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An Introduction to the Cartulary of St. Mary's, Warwick

by J. H. Bloom
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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CARTULARY OF ST. MARY'S, WARWICK.

BY THE REV. J. HARVEY BLOOM, M.A.

THE "High Church of Warwick," as it is locally called, stands in a position of singular power. Its late renaissance tower dominates the whole town and countryside, and beneath its shadow rest the great earls of the House of Beauchamp, and chief of all, Earl Richard, buried beneath his gilded effigy, within a chapel of matchless beauty, reared that daily Mass should be said for ever for his soul's health. Long before the time of the Beauchamps St. Mary's had become great, and had dethroned its more ancient rival the Church of All Saints in the castle, and had absorbed its canons, schools, and revenues. Those who have hitherto written of the College have hardly made this plain. Saxon Warwick under Turchil or Turchetil, had grown about the buhr of Aethefleda, and that buhr had its church and school, as such Saxon strongholds usually had. All Saints' was probably the oldest church in the town, but had, from its position, more the nature of a castle chapel than a parish church. The mother church of the town of Warwick would seem to have been St. Mary (and All Saints'), and it is so called in the confirmation of Bishop Simon and in a letter of St. Thomas of Canterbury (fol. 15). Nevertheless the castle chapel was well endowed, and the bulk of the revenue of the refounded College came from the older institution. Henry de Newburgh was the first of the Norman earls to take an interest in St. Mary's, and it is perhaps due to him (Rous) that Earl Roger was able to carry out the amalgamation. I mean that what his father commenced the son completed. Earl Henry gave the fee of William, the chaplain, who was a

prebendary of some prebend attached to Compton Mordac, but what does not appear. Perhaps Earl Henry made that church a prebend. Herlewine, the priest, ancestor of William, had held it with the tithe of the toll of Warwick and the mill of Lolesam (fol. 8). To this deed Bishop Theold is a witness, and Hugh, Archdeacon of Worcester, and among others Gregory, the Earl's *Medicus*. This grant must have occurred between 1115, when Theold was consecrated, and 1123, when Earl Henry died. The College was, however, founded in 1123, so that the gift took place probably in that year. Earl Roger, the second founder, succeeded; in spite of an attempt of the canons of All Saints' to resist, a resistance backed by a confirmation of their privileges by Henry I (fol. 11). He was rid of the canons and the school out of his castle. Why was this? Did he object to the presence of the boys and clergy, with their strong Saxon proclivities for the old foundation within the fortress he was probably reconstructing? or did he merely believe they would be more useful in the town? Or again, did he wish to found his new College as cheaply as might be convenient? Possibly all these reasons were at work. The translation of the College was effected for the soul's health of King William I and Matilda his wife, King William II, and for perpetual memory of the soul of Roger de Belmund and his Countess Aeline, and for the soul of Earl Henry, the grantor's father. The All Saints' property transferred consisted of the Churches of the Holy Sepulchre with St. Helen, the Church of Gretham (co. Ruts), the Churches of St. John and St. Peter, the school of Warwick, and the tithes of Bodifort, Welesburne, Herdewic next Longe brugge, Charlecot, Fulebroc, Suitenefeld, Claverdone, Sireburne, Mulverton, Coton, Cuntun, Walton Theodric, and Walton Spileby, Bereford, Mueton, Hethe, Caldecot, the Church of Budebroc, and trial by water, iron and duel, 100 acres of land in Coton, and the land of the chaplain Wimund. The transfer was duly confirmed by the bishop, archbishop and pope. To the new foundation Earl Roger

granted £4 10s. yearly out of the toll of the burgh, and the original charter, set out on fol. xd of the Cartulary, is in possession of the Town Clerk of Warwick to-day. He confirmed his father's grants, gave them the Chapel of St. James on the parapet of the west gate (fol. 8d), and a croft without the town ditch. He also added the Chapel of Muiton and ten acres of his demesne there, and confirmed grants made by his men. The College thus set on foot was by no means rich, and had not its revenues been considerably augmented by further gifts, the income of its dean and prebendaries would have been small. The prebendaries, as was usually the case, were appointed to titular prebends, and in the case of Warwick, at any rate at first, they seem to have personally served the churches. They were as follows:—the Prebend of Cumpton Mordac, the Prebend of Budbroc, the Prebend of Sireburne, the Prebend of St. Peter, the Prebend of St. James, the Prebend of St. Michael (or St. Sepulchre), all of which could well have been attended to from Warwick, except the former, which had never any considerable population, the chapel of the manor being served by the domestic chaplain of its owner.

