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Notes on the Manor and Church of Hempstead

by B. S. Dawson
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NOTES ON THE MANOR AND CHURCH OF HEMPSTED.

BY THE REV. B. S. DAWSON, RECTOR.

Read at Hempsted, Tuesday, July 17th, 1888.

THE earliest mention I find of Hempsted, as an ecclesiastical Benefice, is that Walter, Constable of Gloucester, when he founded the Church of St. Owen, in Gloucester, obtained the grant of the tithes of some adjacent rural churches or chapels, of which Hempsted was one, as a perpetual alms and prebend to his chaplains.

Subsequently, at the time of the founding of *New Lanthony* by Milo, Constable of Gloucester, in 1136, the Church of St. Owen, with its appendages—amongst them the Chapel of Hempsted, with all the tithes of the tenants in villenage—was conferred by him on the Priory Church, and this gift, for greater security, was inserted in the act of its dedication: “*Capella de Heylanstede cum omnibus decimis villanorum in omnibus—hanc donationem feci canonicis Lanthon’ in ecclesia sanctæ Mariæ apud Glouc’ die et horâ quâ ipsa dedicabatur. A.D. MCXXXVII.*”

Later on, in 1141, Milo, upon his advancement to the Earldom of Hereford by the Empress Maud, (*jamque consulatus honorem adeptus*) conferred upon the Priory his Manor and Lordship of Hempsted, and solemnly confirmed his gifts before the altar of the Church in the presence of his sons, Roger, Walter, and Henry.

To this gift, ten years later, Sept. 1151, Milo added the *Vill* of Hempsted as a perpetual alms, “which donation, made for the health of his own soul, and his ancestors and his sons, was attested by the Empress Maud.”

I may mention here, that, previously to this, another portion of the tithes of Hempsted, probably the tithes of the demesne and some glebe had been purchased from the Abbot and Convent of Lira, in Normandy, and made over to Lanthony, of which William de Wycomb was then Prior.

These separate gifts of tithes to Lanthony were confirmed by Henry II. ; and there are also found the following Papal confirmations :—by Pope Alexander III. (1159-1181), by Honorius III. (1216-1227), by Gregory IX. in the 6th year of his Pontificate, *i.e.* 1233, (*specialiter autem ecclesiam Sancti Audoeni apud Glouc. cum Capella de Hecamstede, de Elmore et Quedesley et omnibus pertinentiis suis, &c.*) ; and by Alexander IV. (1254-1261).

The Canons of Lanthony being thus in possession of the Vicarage of St. Owen's with the Chapelries of Hempsted, Elmore and Quedgeley, and all their ecclesiastical revenues, put a secular priest into the cure of St. Owen's, together with these chapelries, and assigned him a certain portion of the tithes from each of these places. The portion of tithe from Hempsted is thus described : “ the small tithes and obventions of the altarage of the Chapel of Heyhamstede, which ‘ *communibus annis* ’ are computed worth 60 shillings and more, with the manse, curtilage and garden, belonging to the said chapell, which garden is large and very fruitful (*amplum et bene fructuosum*). Also the Prior added to the same all the tythes, as well in Hay as in corn, arising from three yard land (*sic*) in the Vill' of Heyhamstede, the tythe of every yard taken separately was “ *communibus annis* ” worth seven shillings and more.” (It may interest some to know that the names of the three tenants of these yards of land were Adam Kinemon, Roger Keys, and Alice Drake). This was in the reign of Henry III., say about 1240. The total income assigned to the Vicar of St. Owen's, from St. Owen's, Hempsted, Quedgley and Elmore was £15 6s. 8d., together with the manse and garden at Hempsted. £15 in those times, would, I suppose, be the equivalent of £150 now, perhaps more.

Before long, however, a controversy arose between the Canons of Lanthony and the Vicar of S.Owen's. He complained that while they waxed in wealth he was left with a mere pittance, that “ his vicarage was insufficient, and that if he were bound to reside upon it, the Prior and Convent of Lanthony, according to agreement with his predecessor, were bound to build an Habitable for him.” It would seem likely from this that the “ manse,” before spoken

