DERTE-MVTHE + H'. The next seal is also circular, 2¼ inches diameter. Device, the hull of a ship on the waves, in the centre thereof a king crowned; on each side a demi-lion rampant guardant. In dexter chief, a crescent; in sinister, an estoile. Legend: + SIGILLVM : COMMVNE : DE CLIFSTONE : DERTEMVTHE. The lion supporters are said to have been added at the request of Hawley, a great merchant of the town, in the fourteenth century. H in the first seal stands for Hardness, the third of the three villages of which modern Dartmouth is composed—Clifton and Dartmouth proper being the other two. In the *Visitation* of 1574 [Harl. MSS.] the arms of Dartmouth are said, as well as those of Totnes, to belong to the latter town. The present seal is circular, 2¼ inches diameter. The device is the same as that of the last mentioned. The legend, contained in a double ring, is: (outer) THE · COMMON · SEAL · OF · THE · MAYOR · ALDERMEN · AND · BVRGESSES · (inner) OF · THE · BOROVBGH · OF · CLIFTON · DARTMOVTH · HARDNESS + 1836 +

DEVONPORT.

BOROUGH.—This town was incorporated only in 1837, and the seal was designed by the late Lieut.-Col. Hamilton Smith. It is circular, $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches diameter. The chief subject of the device is the bow of a ship, "end on;" Victory, with spear and shield, crowned, with outstretched wings, standing thereon; beneath are grouped cannon, anchors, flags, and fasci, centring in an oak wreath, which bears within a mural crown and the date 1837. Legend: + COMMON SEAL OF THE MAYOR ALDERMEN & [a small lion] BURGESSES OF THE BOROUGH OF DEVONPORT.

EXETER.

Naturally the contributions of Exeter to the sphragistics of the county are alike numerous and important.

CITY.—Exeter is mentioned as a city in *Domesday*, and Henry I. confirmed its liberties, which were antecedent even to the Saxon kings. The oldest city seal, and that still in use, is circular, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, and represents a building with a tower on each side, surmounted by flags. Lower buildings are continued from the tower to the margin. Above these on each side a key, the wards turned inwards. In chief, the sun, with a star on the dexter side, and moon on the sinister. In exergue a *fleur-de-lis*, supported by what seem to be intended for dragons. Legend: + SIGILLVM : CIVITATIS : EXONIE. This seal has been selected for illustration. The device is given in the *Visitation* of 1574 [Harl. MSS.] as the arms of the county of the city. This, however, cannot be, as the county was only constituted in the 16th century, and the seal is some centuries older. Query, may not the building, which looks like the representation of an actual structure, be intended to represent the cathedral as it appeared before Bishop Quivil, in the closing years of the thirteenth century, converted the towers into transepts, and commenced the present nave? It is a curious coincidence, however, that the old seal of Taunton [engraved in DEBRET'S *House of Commons*] has almost precisely the same device, which in no respect corresponds with the present seal of the constables of Taunton; and all efforts to obtain an explanation of the mystery have failed. That the Taunton folk adopted the Exeter device is clear.

The city arms—a triangular triple-towered castle supported by two Pegasi, crest a demi-lion rampant holding a mound in its forepaws—form the device of the city seal

proper, which has never been much used. It is circular, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, and bears the legend: SIGILLVM: CIVITATIS: EXON: 1672. The city motto, *Semper fidelis*, is under the arms. In the *Visitation* of 1620 these arms are spoken of as the common seal of the city.

The mayor's seal is oval, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch \times $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch; device, a king seated under a Gothic canopy, sceptre in left hand, a building in right. In a niche beneath, a king's head. Legend: S' MAIORATVS: CIVITATIS: EXONIE. There is another small circular seal, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter, bearing the letter X on an escutcheon, with the date 1531 above. Legend: SIGILLVM: CIVITATIS: EXSONIE.* Then follows a *fleur-de-lis*.

EXE BRIDGE.—This bridge was founded in the middle of the 13th century; and the seal, which is circular, 2 inches diameter, dates from about that period. The device is a three-arched bridge, with three buildings thereon, the central one ecclesiastical. Legend: +: S' PONTIS: EXE: CIVITATIS EXONIE.

