

## THE PARISH OF GRANBOBOUGH, BUCKS

## I. IN PRE-REFORMATION TIMES

The earliest reference to Granborough appears to be in a charter of about the year 1060, by which; certain lands were given to S. Alban's Abbey. This old Latin document<sup>1</sup> may be translated as follows:—

" Be this known to all loyal subjects that I Egelwine the Black, with the approval of my Lord King Edward" (i.e., the Confessor) "grant absolutely a certain part of my property to the Church of the Martyr Alban, viz 21 hides of land with 1 virgate, in four places which I own, at Grenebeorge 5 hides, at Reodburne 7 hides & 1 virgate, at Langage 5½ hides, at Dwangtune 3½ hides, for the glory of God, of S. Mary, S. Alban & all the saints and for my soul's health and my wife's, Wynflede, and my ancestors'. This gift is for the use of the monks there serving God & the blessed martyr. If therefore anyone should try to transfer this our gift to some other purpose than, what we have appointed; may he be excommunicated from the holy Church of God, and, if he does not make due restitution, may he suffer pain continually in the everlasting fires of hell, and be punished with Judas the betrayer of Christ, and with his associates."

Our next reference is the entry in Domesday Book (1086), which may be translated as follows: "The Abbot of S. Alban holds Grenesberga. It is assessed at 5 hides. There is land for 9 ploughs. In the demesne are 2 hides, & there are 2 ploughs on it; & 7 villeins with 4 bordars have 7 ploughs. There is 1 serf & meadows for 2 plough teams. Its total value is 100 shillings: when received" (i.e., by its holder under William the Conqueror) "4 pounds : in King Edward's time 100 shillings. This manor belonged & belongs to the demesne of the Church of S. Alban."

From this time down to the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538) Granborough's association with

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<sup>1</sup> Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, 962.

S. Alban's Abbey was maintained. Various references to it are to be found in the Chronicles of the Monastery.<sup>2</sup> For example, under Michael, the 29th Abbot (A.D. 1335-49), we have an account of a dispute as to whether the Abbot, by virtue of his holding Granborough and other possessions, was liable to pay certain fees at the knighting of the King's eldest son. This led to a further question as to names, and a jury was empanelled to inquire also as to the identity of "Grenesbury" and "Grenesborowe." Their verdict was that "Grenesbury" and "Grenesborowe" are one and the same village, and not different villages. And they say that Byggyng is part of the same village of Grenesborowe. And they say that the Abbot of S. Alban, and his predecessors, as far back as memory goes, have held the aforesaid manor of Byggyng, Grenesborowe, and the manor of Wynslow, as a free, unconditional and perpetual gift, always hitherto without any military or civil service or aid at the knighting- of the King's eldest son, or marriage of his eldest daughter, except for the aforementioned 100 shillings.<sup>3</sup>

It was whilst, Granborough was a possession of the Abbey that the present Church of S. John the Baptist was built. The date of the Nave is about 1330. The West Tower was added, and the walls of the Nave were heightened late in the 15th century.<sup>4</sup> The Chronicles state that the Chancel was re-built from the foundation in the time of Abbot John Moote (1396-1401), a date confirmed by indications in the present building. Two piscinæ, one in the South wall of the Chancel, about 1400, and one in the South wall of the Nave, early 14th century, and the original aumbry are features of interest.

Besides the fabric of the present Church, other remains of Pre-Reformation times include a mid-15th century bell, bearing the inscription, "In multis annis resonet Campana Johannis," and the founder's

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<sup>2</sup> *Chronica monast. S. Albani, Rolls Series.*

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. Cit.*, II. 343-354.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Monts. Commrs. Report*, II. 118.

mark, R.L.W., probably Roger Landen, of Wokingham (1461-1483).

