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## **Early charters of Saint Nicholas Church, Bristol**

by L. J. U. Way  
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## THE EARLY CHARTERS OF SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH, BRISTOL.

Translated by LEWIS J. UPTON WAY, F.S.A., F.R.G.S.

THE City of Bristol is rich in ancient churches. Many of the churches are rich in ancient charters. All Saints, St. Johns, St. James, St. Leonards, St. Mary le Port and St. Thomas have at different times yielded up their secrets to the antiquary. John Latimer when compiling "The Maire of Bristowe his Kalendar" drew upon all of them but seems to have allowed St. Nicholas, which we now know to possess a great store of documents, to escape his attention.

So it was with considerable interest that I learnt a short time since that the church wardens of St. Nicholas were looking into their archives and with much pleasure that I received an invitation to meet them in their crypt. My visit was well worth while, for amongst many other documents I was shewn the beautifully written and most interesting series of very early charters which by the courtesy of the Vicar, the Rev. T. J. Bowen, B.D., and Messrs. C. H. W. Davey and H. Hosegood his wardens, I am able to exhibit. (21st March, 1921).

Sixteen in number, these very early charters were written by fifteen different persons. In a wonderful state of preservation, in many cases retaining their seals, they reveal the names and pious benefactions of a large number of citizens of Bristol who lived during the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries.

One wonders who were the ready writers whose pens accomplished such perfect work. Were they monks or parochial clergy or lawyers' clerks of the period or the

merchants who made the grants enumerated within them. The credit is due to none of these but to a humble class of individual known as scribes or scriveners, who earned their living by exercising their skill in penmanship. In large towns where business was brisk they would need no other means of livelihood, but in country places probably combined these functions with the office of parish clerk. The nominal grantors were in most cases unable to do more than make their mark. One also wonders at the smallness of the deeds. This was owing to the high price of parchment prepared from the skins of sheep. With the increase of the wool trade, flocks became larger and more skins available, so towards the end of the 14th century deeds gradually increased in size; with the increase scriveners made use of more words and allowed their writing to spread abroad far more lavishly than their predecessors with their tiny and expensive parchments had dared to do.

Our first three charters are undated. We have to deduce their date from evidences contained within them. This is always a risky proceeding, a mistake of thirty or forty years can easily be made, as handwriting did not change simultaneously all over the country. A new style originating in London or imported from overseas took a long time to reach country places and even then the provincial scribe, especially if an old man, would hesitate to change the style to which he had grown accustomed.

The writing of the first charter is less careful than that of most of the series. From the formation of the characters and the use of a conventional sign consisting of a horizontal line between two dots for the word *est* we can fairly accurately judge the date to be about 1180. The charter is as follows :

To all Christ's faithful ones to whom this writing shall come,  
JOHN PUER chaplain of Saint Nicholas of Bristol and WALTER  
RUFUS parishioner of the same place.

Let it be universally known that BELEFUER widow of JOHN WARWAIN in her last sickness separately made her will and constituted us executors of the same will.

In which will she left to the church of the Blessed Saint Nicholas of which she was a parishioner six pence of rent for a lamp to burn by night. And left to Saint Mary Magdalene upon the heights of Bristol six pence to be paid and had annually at the feast of Saint Michael by the hands of the heirs of the said BELEFUER out of the land which is next the house of stone which belonged to WILLIAM POLLARD in WRPESLIPPESTRET which JORDAN LE FERUN held from the said BELEFUER in fee.

In witness whereof we have caused our seals to be affixed to this present writing.

With these witnesses HENRY PIPER chaplain, LUCA GILES and WILLIAM GERNO, JOHN, GEOFFREY and RALPH AURIFABRIS, JORDAN, WALTER and HUGH DE PONTE and many others.

None of the names herein mentioned are to be found in Latimer's " Kalendar of the Mayors of Bristol."

Date about 1180.

Let present and future men know that I RICHARD SCRINARIUS of the Marsh of Saint Stephen in Bristol have given, granted and by this my present charter confirmed to the house and church of Saint Nicholas for a daily assistance of mass to the Blessed Mary to be celebrated in the chapel of the same church two pence of rent of assize to be paid at the birth of our Lord in pure and perpetual alms for my soul and for the soul of JULIANA my wife and for the souls of all my ancestors and successors from that land with the building upon it and its appurtenances in Scadpullestrete in the Marsh of Saint Stephen which I have given to JOHN my eldest son to wit from the principal Burgage which lies next the land which belonged to WALTER TANNATORIS from the north side.

To have and to pay the said twopence of annual rent from the said land with its buildings and its appurtenances to the said church of Saint Nicholas as is aforesaid at the mentioned term freely, quietly, pacifically and wholly free from condition or reclamation of my successors for ever. I and my heirs or my assigns will warrant, acquit and for ever defend the said two pence of rent against all men and women paid by me the aforesaid.

And in order that this my gift and grant and the confirmation of

my present letters may remain firm and valid for ever to this present writing I have affixed my seal.

With these witnesses THOMAS DE BERKHAM, HUGH DE MELINS, RICHARD TANNATOR, WILLIAM DE KYNGESWODE; HENRY DE LOCKWITH, WILLIAM WARRENER, HUGH DE CAELVESTUN and others.

