

The Acquisition of Colerne and Stert as New College Estates (1387–1394)

Colerne and Stert are two peaceful villages in the county of Wiltshire. Situated on a slight eminence (166 m) seven miles northeast of Bath and mentioned by that name in the Domesday Book, Colerne was the site of a church of St John the Baptist built in the 13th century,¹ while in the Middle Ages Stert possessed only a chapel belonging to the church of Urchfont. Like Stert, the small village of Colerne had several mills and, in the 14th century, was renowned for raising sheep and manufacturing textiles.

TWO MEDIEVAL WILTSHIRE MANORS

The acquisition of the manors there in the 14th century, with the church advowson at Colerne, was a key moment, along with the other acquisition in Wiltshire of Alton Barnes a few years earlier,² in the construction of the patrimony of New College under its founder William of Wykeham (1320–1404). Wykeham donated 22 manors to New College during his lifetime, and, between them Colerne and Stert accounted for almost 10% of its available income at the end of the 14th century³. Examination of their deeds, comprising a dozen documents preserved in the college's archives,⁴ reveals the methods used by the intelligent bishop of Winchester to ensure the continuity and success of his educational foundation. Many of these documents also bear unique witness to the writing media of the period and the use of French in Wykeham's entourage.

The history of Colerne and Stert intersected with English political history several times during the 14th century; they changed hands variously before falling to Wykeham.⁵ Included in the possessions of Humphrey Lisle, of Norman origin, at the time of the Conquest, the manors of Colerne and Stert were at the end of the 12th century part of the barony of Castle Combe belonging to the Dunstanvilles.⁶ In 1309, the estate passed to the powerful Bartholomew of Badlesmere, whose rebellion in 1321 led to his execution in 1322 and the consequent confiscation of his possessions, including Colerne and Stert, and their transfer to the father of King Edward II's favourite, Hugh le Despenser the Elder. On the latter's death in 1326, Badlesmere's widow, Margaret de Clare, obtained from the king the right to recover these estates for life, like her late husband's other possessions. In 1329, however, the new king Edward III withdrew Colerne and Stert and offered their reversion to Henry Burghersh, bishop of Lincoln, then chancellor of England. The latter officially took possession of these estates on the death of Margaret de Clare in 1333/34. On the death of Burghersh in 1340, his brother Bartholomew the Elder inherited the

I am very grateful to Michael Stansfield, Archivist & Records Manager of New College, for his help in preparing and proofreading this contribution. Any remaining errors are, of course, my sole responsibility.

¹ Edward W. Godwin, 'An Account of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Colerne', *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 3 (1857), 358–66.

² Michael Stansfield, '[The Acquisition of Alton Barnes as a New College Estate in 1385](#)', *New College Notes* 20 (2023), no. 3.

³ Jennifer Thorp, 'College Estates', in *New College*, ed. Christopher Tyerman (London: Third Millennium, 2010), pp. 90–93, at p. 90; R. L. Storey, 'The Foundation and the Medieval College, 1379–1530', in *New College Oxford 1379–1979*, ed. John Buxton and Penry Williams (Oxford: The Warden and Fellows of New College, Oxford, 1979), pp. 3–43, at p. 8.

⁴ New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231 to 10253. On the archival treatment of these documents in modern and contemporary times, see Stansfield, '[Acquisition of Alton Barnes](#)', note 8.

⁵ Most of the property titles from the 13th and 14th centuries have been analysed by E. M. Thompson, 'Records of Wiltshire parishes: Erchfont with Stert', *Wiltshire Notes and Queries* 4 (1908–1910), 114–21, 161–7, and 201–8. For a recent overview of Stert's history, see A. P. Baggs, D. A. Crowley, Ralph B. Pugh, Janet H. Stevenson, and Margaret Tomlinson, 'Parishes: Stert', in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 10*, ed. Elizabeth Crittall (London: Oxford University Press, 1975): <www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol10/pp155-159>.

⁶ G. Poulett Scrope, *History of the Manor and Ancient Barony of Castle Combe, in the County of Wilts* (London: J. B. Nichols & Son, 1852), pp. 28–9. See New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 9820: Contemporary copy of an *inspeximus* of an inquisition held at Castle Combe, Wilts, 1269/70, on the death of Walter de Dunstannulla and concerning the manors of Combe, Colerne, Stert, Hurdcott and Heytesbury, all Wilts (6 July 1385).

estate. His son, Bartholomew Burghersh the Younger, one of the first knights of the Order of the Garter in 1348, became the owner in 1355. On his death in 1369, the manors of Colerne and Stert were given to his second wife Margaret Gisors for life, while his heiress after her was his daughter Elizabeth born of a first marriage. It was with this Elizabeth that William of Wykeham first dealt concerning the Colerne and Stert property.

Although these were part of the diocese of Salisbury when the bishop of Winchester began the process of acquiring them, he had already had a legal framework for some ten years on which to build a legacy for his foundations. A papal bull of approval for his colleges on 1 June 1378 and a royal licence on 30 June 1379 to allow the mortmain alienation of a series of lands in favour of his colleges guaranteed him the support of the spiritual and temporal powers that would ensure the solidity of the titles he would be able to acquire.⁷ He had already experienced the strength of these provisions on the occasion of his first major acquisition, that of Alton Barnes, made in 1367 and only ceded in 1385 to New College.⁸ Unlike this first case, however, the acquisition of Colerne and Stert did not constitute a land reserve for the future, but was planned from the outset to round out the assets of New College, which had been founded for just over ten years when the manoeuvres began, and there is every reason to believe that it was conceived for this purpose alone.

The estate of the bishop of Winchester, already one of the richest in England, had grown steadily during the 14th century, thanks to the demographic and economic upheavals caused by the Great Plague of 1348–9. The plague—and its aftershocks in the following decades—had wreaked terrible havoc on the population of this part of England. It had emptied many farms of their ploughmen, and the turnover of owners had been accelerated by sudden deaths linked to the epidemic, although the effects on the land market during the second half of the 14th century should not be exaggerated.⁹ Wykeham, elected bishop of Winchester in 1366, took advantage of the fall in prices brought about by the temporary withdrawal of income due to the absence of tenants, the real availability of property for direct purchase, and the feudal possibilities of managing the property of minors under the bishop's guardianship, to gain control of a considerable estate to which he applied renewed and solid management.¹⁰ With Colerne and Stert, there is no room for doubt: the aim was *ab initio* to fortify 'Seinte Marie college of Wynchestre en Oxenford', i.e. New College.

