The Priory of St. Michael on the Steep Holme.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY E. H. BATES HARBIN, M.A.

I.

THE CHARTERS.

UNTIL 1892 the sole authority for the existence of this Priory was a statement in Dugdale's Baronage, published in 1675. In the account of the Berkeley family, Maurice Lord Berkeley, who died in 1326, is said to have "built a Friary in a place called the Holmes (an island in Severne) not far from his manor of Portbury." The authority cited is an Account roll of the Bailiff of Portbury 8 Ed. II; but unfortunately it cannot now be found.

This statement may have been taken from John Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeley family*, who has however an important correction. "This Lord Maurice (1281–1326) new built the friary for the fryers and brethren in the Holmes, an Iland in Seavern, and not far from his manor of Portbury."

There is no reference in any fourteenth century record that I have examined to bear out this statement; and Smyth writes that in 1390 the island formed part of the dower of Elizabeth Lady Berkeley. As will be shown later on, the island was claimed by another family in the days of Lord Maurice; and so he may have been prevented from carrying out his intention of refounding a priory (not friary), which his own muniments of title show was in existence in the reign of Richard I.

It is also possible that the Bailiff's Account roll may have referred to the property in Portbury which the Prior of Bremner or Brommor in Hants held of the gift of Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Albemarle and Devon, *temp.* Hen. III. A cell had been established here with some resident canons, which was popularly known as the Priory.[1]

From 1886 to 1892 the contents of the muniment room at Berkeley Castle were in process of being sorted and arranged by Mr. I. H. Jeayes of the MS. Department in the British Museum, and in the latter year he drew up a *Descriptive Catalogue of the Charters and other Documents.* This was printed, and the late Lord Fitzhardinge has thereby earned the gratitude of all antiquaries in the two counties of Gloucester and Somerset. Mr. Jeayes has very kindly pointed out to me that the catalogue contained five charters which showed that there had been a Priory on the Steep Holme a century and a half before the date given by Dugdale.

These are given below, and to them are added two other references which have turned up in the records of the thirteenth century.

No. I.

Sciant omnes tam presentes quam futuri quod ego Robertus filius Ricardi intuitu Dei et pro salute anime mee et predecessorum meorum Dedi et concessi quantum ad laicam personam pertinet Ecclesiam Sancti Nicholai de Uppilla in puram et perpetuam elemosinam Sancto Michaeli de Stepholm et fratribus ibidem Deo servientibus cum omnibus libertatibus et cum omnibus rebus ad eandem ecclesiam pertinentibus. Et ut hec mea donatio rata subsistat et immutabilis, eam presenti scripto et sigilli mei patrocinio roboravi. Hiis testibus David, decano Bleden (si), Waltero de Kywestoc, Ricardo, capellano de Caerdif, Ricardo clerico de Marisco, Nicholao clerico, Johanne clerico de Estbrenca, Thoma de la Ville, Jordano de Greinton, Hugone Vassal, Ricardo de Lockeston, Ricardo filio Galfridi, Hugone de Uppilla, Radulfo clerico, qui hanc cartam fecit. [no. 50.]

Grant from Robert, son of Richard to the brethren of St. Michael of Stepholm, of the church of St. Nicholas of Uppille (Uphill). *Temp.* Ric. I. Latin. With seal.

1. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXVII, i, 61.

No. II.

Sciant tam presentes quam futuri quod ego Johannes de Ken cartam Roberti filii Ricardi antecessoris mei recepi in hec verba. Sciant omnes tam presentes quam futuri quod ego Robertus filius Ricardi dedi et concessi divine pietatis intuitu et pro salute anime mee, et patris mei et matris mee et antecessorum meorum et successorum meorum Sancte Michaeli de insula que dicitur Stepholm et fratribus ibidem cohabitantibus dimidiam virgatam terre in Uphulla quam Ailricus de Rewa tenuit cum omnibus pertinentiis suis in puram et perpetuam elemosinam, liberam et quietam ab omni servitio seculari, Similiter liberam molituram in molendino de villa prenominata. Similiter in pastura mea in eadem villa quatuor vaccas et viginti oves. Ego si quidem prelibatus Johannes de Ken hanc donationem ratam habens et firmam presenti scripto et sigilli mei apposicione confirmavi. His testibus A. capellano de Broclegha, Gervasio de Locaston, Daniele Capellano de Locaston, A. capellano de Cristgeston, Jordano Capellano, Hugone Vassal, Reginaldo Iberniense, Roberto de Sparkeford, Roberto de Perrers, Thoma de Muncketon, Galfrido Vassal, Ricardo de la Hulla, et multis aliis. [no. 104.]

Confirmation by John de Ken of the grant by Robert son of Richard to the brethren of St. Michael of the island which is called Stepholm of half a virgate of land in Uphulla (Uphill) with certain rights of pasturage and use of mill. *Temp.* John. Latin. With seal.

No. III.