CUSTOMS.—An ancient seal of the customs of Exeter was used by the rector of Bredon, in Worcester, who claimed testamentary and other jurisdiction, apparently upon the principle of taking the first that came to hand. The device was the crest of John Holland, grandson of John of Gaunt, Duke of Exeter, 1443; and the legend * SIGILLVM + COKETTI + IN + PORTV + EXONIE [*Gent. Mag.*, vol. lxxii. p. 209].

SCHOOL BOARD.—The seal of the Exeter School Board is the most notable in the two Western Counties. The device is two shields suspended, one bearing the city arms and the other an open Bible, with the words, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

CHAPTER.—There have been several chapter seals. One, with the legend + SIGILLV SCI PETRI APLI EXONIENSIS ECCLE, was used in 1133 [OLIVER, *Hist. Exeter*]. The device of this appears to have been the west front of the ancient Saxon cathedral. A seal used in 1237 [*Monasticon*, p. 56] had for obverse the ancient chapter-house.(?) Legend: + SIGILLVM: CAPLI: EXONIENSIS: ECCLE. And for reverse a ship on the waves, therein St. Peter's head mitred, a cross at the mast-head. Legend: PETRI NAVICLAM DICIM' ECCLIAM. The present seal, a pointed oval, bears a device which was used in 1309 [*Monasticon*, p. 58], St. Peter seated, robed with pallium and mitre, holding church in right hand, key in left. Legend: SIGILLVM ECCLESII BEATI PETRI EXONIL.

* The x in Exsonie is reversed.

VICARS CHORAL.—Oval. Device, St. Peter swimming, sup-
plicating Christ to come to his rescue, S · CŌE CVSTODIS : & : COL-
LEGII : VICARIORUM : DE CHORO ECCLIE : CATHEDRALIS EXONIE
[OLIVER, *Hist. Cathedral*].

DOMINICAN CONVENT.—[*Monasticon*, p. 335.] Seal oval. De-
vice: Virgin with infant in arms, St. Joseph standing opposite.
Under a Pointed arch below the figure of a demi-monk in
prayer. Legend: S · CONVENT · FRV · PREDICATORV · EXON. The
matrix is in the possession of the city corporation. Another
seal with the same inscription probably represents the martyr-
dom of the patron saint, St. Peter of Verona.

FRANCISCAN CONVENT.—[*Monasticon*, p. 332.] A pointed
oval. Device, the Virgin and St. Joseph under a Decorated
arch, standing near an altar, upon which the infant Christ is
reclining. Underneath, St. Anthony of Padua in attitude of
prayer. Legend: SIGILLVM · COMMVNITATIS · FRATRVM · MINORVM ·
EXONIE. Another seal reads, MINORVM. This seal is figured
by Oliver.

ST. NICHOLAS PRIORY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 115.] The seal of
this house was stolen in 1400, and notice for its recovery
given. It has been discovered among the city archives. It
is circular, bears a castle quadrate, with towers at each angle,
and a higher tower in the middle. On the dexter side of
central tower an escutcheon with three lions; on the sinister,
a sword erect with crown on point. Beneath the castle a
dragon. Legend: SIGILLVM · ECCLE · SCI · NICHOLAI · EXONIE.
Oliver figures four seals in all of this priory, part of the site
of which is now occupied by the Roman Catholic chapel in
the Mint. One of the other seals was that of a prior, and
another has the legend: SIGILLV · PRIORATVS · ECCLE · SANCTI
NICOLAI · EXONIE. The common seals all show the same build-
ing, but differ in the minor details. One has the castle only.

POLSLOE PRIORY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 163.] A seal used in
1260 was oval. Device, St. Catherine, beads in her right
hand, in her left a book. Legend: + SIGILLV · CONVENT · S · C ·
MONIAL · IVXTA · EXON. That attached to the surrender [p. 164,
figured]—pointed oval—gives the saint holding a wheel in
her left hand, with a broken wheel on each side of her.
Legend: SIGILLVM · SANCTE · KATHERINE · DE · POLSLO.