Elizabeth Burghersh (c. 1342–1409) was the widow of Froissart's friend Edward le Despenser (1336–1375), the grandson of Hugh le Despenser the Younger who, after the battle of Poitiers, had been made a baron and knight of the Garter in 1357. By 1369, Elizabeth had not only inherited the title of Baroness Burghersh from her father, but also the inheritance rights to his estates. To acquire Colerne and Stert, Wykeham obviously had to come to an agreement with her. But these possessions had remained the life estate of the second wife her father had married in 1366, Margaret Gisors (c. 1340–1393), who could not be left out of the negotiation. Margaret had remarried for the third time in 1382 to William Burcestre (c. 1360–1407), sheriff of Kent, and the couple was also called upon to define his terms.

ACQUISITION OF REVERSION RIGHTS (1387)

The acquisition began in 1387. The previous year, the buildings of the Oxford foundation had been completed, but the attitude of the fellows left much to be desired. Following a visit in 1385,

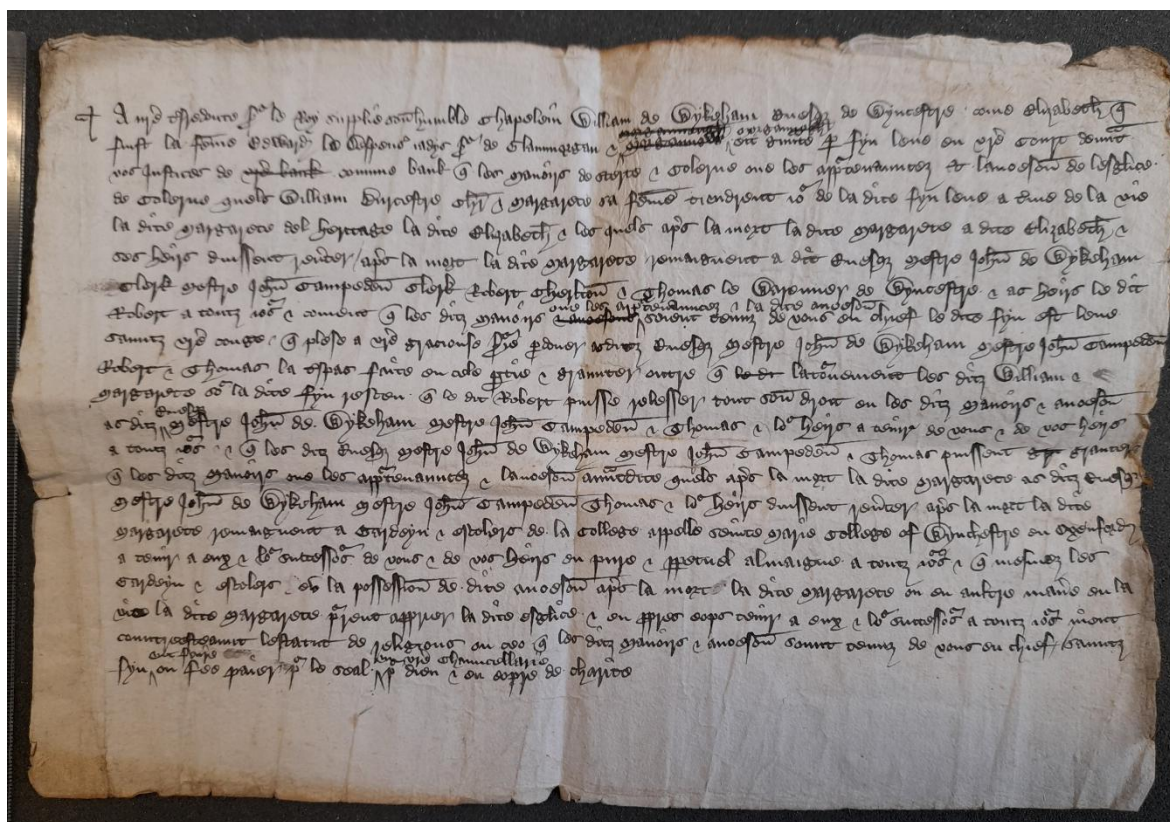
⁷ Virginia Davis, *William Wykeham: A Life* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), p. 151.

⁸ Stansfield, 'Acquisition of Alton Barnes'.

⁹ A. Elizabeth Levett and A. Ballard, *The Black Death*, Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History 5 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916).

¹⁰ Mark Page, 'William Wykeham and the Management of the Winchester Estate, 1366–1404', in *Fourteenth Century England III* ed. W. Mark Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 99–120; Davis, *William Wykeham*, pp. 119–29: '10. Income and Estates'; John Mullan and Richard Britnell, *Land and Family: Trends and Local Variations in the Peasant Land Market on the Winchester Bishopric Estates, 1263–1415* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010).

Wykeham had been advised that indiscipline had crept into the community—‘wild grapes were growing in his vineyard’¹¹—and he had lectured the warden to enforce strictly the statutes.¹² After this disciplinary reprimand, Wykeham consolidated his college’s assets by seeking new sources of income. The first logical step towards the acquisition of Colerne and Stert was a direct transaction with Elizabeth Burghersh, who held the property rights. On 9 November 1387, she relinquished her right of reversion to the manors of Colerne and Stert, and the advowson of the church of Colerne, after the death of Margaret Gisors, for the sum of 700 marks in favour of Wykeham and various members of his entourage.¹³ But very quickly—a sudden realization after an unfortunate oversight, or a deliberate manoeuvre to present the sovereign with a *fait accompli*?—Wykeham realized that he needed royal authorization for a transaction involving feudal elements over which the king had a say.¹⁴ The petition he drew up for the King’s attention, in which he recounted the transaction of 9 November 1387, appealed to the King’s forgiveness for having neglected to obtain his prior authorization in this matter, while asking him to validate it *a posteriori*.¹⁵



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10245

Draft of the petition of William of Wykeham to King Richard II (c. 1387)

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This document was written in French (or Anglo-Norman). By that time (1387), the use of this language in England was in decline. For Wykeham, who probably belonged to the last generation for whom this language constituted the indispensable medium for entry into the

¹¹ Storey, ‘Foundation and the Medieval College’, p. 8.

¹² Davis, *William Wykeham*, p. 83.

¹³ NCA 10234.

