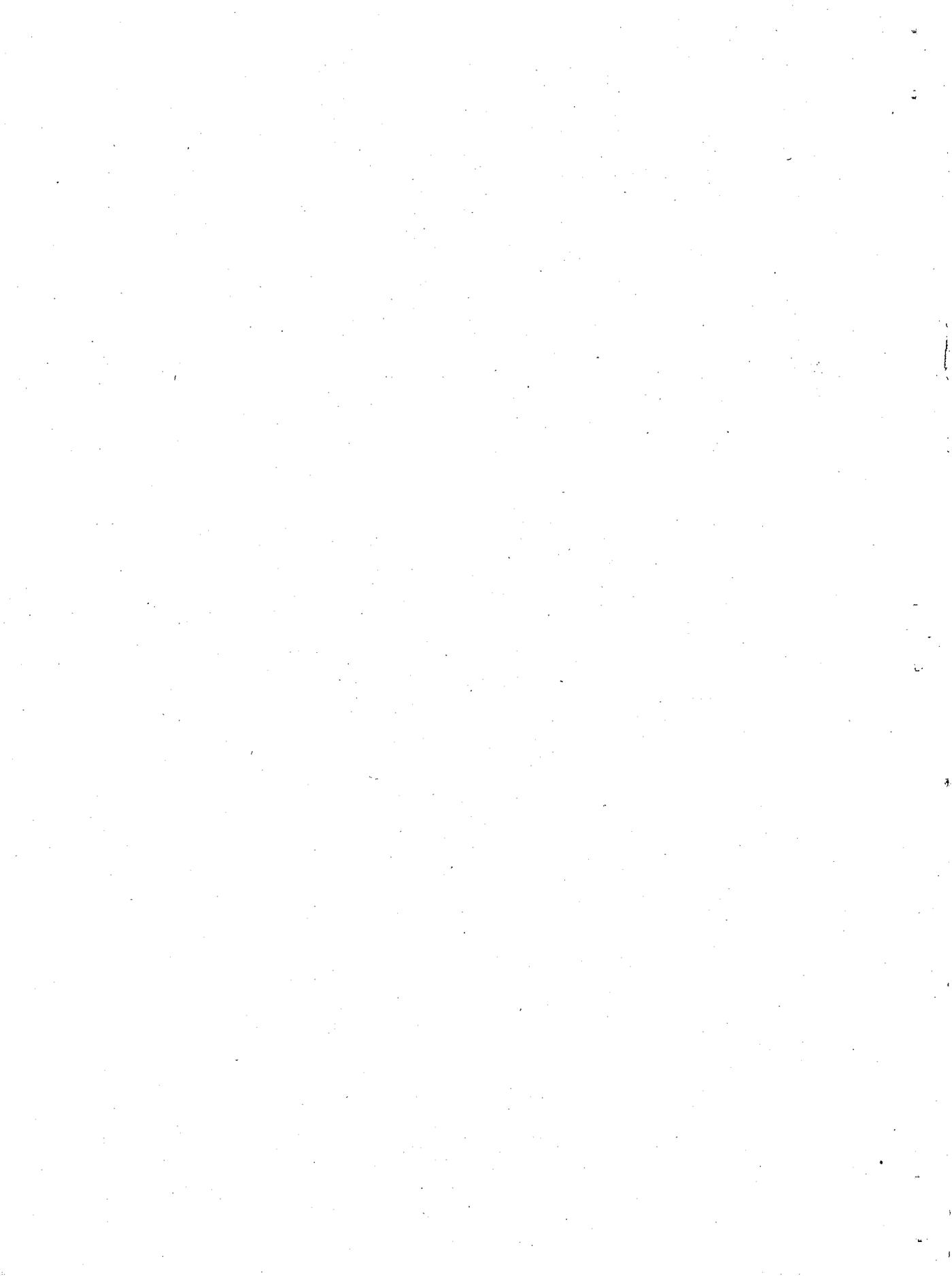


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# THE CLERGY OF WILLINGHAM 1300-1955

## PART I

CANON F. J. BYWATERS, M.A.