of, had fallen into decay, and if so, the vicar had surely some ground for complaint, for the Lanthonians, having absorbed all the ecclesiastical property of Hempsted, might reasonably be expected to have kept the parsonage in repair. Arbitrators were appointed to examine into and settle the matter. They decided that the arrangement with the vicar had been assented to by him on his appointment, and confirmed by the Bishop and that he had consequently no grounds for complaint. The Vicar had to submit, and by the advice of his friends withdrew his claims upon the canons to build a "Habitable" for him. Upon his making submission, the referees granted him "six marks of silver"; so that three-and-a-half of the said six marks were expended, at the discretion of the Ordinary, upon the building of an habitation at Heyhampstede for the use of the said vicarage of St. Owens." The remaining $2\frac{1}{2}$ marks the Vicar was allowed for his private use. How long this arrangement with the Vicar of St. Owen's for serving the Parishes of Hempsted, Quedgeley and Elmore lasted, there is, as far as I know, no record to show. Gibson thinks it did not continue very long, and that the Priory of Lanthony soon got these parishes entirely in its own hands. If he is right in this conjecture, may it not have been then, or soon after, that the old Chapel of Hempsted (of which we may conclude the fine Norman font to be a relic) was superseded by the present Church:—*i.e.* about 1400?

After an existence of 402 years, the Priory of Lanthony was dissolved on the 10th May, 1539. On this, Gibson remarks: "And indeed it was so utterly dissolved then, or at least is so now, that of the Conventual Church, not one stone is left upon another that is not thrown down. All the buildings belonging to the Priory are likewise destroyed; except some of the meanest offices. Neither remain there any marks of its former greatness but the west and south gates, with part of the court walls, which were anciently moated round."

In the following year, 1540, the site of the Church of Lanthony Priory, together with certain lands now forming the estate of Newark, were granted by the crown to Arthur Porter, Esq., (of

Quedgeley) for the sum of £73 16s. 8d. Six of his children are buried at Hempsted. The brass in the tower, date 1548, is to their memory. He had previously buried two at Quedgeley in 1532.

Five years later (37th Henry VIII.) the Manor of Hempsted was granted to Thomes Atkins and Margaret his wife. You will have noticed the handsome recumbent effigy of Sir Richard Atkins in the Chancel, and the tablet to Elenora his wife, bearing the following epitaph :—

Hir godly life, hir blessed death
Hir hope and consolation
Were signes to us and seals to her
Of joyful Resurrection.

The estate of Podgmead, or Podsmead, which belonged to Lanthony, had previously been granted by Henry VIII. to Joan Cook, widow of Alderman Cook. From her it passed to the family of Hoskin, and from them to the Corporation of Gloucester, its present possessors. In this way was disposed of the whole of Hempsted, which for several centuries had been parcel of the possessions of Lanthony Priory.

To revert to the Porter family:—Arthur Porter, who purchased Lanthony and the adjoining lands (now Newark) from Hen. VIII. left a son, Thomas Porter, who had livery of the estate granted him in the first year of Elizabeth. He left a son and heir, Sir Arthur Porter, Knight, who had an only daughter and heiress married to John Scudamore, of Home-Lacy, Esq., afterwards created Viscount Scudamore, who thus, in right of his wife, became proprietor of the lands and tithes conveyed in Arthur Porter's grant. Lord Scudamore was a staunch churchman, the intimate friend and follower of Archbishop Laud, and, in 1635, was sent by Charles I. to Paris, as ambassador to Louis XIII. Accordingly we are not surprised to find that at the very beginning of the Great Rebellion his Hempsted property was sequestered by the Parliament army for delinquency. As soon as he was restored to possession (1652), he charged himself with the arrears of tithes, to the amount of £1200, and disbursed them among ejected Bishops and distressed clergy, and this he continued to do up to the Restoration, thus distributing in all £1756.

After the Restoration, as soon as certain difficulties connected with his marriage settlement were removed, Lord Scudamore formally conveyed these tithes for the maintenance of a clergyman at Hempsted.

But, meanwhile, the church, churchyard, parsonage and glebe of Hempsted, with a portion of the tithes (probably that portion, which, in the reign of Henry III., had been allotted to the Vicar of St. Owen's) had passed into the possession of Henry Powle, of Williamstrop (Williamstrip), in the County of Gloucester, Esq., These Lord Scudamore set himself to recover, and after, what is described as rather a hard bargain, he purchased, January, 1661, for £376, "the Vicarage-House and garden and orchard, the Parsonage, Close and Barn, and a parcel of Meadow ground in Hempsted Moor, the Church-house and Church and Chancel and Churchyard of Hempsted, together with the perpetual advowson, or perfect and absolute patronage of the said Church, and all the said Henry Powle's Portion of Tithes, Oblations, and Obventions whatsoever renewing and growing within the Titheable places of the said Parish of Hempsted."

