

## CHESHAM.

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The Parish of Chesham is the largest in the County, and contains seven Hamlets. It is situated on the southern side of the Chiltern Hills, which form so prominent a feature for miles around, and upon which every native of Buckinghamshire must gaze with peculiar interest and delight. Resisting the temptation to allude to the many important relics still extant on this range of hills, corroborative of their past history, I will confine my remarks entirely to the town and neighbourhood of Chesham, the former of which is delightfully situated in a valley surrounded by bold eminences and beech-clad hills.

The earliest extant record relating to Chesham is that contained in the Domesday Survey, under the name of *Cestreham*. And here I will first say a few words on the etymology of Cestreham or Chesham. It is a compound word and is generally supposed to be derived from the Roman word "cestre" a camp, and the Saxon word "ham," signifying a collection of dwellings or plot of ground near a river. But as there are two Cheshams it is fair to assume that something of more influence than a camp must have given its name to both places. Besides, there is no authority from analogy for supposing that in other instances the Cestre was ever corrupted into Ches. On the other hand, there is nothing more natural or more probable than that Chesham should have had its etymon from the brook Chess. Of this kind of nomenclature many instances could be given, as Trentham on the Trent, Rotherham on the Rother, Cheltenham on the Chilt, &c. Again, like those of most of the English streams, Ches is obviously a British name; and the fact of its being so near the Chilterns, which formed a prominent stronghold of the Britons, renders its paternity the more probable. Indeed, it is very possible that "Ches" is the British

"Ces," which signified a diverging point or centre from whence any thing separates. Now as several valleys diverge at the junction of the two principal streams, the one rising in Highamead meadow, and the other in the meadows on Frogmoor Farm (and it is at their junction that the town is situated), this may very probably be the etymon of the word. The junction of the two streams seems to be the principal natural feature of the place, (and where they join, there they also separate) and is of course of much greater antiquity than any castrum could be. The Anglo-Saxons have appended the well-known epithet "Ham," but in their language there is no word at all cognate with Ches.

To return to the Domesday Survey. In this invaluable record an account is given of the Manors and Lands and their value, and the number and apportionment of the lords, freemen, and cottagers, not only at the time when it was made, but prior to the conquest of England by William the Norman, in 1066. It appears that all the Saxon proprietors having been dispossessed by William, the several Manors and Lands in Cestreham were given by him to four of his dependants, who came over from Normandy with him, viz.: Odo Bishop of Baieux, Hugh de Bolebec, Turstin Mantel, and Alsî. The Manor given to the Bishop of Baieux, who possessed twenty-eight other manors and lands in Bucks, was formerly held by two sokemen or "freeholders subject to service or rent," one a vassal of Earl Leuin; the other a vassal of Earl Harold; and was worth sixty shillings. The Bishop had also two mills, worth three shillings, and held one hide and a half of land. The principal manor was given to Hugh de Bolebec, who was of baronial dignity, possessing large estates in this and the adjoining county of Bedford, and who built a castle at Whitchurch, five miles north of Aylesbury. This manor was formerly held by Brictric, a vassal of Queen Eddid. Its whole value was ten pounds save three shillings; but in King Edward the Confessor's time, twelve pounds. Hugh also held eight hides and a half of land; had one mill of ten shillings, and pannage for 800 hogs. Turstin Mantel, who possessed other lands in Missedene and Elmodesham, appears to have had the smallest share in Cestreham, for he held only half a hide and it was waste, worth only five shillings.

This land was formerly held by Epy, a vassal of Brictric's. The third manor, formerly held by Queen Eddid, was given by her to Alsi after the coming of King William. Alsi held of the King four hides; he had also pannage for 800 hogs, and one mill of six shillings and eightpence. At the time of the survey and previously, it was worth four pounds; in King Edward's time, one hundred shillings.

At the time of the survey, the land under cultivation in Chesham amounted to fourteen hides and a half;\* and allowing to the extent of 100 to 120 acres for each hide, which Camden in his "Remaines" says, is "so much land as one plough can plow in a yere," the portion of land under tillage at that time offers a striking contrast to the state of agriculture at the present period. But the principal part was woodland, and was occupied as "pannage," or keep on beech masts and acorns, "for hogs;" woodland at that time being valued not according to its extent, but according to the number of hogs it would keep. The town and neighbourhood, 800 years ago, presented however some at least of the same characteristics and general features which they do at the present day. At that time even as now, the hills were covered with beech woods, and along the valleys there flowed, then as now, the bright clear water of many springs, which, gathering into one stream, formed the little river Chess, and supplied the motive power to four water or grist-mills, to which in those feudal times even as at present, the produce of the ploughed lands was wont to be carried.

Of the three manors in Cestreham recorded in the survey, the one given by William the Conqueror to Hugh de Bolebec descended to his eldest son Hugh, and afterwards to his second son Walter, who left only one daughter Isabel his heir, then but nine years of age. She was a ward of Alberic de Vere, first Earl of Oxford, who gave a fine of 500 marks to the King that his second son Robert de Vere might take her to wife; and in the ninth year of the reign of John, this Robert de Vere, afterwards third Earl of Oxford, gave to the King 200 marks and 3 palfreys for license to marry her the said Isabel. As the de Veres

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\* In the reign of Henry III., Chesham was returned as comprising only about fifteen hides, valued at £18 5s. 0d.; and in King Edward's time, at £21 5s. 0d.

were one of the most ancient and illustrious families in the annals of our history, and were in possession of this and the other two manors for a number of years, I will give a brief account of the particulars of their connection with them. Alberic or Aubrey de Vere, son of Alphonso Count of Ghines, descended from a younger son of the Count of Flanders, came over with the Conqueror, from whom he received various lordships, principally in Essex and Suffolk, and had his residence at Colne, Essex. He died 1088, and was succeeded by his son Alberic, who was created Lord Great Chamberlain by Henry I., and slain in a London mob, 1140. His son and heir, Aubrey de Vere, was created

(1.) Earl of Oxford by the Empress Maud, 1137, and confirmed by Henry II. in 1155. The office of Lord Great Chamberlain was granted to him and made heritable to his family. Before 1155, he was created Earl of Cambridge-shire, if the King of Scotland claimed it not, but if he did, then he was to have his choice of Oxford, Berks, Wilts, or Dorset; at last Henry II. gave him the third penny or the pleas of the Earl of Oxford, "*ut sit inde Comes.*" He died 1194.

