

The city and citizens of Rochester: Charters relating to property in the city and suburbs, c. 1120--1230

Introduction

The following file contains all the charters known to me which answer to the specifications in the title. That is, they are formal documents, duly witnessed and sealed; they relate to land in the city and suburbs of Rochester (including the built-up part of Strood); and they date from the period between circ 1120 and circ 1230. Except for a few stragglers (docs 50--55), they come from the archive of the prior and convent of Rochester.

Rochester priory (docs 1--49)

By passing into the custody of the monks, these charters gained a much better chance of survival than they would have had in private hands. In the long run, however, their chances were not that good. The sad fact is that only a small fraction of the Rochester archive is still in existence today. Out of 179 documents which are known to have been in the archive circ 1215 -- which is when they were copied into a new cartulary (see below) -- 22 survive as originals (Flight 1997) and 157 have been lost. It may be that many charters went missing at the time of the dissolution of the priory; but sporadic losses have occurred more recently than that. Some documents which existed at the beginning of the seventeenth century -- when they were copied into a sort of scrapbook kept in the bishop's registry (DRb/Ar1/17, fos 1--91)* -- have ceased to exist since then. (Doc 19 is one example.) Possibly they were lost during the interregnum.† Several documents which were transcribed for John Thorpe (who moved to Rochester in 1715 and died in 1750) had disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century. (Doc 22 is one example; others can be found in Flight 1997, app 3.) Those charters which have outlasted every vicissitude are all in safe custody now, with Medway Archives in Strood.‡

* This is a miscellany of documents, haphazardly compiled, in need of closer attention than I have been able to give it. Mostly it seems to have been put together by the then registrar, Thomas Wardegar (d 1619), for his own use. (It includes such personal items as "A verie good medicine for the Sciatica" (fo 36r) and a note of the birth of his first grandson on 13 Jun 1611 (fo 74v).) But some of it may be earlier than Wardegar's time, and some of it is certainly later.

† What happened to the archive during the period 1649--64 is something I discuss below.

‡ My thanks to the former archivist, Stephen Dixon, who supplied me with

photocopies of the relevant charters many years ago, and to the current archivist, Alison Cable, for letting me look at the originals -- and for many other acts of kindness.

The monks themselves were aware -- on occasion acutely aware -- that their charters were at risk of being damaged or destroyed. They took what precautions they could. Once in a while, somebody decided that the time had come to compile a cartulary -- a collection of copies of documents which looked as if they might be of importance or interest to future generations of monks. That is how we know how many of the charters have been lost; that is how we know, more or less exactly, what the lost charters had to say.

The earliest Rochester cartulary (DRc/R1), the scribe of which gave it the title "Privileges granted to the church of Saint Andrew of Rochester", was compiled in the 1120s, some forty years after the foundation of the monastery.* It is a very fine piece of work, but not of much use to us here. At that date, it was very uncommon for small-scale transactions of the kind which interest us to be recorded in writing, apart from whatever memorandum the monks might think to make. The cartulary contains numerous memoranda relating to land in and around the city, but only one formal document;† and this, as it happens, survives in the original (doc 1). A second charter was copied onto a blank page at the back of the cartulary by one of several mid and late twelfth-century scribes who made sporadic additions to it; but that charter too happens to survive in the original (doc 6). In short, it would make no difference to us if these copies did not exist.

* I have posted two transcripts of the cartulary, one of which aims to restore it to the state that it was in it when the original scribe stopped work on it. It suffered much mutilation at the hands of later scribes.

† There are two formal documents much earlier than this, circ 1090, relating to a piece of land south of the city which the monks turned into a garden (and which they later turned into a vineyard). Having printed those documents already (Flight 2010:222--3) I do not print them again.

A new cartulary was compiled in the 1210s. This manuscript disappeared from Rochester, presumably after the dissolution, but was not utterly lost. Whatever adventures it went through, it survived them; and it finally found a refuge in the library of Sir Robert Cotton, as part of a volume shelved under a bust of the emperor Domitian (BL Cott Domitian x, fos 92--211).

Many years ago, I gave what account I could of the construction and contents of this manuscript (Flight 1997, ch 6) and have nothing to add to that. To summarize what I said there, the first and largest part of the cartulary (fos 100r--85r) seems

all to be the work of a single scribe, D1. (Unfortunately for us, he made it his policy to shorten or sometimes omit altogether the list of witnesses' names. That has probably deprived us of evidence which would have helped to date the charters; it has certainly deprived us of much information regarding the involvement of individual citizens in the city's business.) One document towards the end of this stretch of text (fo 181v--2r = Thorpe 1769:527) is witnessed by bishop Benedict; so scribe D1 was at work, or was still at work, after 1215. Other scribes began making additions not much later: fos 185r--91r by scribe D3,* fos 191r--4v by scribe D4, fos 195r--204v by scribe V,† and after that by other scribes. Two of the documents added by scribe V are dated 1222 (fos 199v--200v = doc 44, fos 200v--1v = Thorpe 1769:368); three documents dating from 1225 -- the charters relating to the acquisition of Hartlip church -- were added by somebody else (fos 204v--5r). Up till then, the monks seem to have been making a disciplined effort to keep the cartulary up to date. But after that they got lazy. Desultory additions did continue to be made, on into the 1250s, but none of them are of any relevance here.

