

ROBERT CHESTER, THE POET

AMONG the Clifton Papers in the Lancashire Record Office at Preston is a letter of attorney (DD CL 915) dated 18 January 1603/4 from Sir John Salusburie of Lleweny in the county of Denbigh, knight, to Gryffith Price, gentleman, and John Heaton, servant to Sir John Salusburie, to receive of Sir Richard Molyneux of Sephton, knight, the sum of 1,000 marks at the feast of the Purification next ensuing.

This document is interesting for two reasons: first, because it ties up with No. 88 in the *Calendar of Salusbury Correspondence*, published by the University of Wales Press, a letter which the editor has been unable to date satisfactorily, and secondly, because the payment is witnessed on the back of the document by "Ed. Thelwal, Edwarde Salusburye, Will. Lloyd, Ro. Thelwall, Robt. Pierce" and "Robert Chester".

Some months ago I forwarded a photostat of these signatures to Dr. Hiscock, the deputy librarian of Christ Church, Oxford, who kindly compared them with those in Ch.Ch. MS 184, and stated in his reply: "I consider that the Chester signatures in our MS 184 are the same as shown on your photostat".

This confirmation is important because it narrows down the problem of the identity of Robert Chester the author of "Love's Martyr", the collection of poems, published in 1601, to which is appended among others, the poem *The Phoenix and Turtle*, attributed to William Shakespeare. It is now clear that Robert Chester the poet must have lived somewhere in the neighbourhood of Denbigh, at any rate between Denbigh and Liverpool, possibly even in Chester itself. Perhaps a careful search of local parish registers and similar records for the years round 1600 would help to solve the problem once and for all.

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