It must strike all who think over the question that colleges of secular canons never attracted popularity or attained the wealth and position of houses of regulars. The reasons may perhaps be found that they were created for an end. The various officials of a diocese, its chancellors, vicars-general, registrars, archdeacons, etc., were frequently paid or rewarded by granting to them the deanery of a college, or a prebend within it. In the latter case a vicar was easily procured at a cheap rate who said the daily Mass and sung the offices, and often served the church appropriated to the prebend. The system led to many abuses. The prebendaries usually tried to obtain as much as they could for their money, maintained their vicars for the minimum time, and occasionally allowed the buildings of the benefice and the chancel of their church to become ruinous. This led to

increased stringency in the oath of obedience to the bishop and the oath to observe the statutes of their church, but was so ineffectual that many a canon incurred for his gross neglect the greater excommunication. Royalty copied the episcopate, and provided for its deserving clerks, granting prebends to many who were in minor orders. The great barons followed in their train. It was doubtless for this reason Henry de Newburgh first thought of founding the College of the Blessed Mary and All Saints' of Warwick as a guerdon for his clerks.

The Cartulary of the College is late in date (it was written in the fifteenth century), but is of considerable interest, and noticeable for its wealth of papal bulls, its royal and episcopal confirmations in a negative sense, and for a considerable number of blank leaves. To the lay mind the lists of vestments, ornaments, and relics, the statutes and the royal charters contained in it, are of most interest, but all these have been more or less dealt with, and are accessible in print, and hence practically outside the scope of my article. The Cartulary consists of 232 folios of parchment, mostly written in one hand, but containing a number of scattered additions. It is dull matter, setting down the bare contents of such a MS., but there is perhaps no other way of giving a general idea of its contents.

Omitting the incorporated additional documents, the first section begins on folio 8, with charters of Earl Roger and the Countess Margaret, and includes the school charter of Earl Henry and a long series of royal, papal, archiepiscopal and episcopal confirmations. It is followed by a series of charters of the Salteresford and grants of annual rents out of various tenements in the town and its suburbs. On folio 55d is a long instrument by William Witleseye, Bishop of Worcester, the result of an inquiry into the privileges and rights of the College, and incidentally a record of the depositions of the persons examined. Then follow copies of charters relating to Pillerton, Spellesbury (co. Oxon), Witlesford in Cambridge,

Chaddesley Corbett in Worcestershire, Hasleor advowson, Cuckoo Church in Wedgnoock, Northbrook, the Manor of Haselor, Compton Mordack, and Wolfhamcote.

A series of documents follow relating to the quarrel with the Priory of the Holy Sepulchre over parochial rights, and the appropriation and union of the several Warwick churches. After this there are lists of goods, ornaments, and relics.

In the Public Record Office is another volume of paper which contains various accounts of the College, some of considerable interest, but, alas! undated.

The value of all early documents, apart from such as are obviously historical, lies in the flood of light they serve to throw on the conditions and character of the life of their time. It is true the bones are very dry, but a hint here and another there may lead one into something very near a correct judgment of the size, general character and importance of any particular town, even at a remote date. For instance, the deeds in the Cartulary are concerned with grants to the deans and canons of small rents of a few silver pennies a year at most. Yet they let us know the names and approximate dates of the deans and canons themselves, and also of the inhabitants and traders of Warwick, who appear either as principals or witnesses in them; the names of its streets, etc., and when we pass outside its wall, the names of the physical features of the countryside; while among the volume of accounts is at least one refreshing piece of folklore.

To resume for a moment the story of the College, there is a confirmatory grant (fol. 9d) made by Robert Curli of the Church of Budebroc, and its property, which is set down as sixty acres of inland (demesne land), a portion of waste, the priest's manse, its croft, the tithe of the whole village both in demesne and in the land of the villeins, and that of Hamton, Norton and Crevecnor, with tithe of the mill, all of which belonged to the church in the time of Geoffrey the chamberlain, as the old men of the place make oath. The Chapel of

Norton is specially assigned for the dedication of the cemetery, with three parts of a virgate of demesne land. The grant was made in the presence of Godefry and Baldewin, two deans of the bishop, *i.e.* rural deans, and among the witnesses are Ralph, Prior of the Holy Sepulchre, and two canons of St. Mary's, Osbert and Richard, and William, styled Dean of St. Peter's. The first stage in the story of the College was duly confirmed by the bishops, the archbishop, St. Thomas of Canterbury, Pope Eugenius III, and King Henry I.

