

History of Corbridge and its Antiquities

Published by the Author Robert Forster

Printed by J. Beall, 32, High Friar Street, Newcastle: 1881

In a unique volume in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, the author has tipped in numerous manuscript pages of additional information relating to topics covered in the printed text that came to light post publication and before he sent the amended manuscript to his Uncle, Mr W B McQueen, in 1884.

There is another copy of the *History* in the Library and reference can be made to this, or SANT members may borrow the copy, to read the detailed story of the town from its very earliest reference. In the case of Forster's own copy it was felt that all the additions should be digitised and transcribed, and then given the greatest publicity and access, to avoid the rather delicate volume being handled on numerous occasions.

A copy of this file is always available to view on the public access laptop held in the Library at the Great North Museum: Hancock. It would be appreciated if readers would notify the Librarian in advance so that the computer may be set up for their immediate use. Access to this file does not require access to the internet. However, if readers wish to view it on our website prior to a library visit then of course they may do so.

This file includes images of all the tipped-in pages, and transcriptions. Our thanks to Howard Cleeve and Denis Peel for providing transcriptions, and to Howard and Sue Ward for the editorial work.

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Transcription

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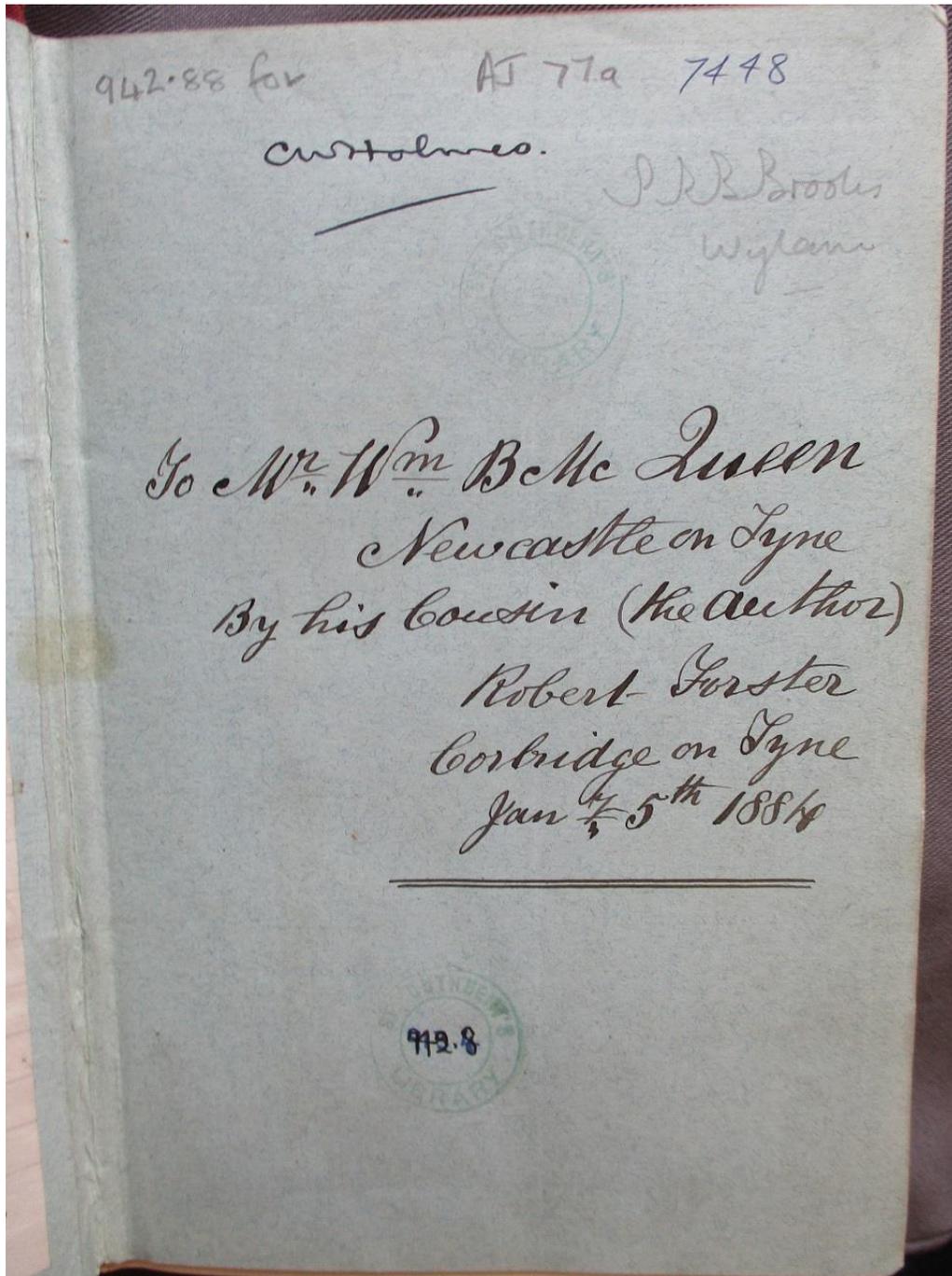
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Inscription

