

III.

THE ABBEY OF ABERBROTHOCK: TWO EARLY THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SEALS. By J. D. GILRUTH, M.D., F.S.A.Scot.

This communication deals with two seals that were found in the debris of the monastery of the Abbey of Arbroath. The church of that monastery was founded by King William the Lion in 1178 and dedicated to Thomas à Becket, and at the high altar of that church King William's remains were laid to rest in December 1214.

Seal No. 1 is at present in the Museum at Montrose. Over a year ago Dr Ewart, the Chairman of the Museum Committee, asked my help in finding out something about this seal (fig. 1). Later I was informed by the late Ex-Provost J. Noel Johnston that the seal was found in the ruins of the Abbey of Arbroath about 1820, and was presented to the Montrose Museum in 1841.

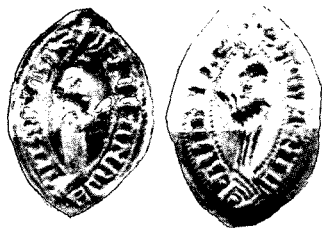


Fig. 1. The Impression of and the Seal of [Prior?] Robert de Lambeley.

The seal is described by Laing,¹ under the title "Robert Lambile," as "A figure of a monk kneeling at prayer, 'S. ROBERTI DE LAMBILE.'" The original brass matrix of this seal was found in the ruins of Arbroath Abbey,

and is now in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Montrose." Birch says that the seal bears "a figure of a kneeling monk with the Sun of Righteousness over his head. It is," he goes on to say, "of doubtful identity, as the legend does not absolutely associate Robert de Lambile with the monastic profession."²

The seal is made of brass, and has a lozenge-shaped surface measuring 28 mm. by 18 mm. The legend has on both sides a line of small dots. Careful examination shows that the words are as Laing wrote. The D and E of the DE are separated by the feet of the monk, whose figure in profile is arrayed in a simple folded habit that reaches to his feet. He wears a hood folded over the shoulders. He is tonsured on the corona. His hands are apparently together in prayer. Above his head there is a star with six points. Above that, and in the scroll of

¹ *Descriptive Catalogue of Impressions from Ancient Scottish Seals*, p. 206, No. 1142.

² *History of Scottish Seals*, vol. ii. p. 74.

the legend, there is a cross "potent." Between the cross and the letter E of the Lambile appear two parallel scrolls indicating the end of the legend. The translation of the legend is "Seal of Robert de Lambile." Who and what was Robert de Lambile?

I am indebted to Mr Henry M. Paton, Curator of Historical Records, H.M. Register House, Edinburgh, for first suggesting to me that the name Lambile is a latinised form of the name "Lambeley" which is found in the Registers of Arbroath Abbey.

Last year Ex-Provost Johnston, Montrose, sent me six letters written by Mr Patrick Chalmers, Aldbar, Brechin, in 1846-7. In one of those letters he says: "On looking at an old charter from Lord Airlie's Charter Room at Cortachy, I find Richard de Lambeley, Prior of Arbroath, in the time of Abbot Gilbert." This charter is incorporated in the *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc*, pt. i. (Cortac. Origin., No. viii. p. 334), published by the Bannatyne Club, under the editorship of Mr Chalmers and Cosmo Innes. In a letter dated 27th November 1846 Mr Chalmers says: "There is no doubt that the inscription is 'S. ROBERTI DE LAMBILE,' who was probably a relative of Richard de Lambeley, Prior of the Monastery." Again, on 21st December 1846 he writes: "Richard de Lambile was Prior, temp. Gilbert, Abbot before 1214 and probably till about 1225-6. Reg. Morav.; Charter penes, E. of Airly, and Chart. de Lindores." That the name on the seal is probably a form of Lambeley we may all agree.

