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**Correspondence Between the Abbot of St. Augustine's,
Bristol, and the Prior of Worcester in 1311**

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SOME CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE ABBOT
OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S, BRISTOL, AND THE
PRIOR OF WORCESTER, IN THE YEAR 1311.

From the *Liber Albus* in the Cathedral Library of
Worcester, foll. xlix, l.

COMMUNICATED BY CANON J. M. WILSON, D.D., Vice-Dean and
Librarian.

AMONG the muniments of Worcester Cathedral is a massive volume of 497 vellum leaves of 13 in. by 9½ in., written at various times during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is known as the *Liber Albus*. The name is probably derived from its having been bound in white sycamore boards till 1824, when the volume was rebound in white vellum by Henry Clifton, Chapter-Clerk of Worcester Cathedral.

It is the letter book and minute book of the Prior and Convent of Worcester. It has been but little used by any of the historians and antiquaries of Worcester, owing to the fact of its great bulk, the faint and crowded writing of the early pages, and the absence of an index or table of contents. I have begun to read it, and have compiled a table of contents and index to the first eighty-two folios, which cover the priorate of John de Wyke, from 1301 A.D. to 1317. Among the documents there are four, Nos. 528, 529, 531, and 534, which contain some interesting, and as far as I know, unpublished correspondence between the Abbot of St. Augustine's Monastery, Bristol, and the Prior of St. Mary's, Worcester; and I have pleasure in offering it as a short communication to the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society. The table of contents, covering 749 documents, and index to this first part of the volume, together with an introduction

and appendices, is being prepared for the Worcestershire Historical Society.

No. 528, Fol. xlix. (r).

Littera Abbatis sancti Augustini de Bristoll pro appropriatione Ecclesie de Wotone directa Priori Wygornie.

Venerande Religionis viro Dompno Johanni de Wike Prior Wygornie Edmundus permissione divina Abbas Sancti Augustini de Bristoll salutem cum honoris et gaudii incremento multiplici.

De vestra benevolentia quam plurimum confidentes dominationem vestram reverendam humiliter imploramus quatenus oppressiones et onera domus nostre considerantes super appropriatione Ecclesie de Wottone consilium vestrum et auxilium intuitu caritatis nobis impendere velitis et vestrum conventum ut super hoc suum adhibeat consensum procurare cum effectu maxime cum religiosi religiosis in suis agendis specialiter pre aliis succurrere teneantur.

Et nos si vos in aliquibus gravavimus quod nollemus juxta ordinationem domini nostri episcopi et vestri pro posse nostro vobis satisfacimus mandavimus procuratores nostros Londonie cum sufficienti mandato ad predicta quantum in nobis est coram venerando patre domino nostro Wygornie proficienda et vos si vestre sedeat voluntati idem ex parte vestra facere dignemini ut amodo inter nos cedantur omnes altercationes quod affectamus voluntatem vestram in hiis et in aliis que vestre placita sunt voluntati nobis vestris in omnibus demandantes.

Conservet vos Altissimus ad regimen suum sanctum per infinita annorum bonorum curricula. Valet.

No. 529, Fol. xlix. (r). Responsio ad eandem.

Reverende religionis viro domino Eadmundo Dei gratia Abbati Sancti Augustini de Bristoll frater J. humilis Prior Ecclesie Cathedralis Wygornie vinculum caritatis et honoris cumulum cum salute.

Quoniam in littera vestra nobis missa scripsistis quod procuratores vestros Londonie cum sufficienti mandato ad tractandum coram venerando patre domino nostro Episcopo Wygornie super appropriatione Ecclesie Wottone et super quibusdam altercationibus inter nos hactenus habitis procuratoribus nostris nunc in parlamento existentibus diximus ante eorundem recessum ut cum dicto Episcopo et procuratoribus vestris super eisdem tractarent et eorum voluntates audirent et sic cum domi redierint et nos plenius super hiis informaverint habita deliberatione domino nostro Episcopo et vobis dabimus responsa que fuerint oportuna.

Valeat status vester diutius in sancto regimine subditorum.

No. 531, Fol. xlix. (v).

Littera episcopi ad inquirendum de causis appropriationis Ecclesie de Wottone ad monasterium Sancti Augustini Bristoll.

Walterus (Reynolds) permissione divina Wygornie Episcopus dilecto filio nostro magistro Benedicto de Pastone officiali nostro salutem gratiam et benedictionem.