The seal is of green wax much broken with a conventional flower of eight petals by way of device surrounded by a legend which appears to read, *Sigillum Ricardi Scrinarii*.

Endorsed: *11d.* of the gift of Richard Scrinarius issuing from a certain tenement in Scadpullestrete in the Marsh of Saint Stephen.

None of the names here mentioned appear in Latimer's Kalendar. By the formation of the letters the date should be between 1200 and 1220.

Let present and future men know that I THOMAS FARDEIN son and heir of JAMES FARDEIN have given and granted and by this my present letter confirmed to ODO BRUN two shillings of yearly rent which JORDAN FENATOR and his heirs used to pay to me annually out of certain land in Worcheslop Strete in Bristol which lies between land which belonged to RALPH CORNATOR and land which belonged to CECILIE POLLART.

To have and to hold the aforesaid two shillings of annual rent to the said ODO and his heirs or assigns from me and my heirs freely and quietly, fully, peaceably and wholly for ever.

The aforesaid ODO and his heirs or assigns rendering yearly to me or my heirs one pair of white gloves or one silver penny at Eastertide whichever ODO and his heirs prefer, for all service, charges, and for all quitclaims and demands belonging to me or my heirs.

It shall also be lawful for the said ODO and his heirs and assigns to give, sell, mortgage or exchange the aforesaid two shillings of annual rent with whomsoever they will saving only our aforesaid annual payment.

But for this gift and concession and for the confirmation of this my present letter the said ODO has given to me two marks of sterling money.

Wherefore I THOMAS and my heirs will warrant the said two shillings of annual rent to the aforesaid ODO BRUN and his heirs

or assigns against all men and women forever for the aforesaid payment.

In order that the same may remain firm and valid I have affixed the impression of my seal to this letter, with these witnesses JOHN LA WARRER, RALPH LE PANAGE, WILLIAM PASSEMER, HENRY BLAKEMAN, HUGH BRUN, WALTER ROP, RALPH CORNATOR, WILLIAM LE MERCER, JOHN LE WORNERE, JOHN the clerk and others.

The seal of green wax has a rough flower in the centre surrounded by the legend "Sigillum Tome Fardein."

None of the names herein mentioned are to be found in Latimer's Kalendar. By the form of certain letters the date should be about 1230.

Endorsed, this is the charter of ODO BRUN concerning two shillings of rent of assize to be paid yearly for one light to the Blessed Mary by PHILIP DE CADWEL and RALPH LE TAVNUR and their heirs.

About 1230.

The next four charters I call the Filomena series as his name appears in each. He was the first Vicar of Saint Nicholas whose name has come down to us and held office from 1240 to 1286. We therefore know that these four charters must have been written between those two dates.

1240 to 1286.

Let present and future men know that I WILLIAM DUNING with the freewill and assent of AGNES my spouse have given and granted two shillings of rent of assize to be paid by my hands or those of my heirs or by the inhabitants in the place to this use after me every year at the four terms of the year, namely at the feast of Saint Michael vid. and at the Nativity of the Lord vid. and at Easter vid. and at the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist vid. to wit for the support of a chaplain who shall celebrate mass to the Blessed Mary the Virgin, in the chapel which is hard by the church of Saint Nicholas daily, from a ground which is between the land of PHILIP DE CADWELL on the east and the land of ADAM SELIMAN on the west, which I hold from THOMAS RUS and his heirs in BALUONESTRETE.

And that this my gift may stand firm for ever through my warrant and that of my heirs, I have affixed my seal to this writing.

With these witnesses WALTER FILOMENA then Vicar of the church of Saint Nicholas, HENRY ALBON chaplain, THOMAS LONG, HENRY LANGBORD, WILLIAM DE BELLOMONTE, WALTER MITTELIME, WILLIAM SKYNNARIUS, and others.

The seal is missing.

Walter Filomena was Vicar of Saint Nicholas from 1240 to 1286.

Thomas Rus is probably identical with that Thomas le Rous who was Mayor in 1251-2 and again in 1263-4.

Henry Langbord was Prepositor of the town in 1239-40.

William de Bellomonte was Prepositor in 1242-3.

Walter Mittelime Seneschal in 1267-8.

The other names do not appear in Latimer's Kalendar. 1240 to 1286.

To all who shall see or hear this writing WALTER FILOMENA, Vicar of the church of Saint Nicholas of Bristol, executor of the will of GILBERT LE CORMANGER his parishioner, health in the Lord.

Be it universally known that GILBERT LE CORMANGER my parishioner in his last will and in good memory, left to the support of a chaplain who shall celebrate mass daily to the Blessed Mary Mother of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, two pence (to be paid) yearly at the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle before the Nativity of the Lord, to proceed from his ground which is between the land which belonged to WALTER DE PARIS on the west and the land which belonged to JOHN DE BERWIKE on the east, in the Street of Saint Nicholas in Bristol.

And in order that this gift and legacy of the aforesaid GILBERT may remain for ever firm and valid through my executorship, I have affixed my seal to this writing.

With these witnesses, GEVA wife of the said GILBERT, WILLIAM his son, ROGER DE BATONIA, WALTER DE OSSEBRIG and others.

