Before leaving this subject I cannot refrain from calling attention to some of the appalling plurals of some of the names of the Stone Age Monuments. Let us take the word *Menhir* to start with. The plural of *Menhir* has been Anglicised into Menhirs; this is not euphonious, and the Welsh plural 'Menhirion' would be distinctly more pleasing to the ear. I see Professor Windle uses this plural, only he spells it Menihirion, the Breton way.

We pass on to the word Dolmen. *Dolmens*, as the plural of Dolmen is highly unsatisfactory, is uncouth, and grating to the ear. The Welsh plural of this word is *Dolmenau* (the 'au' pronounced as the 'i' in high)—Dolmenī—and I strongly advocate its adoption, though learned friends of mine tell me it would *always* be wrongly pronounced!

I leave the student to judge.

Sutton Courtenay and Abingdon Abbey

By Arthur E. Preston.

CAP. I.

MODERN investigation does not deny that the first beginnings of Abingdon Abbey may credibly be referred to a date in the latter part of the seventh century.[1] The story of its early relations with the neighbouring vill of Sutton, some three miles to the south-west, as unfolded in the Abbey Chronicle, may in the main be regarded as trustworthy, although it is unnecessary to insist on the accuracy of all its detail. Briefly put, the course of events can be stated as follows:—

(*a*) Grant of the vill of Sutton to the house of Abingdon by Ina king of the West Saxons about the beginning of his rule in 688.[2] The authenticity of this charter has not been questioned, and from the

[1] Stenton, pp. 17 and 49. [2] *Chron.* i. 14.

character left behind by the founder or refounder of Glastonbury there is nothing improbable in it.

(*b*) Offa II., king of Mercia, after establishing his ascendency over the West Saxons, visited Abingdon (c. 790) not long before his death, and being struck with the commodious and pleasant situation of a tract of pasture land to the southward of the abbey inclosed by the Thames and one of its arms (called Andersey Isle),[3] decided to take it into his own hands as a hunting seat and place of residence. In exchange the monks got the vill of Goosey, about nine miles to the westward, which they retained till the Dissolution in 1538. Andersey was about 283 acres and Goosey 968. Offa occasionally resided at Andersey, and his son Egbert died there a few months after his accession as king in 796.[4]

(*c*) The hunting establishment becoming a source of annoyance to the monks, steps were taken in the time of Kenwulf, Offa's grandson, to get rid of the inconvenience (c. 815-21). An exchange was accordingly effected under which Sutton, with 120 pounds of gold and silver, was given to the king and Andersey restored to the abbey.[6]

There is nothing inherently unlikely in these transactions, and they are borne out by corroborative circumstances. For example. Apart from the exchange with Offa there is nothing to account for the possession of Goosey by the abbey. No other source has ever been suggested. In Domesday it was returned as one of their manors, and specifically stated to provide food for the monks.

[3] The high road to London and the adjoining raised causeway between Abingdon and Culham bridges traverse the western part of Andersey.

[4] *Chron.* i. 14 and ii. 273.

[6] Ib. i. 27 and ii. 274. The vill of Sutton was no doubt commensurate wtih or possibly larger at this date than the manor of later times (c. 3170 acres). The exchange was therefore a good bargain for the king, Sutton being more than ten times the extent of Andersey—to say nothing of the large cash payment made. The eagerness of the monks to recover Andersey is apparent.

On the other hand, doubts have within recent years been expressed[7] as to whether the chronicler's tale of the abbot Rethunus' journey to Rome in furtherance of the exchange of Sutton and in seeking special privileges for Culham church may not have been the invention of a later age; and whether the charters of king Kenwulf[8] cited in proof were not mere fabrications unworthy of credence. Rethunus is admittedly a shadowy figure, and need not concern us. It may be remembered, however, that the abbey Chronicles, from which practically all our information down to 1190 is drawn, were not compiled till near the end of the 12th century or perhaps later; and the barter of Sutton for Andersey may well have been real, notwithstanding the chronicler's unskilful attempt some four hundred years after the event to reconstruct in its support Kenwulf's original charter by that time lost or destroyed. It is hardly possible to doubt that the document as we now have it rested on a veritable basis of fact. Devices of this kind (however disingenuous) were not it may be supposed resorted to with any sinister motive or intention to deceive, but rather to explain events traditionally true, but dim through age, and of which the authentic evidences had disappeared. Stevenson, the editor of the *Abingdon Chronicle* (1858), thought 'there was nothing to militate against the acceptance' of Kenwulf's charter of 821,[9] whilst Professor Stenton rejects it as 'undoubtedly spurious'[10]—a criticism more applicable perhaps to the form than the substance of the charter.