* Scribe D2 did nothing but complete the table of contents, which scribe D1 had left unfinished.

† The Vespasian scribe, as I called him in that book.

A third cartulary, presumably intended to take the place of Domitian, remained in existence and remained in Rochester until the 1620s,* but vanished some time after that, presumably during the interregnum. Some of its contents survive none the less -- as Martin Brett was first to see -- through having been copied into the scrapbook mentioned above (DRb/Arl/17, fos 81r--4r). These copies go to show that the compiler of this cartulary worked from the originals and copied every word, including the full list of witnesses. If the manuscript had survived, it would, for that reason, have been distinctly more useful than Domitian. But it does not survive; and there is little hope that any further trace of it will ever be found. Failing that, we have to fall back on the Domitian cartulary and be grateful for what we have got.

* When it was used by the archdeacon, Richard Tillesley, in his controversy with John Selden about the history of tithes (Tillesley 1619, 1621).

To compile my own small special-purpose cartulary, this is what I did. I began by working through (a microfilm of) Domitian, transcribing all the relevant charters, in the same order that they are recorded there. The documents are identified by entries in the preliminary table of contents (fos 94v--8v), and

by rubricated titles added to the main text. The italicized headings which I give below come from the preliminary listing; I print the rubrics only where they are differently worded, or where the table of contents is defective.

Second, for each document in turn, I looked to see whether the original survives. If it does, I replaced my transcript with a transcript of the original, taking note of any significant discrepancies. (These variants are not of any interest in themselves, only for assessing the reliability of the scribes who worked on Domitian.)

Third, I found some originals which, for one reason or another, had not been copied into the cartulary; so I spliced them into the sequence, at the most appropriate point.

The result is summarized in the following table. In a few instances, some further action was required; but I speak about that in my comments on the document concerned.

Six of these charters have not been printed before: docs 9, 24, 30, 32, 36, 49.

It is important to bear in mind how the charters came to be ordered as they are. For the first half of the list, as far as doc 25, the order is fixed by the topical arrangement created by scribe D1. For the second half, from doc 26 onwards, the order is at least approximately chronological. (Doc 26 itself is a special case, but the statement still holds true.) It seems to have been the rule, especially while scribe V was in charge, that new documents should be copied into the cartulary more or less at the moment of their acquisition.

| | original | DRc/R1 | Domitian scribe D1 | other copies |
|-----|----------|--------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | T310/1 | 191v | 135r-v | |
| 2 | T310/2 | | 135v | |
| 3 | T302 | | 145r-v | |
| 4 | | | 145v | |
| 5 | | | 146r | |
| 6 | T191/1 | (230v) | 146v | |
| 7 | T191/2 | | 147v-8r | |
| 8 | | | 148r | |
| 9 | T191/3 | | | |
| 10 | | | 148v | |
| 11 | | | 149r-v | |
| 12A | | | 154v-5r | |

| | | | |
|-----|--------|-----------|--------------------|
| 12B | | (155r) | |
| 13 | | 155r | |
| 14 | | 155r-v | |
| 15 | | 160v | |
| 16 | | 162v-3r | |
| 17 | | 163r-v | |
| 18 | T293 | 168r-v | |
| 19 | | 173r-v | DRb/Ar1/17, fo 36r |
| 20 | | 177v | |
| 21 | | 178v-9r | |
| 22 | | 181r-v | Thorpe 1769:647 |
| 23 | | 182r | |
| 24 | T644 | | |
| 25 | | 182v | |
| | | scribe D3 | |
| 26 | | 188r-v | |
| 27 | | 190v | |
| 28 | | 190v-1r | |
| | | scribe D4 | |
| 29 | | 192v-3r | |
| 30 | T292/1 | | |
| 31 | T292/2 | 194r | |
| 32 | T292/3 | 194r | |
| 33 | | 194v | |
| | | scribe V | |
| 34 | | 195r | |
| 35 | | 195v | |
| 36 | T604 | | |
| 37 | | 196r-v | |
| 38 | | 196v | |
| 39 | | 197r | |
| 40 | | 197r | |
| 41 | | 198r-v | |
| 42 | | 198v | |
| 43 | | 198v-9r | |
| 44 | | 199v-200v | DRb/Ar2, fo 48v |
| 45 | T278 | 202r-v | |
| 46 | | 202v-3r | |
| 47 | | 203r-v | |
| 48 | | 204v | |
| 49 | T289 | | |

One document which I have not included (because it is long and largely irrelevant) should at least be mentioned. This is a final concord, dated 1 May 1222, made in the king's court at Westminster between Alan Martel, master of the Order of the

