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Welsh documents, including a Royal Letters Patent of Queen Elizabeth I
In Latin and Tudor English, seven single sheet manuscripts on parchment
Wales (Pembroke and Haverfordwest) and England, 1543, 1568, 1579, 1582, 1595, 1601,
1666

Seven single sheet manuscripts on parchment as described below, all with cockling, some small smudges, and faded areas, generally in very good condition, housed in a custom box.

A small Welsh archive, very likely originally the property of Alban Stepneth, an extensive landowner and sheriff of Pembroke in Wales, as well as a member of Parliament, and his heirs. These seven documents, three of which are in English, thus form a cohesive collection that is ideally suited for classroom use to illustrate the different types of documents involved in the administration of a family's properties over a period of about a century; details of format, language, and legal formulas can all be studied here. Manuscripts from Wales are very rare on the market.

PROVENANCE

1. The content of these documents suggests that they most likely originated in the archive of Alban Stepneth (or Stepney; d. 1611) of Prendergast, and then were based down in his family.
2. Schøyen Collection, London and Oslo, their MS 1907, acquired from the late Dr. Jeremy Griffiths (1955-1997) in July 1994.

Seven documents:

1. TM 1135-1

Indenture recording sale of property at "Yelow" by "John ap Harre ap Hoell of Argoed" and Agnes his wife in the lordship of "Monhuntydale," Flint to "Res ap Edwardes ap Pell"
In English, dated November 19, 1543

On parchment, serrated top, bottom folded up with tabs for two seals (now missing), written in 38 long lines in a secretary script, (justification c. 200 x c. 265 mm.). Dimensions, 255-250 x 290-285 mm.

Previous ownership note: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/1."

incipit, "This Indentur made the xixth day of Novembr in the xxxth yere of the reign of our soueraign lord henry the eight by the grace of god kynge of england France and irlond defender of the faith ... John ap harre ap hoell of argoed in the lordship of monh[un]tydale in the countie[?] of fflynt gentilman and agnes hys wiff vpon thoon partis and Res ap Edward ap pell ...";

An indenture is a formal agreement between two parties, usually a written document with a serrated edge; the edge was used to prevent forgeries.

2. TM 1135-2

**Bond of Morgan Johns of Castle Malgwyn, Pembroke, to Alban Stepneth of Prendergast, Pembroke, with a condition referring to the sale by Johns of his part of the manor of Prendergast, to Stepneth and his wife Margaret
In Latin, dated June 12, 1568**

On parchment, written in a flowing secretary script in 23 long lines, (justification 133 x c. 293 mm.). Dimensions 155 x 320 mm.

Previous ownership notes: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/2"; "3824(1)"; verso, "9"; 10 Eliz. 1567."

Incipit, "Noverint universi per presentes me morgann Johns de castle malgwyn in conti[?] pembrogie <?> teneri et firmiter obligari Albano stepneth de Prendergast in dicto ... meo sygillat dat duodecimo die Junii Anno Regni domine Elizabeth dei gratia Anglie Francie et <?> Regine ... Ergo condicion";

A Bond was a written obligation to indemnify a loss suffered or for a failure to perform in some specified manner.

3. TM 1135-3

**Grant by Thomas Woodford of Castle Piggin, Carmarthen, and his wife Elizabeth to Alban Stepneth of Prendergast, Pembroke, of a meadow in Prendergast next to the "friar's garden" and near the mill of "Hauford," along with other estates
In Latin, dated August 18, 1579**

On parchment, bottom folded up and with two tabs for seals (now missing), written in an elegant secretary script in 31 long lines, (justification c. 160 x 300 mm.), some damage to the middle of the document where a damp stain has obliterated several words in c. 17 lines of text (the text, although very faint, remains largely legible). Dimensions c. 225 by 335 mm.

Previous ownership notes: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/3"; "3827"; verso "5" (circled).

Incipit, "Sciant presens et futuri quod nos Thomas woodford de castle piggin in conti[?] Carmathen gendrosus et Elizabeth uxor mea filia et una hered Thome Catharne ... pro Albanum Stepneth de prendengast predictum in com Pembrochie pred Anmigern ... dedimus concessimus et hac presenti carta nostra confirmabimus eidem Albano Stepneth heredibus et assignatis ... the friars garden ... dat decimo octavo die mensis Augusti Anno Regni domine nostro Elizabeth dei gratia Anglis Ffrancie et hibernie Reginis fidei defens et vicesimo primo 1579. [signed on the fold, per me Thoma[s] Woodford; extensive annotations on verso in several hands].

4. TM 1135-4

Quitclaim by Hugh Cradocke of Haverfordwest, Pembroke, "calceolarius" (shoemaker), son and heir of the late David Cradocke and his late wife Helen Murrowe, to Alban Stepneth of

Prendergast, of all right over a messuage or half burgage in "le markett Streete" in Haverfordwest In Latin, dated December 8, 1582

On parchment, bottom folded up with a tab for a seal (now missing), written in a secretary script with larger letters in textura in 20 long lines, (justification 140 x 275 mm.). Dimensions 210 x 310 mm.

Previous ownership notes: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/4"; "3828."

Incipit, "Omnibus christi fidelibus ad quos hoc presens scriptum ... Noueritis me per factum hugonem ... Remississet relaxasse est omnino per me ..."; signed on the fold, "Hugh cradocke";

Quitclaims helped to secure transactions; during the Middle Ages they could sometimes be used on their own to convey land. All people who might potentially bring a claim against a new owner to return the property to them were asked to sign a quitclaim waiving all their possible rights and promising not to bring any legal actions.