By this gift of tithes, great and small, Hempsted became a rectory.

George Wall was the first Rector, and he has left the following memorandum in the Register of this munificent gift :—

Anno Domini 1662.

Ad Perpetuam Rei Memoriam.

Hoc anno Rectoria de Hempsted, appropriata et in manibus Laicorum tanquam feodum seculare diu detenta, mutata fuit et erecta in Rectoriam perpetuam præsentativam, institutivam, et inductivam à Presbyteris, futuris successive temporibus, gubernandam : per piam munificentiam nobilissimi et honoratissimi Domini Johannis Scudamore, Vicecomitis de Sligo in Regno Hiberniæ ; Qui (glorioso et imitatione dignissimo exemplo) cum eandem Rectoriam appropriatam, una cum perpetua Advocatione Ecclesiæ pretio satis magno perquisivisset ; et Prioratum de Lanthoni, cum omnibus et singulis ad eundem pertinentibus terris

pratis, pascuis et pasturis dominicis, Parochiæ de Hempsted, eadem conjungi et uniri providisset ; omnes et omnigenas tam Parochiæ quam Prioratus predict' decimas, oblationes, glebam, domos omnes ad dictam Rectoriam spectantes, necnon antiquum Prioratus Cæmeterium, et obventiones quascunque, Deo et Ecclesiæ predict' restituit et consecravit et Rectori (qui pro tempore fuerit) in perpetuam elemosynam donavit : Eaque omnia et singula, speciali actu Parlamentario confirmari curavit. Deinceps Georgium Wall, Presbyterum, A.M. ad eandem ecclesiam præsentavit ; qui protinus primus ejusdem Rector, institutus, et in realem et actualem ejusdem possessionem inductus est 4^o die Junii 1662.

“An instance,” says Gibson, “of what excellent use Parish Registers would be, if, as Bishop Nicholson saith, ‘care were taken to register all remarkable occurrences relating to the public concerns of the several Parishes.’”

A few years later, Lord Scudamore began to build, at his own expense, the present rectory house, but, dying before its completion, (“*eheu nimis properé*,” writes Archdeacon Gregory) the work was carried on by his executors (Sir William Gregory and Mr. John Hereford). The cost was £700. Its first inhabitant was John Gregory, second Rector, and also Archdeacon of Gloucester, who has recorded his grateful appreciation of his patron's munificence in the Register (*see below*), and by an inscription over the door in golden letters :

“Who'ere doth dwell within this door,
Thank God for Viscount Scudamore.”

The letters still remain, but the gold is new.

A.D. 1671.

Sciant Posterî.

Hoc anno extractas ac finitas fuisse vere amplas et decoras petris hujus Ecclesiæ ædes ; solis sumptibus prænobilis viri ac Domini Vicecomitis Scudamore de Sligo in Regno Hiberniæ, hujus Ecclesiæ patroni in æternum honorandi : Quas ipse superiori anno vivus fundavit ; hoc autem (*heci nimis propere*) moriens, executoribus suis Domino Gulielmo Gregory è civitate Herefordiæ jurisconsulto integerrimo, et Johanni Hereford, Gen. ultimo testamento finiendas

demandavit; Johannique Gregory Archidiacono Glouc' hujus Ecclesie Rectori primum incolendas reliquit.

Sit memoria ejus in omne tempus benedicta
Et exemplum ejus sequentes
Sub Scuto amoris Divini protegantur
Omnes in posterum ecclesie patroni

Upon this Gibson pompously remarks :—

“Here I leave you to reflect a little and consider what an opulent and noble Priory that of Lanthony was, and how poor and mean the Vicarage House of Hempsted that depended on it. How the former is reduced to ruine and desolation, and the latter risen to a state of magnificence to be admired. What a vast difference and disproportion there must needs be between that “ancient habitacle” which cost three marks and a half of silver, and this noble Manse which cost three hundred times as much. For Sir Robert Atkins saith, ‘The Lord Scudamore built the strong handsome Parsonage House in Hempsted, which cost seven hundred Pounds.’”

