

responds with the ancient house still standing here and remarkable for its cellar built with fine fourteenth-century vaulting-ribs and fragments of Norman work. It is most improbable that these can have come from any other building than the Priory church; and since half of that church was bought in 1530 for the repair of the bridge† we may infer that this house was built about the same year. The original writing of the Survey states that "John Croke lately holds it" (*nuper tenet*); but in 1561 the word *lately* is deleted, and at the end the words "now of John Colche" (*modo Johannis Colche*) are interlined. They may relate to the tenement next described; or the name which appears to be *Colche*, obscurely written, may be intended for *Croke*. John Croke appears later as rector of St. Mary's.

† Hedges, II., 254.

J. E. FIELD.

(*To be continued*).

History of the Parish of Beenham.

By Mary Sharp.

(*Continued from Vol. 21, No. 2, page 53,*).

PARISH REGISTERS.

The oldest Register book of Beenham is in parchment. The entries are headed with the following statement:—

THE REGISTER BOOKE OF BEENEHAM.

ANNO DM̄ 1561.

It is in very good condition and the handwriting almost throughout is clear and legible. It goes on till 1778. The first Vicar's signature is that of William Elton in 1614. He dates the pages from the following year not only Anno Dm̄. 1615, but also adds the year of the King's reign—*James 13*,—and the same form is continued till 1648—*Regis Charles 24^o*—after which the date of the year only is given till 1661, when *Regis Charles 2-13th* is added, for, according to the usual custom, the reign of Charles II. was always counted as beginning from the year of his father's death. The

monarch's name appears after this uninterruptedly till 1689, the date of the accession of William and Mary, when Robert Humphreys, the then Vicar, being apparently a non-juror in sentiment if not in fact, omits any mention of the Sovereign, and that practice was never resumed. The entries of births, deaths and marriages are mixed up to the year 1742, when separate pages are given to each, Mr. Francis Ayscough being Vicar.

In 1757 it is recorded that John Jackson then commenced Curate of Beenham and continued in charge of the Registers till 1766, in which year there is an entry of his death. It was during the incumbency and, perhaps, non-residence of Dr. Douglas. In the year 1679 there occurs, for the first time in the Beenham Register, after the entry of the burials, the declaration that the deceased was *buried in woollen only*. This was no doubt in consequence of a second Act of Parliament (the first was passed in 1666) enforcing the practice more urgently under penalty of fines. The object of this sumptuary law for the dead is said in the preamble to the Act of 1678 to have been "for the lessening the importation of linen from beyond the Seas and the Encouragement of the Woollen and Paper Manufacturers of this Country," and it was thereby enacted that :—

"No corps of any person . . . shall be buried in any Shirt, Shift, Sheet or Shroud, or anything whatsoever made or mingled with Flax, Hemp, Silk, Hair, Gold or Silver, or in any Stuff or thing other than what is made of Sheeps wool only . . . under pain of Forfeiture of Five Pounds."

Registers were to be kept in every parish of persons buried there "and that some one of the relations of the Party deceased . . . shall within 8 days after such interment bring an affidavit in writing and signed by a magistrate that the above regulations had been complied with, and also that :—

"the Minister in every Parish shall make a true entry in a book of all such affidavits brought to him."

If we may judge by the Beenham records the Act was disregarded in the parish after the year 1778, and it was repealed in 1814. Many pathetic entries are to be found among the burials, as, for instance, several times "a traveller unknown was buried," and once it is added "in a naked coffin." In 1699 there occurs the curious entry : "John Paty, Farmer, worth £600 in personal estate, was buried in woollen only, April 24th." The occupations of the deceased are often added to their names, as "husbandman" or

"labourer," "a carpenter," or "a blacksmith." "Richard Gold, a Roman Catholic, had a daughter born," but it does not add—baptised.

