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*Photo George Clinch.*

SEAL OF THE VICAR OF RECVLVER.

1. Side view.
2. Matrix of seal.
3. Impression in wax.

## II.—SEAL OF THE VICAR OF RECVLVER.

BY GEORGE CLINCH, F.G.S., F.S.A. SCOT.

THE discovery of a fourteenth-century seal-matrix at Reculver was brought to my notice in July 1917 by Lieutenant Geoffrey C. Shiers. It had been dug up recently just to the south-east of the ruined church. On examination, after careful cleaning, this seal proved to be of peculiar interest. The material is bronze, and the form, as will be seen from the illustration, severely simple. The grip, or handle, is hexagonal, tapering and curved, having at the top a hole for suspension. The matrix, which is of rounded oval outline, measures one inch by five-sixths of an inch. The engraving is bold and skilful. The character of the head, that of a tonsured priest in high relief, is of pronounced classical type. This is seen particularly in the outline and features of the face and the long coupé neck. In general treatment the head is not unlike that borne on the coins of Julius Cæsar, from which perhaps, or from a Roman gem of that period such as would be found at Reculver, it may very likely have been copied. The tonsure is of large size, and the fringe of hair follows nearly the same line as that of the wreath worn to hide Cæsar's baldness.

The head is surrounded by an inscription, in elegant Lombardic lettering, reading:—

\* S' VICARII DE REICVLVRE.

From the inscription it may be assumed that this was the official seal, rather than that of any individual vicar of Reculver. The date, to judge by the lettering, would be early in the fourteenth century.

According to the account of Reculver given by Hasted,\* Nicholas de Tyngewyke appears to have been presented to the Rectory by the King in 1310. The presentation was made in opposition to the wishes of the Pope, who had made

\* *History of Kent*, folio edition, iii. 639.

another presentation. The papal objection was, however, overcome in favour of Nicholas, who occupied the important office of physician to the King.

In the Register (f. 146<sup>b</sup>) of Archbishop Reynolds is entered a grant, under the date of 1325, setting up a peculiar decanal jurisdiction at Reculver. The following transcript is from the printed copy of the deed in J. Duncombe's *History and Antiquities of Reculver*, 1784, p. 140 ("Bibl. Top. Brit.") :—

“Walterus, &c. Dilecto in Christo filio magistro Nicholao de Tyngewico, rectori ecclesie de Racolvre, salm, &c. Ad procedendum, cognoscendum, & firmiter \* terminandum quascunque causas & quecunque negocia in parochia de Racolvre predict' cum suis capellis emergent', necnon ad debite corrigend' & puniend' commissa quorumcunque subditorum nostrorum inibi delinquencium, vobis, de cujus circumspectione & industria fidem plenam gerimus, vices nostras commitimus, cum coherisionis canonice potestate, donec eas duxerimus revocandas. In cujus, &c. Dat' apud Lambeth, 5 id' Decemb', 1325.”

The fact that this grant gave special privileges to the rector, conferring on him, in fact, the status of a rural dean, and exempting him from other jurisdiction, suggests the probability that the seal was cut at about the date of the grant for use of the vicar of Reculver in the exercise of the functions conferred by the said grant. Possibly there exist among the archives of the Dean and Chapter, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, documents with impressions of this very matrix attached.

Seals of this kind, representing the official rather than the personal authority of a vicar, appear to be of great rarity. Indeed, I have not been able to trace another example; and thanks are due to the fortunate discoverer, Lieutenant Shiers, for permission to reproduce a seal of such special beauty and interest.

\* Query, finaliter.