

## Three Lords of Aller

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BY THE REV. PREBENDARY D. M. ROSS, M.A.

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THE three Lords of Aller whom we describe cover the period of post-Saxon church building<sup>1</sup> in Aller, and were probably the chief agents in it. Their history was unknown by Gerard and Collinson.

### I.

Sir John de Aller is also named de Aure—the Latin form was both *Aura* and *Ara*, and the English also *Alre* and *Auler*, which is the modern pronunciation. We hold, in spite of Gerard,<sup>2</sup> that *Auler* represents *Alder*, for there has been a gradual destruction of those trees on the moors for many generations. De Clyvedon had pastures and alder beds in Stathemoor, and allowed the Dean and Chapter to sell and carry away at will the alder wood (1310).<sup>3</sup> Alderney is spelt *Alreneye* in the Patent Rolls, 1230, and “Allern” meant made from alder. There is an Aller-moor in Glastonbury and Allerton in Selworthy, Allerton, etc. They retained the memory of King Alfred at Aller in the name, which is constantly styled Kingsalre or Kynggesalre in the old documents. It is interesting to notice that there were Danes at Aller and the wife of Sir John employs a Gilbert le Daneys (Dacus, Denneys, Denis).

The first-known member of Sir John's family at Aller is Raer de Aller (or Raer de Aure), who was the parson in 1166,

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and wealthy enough to grant an Aller messuage to Athelney Abbey; and he witnesses charters of Bishops Robert and Savaric.<sup>1</sup> His son Raher also became parson of Aller.<sup>2</sup> His elder son Ralph de Aller was of some importance in the early thirteenth century. The father may have been responsible for the rebuilding of the Saxon Church of Aller in the Norman style, the south doorway of which survives to this day,<sup>3</sup> and the Norman font. The latter was found by Prebendary Nicholson in the rectory orchard and restored (1862) to the church, being fitted upon a shaft found there, upon a new plinth, and the seventeenth-century font taken away. Pridham dates it too late for Guthrum's baptism, 1066-1100; and High Ham font, 1100-1135.

John de Aller was the son of Ralph. He married Agnes the widow of Oliver Avenel, and daughter and heiress of Odo de Wanstrowe, and by right of his wife he claimed gallows and assize of bread at Wanstrow, held land near Sturminster, and Paradys in Glastonbury under the Abbot. He was also Chief Lord of Marston, and held land in Blackford, South Stoke, Midford, Yeovilton, Cheldrington (Wilts), North Curry, Southmoor and Stathemoor, besides Aller. We are also told that the ancestors of John de Aure had land in the boundaries of Witham House, and that they received competent exchange for them. Here we touch upon the noble friary of St. Hugh. Sir John had a house with its appurtenances in Glastonbury, and was one to defend the island of Glaston in war time, and did suit of Court to the Abbot and was worth yearly 12*d.*<sup>4</sup>

Sir John de Aure was Justice of Assize in 1225 and in 1242, and was appointed to keep the King's Escheats for the county of Somerset in 1246, an important office which brought wealth and responsibility to Sir John (*Pat. Rolls*). He is mentioned again as Escheator in 1251 (*Cal. Inquis.*). He was made Sheriff in 1254 of Somerset and Dorset, and Constable of the Castle of Shirborne. Later in October, 1255, he received a

1. *S.R.S.*, XIV, *Wells Hist. MSS.*

2. *S.R.S.*, XXV and XI. Also *Close Rolls*, 1234 (Philip de Aure).

3. Collinson and the *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, XXIX, call it Saxon.

4. *S.R.S.*, V, VI, VII, VIII, XI, XIV, XXVI; *Charter Rolls*, 1291; *Wells Hist. MSS.*

royal mandate to deliver that Castle to Stephen de Ashton.<sup>1</sup> In 1258 he was ordered to enquire concerning trespasses, excesses, and injuries committed in Somerset, and to bring the results of the inquisition personally to Westminster by Michaelmas.<sup>1</sup> In 1262 he received another important office, being made Justice in eyre with three others for common pleas in Devon and Cornwall.<sup>1</sup> He was further commissioned in 1265 to enquire by oath of the men of Dorset and Devon concerning a fight at sea between men of Lyme and Dertemne, in which beatings, woundings, and homicides occurred, and the Sheriffs were to attach the offenders and have them before the King.<sup>1</sup>

These instances are sufficient to show the importance of the Lord of Aller in public life for over twenty years; and if the Church of Aller owed much to his father or grandfather, we see the same spirit in himself. For in 1263<sup>2</sup> he was granted permission by Bishop Button to found a Chantry of B.V.M. at Aller for his own soul, his late wife Agnes, his father and mother and forbears and successors, with the right of presentation of a chaplain. The Bishop should present if he failed. This chantry would have been Early English in style. Gerard describes the manor-house as a castle-like house highly seated, on a high round mount, being no larger than to receive that house, the church, and parsonage house. The parish lies scattered off (he says) on the sides of the neighbouring hills, whence in winter they are forced to come to the church in boats and in them also to carry their dead corpses to burial.<sup>3</sup> The chapel was built in the base court of the manor-house, "covered with stone and worth to be sold 26s. 8d." so said the Chantry Commissioners,<sup>4</sup> who put the income at £6 2s. 0d. from land let to Thos. Clerke for life, *viz.* 42 acres of pasture and 18 acres of arable. The chaplain had a dwelling-house

1. *Patent Rolls.*

2. *S.R.S.*, IX, X.