These comments are mostly given us by Phillip Goddard who is the author of nearly all the unnecessary but interesting matter to be found in the parish literature. On the last pages of the old book are several memoranda which, though some of them are undated, seem to be of his time. One is quoted elsewhere in connection with the subject of which it treats (see p.). Another, referring to the confusion and consequent disputes caused by the uncertainty of the boundaries between the parishes of Beenham and Padworth, is here given :—

Memorand : There is a way in the field leading to the Bridge that goeth over the water into Aldermaston mead, on the east side of the way, it tythes to Padworth on the west our land and no more. Now John Smith farmer of Mr. Hildesley's land plowed up that way and made his way upon that land on the west side. The Parson of Padworth taketh up the tythes that way and of another land further on the west side . . . (undecypherable).

A second Register book of paper contains only copies of the entries concerning the Burials "in woollen only" from the older parchment book and includes the years between 1678 and 1684. It was probably written by the same Philip Goddard and was not continued by his successor. The third Register is in two volumes, the Baptisms and Burials in one volume, written on vellum, and the Marriages in another of paper with printed forms. The first dates from 1778 and in it the yearly Bishop's Visitation is recorded up to 1789, after which a line is added at the end of each year (old style March 25th) to the effect that "thus far a copy has been delivered to the Court (of the Bishop)." This was in accordance with a Diocesan regulation, which unfortunately in many cases elsewhere "was honoured more in the breach than in the observance." The book is carried on until the incumbency of John Bushnell in 1812. Among the Burials, infants are numerous, also paupers, which last, in connection with the Overseers' accounts for the same period, can surprise no one, and among the Baptisms illegitimate children are almost as frequently mentioned. Banns of Marriage are first mentioned in the printed book, in which a form of words with printed lines and directions for filling in are provided, the date on the title page being 1754. It was in this year, on the 26th of March, that the new Marriage Act came into force ; this

had not been passed without fierce opposition. "Orators lavished their flowers of rhetoric and wit upon prophecies that the Bill would check population and reduce England to a third rate power, and that fine ladies would never consent to be asked for three Sundays running in the parish church." Charles Townsend delighted the House, never very critical of a new argument, by a pathetic appeal on behalf of younger sons, whom Lord Hardwick's Bill would debar from running away with heiresses. "Were fresh shackles," he asked, "to be forged in order that men of abilities might be prevented from rising to a level with their elder brothers?" * It was after this, when clandestine marriages could no longer be performed in England without banns or special license by any hedgerow priest, that younger sons had to run away with their heiresses to Gretna Green, Scotland not being included in the Act.

The first marriage by banns recorded in Beenham was in 1755. Marriages by license are also sometimes recorded. Among those by banns the marriage of the Vicar, "John Douglas, D.D., widower, with Anna Christiana Webb of this Parish, by John Bostock, Minister (and squire)" is entered on the 11th October, 1792. This volume, like its fellow, finishes its record in 1812, and with such matters in more recent times our work does not concern itself.

TITHES.

Besides the Registers there have fortunately been preserved some old volumes of accounts, which help to throw some interesting light on the life of the Parish during the 17th and 18th centuries. The first which we will consider is a small, vellum-bound quarto in which are set down numerous entries regarding the Vicar's tithes. The earliest of these entries were written by Mr. Horton, Vicar of Beenham from 1731 to 1733. He begins by citing extracts from *Terriers*—*i.e.*, rolls in which are described the lands, etc., belonging to the living—which he tells us are "extracted from the Bishop's Court at Sarum." A *Terrier* of 1608 mentions as due to the Vicar "all Tythe of Hay (except of the Manor Farm) and generally all other Tythes and Dutys whatsoever, except Wheat, Rye, Barley and Oats." *Terriers* of 1609 and 1635 give the same information in the same words. A *Terrier* of 1670 is more explicit; this declares "All the Tithes, Hay (except of the Manor Farm), Wood, Beans, Peas, Vetches, Pulse, Wool and Lamb, Calf and Cow white, and other small tithes wherever arising out of the same Farm, belong

* "The Early Life of Charles James Fox," by Sir George Trevelyan.

