

THE HISTORY OF DENHAM, BUCKS.*

Mr. Lathbury's "History of Denham" has been prepared with so much care and in so thorough a manner, it is therefore only to be expected by the members of our Society that some notice of the work should appear in the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

Mr. Lathbury has obtained his information, as he tells us in his preface, from charters, manuscripts, documents, and rolls preserved in the muniment room of Westminster Abbey, the Public Record Office, the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, and from a few other sources, both public and private. He has set out the Charters included in his volume for the most part *in extenso*, and has given translations of these Charters, so that the work is accessible to a wide circle of readers. It would seem that the most which can be said of the past history of Denham, so far as it has been recorded, will be found in this volume. It possesses a plan of the parish, together with forty illustrations.

The earliest record of Denham we possess is that of a Charter attributed to Edward the Confessor, which records that the Manor of Denham was given by Ulstan, a thane, to Westminster Abbey sometime between A.D. 1042 and 1065, but the Charter itself, from its date, must be clearly a forgery. There is some authority for the statement in the grant, though it may have been that the Monks forged the actual Charter in order to be able to show their title to the Manor. We find from Domesday the following extract with reference to Denham:—"The land of S. Peter Westminster. In Stoke Hundred. The Abbot of S. Peter's of Westminster holds Denham. He returns it at 10 hides." †

* "The History of Denham, Bucks," by the Rev. R. H. Lathbury, M.A., Rector (Lucy and Birch), Uxbridge.

† Terra Sci. Petri Westmon—In Stoches Hund. Abbas Sci Petri Westmonast' ten' Daneha, p. X., hid' se defd. &c.

Between the years 1150 and 1160 the Manor, as described in Domesday, became divided into the Manors of Denham and Denham Durdent, the Lord of the Manor of Denham being throughout the subsequent times the superior lord.

In referring very briefly to the history of the superior Manor we find, by a Charter between 1176-91, that Walter the Abbot of Westminster granted the Manor of Denham to Martin de Capella at an annual rent of £15, and also that he should each year make ready "for my lord Abbot upon his giving 15 days notice such hospitality as becomes his rank."† This grant is with a restriction that the religious house retains in its hands and patronage the Church of the Manor with the tenths and offerings and all other things belonging to it.

It appears that the successor in title, Henry de Capella, compounded with the Abbot for the annual entertainment by paying 60s. more rent in lieu of this hospitality. As Mr. Lathbury suggests, this must have been a great relief, as the entertaining the Abbot, with his retinue of priests, grooms, and serving men accompanying him, in course of time would have become burdensome.

The volume very properly refers to charters and extracts from Assize Rolls to disclose the names of the early inhabitants of Denham, and of persons connected with the parish. Throughout the book, in a truly archæological spirit, we find great care has been bestowed on early names. Proceeding with some account of the contents of the volume, we may here notice that Henry III. granted to Henry de Capella that he might hold each year on the Manor a fair lasting for three days—that is to say, on the vigil, the day and the morrow of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and it is considered that this fair must have been held originally in that part of the parish which is still called Cheapside, and most likely this is a correct conclusion. We gather from the Hundred

† "Et preterea singulis annis Domino Abbati ad suam summotionem quindecim diebus ante factam conveniens hospitium preparabit."

Rolls some probable estimate of the population of Denham in the time of Edward I. It appears that there were 4 decennaries or 40 families in the parish; allowing 5 for each family, Mr. Lathbury conjectures that the population would be at that period about 200.

From the de Capella family the Manor passed into the hands of John de Bohun; it subsequently came into the possession of the de Fyleby family, and Robert de Fyleby granted it to King Edward and Eleanor his queen in 1287.

It was on the death of Eleanor, the devoted queen of Edward I., that the King granted a Charter to Walter the Abbot and the Prior and Convent of Westminster of the Manor of Denham. We are informed that the original copy of this extremely interesting Charter is in the possession of Mrs. Way, of Denham. It discloses the King's anxiety to perpetuate the memory of his Queen, and gives a touching instance of his affection for her. The following is a quotation from the translation of this Charter:—"The said Abbot Prior and Convent and their successors shall every week on the eve of the day on which it shall happen that the obit of the said queen shall be celebrated in the Choir of the said Monastery with the whole and full convent solemnly sing 'Placebo' and 'Dirige' with nine lections for the soul of the said queen and shall cause the singing to be with the solemn tolling of bells and also on each like seventh day on which the said obit shall happen shall celebrate a solemn mass and shall cause the same to be celebrated with the solemn tolling of bells and in like manner on the day of such obit in each week the said Abbot Prior and Convent shall find and cause to be served to seven times 20 poor people within the close of the said Abbey victuals as followeth that is to say, that each of the said poor shall receive one sterling penny that is to say as much as one penny was worth at the time of the making of these presents in each week for his victuals on the said day by the hands of some fit and proper monk deputed for the purpose by the said Abbot Prior and Convent and their successors and discharged from all other duties of his monastery on the said day which said monk shall diligently take