DURING the reign of Elsin, abbot of Ely (981-1016), Uva gave many of his possessions, the village of Wivelingham included, 'to God and His gracious virgin Etheldreda for ever'.<sup>1</sup>

By permission of King Canute (1017-35), Abbot Leofsin ordered certain estates to supply the monastery with food, and Wivelingham was made responsible for the provision of rations for one week in each year.<sup>2</sup>

This association of the monastery with the village was broken after the foundation of the See of Ely in 1109, for Bishop Hervey secured Willingham with the other estates transferred to the bishopric. From 1581 to 1599 the See of Ely was vacant and the revenues appropriated by the Crown, but when the manor was sold in 1602 to Sir Miles Sandys, the advowson was retained by Bishop Heton, and has since been held by successive bishops. Accordingly, except for special reasons given, presentation to the benefice of the incumbents mentioned has been made by the contemporary bishop of the diocese.

1300. WALTER ALIQUID was chaplain. He had been charged with receiving his brother Thomas, who had been convicted of theft, but at an inquisition made by the sheriffs and coroners of the county, Walter purged his innocence. The bishop of Ely reported to the king that his clerk was of good fame and conversation, and the sheriff was ordered to restore his lands, goods and chattels which had been taken into the king's hands when the charge was made.<sup>3</sup>

1301. JOHN DE REDE, parson, acknowledged that he owed £34 to Bonruncinus Walteri de Luca and Burnettus and Richard his son. It was ordered that in default of payment, his lands and chattels were to be appropriated.<sup>4</sup>

1302. RICHARD DE ABINDONE OR ABYTON, rector. Prior to the Council of Lyons in 1274, he held the church of St Sampson, Cricklade, value twenty marks. In 1284 he was Chamberlain of North Wales; in 1285 the king presented him to the Prebend of Lusk in Dublin Cathedral and made him collector of the revenues of the vacant archbishopric. He became a Baron of the Exchequer in 1299, and in the following year custodian of the vacant see of Ely. In April, 1302, as the see was still vacant, King Edward I presented him to Willingham, but in July of the same year he was

<sup>1</sup> *Liber Eliensis* (ed. D. J. Stewart), Bk. II, ch. LXVI.

<sup>3</sup> *Calendar of Inquisitions: Calendar of Close Rolls.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* ch. LXXXIV.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. Close Rolls.*

forbidden 'to intermeddle further in the custody of the vacant see of Ely'. In 1304 he was also a canon of Salisbury and Wells, and prebendary of Wellington in Lichfield Cathedral.

He was cited to appear before the Pope in 1306 for unlawfully retaining the stall at Wells, but in 1309, although it was recalled that on his appointment to Willingham he was not in priest's orders, he was given a papal dispensation to retain the two benefices, Willingham being valued at forty marks, and the four canonries. In the following year he was sent to Gascony on the king's service, and in 1311 received a further dispensation to retain his benefices and canonries together with the chaplaincy of Bourton in the diocese of Worcester, valued at seven marks.

When the citizens of Bristol revolted against the corporation, the king sent Richard as judge (1313); but during the trials, as a tumult had arisen against him, he was kept prisoner for his own safety by William Randall. He subsequently tried eighty of the offenders at Gloucester assizes.

Richard was also vicar of Sutton from 1283 to 1293; he died in 1322. In 1327 Robert de Abingdon made a grant of four messuages and a stone quay in London to find money for the payment of two secular chaplains to celebrate divine service daily for the soul of Richard in the chapel of the Virgin in the abbey church of Abingdon.<sup>1</sup>

1318. JOHN DE EVERISDEN, rector. Though there seems to be no record of the resignation of the former rector, it is evident that John was collated or appointed prior to 1318, for on 15 June of that year, he was obliged to resign since he had held the benefice as a pluralist without a papal dispensation.<sup>2</sup>

1319. ALAN DE HOTHAM, rector. The Pope issued a mandate to John de Hotham, bishop of Ely and to others to assign to Alan, then of the diocese of York, the rectory of Willingham, vacant by the cession of John de Everisden, who held it as a pluralist without dispensation. Willingham was valued at £27, and Alan also held Schire in the diocese of Winchester, valued at £24. As his successor was appointed to Willingham in 1324, it is possible that Alan resigned when he became rector of Dereham with the chapelry of Hoo in Norfolk, where he died in 1351.<sup>3</sup>

In the inventory of church property, originally compiled in 1278, a later note states that Alan gave a vestment.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that land at Willingham was owned and transferred by William de Hoo (or Hoe) during the incumbency of Alan.<sup>5</sup>

The bishop of Ely in 1338 (Simon Montacute) quoted a royal brief which ordered Nicholas de Stokton, executor of the will of John de Hotham, to appear at York and answer Will. de Calthorpe on plea that he, with Simon de Drayton and Alan de Hotham his co-executors, owed him three hundred marks.<sup>6</sup> It seems that Alan may have been a relative of the bishop.

