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THE HISTORY OF NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT.

By MISS HEARN.

(A Lecture delivered at the Town Hall, Newport, on August 19th, 1915.)

WE are indebted to the Mayor for the great privilege he has accorded us this afternoon of viewing the ancient Charters, Maces and other objects of interest which belong to the historical town of Newport. A brief account of the beginning of the borough in connection with the Town Hall may be of interest to all. When William of Normandy crossed the Channel and claimed England as his kingdom he gave the Lordship of Vectis, or the Isle of Wight, to his near kinsman, William Fitz Osborne. Then Carisbrook or the Caer was the stronghold of the Normans, and the little fishing village of Medyne was still in its infancy.

During the reign of Henry I the Lordship of Vectis was granted to Richard de Redvers, Earl of Devon, and the village received its first step of importance when that powerful ruler granted a Charter of Liberties in 1180.

This valuable document is very concise, and consists of a grant of liberties in general terms, but the names of the witnesses give us some idea of the leading knights of the Island at that time.

Will. Fitz' Estur.	Robert de Sorewell.
Walter de Insula.	Will de Argentin.
Roger de Aula.	Peter de Eversey.
Willn. Maskaroll.	Radulphus de Glamorgan.
Robert Trenchard.	Will de Insula.
Robert de Affeton.	Henrie Trenchard.
Adam de Compton.	Robert Fitz' Brient.

A more important Charter was granted by Isabella de Fortibus, Lady of the Isle of Wight (in 1283), granting to the town the property of felons, fugitives and *felo de se* within the borough, and a tax on all vessels coming into the mouth of the river, but the original is missing. The Isle of Wight was sold to Edward I in 1293, when the Royal lady was on her death-bed, and from that time it has been governed by Captains, Wardens and Governors under the Crown.

Succeeding Sovereigns confirmed this Charter, and each Royal document is beautifully embellished by penmanship in Indian ink.

The Charter of Elizabeth is missing, but the copy recapitulates those of former Kings in its curious preamble:—

"Elizabeth by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. She beheld the Charter of her brother Edward VI.

"Edward VI beheld the Charter of Henry VIII.

"Henry VIII beheld the Charter of Henry VII.

"Henry VII beheld the Charter of Edward IV.

"Edward IV beheld the Charter of Richard II.

Grenfall.

"Richard II beheld the Charter of Edward III.

"Edward III beheld the Charter of the good Ladye Isabella de Fortibus who in her pure widowed gave granted and confirmed the Charter of Medyne now commonlie called Newporte to the Baylives and Cornburgesses of the same as in the said Charter shall and may more at large appear."

The Charter of James I is next in order, then the Commonwealth, Oliver Cromwell, and then two Charters of Charles II.

It will be noticed that from the reign of Edward III all the Charters are dated from Westminster.

The seals are of special interest. The Griffin on the earliest document belongs to Richard de Redvers, the great Earl of Devon.

It represents a Griffin, a fabulous animal, but with a very dangerous aspect. Seals were considered of very great importance in olden days. In fact, they were the very essence for the confirmation of the document. Then follow the seals with a figure under the triple canopy. That of Edward VI and James I has an enthroned figure, with a greyhound passant beneath.

In the Commonwealth Charter the obverse seal is "A Session in Parliament"; on the reverse a Map of England and Ireland.

While those Charters belonging to Charles II have an equestrian figure on the obverse, and on the reverse a good portrait engraved.

Charters and Confirmations.

C. 1180. Ric de Redvers.
Seal, green wax, only left. A griffin passant, lower portion. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1265. Isabella de Fortibus.
Copy in Charter Book. Original missing.

C. 1353. Edward III. Westminster, 9 Feb. A. O. 26.
Original missing. Copy in Charter Book.

C. 1393. Richard II. Westminster, 8 May. A. O. 16.
Seal, green wax. *Ob.* Mounted and armed figure to right. *Re.* Figure enthroned under triple canopy. Two shields at side. Parchment mutilated.

C. 1394. Richard II. Westminster, 5 Feb. A. O. 17.
Seal as above. Parchment badly mutilated.

C. 1401. Henry IV. Westminster, 5 Feb. A. O. 2.
Seal, green wax, in fair condition. *Ob.* Mounted and armed figure to right. *Re.* Figure enthroned under canopy, two shields at sides. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1413. Henry V. Westminster, 1 Feb. A. O. 1.
Seal, green wax, in good condition, one corner off. *Ob.* Mounted and armed figure to right. *Re.* Figure enthroned under canopy, two shields at side. Parchment in bad condition.

C. 1439. Henry VI. Westminster, 6 July. A. O. 17.
Seal, green wax, in fair condition. *Ob.* Mounted figure to right. *Re.* Seated figure under triple canopy. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1464. Edward IV. Westminster, 5 Oct. A. O. 4.
Seal, green wax, in fair condition. *Ob.* Mounted figure to right. *Re.* Figure enthroned under triple canopy. Parchment mutilated.