Temple in England, and Willelm, prior of Rochester.* The manor of Strood had been granted to the Templars in 1159 (GREx 1159:57); by becoming the owners of the manor, they also became the owners of Shamel hundred. Over time, various disputes arose, and this agreement was intended to put an end to them. Among other things, the prior and monks relinquished the land and rent belonging to them on the south side of Strood Creek, in return for a rent of three cupfuls of salt to be paid to them by the Templars, plus a rent of 4 shillings 6 pence to be paid to them by Jolan son of Ricard Camberlan, out of the rent which he owed for a house site in Rochester held by him from the Templars.† It is known, from other evidence, that the Templars had at least three tenants in the city: in 1201 (GREx 1201:287), because they were the Templars' men, they were excused from paying their share of the taillage demanded from Rochester in 1198 (GREx 1198:209).

* National Archives, CP 25/1/95/11, no 73, the portion retained at Westminster; Domitian, fos 200v--1v (scribe V), from the monks' portion; Thorpe 1769:368--9, from Domitian; calendared by Churchill 1939--56:75, with corrections, 1956:vii.

† ... nisi tantummodo tria tolfata salis, unde xvi/cim tolfata faciunt unum quarterium salis, reddenda ad natiuitatem sancti Iohannis baptiste, et redditum iiii/or solidorum et vi denariorum, quem redditum ipsi fratres concesserunt predictis priori et monachis percipiendum singulis annis de redditu quem Iolanus filius Ricardi Camberlani debet eisdem fratribus de uno mesuagio quod ipse Iolanus de eis tenet in Rofa, per manum eiusdem Iolani et heredum suorum ad duos terminos anni, scilicet medietatem ad festum sancti Michaelis et aliam medietatem ad Pascha.

Strood hospital (doc 50)

The hospital of Saint Mary of Strood (the 'new work', as it came to be called) was founded in the 1190s. Its history was largely uneventful (Fowler 1926:228--9). It survived until the 1530s, when, with the king's permission, the master and brethren of Strood hospital surrendered all their possessions to the prior and convent of Rochester. That happened on 8 Jul 1539. Nine months later, on 8 Apr 1540, the prior and convent surrendered all their possessions to the king.* Once the cathedral had been reconstituted on the pattern which the king thought best, those possessions were granted to the new dean and chapter, on 20 Jun 1541.

* The last prior of Rochester, Walter Phillips, had already been promised that he would be made the first dean, though that was not formally confirmed till 18 Jun 1541. The last master of Strood hospital, John Wildbore, became one of the new prebendaries.

Since 1539, therefore, the records of Strood hospital have

followed the same trajectory as the records of Rochester priory, and they are, accordingly, now to be found in the archives office in Strood, just a short walk away from their original home. I have gone through the online catalogue,* and looked at all the originals earlier than circa 1230 which seemed even vaguely promising.† But I have not found any charters which definitely relate to property in the built-up area around the approach to the bridge. As far as I can discover, the only donations made to the hospital within this area were those which the monks of Rochester succeeded in having quashed (doc 36).

* The entries for the charters from Strood hospital begin with DRc/T572 and end with DRc/T611. But DRc/T604 should more properly be counted as part of the Rochester archive.

† That was in Aug 2011. My thanks again to Alison Cable, for her kind assistance on that and other occasions.

There exists, however, an unpublished charter relating to land in Rochester, "next to St Clement's church". It is not in Strood. It is in Lambeth Palace Library; and the reason for its being found there is an interesting one -- interesting enough, I think, to justify the following digression.

In 1649, all deans and chapters were abolished by act of parliament.* As had happened in 1646, when bishops were abolished,† provision was made for the seizure of "all Charters, Deeds, Legier Books, Court Rolls, Accompts, Writings and Evidences whatsoever". Throughout England and Wales, the records of every cathedral church were confiscated and carried off to London. They were deposited at Gurney House in Old Jewry, where the trustees appointed by the act had found themselves some office space. A few years later, probably in 1654 (or the winter of 1654--5), the entire collection of records was moved from Gurney House to the Excise Office in Broad Street.‡ After the restoration of the monarchy in May 1660, bishops and deans and chapters were promptly reinstated. The records remained in Broad Street, however, until it could be decided what to do with them.§

* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56329>

† <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=56144>

‡ The Ryleys' petition (see next note) says that this happened in (old style) 1654. Possibly the move was connected with the appointment of a new registrar in November 1654 (Journals of the House of Commons, 7:382--3).

§ During this period, the herald William Ryley (d 1667) and his son William Ryley (d 1675) volunteered to get the records sorted out and sent back to the proper owners. Nothing came of that; but by some fluke the Ryleys' petition survives (Bodl Tanner 141, fo 109). It was put into print by Owen

(1968:3).