Opposite this index, on the flyleaf, appears the following:



Transcription:

Signature:

C W Holmes

Signature:

P R B Brooks

Wylam

Circular Library Stamp:

St Cuthbert's Library

Inscription:

To Mr W^m. B McQueen
Newcastle upon Tyne
By his Cousin (the Author)
Robert Forster
Corbridge on Tyne
Jan 7 5th 1884

Ancient Seals; 2 leaves, tipped in before p. 5

Ancient Seals Page 5

at a meeting of the Antiquarians held in Newcastle on August 30th 1882 Mr Longstaffe remarking on neighbouring cities and Boroughs said, "he was going to produce before them the Seals of the city of Corbridge. He referred at some length to the claims of Durham, Carlisle, Bamborough, and Corbridge to be cities, and in proof of this assertion, produced the discoveries of ancient royal mints which had from time to time been made.

There was no connection whatever between a Bishop and a city, for a city had to be a place of dignity, referring to boroughs, Alnwick was also a borough and so were Rothbury, Newburn, Darlington, Auckland, Stockton, Hartlepool & Newbigen, and while Auckland had lost its seals, Corbridge still had three, so had Darlington and Hartlepool.

Stockton had a device." We had the pleasure
of seeing two of the seals—which are
about the size of a fine shilling piece—
—and give an explanation and description
of them as given by Mr Longstaffe.

"These are three Impressions of common
seals for Corbridge, at Durham. One is
an agreement No 46 between Symon de
Devilstone and the Burghesses of Corbrig
about the bridge-end and a road to it. The
date is 19 Henry III (i.e., 1234) but of course the
seal may have been of much earlier date.
The reading is + S [GILLVM. COMMV] NE CORBRIGIE

The device consists of a cross slightly pater
between four men's heads in profile looking
at each other. The necks seem to be
erased. There is no appearance of
moustache or beard, nor of chain mail
but there are peculiar headpieces with
nasal defences fitting closely. As the third
seal No 46 reading + SIGILIV. COMMV NE CORBRIGIE,
has a device much like the second one—
presently to be described— and was used
in 32 Henry II. 1454 by Henry Earl of
Northumberland, lord of the Manor

