

PRIVATE BURIAL-PLACES AT NEWPORT PAGNELL.

There are no less than four private burial grounds in the parish of Newport Pagnell. The sites of three of them are now known, the fourth is still uncertain. They are as follows:—

(1) There is a vault marked by a high obelisk in the grounds of Tickford Abbey, on the supposed site of the old monastic burial ground. It was used for the burial of members of the Hooton family. There were six interments here: the first in 1768, the last in 1831.

(2) In the garden of a house in Green End there is an obelisk marking the place of burial of Dr. Peter Renny, a noted physician in his day. The inscription, which was written by the Doctor, is as follows:—“P. Renny, M.D. Natus XIV. Augusti, MDCCXXXIV. Denatus XIV. Februarii, MDCCCV.”

(3) Staines, in his “History of Newport Pagnell,” follows Lipscombe in recording the burial of one Mary Church in the Baptist burial ground in Marsh End; Mr. Holland Eaglestone, a prominent Baptist, made objection, and no other body was interred in this ground. The site is uncertain, and no evidence is forthcoming from a search of the title deeds of property in Marsh End, but possibly it was in what is now the garden of a house known as Lovat Bank. In 1899 a skeleton was found only a few feet below the surface not far from Lovat Bank, and it is possible that it was that of Mary Church.

(4) The last is that of Mark Slingsby, who died in 1677. He was an attorney who lived at Newport Pagnell. The date of his birth is unknown, but his marriage is recorded in the Church Register, also his burial on July 19th, 1677. There is no note or comment, and the Register gives no indication that he was buried elsewhere than in the churchyard. He seems to have been a man of some position, and probably was churchwarden. There is a Slingsby Charity, which pays for bread to be given to the

poor who attend Divine service in Newport Church. During the Commonwealth he fell into disfavour, and was charged with having entered Oxford when that city was held by Charles the First during the Civil War. His explanation was that he suffered from stone, and went to Oxford to be cured. His plea, however, was not accepted, and he was only allowed to keep his estates by making a composition with the Commissioners.

In spite of the silence of the Burial Register, there is a tradition that he was buried in one of the fields on his Tickford estate, known as "The Folly." This tradition is mentioned in most of the guide books and histories of the district. There has been no real evidence beyond the tradition; his will makes no provision for burial in any particular place.

"The Folly," together with other fields of the Tickford Estate, came into the market in 1919, and the purchaser of "The Folly" determined to test the truth of the tradition before agricultural operations should disturb the surface of the ground. The number of the field on the Ordnance Survey Map, 1912 edition, is 261.

After probing several spots near the centre of the field, two places were fixed on where brickwork could be detected. The first was opened up, but nothing was found below the turf except a few bricks and scraps of broken pottery.

The turf was then removed from the second place where brickwork could be felt. About a foot below the surface a low wall of brick, two bricks high, was found. The ground on each side was removed, and it was found that there was another wall running parallel with the first at a distance of three feet. The measurements of the bricks were not taken, but they were smaller than the standard brick of to-day. On removing more earth it was found that these two walls were connected at each end by two other walls, also of brick, each measuring three feet long. The two walls first discovered were six feet long, and pointed roughly East and West. Thus the brickwork formed a rectangular parallelogram. The earth inside the walls was carefully removed, and it was found that the walls had been built on a pavement of flat tiles,

each measuring 8 inches by 8 inches, the whole pavement being 6 feet by 3 feet. The tiles, which were very rotten, crumbled when they were being removed. The soil beneath the tiles was then dug out, and, after digging down between five and six feet, the side of a coffin was found; the wood, which was very black and rotten, was elm. The surrounding clay was carefully examined, and portions of decomposed bone were found, but no entire bones. On going a little lower the bottom of the coffin was found, and at the West end of it could be seen the skull, which had been forced through the bottom, owing to the pressure from above and to the rotten state of the wood. The skull fell to bits in a few minutes, but several teeth were found mixed with the clay around it. Careful search was made for a name-plate, but nothing more was found, and, after some photographs had been taken, the grave was filled in.

The following poem occurs in an appendix of Staines' History of Newport Pagnell, p. 240:—

Written on the grave of Mark Slingsby, at Newport Pagnell, Sept. 3rd, 1810, and published in Gentleman's Magazine, May, 1821.

Stranger? with no unholy tread
 Pollute this mansion of the dead;
 Stranger! who'er thou art, draw near,
 Here may'st thou shed the sacred tear;
 Whate'er thy name, whate'er thy fate,
 Thou ow'st a tribute to the great;
 If, reckless of our hero's fame,
 Thou stand'st unconscious of that claim;
 If no ambition fires the blood,
 Thou ow'st a tribute to the good;
 And here, from all intrusion free,
 Pay the sweet meed of loyalty.
 Ask'st thou for whom these tears are shed?
 Great Slingsby slumbers with the dead.

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