The erection of St. Mary's and the dedication of its cemetery made the other parochial churches and chapels of Warwick unnecessary, so far as their parochial rights were concerned. St. Helen's is merged in St. Sepulchre, in time St. Laurence and St. John disappear, St. James and St. Peter are preserved because they are prebendal and also as part of the town defences. With the Holy Sepulchre matters were different; at first a parochial church, it was formed into a priory erected on the site of the old Church of St. Helen (Dr. Cox) about the year 1109 (so Rous). The Church of St. Helen had been, as we have seen, part of the property of the College of All Saints, and was transferred to the College of St. Mary by Earl Roger, but became united to the new foundation before the actual foundation of the College. Hence the later dispute. The consecration of an altar in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is noted on folio 14, wherein it specifies that the assent of the earl and of the canons of All Saints' has obtained. They had also a cemetery which was the source of considerable contention, the canons pleading parochial rights to bury their parishioners. Ralph, who was Prior of St. Sepulchre at the time, fought hard for what was needless to say a pecuniary benefit, but a letter from St. Thomas of Canterbury ordered him to restore the usurped rights to the mother church of All Saints and St. Mary (fol. 15). This was backed by a confirmation from Pope Adrian IV, and a series of confirmations by Henry II. The papal

commissioners were the Bishop of Hereford and the Archdeacon of Oxford, the latter of whom issued a mandate to the Dean, Walter de Salteresford, to recover from Prior Ralph the corpse of the wife of Gilbert le Nutrex, which he had illegally buried, and to expose it publicly in the Church of St. Mary (fol. 20d). Even this did not completely settle the dispute. Another bull from Pope Alexander, a further letter from the archdeacon, and an order from the Crown followed. Many years after the canons made due amends, and granted to the mother church all their rights in a lane reaching from the cemetery of St. Mary to Le Waldich (fol. 22). This was in 1337.

When Bishop Cantilupe visited the College he found the usual state of things. The prebends were all non-resident, their unfortunate vicars had to depend upon the offerings (oblations and obventions) of the people, and were so poor that they had to be reduced in number. The bishop therefore ordered that six chaplains should be appointed, and the prebendaries were forced to contribute a sufficient sum to their support (Dugdale, quoting Giffard). This is the beginning of the second stage in the history of the College. The dean and canons resolved to fight the matter out, and appealed to Canterbury against the bishop. Giffard was, however, a rich man, and could hold his own. He therefore excommunicated the dean and determinedly ignored his existence as such. This took place in 1284. On the other hand, the dean was a relation of the late earl, and no doubt was powerfully backed, or he could hardly have continued his resistance until 1297. The dispute went to the Court of Arches, and the dean and canons were fined twenty marks (Giffard, 249). The new dean, Thomas de Sodington, was appointed as a result of the bishop's visitation.

The reconstruction and endowment of the Church and College began in 1334, when Thomas de Beauchamp gave them the advowson of the Church of Pillerton Hercy, with the Chapel of Pillerton Priors (fol. 61d), and this was appropriated

to them and duly confirmed by the Prior and Chapter of Worcester (53d), with which body there was a long and heated dispute as to the rights of Pillerton Priors (53d *et seq*). Earl Thomas also granted them lands in Haselor, Wolfhamcote, and Whittlesford (co. Cambridge); but previously to this one Simon de Upton had granted them the Chapel of Upton in Haselor, his right to do so being violently disputed by more than one parish priest of Haselor, and even appeals to the archbishop. A letter from St. Thomas of Canterbury caused the then priest, one William, to submit, and Henry II confirmed the rights of the College, Henry III citing his charter and re-affirming it. They also received gifts of woodland from Nicholas de Pole, Justiciary of England, with the full assent of Matilda, his wife, and Ralph and Robert, his sons, and among other things, cherchset of oats and hens, law grist at the mill and fishery on our bank with "shufneht" (? shovenet), and these and all instruments except drawtneht (fol. 125). Another instrument (fol. 129d) states that the Church of Haselor was founded by King Henry with a cemetery, in the name of the most glorious Virgin Mary, St. Lawrence and All Saints, and held a manse and two virgates of land in Haselor and Walcote. The manor itself was purchased by Earl Thomas and conveyed to the College Sept. 20th, 19 Rich. II (1399).