Confirmation by William, son of Robert, son of Martin, of the grant, by Robert, son of Richard, knight, to the Church of St. Michael de Insula " que dicitur " [Stepholm], of a virgate of land in Huppilla [Uphill], which Ailric de Rewa held. Witnesses: Robert de Langatot; Robert de Sancta Cruce; Richard de Bichefauda; Thomas, his brother; Warin de Morcellis; Schep' de Audenoic; William, Clericus de Cuantona; William Bodin. *Temp.* John. Latin. With seal. [no. 110.]

No. IV.

Sciant presentes et futuri quod ego Thomas de Muncketon dedi et concessi et presenti carta mea confirmavi Deo et ecclesie Beati Michaelis in Steepeholm simul cum me ipso in puram et perpetuam elemosinam totam terram meam in Curcheston, scilicet, illam dimidiam virgatam cum omnibus pertinentiis suis quam Ailmarus Bouing aliquando tenuit cum . . . terram pertinente, Habendam et tenendam inperpetuum fratribus ibidem Deo et Beate Marie et Sancto Michaeli servientibus adeo libere et quiete . . . terram melius et liberius et quietius tenui per unam libram cimini annu-

atim reddendam Johanni de Ken vel heredibus suis ad . . . servicio et querela ad eos pertinente. Hanc autem prenominatam terram dedit mihi et heredibus meis Robertus filius Ricardi . . . carta ipsius testatur, Quam ad majorem securitatum predictis fratribus tradidi simul cum confirmatione Willelmi filii Ma . . . confirmatione Johannis de Ken et Agacie uxoris sue filie et heredis predicti Roberti filii Ricardi. Ut autem . . . confirmatio firma sit et stabilis presentis carte mee attestatione et sigilli mei apposicione illam confirmavi. Hiis testibus . . . Sparkeford et Roberto et Helia fratribus suis, Ricardo filio Arturi, Adda Wallense, et Johanne filio suo, Galfrido serviente, . . . sacerdote de Lokeston, Hunfrido de Bagwerke, Hugone de Auxe, et Ada filio suo, Henrico de Belgeton et multis suis. [no. 217.]

Grant from Thomas de Muncketon to the Church of St. Michael in Stupeholm and the brethren then serving God, of himself and his land in Curcheston [Christon], the gift of Robert son of Richard which was confirmed to him by John de Ken and Agacia his wife daughter and heir of the said Robert. Early Hen. III. Latin Mutilated.

No. V.

Universis Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum pervenerit, Willelmus miseracione divina Bathoniensis et Wellensis episcopus salutem in Domino sempiternam. Cum vir nobilis dominus R. de Tregoz patronus loci religiosi qui dicitur Stepholm ipsum locum cum tota insula et omnibus aliis pertinenciis viris religiosis canonicis ordinis Sancti Augustini de Stodlegh Wygorn. dioc. in puram et perpetuam elemosinam tanquam loci patronus contulerit intuitu caritatis valens et appetens ob divini cultus augmentum quod apud prefatum locum divina frequencius solito celebrentur. Nos predicti nobilis laudabile propositum in Domino commendantes et super hiis favorem sibi obtentu religionis ampliande benivolum impendentes donaciones et concessiones ipsius nobilis necnon et quorum libet aliorum religiosis in dicta insula degentibus pie factas, quantum in nobis est pro nobis et successoribus nobis capitulorum nostrorum Bathoniensis et Wellensis consensu unanimi et assensu intervenientibus acceptantes et ratas habentes statuimus et ordinamus quod duo ad minus canonici de prioratu predicto apud prefatam insulam moram faciant continuam. Et quod canonicus qui ibidem preesse debeat nobis et succesoribus nostris loci diocesanis per priorem de Stodlegh qui pro tempore fuerit presentetur et Prior de Stepholm nominetur sine nostro vel successorum nostrorum consensu sue perpetuo per dictum priorem nullatenus amovendus. Quod si per nos vel successores nostros in visitacione nostra et sua demerita ipsum contigerit amoveri, volumus et concidimus quod idem Prior de Stodlegh alium de suis canonicis ad dictum locum et ipsius regimen nobis et sucessoribus

nostris libere valeat presentare. Et quod tempore vacacionis omnium bonorum ad dictum locum spectancium necnon et ipsius loci custodiam prior obtineat supradictus usque ad tempus a jure statutum, quo deterso si prior negligens fuerit presentando nos et successores nostri diocesanis fungentes jure, priorem preficiemus loco predicto juxta formam pretactam. Hec autem ordinanda et statuenda duximus jure diocesano et dignitate episcopali nobis successoribus nostris et ecclesiis nostris Bathoniensi et Wellensi semper salvis Relinquentes potestatem Priori de Stodlegh et suis successoribus faciendi correctiones secundum regulam in loco predicto cum fratres deliquerint, ac eos prout res postulaverit revocandi, necnon et ipsum qui ipsi loco preerit libere presentandi prout superius est expressum. Ad quorum omnium predictorum testimonium et roboris firmamentum nostrum sigillum, et predictorum nostrorum capitulorum sigilla ad confirmacionis titulum et munimen presentibus sunt appensa. Datum apud Cherlecumbe juxta Bathoniam, V Id. Aprilis Anno domini Millesimo ducentesimo sexagesimo. [no. 430.]