Ex parte religiosorum virorum abbatis et conventus Monasterii Sancti Augustini Bristoll nostre diocesis nobis nuper exstitit intimatum quod ecclesia ejusdem monasterii a piis ipsius fundatoribus antiquis temporibus ad cultum divinum opere sumptuoso constructa dudum propter ipsius antiquitatem et debilitatem pro majori parte funditus diruta in parte residua gravem minatur ruinam ad cujus fabricæ restorationem sumptus quamplures apposuerunt et ampliores apponere oportebit in opere ibidem noviter inchoato quodque monasterium predictum in portu publico et municipio famoso constitutum pro receptione hominum in multitudine copiosa de diversis mundi partibus illuc undique confluentium maximo hospitalitatis oneri subjectum ob quorundam virorum potentium persecutiones qui fere tertiam partem substantie dicti monasterii pro sustentatione fratrum

et oneribus eidem monasterio incumbenibus deputate per decem et octo annos et amplius retroactis temporibus occupaverunt gravem in facultatibus passum est lesionem iidem religiosi pro juris sui prosecutione in hac parte ac aliis causis predictis multipliciter premuntur oneribus debitorum adeo quod nisi eorum necessitatibus in hac parte salubri remedio succurratur desolationis obprobrium verisimiliter poterunt formidare.

Quare nobis humiliter supplicaverunt quatenus ad exonerationem hujusmodi debitorum et hospitalitatem solitam juxta ejusdem monasterii et regni Anglie consuetudinem laudabiliter facilius sustinendam necnon ad consumptionem operis tam pii et necessarii fabricae supradictae et alia eis ac monasterio eorum incumbenlia onera subportanda cum ad haec proprie non suppetant facultates Ecclesiam de Wottone nostre diocesis cujus ipsi religiosi sunt veri patroni fructus et proventus ejusdem ipsis in usus proprios perpetuo convertendos concedere dignaremur.

Nos autem volentes super hiis plenius scire veritatem de veritate premissarum fieri fecimus inquisitionem diligentem per quam invenimus premissa omnia et singula vera esse et in partibus Bristoll adeo notoria quod locus inficiationi probabili non existit ipsumque monasterium antedictum premissarum prosecutionum oppressionum ac occurrentium gravaminum pretextu infra paucos annos elapsos in tanta inopia fuisse dilapsum quod canonici ejusdem monasterii quampluries hora prandii nihil esum vel potum paratum habentes ad municipium Bristoll predictum pro victus necseariis ex mutuo vel dono querendis mittere cogebantur.

Et quamvis ad ipsorum relevamen et oppressionum medelam omni devotionis affectu inclinare precipue debeamus ad quorum protectionem et regimen divina disponente clementia licet inmeriti sumus specialiter assumpti quia tamen alienationes ecclesiarum sine capituli nostri consensu tractatu et solemnitate que in hujusmodi negotiis requiruntur

facere nolumus sicuti et secundum canonicas sanctiones facere non debemus.

Idcirco vestre circumspectionis industria plenam in domino fiduciam optinentes vobis mandamus quatenus ad capitulum nostrum Wygornie personaliter accedentes vocatis omnibus quorum interest de premissis et omnibus qui in appropriationibus hujusmodi debeant intervenire cum capitulo nostro vice nostra solennem tractatum habeatis ac plene deliberetis et ejusdem capituli nostri ac aliorum quorum interest consensum in hac parte requiratis.

Et quid inde feceritis et qualiter in premissis deliberatum fuerit ac de consensu capituli nostri et eorum quorum interest si adhibeatur in hac parte nobis per litteras vestras patentes harum seriem continentes quam citius comode poteritis distincte et aperte constare faciatis.

Datum Londonie xi. Kal Julii anno Domini M^o CCC^o. undecimo consecrationis nostre tertio.

No. 534, Fol. 1. (r).

Littera Abbatis et Conventus Sancti Augustini Bristoll pro submissione litis Cape facienda episcopo Wygornie.

Reverende religionis viris dominis priori et conventui Ecclesie Cathedralis Wygornie sui humiles et devoti Abbas et Conventus Sancti Augustini de Bristoll salutem et sinceram in domino caritatem.

Cum nuper inter ecclesias vestram et nostram super visitatione sede vacante ac super quadam capa vestre ecclesie a nostro Abbate prestanda fuissent exorte materie questionum quarum occasione mutua caritas hincinde hactenus tepescebat nos sicut membra capiti inclinare volentes vobis tenore presentium intimamus quod de nostro communi consensu intendimus vestrum priorem sede vacante admittere ad visitationis officium exercendum quatenus jura permittunt et compositio inter venerandum patrem dominum Archiepiscopum Cantuarie totius Anglie primatem et ecclesiam

Cantuarie ex parte una et vestram ecclesiam inita ex altera vobis prestat.