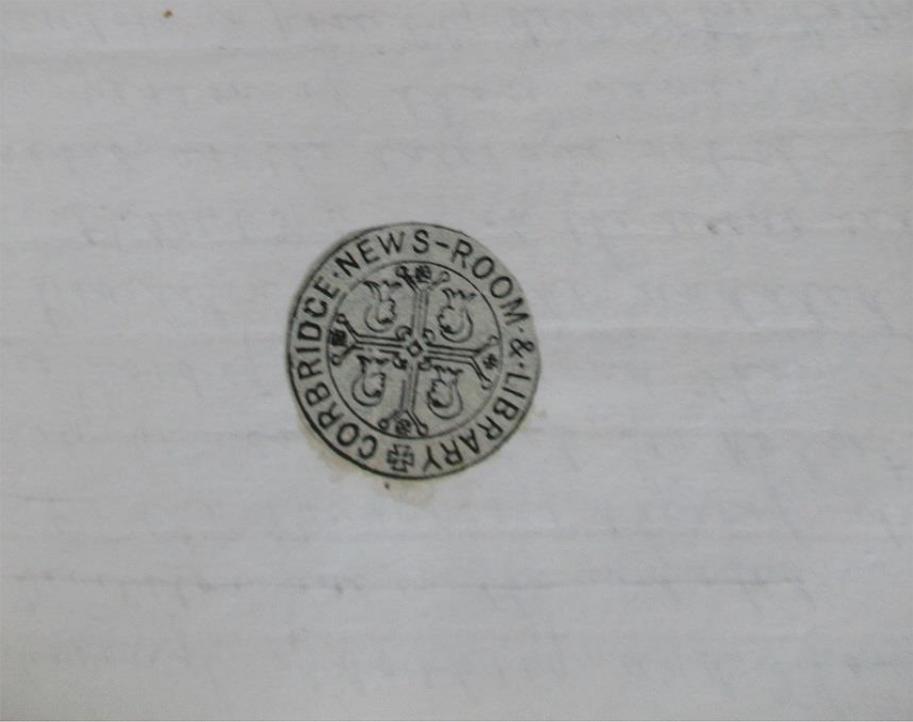
and borough of Corbrigg, and Thomas
Lord of Devilston are in the undated
agreement the Burgesses thereof, it
may fairly be assumed that Sir Robert
Fitz Roger Lord of Corbrigg, and Thomas
Lord of Devilston, are in the undated
agreement (No 463), to which the second seal
is attached, are the later and not the
earlier persons of those names. The
time therefore is possibly during the latter
part of Henry III's reign or the earlier
years of Edward I. (Edward I. 1272-1307)
the burgesses are joined with the lord.

The second seal reads + SIGILLCO MMVNE COREBRIGIE.

The general nature of the device is
the same, but the cross is ornamented
both in its centre and the ends of the
limbs. The heads hardly seem to have
any armour, the necks are clearly erased.

The device of this seal is now used as
the seal of the Corbridge Reading Room
having round its border the name of
the institution ie Corbridge News Room
and Library.

Imprint of the seal



Transcription

Ancient Seals

5

At a meeting of the Antiquaries held in Newcastle on August 30th 1882 Mr Longstaff remarking on neighbouring Cities and Boroughs said “he was going to produce before them the Seals of the City of Corbridge. He referred at some length to the claims of Durham, Carlisle, Bamborough, and Corbridge to be cities, and in proof of this assertion, produced the discoveries of ancient royal mints which had from time to time been made.

There was no connection whatever between a Bishop and a city, for a city had to be a place of dignity, referring to boroughs, Alnwick was also a borough and so were Rothbury, Newburn, Darlington, Auckland, Stockton, Hartlepool & Newbiggen, and while Auckland had lost its seals, Corbridge still had three, so had Darlington and Hartlepool. Stockton had a device.” We had the pleasure of seeing two of the seals - which are about the size of a five shilling piece, and give an explanation and description of them as given by Mr Longstaffe.

“There are three Impressions of common seals for Corbridge, at Durham. One is (on) an agreement No 46 between Symon de Devilston (and) the Burgesses of Corbrig about the bridge end and a road to it. The date is Henry III (ie, 1234) but of course the seal may have been of a much earlier date. The reading is +S[IGILLVM.COMMY]NECORBRIGIE. The device consists of a cross slightly pater between four men’s heads in profile looking at each other. The necks seem to be erased. † There is no appearance of moustache or beard, nor of chain mail, but there are peculiar headpieces with nasal defences fitting closely. As the third seal No 476 +SIGILIV.COMMVNECORBRIGIE, has a device much like the second one - presently to be described - and was used in 32 Henry VI. 1454 by Henry Earl of Northumberland, lord of the Manor and borough of Corbrig, and ~~Thomas Lord of Devilston are in the undated agreement~~ the Burgesses thereof, it may fairly be assumed that Sir Robert Fitz Roger Lord of Corbrig and Thomas Lord of Devilston, are in the undated agreement (No 463) to which the second seal is attached, are the later and not the earlier persons of those names. The time therefore is possibly during the latter part of Henry III’s reign or earlier years of Edward I. (Edward I - 1272-1307) the burgesses are joined with the lord.