Deed of William (Bitton I) Bishop of Bath and Wells ordaining that, for the more frequent celebration of divine service at the religious place called Stepholm, with the island which R. de Tregoz has conferred on the Austin canons of Stodleigh (co. Warwick), the Prior shall cause two canons at the least to reside there, the senior canon to be called the Prior of Stepholme. Latin. With seals (1) of the Bishop in brown wax, and on reverse, St. Andrew on cross, etc. ; (2) fragment of seal of the Chapter of Bath, in green wax, displaying two towers of the Abbey. The third seal of the Chapter of Wells is missing.

Pedes Finium, 20 Hen. III, 218 (1236).

Henry, son of Richard, after assize of mort dancester had been summoned, quitclaimed to William Prior of Stepholme half a virgate of land in Kercheston (Christon). *Som. Rec. Soc.*, VI, 95.

Assize Rolls, Somerset, 27 Hen. III (1243).

No. 780. Hundred of Winterstoke. The jury present Brother Gregory of La Houme and Robert his brother, lay brothers, are suspected of larceny : to judgement on the Prior. *Som. Rec. Soc.*, XI, 780.

Notes on the Donors named in the Charters.

Owing to their early date the donors are nearly all unknown. In Domesday Uphill is held by Serlo de Burci with four knights as his under-tenants. With Uphill went Christon which is

not separately mentioned. As late as 1326 these two villes were still held in quarters by different persons.

At a very early date Serlo's great possessions had passed into the hands of the family of Fitzmartin, whose holding was known as the Barony of Martin or of Blagdon, their principal residence. The confirmer of charter no. III, William son of Robert Fitzmartin, died about 1209 when his son, also William, gave three hundred marks for livery of his lands.

Robert, son of Richard (no. I), as donor of the church of St. Nicholas at Uphill would appear to have been the senior representative of the four knights of Domesday.

He left an only daughter and heiress, Agacia, the wife of John de Ken (no. IV). He may have been the grandson of John de Ken who in 1166 held two knights' fees of the Bishop of the Diocese ; and son of Richard de Ken, who had a controversy with Matthew de Clevedon concerning one knight's fee in Kenn, Huish and Penne. In 1199 Matthew paid 100 shillings for a judgement. However, the matter dragged on to 1223 when Richard had given place to John, and the claim was altered to two knights' fees in Ken and Hiwis. The trial was held at Westminster in the octave of St. Yllar, but instead of providing counsel or even champions, the two disputants waged a duel in arms in open court, and at the conclusion Matthew de Clevedon acknowledged the two fees to be the right of John de Ken.[1]

Considering this exhibition of prowess, John would have had no difficulty in winning the hand of the heiress Agacia against all rivals.

In 1219 after an assize of mortdancester had been summoned John granted a hide of land in Clevedon to John de Chricheston for life.[2] On the demise of the tenant for life a few years later, his brother Herbert de Ken claimed the hide as his free tenement. John de Ken had to defend his rights, this time however by a bayliff, who acted as his counsel at the Ilchester assizes in 1225.[3]

1. *Ped. Fin.*, 7 Hen. III, 59 ; *Som. Record Soc* , VI, 45.
2. *Ped. Fin.*, 3 Hen. III, 24 ; *S.R.S.*, VI, 35.
3. *S.R.S.*, XI, 312.

Nothing more appears about John and Agacia de Kenne. No doubt they were one of the generations of this family omitted by Collinson (III, 592), who hops from Richard *temp.* Richard I to "a son of his own name who was with Edward I in the Scottish wars in 1304."

These charters enumerate: The church of St. Nicholas, Uphill (which included the tithes), half a virgate in the same place with free multure and pasturage for four cows and twenty sheep; another virgate in the same; half a virgate in Christon, as well as all the land there which belonged to Thomas Munckton. All this with the island itself containing sixty acres (modern measurement) forms a very slender endowment.

II.

HISTORY OF THE PRIORY.

Of this one is inclined to say that its days were few and full of evil; and this latter qualification might apply to the island itself. It was the refuge of Gildas who is said to have written his best known work *Querulus de excidio Britanniæ* in this refuge. Somebody has remarked that to be reduced to such a habitation would make anyone querulous. It was frequently utilized as their headquarters by the sea pirates who ravaged both shores of the Severn sea. After the overthrow of Hastings Githa the queen-mother and other English refugees abode on the island until they could retreat to the Continent.

Leaving aside for the present the problem of the founder it appears that at the close of the twelfth century the Priory was in existence and adding to the original endowments. Whatever may have been the intention in planting a community of Austin canons[1] on the Steep Holme, they could certainly render as valuable service to mariners as if they had been planted on the top of an Alpine pass to assist travellers in distress.