Where then do we find the said name of Lambeley? Radulphus de Lamley was Abbot on 30th March 1226,¹ but he appears in the Arbroath Registers as Radulphus only. We have to look to the *Chronicles of Melrose* for his surname De Lamley.² There we find it recorded that Radulphus de Lamley, Abbot of Aberbrothock, was created Bishop of Aberdeen in 1239. The words are: "Dompnus Radulphus de Lamley Abbas de Haberbrothoc." It was apparently during this Abbot's time that the Church of St Thomas the Martyr was dedicated on the eighth day of the Ides of May, 1233.³ Radulph died as Bishop of Aberdeen in 1247.⁴

But the name Lambeley appears elsewhere. In a charter granted by Abbot Radulphus (1226-39) dealing with the lands of Kenny in the parish of Kingoldrum, perambulation is mentioned as having taken place in the time of the previous abbot, namely, Gilbert (*circa* 1214-25) (fig. 2).⁵

¹ *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 120.

² Anderson and Dickinson, *The Chronicle of Melrose*, facsimile edition, 1936, p. 86.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 82.

⁴ *Loc. cit.*, p. 107.

⁵ *Liber S. Thome*, No. 306, p. 262.

Through the kindness of Mr Marryat Dobie, Keeper of Manuscripts in the National Library, I have had the opportunity of

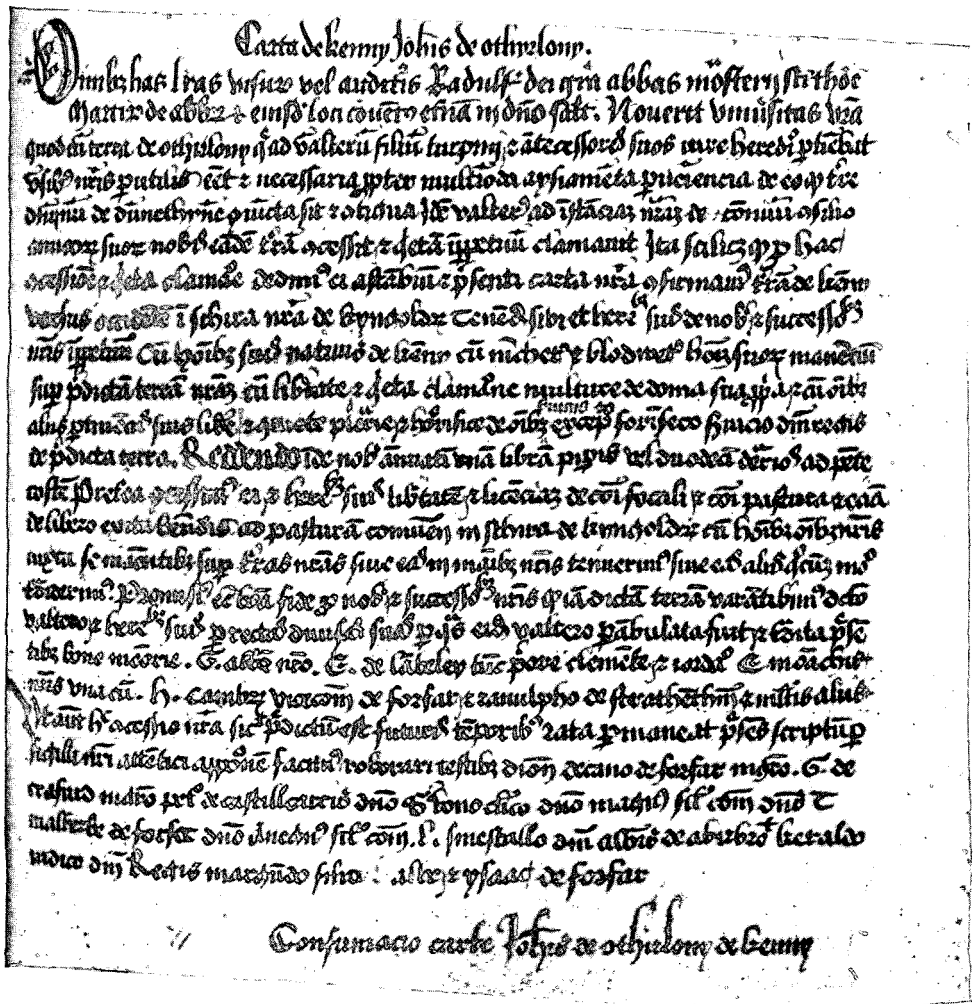


Fig. 2. The Charter of Kenny (1226-1239).