In May 1662, parliament discharged itself of any responsibility in the matter by ordering the entire collection of records to be delivered to the archbishop of Canterbury, "who is desired to take care for the preservation thereof; and to dispose of the same to the respective Bishops, Deans, and Chapters, who are therein concerned, if he shall think fit" (Journals of the House of Commons, 8:428). Accordingly the records were moved from Broad Street to Lambeth Palace. They were, by this time, in some serious disarray. The archbishop at the time was William Juxon, elected in September 1660. He died in June 1663, without getting round to dealing with the confiscated records. His successor, Gilbert Sheldon, was elected two months later.

In 1664, at the instigation of archbishop Sheldon, it was agreed that William Dugdale should be brought in to sort out the records and return them to the churches to which they belonged. Each dean was to pay him 20s for his trouble, 10s in advance and the balance on completion; the money was to be collected by John Barwick, dean of St Paul's, who would pass it on to Dugdale. If everything had gone smoothly, we should not have known about these arrangements; but dean Barwick died, on 22 Oct 1664, without forwarding the money which had come into his hands by that time (24 payments of 10s each). Dugdale had a word with the archbishop; the archbishop had a word with the dean's executor, his brother Peter Barwick (a medical man); Barwick paid the money to Dugdale; and Dugdale wrote a memorandum into his diary recording which deans had paid and which had not.

21 Nov. Received from Dr Barwick, by the appointment of the Archb'pp of Canterbury, the summe of 12 li. which was given to the late Deane of Paul's, by the severall persons whose names here follow, towards my recompence for sorting the old Evidences of the Bishops, which were brought up to London in the times of the late troubles, and confounded together, by mixing with one another (Hamper 1828:117--18).*

Every English and Welsh cathedral is on Dugdale's list; so is the "Deane of Windsor". Two deans (of Chester and Rochester) have "payd nothing yet", but the "yet" makes it clear that they are parties to the agreement.†

* This memorandum of Dugdale's was overlooked by Owen (1968): for the rest I rely on her meticulous account.

† In a postscript Dugdale notes that two deans (of York and Durham) have now paid up in full: "Md that the Deanes and Chapters of these places against wch is this marke ¶ have gratified me for what concerns themselves in this buisnesse."

Once the records had been redistributed, a conspiracy of silence descended over the whole episode. For the reconstituted chapters, for everyone who thought that hierarchy was a good thing, the truth was best forgotten. The embarrassing fact that the records of every cathedral church had been out of the chapter's custody for a period of fifteen years was a fact which many people preferred not to remember.*

* One document which did not return was the copy of the church's statutes signed by the commissioners who had delivered it to the dean and chapter on 30 Jun 1544 (Rawlinson 1717:115). By unknown means, it found its way into the Bodleian Library, and that is where it stayed (Bodl e Mus 51). A copy of this copy was made by the librarian, Joseph Bowles, in 1722, at the request of bishop Atterbury, and donated by the bishop to the dean and chapter, just before he went into exile (DRC/As3).

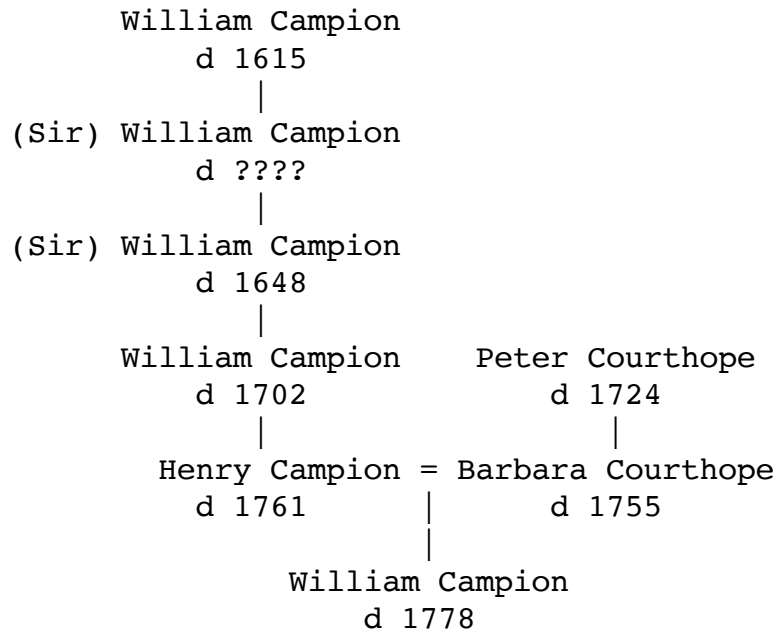
There was no one better qualified than William Dugdale for sorting out the records at Lambeth; but it would not be surprising if he made some mistakes. For instance, there is at least one document in Canterbury (CCA-DCc-ChAnt/R/50) which ought to be in Rochester; and there are several documents in the Rochester archive (DRC/T658 through DRC/T664) which seem to have no reason for being there. It is not certain that they were misallocated by Dugdale in 1664. But it is distinctly possible.

What is certain is that some large number of documents got left behind at Lambeth. Among the series of "miscellaneous charters", there are 68 at least which ought to have been returned to the dean and chapter of Rochester. The majority formed part of the archive of Leeds priory, the rest of which is, as it should be, now in Strood (DRC/T380 through DRC/T571). But three of them are documents which originally came from Strood hospital, and one of these (CM X/3) is the charter which I print here, from an image kindly supplied to me by Clare Brown.