Seal of green wax with the figure of a man standing before an altar, surrounded by the legend "In spiritu humilitatis et in animo."

Walter de Paris is given as Prepositor of Bristol for the year 1235-6 in an undated deed in the Braikenridge collection.

JOHN DE BERWIKE was Prepositor of the town with ROGER GOLDE in 1255-6.

None of the other names appear in Latimer's Kalendar. 1240 to 1286.

Let present and future men know that I PHILIP DE CADWELL have given and granted for my soul and for the souls of my wives CECILIE and JOYSE and of our children and of all the faithful departed, twelve pence of rent of assize from a certain ground which I bought from WILLIAM PLUMBARIUS which is in the parish of Saint Nicholas, namely in Baluinestrete between land on the east which belonged to ADAM LE HOPER and land which belonged to ROGER PLUMBARIUS on the west side, to be paid yearly for ever at two terms of the year, to wit at the feast of Saint Michael vi pence and at Easter vi pence by me or my heirs or by the aforesaid place, for the support of that chaplain who shall celebrate mass daily in the chapel of the BLESSED MARY the VIRGIN which is hard by the church of Saint Nicholas.

And that this my gift may stand firm for ever by my warrant and that of my heirs, to this writing have I affixed my seal.

With these witnesses, WALTER FILOMENA then Vicar of the church of Saint Nicholas, HENRY ALBON chaplain, WILLIAM DE BELLOMONTE, WALTER DE PARIS, WILLIAM DE PARIS, ROGER DE BERCHAM, WALTER MITTELIME, HENRY INNENE and others.

Seal of green wax much broken.

Roger de Bercham was Mayor in 1256-7.

Filomena, de Paris, Bellomonte and Mittelime we have met with before; of the remainder I can find no mention.

Endorsed, xiid. of the gift of Philip de Cadwell out of a certain tenement in Baluinestrete. Thomas Coferer lives in it.

1240 to 1286.

Let present and future people know that I, MARGERY formerly wife of RALPH AUBERCH, by the goodwill and advice of THOMAS LONG heir of the said RALPH my husband, have given and granted in pure, constant and perpetual alms for the soul of RALPH AUBERCH my spouse and for the souls of all the faithful departed, two shillings of rent of assize to be paid yearly for ever at the four terms of the year, namely at the feast of Saint Michael vi pence and at the birth of the Lord vi pence and at Easter vi pence and at the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist vi pence, for the support of a chaplain who shall celebrate mass daily

to the Blessed Mary the Virgin in the chapel which is hard by the church of Saint Nicholas of Bristol, to wit from a ground on which was a dwelling from the tenement of WILLIAM DE PARIS and is between the land which belonged to ADAM SELIMAN on the west side and certain land of the said WILLIAM DE PARIS on the east side in Baluinestrete in the Parish of Saint Nicholas in Bristol.

And that this my gift may stand for ever firm and unimpaired by my warrant and that of my heirs to this writing have I set my seal.

With these witnesses WALTER FILOMENA then Vicar of the church of Saint Nicholas, T. LONG, HENRY ALBON chaplain, HENRY LANGBORD, WILLIAM DE BELLOMONTE, HENRY INNENE and others.

Only a small fragment of the seal of green wax remains with the letters "MARGER"; the whole legend was without doubt "Sigillum Margerie Auberch."

Filomena, Langbord, De Paris and Bellomonte we have already met with. The names of the others are not to be found in Latimer's Kalendar.

1240 to 1286.

The next charter is written by the same scribe as the one who wrote the fifth. It is the first exactly dated by means of the name of the Mayor and his year of office.

Let present and future men know that I WILLIAM DE BELLOMONTE have given and granted for my soul and for that of MARGARET my wife and for those of our fathers and mothers and of our children and of all the faithful departed, my land with the building upon it which is in Baluinestrete between the land which belonged to WALTER MITTELIME on the west side and of JOHN LE GENTIL on the east side, for the support of that chaplain who shall celebrate mass to the Blessed Mary Mother of our Lord in the chapel of our same Lady hard by the church of Saint Nicholas daily.

And that this my gift, free confirmation and perpetual alms may hold good for ever by my warrant and that of my heirs, I have set my seal to this writing.

With these witnesses, HELYAS LONG then Mayor of Bristol, GILBERT DE MARLBERG then Prepositor, THOMAS LONG, WALTER MITTELIME, HENRY LANGBURD and others.

The seal is of dark wax with a nude figure holding a bow. Elyas Long was Mayor in 1250-1 which gives us the date of this charter.

De Bellomonte, Langburd and Mittelime we have already dealt with, the remainder are not to be found in Latimer's 1250-1 Kalendar.

The ninth charter appears to have been written in a hurry, not only is the parchment unevenly cut but the writing is thick and careless and the lines crooked.