care and provide that each of the said poor people before and after the receipt of the said penny shall clearly and devoutly say the Lord's Prayer and Creed and the Salutation of the Blessed Mary for the soul of the said Eleanor and for the souls of all the faithful departed."

It appears that in 1292 the King gave the Manor back to the Abbey. In considering the Charter commemorating Queen Eleanor, Mr. Lathbury refers to the family of Neale, still resident in Denham, and he associates the name with the Queen, Eleanor or Nell being a popular name in the early 14th century. It first occurs in the Harleian Charters in 1303. Whether he is correct in his conclusion as to the origin of the name of Neale we are not prepared to say.

There are a number of Charters from Walter de Wenlack, Abbot of Westminster, to the Provost of Denham, which disclose directions on various matters connected with the Manor of Denham, and are interesting as throwing light on the times and the requirements of a large monastery. The following is a translation from the French of one of these Charters:—
 "We command you that you have provided with all speed 30 quarters of large coal from Ruislip and speak for the carriage and workmen and let the coal be delivered to Master Henry Payn, sacristan of Westminster, and cause to be provided 60 geese against the feast of Mishaelmas and 100 fish and have them delivered at London at a cost of three halfpence a day (for carriage) and the expenses which you shall be put to shall be allowed by this letter on your account."
 Dated at Denham Vigil of St. Lawrence, 34 Ed. I.

The author supplies lists of names of inhabitants of Denham occurring in Compotus Rolls, the earliest of which is dated 1388-1389, and also lists of names from the Court Rolls of the Abbey. The last of the pre-Reformation Rolls gives the names of many of the inhabitants of the parish in the years 1500-1-2; amongst them is the name of Recardus Gerrard. This name, the author considers, is still preserved in the neighbourhood in the designation of Gerrards Cross, now a familiar locality on the high road from London to Oxford.

From the Court Rolls and Compotus Rolls it appears that the Abbey of Westminster was in possession of the Manor of Denham up to 1500, and although there are no Rolls extant after this date, the Abbey continued in possession until the dissolution of the Monasteries. After the dissolution by letters patent 32 Henry VIII. the Manor was granted to Edward Peckham, to whom we shall have to refer more fully hereafter.

We lose sight of the principal Manor for a time to obtain some account of the Manor of Denham Durdent. This Manor continued in the family of Durdent for 359 or 360 years, namely, from 1156 to 1515. It passed to the executors of Henry VII. in 1515, and it seems to have been purchased for the "Savoy" or the hospital of the Savoy, founded by Henry VII., and it is conjectured that the King left instructions to his executors to make provision out of his estate for the endowment of this hospital, and that in furtherance of this object the purchase was made. After the dissolution Edward VI. granted the Manor to the Corporation of London for the endowment of St. Thomas's Hospital; subsequently to this grant we do not propose to follow the history of the Manor. Mr. Lathbury gives the names of the tenants of Denham Durdent taken from the Court Rolls; the earliest roll is in the year 1333.

After carefully making use of the Court Rolls of the Manors of Denham and thus dealing with copyholders and lands of copyhold tenure, the author has resorted to the Harleian Manuscripts, and from them has made extracts from grants and other documents chiefly in the 15th century which throw light on the history of the lands in the parish in the hands of small freeholders and villeins and other occupants.