In weighing this question it must not be overlooked that there is nothing to explain the surrender of Sutton and the re-acquisition of Andersey except the exchange with Kenwulf as alleged by the abbey historian. In Domesday, Sutton appears not as a demesne of the abbey, but of the king, and it remained with the Crown till temp. Hen. II., when it was granted to the first or one of the earlier Courtenays. Seeing the divergence of modern opinion as to the authenticity of Kenwulf's charter, it may be noted in passing for what it is worth that from the 14th century

[7] Stenton, pp. 23 and 27.
[8] *Chron.* i. 19-25.
[9] Ib. ii. 501.
[10] Stenton, p. 23.

onwards the charter has always been regarded by the Crown officials as originally genuine. In 1336 it was the subject of inspection and formal confirmation by Edward III. and again in 1380 by Richard II. Later, with the consent of Parliament, it was ratified by Henry VI.'s council of minority in the early days of his reign, June, 1423;[11] and also two or three times subsequently by succeeding sovereigns.

Should we be minded to enquire how it came about that title-deeds so important to the abbey as Kenwulf's charters had by the 12th century been lost, and the compiler of the history put to the necessity of reproducing their contents as best he could, no definite answer can of course be given. The historian himself seems to have been perplexed by the same question, seeing that he rather goes out of his way to impress on us that their loss was not to be attributed to the ravages of the Northmen in 866-71, when the monks were driven out and little of the abbey buildings left standing except the walls. For in recording, almost with tears, the havoc of the occasion, he says that 'by the providence of God the relics of the saints and the *charters* of the house noted down in this book were *secretly preserved* to the end that those who afterwards recovered and restored the monastery might know by those same deeds what lands belonged of right to the church.'[12] Our respect for this version may be somewhat tempered by the reflection that it occurs side by side with the chronicler's account of a miraculous expulsion of the pagan Danes from the refectory of the abbey 'where a number of them were one day sitting swelled up with pride, but without reverence or discipline.' If, however, we are content to assume that the charters really survived the looting of the Northmen, it may only have been to fall into the Conqueror's net some two centuries later. The Lancaster Herald, Nicholas Charles, writing between 1609-13, and quoting from 'an ancient roll of Abingdon Abbey' not now traceable, says that William I., during the imprisonment of the English abbot Aldred (who had been appointed by the defeated Harold II.), took into his

[11] Cal. Pat. ad annum, 133.

[12] *Chron.* i. 47.

own hands 'all the lands, moneys, books, &c., of that abbey.'[13] The originals of Kenwulf's charters may easily have been amongst 'the books, &c.' so carried off. The seizure of charters—even those granted by William himself—seems to have been part of the regular procedure in the systematic plundering of monasteries authorised by the Conqueror in 1071.[14]

At the time Ethelwold (afterwards Bishop of Winchester) accepted charge in 954, the abbey was in a ruinous and impoverished condition.[15] Previously its history had been that of a small house struggling with difficulties and scarce able to keep up a succession of abbots; at times, indeed, there had been gaps. Under the earlier incursions of the Northmen the little community had suffered severely, and in 871 was, as we have seen, almost entirely swept away. In the course of Ethelwold's nine years' rule, and as re-established and largely re-built by him, the abbey became the first of the Benedictine houses in England to undergo reform. It was from Abingdon rather than from Glastonbury that the new monasticism of the 10th century derived its distinctive features.[16] From Ethelwold's time onwards its prosperous days may be reckoned, and during the next century or so great wealth was accumulated. In Domesday its possessions in Berks were given as second only in extent to the King's.