1. I infer that the "brethren" were Austin canons from the fact that they were transferred to a community of that order.

The endowments were being added to at a later period than the charters. The final concord of 1236 recording a gift also supplies the name, William, of the only Prior known to us. The property at Uphill gave the canons a welcome footing on the mainland, of which they seemed to have availed themselves not always wisely. In 1243 two lay brothers were presented by the jury of Winterstoke Hundred as guilty of larceny ; for which the Prior was to be held responsible.

Within a few years the history of the Priory as a separate community came to an end. In 1260 Robert de Tregoz, patron, by charter no. V, with the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese, transferred the Priory and all its belongings to Studleigh Priory in Warwickshire and the diocese of Worcester.

This priory had been transferred and refounded by his father-in-law William de Cantelupe, who on his death in 1239 was there buried. Studley obtained other lands in Somersetshire from this family ; one third of Trent was the gift of William de Cantelupe and his wife Eva de Braose ; and other lands in Worle, Locking, Norton, and Kewstoke.[1] Studley Priory must be distinguished from Studley Nunnery in Oxfordshire, which owned Crowcombe on the Quantocks.

By the terms of the gift it is evident that Robert de Tregoz intended to retain a community on the island ; but circumstances were eventually too strong for him. By the end of the thirteenth century not only had the community deserted the island, but that had passed into lay hands.

Collinson (I, 179) states that about 1292 John de Bec, lord of Eresby, granted the advowson of Breane with the island of Steepholme to Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. Why these two Lincolnshire magnates should have any dealings in Somersetshire lands is not very clear ; but on referring to Collinson's authority, Dugdale's Baronage, the additional information appears that Bec had inherited the advowson and island from his brother Thomas de Bec, Bishop of St. David's, who died in 1293. Dugdale's authority is the Cowcher Book (or Register) of the Duchy of Lancaster, a magnificent cartulary in two volumes with illuminated initials and shields of arms.

1. *Proceedings*, XX, ii, 118.

On the dorse of fol. 43 in vol. II the grant will be found with the further information that it included "all the land which Robert de Berkeley holds for his life in the villes of Uppehull and Crucheston (Uphill and Christon) *de hereditate mea*, which came to me after the death of the said Robert." The importance of these successive addenda will appear afterwards.

The grant of Robert Tregoz refers to a minimum of two canons to be resident, and this arrangement seems to crop up in a begging letter of a Bishop of Worcester, whose name does not actually occur in the document, but can be identified by the date as Godfrey Giffard, who filled the see from 1268 to 1302. The letter is preserved in the MSS. of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, no. 154, p. 393, and by the kindness of the librarian I am able to print a copy.

Salutem graciam et benedictionem. Preclara pietatis indicia quibus vestra religio insignitur ad excitandum vicera vestra erga vestri ordinis professores nos magos efficiunt studiosos. Cum igitur dilecti in christo filij Prior et Conuentus de Stodleg' ordinis sancti Augustini nostre diocesis precibus amicorum in sue mentis proposito carnis termino preuentorum. Sub fragili fiducia caucionum et alias tam per simplicitatem ipsorum quam nouissime turbationis procellam ultra duplum annui veri valoris tocius substancie eorundem ere alieno cum inportabili pondere vsurarum jugiter excrescencium honerati absque diminutione sumptuum solitorum. Ac fratrum dispersione tolleranda ad tempus nequeant hijs temporibus releuerari. non solis litterarum figuris set ex intimo cordis nostri rogamus vestram plenitudinem caritatis. quatimus optentu vestre religionis quam dicti fratres feliciter profitentur. Ac intuitu pietatis ingentis in vobis ad necessarium nostri instantiam duobus fratribus dicti loci viris vtique prouidis et discretis ac conversationis honeste vobiscum si placet per vnius anni et dimidij spacium in nostri creatoris obsequio moraturis velitis tanquam vestras necessaria ministrare. vt pro hijs que deo grata existunt et proximis sunt humana. vobis et vestris specialius teneamur ad ea. que vestre utilitati cedere poterunt et honori. Valete. Datum apud Bredon. Kalendas Aprilis. anno domini. M°. CC°. lx°. Nono. MS. C.C.C. Oxon, 154, p. 393.

The letter appears to be addressed to another community of Austin canons in the diocese. Whether the "procella turbationis" was an actual storm or a lawsuit is not clear; but Studley was in debt at least two years' income, and over-

whelmed by an insupportable rate of interest for loans, while the expenses did not diminish. The other community is therefore asked to take care of two brethren for a year and a half; and one is tempted to surmise that they may be the couple who ought to have been sojourning on the Steepholme.

I cannot find any further reference in records to a religious community on the island.

Miss R. M. Clay in her book on *Hermits and Anchorites*, 1913, states that the Steep Holme was often inhabited by a solitary, but not necessarily as a permanent abode. Her authority is: *Vitæ*, edit. by J. A. Giles for the Caxton Society in 1854. But it seems to refer to Gildas only, and not to any hermitage in medieval times.