We now return to the history of the principal Manor. At the time of the dissolution Edmund Peckham was in possession of a large amount of land in Denham, and it was in the year 1541 that he purchased this Manor. Sir Edmund Peckham is an interesting character, typical of the times in which he lived, and his connection with Buckinghamshire will afford a fair pretext for here making a digression to enable us to form some notion of the man who took a rather prominent part in public affairs during the reigns of Henry

VIII. and his descendants on the throne. He was the son of Peter Peckham, whose will is set out in the volume before us. Henry VIII. appointed him in 1524 cofferer of the Royal Household, and in 1526 Clerk of the Green Cloth. From 1515 he was a Justice of the Peace for Buckinghamshire. He was knighted in 1542. In 1546 he was appointed Treasurer or Master of the Mint, a post which he retained till his death. In 1547 he was nominated an Assistant Executor to Henry VIII.'s will. In the reign of Edward VI. we find his name connected with an ancient institution in the town of Chepping Wycombe. The spoliation of Hospitals and Guilds resulted in one beneficent movement, namely, in the foundation of Grammar Schools. Peckham, by an arrangement legally carried out with Christopher Chalfont, the last Master of the Hospital of S. John the Baptist at Wycombe, became possessed of the Hospital with George Juncklyn, and subsequently he, with the representative of Juncklyn, sold the Hospital to the Mayor, Bailiffs, and Burgesses of Wycombe to apply the rents towards the foundation of a Grammar School.* We find that Peckham was in this reign appointed one of the Commissioners for Buckinghamshire (6 Ed. vi.) "to take into the Kinge's handes suche Church plate as remayneth to be employed unto his Highnes use." The sacrilegious proceedings of this commission are forcibly exposed by Mr. St. John Hope in his paper on "Wycombe Inventories" in the RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, Vol. VIII., p. 125 *et seq.* On Edward VI.'s death Peckham's religious principles underwent a change, for it is recorded of him that he maintained with much energy the cause of Queen Mary in opposition to Lady Jane Grey. He proclaimed the Queen in Buckinghamshire, and subsequently kept a careful watch over the movements of the Duke of Northumberland in the Eastern Counties. He was rewarded for this zeal for his royal mistress by becoming a Privy Councillor, and he was elected Member of Parliament for Buckinghamshire in the first and third Parliaments

* See Parker's "Early History and Antiquities of Wycombe," p. 142.

of the Queen's reign (October, 1553, and November, 1554). He was now reputed to be a staunch Catholic, and exerted much influence at Mary's Court; but after the Queen's death it is said that his political career ceased. He continued Treasurer of the Mint, and helped to carry into effect Queen Elizabeth's measures for the restriction of the coinage. In this brief sketch of Peckham's life we are first introduced to him as a favoured courtier of Henry VIII.; then we find him one of Edward VI.'s Commissioners for the spoliation of the property of the Church, and therefore ostensibly of Protestant leanings; next we recognise him as a staunch supporter of Queen Mary, with the reputation of having been a person of much influence with the Queen, but in Elizabeth's reign he seems to have fallen on uncongenial times. His will no doubt indicates his real religious persuasions, from which we make the following extract:—"I doe will and bequeathe unto my poore neighbours of Denham to praye for my soule the somme of twenty markes to be distributed unto them by myne executors either in apparrell in bedding or in reddy monney as by their discessions shall seeme beste."

An elaborate altar tomb was erected to Peckham's memory and that of his wife, Ann Peckham, which is still within the altar rails of Denham Church, an illustration of which is given in the volume. His wife was the daughter of John Cheyne, of Chesham Bois; it will thus be seen that he was closely connected with this county, for the Cheynes were an old Buckinghamshire family. His eldest son, Sir Robert Peckham, very shortly after the surrender of Bitlesden Abbey in this county, bought that estate, and quoting from Browne Wills: "On the surrender this church was very soon after demolished and the bells sold or given away by Sir Robert Peckham to Denham parish, at the end of this county, near Uxbridge in Middlesex; these were five very large ones, as I have heard, and continued at Denham till 1683, 35 Car. ii., when they run into 8 bells as they now remain."*

* Browne Willis's "History of the Town and Hund. of Buckingham," p. 152. Also see Cocks's "Church Bells of Buckinghamshire," p. 370.

Space will not permit us to follow out the history of the Peckham family in detail. Those who are interested in the subject should read the epitaphs to Sir Robert Peckham's memory in the Church of San Gregorio at Rome, where he died, and in the Church at Denham, where his heart was deposited. Sir George Peckham, the third son of Sir Edmund Peckham, succeeded to his father's estate at Denham on the death of his brother, Sir Robert, and was knighted in 1570. Mr. Lathbury refers to him "as one of the early pioneers of adventure and discovery on the American Continent," and quotes from the calendar of State papers to establish this. We find at the close of his life that as a Popish recusant he lost all his lands and that he died in great poverty.