A fresh footing in Sutton was at length obtained at the end of the tenth century. In 983 one of the 'faithful men' of the youthful Etheldred II., named Wulfgar (in another place described as his *pincerna*, or butler), obtained from the King a grant in fee of one and a half hides[17] of land in Sutton and three in Drayton. Both the Archbishop Dunstan and Bishop Ethelwold were amongst the witnesses to the charter.[18] In the year 990 another Wulfgar, 'a man

[13] Cott. *Jul. C.* VII. f. 305.

[14] *Annals of England* (1876), p. 90 n.

[15] *Chron.* ii. 257.

[16] Stenton, p. 7.

[17] The hide, as well known, varied in extent, but in the Abingdon Chronicle is mentioned as the equivalent of 120 acres (*Chron.* ii. 56) which may have been less than the modern statute acre.

[18] Ib. i. 86.

conspicuous for his intense uprightness,' and not improbably the butler's son, was chosen abbot. On his father's death he presumably inherited the property, for in A.D. 1000 Ethelred made an offering of the same land and a mill 'to the sanctuary of the monastery of Abingdon.' The gift was really the abbot's, but to add solemnity to it, the sanction of a formal royal grant was obtained. Wulfgar himself figures amongst the witnesses, and relieves the monotony of names, titles and seals with the single word *conlaudo*.[19]

Contemporaneously or thereabouts, the abbey had made itself master of two-thirds of the tithes of Sutton and owned also one hide of land there.[20] The latter may have been Wulfgar's gift. The possession of the lion's share of the tithes indicates that long before the Conquest, and therefore earlier than in most other places, the evil system of controlling the revenues of country churches had begun to take root at Abingdon. The other one-third was supposed to suffice for the maintenance of the parish priest. By the end of the tenth century, and perhaps before there is evidence to show that Sutton had become a separate ecclesiastical unit, with a church and priest of its own and with tithes allocated to their use. Both Milton and Appleford were hamlets annexed. Sutton Wick was also included, but had no chapel of its own. The link with the parent parish lasted till 1915, when by Order in Council Sutton Wick was separated and for ecclesiastical purposes added to the parishes of Drayton and Abingdon respectively.

The one hide of land belonging to the abbey was held c. 1090-93 by a priest named Ælfwin or Ælwin, an Englishman, married, and with at least one son.[21] According to Domesday, his father had held the land before him, and was no doubt also a priest. In the time of William Rufus it is quite clear that the church of Sutton was subject to the lordship of the King alone,[22] and that Ælfwin held it under him with probably the remaining one-third, or the small tithes, as stipend. The chronicler speaks of the priest as a man skilled

[19] Ib. i. 408.
[20] Ib. ii. 27.
[21] Ib. ii. 28.
[22] Ib. i. 26.

in secular affairs and in the laws of the country.[23] Soon after 1090, whilst Robert Bloet (afterwards Bishop of Lincoln) was Chancellor, Rufus granted the church (*i.e.* the advowson), with its lands, tithes and customs, to the abbot and monks, 'as they had enjoyed them in the time of his father.'[24] Although for a century or more the great tithes had been in the hands of the monastery, the right of presentation had remained with the King as lord of the manor; and this had continued down to the time of the Conqueror and his son. A condition of things by no means usual in such circumstances, but the early sovereigns were a law unto themselves in matters of this kind, and did pretty much as they pleased.

The right of presentation was coveted because amongst other advantages it prepared the way for appropriation by the abbey of the whole of the revenues of the church, subject, of course, to the obligation of providing for the spiritualities. This could be done at a cheap rate. For the right to appropriate the abbot Rainald or Reginald—a Norman from Jumièges and high in favour at court—willingly paid into the royal treasury the large sum of £20, equivalent to-day to £400 or more. The payment was in public money, *i.e.*, in coin of the realm, then hard to come by, which possibly may have occasioned the pawning of part of the abbey church plate, of which something is said later. In the king's need for money and in the abbot's appetite for country churches, the circumstances stand out under which the ecclesiastical patronage of Sutton became separated from the manor (though not permanently severed, as after events proved) more than half a century before the manor itself was granted away to one of his followers by the first of the Plantaganets.

Although the new charter professed no more than to ratify the state of things existing in the previous reign, it yet introduced changes adversely affecting Ælfwin's status and caused him disquiet. Whatever may have been the previous position, his post was now at the mercy of the monks. An English priest among overbearing Norman abbots and

[23] Ib. ii. 2 and 27.