De capa vero vobis prestanda imposterum nos ordinationi venerandi patris domini W. dei gratia Episcopi nostri submittemus prout inter vestros et nostros alias extitit prelocutum super quibus faciemus litteras nostras patentes prout vestrum et nostrum commune consilium duxerit ordinandum.

Vestre igitur placeat sanctitati nos in caritatem admittere solita ampliorem et cum vestro consilio de pace predicta et ejus forma tractare et nobis velle vestrum et formas hujusmodi destinare nosque et nostra comoda decetero promovere omni lite et judiciali strepitu interim dormiente quod et advocatis et procuratoribus significare velitis illud scientes quod nos et nostros vobis et vestris optemperantes decetero sentietis.

In suo servitio domini vos dominus protegat et defendat. Scriptum in capitulo nostro v. Kal. Octobris anno domini M° CCC° undecimo.

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE LETTERS FROM THE
LIBER ALBUS, WORCESTER.

BY THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF BRISTOL.

No. 528, Fol. xlix (a).

A letter from the Abbot (Knowle) of St. Augustine's Monastery, Bristol, addressed to the Prior of Worcester, pleading for the appropriation of the Church of Wotton. To the Right Reverend John de Wike, Lord Prior of Worcester, Edmund, by divine permission Abbot of St. Augustine's of Bristol, sendeth greeting with a wish for his manifold increase of honour and happiness. With fullest trust in your kindly feeling, we humbly intreat your reverend Lordship that, in consideration of the oppressions and burdens of our House you be willing, for charity's sake, to grant us your counsel and assistance in the matter of the appropriation of the church of Wotton, and that you prevail upon your

monastery to give its effectual assent in this concern, chiefly since monks are bound to succour monks above all others in promoting their welfare. And as to ourselves, if we have vexed you in some things, much against our will according to the ruling of our and your Lord Bishop, we will to the best of our power give you satisfaction. We have ordered our proctors in London with full authority to advance the aforesaid concerns, as far as in us lies, before our venerable father the Lord Bishop of Worcester, and as to yourself, we would beseech you, if it is your will, to deem fit do the same on your part, so that from henceforth all disputes between us may be removed,¹ because we desire your good-will in this and other matters that are agreeable to you, asking for good-will to us in all your matters.

May the Most High preserve you in His holy governance through the course of many happy years.² Farewell.

No. 529, Fol. xlix. (r). Reply to the same.

To the Right Reverend Lord Edmund, by the grace of God Abbot of St. Augustine's Monastery, Bristol, his humble brother John, Prior of the Cathedral Church of Worcester, sendeth greeting, with a prayer for the strengthening of the bond of love and the increase of his honour.

Since in your letter to us you have written to the effect that you have instructed your proctors in London with full authority to discuss before our venerable Father the Lord Bishop of Worcester the appropriation of the Church of Wotton and certain other matters which have hitherto been subject of dispute between us, we have bidden our proctors now attending in Parliament before their departure to discuss these matters with the said Bishop and your Proctors, and to hear their wishes; and so, when they shall have returned home and informed us more fully in these affairs,

¹ This passage is somewhat obscure. It has been suggested that it should run: "desiring for ourselves as yours in all things."

² Or: "have you in His holy keeping." See Letter 529 *ad finem*.

we will, after deliberation, send to our Lord Bishop and you whatever answer shall seem fit.

Farewell; and may you prosper long in the holy governance of those subject to your care.¹

No. 531, Fol. xlix. (v).

Letter of the Bishop to enquire into the reasons for the appropriation of the Church of Wotton to the Monastery of St. Augustine, Bristol.

Walter (Reynolds), by divine permission Bishop of Worcester, to our beloved son Master Benedict de Paston, our official, sendeth greeting, grace and blessing. From the Abbot of the monks and the Convent of the Monastery of St. Augustine, Bristol, in our diocese, there have lately come to us tidings that the church of the same Monastery, built by previous founders in olden times at great expense for divine worship, hath from some time past for the greater part been utterly fallen into decay by reason of its antiquity and crumbling state, and is now threatening grievous ruin in the remaining part; for the restoration of which fabric they have devoted considerable sums, and it will be needful to devote more in the work which hath lately been begun there.

The brethren tell me also that the aforesaid monastery, established in a public port and a famous township, hath, by reason of entertainment of men flocking thither from divers parts of the world in vast numbers, been subjected to a very heavy burden of hospitality, and on account of the persecutions of certain powerful men, who for eighteen years past and more have seized well-nigh a third part of the substance of the said monastery, which had been allotted for the maintenance of the brethren and for the support of the burden that lay upon the same monastery, hath suffered grievous hurt in its property.