1324. JOHN DE ELLERKER, rector. A king's clerk in January 1320, he was already rector of Willingham in 1324 by papal dispensation, and was appointed Canon of

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography: Calendar of Patent Rolls: Calendar of Papal Registers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. Papal Registers.*

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. Papal Registers: Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>4</sup> *Vetus Liber Arch. Eliensis.*

<sup>5</sup> *Pedes Finium.*

<sup>6</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

Beverley and canon and prebendary of York. From 1336 to 1344 he was rector of Leverington. In March 1336 he went to Ireland on the king's service, where he became canon and treasurer of St Patrick's, Dublin. He was cited to appear before the barons of the exchequer at York to render the account of the profits of the Dublin Treasury during his term of office, as no account had been rendered. This writ could not be served as John was a chaplain to the king, and the bishop of Ely was ordered to distrain upon his goods at Leverington and elsewhere in the diocese.

Yet in 1337 he had been ratified as 'parson of Leverington and prebend of Botavant in the church of St Peter, York, granted for Service to Edward II in Gascony and elsewhere'.

In April 1339 another brief was issued against him for a debt of twenty marks to John Juntyn, merchant of the Guild of Perugia; in February 1340, as he had not accounted for £30 received of the sheriffs of London in aid of the king's expedition to Gascony, a further brief was issued, but a writ to stay proceedings was issued in March, probably for the reason given above. Further briefs alleging embezzlement of moneys due to Hugh le Despenser, and lay subsidies from York, Lancashire, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland were served, but John, who had been presented by the king to St Mary-the-Great, Cambridge, in 1341, became rector of Campsale, York, by exchange in 1344, and archdeacon of Cleveland in 1348.<sup>1</sup>

1339. WILLIAM DE HAUBERGE, rector. On 5 November 1339 he was given a licence of absence, but the reason is not given, nor is there evidence of his collation or resignation.<sup>2</sup>

1342. ADAM DE LYNHAM, rector. He was collated on 3 April, and was a bishop's clerk; he had held Feltwell since 1337. In the additional notes to the inventory of 1278, he is stated to have given a breviary to the church, also a cope for use in choir, with a complete set of vestments including tunicle and dalmatic.<sup>3</sup>

1345. ROGER SYWARD of BOURN was chaplain.<sup>4</sup>

1346. JOHN ALIQUID, chaplain.<sup>5</sup>

1369. JOHN MACONS, chaplain. He was given possession of a messuage and land in Ramsey. In 1380 he was presented to the Free Chapel of Haveringham by Philip de Tylneye; three days later he exchanged it for the vicarage of Stapleford.<sup>6</sup>

1370. ROBERT DE SUSTEDE, rector. Described as 'parson and doctor of laws', he was a member of a commission to try certain friars in a convent at Oxford who were disobedient to their Prior of the order of Friars Preachers.

In 1371 orders were given to the keepers of the passage in the ports of London and Sandwich to suffer Robert to pass without let with one yeoman and two horses, taking his books, one hundred shillings for his expenses and £40 by exchange, as with the

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls: Cal. Papal Registers: Sandars, Great St Mary's, p. 7: Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>3</sup> *Episcopal Registers: Vetus Liber Arch. Eliensis.*

<sup>4</sup> *Pedes Finium.*

<sup>5</sup> *Calendar of Feudal Aids.*

<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of Ancient Deeds: Episcopal Registers.*

king's licence he was to go to the court of Rome in order to prosecute there the business of William de Wymondham the king's physician. He had found in chancery two guarantors in £100 that he would not there or elsewhere oversea attempt aught that might tend to the prejudice of the king or any of his subjects.

Archbishop Wittlesey gave him permission to stay in Rome in 1373, and to lease out his church for three years; he died in Rome in 1375, and it is recorded in a note in Bishop Arundell's Register that the benefice of Willingham was then 'collated by the pope to a "familiar" of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose name we do not know; and as he has appointed no proctor, we have sequestrated the benefice'.<sup>1</sup>

1377. ROGER DE WESTON, rector. He may (or may not) have been the familiar of the archbishop, but there was a suit against him for non-payment of firstfruits after papal provision. Roger was one of the witnesses at the confirmation of the Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1384; in 1388 witness to a charter at Ely; and in the same year his estate as 'parson' was ratified. In 1394 he was one of the parties in a quitclaim concerning lands at Gamlingay, and in 1397 lent £40 to the king.<sup>2</sup>

In 1392 a licence, for five marks paid to the king by John de Brunne, was granted for the alienation in mortmain by him of one messuage, thirteen acres of land and one of meadow in Wyvelyngam, not held in chief, to a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily in the chapel of St Mary in the church of Wyvelyngam for the good estate of the said John, for his soul after death, and the souls of his parents, ancestors and others.<sup>3</sup>

In 1406 a return of chaplains and chantry priests gives the names of RICHARD WESTON and JOHN CROWCHE for Willingham.<sup>4</sup> JOHN DE SNOGH (or SNOW) and JOHN ATTE CROUCH paid 2s. for clerical poll-tax.