3. *S.R.S.*, XV. Possibly for this reason, as he could not get daily to the church, the Aller rector had an oratory built of stone with turret stairs, still existing, with Gothic window, and remains of ancient glass and a fine cross surmounting the gable, within Aller rectory.

4. *S.R.S.*, IV.



worth £6, having a parlour or meeting-room in the dwelling-house, and a third part of the fruit of the orchard. They valued the silver vessel as weighing 19oz., the ornaments at 14*l.* and the bell metal 14*s.* 6*d.* In the present stable west of the church tower are remains of Gothic building either of the house or chantry. We take the effigy in the Aller churchyard to be that of Sir John de Aller,<sup>1</sup> which may have been ejected from the chantry when the Commissioners destroyed it. Collinson more than a century ago found it in the churchyard. He attributes it wrongly to the Botreaux family, and thought the chantry was in the church. The arms on the shield are unknown.<sup>2</sup> They are not Acton arms. The figure is of Sir John's age, clothed in chain armour and surcoat. The shield with the bearer's arms is suspended on his left shoulder, and the sword attached to a broad hip-belt in front of the body. It is a pity it is not placed in the parish church. Sir John died before 1272, when a Commission was granted to Thomas Waleraand and T. Trevet to enquire concerning the refusal of Sir J. de Acton to allow the partition of his property, which came to his daughters as co-heiresses who married Raymond de Clevedon and John de Acton.<sup>3</sup> In 1284 we are told that Master de Acton and Elizabeth de Clefdon held their two fiefs in Aller as one Knight's fee under Hugh Hoddyngeeles (or Doddenseles).<sup>4</sup> This Hugh was the tenant in capite.

## II.

We pass to Sir John de Clyvedon, grandson of the above Raymond, the founder of the Aller Clyvedons<sup>5</sup> who lived there for nearly a century and a half. It was his uncle John de Clyvedon who held Milton Clevedon under the Lovells. Our Sir John had land in Greinton, Kingsaller and Stoke Giffard,

1. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LXII. Dr. Fryer allows it.
2. So Bates Harbin held.
3. *Patent Rolls*.
4. *Feudal Aids*; see also *Patent Rolls*, 1306 and 1316. *Arch. Journal*, IV, 69. 6 Ed., II, I.P.M.
5. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XLI, where Elizabeth Amire should be Eliz. de Aure.

pastures and alder beds (as well as Sir J. de Acton) in Stathe-moor and the manor of Shipham, to the church of which he presented in 1361. He also possessed the manor of Cheddar and land in Yeovilton. In 6 Ed. II he grants to Simon de Nyweton land in Shipham to hold of the grantor and his heirs at the yearly rent of one rose for all demands saving the King's service.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the Axbridge Corporation papers may be seen a grant dated 1337 by John de Clyvedon of Aller, Knight, to John, his son, and Elizabeth the wife of John and to the heirs of their bodies a yearly rent amounting to £11 16s. 6d., arising from lands and houses in Cheddre held by Robert le Flesh-hackere and others. It includes rent from a Cheddar water-mill and from a tenement in Wells. The witnesses to the deed include Thomas de Erlegh, then parson of the Church of Aller. Sir John had presented him to the living in 1332 when he was only an acolyte, and he had to be licensed to study for a year for ordination.<sup>2</sup> Another parchment deed is also preserved at Axbridge in Latin with a fine seal attached recording his grant of freedom to one of his serfs after the Black Death before Wat Tyler's rebellion: "To all the faithful in Christ to whom this present writing shall come, John de Clyvedon, Knight, of Alre, greeting in the Lord. Whereas Thomas Salamon of Cheddar was lately claimed in my Court as being a bondman born (nativus) yet do I, the said John, will and grant for myself and my heirs that the said Thomas shall be quit in future of all servitude and neifty together with all his following and his issue, granting that he shall be free and of free condition without any claim by me or my heirs for ever. In witness whereof to these presents I have set my seal. Given at Alre 8 August 34 Ed. III."<sup>3</sup>

The Aller Clyvedons were a branch of the Clyvedons of Clevedon, and on that account like the Actons (also of Iron Acton)<sup>4</sup> were closely connected with the de Berkeleys. Sir Raymond claimed wrecks at sea in Portbury Hundred ruled

1. *Wells Hist. MSS.*, S.R.S., XII.