†Editor’s note, *The pater or patriarchal cross is a variant of the Christian cross. It possesses a small crossbar placed above the main one, with both crossbars near the top, and is more often known today as a Cross of Lorraine.. See below. However, if this is a correct interpretation of pater it is difficult to understand the phrase ‘slightly pater’ if it was between four men’s heads.*



Bearing in mind the description of the cross in the second seal it seems that the cross had equal arms, more in line with the description of the Greek cross.



The second seal reads +SIGILLGOMMVNECORBRIGIE.

The general nature of the device is the same, but the cross is ornamented both in the centre and the ends of the limbs. The heads hardly seem to have any armour, the necks are clearly erased.

The device of this seal is now used as the seal of the Corbridge Reading Room having round its border the name of the institution ie Corbridge News Room and Library. (over)

The Skeleton of the Giant Cor, 2 leaves, tipped in before page 8

The Skeleton of the Giant Cor. 8

Mackenzie in his history of Northumberland
thus refers to the finding of the skeleton:-

The banks of the Cor being worn away
by some impetuous land floods there
was discovered about the year 1660 a skeleton
conjectured to be that of a man of very
extraordinary and prodigious size. The
thigh bone was nearly six feet in length
and the skull and teeth and other parts
were proportionably monstrous, so that
the whole length of the body was computed
at 21 feet. Some parts of it were in the possession
of the Earl of Derwentwater in 1695. A singularly
large bone found here was hung up in
the kitchen of the Old George Inn, in the flesh
market, Newcastle for many years. This
bone was purchased by the proprietor
of the Keswick Museum where

where it is shown as the rib of the giant
found at Corbridge. The original account
would appear to be in the small "History of
Northumberland" published in the reign of
George I by a person of the name of Robert
Morden. When referring to Corbridge the
writer says "But though King John discovered
nothing there considerable, yet there was found
out accidentally, about forty years ago, a
thing very remarkable. The bank of a small
torrent which comes from the wall side of
the town being worn away by some
impetuous land flood, the skeleton of a
man appeared of a very extraordinary ~~size~~
and prodigious size. The length of his thigh
bone was within a very little of two yards,
and the skull, teeth, and other parts
proportionably monstrous, so that by
fair computation the true length of the
whole body may be well reckoned at
seven yards. Some parts of it were in
the possession of the Right

Honourable the late Earl of Derwent-
water at Dilston in 1695, who was much
pleased with the variety, but his Lordship
having had no notice of it till it was in a
great measure squandered away and lost
by the careless discoverers. He could not by all
his enquiries make it so complete as any
that have a regard for such curiosities
would heartily wish it were."

The small torrent referred to is the
cos of the Romans, which was for many
years in modern times the water power of
Corbridge (manor) Corn Mill. The town is
evidently *Corstopitum* the Roman station,
and the wall side, of the boundary wall
portions of which, and of the interior walls
were standing at the time referred to.

The place where the remains were found
is near the site of the Roman cemetery.

From Newcastle Chronicle
I beg leave to supplement Mr Forster's note
on the above subject by the following
extract from "Nesham's History of West Durham"
"Tradition says that Corbridge, Benfieldside,

and Bonsett, were founded by three
brother giants, Cot, Ben, and Bon, who
are stated to have had a huge hammer
in common, which each could throw nine
miles. Mr Nesham then gives the following
extract from "Dr. Barr's Ode to the Derwent":-

In elder times giants upreared
Their heads and affronted the skies;
Cot, Ben, Bon, terrific appeared,
With names of anomalous size.
A hammer in common they had,
And the use of it easy to all.
Each whistled, each brother was glad
To throw it three leagues at his call.
When Cot was approaching his end,
Deaf, blind, and beginning to rave,
With a ploughman he begged as a friend
To converse at the mouth of his cave;
This ploughman as prudent men do,
Held his ploughshare himself to escape. X
Blind Cot pinched his ploughshare in two,
And pronounced it the arm of an ape.