1447. JOHN SUGDEN, M.A., chaplain, was collated on the death of Richard Weston.<sup>5</sup> While it is not improbable that Roger Weston held the benefice for seventy years, the mention of Richard as Rector raises the point as to whether the chantry chaplain became the incumbent, or whether a confusion in names arose. The registers of Bishops Morgan and de Luxembourg (1426-1443) are missing, depriving us of diocesan information for that period.

In July 1452 Sugden was presented by the bishop of Ely to Bishop's Hatfield, where he died in 1470.<sup>6</sup>

1472. JOHN NEWHOUS, rector. There is no record of the collation of this rector, or of other incumbents until 1518, so it is not clear that he was the immediate successor to Sugden, though his will (P.C.C. 8 Wattys) seems to indicate that he was, for he mentions a tenement, formerly the property of John Sugden, which he ordered to be sold. The will is dated 12 January 1472, and probate was granted 11 March that same year.

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls: Cal. Close Rolls: Episcopal Registers*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

He may have been associated with East Peckham in Kent, to which church he left a silver paxbrede and two reliquaries; also he wished, if he died in London, to be buried in the church of All Saints 'ad Fenum'. If, however, 'apud Wivelingham me ab hac luce migravit contigerit', he wished to be buried in the church at the discretion of his executors. To the poorest of the inhabitants of the parish he left 40s. His breviary was to go to Richard Newport. Was this the parish priest without a surname in 1468?

The money from the sale of the tenement was to buy a paxbrede of silver and two silver cruets for Willingham Church, which he states was dedicated to the Apostle St Matthew (the present dedication is to St Mary and All Saints). Any surplus money was to pay for the repair of a broken chalice and for other ornaments of the church.

Between 1452 and 1488 there are recorded the names of JOHN PYNDER (1463), parish chaplain at nine marks per annum; RICHARD (no surname) as parish priest in 1468; he paid 6s. 8d. subsidy to the king as he received more than one hundred shillings per annum; and PETER ADAMS (1486), chaplain, also liable for 6s. 8d. to the archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> In 1488 JOHN CRAGGYS was chaplain of the chantry.<sup>2</sup>

1518. JOHN RUMPAYNE, rector. He was a scholar of Eton and King's College, ordained acolyte on 4 April 1500 and sub-deacon on 18 April of the same year, when he was a Fellow of King's College.<sup>3</sup>

From 1508 to 1539 he was rector of St Pancras, Soper Lane,<sup>4</sup> and at some time 'was at the charge of the glass in the windows of a vestry on the north side of the College [King's] Chapel, which was for the use of the Vice-Provost'.<sup>5</sup> During his incumbency, GEORGE HARGREAVES was curate.<sup>6</sup>

Rumpayne appeared at a synod without a surplice, and was excommunicated, but in May 1521 he sought absolution; his petition was granted.<sup>7</sup>

In 1545 he resigned the benefice conditionally on his being granted a pension and a house.<sup>8</sup>

1545. LANCELOT RIDLEY, D.D., rector. A graduate of Clare College, he was skilled in theology, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and on the refoundation of the cathedral at Canterbury in 1541 under the king's charter, was constituted one of the Six Preachers. In the reign of Edward VI he distinguished himself by the ability with which he defended the doctrines of protestantism, but on the accession of Queen Mary he was proceeded against as a married clergyman. He failed to appear on the day of visitation, but ten days later pleaded guilty in the chapter house and was deprived. He had signed the inventory of church goods at Willingham in the previous year, and was rector of Bluntisham 1553-4. Bale (says the *D.N.B.*) heard a report that Ridley subsequently put away his wife and returned to celibacy and Roman Catholicism; but he was not re-appointed to Willingham, for his successor was collated in May, 1554.

<sup>1</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>2</sup> *Cal. Patent Rolls.*

<sup>3</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>4</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses.*

<sup>5</sup> Harwood, *Alumni Etonenses*, vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

<sup>7</sup> Baker MSS. vol. xxviii, fo. 252.