examining this charter and of photographing the page. The Arbroath Registers have long reposed in our National Library. This charter has many interesting features, one or two of which it may not be out of place to mention. The charter is one of excambion or exchange. It has a clause of "quitclaim." John of Othyrlyon takes over the lands

of Kenny in Kingoldrum (the name Kenny survives to the present time), and Walter, the son of Turpin, takes over the lands of Othyrlyony. The name of Othyrlyony or Ochterlyony also survives not far from Dunnichen. The family of which this is our first record still holds lands in Angus.

The lands of Kenny are conveyed along "with the men native to Kenny." The ancient feudal privileges of "Bloodwite and Mercheta" are given: "Blodwitis et Merchetis." "Bloodwite" is a "wite" or fine paid as a composition for the shedding of blood. "Mercheta," or "Mercheta Mulierum," refers to compensation paid by inferior tenants to lords for liberty to dispose of their daughters in marriage. "Forinsec" services to the king in regard to the land are excluded. There is a reddendo of a pound of pepper or twelve pence at Pentecost.

Warrandice is granted to Walter, and the lands of Kenny had been perambulated in the presence of the following: G. Abbot ("bone memorie"); E. de Lambeley, "tunc priore" (then prior); Clement and Jordan, monks; Hugh of Cambron, Sheriff of Forfar, and many others. The document is witnessed by a certain Serlo, a clerk to the king; Adam, the Lord Abbot's senescallus, or steward, and others.

Now the editors of the Bannatyne Club Register seemed to doubt the E of De Lambeley, so they inserted a capital R after it in brackets. The reason for this will be seen later. Professor R. K. Hannay, to whom I showed the photo of the document, at once noticed an irregularity. Before the word "monachis" there is another capital E, and this is reproduced in the Bannatyne Register as "eε." But it is clear that the monk who entered this document in the Abbey Register must have been confused, and when we consider a further document, a confirmation of this same charter granted by Abbot William in 1351, the confusion is the more apparent.

There is a Charter of Confirmation (*inspeximus*) of Kenny, 1351, in the Charter Room of Cortachy. A transcript appears in the *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 334. This is a copy of the original document seen by Patrick Chalmers in 1846.

In June 1937 Lord Airlie allowed me to see, examine, and photograph the original charter in Cortachy Muniment Room (fig. 3). The document measures 20½ inches by 13½ inches, is yellow from age, and has been folded for a long time. It is otherwise in good condition and legible. This charter is verbally the same as the earlier Charter of Kenny until the words are reached that deal with the portion referring to the perambulation of the lands. Here the name of the abbot, Gilbert, is given in full, and instead of E. de Lambeley, the name given

is Richard de Lambeley. As before, he is "tunc priore" (then prior). After that we have the same monks, Clement and Jordan, but instead of "e monachis nostris" there appears "et Adam monachis nostris." In view, therefore, of the contracted and inaccurate record of the perambulation inserted into the old register, and the greater care with which

