

Notes on the Rectors of Staveley.

BY REV. J. CHARLES COX.



SINCE the publication of the first and fourth volumes of the *Churches of Derbyshire*, which contain some account of the church and rectors of Staveley, certain additional notes have come into my hands respecting the Incumbents, chiefly through the courtesy of the Rev. J. D. Macfarlane, the present rector. The following is as complete a list of the rectors and patrons as I have been able to compile. Most of the notes are from the pen of that painstaking genealogist, the late Mr. Swift, of Sheffield, and were written in the year 1848; his initials, W.S., are given in brackets after the paragraphs for which he is responsible.

- I. (*circa*) 1280. Nicholas Musard.
- II. 1300. Thomas de Querle; patron, the King, as guardian of the heirs of Nicholas Musard. On the death of N. M.
- III. 1309. Robert de Wodehouse, sub-deacon, placed in custody of the living, then sequestered, by mandate of the archdeacon. Patron, Ralph de Frecheville.
- IV. 1315. John de *Horton* (?); patron, Ralph de Frecheville. On the resignation of R. de W.
- V. 1325. Richard de Marnham, acolite; patron, Sir John de Crombewell.
- VI. 1344. John de Herdby; patron, Anker de Frescheville. On the death of R. de M.

- VII. 1349. Roger de Boston ; patron, Anker de Frescheville.
On the death of J. de H.
- VIII. 1371. William de Montgomery ; patron, Roger de Clifford, for this turn. On the death of R. de B.
- IX. 1387. Richard de Cleyolk ; patron, Anker de Frecheville. On the death of W. de M.
- X. . Richard Dawes.
- XI. 1444. William Stokes ; patron, the King, as guardian of Peter Frecheville, then under age. On the resignation of R. D.
- XII. . Peter Rothery. *Temp.* Henry VI.
- XIII. . Richard Wright.
- XIV. 1494. Richard Frecheville ; patron, Peter Frecheville.
On the death of R. W.
- XV. 1528. John Bakewell ; patron, the King, on account of the minority of Peter, son and heir of John Frecheville. On the death of R. F.
- XVI. (1535). John Hewett. *Valor Ecclesiasticus.*
- XVII. 1539. John Laurence ; patron, Peter Frecheville. On the death of J. H.
- XVIII. 1547. Edward Key.
- XIX. (*circa*) 1607. Edward Birkbeck.
- XX. 1635. Roger Newham ; patron, John Frecheville. On the death of E. B.
- XXI. 1648. George Mason.
- XXII. 1653. Roger Steere. On the death of G. M.
- XXIII. 1662. Ralph Heathcote ; patron, Sir John Frecheville.
On the death of R. S.
- XXIV. 1716. James Gisborne ; patron, Lord Cavendish.
Prebend of Durham, 1742.
- XXV. 1759. Francis Gisborne ; patron, Hon. Richard Cavendish.
- XXVI. 1821. Richard Smith ; patron, Duke of Devonshire.
On the death of F. G.
- XXVII. 1838. Bernard Moore ; patron, Duke of Devonshire.
On the death of R. S.

XXVIII. 1847. James Duncan Macfarlane; patron, Duke of Devonshire. On the resignation of B. M.

I. Sir Nicholas Musard was the last male heir of the baronial family who possessed Staveley. Upon the death of his nephew, John, the young Lord Musard, who died just as he had reached maturity, he became the last Baron Musard. The fact of his incumbency rests primarily on the authority of the Musard Pedigrees, but there are abundant collateral evidences to confirm the statement that he was Rector of Staveley; one in particular, contained in a plea of *Quare impedit*, 19 Edward III., tells us distinctly that "Radulphus Musard fuit seisitus de integro manerio de Staveley, et presentavit Nich. Musard (filium suum) ad medietatem ecclesie ibidem et fuit admissus et institutus temp, Edw. I." Though an ecclesiastic person, and consequently debarred by the Canons at that period in force from the state of matrimony, he appears to have had four children, and to have died about 29 Edw. I.

A paper amongst the evidences of Lord Frecheville contains a remarkable notice of this Lord and rector of Staveley:—"Nicholaus Musard Dominus de Staveley talliavit diversa terras et tenementa Willelmo filio suo et heredi. etc, Christiane filie sue, Johanne filie sue, et Malcolmo filio suo, successive pro defectu heredum etc. Nota, quod predictus Nicholaus fuit rector ecclesie de Staveley, et proles nominata fuere omnes bastarde."—[W. S.]