(2.) Aubrey de Vere, his son, succeeded as Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain. He was one of John's evil counsellors, and died without issue 1214, when Robert de Vere his brother succeeded him as

(3.) Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain. He was one of the 25 Barons who were appointed to enforce Magna Charta. He married, as I have said, Isabel, daughter of Walter de Bolebec, and took possession of the Manor of Chesham. Dying 1221, he was buried cross-legged in the Priory of Hatfield Broad Oak, co: Hertford, of which he was the founder.

(4.) Hugh de Vere, his son, was the next Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain. Henry III. granted to him in "*Cestreham mercat: feria*"\*—a weekly market. His wife Alice held the Manor of Chesham, with the lands and tenements, by the service of providing one waiting-damsel for the use of the Queen on the day of her coronation.† Hugh died 1263, and was succeeded by

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\* *Rotulus Chartarum.*

† *Rotulorum originalum in curia scaccarii abbreviatis*, vol. i. p. 195.



(5.) Robert de Vere, his son, who gave to his daughter Joane, on the occasion of her marriage with William de Warren, lands in Cestreham of ten pounds per annum. He died 1296 and was succeeded by

(6.) His son Robert de Vere; to whom King Edward III. granted "that he and his heirs shall hold for ever in Chesham, view of frankpledge and all other profits which his sheriff in the view of frankpledge, by hidage, fine for fairpleading, suit, ward, or in any other manner, annually receives in augmentation of his maintenance, for the consideration of five marks" paid to the King into his Exchequer.\* He died without issue 1331, and was succeeded by

(7.) John de Vere, his nephew; from whom Edward III. received homage for the manors of Chesham and Calverton with the appurtenances, which Robert de Vere, late Earl of Oxford deceased, held in capite by the service of two Knight's fees and a half, and by sergeanty to wit

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\* *View of Frankpledge.* The ancient custom of the free men of England for the preservation of the public peace was, that every free born man at fourteen years of age, priests and knights excepted, should find surety towards the King, or else be kept in prison; whereupon a certain number of persons became customarily bound over for the other, to see each man of their pledge forthcoming at all times, so that whosoever offended, it was forthwith enquired in what pledge he was, and then they of that pledge either brought him forth within thirty-one days to his answer, or else satisfied for his offence. This was called frankpledge, and the circuits those of decenna, because they generally consisted of ten houses, and the persons holding them were called Decenniers. This usage was so kept that the sheriffs did from time to time, at the county courts, take the oaths of young persons as they attained fourteen, and saw that they were comprised in some pledge, wherefore this branch of the sheriff's authority was styled "*visus franci plegii*." In order to enforce this essential part of police, the courts of the town and leet were erected, or rather were separated from that of the county.—*Hidage* was an extraordinary tax, payable anciently to the King for every hide of land. King Ethelred, A.D. 994, when the Danes landed at Sandwich, taxed all his land by hides. Henry I., in order to marry his daughter Maud to the Emperor Henry IV. of Germany, took of every hide of land in England three shillings.—*Fine for fairpleading.* Fines were a great branch of the royal revenue in early times; they were sometimes inflicted and sometimes paid voluntarily. Instances occur of fines paid "for the King's good will," "that he would remit his anger," "for his mediation;" the Bishop of Winchester pays a tun of good wine, as a fine, for not reminding King John to present a girdle to the Countess of Albemarle; and Robert de Vaux gives his five best palfreys "*ut Rex taceat de uxore Henrici Pinel*." The fine for *fairpleading* was a fine which the sheriff took in his court from either party, for that he pleadeth not fairly.—*Ward.* The Lord's privilege of holding lands during his or her minority, and giving him or her in marriage.

to serve as chamberlain in the King's chamber on the day of his coronation.\* He died 1360, and was succeeded by his son

(8.) Thomas de Vere, who married, during his father's life-time, Maud the daughter of Ralph de Ufford, at which time he had the manor of Chesham settled upon him and her, and the heirs male of their two bodies. He died 1371, and was succeeded by his son

(9.) Robert de Vere, to whom, amongst other manors, that of Chesham with the Leet (parcel of the Barony of Bulbeck) descended. He was created Marquis of Dublin in 1386, and Duke of Ireland the following year. In 1388, he was attainted of high treason, and all his possessions confiscated, excepting his entailed lands, which only were to remain to his right heirs. He was banished; and being wounded in hunting by a wild boar, died from his wounds at Louvain in great penury, in 1392. Dying without issue, he was succeeded by his uncle

(10.) Alberic de Vere, who, by assent of Parliament, was restored to all those lands which had been by fine entailed upon his nephew; and had also the name, title, and honor of Earl of Oxford granted to him and to his heirs male: but being infirm, the office of Lord High Chamberlain was bestowed by the King on John Holland, Earl of Huntendon, to hold for term of life. He died in 1400, and was succeeded by

(11.) Richard de Vere, then fourteen years of age. Upon his assent that the Duchess Philippa, widow of Robert de Vere, 9th Earl of Oxford, should enjoy her dower, the King granted to him and his heirs all those lands and tenements, which by forfeiture of Duke Robert, came to the crown. He died 1417, and was succeeded by his son

(12.) John de Vere, then nine years of age. He obtained a confirmation from the King of the office of Lord Great Chamberlain of England, originally granted to his ancestor Alberic de Vere by Henry I. He was attainted and beheaded with Alberic his eldest son in 1464, and was succeeded by his second son

