

bearing the Cap of Maintenance. On the King's left stand other Officers of State, the Sword-bearer and Garter King of Arms, all standing on the cloth of state. The group in the extreme corner includes the sons of peers, foremost of whom are the two half-brothers of the King, Edmund and Jasper, who were created Earls at this Parliament.

Puritan Ministers at Wokingham.

By ARTHUR T. HEELAS.

THE seventeenth century was a period of ecclesiastical strife. On the one side was Puritanism, on the other what we should call to-day Anglo-Catholicism, of which Archbishop Laud was the leading exponent. In Wokingham Puritanism was predominant, if we may judge from what is known of some of its ministers. Among them was William Benn, 'preacher for some time at Okingham in Berks,' says Calamy. This must have been in the earlier years of the century, for in 1629, Benn became rector of 'All Hallows,' Dorchester, where he remained until he was ejected in 1662. He was 'an eminent devine, famous in all the West of England.' 'He was bred up in Queen's College, Oxon.' Calamy also mentions two other Puritan ministers who preached at Wokingham for a short time. These were the inseparable friends, John Whitlock and William Reynolds, afterwards ministers at Nottingham. About 1647, they were living at Leighton in Bedfordshire. 'Okingham in Berkshire being vacant, they undertook to supply both Leiton and that place, by turns. When Okingham was supply'd at the end of half a year, they afterwards did the same between Leiton and Ailesbury.' John Whitlock ¹ writing of Reynolds ²

The Rev. A. G. Matthews has been of great assistance in the research work required for these Notes. I am grateful to him for his kindness and the trouble he has taken.

¹ John, son of Richard Whitlock, Merchant of London, Emmanuel Coll., Cambs, B.A. 1646, M.A. 1649. Jointly with W. Reynolds, Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham, 1651-62. They were both ejected in 1662.

² W. Reynolds, joint Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham, 1651-62. Ejected 1662.

mentions this fact and the cause of the vacancy, and also throws some light on the character of the incumbent of Wokingham, John Bateman.³ He states that 'in spring 1647, the town of Okingham in Berkshire (where my mother and a brother of mine had a house and lived in the summer-time)⁴ was in present want of a minister on this occasion. Mr. John Bateman had been their pastor, a solid, learned, godly minister, and a very profitable practical teacher, whose labours God had wonderfully blessed in the conversion and edification of many souls (for there were many godly persons in that place, and several that were very eminent Christians both for gifts and graces) : and I have special occasion to mention this faithful servant of Christ, Mr. Bateman, with honour and great thankfulness to God for him, God making him graciously his instrument, to work upon me and do me much good while I went to school there.'

'In the year 1642, there being then, or soon after, garrisons at Reading, Hen(l)ey and Basing-House, he was driven with his family from Okingham, and soon after placed in a good living at Little Munden in Hertfordshire ; yet at the end of the Wars as his former people at Okingham were earnest for his return to them, so he resolved it, but could not effect it till the latter end of the year 1647. Upon this account Okingham wanting a supply and my brother Reynolds and I being in spring 1647 invited to supply the place, till their former minister above-mentioned could return, we undertook between us the supplying of Leighton and Okingham too (though thirty miles distant) for half a year, taking our turns each of us two Lords days in one place and two in the other ; there his (Reynolds) ministerial

3 J. Bateman signed Petition of Hertfordshire Ministers, 1646, as of Little Munden. (Urnick : *Nonconformity in Herts*, 124).

4 The family lived at the 'Beches,' Wokingham. An ancestor, John Whitlock, Lord of the Manor of Beches, Wokingham, by his marriage with an heiress of the De la Beches, near the end of the reign of Henry VI, became possessed of the Manor. He was an ancestor of Sir James Whitlock, a Judge of the Court of King's Bench in the reigns of James I and Charles I, and one of the signatories of the Ordinances granted to the town. Another member of the family was Sir Bulstrode Whitlock, Lord Keeper for the Commonwealth, who was appointed Constable of Windsor Castle and Custodian of the Forest in 1649. See *Memories of Bulstrode Whitlock*, by R. H. Whitlock.

labours, through God's blessing, were attended with good success. During that time, he had an invitation to a good living, Binfield two miles from Oakingham, but he did not accept the offer ; we were both unwilling to part, and indeed, being young, not willing to take upon us a pastoral charge."⁵

Our next information as to matters ecclesiastical in Wokingham dates from some years later, when episcopacy had been suppressed and the Church was under the management of the Parliamentary Committees and Commissioners of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Manuscripts preserved in the Archbishop's library at Lambeth give some light on what was happening at the parish church during the Interregnum.