IV. The name of this rector, which has been given in Nichols' *Collectanea* (vol. iv) as "John de Horton," and which I copied from the Episcopal Register under the same orthography, I now find to be rather indistinctly written, and the name may quite possibly be "Warton." If so the specially interesting monumental slab to an ecclesiastic in the south aisle—"Johannes Warton quondam rector istius ecclesie"—is identified with the fourth on our list of rectors. In the first volume of the *Churches of Derbyshire*, before I had consulted the Episcopal Registers, I gave it as my opinion that the slab was of fourteenth century date.

XVIII. Edward Key was probably a near relative of the Frechevilles, as Peter Frecheville (who died in 1582) married Margaret,

widow of Francis Woodrove, and daughter of Arthur Key (Kay, or Kaye), of Almonbury, Yorks. Edward Key held the rectory for an extraordinary long period, as his name is found in a complete list of Derbyshire beneficed clergy for the year 1605, which I have recently found among the Chapter Muniments at Lichfield.

There are several entries in the Staveley register pertaining to the family of Key between the years 1654 and 1660.

XIX. The Rev. Edward Birkbeck, B.D., was a divine of the Puritan school; he was chaplain to John, Lord Darcy of Aston, a very religious nobleman of that time. In the old register book at Staveley Church, there were several memorials of his family, from which it appeared that he married (14 July, 1609) Ann Key, widow (perhaps of the former rector). The baptisms of his children follow in order, viz.: Judith, 14 October, 1609-10; Thomas, 20 November, 1611; Edward, 1 June, 1613; and Peter, 11 February, 1614. My transcript of the next entry is somewhat doubtful as to its accuracy—and if accurate it seems inexplicable—viz.: “Isabell, daughter of Edward Birkbeck and Barbara, his wife, 3 August, 1614,” whereas it appeared by the same record that Ann, his wife, was not buried till 2 August, 1616. Edward Birkbeck and Thomas Birkbeck both occur amongst the witnesses to the will of Sir Peter Frecheville, dated 16 March, 1632, who thereby gives to “Mast. Edward Birkbeck, clerk, parson of Staveley, £5, and to his godson, Peter Birkbeck, £5.” Thomas Birkbeck, son of this rector, was chosen assistant minister of the Parish Church of Sheffield in 1635, and appointed vicar of the same church in 1644 by the Parliamentarians. He was afterwards resident at the pleasant and valuable rectory of Ackworth, in Yorkshire. And now I must leave him in the hands of the two great biographers of that time. Dr. Calamy (*Nonconformists' Memorial*, 2nd Ed., 1713, p. 789) says: “He had been minister there many years when he was silenc'd in 1662 [probably 1660]. He afterwards dwelt in his own house at Sheffield; preach'd frequently, and did much good. He was a very worthy divine, and a solid substantial preacher, one of a cheerful spirit, but much afflicted with the stone.”

Dr. Walker, a writer on the other side (in *Sufferings of the Clergy*, London, 1710, part 2, p. 85) says, respecting Dr. Bradley, D.D., Prebendary of Bole, that "he was sequestered of his living at Acworth, and thrust out by Mr. Burbeck, a stiff Rump'd Presbyterian. And whereas Mr. Calamy saith, Mr. Burbeck was succeeded by Dr. Bradley, he speaks falsely; for Dr. Bradley was Mr. Burbeck's predecessor (and God be thank'd) lived to come again to his own." Mr. Birkbeck died 8 July, 1674, aged about 60 (Hunter's *Hallamshire*, p. 154), and a stone is now (1848) in existence among the crowded memorials of this class in the parish church burial ground at Sheffield, which has borne an inscription to his memory, but all that is now readable is:—

"Al In Birkbeck
 Departed Jul 1674." [W. S.]

I have not been able to clear up the discrepancy of the dates in Mr. Swift's excerpts from the Staveley register pertaining to this rector, not having had an opportunity of consulting them since reading Mr. Swift's notes. But from extracts of my own, it is quite clear that Edward Birkbeck was twice married, first to Ann, afterwards to Barbara. Barbara, described as the relict of Edward Birkbeck, late rector of Staveley, was buried on February 6th, 1640.