2. *Reg. R. de Salopia*.

3. *Hist. MSS. Com.*, 3rd Report, S.R.S., XIV.

4. 1316 *Close Rolls*. 1305 *Pat. Rolls*.



by the Berkeleys. Sir John was a Knight in 1311 and may have been born in 1295. He appears to have been a domestic Knight of Bishop Drokenford, and married his niece Mary, which may account for his holding £11 yearly from lands belonging to the Drokenfords in Wiveliscombe. By this marriage he had two sons, John and Philip. John dying before 1348 left a daughter and sole heir Margaret to succeed to her grandfather; Philip died without children. Sir John married as his second wife Emma, by whom he had one daughter Katherine, who first married Sir Peter de Vele, an M.P. for Somerset in his day, and then Lord Thomas de Berkeley, one of the most notable peers of the century. The son of this Lady Katherine, Sir John de Berkeley, held Low Ham and other lands in the neighbourhood which continued in the family to the reign of Elizabeth. Lady Katherine dying in 1385 was buried in Berkeley Church, where she lies in stone beside Lord Thomas to this day, the most ancient monument known of any Aller woman.<sup>1</sup>

Sir John de Clyvedon was like Chaucer's "verray parfit gentil knight." In a turbulent age, he was free from the common vice of lawlessness, whereby his brother and Sir J. de Acton became notorious, and he acquitted himself as a loyal soldier and faithful churchman, and lived to a good old age. He held from time to time numerous posts of responsibility, which with us would be entrusted to half-a-dozen different men. He was Castellan or Keeper of Bristol Castle, domestic knight and seneschall of Bishop Drokenford and steward of his manors, arrayer of forces and leader of archers and horsemen to battle, a Member of Parliament (1326), Commissioner of Sewers, Verderer of the King's forests, and Justice of the Peace, with work included which we should give to superintendents of police and tax collectors. Such men were in-

1. In the second year after Lord Thomas's death she had the King's licence to go beyond seas on pilgrimage for a year. Lord Maurice de B. had given Sir John de Vele £100 to go to the Holy Land for the soul's rest of his ancestor, who had vowed a crusade. If he failed, Lady Katherine was to go instead. In her widowhood she also founded the free Grammar School of Wootton-under-Edge, notable as one of the oldest foundations of the kind. Granted royal licence 8 Rich. II.

valuable in carrying out large administrative duties and executing justice, at a time when Government had become contemptible or collapsed entirely in consequence of the conflicts between Edward II and his nobles. Edward III was compelled to pass special Acts to deal with the contempt for law and order, giving extended authority to Justices and empowering them in Quarter Sessions. In all these directions Sir John proved himself one of the most eminent men that Aller has ever produced. In relating the details of his administrative work we cannot always be certain before 1336 that we are right in attributing this or that detail to him, rather than to his first cousin Sir John de Clyvedon of Clevedon who died 1336. His own son was a third Sir John de Clyvedon, dying in 1348.

Sir John comes into prominence in 1321 when a temporary peace was patched up between Edward II and the barons, and the King was compelled to banish the Despensers. The office of Constable of Bristol Castle and Keeper of the Barton and Town of Bristol, which had been held by the Despensers, was conferred upon the two brothers: "his beloved and faithful Matthew de Clyvedon and John de Clyvedon his brother at the rent of £210," and certain other charges. Sir Matthew was a turbulent man like most of the knights of that age. When he violently seized Sir Simon Savage, a priest, and dragged him out of Chard Church, the Bishop excommunicated him, but removed the ban and absolved him, after he had made satisfaction to Simon, and had sworn to abide the Bishop's injunctions.<sup>1</sup> The brothers did not hold Bristol long, for after barely one year Despenser was recalled by the King and the office conferred upon him again, whilst their father Sir Matthew de Clyvedon had to make peace with the King for his life and lands in consequence of joining the barons.<sup>2</sup> Sir Matthew appears to have died about 1328-9, when he was succeeded at Aller by his son John. We have many references to Sir John de Clyvedon acting under Bishop Drokensford which shed light upon the church customs of that day.<sup>3</sup> In

1. *Bishop Drokensford's Register.*

2. *Close Rolls, 1323.*

3. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc., XLI, ii, 10, 11.*



1330 he witnesses a grant to Dean Godelee and the Chapter, from the Dean's brother, of lands and tenements in Bicken-alre to find two chaplains at a salary of two marks yearly to celebrate masses in three chapels in Wells Cathedral for the souls of John Drokensford, late Bishop, and others and all the faithful departed. He was also a witness with his brother Sir Matthew, Sir Richard de Acton, and Sir Ralph de Midelney concerning the foundation of a Chantry at North Curry on behalf of de Beauchamp, Lord of Lillesdon.<sup>1</sup> The Beauchamp arms may be seen to this day in stained glass in Swell Church. In 1332 he is called Sir John de Clyvedon the elder, when he witnessed a charter at Wells with his friend Sir J. de Erlegh, Lord of Durston.