Cotbridge in Northumberland and
Bonsett and Benfieldside in Durham
were places where the brothers
resided.

X This encounter took place between
Cotbridge on a lonely part of the road.

~~the front of the road~~

The Skeleton of the Giant Cor

Mackenzie in his history of Northumberland thus refers to the finding of the skeleton;- The banks of the Cor being worn away by some impetuous land floods there was discovered about the year 1660 a skeleton conjectured to be that of a man of very extraordinary and prodigious size. The thigh bone was nearly six feet in length and the skull and teeth and other parts were proportionably monstrous, so that the whole length of the body was computed at 21 feet. Some parts of it were in the possession of the Earl of Derwentwater in 1695. A singularly large bone found here was hung up in the kitchen of the Old George Inn, in the flesh market, Newcastle for many years. This bone was purchased by the proprietor of the Keswick Museum where ~~where~~ it is shown as the rib of the giant Cor found at Corbridge. The original account would appear to be in the small "History of Northumberland", published in the reign of George I by a person of the name of Robert Morden. When referring to Corbridge the writer Says [sic] "But though King John discovered nothing there considerable, yet there was found out accidentally, about forty years ago, a thing remarkable. The bank of a small torrent which comes from the wall side of this town being worn away by some impetuous land flood, the skeleton of a man appeared of a very extraordinary and prodigious size. The length of his thigh bone was within a very little of two yards, and the skull, teeth and other parts proportionably monstrous, so that by fair computation the true length of the whole body may be well reckoned at seven yards. Some parts of it were in the possession of the Right Honourable the late Earl of Derwentwater at Dilston in 1695, who was much pleased with the variety, but his Lordship having no notice of it till it was in a great measure squandered away and lost by the careless discoverers. He could not by all his enquiries make it so complete as any that have regard for such curiosities would heartily wish it were."

The small torrent referred to is the Cor of the Romans, which was for many years in modern times the water power of Corbridge (Manor) Corn Mill. The town is evidently Corstopitum the Roman station, and the wall side, of the boundary wall portions of which, and of the interior walls were standing at the time referred to. The place where the remains were found is near the site of the Roman Cemetery.

From Newcastle Chronicle

I beg leave to supplement Mr Forster's note on the above subject by the following extract from "Nesham's History of West Durham". "Tradition says that Corbridge, Benfieldside, and Consett, were founded by three Brother Giants, Cor Ben, and Con, who are stated to have had a huge hammer in common, which each could throw nine miles. Mr Nesham then gives the following extract from Dr Carr's Ode to the Derwent";-

In elder times giants upreared
 Their heads and affronted the skies,
 Cor, Ben, Con, terrific appeared,
 With names of anomalous size,
 A hammer in common they had,
 And use of it easy to all,
 Each whistled, each brother was glad

To throw it three leagues at his call,
When Cor was approaching his end,
Deaf, blind, and beginning to rave,
With a ploughman he begged as a friend
To converse at the mouth of his cave;
This ploughman as prudent men do,
Held his ploughshares himself to escape *
Blind Cor pinched his ploughshare in two,
And pronounced it the arm of an ape.

Corbridge in Northumberland and Conset and Benfieldside in Durham were places where the brothers resided.

* This encounter took place betwixt Dilston & Corbridge on a lonely part of the road.

Account of further silver finds, 1 leaf, tipped in before p 16

* Account of further Silver finds No 16
After the silver table was found two
other silver articles were discovered
under rather remarkable circumstan-
ces. The wife of the owner of the same
property (Mr C Charlton) and who
lived in a house which from its appear-
-ance was not only an old house but
had been one of a superior kind (The
Lodge adjoining Mr Edwards Mon-
-sion is erected on the site) dreamed
twice in one night that she saw pro-
-jecting from the side of a small stream
which at that time run through the
garden (and not far from where the
silver table was found) a silver
vessel; she told her husband who
set nothing by it remarking it was
only a dream; but so strongly was the
thing impressed on her mind that
she determined to examine the spot
and there discovered the article she
saw in her dream; which was de-

scribed by those who saw it as a silver
Salver; but Charlton knowing the
fate of the silver Table and knowing
it also to be "Treasure Trove" broke it in
to pieces and sold it for old silver.