XX. In a small MS., formerly in the possession of Mr. John Fletcher, of Staveley, it is stated that in Mr. Newham's time there was a visitation of the plague in the parish of Staveley, in 1646.

The registers contain the entry of the baptism of Roger, son of Roger Newham, rector, and Lætitia his wife, under date February 11th, 1640.

Roger Newham, clerk, had a bequest of £10 by the will of Sir Peter Frecheville, which was dated 1632, and proved in 1634, so that it is clear that he was a friend and acquaintance of the family previous to his nomination to the rectory.

XXI. In the same MS. of Mr. Fletcher, there is a short

biographical notice of the Rev. Nicholas Dickons, sometime Master of the Free Grammar School at East Retford. It is therein stated that he married, 30th November, 1626, Miss Elizabeth Mason, of Staveley, in the County of Derby. In the accounts of the Headborough for the Chapelry of Barlow is an item under the year 1648, October 10, "For a bottle of wine bestowed on Mr. Mason, the parson of Staveley, 2s. 6d.;" but under what circumstances, and for what purpose, does not appear. The registers contain the record of George Mason's burial, on November 17th, 1653.

XXII. In Mr. Fletcher's MS., already quoted, about Rector Newham, it is stated that Rector Steere lived and died a bachelor, and that he gave all his substance to the poor. He was buried, according to the Parish Register, on June 4th, 1662. The Register in which this is recorded, and in which his name is spelt "Steare," is a small volume, evidently begun by Roger Steere, and has his initial letters at the beginning of it.

XXIII. Rev. Ralph Heathcote was descended of the "ancient and respectable family of Heathcote, who have held property in Chesterfield since the reign of Edward IV., when they were engaged in mercantile concerns." He was a younger son of Godfrey Heathcote, of Chesterfield. This rector, by Mary Brailsford, his second wife, was progenitor of a race of great respectability and worth. There is, or lately was, at Stubbing Edge Hall, a portrait of a Mrs. Heathcote, who was probably the lady just mentioned—another of whose relatives, Richard Brailsford, of Staveley, was married 12th May, 1719, to Jane Heathcote, the rector's daughter. The Heathcotes have ever been conspicuous among the local benefactors; nor is the name of this rector at all dimmed by a comparison with any other of the benefaction tables of Staveley and Chesterfield. There were two stones to the memory of his wives in Staveley Church; but one of them is now cut into several fragments and dispersed, three portions of it being within the Communion rails, and I think I observed a fourth outside the chancel door. He began his rectorate in July, 1662, and died in March, 1715-16. [W. S.]

XXIV. A Gisborne Memorandum Book, in the possession of

the present Rector of Staveley, contains the following extract, in the handwriting of James Gisborne :—

“James Gisborne, born at Derby Dec : 14th 1688, went from Loughborough School to the University of Cambridge ; chosen Fellow of the Delightfull old College of Queens ; in the Beginning of the year 1716 presented to the Rectory of Staley by his most honour'd Patron and constant Friend till Death, the Right Hon^{ble} the Lord James Cavendish, on the Death of Mr. Ralph Heathcote, whose Predecessor Mr. Roger Stear Rect^r of Staley was buried June 4th 1661 (1662 NS) and Mr. Gisborne Successor to the said Mr. Heathcote wrote this memorandum July the 21st, 1759, having been collated by his learned Patron and Friend Dr. Chandler to a stall in the Church of Durham in the year 1742 which he always was most thankfull for as he was most justly bound ; and to the said L^d Bishops son and Daughter the Hon^{ble} Mr. and Mrs. Cavendish had as had also his wife the highest and most binding obligations.

“The Lord James Cavendish by his last will left me a Legacy of one hundred Guineas ; and Lady Cavendish (Daughter of Elihu Yale, Esq^r many years Governour of Fort St. George) by her last will gave my Daughter Anne Gisborne who was her God-Daughter, one hundred pounds.—But the greatest Instance of my Worldly Happiness was in my marriage Octob : 28th 1718 with Mrs. Anne Hinton Relict of Charles Hinton of Lichfield Esq^r. She was Daughter of George Jacson Dr. in Physick of Derby, and had been a Widdow eight years when we married.—We have had ten Children ; and in all Virtues and Accomplishments, no Woman ever surpass'd her, nor was there in more than 40 years any abatement.—May Heaven, which only can, reward her fully for her Goodness to me and to her Children !”