On January, 11th, 1654-5, the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers 'being informed that the rectory of Wokingham is out of lease the Trustees do appoint to let the same on the 18th instant, unless Mr. Barker, the present possessor of the said tithes, shall offer good cause to the contrary on the same day.' There is nothing further to show what happened in the matter.⁶ The next entry is dated February 10th, 1656-7. It shows that on October 11th, 1655, the Trustees made a grant of £23 13s. 4d. out of the tithes of Wokingham, to the then incumbent, John Bateman. He had since died and his 'relict' Ellinor had been bearing the expenses of supplying the cure, the Trustees therefore ordered the arrears of the grant they had made to be paid to the Executors and Administrators of the late Mr. Bateman. This was not the first augmentation of his salary which Mr. Bateman had received. In 1649, his name appears among sundry ministers and lecturers upon whom augmentations were settled out of the proceeds of the sale of the Dean and Chapter lands. His allowance was £13 6s. 8d. paid every six months.⁷

5 *Life of Rev. William Reynolds*, by Rev. John Whitlock, 1698.

6 The lease was granted to Thos. Barker of Chiswick in 1650, his heirs and assignes, etc., for the annual rental of £26. 'If the sayde Rent be unpaid by the Space of two months being lawfully required then a Re-entry and the grant to be voyde.' See copy of Rectory Deed in the possession of the Rector, the Rev. B. Long.

7 Shaws' *Hist. of the English Church*, II, 524.

Bateman's successor was Samuel Stancliffe. He was the son of John Stancliffe, a draper of South Oworm, Yorks, had been admitted a sizar at St. John's, Camb., April 7th, 1648, when he was 17 years old. After taking his degrees at Cambridge, he was incorporated at Oxford, July 10th, 1655. The Triers approved him as minister of Wokingham, March 20th, 1656-7. A few days later the Trustees voted him an augmentation of £30 per an. (1004-47). A year later they increased the amount by £20, but by that time Stancliffe was leaving Wokingham, and on April 2nd, 1658, was admitted rector of Stanmore, Middlesex, whence he was ejected in 1662.

The minister who took his place at Wokingham came from the county to which Stancliffe had gone, he was Rowland Stedman, minister of Hanwell since July, 1654, if not before. (997-2-58.) Calamy gives him among his silenced ministers as being turned out in 1660, to make room for the episcopal minister ejected by Parliament. This is an error for on July 18th, 1659, the Committee for Plundered Ministers ordered that the sum of £50 per an. should be paid to him as minister of Wokingham.

On September 22nd, 1659, the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers made an order that of this £50, the sum of £23.13s. 4d. should be paid out of the rents and profits of the tithes of Wokingham, and the remainder from those of the tithes of Steventon, Berks. (x.) Possibly Rowland was the Mr. Stedman, whom in a letter of August 22nd, 1659, the parishioners of St. Lawrence's Reading, invited to become their Vicar.⁸ If so he did not yield to their persuasions but remained at Wokingham until in 1662 he was forced to resign by the Act of Uniformity. He therefore left Wokingham and became chaplain to Philip, Lord Wharton, the friend and patron of many of those who refused to conform.⁹

The Act of Uniformity. On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, a great reaction against Puritanism set in, followed two years later by the passing of the Act of Uniformity. This new Act ushered in an era of persecution for all who could not, or

⁸ Coates' *Reading*, p. 195.

⁹ For further information see *Dic. of Nat. Biog.*

would not, accept the doctrine and constitution of the Established Church. Under this Act about 2,000 incumbents were required to resign their livings, thus Puritanism was driven out of the Church into nonconformity. Of the ministers thus ejected a small group settled at Wokingham, where they were able to remain unmolested although they kept schools and held Nonconformist meetings, in fact the town became quite a strong Presbyterian centre. How they contrived to do such things is somewhat of a mystery. The Bishop's licence was necessary for the keeping of a school and careful search was generally made for the existence of illicit schools kept by Nonconformist ministers.