(13.) John de Vere, who obtained a reversal of the proceedings of the Parliament of 1 Henry IV., by which

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\* Rotulorum originalum in curia scaccarii abbreviatis, vol. ii. p. 59.

he was restored to the original Earldom of Oxford. He was attainted 1474; when Richard Duke of Gloucester, obtained a grant of Chesham and Aston Sandford as part of his possessions. He was restored 1485, and dying without issue in 1513, was succeeded by his nephew

(14.) John de Vere, commonly called Little John of Campes, and had a special livery of all those lands whereunto he was heir. Dying without issue, 1516, his three sisters became his heirs; but the Earldom of Oxford, and all that part of the inheritance which was entailed, came to

(15.) John de Vere, his nephew, whose wife, Alice de Vere, held at her death one messuage, a garden, a piece of meadow with 60 acres of land, a water-mill, and 69s. 4d. rents in Chesham, of the King *in capite* as part of the Earldom of Oxford. He died at his manor of Colne, 1539, and was succeeded by his son

(16.) John de Vere, to whom, in 1532, Henry VIII. granted, amongst others, the manors of Chesham Bury, and Chesham Higham. He died 1562, and was succeeded by his son

(17.) Edward de Vere, who was one of the Peers appointed by special commission to try Mary Queen of Scots. He died 1604, and was succeeded by his son

(18.) Henry de Vere, who died at the siege of Breda in the Netherlands, and was succeeded by his cousin

(19.) Robert de Vere. A contest arose in 1626, between Robert de Vere claiming as heir male, and Lord Willoughby D'Eresby claiming, thro' a female, as heir-general to the last Earl. Charles I. referred the matter to the House of Lords, who called the Judges to their assistance. Their opinion was delivered by Lord Chief Justice Crewe in the following terms:—

“This great and weighty cause, incomparable to any other of the sort that hath happened at any time, requires much deliberation and solid and mature judgment to determine it. Here is represented to your Lordships certamen honoris, illustrious honour. I heard a great peer of this realm and a learned man say when he lived—‘there is no King in Christendom hath such a subject as Oxford.’ And well might this be said, for De Vere came in with the Conqueror, being the Earl of Gaynes; shortly after the conquest he was made Great Chamberlain by

Henry I., the Conqueror's son, above 500 years ago. By Maud the Empress he was created Earl of Oxford, the grant being *Alberico Comite*, so that he was clearly an Earl before. He was confirmed and approved by Henry Fitz-Empress, Henry II. This great honour, this high and noble dignity hath continued ever since in its remarkable surname of De Vere by so many ages, descents and generations, as no other kingdom can produce such a peer in one and the selfsame name and title. I find in all this time but two attainders in this noble family, and those in stormy times, when the government was unsettled and the kingdom in competition. I have laboured to make a covenant with myself, that affection may not press upon judgment, for I suppose there is no man that hath any apprehension of gentry and nobleness, but his affection stands to the continuance of a house so illustrious, and would take hold of a twig or twine thread to uphold it. And yet time hath his revolutions; there must be a period and an end to all temporal things—*finis rerum*—an end of names and dignities, and whatsoever is terrene; and why not of De Vere? For where is Bohun? where is Mowbray? where is Mortimer? nay, what is more and most of all, where is Plantagenet? They are entombed in the urns and sepulchres of mortality! Yet let the name of De Vere stand so long as it pleaseth God."

The judgment went in favor of Robert, as the Parliament of sixth year of the reign of Richard II. had entailed the earldom on Aubrey and his heirs male, though originally it had been held in fee simple; but the Chamberlainship passed to Lord Willoughby D'Eresby. Earl Robert was killed at Maestricht in 1632, and was succeeded by his son

(20.) Aubrey de Vere, the last Earl of Oxford. He was created Knight of the Garter in the reign of Charles II. Dying without issue, 1702, the Earldom became extinct.\*

From the De Veres the three manors of Great Chesham, Chesham Higham, (so called from the acquisition of an estate by marriage of W. Rowe of Higham Hall, co: Essex, with Anne, daughter of John Cheyne of Chesham

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\* In 1711, Robert Harley, speaker of the House of Commons, was by Queen Anne created Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer.





BOPY HILL, CHESTERHAM, BUCKS., 1770.

Day & Son Lithrs to the Queen.

Bois, who died in 1596,) and Chesham Bury passed into the family of the Seymours, and from them to the family of the Sandys, who were also possessors of the manor of Latimer. These four manors were afterwards disposed of to the Cavendish family, and have descended to their present possessor Lord Chesham. I have not entered into any of the many interesting particulars relating to the Manor, Estate, and Church of Latimer, a small hamlet in the parish of Chesham, but leave it for a paper at some future period.

The manor of the Grove was for many generations in the family of Cheney, whose history, written by the Rev. W. H. KELKE, has been published in the "Records" of our Society.

The manor of Hundridge is only a reputed manor, but the substantially built house, with its pannelled rooms and adjoining desecrated chapel, prove that it has been a place of some importance in days gone by.

In one of the old entry books of the Court Leets\* of the manors of Chesham, dated 1552, and now in the possession of the Steward of the manors, are the following singular entries, one of them giving the names of the landlord and tenant of Hundridge at that time, and shewing the honesty of two men in convicting their own brother.

"1587. A remembrance of the p'sentm<sup>ts</sup> fitt for notice to be taken of them.