Copy of a letter, in the handwriting of the same “J. G.,” superscribed, “To Mrs. Gisborne at Staley near Chesterfield Derbyshire. Turn at Doncaster.” Seal, Erminois, a lion rampant, on a canton a garb. Crest, a demi-lion, issuing out of a mural crown. These were the arms granted to Gisborne in 1741 :—

“Durham, July 20, 1750.

“ My Dear

“ I got well, but pritty much weary, to this Place, on Wednesday in the Afternoon, and shall be glad to hear my two Dear Fellow Travellers and Willy Brailsford had a safe Return to Staley on Monday, and found my Dear Girls and Niece all well too.—I found this Place very full of fine folks, of this County, Yorkshire, and Northumberland, as it still continues.—The weather has not been very favourable to the Races ; nor have they had many Horses ; two only started yesterday, and one of them tumbled down the beginning of the first Heat, and so there was no second, and Dr. Stillingfleet and I, who had stolen out in our Coats to see, unseen, came back disappointed, but Feasting, Concerts, and Assemblies flourish greatly.—Our Quire had a Concert yesterday, and a most incomparably good one, in the Chapter House, a noble Room for the Purpose near twenty yards high.—It was Alexanders Ode, near twenty Instruments, and about fifteen excellent voices ; and 3 or four hundred Gentlemen and Ladies to hear them, who all express'd great Admiration ; for my part I was never so entertained, so long together, 2 hours, before, and To Day, vile Change ! in the very same place there has been as long a continuance of Jarring, Quarrelling, and Disagreement.—I am almost tired already of being so far from my Dear and Family, the Want of which nothing can make up to me : my good neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Middleton are run away from the Race into Northumberland.—I am in great hast.—Love, Blessing and Good Wishes to you, Niece Bateman, and my Dear Girls, with Thanks to Willy Brailsford for his Company, and Service to all Friends and Neighbours, as if particularly nam'd.

“ I am, my Dear, ever Thine &c

“ J. G.”

XXV. James Gisborne, who died on September 7th, 1759, was succeeded in the rectory by his son Francis. The two Gisbornes, father and son, occupied the rectory during the extraordinary period of 105 years. The Rev. Francis Gisborne was

born at Staveley, and baptized there 7th December, 1732. He received the rudiments of his education at Netherthorpe School, under Mr. Richard Robinson; from hence he went to Peterhouse, Cambridge, and appears to have arrived just at the time when the Collegians, by their mimicry of Gray's effeminate manner, had driven him from his College. This was in March, 1756. The bard readily gave up his rooms to Mr. Gisborne, who was always a grave man, and even then stood aloof from this indiscretion of his companions. It does not seem clear that Mr. Gisborne was originally designed for an ecclesiastic—indeed, I have heard the contrary; but the decease, at Cambridge, of his next elder brother, in 1750, probably decided his views and those of his family in favour of his entering into holy orders in that Church, the religious duties of which he afterwards lived to perform through so protracted a period. He preached his first sermon in Staveley Church on Sunday, 23 December, 1759, from St. John xiii. 34. On the 14th November, 1809, being the day on which he completed the 50th year of his rectorate, a jubilee was held in Staveley. There was a public dinner, and bread and meat were given to the poor, etc. Mr. Gisborne preached his last sermon in the place where he had laboured so many years, on Sunday, 26th December, 1819. He died a bachelor, on the 30th July, 1821, remarkable for his age (89), his eccentricities, and his charities. There is a short biographical notice of him in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1819, where it is said that, "although in his 88th year, he continues to fulfil all the functions of a village rector, christening, marrying and burying his parishioners; in the latter office he never fails, be the weather ever so unfavourable, to meet the corpse at the church gates, and proceed before it to the church, and at the grave always refusing any temporary shelter, be the season ever so inclement." Like many others, he had his foibles, and he only exceeded them in the number of his virtues. Grave as was his manner generally, gravity is hardly the most frequent characteristic of the tales of remembrance of the village greybeards, who tell a profusion of anecdotes respecting the domestic life and conversation of the

old rector; but after all, it may truly be said of him, as of the village preacher described by Goldsmith, that

“ To relieve the wretched was his pride,
And ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side ;
But in his duty prompt at ev'ry call,
He watch'd and wept—he pray'd—and felt for all ;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,
He try'd each art, reprov'd each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