Clyvedon's state duties were various. The Scots, having won the battle of Bannockburn under Bruce in 1314, invaded England and ravaged the northern counties in the following year. Sir John was therefore ordered to array the men of Somerset, together with Sir J. de Dunmere.<sup>2</sup> In 1320 complaint was made that depredations had been committed by the King's subjects on the men of Count Robert of Flanders upon the English Sea. He was therefore ordered by the King to enquire into these charges together with the Wardens of the Cinque Ports.

The year 1322 was notable as the one occasion when Edward II showed some energy against the party of the barons led by Lancaster. Lancaster had successfully put down the former favourite Gaveston and was in arms against the Despensers, who roused bitter hatred by their insolent recklessness. The barons were even intriguing with the Scots against the King. Treachery was widespread, and the laws were not administered even by the King's friends. Military summons were not obeyed. Taxes were not collected, and public confidence ceased. Clyvedon held steadfastly to the King, though his patron, Bishop Drokensford, was implicated in Lancaster's rebellion, and his father, Sir Matthew, joined in it with the Actons of Aller, the Luttrells, and other Somerset knights.

1. *Wells Hist. MSS.*

2. *Patent Rolls.*

Sir John was ordered by the King in February with Ralph de Gorges to raise 1000 footmen in Somerset and Dorset. In March the number required from the two counties was raised to 2000 apart from Bath and Bristol. In May with Sir J. de Erlegh he was ordered to raise armed footmen from Wells (3), Taunton (3), Axbridge, Ilchester, Chard, and every other town one each, or from elsewhere if no suitable men were found in the towns. Sir John was to be the leader and take measures for arming and conducting the force to Newcastle to serve the King for forty days at the expense of the townships. In October he was ordered to array all men between sixteen and sixty in Somerset. The names of men-at-arms with particulars of array to be certified to the King, and the contumacious to be arrested. In the next year much the same order was repeated.<sup>1</sup> Edward defeated Lancaster and executed him at Pontefract. He then threatened Scotland with his forces, but presently made a truce for thirteen years. Treacherous, selfish, and unscrupulous as Lancaster had been, yet his fall was deplored, since his cause was good as being the champion of the people, and the chief opponent of the royal folly. Two of his faction, who had been drawn by horses and hanged at Bristol, were regarded as martyrs by the populace in their ill-will to the King, and miracles were said to be worked under their gallows. Sir John de Clyvedon (1324) was despatched to Bristol to deal with the men who went to visit these bodies, and see that the bodies were not taken down from the gallows.<sup>1</sup> His father, Sir Matthew, coming to the King under safe conduct to make ransom for his life and lands, was ordered to pay a fine of 400 marks, in consideration of which his life was spared and he was discharged from prison at Tickhill Castle with Sir J. de Acton, on giving security for his future good behaviour, by a bond dated at York, 1322.<sup>1</sup>

In 1324, Sir John with J. de Lorty, his neighbour, was ordered to choose and array 100 footmen, archers; and J. de Lorty was to lead them to Exeter. Wages were to be paid them there from the day they left their county, till they got to Plymouth.<sup>1</sup> We cannot say whether our Sir John or his

1. *Patent Rolls*



namesake of Clevedon was appointed warden of the Channel Islands in this year.<sup>1</sup> In 1325 he was commissioned to set watchmen and prepare beacons, and to make the array in the several hundreds.<sup>1</sup>

In the next reign when trouble was beginning between England and France, the King's writ was sent (1339) to the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Sir John de Clyvedon and others were ordered to assemble the great men and nobles at Somerton, and to make ordinances about arraying the men of the county against the French who presume to invade the kingdom. They were to muster 35 men at arms, 140 other armed men and 160 archers.<sup>2</sup>

We pass next to the important civil duties of Sir John, which were connected with the lawlessness of the times of Edward II. In 1316 he was commissioned concerning a complaint of the Bishop of Exeter that his park of Norton by Taunton had been broken into, and in 1318 he was appointed conservator of the peace in Somerset.<sup>1</sup> He was commanded<sup>1</sup> in 1325 to pursue and arrest men "who banded together to disturb the peace, who go to markets, take goods and do not pay, who imprison people till they pay a ransom, who beat travellers and waylay merchants." In the next year he was admonished to be more active in dispersing unlawful assemblies and arresting malefactors. He is to certify the King who they are that maintain such evil doers, and he is to convey to the Exchequer heavy fines imposed upon the malefactors.<sup>1</sup> In 1327 occurred the complaint of John de Godelee, Dean of Wells, that Geoffrey de Pitney and others had entered the manor of Mudgeley, broken houses, cut timber, besieged servants, and carried off timber, together with cows, mares and foals, and Sir John was commissioned with others to take action upon that complaint.<sup>1</sup>