ST. JOHN HOSP TAL.—[*Monasticon*, supplement, p. 27.] A
seal used 1423 has for device St. John the Baptist standing,
holding medallion with lamb and flag. Legend: + SIGILL ·
MAGISTRI · HOSPITAL · SCI IOH̄IS · EXONIE. Another, figured by
Oliver, has for device a chapel, and for legend: + SIGILL ·
HOSPITALE · SCI · IOHIS · IVXTA · ORIENTALE · PORIA · EXON.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE HOSPITAL.—Three seals of this foundation are known. Oliver [*Monasticon*, p. 401] describes one as being a pointed oval, bearing figure of saint with legend: SIGILL · MARIE MAGDALENE · INFIRMORVM · EXONIE. The matrices of two others are in possession of the corporation. The older is a pointed oval, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches \times $1\frac{3}{4}$; device, the saint standing, with long hair, a palm in left hand, and ointment-pot in right; a building on a shield below. The field is divided into lozenges, and diapered with stars. Legend: *Sigllu * hospitalis * sce marie * magdlene * civitatis * Exonie*. The other is oval, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches \times $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and is evidently, so far as the device goes, intended to reproduce the former. The figure is the same, but the field is only starred, and not lozenged. Legend: + SIGILLV · HOSPITALIS · BEATE MARIE MAGDALENE · CIVITATIS · EXON * 1568.*

ST. ALEXIUS.—[*Monasticon*, p. 300.] Figured, circular. The seal of this Hospital bore the words—SIGIL · HOSPITAL · RETRO · SCM NICOLAV.

FRATRES CALENDARVM.—[*Monasticon*, p. 401.] Oval. Device, a tower with spire, flanked by two small porches; below the tower, a cross. Legend: s · FRATR̄V D' KALEND' EXONIE.

ST. JAMES PRIORY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 192.] The seal of Thomas Dene, prior in 1428, a pointed oval, device St. James, habited as a pilgrim, in an elaborate niche, is figured by Oliver.

FORD.

ABBAY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 341; also figured.] The seal of this abbey, a pointed oval, is divided *per fesse* into three compartments. In the upper part, between two Pointed windows, is a bell suspended in a steeple. Under a canopy beneath, the Virgin and Child; on the dexter side, upon an escutcheon, the arms of Courtenay; on the sinister, those of Beaumont. Below, an abbot erect, crosier in right hand, book in left, with three persons on their knees. Legend: s' · COMMVNE : MONASTERII : BEATE : MARIE : DE : FORDA.

FRITHELSTOCK.

PRIORY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 219.] Seal, oval. Device, church with tower, surmounted with spire between two pinnacles. Legend: s · CONVENTVS · DE · FRITHELEWESTOK.

HARTLAND.

ABBAY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 205.] Device of seal of abbot, 1355, Christ on cross between two rose-bushes. In exergue, a

* The **TE** in **BEATE** and the **NE** in **MAGDALENE** are conjoined.

canon with hands uplifted in prayer. Legend: + NOS: SALVA: REX: CRVCE: XTE: TVA. There were two common seals, each bearing the head of the patron saint St. Nectan. That attached to the surrender is circular, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch diameter. Legend: +†+: SIGILLVM: NECTANVS. The other reads— + SIGILLVM NEHTANVS.

HONITON.