[24] Ib. ii. 26 and 27.

officials, his position was difficult, and we may gather that representations to that effect were conveyed to the king. Past services had ingratiated him with the court, and not long after the charter Rufus sent letters to the abbot in favour of Ælfwin's retention of the church on the ground of his knowledge of the law and of his tenancy under the abbey. At the same time he ordered that after Ælfwin's death the benefice should revert to the common advantage of the abbot and brethren. (*Et jussit ut post ejus decessum in commune abbatis et fratrum rediret*).[25] In this royal authorisation may perhaps be seen the first definite instance of appropriation by the abbey; the effect of appropriation being to divert to the monastery's own use tithes and other offerings originally intended for the benefit of the individual parish churches, their incumbent and poor. Not till 1180 (nearly a century after this date) was the assent of the bishop made necessary before confiscations of this kind could be carried into effect.[26] But it did little to check the abuse.

Ælfwin lost no time in making suit to the abbot for the church, or *suum monasterium* as the chronicler terms it. In compliance with the king's command no difficulty was made about confirming him for life in the position he had previously held. Such as the emoluments had been he was to continue to enjoy them. The one hide of land of which mention has been made was held from the abbot separately on feudal conditions; or perhaps, as was then coming into vogue, at a money rent. Ælfwin was doubtless an agriculturalist as well as a priest and farmed the land himself to eke out a livelihood. Having been thus far successful in securing his own position, he took the human course of looking forward for his son, then a boy, and proceeded to bargain for him too. Approaching the abbot again he asked that after his death his son should have the church for life, which subject to certain conditions, the abbot was willing to concede. If Ælfwin's son lived to succeed his father we have three consecutive generations of one English family serving the same parish church as priests in the period immediately before and after the Domesday

[25] Ib. ii. 28. [26] Selden's *Tithes*, c. 10.

survey. As part of the Sutton benefice Ælfwin held the chapelry of the adjoining hamlet of Milton, one of the many manors of the abbey.[27] As a term of accepting the proposals made, the abbot stipulated that the chapel should be surrendered to the monastery, with a cash payment of £5 in addition.[28] To gain a proper idea of the bargain, we must visualize this at about £100. In the 11th century men's minds were exercised by questions to which in these days less importance is attached. The marriage of priests and the traffic in ecclesiastical benefices, furnish local illustration of practices that according to the sentiment of the age were regarded as the two great scandals of the church.

The scarcity of ready money and the extent to which the abbey had been pillaged by the Conqueror's queen Matilda, by the sheriff Froger,[29] and also under the general order of 1071 for the plundering of monasteries, may be gathered from the acute need for and the application of Ælfwin's £5. It was to be employed in redeeming a silver urn (*situla*), used for carrying exorcised water,[30] that had been pledged for 100*s*.—manifestly a large and costly utensil.

Of the position of the immediate successors to Ælfwin and his son we are without information, but of one thing we may be sure—that the patronage rights had not been acquired at great expense for the sake of leaving the profits in the hands of the local priest. The main object of the abbey was revenue, and there is no reason to suppose that the clerks of Sutton were allowed to fare better than the inferior clergy in other parts of the country. Only a bare subsistence was allotted to them, whether called vicars, stipendiary priests, or chaplains. As an easy and lucrative method of adding to the income of their houses, the art of 'sweating' was well understood by the churchmen of the period; so much so indeed that within

[27] Milton, a parish of about 1466 acres, became thereafter an independent rectory. In the *Taxatio* of 1291 it was assessed separately from Sutton at £5 p.a., and in the *Valor* of Henry VIII. was described as a rectory of the yearly value of £17 9*s*. 5*d*. Appleford appears in the same return as a chapelry of Sutton, the combined *vicarages* being valued at £18 13*s*. 4*d*. p.a.

[28] *Chron.* ii. 28.

[29] Ib. i. 485-6.

[30] Ib. ii. 41.

a hundred years of the Conquest most of the parish priests in England had become tributary to their patrons.[31] Not only at Abingdon, but throughout the country, it was the constant aim of the monastic orders to drive on the trade of annexing advowsons by almost any means open to them, for the express purpose of appropriating the profits to their own advantage. This once accomplished, the common usage was to commit the churches to clerks who, whilst accountable to the abbot for the revenues, should be responsible to the Bishop for the cure of souls.[32] In all fiscal matters the parish priests were merely stewards for the abbey.