Let present and future people know that I WILLIAM DE PARIS son and heir of WILLIAM DE PARIS my father burgess of Bristol, have given and granted in pure and perpetual alms for my soul and for the souls of my father and mother and for the souls of all the faithful departed, two shillings rent of assize payable yearly for ever at the four quarters of the year, to wit at the feast of Saint Michael vi pence, at the birth of the Lord vi pence, at Easter vi pence, and at the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist vi pence. For the support of a chaplain who shall celebrate mass to the Blessed Mary the Virgin in the chapel which is hard by the church of Saint Nicholas in Bristol, to wit from a certain tenement in which WILLIAM BISSOP dwells, which said tenement is between the house of WILLIAM BIN on one side and the house of THOMAS DE BRUTONE on the other side in the parish of Saint Mary de la Redeclive near the stone church on the west side.

To have and to hold the said two shillings of rent of assize from me and my heirs to the said chaplain celebrating mass in the said chapel hard by the church of the Blessed Saint Nicholas.

And that this my gift may stand for ever firm and valid through my warrant and that of my heirs, I have affixed my seal to this writing.

With these witnesses, JOHN DE LIDIARD then Mayor of Bristol, SANEKMO RENEWARD, WILLIAM DE BLAKEFORD then Prepositors, RALPH DE SELEWODE, RICHARD CORDIARIUS, WILLIAM DE SELEWODE, MICHAEL the chaplain and many others.

The seal is missing.

John de Lidiard was Mayor in 1277-8 which fixes the date of this charter. The names of the remainder do not appear in Latimer's Kalendar.

1277-8.

To all the faithful in Christ who shall see or hear this charter JOHN DE WYTH and SIMON SPISAR PROCURATORS of the church of Saint Nicholas of Bristol and all the other parishioners of the same church, Eternal Salvation in the Lord.

Know every one of you that we by unanimous assent, freewill and counsel have given, granted and by this our present charter confirmed to the Mayor and Community of Bristol all that our land with its appurtenances which lies in the suburbs of Bristol upon Avon on the south side of the church of Saint Nicholas between the lands of ROBERT ROPER and JOHN CHEDDRE on the east part and a back of WALTER ROPER on the west part and extendeth itself from the street (vico Regio) before on the north side unto a stream of the water Avon behind on the south side, and contains in its length thirty four feet, between the land of the aforesaid ROBERT and JOHN on one side and a back of the aforesaid WALTER ROPER on the other.

To have and to hold all the aforesaid land with all its appurtenances to the aforesaid Mayor and Community and to their successors, from us and our successors, well, peaceably, freely and perfectly for ever.

The same Mayor which shall be for the time being and Community paying therefore yearly to us and our successors, at the fabric of our aforesaid church, four silver shillings rent in the whole, at the four terms of the year, namely at the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist twelve pence, at the feast of Saint Michael twelve pence, at the feast of the Nativity of our Lord twelve pence and at Easter twelve pence, for all services and secular demands appertaining to the said land.

To have also this our donation, concession and our confirmation of this our present charter, the aforesaid Mayor and Community shall give us a certain sum of money which may be converted to the use of the chaplain of this church.

Wherefore we the said Procurators and Parishioners and our successors for the services aforesaid do warrant, acquit and for ever defend all the said land with all its appurtenances as aforesaid to the aforesaid Mayor and Community against all mortals, and that this our donation, concession and confirmation of the present charter and the payment of the aforesaid rent may for ever remain firm and stable, the common seal of the said church and the common seal of the said community have been alternately put to these bipartite charters made between us in form of handwriting (Chirographi).

Dated at Bristol on the feast of the Apostles Philip and James in the year of grace 1291, and in the nineteenth year of the reign of King Edward.

This translation was made at the end of the 18th century, possibly by William Barrett.

1291

In the eleventh charter we find a somewhat unusual trade mentioned, namely John de Bordeaux the Sheather which means that he was a maker of sheaths for swords and daggers.

Let present and future men know that I JOHN DE BORDEAUX LE SHETHERE burgess of Bristol, have given, granted and by this my present charter confirmed to ROBERT OTERY co-burgess of the aforesaid town, those six shillings of silver which WALTER LE REDE is accustomed to pay me yearly, out of those two shops with their appurtenances situated in a suburb of Bristol in the street of LEUNESMEDE between a tenement of the Abbot of Saint Augustine of Bristol on one side and a tenement of JOHN LE GULDARE senior on the other side, and stretches in length from the aforesaid street in front to the course of the water of Frome behind.

To have and to pay yearly the said six shillings of silver rent of assize from the aforesaid shops with all their appurtenances to the aforesaid ROBERT his heirs and assigns freely, quietly, truly, and in peaceful possession and hereditary right, without let or hindrance from me or my heirs or assigns forever.

For which gift, grant and confirmation indeed of this my present charter the aforesaid ROBERT OTERY has given into my hands a certain sum of money with which I acknowledge myself fully content.

Wherefore I the aforementioned JOHN my heirs and assigns, all the aforesaid rent of assize of six shillings annually to be paid from the aforesaid shops as before stated, will warrant, acquit and everywhere defend for ever against all people, to the aforesaid ROBERT his heirs and assigns.

That this gift, grant and the confirmation of this my present letter may stand legally firm as it ought to do, I have attached the impression of my seal to this my present charter.