Mr. F. A. Knight in *The Sea-Board of Mendip*, p. 320, gives an account of the remains of the Priory still existing or lately destroyed.

The old church at Uphill is early Norman, and is therefore contemporary with the earliest canons who were connected with the Priory.

III.

FOUNDATION OF THE PRIORY.

The date of the foundation and the name of the founder are alike unknown. It is plain that Steepholme in the medieval period was somehow or other closely connected with Breane.[1] As Robert de Tregoz, who is described as "patron" in 1260, was also the owner of Breane, it is natural to examine his pedigree and the title to his Somersetshire estates to see if a probable founder can be discerned in his family tree.

In Domesday Breane and Burnham were held by Walter de Dowai in his own hand. Early in the twelfth century his great possessions were divided between the Honour of Castle Cary held by the Lovel family and apparently not descended from Walter, and the Honour of Bampton, which Devonshire

1. After a lengthy period, during which it was annexed to Uphill or Weston-super-Mare, it has now reverted to the original arrangement.

manor was the head of this portion. It descended from Walter to the family of Paganel or Paynel, and thence by marriage to Sir Milo Cogan. Collinson (II, 390) gives a long account of this family, on which Eyton remarks (*Somerset Domesday*, I, 61) that "his account of the succession of the house of Paganel is altogether inadequate and largely erroneous." But as Robert de Tregoz did not claim descent from either Paynel or Cogan, and indeed had no need to, it will be sufficient to remark that the Cogan family were undoubtedly overlords of much of the marsh territory which had been granted to Dowai.

Tregoz indeed was the representative of the great family which took their name from Ewyas in the land of Hereford in Wales, as it was so long designated. *Temp.* William I, Alured de Merleberge was lord of the castled mount at Ewias on the Welsh border. He was already established in England under Edward the Confessor, as was his uncle Osbern, probably Osbern Pentecost. In Somersetshire Alured held in chief Chelwood (a part); the rest he held as tenant of Count Eustace of Boulogne, of whom he also held Newton in North Petherton, Combwich, and Belgeton (Belluton in Stanton Drew). Alured's successor was that Harold from whom Ewias takes its name, Harold the son of Earl Ralf, and the grandson of Goda, Countess of Boulogne. And this is why Harold of Ewias is found among the knights of Count Eustace under Henry I, and why his heir Robert de Tregoz was a tenant of the Honour of Boulogne.[1]

At a very early date Harold of Ewias had acquired his lands on the coast line of Somersetshire. The records of Gloucester Abbey state that in 1100 Harold lord of Ewyas gave the church of Burneham to Ewyas Priory, which he had just founded; and that this gift was confirmed by his son Robert.[2]

There is every reason to suppose that Breane went with Burnham. These two manors continued to be held of the successors of Walter de Dowai, which was not the case with the Castle Cary portion, so we may suppose that Walter de

1. J. H. Round's *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (1901), p. 156.
2. Dugdale's *Monasticon*, I, 546.

Dowai had voluntarily accepted Harold as his tenant, though for what consideration does not appear.

The Priory of Ewyas Harold was an off-shoot of the Abbey of Gloucester, and existed from 1100 to 1358 "when the revenues being insufficient for their support they were again united with the Abbey."[1]

The mother house certainly took a part in diminishing the revenues, for Robert de Ewyas, grandson of Harold made over the advowson of Burnham to the Abbot of Gloucester, as will appear further on.

It is hardly likely that Harold of Ewyas would found two priories ; or if he was so liberal, that he would have given the church of Burnham to the house in Hereford rather than to the community on the Steepholme. The position of founder therefore appears to rest between Robert de Ewyas and his son also Robert ; or even perhaps to the representative of an earlier generation whose name has not survived. For it is a long period between Harold living in 1100 and Robert senior of full age in 1166.

The members of the family would often have sailed down the Wye and across the Severn sea, passing the island on their voyage to Burnham ; and the selection of St. Michael for the patron saint would commend itself to those who would know St. Michael's Mount off the Normandy coast, as well as its rival in Cornwall.

The real difficulty is to account for the absence of reference to any other endowments besides those mentioned in the charters. For it is difficult to believe that Robert de Ewyas (father or son) gave nothing beyond the island itself.

This is all the evidence that can at present be brought forward on the question of the founder of the Priory ; and by rights the paper should stop here. But so much material for local history was examined in the course of preparation, that I venture to carry on the history of Breane and Steepholme Island to a later period.

Unfortunately the "carta" of the Honour of Bampton is not to be found among those taken in 1166 and preserved in

1. Lewis's *Topographical Dict.*, 1840.

the *Red Book of the Exchequer*. Robert de Ewyas held one fee in Devon of Warine de Aula; and his own "carta" in Hereford enumerates nineteen fees of the old feoffment, and three of the new.