"M<sup>d</sup> that in vicessimo nono Eliz: William Chase the farmer of Hundridge and then S<sup>r</sup> Rob<sup>t</sup> Dormer owner thereof and being now S<sup>r</sup> Rob<sup>t</sup> Pyes. There came in that time a couple of Straye Bucks within the Lopp (*Lordship*) and Manno<sup>r</sup> of Chesham which Bucks were killed within the Manno<sup>r</sup> without the Lords leave whereof the said William Chase killed one of them within the hamblett of Hundridge and one Jeremiah Payne killed the other within the hamblett of Bellenden. And further it is to be observed That at the next Court following, a Jury was impaneld and this William Chase had two brothers named John Chase and Richard who were impanelled upon the Jury, and the killing of those two Bucks being given them in charge for killinge them

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\* The last Court Leet was held in 1843.



within the Manno<sup>r</sup> (without the Lords leave, John Chase and Richard who were impanell'd upon the jurye and the killing of them within the Manno<sup>r</sup> without the Lords leave) John Chase and Richard being Jurors presented their owne brother William Chase for killing one of those Buckes and fined him 10s. for soe doeing and Jeremy Payne the like for the other.

“Alsoe in 4<sup>to</sup> Jac<sup>s</sup> and in Anō doñi 1621 a ffayre pr'ssentm<sup>t</sup> against some for the fishing in the water or River against M<sup>r</sup> Gawdrewes house that now is But then and since was Hen: Meretoux.”

And in Ann. 1621.

“A pr'sentm<sup>t</sup> against some that had fished in the water called frogmore.”

The Ecclesiastical history of Chesham would open too wide a subject to be entered into fully in all its details; but a concise account of it must be given. The Living formerly consisted of two medieties, the great and the small tithes of which were appropriated to the convents of Leicester and Woburn, each of which appointed a Vicar.

The mediety of the Church of Chesham Leicester was given by Robert de Syfrewast to the convent of St. Mary's —“Prē juxta Leicester.” This gift was confirmed by a charter of Henry II.; and then King John by his charter, confirmed it and the exchanges that had been made with the Bishop of Lincoln. One of the early Abbots of the convent of Leicester was a native of Chesham, Alan de Cestreham, who was appointed the 19th Henry III., and sat nine years. In the reign of Edward IV., a terrier was made of all the lands in Chesham belonging to Leicester Abbey, and is to be found in the Library of the British Museum, No. Galba E. iii. of the Cottonian MSS., p. 131, from which the following is an extract:—

“Chesham Leycet<sup>r</sup> in the com. of Buk.

“Perteyninge to the towne of Chesham, and within the constabulwyke there. Yt is to be remembered and to be understonde that theis p'sent scripcons folowing, makyng-money-on where that alle the glebis and tythes of bladis and of heyze, and also of all the rentes, sute, servyce, and demayne londis, wt ther apperten' ben and owet to be hadde, receyved, ga dered and lenyde wythin the limytes, markes, and boundes

of the p'rsche and the pte of Cheshā Leyceſt' foreseyde, in the seyde cōm of Buk, the whiche ben perteyning and belongyng, by dew and ryght of old custome unto the rectorye and p'sonage ther of the lord abbot and convent of the monastery of the blessed Mary Virgin in the mede of Leyceſt', be the ryght of her chyrche, called the chyrche of Chesham Leyceſt', in the seide com of Buk, as the hameletis and constabulwykes in those subscripcons, thereof here after wreten and made plenarly apperyng: The whiche ben renewed atte Chesham Leyceſt' forsayde, at the tide of the yere called hokketyde. In the yere of owre Lord God a MCCCCLXVIII, and the VIII. yere of the reigne of Kyng Edward the III., Be Wylliam Wedon, bayly of Chesham forsaide, and fermo also unto the sayde abbot and convent of ther seyde cherche and p'sonage. And also be the concentyng and a vyse knowlychyng, rehersyng, tellyng, utteryng, and declaryng of the most aged men and best theryn and therof aversed of all the seyde p'issche and parishons, and also of all themits there of the seide abbot an cōvent. Wythyn the constabulwyke of Chesham towne foreseyde."

"In the first. Alle the glebys and tythes of the londys, with app'tin', called coppid-thorne of Thomas lynde, Esquier, lord of the manr of Cheshm Bury, lying in a feld there called chyrchefelde &c."

The terrier then is continued through more than thirteen pages of folio, containing an exact description of all the lands and tithes belonging to the Abbey, viz., of "Chesham Boys, within the constabulwyke of the duchery of langcastell there and also of the Lordshippe of latimer there:" "the hamelett of Layhull; the hameletis of Whelpley Wyth, in the constabulwyke there of the honoure of Walyngforde; and the hameletis of Acheley Grene, of Belenden, of Asherugge, of Charterugge, of Hunrugge, of Chesh'm Dene, otherwyse called Cheshā Water Wyth, and of Botteley."

In the 27th year of the reign of Henry VIII., the tithes of Chesham Leicester were demised by the Abbot and Convent of Leicester to Christopher Ashfield for fifty years, on the payment of the yearly sum of £13 6s. 8d. At the dissolution of the monastery of Leicester, the living became the property of the Crown, and Queen Elizabeth granted it, at the expiration of the said term of fifty years, to Thomas Ashfield for £53 6s. 8d. for four years only. But afterwards, in 1602, in the 44th year of her reign, she granted it for the sum of £579 2s. 2d. to him and his heirs in fee for ever, to hold it as of the manor of East Greenwich with the advowson of the vicarage. In the year 1650 a descendant of the Ashfield's sold the rectorial manor of Chesham Leicester, together with the advowson of a mediety of the Vicarage, to the family of the Whichcotes. The Rectory House was for some time the residence of that family, whose chief seat was in Lincolnshire. About the year 1730, this property was sold to

Mr. John Ware in trust for Coulson Skottowe, Esq.; it was afterwards disposed of piece-meal; the advowson of the vicarage was purchased by the Duke of Bedford; the tithes were for the most part purchased by the proprietors of the several estates; and the House and Park by Charles Lowndes, Esq. The House was a fine old manorial residence, situated at a distance of about three hundred yards to the north of the parish Church, and its site may still be traced. The date of its erection was probably about the year 1500; it was taken down in the early part of the present century. Deer were formerly kept in the park.