The other article was described by
the late Mr. Matthew Greenwell who
often saw it when a youth and passed
as a pewter vessel; was like a small
^{wash} Basin and was used at that time for
hoeding Corn or food for feeding fowls
and was placed on an ash heap in
Main Street where it had been used
for some time and belonged to a
man of the name of Sweddell; a few
however one day in the selling of his
wares discovered it and knowing
it to be silver at once purchased
it for a few pence - it was never
more heard off; undoubtedly both
those articles were Roman work &
only confirm the opinion we have ex-
pressed that all those articles had
been concealed near together and never
again recovered by the owners.

After the silver table was found two other silver articles were discovered under rather remarkable circumstances. The wife of the owner of the same property (Mr. C Charton) and who lived in a house, which from its appearance was not only an old House but had been one of a superior kind (The Lodge adjoining Mr Edwards Mansion is erected on the site) dreamed twice in one night that She saw projecting from the side of a small stream which at that time run through the garden (and not far from where the silver table was found) a Silver Vessel: She told her husband who set nothing by it remarking it was only a dream; but so strongly was the thing impressed on her mind that she determined to examine the spot and there discovered the article She saw in her dream; which was described by those who saw it as a Silver Salver; but Charlton knowing the fate of the Silver Table and knowing it also to be "Treasure Trove" broke it in pieces and sold it for old Silver.

The other article was described by the late Mr. Matthew Greenwell who often saw it when a wash youth and passed [it] as a pewter vessel; was like a small ^ Bason [sic] and was used at that time for holding Corn or food for feeding fowls and was placed on an ash heap in the main street where it had been stored for some time and belonged to a man of the name of Tweddell; a Jew however one day in the selling of his wares discovered it and knowing it to be Silver at once purchased it for a few pence – it was never more heard off; undoubtedly both those articles were Roman work & only confirm the opinion we have expressed that all those articles had been concealed near together and never again recovered by the owners.

x Cadwallon Page 23

" One of the ancient Welsh Bards
a friend of Cadwallon, has sung
his victories, and painted his
martial character in the following
lines.

Fourteen great battles he fought
And sixty skirmishes.

Of Lloegyr (England)

The scourge and the Oppressor;

His hand was open,

Honour flew from it.

Cadwallon encamped on the Yeddon,

The fierce affliction of his foes,

The lion prosperous against the Saxons

Cadwallon in his fame encamped

On the top of Mount Digoll,*

Seven months, and seven skirmishes daily

He led the hand of slaughter in

the breach;

Eagerly he pursued the conflict

Stubborn in an hundred battles,

80 hundred castles he threw down

He made the eagles full!

Violent his wrath in the gash,
As the water flows from the fountain
So will our sorrow through the
lingering day,

For Cadwallon:

* St Oswald Hill head would
appear to answer to Mount Digoll
where Cadwallon was encamped
the night previous to the great
Battle with King Oswald, and
afterwards called Heaven Field
on account of the glorious victory
obtained by Oswald.

“One of the Ancient Welsh Bards, a friend of Cadwallon’s has sung his victories, and painted his martial character in the following lines.

Fourteen great battles he fought
And sixty skirmishes.
Of Lloegyer (England)
The scourge and the Oppressor;
His hand was open,
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Cadwallon encamped on the Yeddon,
The fierce affliction of his foes,
The lion prosperous against the Saxons
Cadwallon in his fame encamped
On the top of Mount Digoll,*
Seven months, and seven skirmishes daily
He had the hand of slaughter in the breaches;
Eagerly he pursued the conflict,
Stubborn in an hundred battles,
A hundred castle he threw down,
He made the eagles full (fall??);
Violent his wrath in the gash,
As the water flows from the fountain
So will our Sorrows through the lingering day.
For Cadwallon:

*St Oswald Hillhead would appear to answer to Mount Digoll where Cadwallon was encamped the night previous to the great Battle with King Oswald, and afterwards called Heaven Field on account of the Glorious Victory obtained by Oswald.