BOROUGH.—The seal of Honiton is a mystery. It represents the arms of the town; but concerning what these arms are there are at least three different opinions, and there may be more. According to Lysons, Honiton was made a borough by William le Vernour, Earl of Devon. It sent members to Parliament in the reign of Edward I., but the right lapsed, and was not restored until 1640. In 1832 the two were reduced to one; and in 1867 the borough was disfranchised. It was not incorporated municipally until 1846, and this is the date of the present seal, which, so far as the device goes, is a copy of one presented to the town by Sir W. J. Pole in 1640. This seal is engraved in the *Gentleman's Magazine* [vol. lxiii, p. 113] as oval, with the legend + SIGILLVM: COMMVNE: DE: BVRGO: DE: HONITON: CO: DEVON. One John Feltham, describing it, says that it represents a pregnant woman kneeling before an idol, a plant below and an obstetric hand above; and connects it with a tradition that barren women in Honiton in the old time were directed to pass a whole day and night in prayer in St. Margaret's Chapel, when by a vision they would become pregnant—adding that the vision never deceived them. Elsewhere this story is said to have some bearing on the etymology of the name of the town—*Honi* being interpreted “shame.” Browne Willis [*Notitia*] describes the arms as a priest instructing a demi-child erased; in chief, a hand couped; in base, a growing plant. Oliver [*Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 72] says of the old seal, that it appears to represent a mermaid standing before a young female; above, an enormous human hand; below, a flower. He reads the legend: SIGILLVM COMMVNE DE BURGO DE HONITON COM. DEVŌ. The present seal is included in the illustrations of this paper, so that the accuracy of the following description may be tested. It is circular, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches diameter. Device, a pregnant female figure to knees—whether kneeling is not clear—before a demi-figure erased, with long hair, but apparently a male. Above, a huge hand, fingers as in benediction; beneath, a spray of honeysuckle in bloom. Legend: **The common seal of the Borough of Honiton Devon. 1846.**

ILFRACOMBE.

LOCAL BOARD.—This town is described as a borough in ancient records, and has a portreeve. The Local Board seal is oval, having a crown for device and the inscription on a garter.

KINGSBRIDGE.

A seal is used by the charity feoffees of Kingsbridge, which is apparently of 17th century date. It is circular, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter. Device, a three-arched bridge with parapet, water flowing through; a royal crown above. Legend—roses between the words—SIGILLVM REGIS PONTIS. This is one of the few canting devices to be found on Devonshire seals. The honeysuckle in that of Honiton is clearly another. They are much more numerous in Cornwall.

MODBURY.

This place sent members once, *temp.* Edward I. It has a portreeve, and the seal used for official purposes is the private one of the lord of the manor, Mr. Edgar Crespin.

MILLBROOK.

BOROUGH.—Although on the western side of the Tamar, Millbrook, until recent legislation handed it over to Cornwall, was partially in Devon, and therefore of right claims admission here. According to Hals, it sent members to Parliament in the reign of Henry VIII., but was excused continuance on the ground of poverty. No trace of its corporate character survives except the seal, the holder of which styles himself the borough reeve. It is circular, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter, and bears the punning device of a mill in a brook; trees are scattered about, and dogs amongst them. Legend: + :: SIGILLVM :: DE :: MILBROOKIA :: This is a peculiarly interesting seal, now described for the first time, and is, therefore, made the subject of illustration.

NEWTON.

There can be no question that many of the ancient manorial boroughs, yet under portreeves, had once seals, though few remain. This was the case at Newton. Forty years ago the portreeves of Newton Abbot and of Newton Bushel (now popularly included within the one name Newton) both had official seals. There were likewise manorial seals of the boroughs; but all efforts to trace them have failed, though it is not impossible that impressions may be extant. The seal

of the Newton Local Board is a curious compound. It bears a tower, mitre, and fleece; with a pastoral staff on each side. The tower is said to be intended for that of St. Leonard, still standing in the town; the mitre and crooks to refer to the connection with Newton of the abbots of Torre; and the fleece to typify the ancient woollen trade.

NEWENHAM.

ABBEY.—[*Monasticon*, supp. p. 33.] Oval. Device, Virgin and Child under canopy. Shields on each side, one with the engrailed cross of Mohun the founder, the other with the manche of the same family. At the feet a monk offering what appears to be the charter of foundation. Legend: s · CONVENTVS · MONASTERII · DE · NVWEHAM.

NORTHAM.

LOCAL BOARD.—The seal of this body is a stamp impressed with ink. The device is a bundle of sticks, intended to indicate the advantages of union between the distinct (but included) communities of Northam, Appledore, and Westward Ho.

OKEHAMPTON.