Of the mediety of Chesham Woburn, the first notice we have is in *Dugdale's Monasticon*, where it is recorded that the Canons of Dunstable made an exchange with the Abbot and Monks of Woburne for the Vicarage of Chesham: "A.D. 1221. . . Eodem anno, composuimus cum abbate et monachis de Woburne, super vicaria ecclesiæ de Cestreham, ita quod ex toto renunciavimus juri nostro: et abbas et monachi nobis perpetuo conferrent redditum trium marcarum annuatim quod factum est per ordinationem de Bedeford et de Hunteton archidiaconorum." In the year 1291, when all monasteries were taxed or valued by order of Pope Nicholas IV., who granted to Edward 1st for six years the tenths of all Ecclesiastical benefices towards defraying an expedition to the Holy Land, the valuation of Chesham Woburne is contained in two entries, which translated, run thus: "Temporal possessions. Cestreham in lands and rent £1 13s. 6d.; the same in fruit, flocks, and herds 18s. 6d. The Spiritualities; Church of Cestreham the portion of the Abbot of Woburne, deducting pension to the priest, £17 5s. 0d." By the *Inquisitio Nonarum* in the Exchequer of Edward III., taken in the fourteenth and fifteenth year of his reign, it appears that "the valuation of the ninth in this parish by the presentment of John de Brok, William Wodard, William Gerveys, Roger Hykebrid, Stephen Martyn, and Henry le Smyth is 43 marks and no more because it is stated that a fourth part of the arable land in the said parish lies arid and untilled, and it is said that the demesne lands belonging to the same parish, with the rents of assize and divers other profits to the same Church belonging, are worth one year with the other £20, and that there are no merchants

or cattle-dealers dwelling in the foresaid parish." In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, which is a declaration at the first visitation of the Monasteries of their annual value made at the feast of St. Michael in the twenty-sixth year of Henry VIII., are several entries relating to Chesham, one of which describes the farm of the Rectory of Chesham Woburn, with the lands and tenements there, so let to John Cheney, Esq., by indenture, as worth £23 per annum. At the second valuation, made in 1543, the rectory of Chesham Woburn was valued at £23 3s. 4d. The rectorial manor of Chesham Woburn, with the advowson of one mediety of the vicarage, was granted Dec. 12, 1553, by Edward VI., to Anne, Countess of Bedford, and Sir Francis Russell, Knt., to hold by fealty only in free soccage, and not in capite. Lord Russell, who was afterwards created Earl of Bedford, disposed of the manor to the Rev. Mr. Hubbard, but retained the advowson of the vicarage; and in the year 1795 sold the great tithes, which were purchased by the respective landlords. The two medieties therefore of the vicarages of Chesham Leicester and Chesham Woburn, being thus in the possession of the Duke of Bedford, were consolidated by Act of Parliament in the year 1767; and each is valued in the King's books at £13 1s. 5½d.

That there were formerly two Churches in Chesham does not admit of a question—one the present Church, and the other Chesham Woburn, which was situated at the back of the Infant School, where the foundations have been discovered; for Edward IV., in the sixth year of his reign, granted to Edward Braymill a garden and one rood of land in West-dean field, lying and being in Chesham Leicester and Woburn, for the maintenance of lights in the Churches of Chesham Leicester and Chesham Woburn.

There are also undoubted evidences of the existence of two vicarage houses—one situated in a garden adjoining the Infant School and near the Church of Chesham Woburn; and the other to the north of the town, about one mile distant, and situated between the roads leading to Bellingdon and Chesham Vale. The Duke of Bedford being patron of both vicarages, pulled them down and built the present vicarage house.

The Church of Chesham Leicester, which is dedicated to St. Mary, and which was rebuilt by our catholic fore-



fathers, on the site no doubt of an earlier building, remains to this day an incontestible proof that our ancestors laid not one stone upon another without a goodly foundation. The precise date of its erection cannot be ascertained. Judging however from the perpendicular style of the architecture of the nave and chancel, the time of its erection may be ascribed to the end of the fourteenth century. The plan of it is cruciform, having nave, chancel, and transepts intersecting a central tower, which is embattled and bears a spire, with aisles and chapels attached. Over the porch there is a muniment-room or parvise, where the priest lodged, and which is reached by an octagonal stair-turret in the north-west angle, the entrance to which is concealed by wood pannelling. The interior of the Church is disfigured by plaster ceilings, cumbrous galleries, and hideous pews, made, as Weaver in his "Funeral Monuments" sarcastically says, "high and easy for the parishioners to sit or sleep in." The east window in the chancel, and a small one on the south side, were filled with stained glass, by William Lowndes, Esq.; the former represents the crucifixion, the resurrection, &c. Another window on the south side of the chancel bears the following inscription:—

"In memoriam Johannis Newton M.R.C.S., natus XXIII January, 1835. Obiit apud Scutari, January XXXI, 1855. Sorores mœrentes posuerunt."

The south transept was formerly a burial place for the family of Cavendish, of Latimer. In it is erected a monument to Sir John Cavendish (a younger son of the first Earl of Devonshire), who died without issue 1618; and also one with an altar-tomb supporting a lofty pyramid erected to the memory of Mary, wife of Sir Francis Whichcote. It is reported that the expenses incurred at the funeral and in erecting this monument were so costly that they almost ruined Sir Francis Whichcote, and led him in 1730 to dispose of the rectorial manor of Chesham Leicester. The procession at the funeral, as it arrived from London, is said to have extended from the entrance of the Churchyard to about 100 yards beyond the Alms-houses by the water side. There is also a curious monument erected on the north side of the chancel, to Richard Woodcock, formerly a Vicar of Chesham, who died in 1623. He is represented in the attitude of preaching,

with a green cushion before him, and wearing a quilled ruff. On a black marble slab below is an inscription in Latin, given in Lipscomb's History, a translation of which will be more generally intelligible—

“Sacred to the memory of Richard Woodcock, sprung from parents of an honest sort, formerly a pupil of Eton School, elected into the Society of King's College, Cambridge, on account of his virtue, skilled in all the ornaments of the languages and polite literature, an honour to his school, a master of preaching or sermons, the subdean of his college, Bachelor of Divinity, a hammer of Hereticks, reverend in his aspect, shining in his life, sharp in his discourse, pious in his example, unwearied in his labour, supreme in Prudence, of this Church the most learned Pastor. He quietly fell asleep in the Lord on the 20th of October, 1623, aged 68 years.”