With these witnesses THOMAS DE LA GRAVE then Mayor of Bristol, JOHN TYKE and ROGER BEAUFLUR then bailiffs of the same town, JOHN DE CHEDDRE and JOHN WALYS-

SCHOTE then Seneschals of the aforesaid town. JOHN DE WYGHTE, DAVID DE WYGHTE, ROBERT SNOW, PHILIP LE HASTERE, NICHOLAS DE HASELE, ROBERT LANERK, JOHN LE GULDERE senior, JOHN LE GULDERE junior, NICHOLAS DE CONWEYE, MATTHEW CISSORE, RICHARD DE ROMENEYE the clerk and others.

Seal dark wax much broken.

Endorsed LEWENSMEDE.

Thomas de la Grave was Mayor in 1302-3 which gives us the date of this charter.

John Walysschote Bailiff in 1314-5.

Robert de Otery four times Seneschal.

1302-3.

In number twelve we find an example of the care taken by merchants of old to distinguish themselves from others bearing the same surname. Here we have three persons of the name of Le Wythe, the first two evidently belonged to the same family and are careful to add of their trade to their names, *i.e.* John le Wythe Iremonger and Richard le Wythe Iremonger. Lower down amongst the witnesses we get Richard le Wythe Piscator which I have translated fisherman though it may merely mean fishmonger.

Let present and future men know that I JOHN LE WYTHE IREMONGER burgess of Bristol have given, granted and by this my present charter confirmed to RICHARD LE WYTHE IREMONGER co-burgess of the same town for his service all that messuage with its appurtenances which is situated in a suburb of the aforesaid town in Baluenestrete between a tenement of THOMAS DE BERWYKE on one side and a tenement of JOHN DE SAINT ALBANS which formerly belonged to EVORARDUS LE FRAUNCEYS on the other side, and reaches from the aforesaid street in front up to the land of the aforesaid JOHN DE SAINT ALBANS behind.

To have and to hold all the aforesaid messuage with all its appurtenances before and behind to the aforesaid RICHARD LE WYTHE his heirs and assigns from the capital lords of the fee, freely, quietly in peaceable possession of hereditary right for ever. The said RICHARD his heirs and assigns paying thence annually to the capital lords of that fee all due and accustomed services for all other services and secular demands.

In witness whereof I have signed this my present charter with the impression of my seal.

With these witnesses WILLIAM RANDALF then Mayor of Bristol. JOHN WATCHET and JOHN METHELAN then Bailiffs of the same town THOMAS DE BERWYK, ROBERT DE HOLHURST, JOHN DE SAINT ALBANS, ROGER DE LYCHEFELDE, RICHARD LE WYTHE fisherman, WILLIAM SYLEMYN clerk and others.

The seal is of dark wax with a large I in the centre.

William Randolph was Mayor in 1309-10 which gives us the date of this charter.

Thomas de Berwyke Seneschal in 1306-7.

Robert de Holhurst Bailiff in 1314-15.

The names of the others do not appear.

1309-10.

Let present and future men know that I ROBERT MONJOYE son and heir of RALPH MONJOYE formerly burgess of Bristol have given, granted and by this my present charter confirmed to ROBERT SNOW co-burgess of the aforesaid town all that my tenement both with solar and cellars below the same solar, which is situated in the town of Bristol in the street of Saint Nicholas between a tenement formerly of JOHN TYKE on one side and a tenement formerly of RALPH MONJOYE on the other and reaches from the aforesaid street in front up to a tenement of PHILIP DE SWEYNCESTER behind.

To have and to hold the aforesaid tenement with its appurtenances to the aforesaid ROBERT SNOW and his heirs and assigns from the capital lords of that fee, freely, quietly, truly and in peaceful possession by hereditary right for ever.

Paying thence annually to the capital lords aforesaid the services accustomed and due at the usual terms of the year by four portions for all services and secular demands to the aforesaid tenement in any manner belonging.

For which gift and concession and for the confirmation of this my present charter, the aforesaid ROBERT SNOW has paid a certain sum of money into my hands, with which I acknowledge myself well pleased and fully content.

And I the aforesaid ROBERT MONJOYE and my heirs and assigns will warrant, acquit and defend for ever the aforesaid tenement with its appurtenances to the aforesaid ROBERT SNOW and his heirs against all people.

In witness whereof I have sealed this present charter with the impression of my seal.

With these witnesses RICHARD TYLLEY then Mayor of Bristol, RICHARD LE WHYTE and RICHARD DE PANES then Bailiffs of the same town, ROBERT OTERY, DAVIT DE WYGHTE, ROGER BEAUFLUR, GERNAS DE KARY, PHILIP DE SWEYNCESTER, RICHARD DE CALDECOTE, RALPH DE ABENDON, RICHARD the clerk and others.

The seal is missing.

Richard Tylley was Mayor in 1318-19 which gives us the date of this charter, Ralph Monjoye Mayor in 1244-45.

Robert Otery several times Seneschal of Bristol. Roger Beauflur Seneschal with John Tyke in 1302-3.

The names of the remainder do not appear.

1318-9.

The fourteenth charter carries on the history of the house which was conveyed in the twelfth charter by John le Wythe Iremonger to Richard le Wythe Iremonger which we now see passes into the possession of the church of Saint Nicholas.