There is an interesting reference to Queen Elizabeth's visit to Denham taken from manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, which gives "the chardges done upon the quenes progresses," and from one item "to John Dewe for the land-cariage of ironworke lokes henges. . . . from Oatlands to Denham," it is inferred that the Queen had her own special locks and hinges for the doors of the rooms where she was visiting. The locks, etc., were brought to Denham from Oatlands in Surrey, and when she had finished her visit at Denham they were sent on to Chenies. This was a visit paid to Sir George Peckham, and it is supposed that she in these times of danger and conspiracy was specially suspicious of her host.

In rapidly alluding to the ownership of this Manor, we find that it passed into the family of Bowyers, and that Sir William Bowyer sold it to Sir Roger Hill in 1670; it then came into the possession of the Way family through Esther Hill, the elder daughter of Sir Roger Hill.

With his usual care, Mr. Lathbury has given an account of the Church of Denham, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It would, we consider, however, have been of great advantage—and have enhanced the value of the work—if he had assigned the preparation of the history of this Church to an expert, so that its architectural features might have been treated of in

detail, and with an authority that only an expert possesses.

There is on the north side of the entrance to the Chancel a brass to Agnes Jordan, the last Abbess of Sion Monastery, specially interesting, as it appears that there is only one other pre-Reformation brass to an Abbess in England, which is at Elstow, in Bedfordshire. The Abbess of Sion was in her retirement to Denham exceptionally well off, as she received no less than £200 a year, while none of her Sisters had less than £6, and several more than that. (Gasquet's Henry VIII., and English Monasteries, Vol. II., p. 459.) Mr. Lathbury gives a copy of Agnes Jordan's will, which is a valuable document, as it discloses to us the possessions of a rich Abbess on her retirement from her Monastery. It is of great length, but well deserves reproducing *in extenso*. We give a few extracts from the many items it contains:—"Item. I geve and bequeth to a Prieste for to singe for my soule the space of thre yeres in the same Churche (Denham) twentie poundes that is to have every yere six poundes thirtene shillings foure pence sterlinge for his wage willinge that the same prieste shalbe one of my owne chaplyns yf anny of theym wilbe contented to take it upon him." In another item we find the following provision:—"And whereas Master William Latymer clerke doth owe unto me upon one obligacion the summe of eight poundes I will that the same some of eight poundes shalbe employede by the said Master Lytle Clerke to the fynding of twoo children to scole for to have lernynge to praye for my soule." After numerous gifts, the Abbess makes her residuary bequest as follows:—"And ffurther more all the residue of my goodes movable and immovable not geven or bequethed I geve and bequethe unto myne executours of this my laste will willing that they shal bestowe the saide goodes after theirre discrecion for the welth of my soule my frendes soules and all Cristen soules so that I will that my bookes ymages and pictors be distributed amongst my sisters that hath benne moste comenly aboute me and hath taken moste paines with me in my sicknes since the dissoluinge of the late monestary of Syon excepte that I wyll that my

good Lady Peckham and my landlady younge mystres Peckham shall chose and fyrste have to eche of them after there devocion an ymage or a pycetour or twoo of those whiche speciaellye by name are not given nor bequethed."

From the Court Rolls of the Manor preserved in the Muniment Room at Westminster Abbey a great deal of valuable information is to be gleaned of the social condition of the inhabitants of Denham in early times, and these Court Rolls have a wider interest, inasmuch as they disclose a great deal that relates to the economic condition of a rural parish in England in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the scrutiny to which each inhabitant was subjected during the sittings of a Manor Court. Among the presentments made at a Court held on the Feast of the Purification, 50 Edw. III., it was presented "as it had been on other occasions to seize into the Lord's hands all the tenements which Simon Satyn, a native-born serf belonging to the Lord (*nativus domini*) holds in the village of Ruislip." Here is an instance of the survival of serfdom in the 14th century, and all the more striking as this record occurs on the eve of the peasants' revolt. The jury report at a view of Frankpledge with a Court-baron held at Denham on the Wednesday next after the Feast of St. John Baptist (4 Henry VII.), "that John Dawson is a common butcher in the place but he makes too much gain out of his trade. *Cepit excessivum lucrum. Ideo in misericordia.* Also that Thomas Rowley and Richard Collyn are common Bakers of bread for the people outside the parish but come to sell it in the parish."

Altogether this is a most praiseworthy history of a rural parish, evidently prepared with much labour and research, and which greatly redounds to the credit of the author of the volume.

ED.