And then beneath, in the wall itself, are the following quaint lines in English,—

Mark Reader, seest those golden letters shine  
Out of a dark ground in the sacred shrine?  
Learn hence what pure virtues golden Grace  
Bright Letters give, black Fate cannot deface,  
Rest then in peace, O happy Richard rest  
Death cannot harm the man whom God hath blest!

Several other monuments with their inscriptions, are well worthy of inspection.

Of the property formerly belonging to the Church, the following is an extract from a MS. of the Inventories of Church goods in the Public Record Office:—

**Chesham** ) This Inventory indented made the xvijth of July in the  
**Magna** ) Sixth yere of the Raigne of our Sovereigne Lord Edwarde  
the Syxt by the grace of God of England, France and Ireland,  
King, defender of the faythe and on earthe of the Churches of  
England and also of Ireland the Supreme hedd, of all the goodes,  
plate, Jewells and all other ornaments perteyning to the parishe  
Churche of Chesham Magna within the Countye of Buckingham;  
Between the Ryght Honorable Sir Francis Russell Knight Lord  
Russell, Sir Maurice Barekley, Sir Edmonde Peckham, Sir Robert  
Drury, Knighte and William Tildesley esquire of th'one parte  
Commyssioners emongest others of the saide goods and other the  
premysses by vertue of the Kinges Maytie Commyssion to them  
directed bering date the xvi daye of Maye in the Sixt yere of the  
reigne of our sayd Sovereigne the Kinge Maytie that nowe is, and  
Christopher Asshefyld gentelman and Richard Marres gent, and  
th' other parte: all whiche goodes plate and Jewells and other  
ornaments be commytted to the saffe custodye of the sayd Asshe-  
fyld and Marres untill such tyme as the Kinges Mate furthe  
pleasure be further knowen.

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Imprimis v chalesys with their patens of silver parcell gilt.  
Item one silver Senser paræll gilt.  
Item a littell pax of silver parcell gilt.  
Item a nixe of copper.



- Item a littell box of silver.
- Item ij crosses of copper and gilt with a staffe of the same mettall.
- Item a vestment of white dammaske with ij Tunyckels and a cope somewhat worne.
- Item an olde Redde velvet vestymment with ij Tunyckels and a coope.
- Item an olde vestymment of grene Silke with ij tunyckels and a cope.
- Item an olde vestymment of olde Redde velvett with ij tunyckels and ij reld copes very cowerse.
- Item a blacke cope of Russett Worsted.
- Item iij pillowes one of Redde velvet, one of Brudges Satten and one of grene silke.
- Item a vestymment of olde bleue velvet with an albe to the same.
- Item a vestymment of Tinsell Satten with an albe to the same worne.
- Item an old Cope of grene Bandelyn.
- Item vj corporas cases.
- Item a blacke vestymment of Russett and Satten of Bruge with an albe.
- Item ij olde vestymments.
- Item vj olde aulter clothes of diaper.
- Item iij playn lynen aulter clothes.
- Item xij towels goode and bade.
- Item ij aulter clothes of Satten of Bruge.
- Item a vestymment of grene velvet with flowers.
- Item iij aulter clothes of Branched Tycke.
- Item a white vestymment of Bustyan with an albe.
- Item a bible in English and the Newe Testament with the paraphrases.
- Item a pair of Sencers of latten with a shipp and ij batten basens.
- Item v bells in the stepill.
- Item a crosse clothe and ij banner clothes of silke.
- Item a pair of organes.
- Item a raill cloth.
- Item by estymacion vij hundred pounce Lead occupied about the Church.
- Item the Channell, the Churche with ij iles and the stepill are coveryd with Leade———. Item iij Candelstickes of latyn and a egle of latyn and iij litel belles and ij hand bells sold for xxxv s.

By me Richard Marres.

The remains of two other ancient Ecclesiastical Edifices still exist in the Parish, accounts of which have been given by the Rev. W. H. KELKE in his "notices of Desecrated Churches in the County," and have been published by the Society in the "RECORDS;" that of the Grove, vol. i. p. 125, and the chapel at Hundridge, vol. i. p. 126. In confirmation of Mr. KELKE's opinion that the Chapel at the Grove stood to the south of the present buildings, I may add, that an encaustic tile was found on that spot the beginning of the year 1860.

The house now known as Blackwell Hall, between Chesham and Latimer, was probably an old religious house; human bones having been dug up in the garden, as

well as several gold coins. Drawings of men and women, chained to stakes and nailed to crosses, were formerly to be traced on the walls of the kitchen; and the following texts of scripture were inscribed on each side of the fireplace. On the left, "Receive the word of God, wherewith ye may learn to know God; happy are they that hear the word of God." St. Luke xi. 28. On the right, "He that is of God heareth God's words, ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John viii. 47. "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot abide the hearing of my word." John viii. 43.