In 1665, further trouble for the silenced ministers was brought about by the passing of the Five Mile Act, which forbade them to live within that distance of a corporate town unless they took an oath which the majority of them refused. Although Wokingham at this time was a corporate town they still remained unmolested in it. It looks as if the group at Wokingham had some powerful friends on the spot who saw to it that they were not interfered with. This is rendered the more likely from a piece of evidence belonging to the year 1669, when Archbishop Sheldon, for his own information, ordered an enquiry to be made in every parish throughout the country as to what conventicles, or Nonconformist meetings, were being held. The return for Wokingham reports three conventicles, two were Presbyterian, attended by '200 or more, some of the better sort.' In connection with these two conventicles the following are mentioned. 'John Planner, Citizen of London, the King's Brewer; Mr. Robert Whitlock, merchant; Mr. H. Montague, Schoolmaster; both widow Hawes¹⁰; Nath Hawthorne, tanner, Jo. Griffin,

¹⁰ The two widows, Elizabeth and Alice Hawes, were members of a well-known local family, who obtained possession of the manor of Beaches from the Whitlock family towards the end of the seventeenth century. In 1729, Richard Hawe, brewer, of Richmond, Surrey, died leaving the manor of Beaches to his wife for life with remainder in equal shares to her six nieces. (*Berks, Bucks & Oxon Arch'l Journ.*, xv., 27.) He also bequeathed eight acres of arable land in Langborough Field, Wokingham, upon trust, from the revenue of which bread was to be purchased for the poor of the town and parish, irrespective of them being members of the Church of England or Protestant Dissenters. (*Charities of Wokingham*, p. 131.)

tayler.'¹¹ The teachers at these gatherings were Benj. Perkins and Thomas Gardiner.

The third conventicle was Anabaptists, they were said to number only ten or twelve in all, 'most meane persons,' their teachers were John Griffin and H. Dearing.

Thomas Gardiner was rector of Farnham Royal, Bucks, from which he was ejected. Calamy says, 'he removed to Ockingham where he boarded eight or nine youths at a time and taught them grammar learning. There lived there at the same time with him, Mr. Edward Perkins, Mr. Benjamin Perkins, his brother, and Mr. Hook, all Nonconformists as well as himself. They all of them kept up a good correspondence with Mr. Thomas Hedges who conformed, and was minister of a chapel that belonged to an almshouse, near the town.'¹² Mr. Gardiner was one of eminent piety. He was a great grammarian, and master in critical and all school learning; and a very excellent preacher and liver.' The parish register shows that he was buried at Wokingham on March 14th, 1686-7.

Of those mentioned above, Edward Perkins had been ejected from the vicarage of Willesden, Middlesex. He was probably, and his brother too, a native of Wokingham, in any case their father, Edward Perkins, was living at Wokingham when his son Edward matriculated from Magdalen, Oxford, December 4th, 1629, at the age of 17, and was still resident there when on December 6th, 1639, his son Benjamin matriculated from the same College. According to the parish register they were both buried at Wokingham, Benjamin on July 31st, 1676, and Edward on August 5th, 1687. Benjamin had been a near neighbour of Gardiner's in Bucks, being Vicar of Burnham, from whence he was ejected. John Hooke had been ousted from the living of Kingsworthy, Hants. The first entry in the existing parish register is of the baptism of his daughter, Mary, on September 29th, 1674. He afterwards removed to Basingstoke.

¹¹ Benjamin Griffin, a member of the family, bequeathed 50/- per annum, payable out of land near Star Lane, Wokingham, for the maintenance of the Baptist minister of Wokingham and to the Baptist minister of Reading. (*Charities of Wokingham*, p. 109.)

¹² Lucas' Hospital.