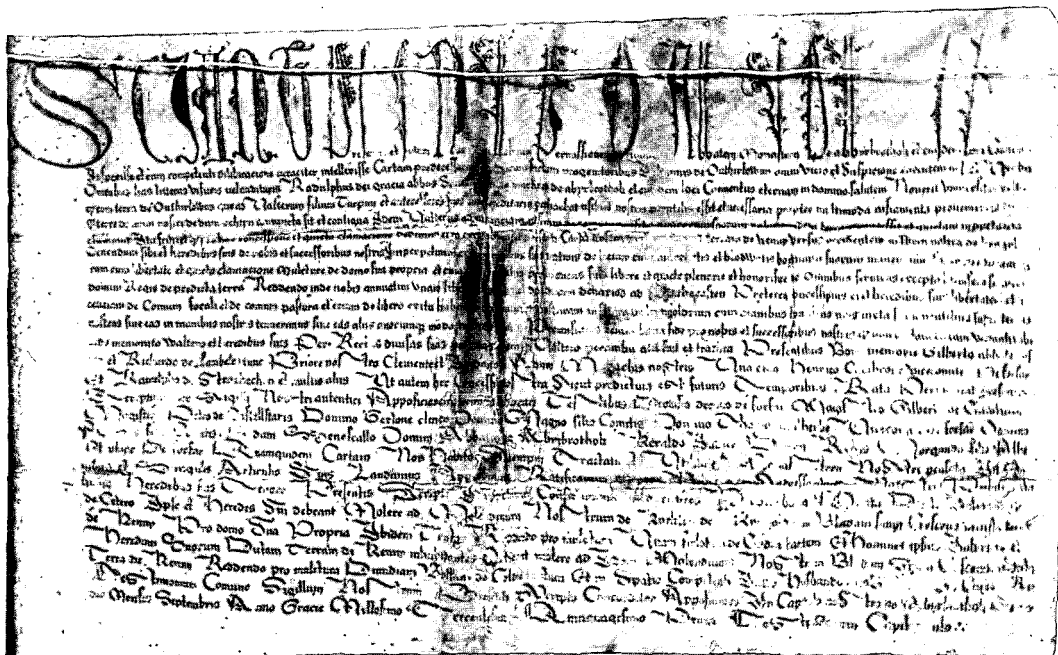


Fig. 3. The Confirmation of the Charter of Kenny (1351), Cortachy Muniment Room.

the Airlie document seems to have been prepared, we may fairly assume that the latter, the charter of "inspeximus," is the more correct, and that the name of the prior was really Richard de Lambeley.

We have thus encountered two De Lambeleys, one an Abbot and one a Prior. Who then was Robert of the same name?

There was an Abbot Robert in 1261, twenty-two years after Radulphus went to Aberdeen.¹ Could he have been the man? In this regard it is interesting to note that in 1260 one Eustace, Abbot of Aberbrothock, accompanied the Bishop of Brechin in a pedestrian tour through the kingdom.² That is certainly in Robert's time. But there

¹ *Reg. Prior. St And.*, p. 286; *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 208.

² Spottiswoode, *History*, pt. i. p. 213.

is no record of Eustace in the Arbroath Registers. Could this have been the cause of the wrong entry of E by the monk in the early Kenny Charter? Spottiswoode does not give his source, and we have no means of finding where he received his information. All we can conclude from the evidence is as follows:—

1. There was a family of De Lambeleys.
2. One of them, called Richard, was a Prior between 1214 and 1225.
3. One, called Radulph or Ralph, became Abbot in 1225 or 1226.
4. One, named Robert, owned a seal, and was an officer in the Abbey holding an office entitling him to the use of a seal. The only office one can guess at is the office of Prior, and this question must await consideration of our other seal.

The name De Lambeley is probably a territorial name, and in this view let us consider where Lambeley or Lamley may have been.

The name Lambeley or Lamley may be, as suggested by David Miller, the name of lands still known as Langley, or Langley Park, near Dun, in Angus.¹ But it is perhaps more probable that the name refers to lands to which reference is made in the later charters of Arbroath as Lamlaw. This was a small property in the near vicinity of Arbroath which, we find from a register in 1500, lay just outside the considerable tract of land which the monks used as a farm known as their "Ward."² It was leased along with Cairnie, part of the Ward, in 1500. The let specifies "*terram que vocatur terra fabricæ jacentem prope Carny et terram subtus Lamlaw extra wardam nostram*": "The land called the Smith's land lying near Cairny and the land lying below Lamlaw outside our Ward." The same terminology appears in a later lease in 1527.³ The position of Lamlaw is now unascertainable, but it must have been somewhere near the present lands of Cairniehill in the north outskirts of Arbroath. The change from Lamley to Lamlaw in three hundred years is not so violent as to be incredible.