His charitable disposition was shown, not only in the remission of his fees to the poor, and the demand of merely nominal tythes—questionable precedents as some persons, perhaps, may think—but in various other cases, in which he dispensed his bounty both casually and stately—

Full oft around his board in reverent state,
A goodly row of ancient widows sate,
Invited to partake the grateful meal,
His hospitality rejoic'd to deal :
For them he slaughtered, too, the fatted steer,
What time glad Christmas festal closed the year.
The village matron should disease assail
Herself, or neighbour, thither told her tale ;
Nor fear'd in sickness she should feebly pine,
If fallen strength required a little wine ;
Or if in fever jellies might allay
The hot distemper'd palate, there were they.
Or if when convalescence feebly claim'd
Some soothing hand, but left that hand unnam'd,
The kind attention of the Parson's wife
Might cheer the hopes of slow reviving life.
Alas ! he never had a wife : with tears
The villagers deplored the lapse of years
Whose long succession had their honours shed—
A crown of hopeless grey upon his head.
Hopeless for them, as one sad day they must
Weep grief's last tribute, o'er his childless dust—
The last most honour'd relict of a race
Of generous benefactors to the place.

Besides the munificent charity still known by his name in 100 parishes in Derbyshire, and the large bequests in his will to the Derbyshire and Sheffield Infirmaries, Mr. Gisborne gave anonymously to St. Peter's College, Cambridge (of which he was a fellow), the sum of £22,000, in consideration whereof two Fellowships of £70 per annum each, and four new scholarships of £30 per annum were added to the patronage of the College. This foundation bears the name of the donor.—[W. S.]

XXVI. The Rev. Richard Smith, of Trinity College, Cambridge, M.A., Vicar of Edensor, and Domestic Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, was presented to the Rectory of Staveley in October, 1821; somewhat contrary, it is believed, to the expectations of Mr. Gisborne, and certainly so as to the hopes of the parishioners, which had been fixed upon another clergyman, born, and at that time resident and officiating in the village of Staveley. Mr. Smith preached his first sermon in Staveley Church 25th November in that year from Heb. x. 13. He being non-resident the duties were performed for several years by the Rev. John Clarke, his curate, who preached here for the first time 31st March, 1822. Mr. Smith died 26th September, 1837, aged 70, leaving two sons both in Holy Orders, viz.—the Rev. Courtney Smith, curate of Barlow, and the Rev. Charles Smith. I accidentally fell upon an address delivered to the Chatsworth Volunteers, at the presentation of their colours, on Friday, June 27th, 1806. “By the Rev. Richard Smith, chaplain to the regiment;” but this is all I have discovered of anything printed by any of the above-named rectors of Staveley.—[W.S.]

XXVII. The Rev. Bernard Moore preached and read in as rector on the 11th March, 1838. If I may be permitted briefly to speak of the living without offence to truth or delicacy, I may state that he deserved and enjoyed the respect of his parishioners in an eminent degree. Maintaining in his own conduct the reputation of his ancient predecessors for kindness and urbanity towards the resident population, his evangelical preaching, strict pastoral attention, and evidently disinterested religious solicitude for the welfare of his flock, wrought a very visible improvement in the parish. After a residence and ministry of nearly ten years, he determined, to the great regret of the bulk of the parishioners, to remove from this scene of usefulness; and his departure was marked by private expressions and public testimonials of respect and regret. In order to his removal, and still having in view the welfare of his late flock, he affected an exchange with the present rector of Staveley for the living of Sutton-in-Norfolk, and preached three valedictory sermons on the same day, viz.—Sunday,

September 5, 1847, at Staveley and Handley from Acts xx. 32.—
[W. S.]

XXVIII. The Rev. James Duncan Macfarlane had, from about December 1840 to 1843, been the curate here. In the month of May, in the latter year, he was presented by the Earl of Abergavenny to the rectory of Sutton. In June, 1847, an exchange was effected between the rectors of Staveley and Sutton, with the consent of the patron of the former rectory; and Mr. Macfarlane took formal possession of this living on the 29th of June, and read himself in as rector on the 8th July. He preached his first sermon at Handley, as curate, on 6th December, 1840, from St. John vi. 25—27, and as rector, on 26th September, 1847, from St. John xvi. 14.—[W. S.]