In 1329 Sir John was also employed to collect the tax of one-twentieth of all moveables of all persons possessing not less than 10s. It was for the defence of the kingdom against the Scots.<sup>1</sup> We have the names of the Aller people who paid this subsidy, which is interesting as the earliest list we possess :

1. *Patent Rolls.*

2. *Register, R. de Salopia.*

John de Acton, 8s. ; John de Ovoltone (Yeovilton), 3s. ; Hugh de Parker, 12d. ; Master Adam, 12d. ; Thomas Parson, 12d. ; Galfrid at Mere, Wm. Bagenham, John Mareward, John Godfrey, John atte Brugende, John South, Wm. Jubec, Adam Stal, Stephen Grey, Avicia at Brugend, John de Oky, Robert Stapulbrugge, all 12d. ; 6d. from John Manceral, Nich. Bagenham, Roger le Gardiner, Robert Humfry ; 20d. from John Richard, John Bishop, Thomas de Ledintone ; Cibillia Fayrwit, 2s. ; Wm. Combe, Richard Dyke, John Courteney, Thomas Woderow, 4s. each ; Wm. le French, Hugh Myles, John le Monck, 18d. ; Matilda at Water, 3s. ; Richard at Water, 2s. ; total 60s. 6d., about £60 in our money (1 Ed. III, *Exchequer Lay Subsidies*).

In the subsidy above mentioned, Thomas, the parson or rector of Aller, was Thomas de Wyke, appointed in 1326 and only rector for two years. John le Monck seems to be the same as John Valerian, priest of the Chantry of the Blessed Virgin, which was the chantry chapel west of the parish church.

In 1331 Sir John de Clyvedon was placed on a commission to examine a charge against the Prior of Goldcliffe and others that they claimed all the goods upon a stranded merchant ship of Bristol from Bordeaux, and carried off the wreckage though the men aboard were alive. He was also to enquire into a complaint of the Dean and Chapter of Wells that the Prior of Montacute had broken an ancient wall and dyke on their lands at North Curry, so that floods invaded the crops, and that the Prior had also carried off the timber.<sup>1</sup> In the next year (1332) Sir John was again in the commission of peace with Wm. de Montacute, Erlegh and Lovel to put down lawlessness in Somerset. The Provost of the Cathedral had died and his goods had feloniously been seized.<sup>1</sup> In 1339 he was again commissioned in matters of lawlessness on a complaint of Sir Alan de Charleton that his houses and fields had been broken into at Wittenham, and his cattle, goods and writings carried away ; and on a similar complaint by Sir John de Beauchamp, of Stoke-sub-Hamdon, that certain persons had broken into

1. *Patent Rolls*.



his closes at Stoke, and fished in his stews there, and carried away his fish and 1000 rabbits.<sup>1</sup> A further charge which Sir John was called to enquire into, still more reveals the gentle habits of the good old days. John de Crouchester was ordered on a certain charge to be imprisoned in Winchester gaol. He was taken instead to the house of his prosecutor, Robert Martin, of Yeovilton, where he was imprisoned for a long time and tortured with cords tied round his head and other torments, and dire punishment, till his friends, fearing he would die, paid Robert Martin £1,150 for his deliverance.<sup>1</sup>

In 1342 we have the only charge which we can find to have been made against Sir John de Clyvedon to his discredit in public affairs. The Sheriff of Somerset was ordered to apprehend him with Sir Alex. Luttrell and others as collectors of wool for Somerset, to take all their goods and chattels into the King's hands, and have them before the King in Chancery to answer for contempt. But shortly afterwards in April this order was countermanded because these knights had appeared, and undertook to certify the King concerning the collection of wool at their peril in fifteen days from Trinity next, and so were allowed to return to their own homes.

In the next year, with J. de Acton, Sir John witnessed a grant by Thomas de Langford of his manor of Fifhid (Fivehead) to Simon de Ash. In 1344 he witnessed with Sir J. de Acton and Richard de Acton the charter appointing his brother Sir Matthew de Clyvedon Forester of North Petherton, Neroche and Exmoor.<sup>1</sup> In the year of Crecy with Sir J. de Acton he paid 40s. for the one fief of Aller for making the Black Prince knight. In that year and in several others (1361, 1362, 1364-1368) he was appointed Justice of the Peace in Somerset to take inquisitions about vagabonds, unlawful assemblies and robberies, to arrest the indicted and imprison them till the King gave orders concerning them, and order if necessary that all men of the county should be fitted with arms to aid the King's peace, and certify the King of any who flee the county. For a number of riotous and rebellious persons of the counties of Gloucester, Somerset and Bristol had taken on them regal powers and chosen a

1. *Patent Rolls.*

captain in the nature of a king to govern them, and had seized ships laden with corn and provision by the King's command for Gascony, and had taken them beating and wounding the mariners.