These same monks in pursuance of their right in this

¹ Or perhaps "prosper long, held in His holy keeping." See Letter 528 *ad finem*.

matter and by reason of other aforementioned causes, are crushed beneath manifold burdens of debt, so that unless in this matter help be given to their necessity by a wholesome measure of relief, they will likely have occasion to fear the disgrace of leaving their House desolate. Wherefore they have humbly besought us, with a view to the removal of such burden of debt and to the more easy maintenance in worthy manner of the hospitality that is wanted, according to the custom of the same monastery and of the kingdom of England; also with a view to the completion of the work so pious and necessary of the aforesaid fabric, and to the support of other burdens that lie upon them and their monastery.

Inasmuch as their own funds for these purposes are insufficient, they beg that we should deem fit to allow them to convert to their own use in perpetuity the Church of Wotton in our diocese, of which the monks themselves are the true patrons, with the fruits and produce thereof.

We, however, desiring to have fuller knowledge of the truth of these matters, have caused careful enquiry to be made concerning the truth of the statements; whereby we find the statements all and singular to be true and to be so well known in Bristol that there is no reasonable room for denial thereof, and the monastery itself aforesaid, by reason of the aforesaid persecutions, oppressions and troubles that have befallen them, to have fallen, in the space of a few years into such destitution that the canons of that same monastery often at the hour of the mid-day meal, having nothing on their board to eat or to drink, have been compelled to send to the township of Bristol aforesaid to obtain the bare necessities of living either on loan or by gift.

And although we ought chiefly to turn in all brotherly love, to the relief of these same monks and the redress of their oppressions, to the protection and governance of whom by the disposition of divine mercy we, however unworthy, have been specially appointed, nevertheless because we are unwilling to alienate churches without the consent of our

Chapter in full and solemn discussion which is required in matters of this sort,¹ for that reason and according to canonical principles we ought not to do so.

Therefore having full confidence in the Lord in your diligent prudence, we command you to approach in person our Chapter of Worcester and, having summoned all who have interest in the matters aforesaid and all who in respect of such appropriations have a right to intervene, to hold solemn discussion with our Chapter in our place, and to deliberate fully, and to seek in this matter the consent of that same Chapter of ours and of others who have interest therein.

And as to what you have done thereupon and how the matter has been arranged, and as to the consent of our Chapter and of those who have interest in this matter, if that consent be given, you shall make known to us clearly and openly by your letters patent dealing with all these points, as speedily as you conveniently can. Given at London the xxist day of June in the year of our Lord 1311 and of our consecration the third.

No. 534 Fol. 1. (r).

Letter of the Abbot and Chapter of St. Augustine's Monastery, Bristol, for the purpose of proposing the submission of our dispute, concerning the making of a cope, to the Lord Bishop of Worcester.

To the Right Reverend Lord the Prior and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Worcester, their humble and devoted Abbot and Chapter of Saint Augustine, Bristol, send greeting and true love in the Lord.

Inasmuch as of late between your Church and ours, over the question of visitation during the vacancy in the See and over a certain cope which, it is claimed, should be presented by our Abbot to your church, there hath arisen matter of dispute, by occasion of which our mutual love on both sides was growing cold, we, wishing to submit as members to the

1 *Sicuti* here seems==*sic*.

head, inform you by these presents that of our common consent we agree to admit your Prior during the vacancy in the See to the exercise of the office of visitation, in so far as laws permit and the agreement entered into between the venerable Father the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of all England, and the church of Canterbury on the one hand, and your church on the other grants to you.

Moreover, as to the presentation of a cope to you in future, we will submit to the ruling of our venerable Father, Lord Walter by the grace of God our Bishop, even as it hath been elsewhere arranged before between your proctors and ours ; concerning which we will write our letters patent according as your and our common council shall consider should be ordained.

Therefore may it please your Holiness to admit us to fuller love than before, and to discuss with your Council concerning the aforesaid agreement and its form, and¹ to make clearly known to us your wish and the forms thereof and otherwise to promote the welfare of us and our interests, all strife and judicial clamour in the meantime being at rest. This we would have you signify to advocates and proctors, knowing this that in all things you will find us and our brethren obedient to you and your brethren.

May the Lord protect and keep you in His service.

Written in our Chapter this xxviiith day of September in the year of our Lord 1311.

¹ *Velle=voluntatem* : cf. *proposse nostro*, Letter 528. It has been suggested that this passage should run : " may it please us to desire your wishes and agree to forms of that sort."