Let present and future men know that I RICHARD LE WYTHE LE IREMONGER burgess of Bristol, have given, granted and by this my present charter confirmed to SIR WALTER DE KELMESCOTE Vicar of the church of Saint Nicholas of the said town all that messuage with its appurtenances which is situated in a suburb of the town beforesaid in BALUENIS-TRETE between a tenement formerly of THOMAS DE BERE-WIK on one side and a tenement formerly of JOHN DE SAINT ALBANS which aforetime belonged to EVORARDUS LE FRAUNCEYS on the other side and stretches from the aforesaid street in front up to the land of the aforesaid JOHN DE SAINT ALBANS behind.

To have and to hold all the aforesaid messuage with all its appurtenances before and behind to him the aforesaid SIR WALTER his heirs and assigns from the capital lords of that fee, freely, quietly in hereditary right for ever, the same WALTER paying thence annually to the capital lords of that fee all due and accustomed services for all other services and secular demands.

For which gift indeed and for the confirmation of this my charter the aforesaid SIR WALTER has paid me a certain sum of money with which I acknowledge myself fully content.

And I the said RICHARD IREMONGER my heirs and assigns will warrant and defend for ever the said tenement with all its appurtenances to the said SIR WALTER KELMESCOTE his heirs and assigns against all mortals.

In witness whereof I have sealed this my present charter with the impression of my seal.

With these witnesses, RICHARD TYLLEY then Mayor of Bristol, GILBERT POKEREL, CLEMENT TORTLE, ROBERT HORHURST, RICHARD LE WYTHE fisherman, STEPHEN LE SPICER, JOHN LE HUNTE, JOHN LE SULLER and others.

The seal is of dark wax and much broken.

Richard de Tylley was Mayor of Bristol for the second time with Gilbert Pokerel and Clement Tortle as his Bailiffs in 1321-22 which gives us the date of this charter, although the designation bailiff does not appear I do not think that the position of the two names following that of the Mayor can be accidental.

Walter de Kelmescote was Vicar of Saint Nicholas from 1313 to 1341, the prefix Sir was usual before the name of a priest in those days.

Evarard Le Fraunceys and Stephen Le Spicer were Bailiffs together in 1323-4 and were both subsequently several times Mayors of Bristol.

Roger Tortle was several times Mayor.

1321-22.

The fifteenth charter is entirely different from the rest. In the first place it is a royal document sealed with the great seal of Edward the 3rd. In the second place it does not convey money or land from one person to another, but grants the royal licence to an individual to alienate certain property from everyday use and vest it for ever in the hands of a body of men or corporation.

It is called "A licence in mortmain," and had always to be obtained from the king on payment of a pretty heavy fee whenever property was made over to the church or any

other body corporate. Since the body corporate could never die but must perforce go on forever unless dissolved by law, all property within its grasp was for ever exempt from paying taxation on passing into other hands at the owner's death. Therefore the king and government took toll of it at their only opportunity namely, on its first passing from private into corporate ownership.

EDWARD by the Grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, to all to whom these present letters shall come Greeting.

Altho' by the Common Counsel of our Kingdom of England it is established that it should not be lawful for Religious Persons or others to enter upon any fee so that it passes into a dead hand (manum mortuam) without our leave, and the leave of the Capital Lord from whom the thing is immediately holden. Yet for twenty pounds which RICHARD HUREL of Bristol Spicer hath paid to us, We grant and give leave for ourselves and our heirs as much as in us is, to the said RICHARD that he should hold the four messuages and the four shops with their appurtenances in Bristol whereof the four messuages and three of the shops from us in Capite by the service called Longabile paying to us therefor yearly at the feast of Saint Michael twelve pence for all services, and the remaining fourth shop from the Mayor and community of the town of Bristol for the service of ten shillings per annum, holden as by the inquest made thereon at our command by our beloved WILLIAM AUNCELL our Escheator in the County of Gloucester and accompt thereof returned into our Chancery, may give and assign to a chaplain to perform divine service every day for the healthy state of the said RICHARD and CECILY his wife while they shall live, and for their souls when they shall pass hence, and for the souls of their father and mother and of AGNES SPICER, and of their ancestors, and of all the faithful departed. To be celebrated in the church of Saint Nicholas, Bristol at the altar of Saint Mary in the same church, to be had and holden by the same chaplain and his successors chaplains performing divine service every day at the aforesaid altar for the state and souls aforesaid to be celebrated for ever. And we likewise give special licence by the tenor of these presents to the said chaplain that he may receive and take the messuages and shops aforesaid with the appurtenances from the said RICHARD for himself and his successors chaplains performing divine service every day in the same chapel

at the altar aforesaid for the state and souls aforesaid to be celebrated for ever as is aforesaid notwithstanding the statute aforesaid. We being unwilling that the aforesaid RICHARD or his heirs, or the aforesaid chaplain or his successors should meet with any molestation or vexation by reason of the statute aforesaid, or because of the four messuages and three shops holden of us as is said by our heirs, justices, escheators, sheriffs or other our bailiffs or ministers whatsoever for the same. Saving to us and our heirs however and to the other capital lords of the fees their services thereof due and accustomed. In witness whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent. Witness myself at Westminster the sixteenth day of May in the forty fourth year of our reign of England and in the thirty first year of our reign of France.