What actually may have been the course of events at Sutton after Ælfwin's time is now beyond ascertainment, but at first it is not impossible that, following a usual practice, monks of the house were told off in turn, or by lots, or even as penance, to perform the spiritual duties. Not till the reign of Henry IV. (1402-3) were the professed religious prohibited by statute from serving cures in parish churches.[33] But it is more in accordance with the indications that Ælfwin and his son were the forerunners of a line of perpetual vicars that did not terminate till near the end of the thirteenth century, when the advowson became lost to the abbey, under circumstances that will presently appear. These perpetual vicars, there is reason to think, gradually became entitled by episcopal influence or otherwise to a settled share of the emoluments. The *Taxatio* of Pope Nicholas (p. 187) furnishes evidence that the status of the benefice had been a vicarage prior to the date of its compilation in 1291, but by then it had become consolidated with the Rectory as a result of the circumstances alluded to.

[31] Burn, i. 65. Fixed annual payments from St. Helen and S. Nicholas, Abingdon, as well as from Sutton Courtenay and other churches were confirmed to the Abbey by Hubert, Bishop of Salisbury, c. 1192-94; some of the payments being described as ancient and some as new. *Cott. Claud,* c. ix. f. 180. In preparing the *Abingdon Chronicle* for publication the editor omitted this interesting document.

[32] Burn, i 66, and *Chron. of Jocelin of Brakelond* (Clarke, 1903). p. 75.

[33] 4 Hen. IV. c. 12.

CAP. II.

Nearly three centuries after parting with the vill or manor of Sutton,[34] the abbey made an unsuccessful attempt to recover it. The Tuscan abbot Faritius, a skilled physician, had during the first decade of his tenure (1100-1110) increased the monks of Abingdon from twenty-eight in number to eighty, and designed to still further increase them to a hundred. To assist in accomplishing this he conceived the idea of regaining the vill of Sutton and its revenues.[35] Judged by his works, Faritius must be accounted one of the most enterprising and energetic of the abbey's long line of rulers. His connection with the Court was a close one, as with his countryman Grimaldus he had acted as physician to Maud,[36] queen of Henry I., on the birth of her first child in 1101. She had been sent to the royal residence at Sutton for the occasion. Making use of the opportunities afforded by that event,[37] he obtained from the queen (afterwards confirmed by the king), for the rebuilding of the abbey church, the lead and other materials of the houses and chapel erected by one Blacheman[38] on the Isle of Andersey some half a century earlier.[39] He also got back the island itself, lost to the abbey on the confiscation of Blacheman's property by the Conqueror.[40] Under the guise of purchase, the project of the astute Faritius was in effect to beg the manor, and with this proposition he went to the king in Normandy during his long stay there in 1112.[41]

[34] *Vill* and *manor* in the case of Sutton seem to have been employed as convertible terms. To describe the king's land there the chronicler uses *villa* and Domesday *manerium*.

[35] *Chron.* ii. 289.

[36] She was baptized as Eadgytha or Edith, but to suit the Norman taste her name was altered to Maud or Matilda. She was married to Henry I. 11th November, 1100, at the age of 20, and died 1st May, 1118. *D.N.B.* says (vol. 37, p. 52) that the first child '*seems* to have been born at Winchester' at the end of July or beginning of August, 1101, and died in infancy.

[37] The arguments with which these medical ecclesiastics plied the young queen are worth perusal. (*Chron.* ii. 50-51.)

[38] Ib. i. 474.

[39] Ib. ii. 50-51.

[40] Ib. ii. 52.

[41] Ib. ii. 289.