Combwell priory (doc 51)

Combwell (TQ 7033) was a small Augustinian priory in the southern part of Goudhurst parish, not far from the Sussex boundary. It was founded by Robert de Turneham, before but probably not long before 1170; originally an abbey, it was demoted to the status of a priory in about 1220. It survived until 1536, when it succumbed to the act for the suppression of the smaller monasteries (Fowler 1926:160--1). After the dissolution the estate changed hands a few times before becoming the home of a branch of the Campion family,* who built themselves a grand new house on the site where the priory had stood.

* The Campion pedigree is worked out in detail by Green (1908). Hasted's version (7:81) conflates the two Sir Williams (knighted in 1618 and 1644 respectively) but is right apart from that.



The last of the Campions to live here was Henry Campion (d 1761), who inherited Combwell on the death of his father in 1702, but chose to move to Danny Park in Sussex on the death of his wife's father in 1724.* "Soon afterwards", says Hasted, he "pulled down the greatest part of this seat of Combwell, leaving only sufficient for a farm-house" (Hasted 7:81). That farmhouse, having lasted just long enough for a view of it to be drawn by a tourist from Tunbridge Wells,† was demolished in about 1808 (Amsinck 1810:88). After that, there was nothing left to see of the Jacobean mansion, nor of the medieval priory.

* Hasted blundered badly here, confusing Peter Courthope (d 1724) with his grandfather Peter Courthope (d 1657). That mistake has been repeated frequently, by writers parasitical on Hasted.

† The tourist was Edward Vernon Utterson (1777--1856), who let this drawing be used as one of the illustrations in Amsinck's book. The others are all Amsinck's own work. Paul Amsinck, "master of the ceremonies at Tunbridge Wells", died at Bath on 19 Apr 1814 (Gent Mag, May 1814, p 518); beyond that I know nothing about him, except that he drew quite well. The plates for this book were etched by Letitia Byrne (1779--1849).

The priory's archive survived the dissolution, more or less intact. A large collection of charters and other documents was acquired and preserved by the Campion family. Thomas Tanner, writing in 1695, reported the existence of these charters,

which, at the time, were the property of William Campion (d 1702).* Within the next twenty years, many of the charters passed into the possession of the College of Arms;† they were donated, it seems safe to infer, by William or Henry Campion (the latter, I would guess).‡ There they were seen and studied by Peter Le Neve, who, as well as writing notes on the backs of the originals, made "transcripts and extracts" from these charters for his own use.§

* "Cartas Autographas penes Gul. Campion de eadem [Cumbwell] Armig." (Tanner 1695:102). In the second edition this becomes "Cartas originales, et alia munimenta penes Gul. Campion de ead. arm." (Tanner 1744:216).

† "Cartas quamplurimas ad hunc prioratum spectantes, in bibl. coll. Armorum, Lond. A.D. 1714." (Tanner 1744:216). The date, I suppose, is the year when Tanner took note of them, not the year when the college acquired them.

‡ The members of the college whom Faussett dealt with (see below) seem not to have known how these charters had come into their hands. According to him, it was "surmised with some probability that they formed part of the collection of Sir William Dugdale" (Faussett 1863:194). I see no probability in that.

§ "Transcripta et extracta e dictis cartis inter collectanea V. cl. Petri Le Neve arm. Norroy" (Tanner 1744:216). Le Neve died in 1729, and his books and papers began to be dispersed soon afterwards. I do not know whether these Combwell transcripts survive.

Despite Tanner's having called attention to them, the Combwell charters in the College of Arms were ignored by some subsequent writers who would have found them useful. Hasted did not look at them;* nor did Henry Ellis, while he was working on the new edition of the "Monasticon Anglicanum".

* Hasted did notice -- but did not pursue -- a remark in Tanner's preface: "And I meet with one instance of an abby being reduced to a priory, because the revenues of it could not support the state and dignity of an abbat, viz. Cumbwell in Kent" (Tanner 1744:xxvii, cited by Hasted 7:79). (The phrase quoted in Tanner's footnote, "Propter tanti praelati sumptus," comes from the charter of Mabilia de Gattone (Faussett 1863:214--15).)

Eventually, with the approval of Sir George Young, Garter, the Combwell charters began being printed in *Archaeologia Cantiana*. They were edited by T. G. Faussett. Altogether he published 69 charters (Faussett 1863--72), arranging them in loosely chronological order; the last (not the latest) is dated 1231. The series was interrupted at that point, perhaps because Faussett's health was failing, perhaps because the new editor had a different policy. Whatever the reason, a large number of the charters remain unpublished, and I do not know that they have ever been looked at closely. Nevertheless, thanks to

Faussett, the early charters are all available in print.