Seal No. 2 is in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh (fig. 4). It is No. 981 in Laing's *Catalogue*, p. 174. This is how he describes it: "A full length figure of an Abbot, in pontifical vestments, his right hand raised, and his left holding a crozier. On each side is a figure of an angel with the thurible. At the lower part of the seal is a demi-figure of a monk praying. 'S'P. (F?) W. MATHI MONAC. D. ABIRBROTHOT.' The original brass matrix of this seal was found at Arbroath the latter end of last century."

¹ *Arbroath and its Abbey*, p. 192.

² *Liber S. Thome*, pt. ii. p. 329, No. 408.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 473, No. 673.

Birch¹ says it is "of the thirteenth century," and "appertained to Brother W. Matthew." "Here," he says, "under a canopy of triple arcades, we observe a figure of the Patron Martyr, the renowned Thomas of Canterbury, lifting up the right hand conventionally in the attitude of one pronouncing a benediction, between two kneeling angels, one of whom holds a censer and a palm branch, the other the quatrefoil flower of divine love and a palm branch; in base under a smaller canopy is the figure of the monk half length in profile to the left. The legend in this case leaves no doubt that the seal belonged to the above-mentioned monk, for the legend reads: 'S. F. W. MATH'I MONACI D'ABIR-BROTHOT.'"



Fig. 4. Impression of the Seal of W. the son of Matheus, monk of Abirbrothot.

The matrix is made of brass, is oval in shape, and measures 29 mm. by 22 mm. (fig. 4).

The figure of the Archbishop in the centre stands under a canopy of a debased cusped ogival arch, ornamented above by three crockets of fleur-de-lis character. The archbishop holds his right hand raised in benediction. In his left hand he holds the crozier, the distinctive feature of an archbishop. Bishops hold the crook. The two small censuring angels, one on each side, are swinging the thuribles, which appear at the level of the saint's head. The feet of the archbishop stand on a platform formed by two conjoined triangles, panelled, the space immediately underneath the figure arranged to accommodate the small kneeling figure of a monk. He is in the attitude of prayer. On his shoulder he has a folded hood. This figure in profile, especially the hands, the hood, and the folded habit, corresponds narrowly to the figure in the Lambile Seal No. 1.

I am indebted to Mr James S. Richardson, H.M. Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland, for valuable assistance in elucidating the various ecclesiastical vestments seen on the seal. If we compare the detail with plate III. in the *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament* by A. W. Pugin, we readily recognise the archiepiscopal dress. He holds the crozier and wears the mitre. The amice is unmistakable round the neck, and the pallium is distinct lying over the orphrey of the chasuble. The chasuble itself is neatly folded, and covers arms and body. The albe reaches to the feet, and the two terminations of the stole are clearly delineated. One cannot detect a dalmatic, but the maniple is noticeable falling from the arm on the left side.

It is interesting to compare these vestments with the splendid

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 74.

fragment of sculpture, which has survived to us in a sadly mutilated state, found and preserved in the Abbey (fig. 5). It is all that we have of a noble figure of Saint Thomas that once stood in some sacred place



Fig. 5. Statue of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Abbot's House Museum, Arbroath.

and probably in some conspicuous position. It is made of fine free-stone, and stands 4 feet 6 inches in height. The right hand and forearm, now lost, had apparently also been held up in benediction. That he held the crozier in his left hand, now also similarly torn off with its forearm, admits of no possible doubt, as we see where the long staff impinged against the chasuble. The orphrey of the chasuble is richly decorated with intricate embroidery, and so are the amice, the stole, the maniple, and the apparel of the albe. The stole and maniple are tasselled. Minute evidences of gold embroidery can still be seen. The

statue itself was at one time decked out in many colours, and must have been an imposing sight.

The illustration is taken from a photo of the statue kindly lent for the purpose of this paper by the Department of Ancient Monuments, H.M. Office of Works, Edinburgh.

