

## BRIDGWATER IN THE OLDEN TIME

### AUTHORITIES.

- (1) Appendix to the 1st and 3rd Reports of Hist. MSS. Commission.
- (2) Somersetshire Archaeological Society's Proceedings, vols. vii. and xxiii.
- (3) Wells Wills (and MSS. Collections).
- (4) Somerset Record Society, vol. ii.

Bridgwater is particularly fortunate in having preserved a very large quantity of ancient documents which throw great light on its past history.

The object of this Paper is to give as far as is possible an account of the churches in Bridgwater ; there were at least four.

- (1) The Parish Church of St. Mary.
- (2) The Chapel of St. Brigid.
- (3) The Chapel of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist.
- (4) The Church of the Grey Friars.

### THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY

Contained at least seven altars:

- (1) The High Altar (presumably dedicated to B.M.V.)
- (2) Trinity Altar.
- (3) Our Lady's Altar.
- (4) St. George's Altar.
- (5) Rood Altar.
- (6) St. Katharine's Altar.
- (7) St. Sondag's Altar.

The first six of these occur (in the order given) in the will of Harry Bodman, which is dated July 4th, 1533 (Wells Wills, p. 14).

The altar of St. Sondag occurs in the will of Thomas fflemynge, dated June 18 th, 1543.

There were three chantries within the parish church, dedicated respectively to St. George, Our Lady and the Holy Trinity, and lands and tenements are found belonging to each (S.R.S., ii. 56); one of the aisles was called St. Katharine's aisle and an inventory of vestments belonging to it is given in *S.A.S. Proceedings*, vol. vii., pt. ii., p. 100.

There were at least seven gilds attached to the church. We read of "The Wardens of the light of the chantry of St. Mary," "The Wardens of the goods of the light of the Blessed Trinity," the Merchants' Gild, which presented to the Chantry of B.M.V. in the parish church, and the Wardens of St. Katharine ; while Joan Father, widow, in her

will dated 30 November, 1536, bequeaths " to the brotherhed of: St. Gregorie xxd. ; to the brotherhed of St. John Baptist xxd ; to the brotherhed of Ss. Osburne xxd."

At first I thought that St. Osmund must be meant by the last named bequest ; but I have found another instance ; the shrine of St. Osborne in the Cathedral Priory of Coventry is mentioned in *Letters and Papers* Hen. VIII. xiv., part i., No. 69.

There were at least two " services " in the Church.

In 1310 John de Millo of Bridgwater bequeaths xijd " to the Mass before the cross in the church," and sometime before the reign of Edward I., William, Vicar of Bruges (an old name for Bridgwater) left a burgage there to God and " the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary in that town."

In a document sans date, but of the reign of Edward I., we read of Peter de Bruges, rector of the Church of St. Brigid. I think this is very likely identical with the chapel of Horsey, situated a mile from the parish church, and at a later date found annexed to it.

Horsey Chapel is described by Collinson in 1791 as "long since ruined," but we have occasional glimpses of it. Thus among the Inquisitions post-mortem for 19 Ric. II. we find

No 99 JOHES HORSEY PRO UNO CAPELLANO IN  
CAPELLA DE HORSY

Chacrlton Makerell j mess. 80 acre terr.  
et 12 acre prati pro cantaria  
et luminibus in ecclcsia de Horsy. }

This document is probably not an Inquisition p.m., but it is clear from it that a house and 92 acres of land in the parish of Charlton Mackerell were set aside by John Horsey or his ancestors as an endowment for this chapel.

Again in 1542, William Alyn, of Bridgwater, bequeaths iijjd. to the Chapel of Horsey ; and in 1548, Somerset Chantries (S. R. S. ii. 57) show that the vicarage of Bridgwater is of the yearly value of £12 6s. 8½d.; that Thomas Strete is now incumbent, and that he finds one priest under him to minister and help to serve the cure there, and that he (the assistant priest) celebrates every Sunday at a chapel annexed, called Horsey, distant a mile from the parish church.