¹⁴ For a general overview of the feudal stakes involved in transactions by sale or marriage at that time, see Joseph Biancalana, *The Fee Tail and the Common Recovery in Medieval England 1176–1502* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ NCA 10245, and Appendix 1.

political society of the time, it was more natural than English: the rare autograph letters we possess from him, one of which is preserved in the archives of New College,¹⁶ were written in French.¹⁷ In 1363, the year Wykeham became keeper of the Privy Seal, the Chancellor opened Parliament in English for the first time. This linguistic transition was already largely complete by 1387, as evidenced by the cross-outs and interlinear additions concerning English toponyms that the scribe seems to have hesitated to transcribe directly into French. A third (four out of twelve) of the documents in the Colerne and Stert files are written in French. To explain this unusual number of deeds in French, which contrasts with the scarcity of documents in this language in the New College archives for this period,¹⁸ we must certainly take into consideration the status of the people present. Wykeham, Elizabeth Burghersh and Margaret Gisors belonged to the upper echelons of society. In fact, it is highly likely that Elizabeth expressed herself primarily, if not exclusively, in French, as the legend on her personal seal seems to indicate, partly in French—a remarkable oddity in the late 14th century (and probably even earlier). The fact that Wykeham’s petition to the king was written in French would then tend to underline the direct, non-administrative nature of his request to a sovereign to whom he was so close.



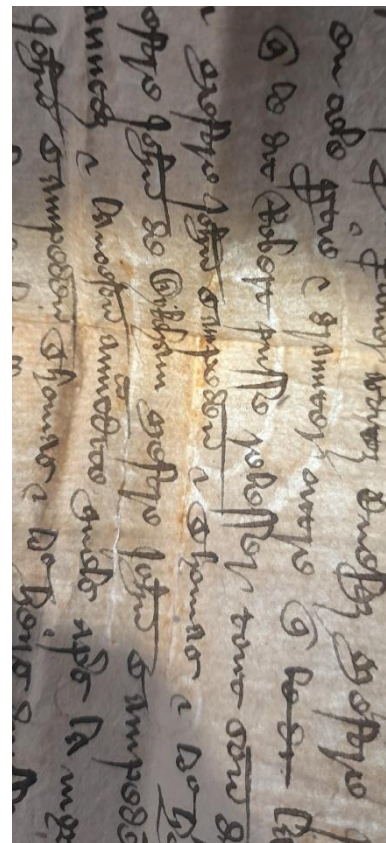
New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10234
 Receipt of Elizabeth Burghersh to William of Wykeham for 700 marks
 for the reversion of the manors of Stert and Colerne, 9 November [1387]:
 Seal of Elizabeth Burghersh, 38 mm, coat of arms, per pale, quarterly, a bend, chequy, a lion rampant,
 flanked by ES initials, with a bird above; legend: *le:seal:elizabethie:le:despensere*

¹⁶ NCA 3954, Letter from William of Wykeham to John Lord Cobham, Sheen (21 décembre 1366).

¹⁷ Davis, *William Wykeham*, p. 10. Despite the tradition and the fact that it was already used among the English society in the 14th century (Mark Griffith, ‘[The Language and Meaning of the College Motto](#)’, *New College Notes* 1 (2012), no. 1), it seems that we do not have any documented witness of the use of the English motto of Wykeham’s colleges (‘Manners Makyth Men’) during the lifetime of the bishop of Winchester, by himself or by his educative institutions.

¹⁸ According to New College’s Archives catalogue. There is no exhaustive list of documents in French in the Oxford College Archives, without speaking of systematic editions. One exception is *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions from All Souls MS. 182*, ed. M. Dominica Legge (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941). On the relative ‘invisibility’ of French language in English studies, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “Invisible Archives?” Later Medieval French in England’, *Speculum* 90 (2015), pp. 653–73.

The petition to the king must have been a decisive enough act for Wykeham and his patrimonial strategy that he kept not only a parchment copy of the original sent to the king, but also the draft which is also quite unusual and remind us that at the same time notaries in Italy or South of France were also recording the documentary witnesses of the first stage of their work. The draft had been written on paper, another peculiarity of a documentary file that is not short of them. As we know, paper was not produced on English soil until the end of the 15th century, and even then it was only a trial run with no immediate future, at least until the end of the 16th century, when national production really began. Until then, paper was no more unknown in the British Isles than on the Continent, but it was all imported. The draft of the 1387 petition bears a watermark at its centre, representing the letter 'P' written in Gothic script surmounted by a four-leaf floret. While the motif was common in the following century, especially in the Germanic area, and has also been reported in Flanders and Northern France,¹⁹ the New College watermark, unknown to the main repertory on the subject, would be the earliest evidence of this image. The fact that the draft was written on paper, while the copy of the original was drawn up on parchment, clearly marks a form of hierarchy between the two media, and underlines the character of paper at the time, destined to capture innovation and invention, and thus the first version of a text.²⁰ The appearance of this medium in the Colerne and Stert dossier should be taken for what it is: a manifestation of contemporary use in the king's administration and justice, for example in Richard II's King's Bench, heralding a general success in the following century.²¹ In 1387, therefore, it must not have been difficult to obtain paper from Wykeham's entourage, be it the administration of his bishopric, his political correspondence or his academic circle.



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10245

Draft of the petition of William of Wykeham to King Richard II (c. 1387):
Watermark with a Gothic 'P' in Gothic script surmounted by a four-leaf floret

A draft worked out on paper, a text in French: Wykeham had thus put all the trump cards on his side to convince the king. Anyone other than Wykeham might have been asked to reconsider his somewhat rushed affair, but in truth, at this date, the bishop of Winchester was not risking a rebuff from a Richard II preoccupied by a major political crisis (Lord Appellants) during which Wykeham was constantly present at his side.²² In fact, Richard II's letters patent in response to the petition were sealed without a moment's delay on 22 November 1387,²³ completing this first, essential part of the acquisition of the Wiltshire estates. This was done according to a practice already tried and tested by Wykeham in previous acquisitions. Elizabeth Burghersh had in fact ceded her reversionary right to Colerne and Stert not only to Wykeham, but also to four other persons who appear alongside the bishop of Winchester in the same capacity as him, according to the legal form of feoffee shared by several.²⁴ Although we cannot say whether Wykeham played a

¹⁹ Charles M. Briquet, *Les filigranes: Dictionnaire historique des marques du papier*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (Leipzig: K. W. Hiersemann, 1923), III, 462–8.

²⁰ Orietta Da Rold, 'Writing on Paper: Tradition and Innovation', *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 94–142.

²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 163–4.

²² Davis, *William Wykeham*, p. 85.

²³ NCA 10248.