5. TM 1135-7

Letters Patent of Elizabeth I, referring to a previous grant by letters patent (December 7, 1579) to Alban Stepneth of the rectory and church of St. Martin, Haverfordwest and its possessions in Pembroke and Haverfordwest, formerly in the tenure of the late Thomas Catharne, and tithes for 21 years from September 29, 1579; and granting to Philip(?), Thomas and Dorothy Stepneth, sons and daughter of Alban Stepneth, the same rectory and church and possessions for their three lives in that order, for an annual rent of £5 and other payments specified.

In Latin, dated July 1, 1595

On parchment, written in an accomplished secretary script with larger letters in textura in 44 long lines, elaborate opening letter, elongated and decorated ascenders in the first line, (justification 260 x 470 mm.), some wear along folds and somewhat darkened in a central section (text remains legible in both cases). Dimensions 400 x 540 mm.

Previous ownership note: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/5."

Incipit, "Elizabeth dei gratia Anglie Omnibus ad quos presentes ... Cum nos per litteras nostras patentes sub sigillos"; signed on the fold, "Will[iam] Bromleye," and by the examiner, "Tho[mas] Hanbury";

6. TM 1135-5

Indenture of a deed to lend the uses of a fine from Edmond Harries of "Freistroke," Pembroke, and his wife Margaret, to Alban Stepneth of Prendergast, of a house or half burgage, formerly the house of Elizabeth Morrowe, widow, afterwards purchased by Alban Stepneth, in the "markett streete" in Haverfordwest

In English, dated June 24, 1601

On parchment, top serrated, bottom folded up with tab for a seal (now missing), written in a secretary script with larger letters in textura in 26 long lines, opening letter larger, (justification 245 x 132 mm.). Dimensions 220 x 280 mm.

Previous ownership notes, in pencil, recto: "MS 1907/6"; "3837."

Incipit, "This indenture made the foure and twentieth daie of June in the three and fourtieth yere of the Reigne of our Souereigne Lady Elizabeth ..."; signed on the fold "Edmond harrys," and "signum per <me> Margaret";

7. TM 1135-6

Indenture of a transfer by Thomas Stepney of Sandyhaven, Pembroke, of a lease of the capital messuage and lands at St. Ishmaels, Pembroke, called Sandyhaven, at an annual rent, leased then to Stepney for his life and one subsequent year, to Richard Phillipps of Loveston, Pembroke.

In English, dated July 24, 1666

On parchment, bottom edge folded up with tab for a seal (now missing), copied in a secretary script with larger letters in textura in 52 long lines, opening letter larger and embellished, (justification 315 x 413- mm.), bottom edge turned up c. 40 mm. Dimensions 420 x 480 mm.

Previous ownership notes: in pencil, recto, "MS 1907/7"; verso in pencil, "7. 18 Car 2- Stepney 1666-7"; earlier notes in pen, four lines now partially legible, and an 18th-century note concerning contents.

Incipit, "This Indenture made the fflower and twentyeth day of July in the eighteenth yeere of the Reigne of Charles the second ... Betweene Thomas Stepney of Sandyhaven ... of the one parte and Richard Phillippe of Loveston ..."; signed on the fold "Richard Phillipps"; verso, signed by six signatories.

The website of the National Library of Wales underlines the importance of documents for historical research: "Archives are documents created or accumulated by individuals or institutions and selected for permanent preservation. It is not possible to trace the industrial, social, and economic history of Wales without using the sources available among the records of the large estates and also smaller estates whose influence is more local" (Online Resources).

Documents such as the group described here were originally created for administrative or personal purposes, but with the passage of time became archives. They are the raw material of history providing original and unique evidence of events in the past and are essential for historical research. The documents in this collection all pertain to the transfer or sale of property and include examples of several different types of documents, including three indentures (in English rather than in Latin), a bond, a quitclaim, and a Royal Letters Patent.

This small archive is very likely one preserved by the family of Alban Stepneth. Alban Stepneth (or Stepney; d. 1611) of Prendergast came from Hertfordshire family. The family was a wealthy one that had profited from the dissolution of St. Alban's Abbey. Trained as a lawyer, Stepneth moved to Wales c. 1559, and found employment in the service of Richard Davies, bishop of St. Asaph, and then of St. David's. Purchases and marriage made Stepneth an extensive landowner; he acquired the manor of Prendergast through his first wife, Margaret, and further property, including Walwyn's Castle, through his second marriage. He held numerous public offices: justice of the peace for Pembroke and Haverfordwest, sheriff for Pembroke and Carmathen, member of parliament, and lastly governor of the town of Haverfordwest during the Civil War.

During the Civil War he was one of the few Pembrokeshire noblemen who remained loyal to the king. He died in 1611, and his heirs remained influential in Welsh politics until the eighteenth century. His line went extinct in 1825, at which point these records presumably left the hands of his heirs.

Following a period of English rule (as a consequence of the conquest of Wales by King Edward I by 1283), Henry VII, who was of Welsh ancestry, re-established the Council of Wales and the Marches for his son Arthur. During the reign of King Henry VIII, the Laws in Wales Acts of 1535 and 1542 integrated Wales with England legally, abolishing the Welsh legal system and banning the Welsh language from any official role or status. These laws also defined the Wales-England border for the first time and allowed members representing constituencies (like Alban Stepneth) in Wales to be elected to the English Parliament.

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