BOROUGH.—This town was included in the representation of Edward I., but ceased to return members from the 7th Edward II. until 1640, whence it continued to be represented until its disfranchisement in 1832. Originally it was governed by a portreeve; but in 1623 it was incorporated by James I. The last seal of the portreeve's office, which has been discontinued many years (the custom was for the mayor to be chosen portreeve), is circular, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter. Device, a triple-towered castle. Legend: * BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON * 1788. The corporate seal is circular, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter. Device, a cornucopia charged with an escutcheon bearing the arms of De Brioniis, the Norman lord of Okehampton, chequy or and azure, over all two bars argent, crest a castle. No legend.

OTTERY ST. MARY.

COLLEGIATE CHURCH.—[*Monasticon*, p. 261, and figured.] Oval. Device, under a canopy, the Virgin and Saint Edward the Confessor, both crowned. Legend: s COLLEGII BEATE MARIE DE OTERI. The church was originally dedicated to both, though now known as St. Mary only.

CHURCH CORPORATION.—Circular, $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches diameter. Within two niches, formed by columns and an arched super-

structure of Palladian character, the Virgin and Saint Edward the Confessor, the latter with aureole, both with their hands uplifted. On lintel, over their heads, REX HENRIC · 8; beneath, on an escutcheon, France and England, quarterly. On one side the letter · I, on the other H. There is foliated ornamentation on each side of the niches and within the arch, which bears alternately roses and crosses. Legend: * SIGILLV : CORPORACHIS : ECCLIE : PEROCHIALIS : DE : OTEREY : BTE : MARIE : IN : COMETATV : DEVONIS.

PAIGNTON.

LOCAL BOARD.—The device of the Paignton Local Board seal is the ruined tower of the old episcopal palace at that place.

PLYMOUTH.

BOROUGH.—Plymouth did not receive a royal charter of incorporation until 1439, although it had commenced to send representatives in 1298. There was, however, a corporation before the fifteenth century, and a seal is extant attached to a deed dated 1368 [*Monasticon*, p. 130], bearing for device a ship on waves, and for legend: S · COMMVNITATIS VILLE DE SVITVN SVPER PLYMMVTH. The oldest seal now in being, which was disused at the passing of the Municipal Reform Act, is apparently that provided when the town was chartered. It is elaborate, but of rude workmanship; circular, 2½ inches diameter, and will be found among the illustrations to this paper. In the centre, under a Perpendicular canopy, is St. Andrew, the patron saint of the old or mother church of the town, seated, holding his cross in his right hand and a book in his left. On the dexter side, under a similar but smaller canopy, is an angel with an escutcheon of the cross of St. George. On the sinister side a similar angel with an escutcheon of the Royal arms, France and England quarterly. In exergue an escutcheon of the town arms—a saltire between four castles, supported by two lions passant guardant. Legend: THE : COMEN : SELLE · OF : THE : BORO VGH : & : COMENALTE : OF : ȝ : KYNGS : TOWNE : OF : PLYMOTHE. Although this seal continued in use so recently, for a long time it seems to have been set aside in favour of a later one, now lost. This seal was likewise circular. The device was an escutcheon bearing the saltire and castles, surmounted by a crown of *fleurs-de-lis*, the otherwise vacant portion of the field being filled by Gothic tracery. The legend, as we learn from the *Visitation* of 1620, where it is

described as the common seal, was (black letter): S: OFFICI: MAJERATVS: BVRGI: VILLÆ: D'NI: REGIS: DE: PLYMOVTH. It was afterwards mutilated, probably during the civil wars, Plymouth being a stronghold of the Parliament, by "d'ni regis" being defaced.

The present seal, circular, 2½ inches diameter, is a combination of the arms of the town already mentioned with another coat—probably the original—given in the *Visitation* of 1574, a three-masted ship on waves, the masts surmounted by fire-beacons. Lieut. Col. Hamilton Smith placed the saltire and castle shield with the rampant guardant supporters in a three-masted beacons ship, and adopted for crest a crown of *fleurs-de-lis*, issuant therefrom six flags of the town arms. Around is the motto, followed by a lion, TVRRIS * FORTISSIMA * EST * NOMEN * JEHOVA. The inscription runs, in an outer circle, * COMMON SEAL OF THE MAYOR ALDERMEN & BURGESSES OF THE BOROUGH OF PLYMOUTH * 1835.