* Thomas Godfrey Faussett (1829--1877). (With the rest of his family, he changed his name to Godfrey-Faussett in 1869.) He was elected Hon Sec of the KAS in 1863 and remained in post for ten years. During that time he edited four volumes of *Archaeologia Cantiana* (vols 5--8).

A stray charter from Combwell, described as "the original Charter of foundation",* was reported by Ellis (1830:413) to be in the possession of "Mr Clarkson of Richmond in Yorkshire". The man referred to is Christopher Clarkson, author of "The history and antiquities of Richmond" (Richmond, 1821), who died, aged 75, on 17 Feb 1833 (*Gent Mag*, Mar 1833, p 278); but I have no idea how this document might have come into his hands, or what might have happened to it after his death. Again, "several" charters from Combwell are reported to exist among the Harleian manuscripts in the British Library (Fowler 1926:160--1).† I have not seen them; nor have I seen the fragment of a Combwell cartulary which is in the Cambridge University Library.‡ This is all by the way. I only mention these facts because I hope that someone reading this may think it worth their while to look more carefully at the priory's history.

* Presumably this means the charter of Robert de Turneham confirmed by his son Stephan in 1194×9. Neither Robert's nor Stephan's charter is among the collection in the College of Arms. The latter survives through having been copied into an *inspeximus* dated 6 Jul 1227 (Ellis 1830:413, from Dugdale 1661:270--1, from the charter roll C 53/19).

† The references cited by Fowler are Harl Chart 75 G 1, 76 F 13, 78 A 19.

‡ Tanner ed Nasmith 1787 sig 3Llr, citing the reference as Dd iii 88, n 4.

The collection of charters in the College of Arms includes a single early thirteenth-century charter relating to land in the city or hundred of Rochester. Faussett printed it (1866:208--9), but in a shortened form. I have retranscribed it from the original (Combwell Charters 92), for access to which I am grateful to the college's then archivist, Matthew Jones.

Cobham Hall (docs 52--5)

The family which took its name from the village of Cobham became one of the most prominent in thirteenth-century Kent.* Their origins are obscure: the first of them to make any mark in the historical record was Henric de Cobeham (d 1232), whose name shows up in the exchequer rolls from 1202 onwards (GREx 1202:215). By around that time, he was busily acquiring land and other property, some of it in the neighbourhood of Cobham,

some of it in Milton hundred (of which I suppose he had got himself appointed bailiff). By 1208, his acquisitions were so numerous that he thought it prudent to invest in an insurance policy -- a charter from the king ratifying all the transactions in which he had been involved, in accordance with the donors' charters. (The word "donor", of course, is not to be taken literally. In every case, no doubt, some hard bargaining had been involved.) As usual, the chancery retained a copy of the charter (C 53/9, m 5), and that copy was eventually put into print by Hardy (1837:178--9).

* I hope to have a chance, in a separate paper, to pull together some of the evidence relating to the early history of the manor of Cobham.

Three of the transactions recorded here relate to land in Rochester. Since the total number of transactions is very much larger than that (38, to be precise), it would be disproportionate to print the entire text; I reproduce only those passages which are relevant here (doc 52).

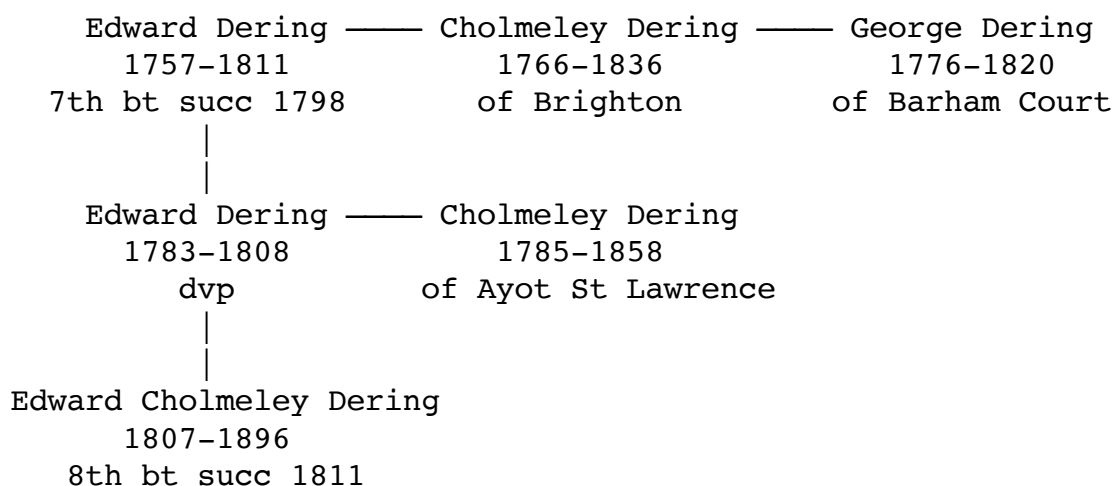
In 1574, when the herald Robert Glover was given access to the muniment room at Cobham Hall, he came upon the original of this charter, with its seal of green wax still attached to it with green silk.* This was just one among hundreds of documents which passed through Glover's hands on that occasion. The notes which he made -- printed by Nichols (1841) from the manuscript in the College of Arms -- refer to more than 300 original documents; and he only took note of those documents which supplied some facts of value to him (that is, some genealogical information, preferably dated, or a seal showing someone's coat of arms). As far as I know, this is the only record of the contents of the Cobham Hall archive. As far as I know, not one of the documents seen by Glover survives. It seems likely -- as Larking (1858:60) suggested -- that the archive was destroyed or dispersed in the aftermath of the events of 1603--4, when the last Lord Cobham was arrested, convicted of treason, imprisoned for life, and deprived of his title and estate.†