In order to make the identification complete, it will be necessary to show that the chapel at Horsey was dedicated to St. Brigid. This at present I have been unable to do.

There were churchyards attached to the Parish Church, the Church of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, and the Grey Friars' Church, and there are instances in *Wells Wills* of burials in each of the three.

The churchwardens' accounts are early in date and contain very many interesting entries.

Thus William the Bedeman gets a penny for going round the town on All Souls' Eve to summon the parishioners to a general *dirige* on the morrow :—

"Willemo Bedeman ad pronuciand.  
circum villain pro animabus omnium  
defunctorum jd."

The same man is paid viijd. for looking after the light of the Sepulchre at Easter:—

" Solut. Willelmo Bedeman pro custodia  
luminis sepulcri domini in festo pasche viijd."

And he is paid xijd. for looking after the other lights of the church for a year.

These accounts afford a new word for the four wax-lights used at " obits," viz., *mynd-day tapers*, as the two following extracts show :—

1441-2. pro factura cerearum pertinentium  
ad altare [vocat.] myndotaburs pro obitibus  
defunctorum hoc anno in diversis  
tomporibus, ijs. jd. ob.

1455-6. pro factura iij cerearum voc.  
myndey tapirs, vd.

Dr. Cox has shown in his paper entitled. "*On Some Popular Archæological Errors and Fictions*," which was printed in the *Antiquary* (August, 1894), that *whitewash* or *colourwash* is not a modern abomination, as is popularly supposed ; and mentions that St. Wilfrid, when restoring the ruined Minster of York, washed the walls whiter than snow (parietes lavans super nivem dealbavit).

The Bridgwater accounts for 1447-8 fully corroborate Dr. Cox's statement, as the following items show -

jc [hundred] of chalke bougt of Robert  
Powle, xd. to John Day labourer for v dais to  
make clene ye chirche wallis, xxd. to Walter  
Peynter for whityng of the chirch by v dais di  
ijs. xjd. to John Peynter for gryndyng of  
chalke by iij dais di xvjd.

There is no doubt that the walls of the church were whitewashed previously to being adorned with frescoes, which were usually painted on the whitewash.

John Colsweyn was Vicar of Bridgwater for 51 years (1423—74) : he was instituted Vicar of Davidstowe (dioc. Exon), 15 Dec., 1412, and exchanged for Bridgwater in 1423.

He commemorated his long vicariate by giving a handsome book to the parish church. The book has disappeared, but the Latin memorandum, formerly inserted therein, has survived, and runs thus :

(Trans.) " Pray for the soul of Sir John Colsweyn, vicar of this Church of Bruggewater, who to the end that his soul might he kept in especial memory for the future, made and left this book, prepared at his own costs and labour, to lie in the church aforesaid, before the vicar thereof, of his own free will ; as also, in part by way of relief of all his parishioners."

John Cosyn [? the same man] gave a cope to the Church, for in an Inventory, dated 1447, we find, " Item j cope of white damaske with eglis of gold displayed, that Johan Cosyn yaf inne (gave in)."

The earliest will I have noticed is that of Gilbert Bussell ; it was proved in 1317. Among other bequests he leaves to the man who shall make a pilgrimage for him to St. James [of Compostella] and to Rochemadour 40 shillings, and a similar sum to the man who shall make a pilgrimage for him to Bromholm, Walsingham and Canterbury.

Bromholm was a Cluniac Priory in Norfolk. An account of the Holy Rood of Bromholm is given in Bye's Norfolk, p. 174, where it is added that a convent of nuns in Yorkshire now have a large piece of the true Cross set in silver in the shape of a Jerusalem cross, which they think came from Bromholm, as one of their Superioresses belonged to the Paston family, which was intimately connected with that Priory.