<sup>8</sup> *Episcopal Registers.*

Ridley became rector of Stretham in 1559 and in 1560 was restored to his preacher-ship at Canterbury. He was buried at Stretham on 16 June 1576.

Among his works were:

An Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude the apostle of Christ wherein he setteth plainli before every man's eyes false Apostles and theyr craftes, bi the whiche they have longe deceyved symple Christian People. (London, 1538.)

A Commentary in Englyshe upon Sayncte Paule's Epystle to the Ephesyans, for the instruccyon of them that be unlearned in tongues, gathered out of the holy Scriptures and of the olde Catholyke Doctours of the Churche, and of the best authors that nowe a daye do wryte. (London, 1540.) According to J. Moffat (*Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*) this was the first commentary in English on the Epistle.

An Exposition in Englishe upon the Epistle of S. Paule to the Colossians, wherein the latter is purely declared, with many good exhortacions to flee vice, and to take virtue as shall appere clerely to the faithfull Reader throughout this Epistle.

An exposityon in Englyshe upon the Epistyl of saynte Paule to the Phillipians, for the instruction of them that be unlearned in tonges; gathered out of holy scriptures, and of the old catholyke doctours of the church, and out of the best authors that now adayes doe write.

Exposition of the book of Joshua; the gospel of St Matthew; the second epistle to the Thessalonians; the second and third epistles of St John.

De xiii abusionibus missae.

De conjugio ministrorum.<sup>1</sup>

Ridley was a beneficiary under the will of William Spicer, rector of Clopton, Cambridgeshire, who died in 1535. He was to receive 'my goblet of silver with the cover parcel gilte', and if present at the funeral as a Fellow of Clare College was to receive 3s. 4d. He was also a witness of the testator's signature.<sup>2</sup>

1554. THOMAS PARKINSON, rector. A graduate of Trinity College, he proceeded to B.D. in 1545 and became one of the original Fellows in the following year. He had been ordained priest at Lincoln in 1534-5 as 'Fellow of Michael House', and in 1551 was rector of Wimpole, where in 1553 he signed the inventory of church goods. Parkinson was brother-in-law to Lancelot Ridley, who instituted proceedings against him in the Chancery Court with reference to Willingham, of which he expected to be deprived by reason of his marriage.<sup>3</sup>

It was during the incumbency of Parkinson that the Willingham Registers, complete from 1559, were begun, and the chalice and paten, dated 1569 were made, probably in obedience to the injunction of Archbishop Parker, from existing plate left after the confiscation of 1553 to replace 'the prophane cuppes, bowles, dishes or chalices heretofore used at Masse'.

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*; Venn, *Alumni Cantab.*; Cooper, *Athenae Cantab.* vol. 1, p. 354; *Episcopal Registers*.

<sup>2</sup> W. M. Palmer, *History of Clopton*; *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. xxxiii, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Chancery Proceedings, 1547-51, file 1466.

In 1560 the bishop of Ely reported to the archbishop of Canterbury that Thomas Parkinson, priest and resident rector of Willingham was a B.D. 'ac ad predicand: habilis, non habet specialem praedicandi facultatem, alit ibid Hospitium'.<sup>1</sup>

Jane Parkinson was buried at Willingham on 24 June 1560; Parkinson was appointed to Orwell in 1566, apparently holding it with Wimpole and Willingham. He gave to the University Library Homer's works, printed in Florence, and also gave 40s. towards making a door in the steeple at the west end of Great St Mary's Church. He was a subscriber to the Liturgy at Elsworth in 1571, and died in March 1585-6. The parochial register records his burial as of 'rector ecclesiae ibidem'. He was a benefactor to Magdalene College.<sup>2</sup>

It may be asked whether he gave orders for the painting of the commandments on the walls of the church. The insertion of a perpendicular window which took up most of the space at the east end of the chancel would not have left much room for the painting of the commandments there; that may be the reason why some were painted, 'with other chosen sentences written upon the walls. . . in places convenient'.<sup>3</sup> Some parts are still visible.

1585. WILLIAM SMITH, rector, D.D., Fellow of King's College, 1576-86. He had been a scholar at Eton, and was presented to Willingham by Charles Smith by grant from Queen Elizabeth, as from 1581 to 1599 the see of Ely was kept vacant and the revenues appropriated by the Crown. The institution took place at Lambeth on 19 March 1586, only seven days after the burial of Parkinson.