ORPHANS' AID HOSPITAL.—The seal of this charity is circular, 2½ inches diameter. Device, the arms of Plymouth charged with a disc, representing five orphans, two boys and three girls, praying for admission at a gate of a building over which the sun is rising. Encircling this disc are the words * AVXILIVM * NOSTRVM * A * IEHOVA. The outer legend is: *: SIG: COMVNE * ORPHANOTROPHII * IN * BVRGO * DE * PLIMMOVTH:

HOSPITAL OF THE POOR'S PORTION.—This is now the work-house. The device of the seal, circular, 2½ inches diameter, repeats the idea of the last. The saltire in this case is charged with a beehive, in full work, a sort of hint that the promoters really meant business. The castles are on the extremities of the arms; above is the date 1630; on either side that of 1708—the first referring to the original foundation; the second to the Act of Parliament incorporation. Legend: * SIG · COME · HOSPICI · PORCIONIS · PAVPERVM · BVRGO · DE · PLYMOVTH.

CARMELITE FRIARY.—[*Monasticon*, supp., p. 16.] Seal, oval; device, the Virgin standing with Child in her arms; two kneeling figures below.

PLYMPTON.

BOROUGH.—Plympton was a Parliamentary borough from the earliest records down to 1832. It was also a municipal borough of great antiquity; but the charter has of late years been allowed to lapse in consequence of its conferring no

exclusive jurisdiction as against the county. The seal is in the possession of Mr. Deeble Boger, the last recorder. It is slightly ovate, largest diameter $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch. Device, a falcon rousant. Legend: + SIGILL : BVRG : DE : PLYMPT : COMIT.

PRIORY.—[*Monasticon*, pp. 132-3]. A thirteenth century seal, pointed oval, which Oliver figures, bears Saints Peter and Paul, with the legend: SIGILLVM · ECCLESIE · AP'LOR · SCÔ R · PETRIS ET · PAVLI · DE · PLIMTONA. Another, *temp.* Edward II., has both obverse and reverse. The device of the obverse is Saints Peter and Paul seated—Peter holding the keys erect and addorsed in his left hand; Paul supporting an erected sword by the point. Reverse, the Virgin seated, Child on knee, hawk in hand. Legend: SIGNVM SANCT [E MARI] E DE PLIMTONA.

STONEHOUSE.

LOCAL BOARD.—The device used by the Sewer Authority, and now by the Local Board, is a ram's head, from the arms of the Durnford family, once owners of the manor.

ST. MARYCHURCH.

LOCAL BOARD.—This seal bears the tower of St. Marychurch.

SLAPTON.

COLLEGIATE CHURCH.—[*Monasticon*, p. 322.] The seal of this body is a large oval. Device, the Virgin on a throne, seated under a rich canopy, supporting her infant erect in her right hand, and bearing a lily in her left. Under a circular arch below, the founder, Guy de Brian, on his knees, his hands joined before his breast, and his shield beneath. Legend: S · COE · COLLEGII · GUYDONIS · DE · BRIENE · DE · SLAPTON.

SOUTH MOLTON.

BOROUGH.—This borough was incorporated by Elizabeth, and sent members once, *temp.* Edward I. The *Visitation* of 1620 gives the device of the corporate seal as a rose surmounted by a crown. Legend: SOUTHMOLTON : LYBERTIE. The present seal is circular, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inch diameter. Device, a fleece between crown and mitre. Legend: LIBERTAS * DE * SOUTHMOLTON; motto beneath mitre, FIAT · IVSTITIA. The fleece is typical of the woollen trade.

TAVISTOCK.

BOROUGH.—Although Tavistock ranks among the oldest of parliamentary boroughs, it has never been incorporated, and

its chief officer is still the old Saxon portreeve. The seal attached to the indentures of return dates from the latter half of the 17th century. It is oval, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch \times $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Device, on an escutcheon, the Bedford arms: argent, a lion rampant gules; on a chief sable three escallops argent: surmounted by an earl's coronet. Legend: + ARMA · DNI: LIBERT' DE: TAVISTOCKE.