X Parishes page 24

Our Realm was divided
into parishes by Honorius
Arch Bishop of Canterbury
in the year of our Lord 636.

"Johnson"

Our realm was divided into parishes by Honorius Archbishop of Canterbury in the year of our Lord 636.
“Johnson”

X Corbridge in 1297 Page 29
Sir. It will I have no doubt interest many of your readers in this locality, to see the following extracts from some old documents in the Public Record Office London, lately found by a friend of mine relating to Corbridge. They carry one back to the time when the first Edward ruled in England and had much trouble in subjecting Scotland to his Authority. It is quite evident that some invasion had been made by the Scotch, and Corbridge had suffered both by fire and ~~wood~~ and an application had been made to the King to grant bricks to rebuild the town for we read "Concerning the giving of oaks, it is commanded the Sheriff of Northumbria that the Wood which used to belong to John of Balliol, lately King of Scotland of Breynshire, existing in his Sheriffdom and in the power of the King he should grant to the Burgesses of the
* The year before 1296 William Wallace burnt the town

town of Corbridge to have forty Oaks
fit for timber for rebuilding these
their Houses lately burnt down by
the scotch. By the gift of the King wit-
nessed by the King at Durham Oct 5.
But the curious part is the refusal
of the King some two years later to
grant timber for repairing the
bridge which was applied for appa-
rently by the "brothers" of some reli-
gious order there living in Corbridge.

Their request is as follows "In re-
membrance Lord King for Gods sake
of the bridge of Corbrigg, that you
would give to the bridge some timber
from the wood which belongeth to Sir
John de Bagloft in the Teyning char-
ity, and would cause great profit to the
Country if the bridge were repaired;
Then follows the Kings Answer.

The King has given to the Brothers
for their great need now, and will
not grant more in this wood until
he shall order otherwise" the first
extract is in Latin in the original,
and the second in Norman French.

Corbridge vicarage
Jan 26 G. C. Hodgson
June 22 1883

From the Keelham Herald

Sir, It will I have no doubt interest many of your readers in this locality to see the following extracts from some old documents in the Public Record Office London, lately found by a friend of mine relating to Corbridge. They carry one back to the time when the first Edward ruled in England and had much trouble in subjecting Scotland to his Authority. It is quite coin[ci]dent that some inroad had been made by the Scotch, and Corbridge had suffered by fire and Sword* and an application had by been made to the King to grant bricks to rebuild the town for we read “Concerning the giving of Oaks, it is commanded (of) the Sheriff of Northumbria that the Wood (which used to belong to John of Balliol, lately King of Scotland) of Broysire (??), existing in his Sherifffdom and in the power of the King – he should grant to the Burgesses of the town of Corbridge to have forty Oaks fit for timber for rebuilding these their houses lately burnt down by the Scotch. By the gift of the King, witnessed by the King at Durham Oct 5. But the curious part is the refusal of the King some two years later to grant timber for repairing the bridge which was applied for apparently by the “brothers” of some religious order there living in Corbridge. Their request is as follows: “In remembrance Lord King, for God’s sake of the bridge of Corbrigg, that you would give to the bridge some timber from the wood which belongeth to Sir John de Bagloft in the Hayning Charity, and would Cause great profit to the Country if the bridge were repaired:

Then follows the King’s Answer:

“The King has given to the Brothers for their great need now, and will not grant more in this wood untill he shall order otherwise.”

The first extract is in Latin in the Original, and the second in Norman French.

I am etc (... Your Obedient Servant)

G C Tevelgson

Corbridge Vicarage June 22, 1883

.....
From the Hexham Herald

*The year before, 1296, William Wallace burnt the town