²⁴ K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 146–7; Robert C. Palmer,

decisive role in the introduction around 1375 and the long success of this new legal formula, it is worth noting that he did not hesitate to use it on numerous occasions to acquire property through co-feoffees, whose composition varied somewhat from one transaction to another. In the case of Colerne and Stert, there were four Wykeham's faithfuls in whom he had every confidence and who would obey his every future will: John Wykeham, John Campden, Robert Cherlton, and Thomas le Warenner. The first was a cleric trained in law at Bologna and then Oxford, who was there primarily because of his kinship with the bishop who had showered him with benefices.²⁵ The second was the true right-hand man on whom Wykeham relied to look after the interests of his Oxford and Winchester colleges. Campden, who had also trained in civil and canon law at Oxford, was involved with many other feoffees alongside his boss, had been made Master of St Cross's Hospital in Winchester, and was appointed by Wykeham as one of his will's executors.²⁶ As for Cherlton and Le Warenner, respectively judge of the 'common bench' of the appellant lords²⁷ and Wykeham's episcopal officer, of whom he was probably a relative, they were clearly there to secure the transaction and bring their expert weight to bear.



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231
Grant of the manors of Colerne and Stert and advowson of Colerne
by William of Wykeham, John of Wykeham, John Campeden, Robert Charleton, and Thomas le Warenner
to the warden and scholars of New College, 1 April [1389]:
Seal of William of Wykeham

English Law in the Age of the Black Death, 1348–1381: A Transformation of Governance and Law (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 110–32.

²⁵ A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957–59), III, 2110.

²⁶ *ibid.*, I, 343–4; Davis, *William Wykeham*, pp. 133–4.

²⁷ Davis, *William Wykeham*, p. 134; Gwilym Dodd, 'Charleton, Sir Robert (d. 1395/6)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (25 May 2016) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/94545>> (Accessed: 28 July 2025).



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231: Seal of John of Wykeham



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231: Seal of John Campeden



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231: Seal of Robert Charleton



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10231: Seal of Thomas le Warenner

NEW COLLEGE'S PATRIMONY (1389–1393)

A year and a half after the transaction with Elizabeth Burghersh, by deed dated 1 April 1389, Wykeham and his team of co-feoffees, as announced in the 1387 petition, granted the manors of Colerne and Stert, together with the advowson of Colerne, to the warden and scholars of New College.²⁸ A few weeks later, on 4 May 1389, Wykeham became Richard II's chancellor. There is certainly no direct connection between the two events. On the other hand, it is probable that the bishop of Winchester's political advancement made it easier for him to reach an agreement on 20 June 1389, by which Elizabeth Burghersh acknowledged in the King's court that Wykeham and his familiars were the rightful owners of the property they had purchased from her, and therefore implicitly entitled to enjoy it as they saw fit, including donating it to a corporate body such as the college.²⁹ Judging by two new documents drawn up on 5 June 1390 and 19 November 1390,³⁰ in which Elizabeth Burghersh reiterated her right to make whatever transactions she wished concerning Colerne and Stert, and confirmed the agreement with Wykeham, the *manoeuvres* of the enterprising bishop of Winchester was, to say the least, unprecedented or uncertain.

Passing on reversion to his Oxford foundation in advance was also bound to give rise to legal proceedings on the part of the other party, that is Margaret Gisors and her husband William Burcestre. It explains why Wykeham requested, and obtained from them, an attorney's letter of 14 July 1392, in which the lifeholders of Colerne and Stert acknowledged the legality of the transfer of these properties to the warden and scholars of New College, and undertook to pay symbolically the sum of one denarius by way of acknowledgment.³¹ His resignation as chancellor on 27 September 1391 had not weakened Wykeham's position, as he continued to enjoy the king's confidence. It was on his initiative, as the crisis between Richard II and the city of London reached a climax, that the king opened Parliament in Winchester on 21 January 1393, and spent part of the year in the dioceses of Salisbury and Winchester.³² During this year, Wykeham pressed his advantages to secure the acquisition of Colerne and Stert. Not content with having secured the future reversion, its transfer to the college and the recognition of these initial deeds by the life owners, the bishop of Winchester was eager to press his case so that his College could enjoy the revenues from these manors without delay.



New College Archives, NCA 10240

Agreement between William Burcestre and Margaret, his wife,
and Thomas Cranley, warden of New College, and the scholars there, 20 June 1393
Seal of William Burcestre Seal of Margaret Gisours

²⁸ NCA 10231.

²⁹ NCA 10243 and NCA 10244. The sum paid to Elizabeth le Despenser was then expressed as £500.

³⁰ NCA 10238 and NCA 10236.

³¹ NCA 10239, and Appendix 2.

³² Davis, *William Wykeham*, p. 93.

In two deeds dated 20 June 1393, the new warden of New College (named explicitly after the founder, ‘college l’evesque de Wyncestre appelez Seinte Marie college of Wynchestre en Oxenford’), and future archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Cranley (c. 1340–1417), and the scholars of the college took possession of the manors of Colerne and Stert. Like the letters of attorney of 1392, both documents were written in French, a clear sign of a transaction between people of the same generation—Cranley was the same age as Margaret Gisors—who probably were more used to French than English, and may have preferred to verify what they agreed between themselves. In the first document,³³ Warden Cranley and the scholars agreed to grant an annual annuity of 100 marks to Margaret Gisors and William Burcestre in exchange for their immediate surrender of the manor and advowson revenues. In a second deed,³⁴ they agreed to assume Burcestre and Gisors’s debts relating to the transferred properties; a fine of 200 marks was imposed in case of non-compliance. Above all, an agreement was reached on the appointment of the incumbent of the Colerne church, as announced in the 1387 petition (‘en aultre manere en la vie ladite Margarete purent appropriier ladite esglise’): Burcestre and his wife retained the right to choose the priest and present him to the warden and scholars, but if the bishop refused the appointment because of the candidate’s inadequacy, they would have to renew the appointment until episcopal approval was obtained; if the warden and scholars disregarded this right of presentation, they would be fined £40.