1371.

The sixteenth and last charter is a conveyance from the Mayor and Commonalty of Bristol to Richard Spicer of a small piece of ground on which to erect a weighing machine.

To all to whom this present writing shall come, WALTER DERBY Mayor of the town of Bristol and the Commonalty of the same town, health in the Lord.

Be it known that we with unanimous consent, freewill and counsel have granted and given and by this our present writing confirmed to our beloved co-burgess RICHARD SPICER one small piece of ground containing four perches to make thereon a scale for weighing, (which ground) reaches from the tenement of RICHARD SPICER situated upon the Back of Avon on the east side to have and to hold the aforesaid vacant space of ground to the aforesaid RICHARD SPICER his heirs and assigns, truly and peaceably for ever, paying thence annually to us or to our successors six silver pence at the four usual and accustomed terms of the year by equal portions for all services and secular demands.

And if the aforesaid annual rent or any part of it shall be behind hand for one quarter of the year after that on which it ought to have been paid, then indeed shall it be lawful for us or our successors to enter into the said building to the said weighing place annexed and distrain upon it etc. until the arrerage shall be fully satisfied and discharged etc.

Wherefor we the aforesaid Mayor and Commonalty and our successors will warrant and defend in the aforesaid form, the

aforesaid small piece of land to the aforesaid RICHARD SPICER his heirs and assigns against all men.

In witness whereof our common seal is appended to one part of this Indenture which remains in the possession of the said RICHARD and the aforesaid RICHARD has affixed his seal to the other part which remains in our possession.

Given in the Schald of Bristol on the third day of September in the fourth year of the reign of King RICHARD second after the conquest.

Walter Derby was five times Mayor of Bristol.

Richard Spicer Mayor in 1372-73.

The seal is of red wax much broken, the seal of the town of Bristol.

1380

In these deeds the chapel of the Blessed Mary the Virgin is always said to be hard by the church of Saint Nicholas, the latin word used is "juxta" which means close to and not inside, so we must picture the little chapel as standing close to and not within the church. The following extract from the second volume of "Bristol Past and Present" bears this out. In light of which, the known chapel of the Virgin standing on Bristol Bridge can hardly be the one referred to in these deeds:—

"About the year 1200 one Richard Wombstrong, for the benefit of the souls of his parents, sold to the parishioners of Saint Nicholas, for thirty marks of silver, his house near the church of Saint Nicholas, for making a chapel to the Blessed Virgin Mary."

I fear that all knowledge as to the site it occupied has been lost. The chaplains whose names are mentioned now and then were no doubt the priests in charge of the chapel. One is inclined to wonder whether they acted as curates to the Vicar of their large neighbour when their daily task of singing or reciting masses was accomplished.

Of the streets mentioned only two present any difficulty *i.e.* Scadespulle strete and that strange jumble of letters meant for Worship street. The former was near Saint Stephen's church and the latter upon part of the ground

now occupied by Bridge Street. All the others (though oddly spelt) can be recognised by their modern equivalents.

The term "Rent of Assize," has been so frequently repeated that I have looked up its meaning in a law dictionary for the information of those of our members who are unversed in legal phraseology, *i.e.* "Rents of Assize are the certain established rents of the freeholders and ancient copyholders of a manor, which cannot be departed from or varied, when these payments were reserved in white money or silver, they were called white rents or Blanch-farm." They were probably the safest investments to be obtained in those days for trust money.

We gather from these charters that our Bristol forefathers in the trading class were strong supporters of their church, the Catholic church in England which then yielded obedience and pence to the occupant of the chair of Saint Peter at Rome. Even if their pious bequests partook somewhat of the nature of fire escapes, we must give them credit for filial piety and humanitarian motives since they bracketted the souls of their parents and ancestors with their own to share equally the benefits to be gained by their anti-purgatorial payments.

In bringing my paper to a close I must again express my obligation to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Saint Nicholas, for having permitted me to draw these fascinating relics of ancient Bristol from the dust of ages in which they have been so long enshrouded.

List of names contained in the earliest charters of Saint Nicholas Church, Bristol.

Puer, John, chaplain of St. Nicholas  
 Rufus, Walter  
 Warwain, John  
 Warwain, Belefuer, widow of above  
 Pollard, William  
 Le Ferun, Jordan  
 Piper, Henry, chaplain  
 Gerno, Giles

Gerno, William  
 Aurifabris, John  
 Aurifabris, Geoffrey  
 Aurifabris, Ralph  
 De Ponte, Jordan  
 De Ponte, Walter  
 De Ponte, Hugh

## 2nd Charter undated

Scrinaris, Richard  
 Scrinaris, Juliana, wife of the above  
 Tannatoris, Walter  
 De Berkham, Thomas  
 De Melins, Hugh  
 De Kyngeswode, William  
 De Lockwith, Henry  
 De Caelvstun, Hugh  
 Tannator, Richard  
 Warrener, William