In support of his scheme, Faritius represented that the people of Sutton (*rustici*) were causing great trouble to the abbey; which was true to the extent that he had just previously (1109) been complaining to the hundred court[42] of their conduct in taking soil or clay from the abbey lands for repair of the king's mill and fishery.[43] No other troubles have been recorded. If the people of Sutton could have been heard, a contributory cause to their discontent might have been found in the diversion of the revenues of their church to the private purposes of the abbey, and perhaps also in the disappearance of their resident priest. If any were dissatisfied with his spiritual rule, control of their temporal affairs was apparently the abbot's corrective. So Faritius hoped; but plausible as his proposals may have been, they made no impression on the king, who, knowing the locality well, postponed the business till his return to England. But nothing came of it. The advocacy of the queen was no longer available, as for years she had quitted the king's dissolute court and taken refuge in a convent. Some expectation of compliance seems, however, to have been held out by the king, seeing that Faritius on his deathbed in 1117[44] directed all the money he had collected for purchase of the vill to be given to the poor.[45] The method of disposal argues that the amount was small.

Matters so rested till about 1153, when the abbot Ingulf procured from Stephen, whilst Richard de Luci was justiciar, a confirmation of the abbey's rights in Sutton church.[46] Papal confirmation had also been obtained by the same abbot from Eugenius III. in December, 1146, and again in April, 1151.[47] By the efforts of abbot Hugh the privileges at Sutton

[42] Sutton at this time gave its name to the hundred in which it was placed. By 1265 it had been joined with the hundred of Ock (*Cal. Inq. Misc.* i 190), and subsequently became entirely merged. Neither of these hundreds ever belonged to the abbey. Ock does not appear as a hundred in Domesday, but is there called 'Merecham.'

[43] Ib. ii. 117.

[44] The chronicler gives 1115 as the year of death, which appears to be an error. Cf. also *Chron.* ii. 158. The date usually accepted is 23rd Feb., 1117, as given in *A.S. Chron.* p. 220 (Edit. Gibson, 1692).

[45] Ib. ii. 290.

[46] Ib. ii. 179.

[47] Ib. ii. 192 and 199.

(with all other possessions of the abbey) were again confirmed by Richard I. in a charter promulgated at Gisors in 1190,[48] and several times afterwards ratified by succeeding kings, as the Patent Rolls attest. Notwithstanding the elaborate care taken to secure royal and papal authority for the abbey's rights and privileges, it was presently to appear that they were not proof against hostile attack or the venality of the king's judges.

Under Henry III. claims by the Pope to the patronage of English benefices had reached a pitch of unparalleled arrogance, and the country was teeming with foreigners for whom papal influence and the nepotism of the king were always seeking to find ecclesiastical preferment. The competition between the parties was such that not infrequently serious dissensions arose; one of these was at Abingdon in 1248 between pope and king, and another ten years later at Sutton between pope and abbot, when something like a pitched battle took place. After Alexander IV., by a high-handed act of usurpation, had affected to confer the church of Sutton on an Italian youth named Richard Hannibal, the abbot and convent, in exercise of their hitherto uncontradicted rights,[49] presented one Peter de Wylebi (*Willoughby*), a brother of the late abbot, who was still living, but paralysed. This took place after the feast of the Trinity, 1258 (19th May). About the same time the king was himself a visitor to the abbey,[50] and consequently so placed as to be a near observer of the events that were happening. The barons of the realm, after their recent altercations with the king, met at Oxford the following 11th June, under Simon de Montford, in an assembly subsequently known as the 'mad' parliament, and in the course of a short session virtually deposed the king and forced him to submit to the reforms aimed at by the Provisions of Oxford. During the early days of the parliament, the king was again at Abingdon[51] as the guest of the abbot, and there received tidings of the confederated barons' proceedings.

[48] Ib. ii. 247.
[49] Hal. p. 30.
[50] Hal. p. 10.
[51] Cal. Pat. ad. ann. p. 633.

The father of Hannibal was at this juncture in England, and before Whitsuntide 'had been nobly entertained by the king.' In his son's name he now demanded institution to the church. Young Hannibal himself, the papel candidate, was an absentee, and no nearer Sutton, perhaps, than Rome or some other spot in Italy. A man of mature years, Wylebi would by no means give way, and on the bishop's officers essaying institution of his rival, filled the church with armed men, made an attack on the Italians, and severely beat and wounded them.[52] Discomfited, the Italians were in the highest degree enraged against the abbey, and principally, says the *Cambridge Chronicle*, because Wylebi was brother of the abbot John. The abbot actually in office at the time was William de Newbury, who in July, 1256, had succeeded the invalided John de Blosneville.[53] It was against the latter that the wrath of the Italians was directed, doubtless in consequence of the part he had taken in 1248 in conferring the rich living of St. Helen's, Abingdon, on the king's half-brother, Aymer de Valence, in preference to the pope's nominee. For this offence Blosneville in his old age and infirmity had been dragged to the papal court at Lyons and heavily fined.[54] But even after the lapse of years it would seem that his loyalty to the king had been neither forgotten nor forgiven.