unto the Vicar, and generally all manner of Tithes throughout the whole Parish, except the Tithe of Wheat, Rye, Barley, Oats, which belong to the Impropiator. And as for the Customs which the said Parish have upon the Vicar, we know no other than 2d. offerings, 6d. Churching a Woman, 2d. for the White of every milch cow at Lammas; for other small Tithes as the Vicar and Parishioners can agree, or else to take it upon kind." Mortuaries are paid. Tithe Wood is paid every tenth drift cut down, unless an Agreement be made with the Vicar to take it in another manner. Mr. Horton, evidently anxious that precedent and custom in these matters should be known and established, next proceeds to quote from his predecessor's Tithe Book, the "Tithes due of Common Right to the Vicar of Beenham." The said predecessor was the same Mr. Philip Goddard, who in 1677 had the dispute with the Commoners respecting his rights of pasture in the Open Field which has been already described on page 17, Vol. 20, and it is to him we owe, through Mr. Horton, the following interesting particulars:—

Tithes due to the Vicar were—

Hay—10th cock.

Beans—10th sheaf.

Peas—10th wadd.

Underwood—10th pole, when cut and thrown in drifts.

Hemp and Flax—5/- per acre before carried off the ground.

Lambs—10th, or 10th penny value.

Wool—10th pound weight.

Calves—if weaned 1/-, if sold, ye 10th penny.

Pigs—the 10th, if the litter be only six then one.

Milk—every 10th meal.

Vetches—10th wadd.

Hops—10th bushel when picked.

Clover—Aftermath or second cutt either for seed or hay.

Honey and wax—10th pound.

Fall of Colts—1/- each.

Fruit of all kinds—10th measure of number.

Poultry, as Fowls, Geese, Ducks, Turkeys—10th in number.

Potatoes, Turnips and Parsnips—10th measure.

Turnips, if not drawn but fed with unprofitable Cattle, then Agistment Tythe, which is the improved value of such Cattle.

Garden' stuff and herbs—2d. in the pound of computed value.

Next is given a list of the Customary Easter Offerings. These were : 2d. each person in the Family above the age of 16 years, to be paid by the Master of the Family.

1d. per *head* for gardens.

Eggs were to be paid on Good Friday at the rate of—3 for a cock, 2 for a hen, 1 for a pullet. (If poultry were kept in large numbers, the amount of eggs received by the Vicar must have been distinctly more than he desired, if not more than he deserved.)

Other customary dues are stated to have been :—

For a marriage by banns—5/-.

Burials—0. For a stranger—6/8.

Churching—6d.

Mortuaries were 10/-.* Twelve of these were received between July, 1718, and May, 1800.

It can be readily understood that the custom of paying tithes in kind was attended by much inconvenience and also much exasperation on both sides. An old man, in a parish where they were thus collected up to the time of the Act for the Commutation of Tithes in 1836, has often told the writer of the bitterness of feeling betwixt Farmer and Parson, of the quarrels that arose over which pig of the litter should be allotted to the latter, and the unpopularity of his man, who at harvest time came with a “two-tined fork”—*i.e.* a pitchfork with prongs at either end—and marched from stook to stook of corn, abstracting his master’s tenth sheaf. Even where compounded for a money payment, such payments, when made direct from farmer to parson, were not exactly productive of harmony.

“In sooth, the sorrow of such days

Is not to be expressed,

When he that takes and he that pays

Are both alike distressed.”

Cowper has inimitably described a tithe dinner in “The Yearly Distress, of Tithing time at Stock in Essex,” a poem no lover of “John Gilpin” should allow to be forgotten.

* A “Mortuary” has the resemblance to a burial fee, in that it is a gift made by a man at his death to his Parish Church. It was made in Saxon times under the name of *Saulscoat*. It grew to be a customary gift and the parson took it in the form of the second best beast belonging to the deceased, the best beast going to the lord of the manor. An Act of Henry VIII. reduced the tax, as it had then become, and established a tariff. If a man died worth in personal goods under £30, the Mortuary was 3/4; between £30 and £40, 6/8; and over £40, 10/-.

(To be continued.)