Another very interesting relic is a pewter chrysmatory of 15th century date, found during the restoration of the Church in July, 1880, built into the East wall of the Nave, south of the Chancel arch, where it is supposed to have been hidden for safety during the troubles of the Reformation. It consists of a rectangular box, 6 inches long, with "lion" feet at three corners, and fitted with three cups which originally held the sacred oil, of which dry brown fragments still remain. Two cups retain their lids, to which are attached hooks, with which the sacred oil was administered. Of the lid of the box itself two fragments are left, as well as the hinge, with pin, attaching them to the box. No letters designating the purposes for which the respective oils were used are discernible on the lids of the cups. This chrysmatory is considered one of the most complete English chrysmatories that has survived.

The remaining two relics of Pre-Reformation times were probably connected with Biggin, where there is supposed to have been a chapel attached to the home farm of the manor<sup>5</sup>. One of these relics is an alabaster panel of 15th century work, representing the Crucifixion, with the figures of S. John and the three Maries, probably originally forming an altar piece. It was rescued from the gable end of an old farmhouse in the village, c 1880, by the then Vicar, C. W. Stubbs (afterwards Bishop of Truro). Probably the only other remnant of mediæval times is a stone fragment, apparently part of the head of a fireplace, late 15th or early 16th century, and said to be from Biggin.

Ripples of events in the outside world and glimpses of mediæval social life are to be found in the scanty records of the Granborough of those early times. The Abbey Chronicles, for example, describe how, during the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, the natives of "Greneborough" came together on the 17th of June, and with the other tenants of the monastery secured from

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<sup>5</sup> Sheahan: *History of Bucks*, p. 382.

Thomas, the 30th Abbot, charters of liberties such as were never before granted to villeins, "having been extorted from us by force and wickedness." <sup>6</sup>

Again, the gradual disruption of the mediæval system of serfdom is indicated by these two items under the date 1467, relating to the manumission of a villein: "William Perkins, of Aylesbury, painter, otherwise stainer, lately the son of William Perkins, a native of Greenburgh, belonging to the manor called De Bygging, lying near Wyncslow, in the county of Bucks, fine 3/4d." On 31<sup>st</sup> October, in the year of our Lord 1467, the Lord Abbot set free and made a freeman of John Geffis, of Greenburgh, under his letters patent, both under the seal of the said Abbot and the seal of his court; and the whole of his descendants, his offspring, and those afterwards to be born, were in like manner to be free of all service. <sup>7</sup>

The stern justice of the times is reflected in the following Gaol Delivery Roll (214 P.R.O.) : "at S. Albans on Friday next before the feast of Pentecost, 10 Edward II (i.e., 1317) : William, son of John le shepherd of Greneburgh was taken at the suit of Ralph Syward, having stolen goods upon him, namely, 1 cloak of the value of 2/8d. 2 hoods of the value of 2/-, & 6 silver spoons of the value of 3/-, stolen at Rykemersworth (Rickmansworth); which William, before the Coroner, acknowledged himself to be the stealer of the aforesaid goods, and accused John son of Peter Faber of the same theft. . . . . The jurors for the county of Buckingham came & say upon their oath that the aforesaid William son of John is hanged. And the aforesaid goods are delivered up to the aforesaid Ralph Syward, because the aforesaid William was captured at his suit. And the jurors . . . . say upon their oath that the aforesaid John son of Peter is guilty of the aforesaid theft to him imputed. Therefore he is; hanged."

The following extract from a will proved at the Manor Court of Winslow in 1431 has a local interest :

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<sup>6</sup> *Chron. Monast. S. Albani*, III., p. 330.

<sup>7</sup> A. Clear's *Winslow*, 1894, p. 22.

" In the name of God, Amen. I John Watts of sound mind, in the year of our Lord 1427 set forth my Will, after this manner. First I commit my soul to God, & my body to be buried in the graveyard of S. John the Baptist of Greneburgh. Items: to the monks of S Albans 12 pence, To the Vicar of Greneburgh 12 pence, To the Clerk of the same Church, 4 pence, For the 4 lamps of the same Church, half a quarter of Malt."<sup>8</sup>

CYRIL E. MARTIN.

(To be continued.)

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid p. 21.