In 1595 and in 1609 he was rated for his parsonage to provide three petronels furnished. Smith was Master of Clare College 1601-12; Vice-Chancellor 1602; Provost of King's College 1612-15; chaplain to Queen Elizabeth and James I; canon of Peterborough 1595-1602; rector of Kingston, Cambs., 1595-1601; rector of Little Bardfield and vicar of Halstead, Essex; rector of Toppesfield, 1601-3.

Dr Smith took a great interest in the parish of Willingham. In his lifetime he built and endowed almshouses which stood at the east end of the churchyard, and in 1593 was a founder and benefactor of the school. At his death in 1615 he left West Meadow, arable land of over eight acres in extent, to the parish charities to be let in small allotments to poor persons. This land is so let today.

Among his benefactions to King's College were books worth £100, a salt worth £40, a fine standing cup with pendant moving figures surrounding the middle and many other legacies. 'His death was much lamented by his friends and by the public.'<sup>4</sup>

'He was a good housekeeper and the loss of him was much lamented as well by the Fellow-Collegiates as by the College Tenants generally.'<sup>5</sup>

During his incumbency, the following curates were assistants: JOHN HAWKSBEЕ, 1599-1600; CHARLES SMITH, 1603-7; JOHN NIXON, 1608-11; and JOHN WILLIAMS, 1611-15.

<sup>1</sup> Baker MSS. vol. xxvii, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> Venn, *op. cit.*; Cooper, *op. cit.*; *Episcopal and Parochial Registers*.

<sup>3</sup> Ordered by Queen Elizabeth, 1559-64.

<sup>4</sup> Harwood, *Alumni Etonenses*, vol. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Austen Leigh, *History of King's College*; Gibbons, *Ely Episcopal Records*; Venn, *op. cit.*

Charles, a son of Charles Smith was baptized in August, 1607. A Charles Smith of King's College (B.A. 1597-8) and M.A. (Clare College, 1606) became vicar of Litlington, in the gift of the college in 1603; in 1609 he became vicar of Southery, where he died 1625.<sup>1</sup> John Nixon was a graduate of Clare College.

1615. JEROME BEALE, rector, collated on the death of the late rector. A graduate of Christ's College in 1595-6, he was M.A. of Pembroke College and Fellow; D.D. 1619. In 1602 and 1608 he was incorporated at Oxford. In the latter year he became prebendary of Chichester, vicar of Cowfold in 1609, vicar of West Wittering and rector of Nuthurst 1609-13. He then became rector of Hardwicke where he signed the register transcripts in 1613, and was prebendary of Ely in 1617, also Master of Pembroke College from 1617 to his death. He resigned Hardwicke on his collation to Willingham, but retained his other offices, including those of chaplain to the king and sub-almoner. He was also Vice-Chancellor in 1622-3.<sup>2</sup> His death occurred in 1630.

Assistant curates were EDMUND MAPLETOFT, who later became rector, 1617-23; GEORGE ALSOPPE, 1623; and EDWARD WETHERED, 1624-30.

George Alsoppe was a graduate of Pembroke College, and was ordained deacon at Peterborough on 31 May 1618 and priest on the next day. His son Vincent took Anglican orders, but afterwards became a Presbyterian, then a celebrated Congregational minister at Westminster.<sup>3</sup>

Edward Wethered was another Pembroke College graduate.

1630. JOHN BUCKERIDGE, rector. John Buckeridge, bishop of Ely from 1628-31 had been President of St John's College, Oxford, where the younger John, probably a relative, also graduated M.A. in 1629, and incorporated at Cambridge in the same year. The rector compounded for first-fruits on 11 January 1630, paying £18. 8s. 6d.<sup>4</sup>

He was the son of George Buckeridge, 'citizen and haberdasher of London', who was buried at Willingham in 1646, his wife Susan having been buried there in 1643.

Nine of the children of John Buckeridge were baptized at Willingham, and three of them buried there. He was a prebendary of Ely from 1642; he died and was buried at Willingham in September, 1647, his eldest surviving child being ten years old.

From 1631 to 1633 THOMAS AMBLER, M.A., Pembroke College, was curate.<sup>5</sup>

(To be continued)

<sup>1</sup> Venn, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Venn, *op. cit.*; Bentham, *History and Antiquities of Ely*.

<sup>3</sup> Venn, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Baker MSS. vol. xxviii, p. 252.

<sup>5</sup> Venn, *op. cit.*; Bentham, *op. cit.*; Parochial Registers.