The town of Chesham furnished her quota to the noble army of martyrs; a fact of which she may not unjustly be proud. In Fox's acts and monuments is an account of the noble consistency and adherence to the truth even to death of one of them. This was Thomas Harding, an aged father who, in the year 1532, was confined in the Bishop's Prison, called *little-ease*, where he did lie with hunger and pain enough for a certain space, for worshipping solitarily in the woods about Easter Holy-days when the other people went to Church, and because certain books of holy scripture were found under the floor of his house. Being afterwards condemned by John Longford, Bishop of Lincoln, and the charge and oversight of his martyrdom being committed to Rowland Messenger, Vicar of Great Wickham, he was chained to the stake, and "burned to ashes in the Dell going to Botley, at the north end of the town of Chesham." Many others, to whom it is not necessary to make particular allusion, suffered for the truth's sake. Certainly it is an honour and a glory to the town to have had those amongst her children, who in spite of persecution and loss of all things, and in face of death itself, have thus been faithful to the truth, and ready to seal their testimony to it even with their blood.

During the civil wars in the seventeenth century, the Chiltern hills were a stronghold for the Roundhead or Republican forces, and some of them mustered more than once in no small numbers within the town. Among the original papers in the appendix to Seward's Anecdotes is the following letter written from Chesham, and signed by Warwick and John Pym, shewing that the town was for a time the head-quarters of these two leaders.

To our very worthy Friends, the Deputy Lieutenants of the County of Buckingham.

Chesham,

Gentlemen,

We perceeve by your letter to Dr Burgess, that you are in expectation to be set upon by some of the horse commanded by Prince Rupert; and that you mean to stand upon your garde: we shall take the speediest course to relevee you with all the horse and dragoons we have here ready; and wee hope my L General Essex will be at St Albans this night, from whence, we doubt not, but more powerful supplyes may be employed into these parts. So wee rest.

Your very loving

Frindes,

Warwick.

Jo. Pym.

3 1642,  
about 9 a clock.

In the following year, when Prince Rupert encamped on the hill at Stone on the 13th of March, for the purpose of attacking Aylesbury, he found the town on the following morning thronged with a powerful force for its defence. Being therefore disappointed in his intention, and pillage being the order of the day, he detached Lord Carnarvon to his right, who entered the town of Wendover, and having plundered it, proceeded towards Chesham, where he met a few of the Parliament's horse, whom he routed and forced back into Missenden. On rejoining Rupert that night, he found him in full retreat towards Brill. Chesham, therefore, on this and every other occasion, escaped attack from the Royalists.

About this eventful period there lived in Chesham an extraordinary character, named Roger Crab, the Chesham Hermit. The account of him is chiefly comprised in the title to his life, afterwards published by himself in 1655, which is reprinted in "Morgan's Phœnix Britannicus," and runs thus—

"The English Hermit, or the Wonder of this Age; being a relation of the life of Roger Crab, living near Uxbridge, taken from his own mouth, shewing his strange, reserved, and unparalleled kind of Life, who counteth it a Sin against his Body and Soul, to eat any sort of Flesh, Fish, or living Creature, or to drink any Wine, Ale, or Beer. He can live with Three Farthings a week. His constant Food is Roots and Herbes; as Cabbage, Turnips, Carrots, Dock-Leaves, and Grass; also Bread and Bran, without Butter or Cheese. His cloathing Sack-Cloth. He left the Army, and kept a shop at Chesham, and hath

ROGER CRAB that feeds on Herbs and Roots is here,  
But I believe Diogenes had better Cheer.

*Rara avis in terris.*



Deep things more I have to tell, but I shall now forbear,  
Lest some in wrath against me swell and do my body tear.

now left off that, and sold a considerable estate to give to the Poor; shewing his Reasons from the Scripture: Mark x. 21., Jer. xxxv.—Wherefore if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, &c. 1 Cor. viii. 18.”

It appears that this ascetic humourist was brought up as a hatter at Chesham, and afterwards joined the Parliamentary army, in which he served for some time. Having retired and returned to Chesham, he resumed his trade, which increased so rapidly, that before he was twenty-six years of age he purchased an estate worth £20 a year, and eventually became one of the richest tradesmen in the town. He paid much attention to religion, applied himself to reading the Scriptures, and both day and night was seen praying either behind his counter or any other place he happened to be in. He formed the resolution of becoming the leader of a sect, and working the salvation of his countrymen, whom he fancied far advanced on the road to perdition. Filled with this resolution, he sold all his property and distributed the proceeds among the poor. He retired to Ickenham near Uxbridge, where with his own hands he built himself a hut. The accompanying curious print is a fac simile of the one published with his life, which makes him appear to be well dressed; but the account given of him is that a sackcloth-frock and a coarse pair of breeches, open at the knees, were all his covering. He published, in addition to his life, a pamphlet called “Dagon’s Downfal, or the Great Idol digged up by the Roots, 1657.” There are also some letters of his in a pamphlet called “A voice from Zion.”

He died in London, and the following memorial of him is preserved in the Church-yard of St. Dunstan, Stepney.

“Here remains all that was mortal of Mr. Roger Crab, who entered into eternity the 11th day of September, 1680, in the 60th year of his age.”

Tread gently, reader, near the dust  
Committed to this tombstone’s trust  
For while twas flesh it held a guest  
With universal love possest,  
A soul that stemmed opinion’s tide  
Did over sects in triumph ride  
Yet separate from the giddy crowd  
And paths tradition had allowed  
Thro’ good and ill report he passed  
Oft censured yet approved at last.



Would'st thou his religion know }  
 In brief twas this; to all to do }  
 Just as he would be done unto. }  
 So in kind nature's laws he stood }  
 A temple undefiled with blood }  
 A friend to every thing was good }  
 The rest, angels alone can fitly tell  
 Haste then to them and him, and so farewell."