The meticulous care taken in drafting these anticipatory measures soon became unnecessary. In November 1393, Margaret Gisors died, paving the way for the final transfer of property rights to New College. As was customary for fees under the king’s jurisdiction, an *inspeximus* procedure was initiated and the king issued a writ to his escheator in Wiltshire to inquire into, seize and keep in safe custody the lands on 16 November 1393.³⁵ William of Wykeham concluded these proceedings in person, entrusting on 20 November 1393,³⁶ William Stourton (d. 1413), lawyer and knight of the shire (MP) for the Somerset, with an official certificate of *diem clausit extremum* for the Wiltshire escheator concerning the death of Margaret Gisors. Once again (and for the last time), the deed presented some notable features: the original Latin indenture, in a reduced size (155 x 155 mm), was drawn up on a sheet of paper, which was highly unusual for an authentic deed at the time, and perhaps still bears witness to the innovation of the bishop of Winchester. Furthermore, Wykeham sealed the document directly on the paper, in the upper left margin. The red rectangular imprint (upside down to the text), depicting a figure of a man wrapped in a long cloak with a stick surmounted by a cross or a point lying on his right shoulder, may have been made with a gem (intaglio). Even if it is not uncommon in the Middle Ages to re-use antique gems as seals,³⁷ this one could be of a more recent age, even in the late 13th or 14th century.³⁸ It was inserted in a ring (14 mm diameter) that Wykeham must have held on his finger; the ring should have been probably buried with Wykeham himself, since there are no evidences of it either in New College collections or in public collections.³⁹ Never before has Wykeham been so close and present

³³ NCA 10232, and Appendix 3.

³⁴ NCA 10240, and Appendix 4.

³⁵ NCA 10237.

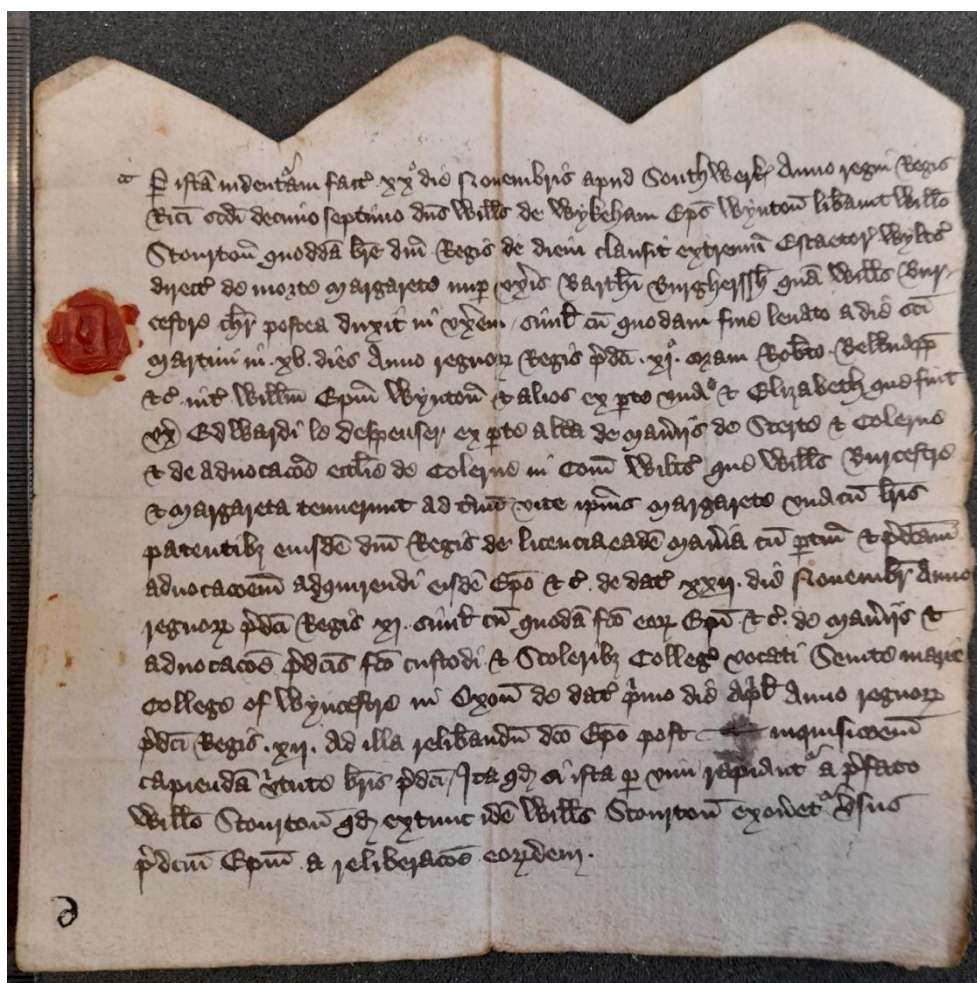
³⁶ NCA 10242.

³⁷ Caroline Simonnet, ‘The (Re-)Use of Ancient Gems and Coins: The Presence of Antiquity in Medieval Sigillography’, in *A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. Laura J. Whatley (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 355–95.

³⁸ Many thanks to Claudia Wagner (Lady Margaret Hall) and Anna Blomley (New College) for their advice and suggestions.

³⁹ Unlike Stephen Gardiner’s episcopal ring, also made from a Roman intaglio, which was found in his tomb during work carried out in the first half of the 19th century (John Vaughan, *Winchester Cathedral: Its Monuments and Memorials* (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1919), pp. 65–6), Wykeham’s tomb does not appear to have been analysed internally. Wykeham does not mention a ring of this type in his will: Robert Lowth, *The Life of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester* (London: A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), Appendix No XVII, pp. xxxiv–xlvi. New College has only one ring that could be quite surely attributed to Wykeham: ‘Of the two rings, one is a small and plain gold one set with a table ruby, and can hardly be so early as the bishop’s days. The other is a large and massive gold one with an irregularly shaped greenish crystal in a heavy claw setting. On each side of the bezel is a figure in low relief of an

as in the final scene of this multi-act documentary play.



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10242

Indenture by which William of Wykeham handed over to William Stourton
a royal writ de diem clausit extremum for the Wiltshire escheator, 20 November [1393]



New College Archives, Oxford, NCA 10242: Presumably seal of William of Wykeham

angel with outspread arms and wings issuing from a cloud, and below some other ornament, beyond which is a St. Andrew's cross' (W. H. St. John Hope, 'The Episcopal Ornaments of William of Wykeham and William of Waynfleet, sometime Bishops of Winchester, and of certain Bishops of St. Davids', *Archaeologia* 60 (1907), 465–92, at pp. 482–3).