An inquisition taken 12 John (1210–11) of the fees held of the Honour of Boulogne records that Robert de Ewias held four knights' fees in Bren, and Cunnich, and Lekesworthe, and one in Lokestone which Gervase de Sperkeford holds (*Liber Ruber*, 577).

About this date Robert de Ewias died, leaving a daughter and heiress Sybil, then wife of Robert de Tregoz. In the lists of scutages levied in the reign of John (1201–1212), under Hereford in Wales appears the entry: Robert Tregoz holds the fees of xix knights with the daughter of Robert de Ewyas. He also held land in Norfolk (1190), Northants (1200), and Wilts (1200). But his name does not appear under Somersetshire (*Liber Ruber*, 159).

The surname of Tregoz occurs very early in English history. In the second charter of King Stephen to Geoffrey de Mandeville Earl of Essex, 1141, William de Tresgoz appears among the knights owing service. He was a landowner in Essex, where the name is commemorated in Tolleshunt Tregoz, in 1130, and elsewhere.[1] Among the deeds of the Dean and Chapter of Wells (MSS. I, 51) is a charter recording the gift by Alexander de Rodolio and William Desafuble to Bishop Reginald of the church of Eston (Easton-in-Gordano) to form a prebend. The date of the charter is between 1189 and 1191, and among the witnesses is Robert de Tresgoz. It is a curious coincidence that as in the case of the Sanzaver family (*Proc.*, LXI, 111) their first appearance in the county is in connection with ecclesiastical transactions.

An article in the *D.N.B.* (XI, 72) states that after the demise of Robert Tregoz, Sybil married as her second husband William de Newmarch. The owner of North Cadbury at this period was William de Newmarch, but in 1205 he was found to be a leper, and his property was handed over to his brother James de Newmarch. There may have been another family of this

1. J. H. Round's *Geoffrey de Mandeville*, p. 142.

name ; but I can find no other reference to the marriage, and before 1222 Sybil was remarried to Roger de Clifford, nephew of " Fair Rosamund."

In that year Roger brought an assize of darrein presentment against the Abbot of Gloucester to establish his right to the patronage of Burnham. The Abbot produced " a charter of gift from the son of Robert de Ewyas, father of plaintiff's wife," and won his case.[1]

In 1225 Roger de Clifford owned Hawood in the Hundred of Keynsham, probably a part of Chelwood.[2] He died about 1231, leaving a son Roger, whose son, also Roger, made a good match by marrying Isabella de Vipont, the heiress of Appleby, and became the ancestor of the great Clifford family of the North of England.

Sybil's own property descended to her son by her first marriage, Geoffrey de Tregoz. His son, called Robert after his grandfather, married Juliana de Cantelupe, daughter of William de Cantelupe and great niece of Walter de Cantelupe Bishop of Worcester. She was sister to Thomas de Cantelupe, Bishop of Hereford and Saint. His biographer in the *D.N.B.* (VIII, 450) records that " he rigorously excluded all women, however old and ugly, from his household, and mortally offended his sister, Lady Tregoz, by the severity which rejected even her affection."

We have already seen that Robert de Tregoz as patron of Steepholme Priory transferred it to his father-in-law's foundation at Studley. Unfortunately the records of this house are very scanty, and contain no reference to the gift, nor what they did with it.

A reference in Dugdale to the Harleian MS. 2044, as containing transcripts of deeds relating to Studley, on examination turned out to be a miscellaneous collection made by Randal Holme of Chester, containing on fol. 105 a single charter of William de Cantelupe in favour of his Priory.

Robert de Tregoz fell at the battle of Evesham in 1265. In such a troubled period of politics it is quite likely that he

1. *Wells MSS.*, I, 234.
2. *S.R.S.*, XI, 209.

may have been unable to carry through his proposed arrangement, or he may have suffered some temporary forfeiture of his lands, or perhaps have been obliged to make friends at court by judicious presents. Otherwise the transfer of the endowments to Thomas de Bec, Bishop of St. David's, is quite inexplicable.

Robert de Tregoz was succeeded by his son John, who became the first (and last) Baron Tregoz. In Kirkby's *Quest*, 1284, he appears as John Tregoz "dives" holding East and West Burnham of John de Cogan. He is also the mesne tenant in Breane between Cogan and John Tregoz "pauper." The distinction between an elder and a younger brother (or query cousin) is not often put so bluntly. He appears as tenant or mesne tenant in a number of other manors in the Bridgwater district. Lexworthy was held of John Tregoz of the Honour of Burnham. He was also mesne tenant of Poyntington.

The numerous deeds relating to this manor in the *Cartæ Antiquæ* of Lord Willoughby de Broke[1] throw no light on this connection. No. 27 in the collection is a quit-claim by Amflysia de Ewyes, formerly wife of Peter de la Forde, of her right to certain lands in Poyntington ; the date is about 1280. This seems to point to some emigration from the battlefields of the Welsh border to peaceful Somerset.