In the reign of George II., when the Stuart family endeavoured in vain to regain the throne of these realms, and established more strongly, by their failure, the protestant constitution in Church and State, the Pretender's Son Prince Charles Edward, in 1745, having defeated Sir John Cope, commander of the King's forces at Edinburgh, marched with the rebel troops towards London as far as Derby. The alarm and consternation which prevailed on this occasion was indescribable, insomuch that every town between Derby and London began to prepare for a defence; and Chesham is said to have been barricaded with all the carts and waggons that could be collected in the neighbourhood. This is only a tradition, but it is founded upon good oral testimony, being derived from the son of an old Scotchman who served in the King's army at the time, and who afterwards settled in Chesham.

In the year 1720, the town is described in an old Gazetteer as "consisting mainly of three streets, whereof the chief (the present high street) goeth almost in a direct line from north to south, in the which is the market house. Another street leadeth from this toward the west, past the Church unto the hamlets of Pednor and Hundridge, and to Great Missenden." Within the town and parish are a few ancient domestic edifices of some interest, though none of a very early date; and of these the number is gradually decreasing. Many which were standing within our recollection, with their quaint gables, have disappeared, and others of a more modern style with *more of comfort* within perhaps, but certainly with less of the picturesque *without*, have risen up in their stead. Among those still standing may be mentioned the "High House," in the Broad Way, and dating back probably as far as the year 1600, or perhaps earlier; the first Mill down the water-side, with its triple broad gables, and the Mill House adjoining, with its equally picturesque stack of chimnies; and several old cottages with overhanging eaves built probably about the year 1650.



In the Broadway the Cage only a few years ago reared its unshapely head, and the Pound and the Stocks adjoined it. They were removed in 1833, when one honest citizen objected to the removal of the cage, for, quoth he, it stops the dust that blows down the town. This spot had formerly been also graced by a pillory.

The residence of W. Lowndes, Esq., called the *Bury*, bears its name of ancient date. The word is derived from the Saxon *burgh*, and signified a stronghold or place of defence into which the inhabitants might retire in times of invasion. The present house was built in the 17th century by William Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury in the reign of Queen Ann, and for many years Chairman of Ways and Means in the House of Commons. During the excavations in the spring of 1853 for the foundations of a west wing, several skulls and other human remains were exhumed about four feet from the surface: the teeth were in excellent preservation, and the bones evidently denoted men of large stature and proportions.

The Registers in the parish Church date from the year 1538, and are continued, uninterruptedly, down to the present time, with the exception of a brief space in the time of Queen Mary. From them we learn that the yew trees in the Church-yard, of which there are three, were planted in the year 1720; and that the Pest Houses—these remnants of by-gone times when sanitary laws were scarcely dreamt of—were built about the same date for the reception of persons labouring under any infectious disorder, especially the small-pox, which on one or two occasions appears to have raged most fearfully in Chesham, almost decimating the poorer population.

The Alms-houses on the waterside were built in the reign of James I., by Thomas Weedon, Citizen and Draper of London, who was one of the sons of Richard Weedon, of Pednor, within the parish of Chesham, and deceased in September, 1624. Other benefactors to the town must not be forgotten—benefactors, who, from the noblest and purest motives, have left behind them lasting proofs of their desire to provide for the poor and needy, and who deserve such honourable mention as can be given in a brief sketch like the present. The Earl of Devonshire and Elizabeth his Countess, by indenture made 5th of August in the 5th year of King Charles, gave upon

trust thirty-two acres and two roods of land, that the Incumbents of Chesham Woburn and Chesham Leicester and the Churchwardens should receive the rents and distribute them to seven poor and impotent persons. John Gawdrey bequeathed in 1670, the sum of £3 per annum to twelve poor widows and widowers in the water-side, living between his house and the town of Chesham, to be paid on St. John's day. John Cheney, by deed 1555, gave the sum of forty shillings, to the poor of the parish of Chesham, to be paid out of the Mose Farm, in Ashley Green hamlet, and distributed by even portions, viz., 10 shillings at the Nativity of our Lord, the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, and St. Michael the Archangel.

The Curfew-bell (from the french *couvre feu*, cover fire) as established by William the Conqueror, was rung at eight o'clock in the evening for the object of having all fires and lights extinguished—a requisite precaution in ancient times. The name and use is still retained at Chesham, where it is rung annually from the first Sunday after new Michaelmas day, until the Saturday evening immediately preceding the 10th of March.

There were three open wells or springs which may be mentioned among the interesting local features of the place. One in Church-street called Bidwell; another at the present entrance to Duck alley, near Town Field Bridge; and a third in the Waterside, of which no traces are now to be seen, but which was once held in high repute; it rose on the left hand side of the road leading to Chenies, about twenty or thirty yards on the west of the present gas-house. There is also a chalybeate spring, similar to the Tunbridge water, on the road to Amersham. In the year 1820, an effort was made to bring it into repute, and add Chesham to the list of watering places, but without success.

The nineteenth century has been marked by a fact which I shall record for the benefit of future generations. Her Majesty Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and suite passed through the town of Chesham, July 25, 1841, on their way from Windsor to Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire. The Royal party was escorted from Amersham to Chesham Bois Common, by Mr. Cavendish's troop of yeomanry and other gentlemen. As soon as the cavalcade appeared

on the hill above the valley of Chesham, the cannon posted on the opposite hill commenced firing a double royal salute of half-minute guns. At the entrance of the town, her Majesty was received by the Chesham troop of Bucks Hussars, under the command of Captain Fuller; by whom, with a large body of horsemen, she was conducted to Great Berkhamstead. On entering Chesham, her Majesty's carriage slackened speed to a steady walk, at which pace it proceeded through the whole length of the town, and through the four triumphal arches which had been erected in various parts. One of the most imposing and affecting parts of the whole pageant consisted of the Sunday School children, to the number of 850, who had been collected in a long row of waggons in the Broadway, and from whom there issued a shout of little voices and a clapping of hands quite overwhelming. Great rejoicings took place in the evening of this memorable day throughout the whole parish; and the hospitality of the Lord of the Manor of Chesham and Latimer, to the party assembled under the large elm tree in the village of Latimer, will be long remembered.

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