Archdeacon Gregory lies buried beneath the altar. At Hempsted he was enabled (“otium adeptus”) to complete his edition of the Greek Testament, with its laborious Greek Scholia, which was published by his son and successor in this Rectory, with the assistance of Dean Aldrich and others at Oxford. A copy may be seen in the vestry

The following notes on the Church are contributed by Messrs. Waller & Son :—

ST. SWITHIN'S CHURCH, HEMPSTED.

This church consists of a South Porch, 10 ft. by 8 ft.; a nave, 56ft. by 25ft. ; and Chancel, 29ft. by 23ft. ; with a Tower carried on very peculiarly constructed arches between the Nave and Chancel. There is also a modern Vestry and Cloister approach to it. Of the old Church nothing remains but the walls of the Porch, Nave and Chancel, and the whole of the Tower, all of which were erected, probably, in the early part of the fifteenth century.

About forty years ago new roofs were placed on the Nave and Chancel, a new Vestry was erected on the north side of the Nave,

and new windows were erected in the west wall of the Nave and on the east wall of the chancel.

In 1885 much of this last named work, which was in very bad taste, and of inferior workmanship, was removed, and new erected in its place; in no case, however, was the old work interfered with excepting in adding 12 feet to the length of the Nave, that being the only part where an addition could be made for the necessary increase of accommodation owing to the interments on the north and south sides of the Church.

The Tower is a singularly picturesque feature of the building, and the details of it are very bold.

The Cavalier's Tomb in Hempsted Churchyard.

The following is the inscription on the tomb of Captain Freeman, who was killed in the siege of Gloucester:—

*Hic jacet Johannes Freeman
Centurio Equestris, Filius Johannis
Freeman de Bushleij Comitatu
Wigorn: Armigeri, Castris Regiis
Obsidione Gleuensi Sclopetarice
Glandis Ictu Trajectus,*

Anno { *Salutis* } 1643
 { *Ætatis* } 23

In *Dorney's Diary of the Siege of Gloucester* (London, 1643) there occurs the following:—

“Monday, Aug. 14. We had some suspicion and kind of intelligence that they were drawing ordnance to the Kingshome; and that it lay in some grounds undiscovered between the Northgate and the Margarets. Whereupon a party of about 150 musketeers commanded by Captain Mallery sallied forth of the Northport to surprize it; but not finding any retreated without losse, but *killed four of the enemies*, and took two prisoners & fired some of their quarters at the Margarets . . . This day the enemy played with their ordnance from Gaudy Greene, & battered the town wall on the south side of the Fryer's Orchard, but we quickly made up the breach with

woolsacks and canon-baskets. By this time they had drawn their trench in Gaudy Greene near the moat at Rignall Stile, where they made a kind of mine to drain the moat which much sunk the water of the moat between the south & east ports."

As this is the whole of the entry in the Diary of the Siege for 14th of August, the day on which Captain Freeman was killed, it seems tolerably clear that the musket ball by which he lost his life was fired by one of these 150 musketeers.

A brass in Bushley Church records the death of his brother, Roberts Freeman, who was four years his junior, at the age of 27.

ROBERTS FREEMAN, GENT.

Deceased Dec. 13, 1651.

Here Reader reade Thine own estate
 Though young, wise, pious, such thy fate
 Must shortly be
 For such was he
 Serve thou thy God as he hath done,
 This service makes a servant son
 Heaven's Freeman be
 For such is he.

Aged 27.

 HEMPSTED BELLS.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 5. Tenor <i>F sharp.</i> | 1694. Ab. Ruddall fecit. John Gregory, Rector. |
| 2. B | 1694. A.R. of Gloster, cast us. |
| 1. C <i>sharp.</i> | 1764. (<i>probably recast</i>) Burris and Driver, Churchwardens. |
| 3. A <i>sharp.</i> | 1817. J.R., fecit. Rev. S. Commeline, Benefactor.
(Re-cast at the expense of Saml. Lysons, Esq.) |
| 4. G. <i>sharp.</i> | 1817. Samuel Lysons, Esq., Benefactor. J.R. fecit. |
| 6. D <i>sharp.</i> | 1885. B. S. Dawson, Rector, dedit. Mears and Stainbank, fecerunt. |

 INSCRIPTION ON BRASS IN TOWER OF HEMPSTED CHURCH.

Nere this place lyeth buried ye bodyes of Nicholas Porter, Henry Roger and Nicholas junr. Cecilly and Brigid sonnes and daughters to Arthur Porter Esquir and Alys his wife A^oDⁱ MDXLVIII. on whose soules Jesu have mercy.