The distinction between the two persons named John de Tregoz does not appear in Kirkby's *Quest* as printed in the third volume of the Somerset Record Society's issues. The editor, Mr. Dickinson, worked from the manuscript compiled in the sixteenth century from the original returns by a clerk who could not read old writing easily. The text in the fourth volume of *Feudal Aids* is taken from these original returns, which have recently been unearthed. They contain the names of the jurors, and are so much fuller and more accurate that the *Feudal Aids* should always be used.

By a final concord in 1280[2] John de Tregoz quit-claimed the advowson of Burnham to the Abbot of Gloucester, who

1. *Cartæ Antiquæ ;* edit. Rev. D. Harvey Bloom, 1901.
2. *Ped. Fin.*, 8 Ed. I, divers cos., 93 ; *S.R.S.*, VI, 384.

in return released his claim to the advowson of Lydeard Tregooze in Wilts. It is also recorded in the *Wells MSS.* (I, 234) as the result of a suit decided at Somerton, iv Kal., July 1280, during the "eyre" of Solomon of Rochester and others; with the variation that the consideration was a grant by the Abbot of the church of Foye (co. Hereford) to the priory of Ewyas. As Harold of Ewyas had intended Burnham for the Priory, this seems a somewhat belated recompense.

In 1286 Bishop Robert Burnell obtained a licence in mortmain for the Abbot of Gloucester to alienate the advowson of Burnham to him and his successors in the bishopric (*Wells MSS.*, I, 404). On the same page is entered an "Inspeximus" by Edward I, dated at Berwick 2nd August, 1291, giving the name of the witnesses, which include Thomas (Bek) Bishop of St. David's, Sir John Tregoz, Sir William de Grandison, knights. Burnell's successor, Walter de Hasleshaw, alienated the advowson to the Dean and Chapter of Wells in 1306, in whose gift it still remains (*Wells MSS.*, I, 405).

John Baron Tregoz died in 1300 leaving two daughters coheiresses. The eldest was Claricia the wife of Roger la Warre who died in 1321; the younger, Sybil, married William de Grandison, and was the mother of Sir Peter de Grandison, and of John, born 1292, who became Bishop of Exeter and died in 1369. Leaving aside the division of the rest of the Tregoz inheritance, Breane certainly was divided between the sisters, though as often as not it is referred to as a whole and not as a moiety.

Roger la Warre and his wife, who settled at Ewyas Harold,[1] soon parted with their (Somerset) share to the family of Le Botiller, who as Earl, Marquis and Duke of Ormond have held such a high position in the Sister Isle. The date of the sale is not recorded in any Final Concord; but in 1310 Edmund le Botiller granted to John Pypard for life the manor of Belweton (Belluton), and seven pounds of rent in Breen juxta Bledon, besides lands in Oxford, Gloucester and Bucks. The

1. *Genealogist*, n.s., XXXIII, p. 56; Marriage settlement of Sir John la Warre.

Final Concord is endorsed : William de Grandisson and Sybil his wife put in their claims.[1]

Edmund was the second son of Theobald le Botiller, and by the death of his elder brother Theobald, a bachelor, in 1299, became his father's heir. He married Jane Fitzgerald, and was father of James, who married Eleanor Bohun, granddaughter of Edward I, and was therefore created Earl of Ormond.

Pypard was no doubt a trustee for Edmund ; but almost immediately afterwards the Somersetshire estates, which had been purchased from le Warre, are found in the possession of Walter de la Hay and Cecily his wife.

In 1311 Walter de la Haye recovered lands in La Cloud and Camelye from Richard and Alice Wogan. The terms of the Concord suggest that Cecilia was the daughter and heiress of Richard and Alice.[2] Walter appears as the owner of these lands in the Nomina Villarum of 1316.

Walter's position in the State was much higher than this settlement would imply, as he was the Royal Escheator in Ireland. In this position he would be brought much in contact with Le Botiller ; and in some way, not even to be guessed at, became the richer by it.

By an inquisition[3] taken in 1324, it was found not to the King's damage for Cecilia de la Haye of Hertesleigh to acquire for her life from Edmund le Botiller two messuages and two carucates of land in Brene and Belluton.[4] But her actual interest in the Le Botiller property was much larger. In 1332 James, now Earl of Ormond, settled the manors of Belweton and Breane subject to the life interest of Cecilia de la Haye on himself and his wife Eleanor.[5]

Cecilia died in 1340 ; and on the Close Roll of the 18th May in that year is an order to the Escheator to restore to Eleanor

1. *Ped. Fin.*, 3 Ed. II, 32 ; *S.R.S.*, XII, 112.

2. *Ped. Fin.*, 5 Ed. II, 4 ; *S.R.S.*, XII, 26.

3. The actual record is faded beyond legibility, but the accompanying writ is in fair preservation.

4. Inq. a. q. damn., 17 Ed. II, 237. Modern reference, File 170, 13.

5. *Ped. Fin.*, 6 Ed. III, 124, divers cos. ; *S.R.S.*, XII, 241.

late the wife of James Earl of Ormond the moiety of the manor of Breane, which had belonged to Cecilia de la Haye for her life, and is held of Peter de Grandisson by the annual rent of one halfpenny at Michaelmas.