Wykeham's familiarity with the aristocratic world, his eminent position as a powerful prelate of the region, the competence of his entourage, and his privileged links with the reigning monarch meant that he was able to make the most of the tangle of English customary and feudal arrangements in which the king played a role of guarantor as much as of controller. The New College's lordship over Colerne and Stert soon manifested itself in the keeping of accounts,⁴⁰ repairs to Colerne church as early as the end of the 14th century⁴¹ and the royal grant of a market at Colerne in 1447, all punctuated in subsequent times by the progress of the various wardens.⁴² One of these, Herbert Fisher, expressed doubts in 1926 about the value of retaining these remote Wiltshire properties, with their uncertain returns.⁴³ Colerne, the weakest property according to Fisher, was sold in 1932. In the first half of the 19th century, Stert Manor had been divided into two farms, Stert Farm and Hatfield Farm; these were sold, along with other minor acquisitions made since the 14th century, by New College in 1951 (191 acres) and 1963 (465 acres) respectively,⁴⁴ while the manor itself was finally sold in 1968. For almost six centuries, these farms had made a solid contribution to the educational work intended by William of Wykeham, whose archives are now as rich as they are exceptional.

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⁴⁰ The first rolls of the Colerne's and Stert's *compoti* dates of Mich 1393 to Mich 1394 (NCA 5960 and NCA 6902).

⁴¹ Godwin, 'Account of the Church', p. 363.

⁴² R. L. Pickard (ed.), *Progress Notes of Warden Woodward for the Wiltshire Estates of New College, Oxford, 1659–1675*, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Records Branch, 13 (Devizes: Northumberland Press Ltd, 1957), pp. 18–38 ('Progress Notes for Stert') and pp. 39–69 ('Notes for Colerne'). Many notations relate to the felling of trees and the sale of wood.

⁴³ NCA 3510 (five pages on Stert and one for Colerne).

⁴⁴ Baggs *et. al.*, 'Parishes: Stert'.

APPENDICES

Note: the transcription has been made in accordance with French philological practice: the punctuation and the use of modern upper and lower case have been restored; accentuation has been limited to acute accents for finals and to disambiguate certain words ('après'); abbreviations have been developed according to the scribe's habit when equivalent words are not abbreviated ('sire', 'evesque', 'chivaler', etc.).

1.

[c. 1387]. S.I.

Contemporary copy. NCA 10235, parchment, 140 x 340 mm.

Draft. NCA 10245, paper, 195 x 285 mm.

Petition to the king Richard II by his chaplain William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, that as Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Bartholomew Burghersh, formerly wife of Edward le Despenser, lord of Glamorgan and Morgannogh, granted by fine levied in the court of king's bench that the manors of Stert and Colerne with the advowson of the church of Colerne, which William Burcestre, knight, and Margaret his wife held from the day of the fine for the life of Margaret, of the inheritance of Elizabeth, with reversion to Elizabeth, now the reversion should rather remain to the said bishop, John of Wykeham, clerk, John Campeden, clerk, Robert Cherlton, and Thomas le Warenner of Winchester, and the heirs of the said Robert, and that as the manors and advowson are held of the king in chief, and the fine has been levied without his consent, they petition for his concession, and that Robert can release his interest in them, and that after Margaret's death the manor and advowson can remain to the warden and scholars of the college called Seinte Marie College of Wynchestre en Oxenford, to be held of the king in pure and perpetual alms, and that the warden and scholars can appropriate the advowson after Margaret's death or in another manner during her life, the mortmain statute notwithstanding.

A nostre tres douté⁴⁵ sire le roy supplie son humble chapeleyn⁴⁶ William de Wykeham, evesque de Wyncestre, come Elizabeth, file et heir mons. Bartholomeu de Burgherssh,⁴⁷ que fuist la femme Edward le Despenser, jadys sire de Glammorgan et Morgannogh⁴⁸, eit grannté⁴⁹ par fyn levé en votre court devannt vos justices de⁵⁰ commune⁵¹ bank que les manoirs de Sterte et Colerne ové les appartenaunce⁵² et l'avoeson de l'esglise de Colerne, quels William Burcestre, chivaler, et Margarete sa femme tiendrent jour de la dite fyn levé et terme de la vie la dite Margarete de l'heritage la dite Elizabeth et les quels après la mort la dite Margarete a dite Elizabeth et ses heirs duissent reverter après la mort la dite Margarete remaignent a dit evesque, mestre Johan de Wykeham, clerk, mestre Johan Campeden, clerk, Robert Cherlton et Thomas le Warenner de Wyncestre et as heirs le dit Robert a toutz jours; et coment que les ditz manoirs⁵³ ové les appartenaunce⁵² et la dite avoeson soient tenuz de vous en chief, le dite fyn est levé sanz votre congé. Que plaise a votre gracieuse signorie perdoner as ditz evesque, mestre Johan de Wykeham, mestre Johan Campeden, Robert et Thomas, la trespas faite en celle⁵⁴ partie et grannter outre que l'atournement les ditz William et Margarete sour la dite fyn resten que le dit Robert puisse relessier tout son droit en les ditz manoirs et avoeson as ditz evesque, mestre Johan de Wykeham, mestre Johan Campeden et Thomas et leurs heirs a tenir de vous et de voz heirs a toutz jours et que les

⁴⁵ redouté, *draft*.

⁴⁶ chapeleyn, *draft*.

⁴⁷ file et hoir (. . .) Burgherssh, *omitted in draft*.

⁴⁸ Morgannol, *cancelled in draft*; Morgannaugh, *interlinear addition also cancelled*; Morgannogh, *final interlinear addition*.

⁴⁹ grante, *draft*.

⁵⁰ erere bank, *cancelled in draft*.

⁵¹ comune, *draft*.

⁵² appartenaunce, *draft*.

⁵³ et avoeson, *cancelled in draft*.

⁵⁴ cele, *draft*.

ditz evesque, mestre Johan de Wykeham, mestre Johan Campeden et Thomas puissent granter⁵⁵ que les ditz manoirs ové les appartenauncez et l'avoeson avant dite quels après la mort la dite Margarete as dits evesque, mestre John de Wykeham, mestre Johan Campeden et Thomas et lour heirs duissent reverter après la mort la dite Margaret, remaignent a gardein⁵⁶ et escolers de la college appellé Seinte Marie college of Wynchestre en Oxenford à tenir à eux et lour successours de vous et de voz⁵⁷ heirs en pure et perpetuele⁵⁸ almoigne⁵⁹ a toutz jours et que mesmes les gardeyn et escolers ev la possession de dite avoeson après la mort la dite Margarete ou en aultre manere en la vie la dicte Margarete purrent approprier la dite esglise et en propres oeups tenir a eulx et lour successours a toutz jours vient contreestaunt le statut de religious ou ceo que les ditz manoirs et advoeson sont tenuz de vous en chief sanz fyn eut faire ou fee paier pour le grannde⁶⁰ seal en votre chauncelrie⁶¹ pour Dieu et en eopre de charte.

2.
[1392], 14 July. S.I.

Orig. NCA 10239, parchment, 115 x 350 mm, sealed by two red seals.