Wylebi's stout defence was not destined to succeed, but the dispute was of such proportions as to require for its settlement the intervention of no less a personage than John Mansel, a former keeper of the great seal to Henry III., a powerful ecclesiastic, and still a prime favourite at court. After his arrival at Abingdon, two days were occupied in quelling the animosity of the parties, when the church was by his counsel surrendered to the Italians. Hannibal was

[52] Hal. p. 10.

[53] Blosville's name before entering religion seems to have been Wylebi. A Robert de Wylebi figures as witness in one of the Christ's Hospital deeds (Abingdon) of about 1240 (No. 9), and in *Testa de Nevill* as holder of 1½ knights' fees from the abbey in Sunningwell, Cumnor, Garford, &c. They were a local family apparently.

[54] *Chronica Majora*, v. 468.

instituted (by proxy) and Wylebi retired.[55] So for the moment the contest ended; but the abbot's troubles were only beginning. The Sutton benefice by this time had clearly become valuable and in consequent keen demand; without the prospect of gain there would hardly have been so much ecclesiastical scrambling for it.

The abbot William de Newbury was a weak man of irregular life, compelled soon after to resign,[56] which may have had its effect on what at first sight looks like a tame surrender. But there may have been deeper causes. Monks as a class were fond of law, and rarely shrank from indulging in it when opportunity offered, whether at Abingdon or elsewhere. To the experienced eye of Mansel[57]—a colossal pluralist of princely income, reputed as chancellor to have presented himself with more than three hundred benefices[58]—a survey of the abbot's title may have revealed possibilities of future trouble that it were well to forestall by submission to and timely peace with Rome. Such perhaps may have been thought the course of wisdom at a moment when no recourse to the royal authority could be had, the king being practically deposed and the government of the country in the hands of the great barons. Whether a politic desire to earn favour by recognition of the pope's pretensions to be accounted superior lord of all English benefices were the determining factor, or some other motive, cannot now be said. But it is certain that before the end of 1258 negotiations had been completed, and the abbot had deemed it worth while to take a 'farm' of the church and its revenues from the papal agents

[55] Hal. p. 10.

[56] Gulielmus Newbery qui resignavit abbatiam ad declinandam invidiam multorum pro in continencia sua; uxorem tamen habuit apud Littlemore monialem sub Henrico III. (E.H.R. xxvi. 730, quoting a lost Chronicle of Abingdon).

[57] Mansel was again at Abingdon about the end of August, 1259, in company with the queen, prince Edward and his wife, and Margaret queen of Scotland (*Hal.* p. 10), and later for a short time was again chancellor. It was due to his efforts that Urban IV. issued a bull releasing the king from the Provisions of Oxford which he had several times solemnly sworn to observe. Mansel afterwards fell into disgrace and died in France, January, 1265, in great poverty.

[58] Campbell says *seven* hundred in his *Lives of the Chancellors*, i. 122.

(*accepit ecclesiam de Sotton ad firmam*).[59] The price demanded was 110 marks, or £73 6*s*. 8*d*., representing over £1,000 of modern money. The largeness of the sum proclaims the store set by the abbey on retention of the church.

A similar course had been pursued at Abingdon at some date before 1225, when St. Helen's church was received to farm from Stephen de Columna, sub-deacon of the pope.[60] In both cases appropriation by papal indulgence followed (after a further heavy payment), but with widely different results.

[59] Hal. p. 10. [60] *Salisbury Charters*, p. 168.

(*To be continued.*)

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The Parish Registers of St. Lawrence's, Reading

By Mrs. Cope.

MANY years ago, under that astute antiquary, Bishop Stubbs, at Oxford, every encouragement was given to transcribe and thus preserve those unique documents, the Parish Registers. If only those who oppose transcription really understood that these were the only records of the kind, surely something more would be done.