At the same time William de Beauchamp, the brother of Earl Thomas, granted them the advowson of Spellsbury (fol. 81), and that of Chaddesley Corbett in Worcestershire, because the endowment was too small for the maintenance of divine worship. It had no doubt deteriorated, as all property had done, through the three visitations of the Black Death. There was also the new church to be considered. This was probably in the course of erection in 1364, when the pope granted a three years' indulgence to all who helped the repair by gift on Feasts of the Virgin, and the more usual forty days' canonical remission for those assisting in like manner at other feasts (Cal. Pap., Lett iv, 39).

The spirit of reform was in the air, for Bishop Wittleseye held a long inquiry into the ancient rights and privileges of the College, and both it and the depositions of those whom he examined are set out in the MS. This took place in December, 1367, and the bishop was enabled to recover many of the rights which had lapsed through the neglect of the dean and his non-resident canons (fol. 56). This stage in the reorganisation of the College was marked by the license of the earl, the bishop, and the Crown, for the appropriation of the advowsons of St. Nicholas, St. Lawrence, St. Peter and that of Budbrook (fol. 178-184). The Prior of Sepulchre, who had previously held a seat in the chapter as a prebendary of the prebend of that name, was expelled by a mandate from Bishop Tideman in 1375 (fol. 185d).

In 1401 Walter Power gave the College the Manor of Heathcote, and in 1454 the King-maker added a considerable plot of ground to their garden and churchyard. In 1461 the king granted them part of Northbroke (fol. 142), and in 1468 the King-maker and his Countess Anne added the Manors of Baginton and Wolverton, with the intent that four priests and two clerks should be found for service of the church. This does not appear at all in the Cartulary. Henry VII gave Cuckoo Church in 1500, but it has been overlooked that this was a re-grant of an estate that had lapsed, and which was originally the gift of John de Abetoth and his wife Margaret de Clynton, under the style of the Chapel of the Blessed John the Evangelist of Beausale, and the land in the field of Rykenylesbury which Martin the miller held, and various other lands and rights such as tithe of each beast in the Park of Beausale and of pannage there, and tithe of fish in the pond. For each such beast a spatula was paid.

The church was remarkably rich in vestments, but the list is far too lengthy to be given in the course of this paper. The service books were of unusual splendour, and the relics, many and peculiar, are apt to raise a smile in the twentieth century. For instance, a piece of the burning bush which Moses saw,

a fragment of Abraham's seat, part of the oil in which fire came down from heaven at Pentecost, part of the hair, milk and garments of the Blessed Virgin, the ivory horn of St. George, and the frying-pan of St. Brandon. But these have more than once been noticed, and, as already said, are outside the scope of the paper.

A note on folio 2 of the MS. states that Thomas Younge, the dean, gave a gilded chalice enamelled with ymages of the four doctors, a linen cloth, a towell of work, and six books, Pupillo oculi, Odo, a treatise of Pope Innocent, *Librum de Corpus Christi*, *Dialogus Gregorii*, *Peter Comestre*, etc., and also that John Porter received from him for the repair of the deanery a silver chest and lid, worth 23s., two spoons worth 25s., various furs, etc., a book of St. Bridgett, another of SS. Matilda and Elizabeth, a book of chronicles, *De Expositione Missus Gabriel*, the white book of Lusanc', a red book, a book of the Order of St. Benedict, etc.

The dean and canons obviously lived in their own manses, but after the formal institution of the six vicars these seem to have lived in common, and had furniture for common use, which is duly set down (fol. 186) as handed to Roger Whytyngton and his companions. They comprise very simple household necessaries, the most unusual articles being :—ii. hamos feari pro ollis, i. Salsarium pro sale inponeda de stague, xii. perapsides (platters), i. grator de plate Flanedre, i. coclarium argenteum (a silver spoon), vi. gilt candlesticks, i. peperqueerinie.

The published list of deans is very defective, but the Cartulary supplements them to a considerable extent. The first to be recorded is one Master John, *circa* 1123 (fol. 10d). His successor, one William, occurs after A.D. 1141. After 1154 Walter de Salteresford appears, then Jordan, who had previously been a canon. Before 1160 William, son of Richard; before 1185 Richard, son of Ascur; in 1279 Robert de Placeto, who after a long fight was, as we have seen, excommunicated and apparently deposed in 1290; then

Thomas de Sodynton. Then in 1297 Ralph de Hengham, one of the canons, who in that year took the place of William de Apperley, to be succeeded in 1306 by Master Robert Tankard. The list of deans must cease here for want of room, and no mention can be made of the various prebendaries, many of whom are on record, but are difficult to assign to their respective prebends, though occasionally the descent is plain and apparent.