Seals:

1. Round, complete, 23 mm, on a parchment, through a slit in a turnup; with a coat of arms of three heads, within an engrailed shield shaped border; legend: *sigill willelmi de burcestre*.
2. Round, complete, 24 mm, on a parchment, through a slit in a turnup, in a dark red seal bag partially unpicked; with a coat of arms, per pale, lion rampant and lion rampant on a field of ermine, within a scalloped border; legend: *sigil margarete de burgherssh*.

Letters of attorney of William Burcestre, knight, and Margaret, his wife, formerly wife of Bartholomew Burgherssh, knight, holding the manors of Stert and Colerne in Wiltshire along with the advowson of the church of Colerne for the life of Margaret with the reversion for William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, John of Wykeham, clerk, John Campeden, clerk, Robert Cherlton, chivaler, and Thomas le Warenner of Winchester, which reversion by royal licence they have granted to the warden and scholars of the college called Seinte Marie College of Wyncestre en Oxenford, after Margaret's death, letters of attorney of their fealty by Burcestre and his wife to the warden and scholars by payment of 1 d to them.

[*On the reverse, of contemporary writing:*] Littera attornamenti Willelmi Bincestre, chivaler, factum custodi et scholaribus collegii.

[*Idem, lower:*] Sterte. Colerne.

A toutz yceux qui cestes lettres verront ou orront, Willam Burcestre, chivaler, et Margarete sa femme et nadgairs femme a mons. Bartholomeu de Burgherssh, chivaler, que Dieu assoille, salut en Dieu. Come nous tenoms les manoirs de Sterte et Colerne ové les appartenantz en le counté de Wyltes ensemblement ové l'avoeson de l'esglise de Colerne a terme de la vie la dite Margarete, la reversion eit regardant a reverent piere en Dieu sire William de Wykeham, evesque de Wyncestre, mestre Johan de Wykeham, clerc, mestre Johan Campeden, clerc, Robert Cherlton, chivaler, et

⁵⁵ granter, *draft*.

⁵⁶ gardeyn, *draft*.

⁵⁷ vos, *draft*.

⁵⁸ perpetuel, *draft*.

⁵⁹ almaigne, *draft*.

⁶⁰ grannde, *omitted in draft*.

⁶¹ chauncellarie, *draft*.

Thomas le Warenner de Wyncestre et lour heirs a toutz jours, quelle reversion les ditz evesque, Johan, Johan, Robert et Thomas par licence notre sire le roy ount granté as gardein et escolers de le college appellé Seinte Marie college of Wyncestre en Oxenford,⁶² fundé nadgairs par le dit evesque, a avoir et tenir les ditz manoirs ové les appartenantz ensemblement ové l'avoeson avanndite après la mort de la dite Margarete as ditz gardein et escolers et lour successours a toutz jours, sachez que nous avoms attourné de notre fealté et par paiement de un denir as ditz gardein et escolers par force du grannt susdite et granntons pas icestes de faire a mesmez les gardein et escolers et lour successours pour les manoirs et avoeson susditz ové les appartenantz pour la vie la dite Margarete en manere come nous fesoiasmes as ditz evesque, Johan, Johan, Robert et Thomas devant la grant susdite, en tesmoignance de quelle chose a ycestes noz lettres avoms mys nos cealx. Donné le quatorzisme jour de juylet l'an du regne le roy Richard secunde ceszisme.

3.

[1393], 20 June. S.l.

Orig. NCA 10232, parchment, 175 x 310 mm, indented head, zig-zag, sealed by two red seals.

Seals:

1. Round, complete, 23 mm, on a parchment, through a slit in a turnup; with a coat of arms, three heads, within an engrailed shield shaped border; legend: *sigill willelmi de burcestre*
2. Round, complete, 24 mm, on a parchment tag, through a slit in a turnup; with a coat of arms, per pale, lion rampant and lion rampant on a field of ermine, within a scalloped border; legend: *sigil margarete de burgherssh.*

Note: between the two seals, an incision at the bottom of the document, without seal.

Grant by Thomas Cranley, warden of the college of the bishop of Winchester called Seinte Marie College of Wynchestre in Oxford, and the scholars of the same to William Burcestre and Margaret, his wife, formerly wife to Bartholomew Burgherssh, of an annual rent of 100 marks to be paid at the 4 terms of Christmas, Easter, Nativity of St John the Baptist and St Michael, in equal portions of 25 marks, for the life of the said Margaret; and if it is unpaid for 40 days, the warden and scholars will pay to William and Margaret 20 marks in addition to the arrears; and William and Margaret will provide an acquittance for each sum paid at the church of St Martin in the Fields, London, with the warden and scholars not being liable for the 20 marks if there is no acquittance.

[On the reverse, of contemporary writing:] Indentura Willelmi Bincestre et Margarete Uxoris sue.

[Idem, lower:] Sterte. Colerne.

Ceste endenture faite parentre Thomas Cranlegh, gardein del college l'evesque de Wyncestre appelez Seinte Marie college of Wynchestre en Oxenford, et les escolers de mesme le college, d'une part, et mons. William Burcestre et dame Margaret sa femme, jadis femme a mons. Bartholomeu Burgherssh, d'autre part, tesmoigne que come les ditz gardein et escolers par un escript de lour comune seal par lour assent enseallez eiont grantez as ditz mons. William et Margarete un annuel rente de cent marcz a paiers a quatre termes de l'an, c'est assavoir Nowell, Pasches, Nativité de saint Johan le Baptistre et Seint Michel par oweles porcions, c'est assavoir vint et cink marcz a chescun terme par toute la vie la dite Margarete, come en le dit escript plus pleinement est contenuz. Il est accordez entre les parties susditz que pour chescun terme et atant de foitz que le dit rente de cent marcz en parcellle de ceo soit aderers par XL jours vient paieez après ascuns des quatre termes de paiement suslimitez, les ditz gardein et escolers et lour successours paieront as ditz mons/ William et Margarete vint marcz outre les arrerages de dit rente de cent marcz, et al

⁶² 'n' correction instead of another letter scratched.