The legend runs almost as Laing read it. S stands for Sigillum. The next letter may be a P or a D, more probably the latter, representing "Domini" or "Dompni," a common designation for a monk. The large W may be William or it may be Walter. The M of MATHI is Lombardic, and when we examine the lettering further we notice that the letters adhere to the Lombardic character, to a large extent if not entirely. The MATHI has a definite circumflex sign over the second half of the H, denoting the genitive as in the Abbey Charters. This means that the word is Mathei, the son of Matheus. The D before Abirbrothot is attached to the rest of the word and not separated by a dot as Laing indicated. The translation submitted is: "The seal of Prior W. (or Dom. W.) the son of Matheus, monk of Aberbrothock."

A small portion of the outer band round the legend at the top left shows a faint dotted curve.

Whose name does this seal record? Professor R. K. Hannay, to whom I submitted an impression of the seal, gave me the first clue to its interpretation when he suggested that it must belong to one of the officers of the monastery. Of the various officials in the earlier period, the one to whom the seal most readily applies is the Prior.

This office of Prior is disclosed to us in very early charters. Later the office of sub-prior is mentioned. The Prior seems to have acted as Vice-Regent to the Abbot. Later we have direct evidence that he presided over the meetings of the monks when the Abbot was elected. There is no reason to think that this function was not exercised even at an early period. Further consideration must be deferred until we discuss the evidence regarding Prior W.

Two priors are mentioned in early thirteenth-century charters of the Abbey of Aberbrothock, and only two. This does not mean that the office of Prior did not continue. One prior we have already met in the form of a certain De Lambeley, the surname denoted on No. 1 Seal; the other is Prior W., who figures in Charter 63, p. 42, of the *Liber S. Thome*, in connection with certain lands in the territory of Rossyn or Rossie, near Montrose. This charter has also been seen and a portion photographed in the National Library, and is here submitted (fig. 6).

The charter records that Hugo Malherbe, the son of Hugo Malherbe,

gave "two bovates of land" to the Abbey, and that those two bovates were perambulated "coram domino W. Priore de Abirbr. et coram domino Clemente ejusdem loci monacho," also in the presence of others whose names are mentioned "et multis aliis" (and many others)

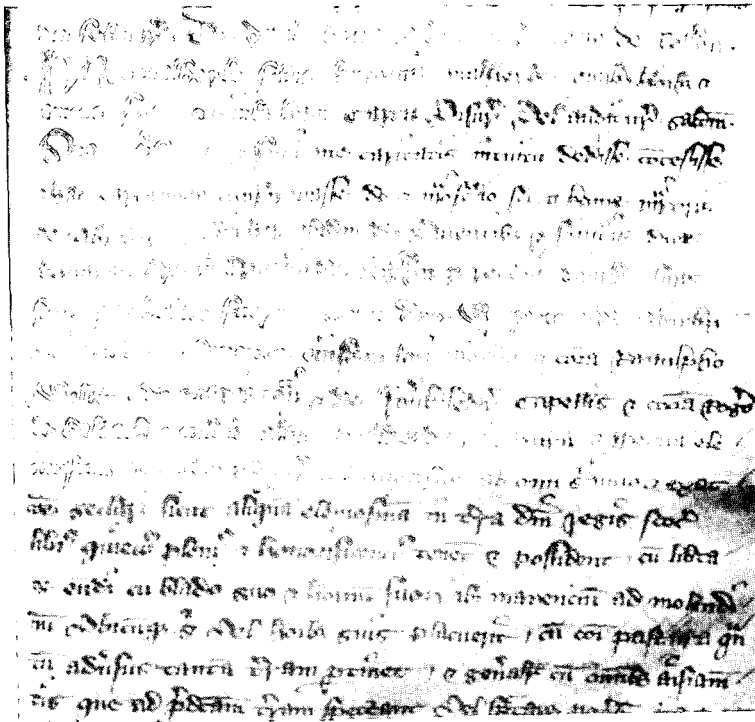


Fig. 6. The Charter of two bovates of land in the territory of Rossie (1211-1214).

(fol. 57). Amongst those names we find that of Roger de Balcathyn, who is mentioned elsewhere as one of two Provosts of Arbroath, ("prepositus").¹ He also attests as a witness. Other witnesses are Serlo, the clerk, and A. [Adam], the senescallus, with his son Robert; also another senescallus, named Robert. Note that we have already encountered both of those names Serlo and Adam in the Charters of Kenny.