The plan of the town in the twelfth century was much as it remains to-day. On the south lay the castle, with its stockaded mounds, shortly to be walled with stone, a simple mott and burh, afterwards re-modelled as a concentric castle. From its enceinte the ditch and mound of the town stretched round three points of the compass, with gates on the east, north, and west, the first and last still standing with their chapels on the parapet, though the present structures are far later than the twelfth century. From the west gate led the shopping centre of the burgh, the High Pavement or High Market. It was continued as Le Jury to the east gate. In the present market-place stood the Church of St. John, used for the school after its disuse as a parish church. The other streets and places mentioned in the Cartulary are Scholane (fol. 33), Le Bretayne (fol. 47d), Le Rondetable (fol. 32), Le Waldich (fol. 22), Fullers Street (fol. 46d), the street of the Castle, le Rue Chastel (fol. 48d). At a later date, 1425 (fol. 32-9) Smyth Street, Nicholas Street, West Street, Queenwelst, Walker Street, Le Horse Chepynge (fol. 54d), and so forth.

Warwick never possessed much trade. At any rate, the evidence of any is very slight so far as the Cartulary goes. As early as 1115 a resident medicus, one Gregory, was there in the earl's employ (fol. 41d), and in 1306 Robert le Belyetere appears, a name especially interesting, as so very little is known of the Warwickshire bell-founders. He probably cast the bell at Halford and that at Whitchurch.¹ The only name

¹ Letter to Author from Mr. Walters of the British Museum, author of *The Church Bells of Warwickshire*.

previously known was that of John Kingston, who was living in the Northgate in 1401.¹ Unfortunately Robert must have got into trouble, as the dean seized his goods for some felony (fol. 52d). William Calcearius (fol. 51), a spur maker. There was a tannery at Warwick at an early date, if one can trust such names as Gerard the tanner (fol. 42d), and Robert le tanerer was provost of the burgh in 1296 (fol. 48d). There was also one William a skinner (fol. 42d), and Henry le Wolmonger (fol. 53d), but he was somewhat late in date. Robert le Pursere occurs on folio 48, and Geoffrey the taylor on 49d, both thirteenth century. Geoffrey the cook appears in the twelfth century (fol. 42d), and Hugh le Chapman (fol. 44) in 1322. The usual trades of a small town so far as the Cartulary goes are entirely absent. Robert Mercarius alone represents the drapers (fol. 42d), but it would not do to judge only from this particular MS., since very few Warwick deeds are known, and still fewer have been studied. Among the original deeds in the Public Record Office one meets with Ralph le Taylor,² and in an early deed in the castle John le Couper, Clement of Shereburn, smith, and Henry the smith all occur.³ No community could very well get along without its smith and cooper, its mason and carpenter, and if these names do not appear it is that we have not the material at our disposal. There are one or two names of unusual character that demand notice: Rogiment Vicedent (fol. 43d), William le Quarrenir (fol. 44), Nicolas le Oatreour (fol. 44), John Paternoster (fol. 45d), Recello de Warric, Maskede Knout (fol. 53d).

There is little time for more than a brief note from the volume of College accounts, also preserved in the Public Record Office. They are undated, but probably of the time of Henry VII. When the bishop came, the canons gave 2s. for six fat geese, 4s. for as many capons, 2s. 6d. for twelve

¹ Mentioned in a Comptus Roll of the King-maker presented to the Castle.

² Misc. Exch. xxxvi. 60.

³ Grev. Ch. w. 1.

rabbits, so that they feasted my lord as was usual. Another item is of interest: "Item paid on Sherethursday¹ at the Maundy for vii cake made sheelewise² with loves³ for Mr. Dean and the 6 canons 14d. Item ten wiggs for the ten vicars, item 8 wigges for the 8 clerks, item for 6 queresters vi wiggs, iiijd, item further to 1 cake to make the porchions drynke wull iiijd, item ale iiij galons viiid, item a potell of sak 6d."

This is a specially interesting piece of Warwickshire folklore, marking apparently some ceremonial cake distribution on Maundy Thursday. Wigs were three-cornered cakes made in most parts of the county.

This concludes my short summary of the contents of this most interesting manuscript, which should be printed as speedily as may be. It is my earnest hope that the few points used in my paper will serve to show how needful this is.

¹ Ascension Day.

² ? Shellwise, that is the form of escallops.

³ Loaves.