The following is a list of service books as found in an Inventory, dated 1447.

Item, iij massebokys  
a Clayles  
ij Processionaries  
j Pysfcolar  
j Colitare  
j Morbylage  
j Anfciphoner tofore Seynt; Mare preste  
j Portas of the bequest of Will. Hurste.  
j Antipbonei: before the Dekyn †  
j Manuell  
j Ordynal

[Footnote] † In the wardens' account for 1447-8 occurs " for j loke [lock] for the dekenes dore viijd."

There are several documents [in Latin] admitting divers persons to the benefits of fraternity with the Order of the Grey Friars ; one is given as an example.

1409. Jan. 10. Brother William, Warden of the Friars Minors in Bridgwater, sends greeting to William Dyst and Johanna his wife. " And through the merits of this life may they attain everlasting joy."

For the devotion shown by them towards the Order, and their benefits to the Convent, they are admitted, to participate in the suffrages of the Convent, and after death, they are to have the same benefits (in the way of prayers) as the brethren, and friends, and benefactors of the Order. ,

To this document the conventual seal is attached and is in good preservation. We append from another source the last document concerning the Grey Friars of Bridgwater.

The following surrender of the House of the Grey Friars is found in *Letters and Papers* Hen. VIII., vol. xiii., pt. ii., p. 130.

1538. Sept. 13. Grey Friars, Bridgwater.

Surrender of the house by warden and convent to the lord Visitor for the King 13th Sept., 30 Hen. VIII.

Signed per me Joh'em Horys, gard., per me Thomam Howell;

and also by John Wake, Richard Harris, priest, Gerard Morley, bachelor, John Cogum, Andrew Gooyt, and Robert Oliver.

ii. Indenture of the stuff of the Grey Friars, Brygwater,

received by the lord Visitor under the Lord Privy Seal and delivered to John Newport, Mayor there, and Richard Torell for the King.

CHOIR, a table of alabaster with 9 images, 2 goodly candlesticks, a pair of organs, an iron grate about a tomb, &c.

CHURCH. 3 cloths before the altars, a chapel with a frame barred with iron.

SEXTRY. 21 copes detailed of velvet, silk, &c. ; also vestments, &c.

THE R<sup>DE</sup> HOUSE (what is this ?) A suit of white damask with flowers of gold, a suit of

blue silk with stars of gold and many other suits and vestments.

Chambers, frayter, kitchen, and buttery.

The debts drew about £18 or £19, to discharge which' the visitor has delivered a suit of vestments and other small things to the warden.

The Visitor has in jewels and plate 358ozs. and has sold two old feather-beds two small pots, and a pan for 17s.

[Signatures copied of John Newportt and Richard Tyrrell].

I shall be very glad if any reader of this paper can throw light upon St. Sondag, St. Osborne, or the R<sup>de</sup> house.

To the Saints venerated at Bridgwater must be added St. Erasmus : Agnes Cuttelar gave " an anyyll to the chirche of Briggwater that is to witte to our laday to Seynt Kateryn and to Seynt Rasmus " (S.A.S. vii., ii. 104).

Since writing the above, I have been led to think that St. Sondag is identical with St. Saviour. This idea first struck me on noticing the cross references in a paper by Mr. Leland L. Duncan, F.S.A., entitled " *The Parish Churches of West Kent: Their Dedications, Altars, Images, and Lights.*" (Transactions of the St. Paul's Ecclesiological Society, vol. iii., p. 273.)

It will also be noticed in *Wells Wills*, pp, ix-xii., that St. Sondag and St. Saviour occur in many contiguous churches of West Somerset, but never in the same church. If I am right, St. Sondag would be represented by Christ, rising from the dead : and there is a quaint representation of this on the Tower of Ile Abbots Church (Somerset), where our Lord appears stepping out of the grave, the tomb being like an ordinary altar-tomb.

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Edited by Tony & Jane Woolrich, 03/10/2019