C. 1489. Henry VII. Westminster, 30 Oct. A. O. 5.
Never sealed. Parchment in good condition. Ink blotted.

C. 1531. Henry VIII. Missing. 11 Feb. A. O. 22.
There no doubt existed such a Charter as Edward VI on his Confirmation, 9 July, A. O. 3. Mentions his Father's Charter and Confirmation, 11 Feb., 22 Henry VIII.

C. 1547. Edward VI. Westminster, 11 July. A. O. 1.
Seal, brown wax, centre portion only left: a beautiful impression. *Ob.* Mounted figure to right. *Re.* Enthroned figure under canopy, at bottom a greyhound passant. Parchment in good condition, but stained with red ink.

Elizabeth.
Copy in Charter Book. Original missing. Copied into the Vellum Charter Book in 1747.

C. 1607. James I. Westminster, 3 Jan. A. O. 5.
Seal, brown wax, in good condition except wear. *Ob.* Mounted figure to right. *Re.* Enthroned figure under canopy. Beneath a greyhound passant. Parchment in very bad condition.

C. 1651. Commonwealth. Westminster, 24 Jan., 1651.
Seal, yellow wax, broken to bits. *Ob.* Parliament in Session. *Re.* Map of Great Britain and Ireland. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1655. Oliver Cromwell, Protector. Westminster, 20 Feb., 1655.
Seal, yellow wax, as last exemplification of letters patent. Rex. Edward VI. Capitaino Insule. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1661. Charles II. Westminster, 9 Dec. A. O. 13.
Seal, green wax, only a portion left. *Ob.* Equestrian figure to right. *Re.* Figure enthroned; a good engraved portrait initial. Parchment in good condition.

C. 1684. Charles II. Westminster, 5 March. A. O. 36.
Seal, green wax, as before; large, in fair condition. Perpetuity granted the Corporation. Hand-drawn portrait initial. Parchment in fair condition. Gone at folded corners.

The town was governed in early years by a bayliff and vice-bayliff, and 24 chief burgesses to act as Aldermen. No one could be a burgess unless he owned a "place" which was a plot of land. These worthy men held their court in a small audit house, which stood on part of the site of this present town hall. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth this civic house fell into decay, but those in authority "patched it up and mended the windows and gave it a coat of whitewash, and so were content" to hold their meetings. In the reign of James I, owing to the influence of Lord Chief Justice Fleming, Newport became a corporate town, and a Mayor was elected, and twelve Aldermen and twelve Councillors, and in 1637—in Charles I reign—the Town Council decided to put down the "decayed audiett house," and a larger building was then built in 1638 on the same site, and the large sum of £500 was raised throughout the Island, with the understanding that the audit house should be for the whole community. There are prints still to be seen of this ancient audit house, which was used until 1814, when that building was pulled down and the present hall completed in 1816 at a cost of £10,000, from the designs of John Nash, Esq., who also built the Institute opposite the Bugle. Several adjoining houses were then pulled down to give room for the larger Town Hall.

The council chamber is a fine room, 28 ft. by 30 ft., and communicates with the magistrates' room, which is 30 ft. by 20 ft.

The platform on which the magistrates sit, together with the witness boxes, are fixed to the floor by screws which can be removed, and the partition between the two rooms can also be taken down, so converting the apartment into one large room, size 48 ft. long and 30 ft. wide, and 22 ft. in height.

There are smaller rooms for the use of the Judge and Town Clerk, and formerly, in 1832 and later, the small rooms above were used by the two Lodges of Free or Accepted Masons in the town of Newport—the Albany Lodge, 249; the Vectis Lodge, 579. But on that sub-

ject I must remember their motto—"I came—I heard and was silent."

Many great functions have taken place in this hall. A banquet was given here on August 4th, 1854, when H.R.H. Prince Consort laid the foundation stone of St. Thomas's Church. The Mayor and Corporation also entertained Garibaldi at a banquet when he visited the Island.

The title of Mayor is of very ancient origin, and the office was one of the highest dignity among the Francos or Franks; the office was in reality that of Chief Judge or Governor of the affairs of a state or town. The name originally came from the two old German words, *mord, Dome*, which meant Judge of murders. Later the Gauls Latinised the title into *Major Domus*, or the Master of the House. The title of Lord Mayor of London was not adopted until 1534-5; previous to that he was styled "My Lord the Mayor." Alderman comes from the old Saxon—the elder men.

