

ST. LEONARD'S, PRESTON (BANSTEAD).

BY

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THE Ordnance Survey of Banstead shows the site of St Leonard's Chapel in the north-east corner of Chapel Grove, not far from a field called Preston Hawe (where are some earthworks figured in the *Victoria History of Surrey*, Vol. IV, p. 400, and believed by Manning and Bray to be the site of the Manor House of Preston). This Chapel was in the Manor of Preston, and Manning and Bray say that traces of the Chapel still remained in 1809, but that the greater part of the foundations had been made use of some years before in building a barn. According to Edwards (1801), many human bones were found in the south-west corner of Preston Wood when workmen were digging earth there (p. 249 of my *History of Banstead*). The site of the Chapel is in fact easy to identify, as it is higher than the surrounding ground, and I have recently been allowed to dig and examine it. Only foundations remain, and these are not easy to trace accurately, the whole ground being littered with flints and other debris, but the building measured approximately 30 feet from east to west, and 15 from north to south (inside measurements). What remains shows flints set in mortar resting on lumps of chalk, under which is a layer of broken tiles resting on the undisturbed hard chalk. Pieces of a softer stone like Reigate stone are also to be found with many bits of broken tile. No traces of a floor seem to remain, but there is a great deal of loose mortar rubble on which the floor must have rested.

The evidence of the Lambeth Registers, for which I am indebted to Mr. G. W. Waine, makes it clear that though it is believed¹ that the only parishes in Surrey which before

¹ See *V. H. S.*, II, 3.

the nineteenth century were separated from the See of Winchester were Croydon, East Horsley, Merstham, Wimbledon, including Putney and Mortlake, Barnes, Burstow, Newington, Cheam, and Charlwood, forming the old Deanery of Croydon and all Peculiars of the See of Canterbury, Preston must be added to this list. It is, for instance, described in the entry of 5 December, 1317, referred to below, as "ecclesiam parochialem de Preston decanatus de Croyndon immediate jurisdictionis domini." The Inq. p.m. on Richard Merlond who, with his wife Elizabeth, owned the manor of Preston "una cum advocacione ecclesie Sancti Leonardi eidem manerio spectanti," and 336 acres in Banstead, Ewell, and Epsom, taken 10 Nov. 22 Henry VII (1506), says: "Item (dicunt) quod predictum manerium de Preston et trecinte acre terre cum pertinentiis in Bansted et Ebbesham predictis parcella predictarum trecentarum et six (? 336) acrarum terre tenentur de Archiepiscopo Cantuarensi et de dominio sive manerio suo de Croydon per fidelitatem et redditum xijs. per annum."

It is, according to Wood (who wrote the *Institute of the Laws of England*, a standard work till superseded by Blackstone), who is cited by Jacob,¹ an ancient privilege of the See of Canterbury that wherever any manors or advowsons belong to it they forthwith become exempt from the Ordinary, and are reputed Peculiars of that see, and the Archbishop seems, in fact, to have had lands before the Conquest in all the eleven parishes just mentioned.² We must therefore suppose that at some time the Archbishop had owned the Manor of Preston, but there does not seem to be any direct evidence of this. Neither manor nor advowson, it will be seen, was held by the Archbishop in the fourteenth century.

The information supplied by the Lambeth Registers is as follows:

30 May 1317. Michael de Panton presented on the resignation of Hugo the last Rector. Patron John de Chetwode (Reynolds 20a).

13 June 1317. Robert dictus de Ispannia presented

¹ Law Dictionary, 1809, "Peculiar." See also Hasted, *History of Kent* [1799], IV, 761.

² *P. H. S.*, II, 3.

Michael de Panton having voluntarily resigned. Patron John de Chetwode, miles (20*b*).

5 Dec. 1317. John de Ispannia presented on the resignation of Robert—same Patron (22*a*).

29 Nov. 1352. John de Norton—Archbishop patron—lapse of time. (Islip 262*b*).

18 Feb. 1358–9. Dominus Robert Spryngit presented on the death of John de Harleye. Patron Nicholas de Chetwode (280*a*).

7 Aug. 1363. Dominus Thomas Spenser cap. Patron the Archbishop—lapse of time (301*b*).

15 June 1364. Peter Hatter on the resignation by exchange of Thomas Spencer. Patron Richard Wodevyle, lord of Preston (306*a*).

22 Feb. 1366. John Mayn of Boudon presented. Patron Richard Wydewell (Langham 98*a*).

21 May 1369. John Lovede, cap. on resignation of John Boudon. Patron Richard Wydewill. (Whittlesea 70*b*).

10 July 1369. Commission appointed for an exchange with Great Kymburlee. Thomas Mareschall on resignation of John Lovede (72*a*).

5 Oct. 1375. Richard de Ellesworth presented on the resignation of Thomas Marescall of Amphthill. Patron Richard de Wodevile (Sudbury 115*a*).

30 Nov. 1375. John Knyght, cap. on the resignation of Richard de Ellesworth. Patron Thomas de Hayton (111*a*).

20 Oct. 1399. Collation of William Derby, cap. (Arundel 262*a*).

4 March 1402–3. Roger Longley. Patron John Longley, citizen of London (287*a*).

16 Feb. 1404–5. Walter Duryng presented on resignation of Roger Longley. Patron, the same (301*a*).

10 May 1482. Mag. Henry Taillour, cap. collated ("Dominus contulit Magistro Henrico Taillour capellano in decretis bacallario ecclesiam parochialem de Preston ecclesie Cant. jurisdictionis immediate vacantem," etc. Bouchier, 129*b*).

No later entries appear to exist in the Registers, nor can any date apparently be assigned at which Preston ceased to

be a Peculiar of Canterbury. It is not referred to in the Valor Ecclesiasticus of Henry VIII (but for that matter it does not appear in the Taxation of Pope Nicholas). It seems to have just been forgotten. The parish was very small, and the living may have been difficult to fill. This was in fact so with the neighbouring church of Burgh in Banstead, which, though presented to in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was poor, and the church already dilapidated in 1379. The Manor of Preston passed from the Chetwodes into the hands of the Merlands, who held Great Burgh, and no doubt preferred it to Preston. If there was no sufficient reason for putting the church of Burgh on its feet they must have felt that there was still less in the case of Preston, and though there is a reference to the advowson of Preston in the conveyance of Great Burgh and Preston from the Merlands to Christopher Buckle in 1614, this reference was probably only due to the abundant caution of the draughtsman. The Archbishop's financial interest in Preston was insignificant, and the population too small to give work to the ecclesiastical courts.