* "Huic Cartae appendebat sigillum magnum dicti regis Johannis in viridi cera, cum appendiciis ex serico coloris item viridi<s>" (Nichols 1841:350).

† In 1604 a share of Lord Cobham's forfeited lands, including Cobham Hall itself, was granted for life to his wife -- a well-connected lady, previously married to the Earl of Kildare. She was living at Cobham Hall in 1623. Soon after that, she was induced to move out, so that the Duke of Lenox could move in (Robertson 1877:219). But how this all links up with the disappearance of the archive is more than I can say.

At some uncertain date, by unknown means, a batch of documents which had escaped from Cobham Hall found their way into the library at Surrenden Dering. Though I have not seen anything to

prove it, the presumption is that they were acquired by the man who rebuilt the house and created the library inside it, Sir Edward Dering (1598--1644), knight and baronet. There is an unexplained time-gap, however, because Dering did not start collecting until the 1620s.



The documents from Cobham Hall were certainly at Surrenden in the 1840s, when they and many others were seen, sorted through, and transcribed by the Rev Lambert Larking.* For many years, Larking enjoyed free access to the Surrenden library, by courtesy of the then baronet, Sir Edward Cholmeley Dering.†

* Lambert Blackwell Larking (1797--1868), vicar of Ryarsh from 1830 till his death. "Mr. Larking intended to publish a catalogue of the 'Surrenden Charters,' interspersed with copies and translations of the most ancient and valuable; but the great expenditure which such a publication would have entailed upon him alone prevented him from carrying his design into execution" (Hardy 1868:324).

† Edward Cholmeley Dering (1807--1896), who succeeded to the estate and title at the age of three, on the death of his grandfather. His great-uncle Cholmeley Dering (1766--1836), half-brother of the 7th baronet, became his guardian. (The name "Cholmeley" came into the family in the 1670s, when one of the Derings married a Miss Cholmeley, the sister of a Yorkshire baronet. For the history of the Dering family I rely chiefly on Haslewood (1876), Foster (1881) and Cokayne (1902).)

It may have been Sir Edward's idea at the time that these documents belonged to him; it certainly seems to have been Larking's impression that they did (Larking 1858); but legally they did not. Since 1811, they had belonged to Sir Edward's uncle Cholmeley.

When Sir Edward's grandfather made his will, he bequeathed his "personalities" to his younger son, Cholmeley Dering,* and that

included, or was taken to include, the library. On his father's death in June 1811, Cholmeley promptly took possession of the books. Those which he did not want were sold by auction in Dec 1811 -- more than 300 of them, mostly printed books, but also some bound manuscripts (Mattingly and Burnett 1915:128, Wright 1950:378). The rest he kept for himself. They stayed with him till his death, in Feb 1858, and after that they too were sold -- by Puttick & Simpson, on 8 Jun 1858 (Mattingly and Burnett 1915:282).†

* Cholmeley Charles William Dering (1785--1858), of Ayot St Lawrence (Herts) and Chapel-street, Grosvenor-square. The lady mentioned by Bruce (1862:vi), "the widow of the late Mr. Cholmeley Dering," was his second wife, Charlotte Mary (Yea) Dering. They were married in 1846; I do not know when she died.

† I do not know whether Cholmeley Dering is mentioned by name in the catalogue, but this has to be the sale which Larking was referring to: "In the recent sale of the library of the late Cholmeley Dering, Esq. (the legatee of the personalties of his father, Sir E. Dering, who died 1811), there were many books of arms, and a transcript of all the early charters in the Surrenden collection, with the seals carefully tricked" (Larking 1858:59). (The sale also included some "books and tracts" which had belonged to Sir Roger Twysden (d 1652); whether those came from Cholmeley Dering's library, again I do not know.)