## 3rd Charter undated

Fardein, James  
 Fardein, Thomas, son of the above  
 Brun, Odo  
 Fernator, Jordan  
 Cornator, Ralph  
 Pollart, Cecilie  
 La Warrer, John  
 Le Panage, Ralph  
 Le Mercer, William  
 Le Wornere, John  
 Blakeman, Henry  
 Brun, Hugh  
 Rop, Walter  
 John the clerk  
 De Cadwel, Philip  
 Le Tavnur, Ralph

## 4th Charter between 1240 and 1286.

Duning, William  
 Duning, Agnes, wife of the above  
 Seliman, Adam  
 Rus, Thomas  
 Filomena, Walter, Vicar of St. Nicholas  
 Albon, Henry, chaplain  
 Long, Thomas

Langbord, Henry  
 De Bellomonte, William  
 Mittelime, Walter  
 Skynnarius, William

5th Charter, 1240 to 1286

Filomena, Walter, Vicar of St. Nicholas  
 Le Cormanger, Gilbert  
 Le Cormanger, Geva  
 Le Cormanger, William, son of the above  
 De Paris, Walter  
 De Berwike, John  
 De Batonia, Roger  
 De Ossebrig, Walter

6th Charter 1240 to 1286

De Cadwell, Philip  
 De Cadwell, Cecilie and Joyse, wives of the above  
 Plumbarius, William  
 Plumbarius, Roger  
 Filomena, Walter, Vicar of St. Nicholas  
 Albon, Henry, chaplain  
 Mittelime, Walter  
 Innene, Henry  
 Le Hoper, Adam  
 De Bellomonte, William  
 De Bercham, Roger  
 De Paris, Walter

7th Charter 1240 to 1286

Auberch, Margery  
 Auberch, Ralph, husband of the above  
 Long, Thomas, heir of the above Ralph Auberch  
 De Paris, William  
 Seliman, Adam  
 Filomena, Walter, Vicar of St. Nicholas  
 Albon, Henry, chaplain  
 Langbord, Henry  
 De Bellomonte, William  
 Innene, Henry

8th Charter 1250-3

De Bellomonte, William  
 De Bellomonte, Margaret wife of the above  
 Mittelime, Walter  
 Le Gentil, John  
 Long, Elyas then Mayor of Bristol 1250-1

- De Marlberg, Gilbert  
 Langburd, Henry
- 9th Charter 1277-78  
 De Paris, William  
 De Paris, William, father of the above  
 Bissop, William  
 Bin, William  
 De Brutone, Thomas  
 De Lidiard, John, then Mayor of Bristol 1277-78  
 Reneward, Sanekmo  
 De Blakeford, William  
 De Selewode, Ralph  
 Cordarius, Richard  
 De Selewode, William  
 Michael the chaplain
- 10th Charter 1291  
 De Wyth, John  
 Spisar, Simon  
 Roper, Robert  
 Roper, Walter  
 Cheddre, John
- 11th Charter 1302-3  
 De Bordeaux le Shethere, John  
 Otery, Robert  
 Le Rede, Walter  
 Le Guldere, John senior  
 De La Grave, Thomas, then Mayor of Bristol 1302-3  
 Tyke, John  
 Beauflur, Roger  
 De Cheddre, John  
 De Wyght, John  
 De Wyght, David  
 Snow, Robert  
 Le Hastere, Philip  
 De Hasele, Nicholas  
 Lanerk, Roger  
 Le Guldere, John junior  
 De Conweye, Nicholas  
 De Romeneye, Richard
- 12th Charter 1309-10  
 Le Wytthe, John, Iremonger  
 Le Wytthe, Richard, Iremonger  
 De Berwyke, Thomas

De St. Albans, John  
 Le Fraunceys, Everard  
 Randalf, William, then Mayor of Bristol 1309-10  
 Watchet, John  
 Methelan, John  
 De Holhurst, Robert  
 De Lychfelde, Roger  
 Le Wythe, Richard, piscator  
 Sylemyn, William, the clerk

13th Charter, 1318-19

Monjoye, Robert  
 Monjoye, Ralph, son and heir of the above  
 Snow, Robert  
 Tyke, John  
 De Sweyncester, Philip  
 Tylley, Richard, then Mayor of Bristol 1381-19  
 Le Whyte, Richard  
 De Panes, Richard  
 Otery, Robert  
 De Wyght, Davit  
 Beauflur, Roger  
 De Kery, Gernas  
 De Caldecote, Richard  
 De Abendon, Ralph  
 Richard the clerk

14th Charter, 1321-2

Le Wythe le Iremonger, Richard  
 De Kelmescote, Sir Walter, Vicar of St. Nicholas 1313-1341  
 De Berewik, Thomas  
 De St. Albans, John  
 Le Fraunceys, Evorardus  
 Tylley, Richard, then Mayor of Bristol 1321-2  
 Pokerel, Gilbert  
 Turtle, Clement  
 Horhurst, Robert  
 Le Wythe, Richard, piscator  
 Le Spicer, Stephen  
 Le Hunte, John  
 Le Suller, John

15th Charter 1371

Edward the 3rd  
 Hurel, Richard  
 Auncell, William, escheator in the county of Gloucester

Hurel, Cecily, wife of Richard

Spicer, Agnes

16th Charter 1380

Derby, Walter, then Mayor of Bristol 1380

Spicer, Richard