The first Mayor on the tablet on the south wall is that of Mr. John Ridge, and year by year the name of the worthy representative of the Town of Newport is recorded in letters of gold as a memorial of the responsible office which he holds for one year. The "swearing in" of the Mayor formerly took place in the Church of St. Nicholas, in the Castle of Carisbrook, before the Governor of the Island, but the custom was changed in 1843, when that sacred edifice became dilapidated. The official proceedings now take place in the council chamber of the Town Hall.

The Mayor takes the necessary oaths set forth in the Statute Book, and makes the required declarations at the time of his appointment; and I have no hesitation in saying that the present Mayor, in taking that oath of allegiance, felt the solemn responsibility which was placed upon him, and in every way has acted for the welfare of the borough.

The Mayor's robe is of scarlet, faced with sable. The Alderman's robe of dark cloth, faced with sable. The Councillor's robe is of black cloth, faced with blue

velvet. The gold chain of office is very beautiful; it is of snake pattern.

There are also two silver medals, one of the late Queen's Jubilee, 1887, and the other of the Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

The duties of the Mayor seem to vary with the period, and in the early times of their appointment the Mayor was Churchwarden.

During the reign of James I, in 1604, the government of Newport was constituted into a mayoralty, consisting of the Mayor and twenty-four burgesses. To-day we have six Aldermen and eighteen Councillors.

The manner of choosing a new Mayor by pricking the name gave rise to an unmannerly action in 1620 by Chief Burgess Edward Waterlow, who snatched the voting paper out of the hands of the Town Clerk, by reason of which the election of Mayor could not proceed, and Edward Waterlow was dismissed his office. At the Court of Common Council held the next year—August, 1621—it was decided to have two ballot-boxes made of oak, and at the election of Mayor the two names of two of the chief burgesses were written, one on either box, and every member of the Corporation had a red and white ball given them to put in either box. The burgess who had most white balls was then elected Mayor. The ballot-boxes are of carved oak, and the bullies or balls are turned, and then painted red or white. Some oak galls have been put among the real balls. This is the oldest known instance of voting by ballot in England.

The mace is the emblem of authority, and has come down to us from ancient days. In Biblical times it was the heavy club or rod used for offence and defence. In Anglo-Saxon times the mace-heads resembled a thick-headed club, which was studded with nails or bosses. The mace-heads have come down to us in various forms, which are carried before our Mayor or chief men on special occasions as symbols of the authority and justice which they hold against the enemies of law and order. There are five maces in the Island at the present time.

The mace of Newtown is a good example of the boss-headed club, which was formerly used in battle. It is now in the possession of the Simeon family at Swainstone, having been purchased by Sir Richard Simeon after the passing of the Reform Act in 1832. When the British Archæological Association visited the Island in 1855 they had the opportunity of seeing the Newtown mace, and while the Members of the B.A.A. were examining the silver mace, the seal of engraved wax at the top fell out and revealed on the reverse side the arms of the Commonwealth. Either from motives of economy, or perhaps thinking the Commonwealth would not long continue, the seal was thus engraved, but at the Restoration the arms of Edward IV came uppermost again.

The mace of Yarmouth is silver-gilt, and was presented to that town by King Charles II when he visited Sir Robert Holmes at his house, which is now converted into an hotel.

The two Newport maces on the table are very fine indeed.

The large mace was presented to the Borough by John Lord Cutts in 1698. The Royal Arms of England are to be seen on the head of the mace, and the centre of the shield bears the escutcheon of Pretence with the arms of Nassau and Orange. Shield, *azure*, Villettée, lion rampant, *or*.

John Lord Cutts was rather a notable man. He fought for William III in Flanders and afterwards greatly distinguished himself at the Battle of the Boyne. He was so intrepid in facing and attacking the enemy that he was called the Salamander.

William III appointed him Governor of the Island, and he was also several times returned as M.P. for Newport and also for Cambridge.

The smaller mace is also of very beautiful workmanship, and was presented to the town in 1775-6. Three years ago these Borough maces were sent up to London to be valued by the Keeper of Metal Work in the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington.

Large mace, London hall mark for 1696-7. Maker's mark F. G., for Francis Garthorne.

Small mace, London hall mark for 1775-6. Maker's mark, S.·W. Supposed to be Samuel Wood.

The possible value is £700 for the larger mace, and £120 for the smaller one.

The large leather gloves or hands remind us of the Whitsuntide fair: the glove is at the end of a long pole, and one was put out from the balcony at the front of the Town Hall, while the other, in early Victorian days, was fastened in front of the Newport Arms in St. Thomas's Square.

The fair was generally held close to the church in olden times, as the priests received a tithe from those who had stalls, and the bargains were usually ratified in front of the Cross. The fair was transferred to Quay Street after the erection of the new church of St. Thomas; it was again removed to Kingsfield, near the brewery, and died away on Hunnyhill some few years ago.