It was, I suspect, only realized at this time that the Surrenden charters were also Cholmeley's property. The fact that he had left all the loose documents at Surrenden did not mean that they had ceased to belong to him. They had been his all along. Just like his books, they were now to be sold. Sir Edward Dering (who must, I suppose, have been appointed his uncle's executor) was approached by an intermediary actng for Sir Thomas Phillipps, who offered to buy the whole collection en bloc (Munby 1956:75--6); but those negotiations fell through. Instead the charters were sold by public auction, in three separate sales: 10--13 Jul 1861, 4--7 Feb 1863, 13--15 Jul 1865 (Mattingly and Burnett 1915:296, 302, 312, Wright 1950:378--80). There was nothing that Larking could do to stop this happening. Except for an occasional "alas!", he kept his feelings to himself; but it must have been agony for him.*

* One month after the last sale, Larking wrote this epitaph on the Surrenden collection: "About the year 1811, Sir Edward Dering, the Grandfather and immediate predecessor of the present Baronet, bequeathed his personalties to his younger son, to whom the ancient Library and vast store of MSS. collected by his ancestor in the time of Ch. I. thus passed in due course of Law. They <the unwanted books> were shortly afterwards sold. ... The collection which I found at Surrenden was still large and valuable -- it consisted almost entirely of ancient Rolls and Charters which the legatee of the personalties had suffered to remain at Surrenden, the books only attracting his attention. All have since been sold by auction by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, in three several sales, the last of

which took place about a month since, viz. in July, 1865" (Larking 1869, p 6*). (I quote this passage at length because it was overlooked by Wright.)

The story gets sadder and sadder. Sir Edward Cholmeley Dering was the last of the family who lived at Surrenden Dering. He died in 1896, and after that the house was let. In Oct 1928 the entire estate (as much as had not been disposed of already, ten years before) was put up for sale by auction, together with the contents of the house and the stock of the home farm. In the following year the house became a school. There was a fire in Oct 1952 which caused no fatalities but did cause extensive damage. The school found itself new premises (near Salisbury), and the abandoned house was totally demolished soon afterwards.* As for the baronetcy, that went extinct in 1975.

* "A Perfect Site for a Gentleman's COUNTRY RESIDENCE. The lovely gardens and grounds of the recently demolished mansion at Surrenden-Dering, Pluckley, Kent; about 8½ acres; entrance drive, one good building; main water and electricity; lovely views; additional land and stabling available" (advert in The Times, 2 Jun 1953).



Surrenden in 1826 -- drawn by John Preston Neale, engraved by William Tomblinson

To revert to happier days. The Kent Archaeological Society was brought into existence in 1857, and Larking became the first Honorary Secretary. (Sir Edward Cholmeley Dering became one of the numerous vice-presidents.) Failing health forced Larking to step down in Jul 1861. (He was added to the roster of vice-presidents.) During that time, he had edited the first three volumes of *Archaeologia Cantiana*, and in each of these volumes he found space to print some of the Surrenden documents, from the transcripts which he had on file.

Finally to come to the point. In the second volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana*, Larking published three early thirteenth-century charters (docs 53--5) relating to property in Rochester and Strood acquired by Henric de Cobeham (Larking 1859). When Larking came across these documents, they were at Surrenden Dering. Whether Glover saw them at Cobham Hall is uncertain. One of them would have been significant for him, because it gives the name -- not recorded anywhere else -- of Henric de Cobeham's father;* but there is no mention of it in his notes.

* His name was Serlo de Cobeham. That name does occur in one of the charters copied by Glover (Nichols 1841:320), but it is not said explicitly there that he was Henric's father.

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      Serlo
      |
Henric de Cobeham
  d 1232
      |
Johan  ———  Willelm  ———  Reginald
d 1251      d 1257×60      d 1257
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None of the transactions in question are referred to in the charter of 1208; so presumably these charters are all later than that. Henric died in 1232; so they must be earlier than that. There is nothing which dates them any more closely, as far as I can see.

Whether these charters still exist, I have no idea. I reproduce the printed text here, making a few corrections (silently if they are trivial). For each charter the same is true: if Larking's transcript can be found, the text should be checked against that, to filter out any errors introduced by the printer (or by me); if the original can be found, of course the text should be transcribed afresh. Nevertheless, my versions are probably good enough to be going on with.

((I would not dare to assert that this collection is complete. It is entirely possible that other stray documents exist which I have failed to find. In fact, I already know of one which ought to be added to the list -- a charter of Johan de Godintune for Willelm Potin (National Archives, C 146/5866). The printed catalogue gives this description of it:

C. 5866. Grant by John de Godintune to William Potin of part of his land in the town of Strodes; rent, 5s. 10d. for all service save the king's service, viz. 17½d. for ward; and he grants and confirms to the said William land held of William Burgelai, being partly the site of the grantee's barns, land called 'Suthelde' held of Walkelin de Northslade, and land in Northslade held of Walkelin son of Odo. For these grants and confirmations the said William has paid him 40s. in gersum. Witnesses:-- Henry de Cobham, Roger Wastehole, William son of Roger, John the Englishman (anglico), Robert Durant, John de Belevile, John son of Simon, Hugh son of Geoffrey, Hanfrid the dyer (tinctore), Richard son of Simon, Ralph Burcekin, Simon and Walter But. Seal in wrapping. (A descriptive catalogue of ancient deeds in the Public Record Office, vol 6, p 275)

From the witnesses' names, it is clear that this transaction was reported to the citizens of Rochester, not to the hundred of Shamel.))

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