paiement de chescun des ditz vint marcz en fourme avandite paiables bien et loialment faire. Les ditz gardein et escolers soi obligeont et lour successours par icestes. Et les ditz mons. William et Margarete, si ele survive, le dit mons. William deliveront une acquittance de chescune somme a eux paieiz par les ditzs gardein et escolers et lour successours sour le paiement de dit annuel rente, pourveux toutesfoitz que acquittance d'ascuns tiels paiement alleggé ou supposé estre fait aillours q'en l'esglise de Seint Martin en la vuntre de Londres soit tenuz pour nulle et de nulle force et les ditz gardein et escolers et lour successours par icelle en nulle manere seront eidez pour barrer les ditz mons. William et Margarete. En tesmoignance de quelle chose, a l'une partie de ceste endenture demourant vers les ditz mons. William et Margarete les ditz gardein et escolers ont mys lour comune seal et a l'autre partie de mesme l'indenture demourant vers les ditz gardein et escolers les avanditz mons. William et Margarete ont mys lour sealx. Donné le XX^{me} jour de juyn l'an du regne le roy Richard le second disepisme et les parties susditz sont acordez q'en cas que les ditz William et Margaret ne facent ne deliverent une acquittance suffisante a celly q'est prist de paier le dit rente en l'esglise susdite,⁶³ q'adonq les ditz gardein et escolers n'encurgent en nulle peyne ne duete de vint marcz susditz pour non paiement du dit rente q'est issint prist d'estre paieiz.

4.

[1393], 20 June. S.l.

Orig. NCA 10240, parchment, 210 x 340 mm, indented head, zig-zag, sealed with two red seals.

Agreement between William Burcestre and Margaret, his wife, and Thomas Cranley, warden of the college called Seinte Marie College of Wynchbestre en Oxenford, and the scholars there, whereby they surrender to the warden and scholars the reversion of the manors of Stert and Colerne in Wiltshire which they hold for the life of Margaret from the morrow of St Michael next, and they will pay William and Margaret all the debts to the next All Saints after St Michael, with an indenture to be made thereof and delivered to the warden and scholars, for which the warden and scholars shall be obligated in 200 marks, and each time the church is vacant during the life of Margaret, William and Margaret, or Margaret if surviving alone, will present to the warden and scholars and if the bishop refutes their presentation, William and Margaret, or Margaret if surviving alone, will present another time, with the warden and scholars liable for £40 thereby.

Seals:

1. Round, complete, 23 mm, on a parchment, through a slit in a turnup; with a coat of arms, three heads, within an engrailed shield shaped border; legend: *sigill willelmi de burcestre*
2. Round, complete, 24 mm, on a parchment tag, through a slit in a turnup, in a dark red seal bag partially unpicked; with a coat of arms, per pale, lion rampant and lion rampant on a field of ermine, within a scalloped border; legend: *sigil margarete de burgherssh.*

[*On the reverse, of contemporary writing:*] Indentura Willelmi Burcestris et Margaretis uxoris sue.

Ceste endenture tesmoigne que acordé est entre mons. William Burcestre et dame Margarete sa femme, d'une part, et Thomas Cranlegh, gardein del college apellez Seinte Marie college of Wynchestre en Oxenford, et les escolers de mesme le college, d'autre part, que par la ou le dit mons. William et Margarete sa femme ferront une susrendre as ditz gardein et escolers des manoirs de Sterte et Colerne en le counté de Wiltes qu'eux les ditz mons. William et Margarete tignent a terme de vie de dite Margarete la reversion eut regardant as gardein et escolers susditz de cy et a lendemain de Seint Michel proschein venant pur eut franchement faire lour profit et avantage. Et auxint ils averont del dit feste tanque a la goule d'augst⁶⁴ adonque proschein ensuant le oepe et

⁶³ en l'esglise susdite, *interlined*.

⁶⁴ 1st august.

occupacion des mesons des manoirs susditz ové frank issue et entré en icelles et frank administracion de toutz lour biens en icelles, sanz ascune destourbaunce ou enpechement des ditz gardein et escolers ou lour successours ou ascun autre en lour noun par nulle voie. Et auxint les ditz gardein et escolers paieront as ditz mons. William et Margarete ou a lour executours al feste de Toutz Seintz proschein après le dit feste de Saint Michel toutz les dettes et arrerages des rentes, fermes et revenues et toutz profitz de toutz tenantz des mesmes les manoirs dues as ditz mons. William et Margarete qui seront trovez a eux dues parentre cy et lendemain del feste de Saint Michel, si les dettours soient adonques a ceo suffisantz. De quele dette serra faite une endenture parentre les ditz gardein et escolers, d'une part, et les ditz mons. William et Margarete, d'autre part, et deliveré as ditz gardein et escolers et sour ceo les ditz gardein et escolers soi obligeont et lour successours par icestes et counsteont estre tenuz as ditz mons. William et Margarete en deux cent marcz a paier en cas que les ditz gardein et escolers et lour successours enfreignent ascuns de covenantz susditz. Et outre ceo les parties susditz sont acordez que a chescun temps que l'esglise de Colerne soit voide durant la vie de dite Margarete, les ditz mons. William et Margarete ou la dite Margarete⁶⁵ si ele survive le dit mons. William nomeront ou⁶⁶ nomera une convenable persone deuiz convenable temps a terme de vie de dite Margarete as ditz gardein et escolers pour estre par eux présenté a dite esglise quele persone ils presenteront en convenable temps a dite esglise. Et en cas que le dit présenté soit par nonnabilité par l'evesque refusé, les ditz gardein et escolers eut ferront notice as ditz mons. William et Margarete ou a la dite Margarete en cas q'ele survive de nomer une autre persone convenable d'estre présenté par les ditz gardein et escolers a dite esglise. Et lesditz gardein et escolers la persone adonques par les ditz mons. William et Margarete ou par la dite Margarete si ele survive al dite esglise suffisamment presenteront. Et issint a tant des foitz que la dite esglise soit voide et a chescun temps que les ditz gardein et escolers ou lour successours facent ascune presentement a dite esglise a contrarie de la covenant avandite et ne⁶⁷ presentent mys la persone par les ditz mons. William et Margarete a terme de vie de dite Margarete come dit est nommé, les ditz gardein et escolers grantont pur eux et lour successours de paier as ditz mons. William et Margarete quarant livres, a quelle paiement bien et loialment parfaire en manere et fourme susditz ils soi obligeont et lour successours par icestes. En tesmoignance de quele chose a l'une partie de ceste endenture demourant vers les ditz mons. William et Margarete les ditz gardein et escolers ont mys lour comune seal et l'autre partie de mesme l'indenture demourant vers les ditz gardein et escolers les avanditz mons. William et Margarete ont mys lour sealx. Donné le XX^{me} jour de juyn l'an du regne le roy Richard le seconde disepisme.

⁶⁵ ou ladite Margarete, *interlined*.

⁶⁶ ou, *interlined*.

⁶⁷ ne, *interlined*.