The "open hand" represents freedom and liberty; it was put out on the Whit Saturday at four o'clock P.M., and remained until the same hour on the following Wednesday. During those days no arrests were made for drunkenness or disorderly conduct, and this free license gave rise to every kind of evil. It was customary for every one to exchange gifts or "fairings," so all kinds of goods were exposed for sale on the stalls: crockery ware, including huge dogs, lambs, and lovers quaintly dressed in briliant-coloured costumes, basket-work of all kinds, and gingerbread in every device, more especially gilded lions and elephants; also soldiers fully equipped for the war, and there were the favourite gingerbread snaps. There were shows of various kinds and marvellous panoramas and whirlygigs.

The pewter inkstand is massive, and the sand-sifter, which was used instead of blotting-paper, also the empty pewter-case for wafers used in sealing letters.

In the court hall is a fine monument in plaster-of-Paris of Lord Chief Justice Fleming. The ancestor of this worthy man came over with Baldwin de Redvers

from Flanders; and under the skill of John le Fleming as a freemason, the beautiful abbey of Quarr was built.

The family of Flemings prospered, and were worthy people in the reign of Henry VIII. The Lord Chief Justice was born at the old-fashioned gable-house of his father, at the corner of St. Thomas's Square, where the elder Fleming kept a hardware shop in the reign of Elizabeth. His cousins were also very celebrated men during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Dr. Eades was born at a clothier's shop in St. James's Square, and was the domestic chaplain to Queen Elizabeth. Dr. James was born in the house opposite the town hall and was her physician. The Queen always spoke of these as her three good Newport men: one for her body, one for her sowle, and one for her goodes.

During the reign of James I, Lord Chief Justice Fleming purchased the Quarr estate, which comprised the Abbey, Combley, Nineham and Hazeley.

The monument represents Sir Thomas Fleming seated in his robes of office, and on the panels beneath in bas-relief are three incidents in his life:—1. His introduction to Queen Elizabeth; 2. In the House of Commons; 3. At the trial of Guy Fawkes, where he sat as Judge in 1605. (The plot was discovered November 5th, 1605. The execution of conspirators was on January 30th and 31st, 1606.)

The paintings in the Council Chamber are of interest. The life-size painting of Sir Leonard Thomas Worsley Holmes is by "Owen," and was presented to the Town Hall by the inhabitants of Newport.

The three sea pictures are by Mr. Fowler of Ryde; "Yachting in the Solent" is considered good. The portraits of many of the Mayors during recent years recall familiar faces which now alas! are gone from our midst.

The Yeomanry who went out from the Island to the Boer war have their names written on the tablet on the east side.

The silver medal given by Queen Victoria to the Corporation was in remembrance of the marriage of Princess Beatrice with Prince Henry of Battenburg, at Whippingham Church, on July 23rd, 1885.

The Judge's chair in the court hall is beautifully carved, so also are the two side chairs; under the seats are to be seen the names of the clever workmen—T. Barnes, S. Coats, H. Patten. The Royal Arms above the judge's chair are those of George III. The Arms of Hanover are blazoned in the fourth quarter. The Borough arms are also hung in the court hall, and represent "the ancient ship of commerce sailing over the rippling waves." Another shield with the arms of Newport can be seen in the adjoining room with the Latin inscription, and we heartily wish that the old shippe may have fair winds and a smooth sea for many a year to come, in spite of these perilous times, and although it is impossible for all to be at the helm, yet it is the privilege of each one to uphold the honour and dignity of the sphere in which they live.

The small medallions on the north wall are likenesses of some of the famous men who have represented Newport in past years.

Lord Palmerston became M.P. for Newport in 1807, and his colleague in the representation being Sir Arthur Wellesley, who afterwards became the Duke of Wellington.

Rev. Boucher James, in his "Historical and Archæological Letters" writes:—"A Borough which has returned Lord Falkland in the Long Parliament, and after him four Prime Ministers — Stanhope, Canning, Duke of Wellington, and Lord Palmerston — has no reason to be ashamed of its electoral annals."

John Mann—a fine portrait. By his will, dated January 3rd, 1688, he devised the sum of £53 16*s.* 4*d.* from the Manor of Oberton, in Yorkshire, to be paid to the Mayor and burgesses of the town of Newport and their successors, to be by them applied for the maintenance, education, and placing out in the world, poor orphans in the said Borough. Died 1705. His father,

Eustace Mann, had possession of Osborne estate, and he presented the beautiful silver communion service to St. Thomas's Church in 1637. His shield, bearing a mailed arm displayed, is carved on the back of the pulpit in the church.

The Borough arms are represented on every side. In one of the side rooms there is a carved shield with the shippe of commerce sailing over a rippling sea.

In the place that e'en in dying
Thou wouldst not fear to be;
The work that is most needed
For God, the world, and thee.