Countess Eleanor was still living in 1361 when she recovered the manors of Breen and Belweton (besides lands in Bucks and Oxford) from Robert and Joan Manfeld.[1] This was some formal transfer under settlement.

The inquisition taken after the death of James, fourth Earl of Ormond, in 1453 enumerates among his possessions the manor and advowson of Breane and the Steepholme Island (Collinson, II, 392), but the Bishop's register contains no record of a presentation made by this family.

To return to the younger daughter, Sybil de Grandison, who died in 1334. Her descendant Sir Thomas de Grandisson, chevalier, conveyed the manor of Burnham and Brene in 1366 to William de Montacute, Earl of Salisbury;[2] in trust, as appears by another fine levied 3rd February, 1384, when the manors were reconveyed to Margaret de Graundson.[3]

By another fine levied in the octave of Trinity, 1384, Margaret really got rid of the manors of Burnham and Breene, saving her life interest, to certain persons in trust for William de Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, and others.[4]

It is a little curious how many celebrated Bishops have appeared in these notes. In 1397 the Bishop of Winchester settled the manors on himself for life, with remainder to his cousin William and Alice his wife, with remainder over to a very numerous body of Founder's kin of Winchester College.[5] To conclude this branch of the enquiry; in 1428 William Wykeham held one knight's fee in Burnham and Breane, which Peter de Grandison formerly held.[6]

We will now return to Robert de Berkeley, who in 1293 was

1. *Ped. Fin.*, 35 Ed. III, 599, divers cos.; *S.R.S.*, XVII, 186.
2. *Ped. Fin.*, 40 Ed. III, 12; *S.R.S.*, XVII, 62.
3. *Ped. Fin.*, 7 Ric. II, 55; *S.R.S.*, XVII, 121.
4. *Ped. Fin.*, 7 Ric. II, 58; *S.R.S.*, XVII, 124.
5. *Ped. Fin.*, 20 Ric. II, 32; *S.R.S.*, XVIII, 168.
6. *Feudal Aids*, IV, 369.

holding lands in Uphill and Christon for his life of Thomas de Bec, late Bishop of St. David's. There is nothing here said about the patronage of Breane. But in 1322 on the presentation of John Garbe, the episcopal register records that the patron was John Burcy "ex acquisitione patronatus facta de Roberto de Berkele, ut dicit inquisitio:" (*S.R.S.*, I, 211). Ten years later on Walter de Bursey quit-claimed to Sir Thomas Lord de Berkeley all his right in the isle of Stepelholme and all lands which the said Walter holds in Upphall and Churcheston, as well as the church of Broen. The deed is dated at Portbury 8th March, 6 Edw. III; and has been copied into the Bishop's register (*S.R.S.*, IX, 90). Its appearance in the register may be due to the subject matter having been church property. It was a fortunate scruple as there is no Final Concord recording the transaction.

Walter de Burcy was the representative of the junior line of a family which could rightly claim to have come in with the Conqueror. But apparently all that Serlo de Burci was able to leave them was the manor of Low Ham or Ham Burci, a part of the great Glastonbury manor of High Ham near Langport. Several references to them will be found in Prebendary Ross's article on Sir Ralph de Midelney in our *Proceedings*, LXI, 145; to which may be added an entry from the Close Rolls for 1226:

Custody of the lands and heir of Robert de Burcy committed to Martin son of William as that which he had of the gift of Engharred wife of William Fitzmartin by reason of her dower, which after her death came to the King; Robert de Burcy having held of Martin son of William.

Whatever the connection may have been between Berkeley and Burcy, it was not eventually to the advantage of the latter; for by a Final Concord of 1377 John Burcy and Agnes his wife sold the ancestral manor of Ham Burcy to Katherine, late the wife of Thomas de Berkele of Berkele.[1]

Although the Ormond family claimed the advowson of Breane and the island of Steep Holme as late as 1453, it is now quite evident that Robert de Berkeley was the person

1. *Ped. Fin.*, 1 Ric. II, 1; *S.R.S.*, XVII, 94.

who really benefitted by the abandonment of the Priory. De Burcy was most probably only an agent or trustee ; but the appearance of a member of this family is a reminder that their great ancestor Serlo de Burci was lord of Uphill and Christon, and much else in that part of Somersetshire. Also that Serlo's successor to most of his property was the family of Fitzmartin of Blagdon, who also owned property in Kemeysland in Pembrokeshire and in the diocese of St. David's, where they founded the Abbey of St. Dogmael.

In the absence of any positive information, it can only be a surmise that the Bishop on the ecclesiastical side, and the squire on the secular side, had tried to assert a claim to the Priory endowments as having reverted to the representatives of the original donors or their over-lord on the failure of the object endowed ; but that they had found it advisable to make over their claims to an individual whose position and wealth would enable him to make good.