The date of this charter is given as 1211-14 by the editors of the Bannatyne edition.² King William the Lion confirmed this charter,³

¹ *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 55.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. iv.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 43.

and as he died in December 1214, the gift of Malherbe occurred in or before 1214. Compare now this charter with the Kenny Charter further. Both charters deal with records of perambulations. The monk Clement was present at both perambulations. Adam, the senescallus, and Serlo, who were therefore alive before 1214 and after 1225, as pointed out, witnessed both documents. The name De Lambeley and that of Prior W. in one and the other correspond, to some extent at least, with the two seals under examination. We can also fix an approximate date for the perambulations. The Kenny Charter, although in Radulph's time (1226-39), tells us that the perambulation was carried out in Gilbert's period (1214-25). The Rossie Charter deals with a perambulation in or before 1214, so that we can conclude that the Prior Richard de Lambeley and Prior W. both held this office in a period with its centre round about the end of the second decade of the thirteenth century.

Priors do not appear again in our Abbey Registers for two hundred years. The first sub-prior we are told of is called Thomas de Fowlis, (1425)¹ and he acts as Vice-Abbot in the Abbot's absence, "abbate in remotis agente." Later, in 1455, Thomas Driden is claustral sub-prior of the monastery, in a document regarding the resignation of Abbot Richard, which resignation is placed in the hands of Thomas.² At the election of Richard Guthrie, Abbot in 1470, described as Professor of Sacred Theology and prior of the monastery, a certain John Ancoll, then claustral sub-prior, presided.³

On 8th August 1482 William Bonkyl, a monk of the Abbey, was elected Abbot, and Thomas Bet, the Sub-Prior presided.⁴ The speech proposing election is recorded. After the election the monks sang the Te Deum Laudamus, and caused the bells to be rung in the Abbey Church.

The name following the large W is Mathi. As said, it is probably the genitive of Matheus.

In the charters of the early thirteenth century many persons called Matheus appear. One, an early witness, is the son of Dufsyth, the ancient celtic lord of Conan, or Cairnconan.⁵ The son of Matheus, the son of Dufsyth of Conan, also appears.⁶ Matheus is also a burgess of Aberbrothock in 1242,⁷ showing how early persons claimed their burgess

¹ *Liber S. Thome*, pt. ii. p. 56.

² *Loc. cit.*, p. 87.

³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 165.

⁴ *Loc. cit.*, p. 184.

⁵ *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 40, post 1180.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*, p. 162.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*, p. 32.

rights. Magister Matheus was Chancellor to Alexander II., and he attests a charter in 1229,¹ also in 1219. From the beginning of our charters, Matheus, Bishop of Aberdeen, previously Archdeacon of St Andrews, is witness to documents. He it was who, in 1178, consecrated Abbot Reginald, who came from Kelso as first Abbot of Aberbrothock, the see of St Andrews being vacant at the time. This ceremony took place in the presence of the King, William the Lion, at Arbroath.² This Matheus of Kininmonth founded the Cathedral of St Machar at the Bridge of Don.³

We may now conclude by summing up the visible and documentary evidence which may have some reference to the seals under review.

(1) Both the seals belong to the early thirteenth century, and are connected with Arbroath Abbey Monastery. (2) They were probably made by the same person, and about the same time. (3) They were probably used by (a) a prior of the family of De Lambeley, which family gave at least two other officials to the monastery, Richard de Lambeley, Prior, and Radulph de Lambeley, Abbot; and (b) a prior named W. whose father may have been one of the several persons called Matheus mentioned in the documents, and whose name may be recorded in a particular charter. (4) The seals were probably in use by those Priors in the election of new Abbots, and when they acted as Vice-Regent in the Abbot's absence.

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 79; also p. 86.

² *Liber S. Thome*, pt. i. p. 9.

³ Spottiswoode, *History*, pt. i. p. 200.