The result of his commission was that many were put into the King's gaols of Somerton and Dorchester, and Sir John with J. de Leddred was ordered to inspect the indictments and determine the causes.<sup>1</sup> For example in 1350 Sir John with Earl Hugh of Devon sat to consider a complaint of John Durburgh that Philip de Luccombe and others at Heathfield Talbot drove away his horses, oxen, cows, sheep, geese and capons worth £100, and assaulted his men and servants. Many similar cases were entrusted to him.<sup>1</sup> In 1364 a similar enquiry was entrusted to him concerning the complaint of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, "the Treasurer," that whereas the King took him into state business, and occupied him daily, and took his men, land and rents into his special protection, certain Shirburn men and others carried away his goods at Everereech, trod down and consumed with cattle his crops and grass, and assaulted his men and servants.<sup>1</sup>

In 1316, 1348, and 1351 de Clyvedon was made with others a kind of commissioner of sewers (*de fossatis at Walliis*) on the coast of Somerset between Bristol and Dunster.<sup>2</sup> In 1358 he was appointed with his brother, Sir Matthew, and others to inspect sea-walls between Bristol, Martock and Taunton, and between Bruton and the Severn, *i.e.* the banks of the Parrett and Brue; and in 1365 they inspected alleged obstructions to navigation between Bristol and Bath.<sup>2</sup>

In 1370 his brother Sir Matthew had to examine a complaint of the Mayor of Bath, that whereas their town is surrounded with stone walls for the safety of the inhabitants and those dwelling in the vicinage, evil-doers had broken the walls in divers places, and carried away the stones, and the town is so weakened that there is danger of its being entered by the King's enemies. Sir Matthew was to take proceedings against those involved and distrain them, and repair and mend the walls.

1. *Patent Rolls*; see also 1362-1364.

2. *Patent Rolls*; see also 1362, 1364, 1368, 1370.



The last reference to Sir John which we have discovered is in 1372 (*Close Rolls*) when he with others is to make inquisition touching some ill-doing by John Godeslond. Patent Rolls mention his heir in 1384.<sup>1</sup> We conclude therefore that his death occurred about 1372, and so ended more than fifty years of honourable public service rendered to King and country. He was buried, unless we are mistaken, in Aller chancel.

His tomb is on the north of the Aller chancel, under the ogee arched recess showing the figure of a knight in chain and plate armour, after the fashion of that period. He wears armour which had come into use between Cressy and Poitiers. The former hauberk of chain armour has shrunk to a vest, and is seen only at the armpits and lower edge. The linen surcoat which the effigy of Sir John de Aller possesses had been given up by that date, and de Clyvedon wears instead a leather jupon or close-fitting tunic without sleeves, furnished with a scalloped border. Between the hauberk and jupon has been added a cuirass of steel hidden from view, but shewn by the shape of the figure and waist. On his head is a sharp-pointed steel bascinet, to which is laced a camail or tippet of chain mail, fully protecting the neck and shoulders. The arms and legs are completely encased in plate armour. A broad belt or bawdric is worn across the hips, and a sword is attached on the left side. The long dagger or misericorde on the right is probably lost. We attribute the rebuilding of Aller Church to this Sir John, who may have prepared the recess for his own tomb, as was often done. The rebuilding is in the style of his day (Decorated), preserving the old Norman south doorway and font. He probably left the tower unfinished or unattempted. The two master passions of that age were fighting and religion, the unfailing mark of this latter being church building. As steward of Bishop Drokenesford Sir John must have seen much of the church building of the diocese, and he knew how a great longing for prayers for their souls after death influenced the builders.

1. John and his brother Matthew, who was living in 1376, lived to an age unusual in those violent times

A tombstone of Reginald Botreaux, great grandson of Lady Margaret, the grand-daughter and heiress of Sir John, has been at some date taken up from the church floor and set up near Sir John's tomb. Botreaux's death in 1420, when a later fashion of plate armour was in vogue, proves that it is not a Botreaux tomb.