ABBEY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 93.] A pointed oval. Device: the Virgin seated with Child on left knee, on each side an angel incensing them. In exergue St. Rumon in pontificalia, blessing two children who kneel before him. Legend: SIGILLVM · ECCLESIE · BEATE · MARIE · ET · SANCTI RUMON · TAVYSTOKE. This seal is figured in the *Monasticon Anglicanum*.

MAGDALENE HOSPITAL.—Oliver figures a seal—pointed oval—the device of which is the Magdalene under a canopy; and the legend: SIGILLVM HOSPITALIS SANTA MARIE MAGDELENE DE TAVISTOCKE.

TEIGNMOUTH.

LOCAL BOARD.—Teignmouth is not understood to be a borough, but the Local Board use a seal, with the device: azure, a saltire gules between four *fleurs-de-lis* converging. It is circular, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter, and the legend is: * SIGILL · BURGHI · TEIGNEMUTHIENSIS · 1002. No satisfactory explanation of the date has been suggested. The arms are the same as those engraved on the silver staff of the portreeve, which is of considerable antiquity.

TIVERTON.

BOROUGH.—This town was incorporated by James I., and has been represented in Parliament ever since. The seal is curious. It is circular, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter, and represents the church, castle, and town. At each end of the latter is a bridge, the water flowing beneath uniting in base. In the space thus enclosed is a woolpack. A flight of birds above the church and castle complete what was evidently no fancy sketch. The legend, which extends round the upper two-thirds only, is SIGILLVM · OPPIDI · DE · TYVERTON.

TORRE.

ABBEY.—[*Monasticon*, p. 172.] Oliver mentions two seals of this house, both pointed ovals. One bears the Saviour on the cross, the Virgin and St. John below. Underneath a quatrefoil, with the Virgin and Child seated. Legend: SIG · COE · ABBATIS · ET · CONVENTVS · DE · TORE · AD · CAVSAS. On the

other there is represented an abbot in full costume, a crosier inverted in his right hand, a book in his left. Legend: SIG · ABBATIS · ET · CONVENTVS · DE · TORRE.

TORRINGTON.

BOROUGH.—Great or Chipping Torrington is a very ancient parliamentary borough, but the inhabitants were relieved in 1368 from the obligation to return representatives on the ground of poverty. It was incorporated by Mary. The *Visitation* of 1620 states that the seal bore the arms of the town, argent two bars wavy, over all a *fleur-de-lis*, within a bordure engrailed—all sable. Legend: SIGILLVM : COMMVNE : VILLA : DE TORRINGTON. The present seal, however, which appears of older character than the date just named, is circular, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch diameter; and bears a *fleur-de-lis* on waves—a barry wavy of five. On each side of the base of the fleur is a cross and a small star; and the field is enclosed above by a cusped border trefoiled at points. Legend: : **Sigillb : cor · ville · De · chippingtoriton : com : Devon.** Then follows the head of some animal.

TOTNES.

BOROUGH.—Totnes was continuously represented from the 23rd Edward I., until it was disfranchised for corrupt practices in 1867. According to tradition it was a "mayor town" in the reign of John; but Lysons held that it could not be shown to have been so before Henry VII. The seal is the same that was described in the *Visitation* of 1620, and is of considerable antiquity. It is circular, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter. Device, a triple tower, masoned proper, between two keys erect. Legend: **sigillvm combnitat magne tottonie.** There are roses between each word.

ST. MARY PRIORY.—Two seals of this priory are known. Both are mentioned by Oliver [*Monasticon*, p. 239, supp. p. 20], but the best account will be found in Cotton's *Antiquities of Totnes*, where both are figured. One, a pointed oval, has for device a female figure in chair, with rod in her right hand; before her a female child with book—apparently St. Anne teaching the Virgin to read. Legend: s : PRIORIS : ET : CONVENTVS : DE : SCE : MARIE : DE : TOTON. The other is circular, and represents the Virgin seated, blessing with her right hand and holding the lily in her left. Legend: + SIGILLUM · SCE · MARIE · DE · TOTT.