### III.

The third Lord of Aller, whom we now sketch, is Sir Peter de Courtney, second husband of the above Lady Margaret de Clyvedon. Their arms are on two sculptured shields on the corbels of the label of the west window of Aller tower, on the dexter side Courtney three torteaux, and on the sinister Courtney impaling three escallops Clyvedon of Aller. The tower has a bold turret and unique features within. It is supported on three fine arches with buttresses springing from the nave walls and has two narrow passages or side aisles outside the arches north and south. A rose (the Lancastrian ?) is on the battlements of the tower. This famous soldier of fortune, who had been oftentimes engaged both on land and sea, seems to have united with his wife in building Aller Church tower as a thank-offering to God. In 1397 the Pope granted permission to Peter Courtney, Knight, Nobleman of the Diocese of Exeter, that a confessor of his choice may give him plenary remission as often as he pleases.<sup>1</sup>

It may have been the Lady Margaret who obtained a dispensation from the Pope in 1373, granting an indulgence, during twenty years, of a year and forty days of enjoined penance, to penitents who give alms to the Chapel of Oth (or Worth) in the parish of Kingsaller, which needs repair. There is now no trace of this chapel. A dispensation was granted to Sir Matthew de Clyvedon in 1353 conveying a "mandate to the Bp. of Worcester to dispense M. de C. and Eliz. Blount of the diocese of Wells to remain in marriage though related in the fourth degree, and to declare past and future offspring legitimate. They are to found and endow a chaplaincy of 10 marks."<sup>1</sup> Was this for Oth or Aller ?

1. *Calendar of Papal Registers and Letters.*



Sir Peter, called "the strenuous Knight,"<sup>1</sup> was a younger son of Hugh, second Earl of Devon, by his wife Margery de Bohun,<sup>2</sup> grand-daughter of Edward I. In him, therefore, Aller had a resident of royal blood and one of descent from Alfred. Sir Peter as Constable of Windsor Castle, Knight of the Garter and Master of the Falcons, would have been often there, and at Calais, of which he was made Governor for six years, as well as on his manors. He and Lady Margaret would move in high place, amid the great events of those stirring times of the Black Prince, Wicliffe, and Chaucer. His brother William was Prebendary of Wells, Chancellor of Oxford, and Archbishop of Canterbury.

All Sir Peter's estates were held in right of his wife, namely the manors of Aller, Yeovilton, Cricket St. Thomas, Shipham, Cheddar and Legh, with rents in Wells 26s. 8d., the advowsons of the churches of Aller, Cricket and Shipham, manors of Maiden Newton, Standerwyke and Rodden near Frome, Publow, Newton St. Loe, Chelworthy, Peryton, and a moiety of other manors Co. Southampton, messuages in Dorset and advowsons in Wilts,<sup>3</sup> and the Chantry of Aller. As a younger son he inherited but little, but he made up for it through the important offices conferred upon him as the King's kinsman and a scion of a princely house, and through the exploits by which he became famous. In 1366 he was with the Black Prince at the battle of Navaret in Spain, and was knighted the day before the battle.<sup>4</sup> In 1378 he was in the fleet sent out under the Earls of Arundel and Salisbury against the French, who had landed on our coasts and done great damage and spoil. The sheriffs had been ordered to assist the admirals in all points from the Thames westward, and Philip de Courteney was told to arrest and keep in custody all seamen who made off to fish and for divers other reasons, and so

1. *S.R.S.*, XIII.

2. The only reference by Lady Margaret to her second husband in her will is to the Bohun arms: "one entire bed of tawny with curtains fixed on it with the Arms of Herford and Devon." Her usual places of residence seem to have been Alre and Newton Seintloo.

3. *Inquis. P.M.* and *S.R.S.*, XVII.

4. *Som. & Dor. Notes and Queries*, VI.

delayed to furnish ships for the King's service.<sup>1</sup> In 1378 Sir Peter with his brothers Philip and Hugh attacked the whole fleet of Spain off the coast of Brittany, but they were outnumbered and defeated. Sir Philip was sore wounded, and Sir Peter was carried prisoner to Spain but released in the following year. In 1380 the King gave Sir Peter the dues payable to the King for the marriage of Richard de Poyngge in aid of his deliverance from prison, this feudal aid bringing him £433. The King also granted him from the Stannary of Cornwall £50 per annum for good service to the Prince, and also £50 from the King's lands and lordships in Cornwall and Devon.<sup>1</sup> In 1383 he had leave from the King to cross over to France in company with a herald and pursuivant, and took over to certain noblemen of that realm sundry presents of cloth, horses and saddles, bows and arrows, and greyhounds. In 1387 he was made Lord Chamberlain, and a Privy Councillor (1389) and Captain of Calais. In that year he went to France to take part in the great tourney whereat were present one hundred English knights. "He did notably manifest his military skill and valour," but the French King stopped the proceedings, made Sir Peter an honourable present, and sent him to Calais accompanied by Mons. de Clary. On the way they quarrelled about the magnificence of their several countries and challenged one another, and fought near Calais. "In the first course both parties broke well." Sir Peter was hurt in the shoulder and his armour was broken. The King of France and the King of England were both displeased at this unauthorised renewal of the tourney, and King Edward ordered that Sir Peter should not exercise any feat of arms without permission of the Earl Marshal. In the celebrated tourney at Smithfield, prepared for by the poet Chaucer, Sir Peter as the King's Banner Bearer of England was challenged by Sir Wm. Darell, the King's Banner Bearer of Scotland, and they ran certain courses but finished without certain victory.

In 1399 the custody of various forests and parks and the Priory of Otrynton was committed to Sir Peter de Courtney,

1. *Close Rolls*, 1372.



the King's kinsman. He was that year ordered to enquire about the bondsmen and bond tenants of Bishop Ralph of Bath and Wells, who had withdrawn their services in the manor of Wellington and leagued together to resist the Bishop.<sup>1</sup> He was given, in conjunction with Sir John de Berkeley, the survey and custody of the rivers in the co. Somerset, and the charge of the erection of weirs and mills.<sup>1</sup> In 1401 he was joined with Sir Thomas de Berkeley to enquire concerning evil-doers who had attacked Thomas Newton, Esq. (of Swell ?), late collector of the venage of cloth in Somerset. When he came to the fair of Philip's Norton to proclaim the King's Letter Patent, they assaulted him and killed one of his servants, and inflicted more than one hundred mortal wounds on Newton.<sup>1</sup> We do not know what part Sir Peter took in the Revolution which dethroned Richard II, but we find Royal Commissions again laid upon him. In 1402 he was ordered to arrest and imprison people who endeavour to subvert the laws by preaching in taverns and elsewhere that the King did not keep his promises made at the Coronation. Some were already captured and imprisoned in the Tower. In the same and following years Sir Peter was sent to raise men in Somerset to settle Wales, and to meet those who had lately invaded the realm, and to provision certain towns in Wales with wheat, wine, fish and oats from Somerset. He is to retain twenty men-at-arms and fifty archers from the more sufficient men of Somerset and Dorset, at 12*d.* daily King's wages for each armed man and 6*d.* daily each archer, and take them to Dunster to go to guard Kermerdyn, Wales, for quarter of a year, to arrest and imprison any who refuse to go, and to take ships and boats at the port of Dunster.<sup>1</sup> Sir Peter lost his life in a tournament in 1405. He was buried in Exeter Cathedral, where his brass can be seen in the south aisle of the choir. He is in plate and chain armour, having the Garter round his knee. The corner-pieces of the brass represent birds of prey devouring their victims, as though to represent the knight's warlike life.<sup>2</sup> The Lady Margaret died in January, 1412, and

1. *Patent Rolls.*

2. *Som. & Dor. Notes and Queries*, VI.

directed in her will<sup>1</sup> that she should be buried by her first husband in Bath Abbey, leaving ten marks to the Prior "to celebrate and pray for my Soul," and another ten marks to the chapel of the Chantry of Alre, and silver vessels to divers churches, who shall be bound to pray for the soul of her first husband. Her daughter Elizabeth Clyvedon St. Loe married the second Baron William de Botreaux. They both died before 1412, so that the Aller effigy cannot be that of Lord Botreaux, who did not live to possess Aller. Elizabeth St. Loe was the sole heir of her mother and co-heir of her father. Her husband inherited on the female side North Cadbury from Richard, Lord Lovell of Castle Cary, and his mother rebuilt that church (1417, *Pat. Rolls*). His son is buried there, and now lies in effigy with Elizabeth Beaumont his wife beneath the tower. Those manors and churches descended to the Hungerfords and Hastings, who bequeathed the advowsons to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which has now held them three hundred years, viz. Aller and North Cadbury.

The church of North Cadbury was being rebuilt about the time that Aller tower was built, and there is a similarity between the spirelets on the north and south porches of North Cadbury and that on Aller tower.

We conclude with a curious entry in the Patent Rolls in 1426 which shows the superstition of the age. A commission was solemnly appointed by royal authority of the Sheriff of Somerset, Sir Hugh Luttrell, Sir Wm. Bonville and others, of Sir T. Arundell and others for Cornwall, and Sir John Warre and others for Dorset, to enquire about a complaint of Wm. Lord Botreaux<sup>2</sup> against his uncle Sir Ralph Botreaux, Knight, that he with Wm. Langkelly, Yeoman, and other malefactors of their covin and assent, unmindful of the salvation of their souls and not having God before their eyes, have procured John Alwode, Hugh Bowet of Kilmington, Chaplain, and John Newport, who are said to practise soothsaying, necromancy and art magic, to weaken and annihilate, subtly consume, and altogether destroy by the said arts, the body of the said Wm. Botreaux.

1. *S.R.S.*, XVI.

2. Whose effigy is in North Cadbury