Another of the group was William Segary, ejected from his studentship at Christ Church, Oxford. Calamy states that he was a 'good disputant' when he left Oxford he retired to his native town of Wokingham, where 'he taught school and died very old.' He died on December 12th, 1697, and was buried at the west end of the church-yard where a plain free stone tomb with a Latin inscription once marked the spot.¹³ Thomas Hodges was rector of Souldern, a zealous Presbyterian during the Commonwealth, held several College appointments at Cambridge, chaplain of All Soul's College, Oxford, and when the Act of Uniformity was passed he resigned his living and presented the advowson to his College.¹⁴ He then retired to Wokingham and eventually conformed and became chaplain of Lucas's Hospital, he was its second master. He was also an able writer and published several religious papers.

The Declaration of Indulgence. In 1671-2, Charles II put a temporary stop to the persecution of Nonconformists by issuing a Declaration of Indulgence. By this, Nonconformists were enabled to take out licences for persons teaching and for places for religious meetings; these were usually private houses. Under this Indulgence, on April 30th, 1672, Edward Perkins was licensed to be a Presbyterian teacher in the house of Elizabeth Haw in Wokingham, and the house was licensed for the purpose on the day following.¹⁵

On May 13th, Benjamin Perkins was licenced as a Presbyterian teacher, and on the same day his house, and also that of Alice Haw, as Presbyterian meeting places.

The following year Parliament met and insisted on the King withdrawing his act of clemency, carried out without Parliamentary sanction, but we do not hear that this little colony of Presbyterians was disturbed.

The two Perkins' mentioned above appear to belong to a branch of the Perkins family who inherited West Court, Finchampstead, a family of great antiquity, dating from the end

¹³ Ashmole : *Antiquities of Berks*, I, xlii.

¹⁴ Among the records of St. John's College, Cambridge.

¹⁵ Lyon Turner : *Original Records*, I, 453.

of the fourteenth century, and extending down to the nineteenth. Most of the family were staunch Roman Catholics, and in their house at Ufton was concealed a priest during the period of persecution against the Catholics in Elizabeth's reign.¹⁶

One of the principal supporters of the Presbyterian movement in the town was Bartholomew Hall, of Barkham.

Some years later the Nonconformists were re-enforced by a new arrival, this was James Prince, described by Calamy as 'a gentleman born and of good family. In good repute both for learning and piety, but young when ejected' from the chapelry of Kingsbury, Middlesex. He is described as 'armiger' in the record of his matriculation from Wadham College, Oxford, October 18th, 1652. He took his B.A. and M.A. The first definite evidence of his residing in the town is the baptism of his son James, which took place at the parish church on August 31st, 1677, his other children were baptised there in 1678 and 1682.

He must have become the minister of the Presbyterians of the town after the deaths of Gardiner and the two Perkins brothers, as we find when the Toleration Act was passed and Nonconformity was legalised, a survey was taken of all Presbyterian meetings and their ministers between 1690 and 1692, it states 'that Mr. James Prince, Att Ockingham, has a fixed Congregation, has but £10 per ann. A Londoner born, about 60 years old, they allow very little.'¹⁷ He was buried in the parish church-yard on January 15th, 1707-8.

The Presbyterians. In the report of 1715, the congregation was estimated at about 200, it included among that number nine gentlemen, eight yeomen, fifteen tradesmen, five farmers and twenty-two county voters. In 1772, the interest in the Presbyterian movement had sunk very low but revived considerably under the ministry of Richard Davis for a time. After the founding of the Baptist church in the town in 1778, the movement gradually dwindled down and eventually ceased to exist in 1802. The meeting house appears to have been

¹⁶ Sharpe's *History of Ufton Court*, 223.

¹⁷ Gordon : *Freedom after Ejection*, p. 7.

situated on the site of St. Paul's Rectory, but all trace of it has long since disappeared.

The following names and dates are taken from the minutes of the Presbyterian Fund Board¹⁸ which throughout the period, from 1718 to 1802, made grants of £5 yearly to the meeting-house. The last grant was made on November 8th, 1802.

Wokingham Presbyterian Meeting-house.

Ministers.

1677 to 1707. James Prince. Died January, 1707.

1715 „ 1728. John Meers. Died June, 1728.

1728 „ 1729. Robert Mackewin.

1729 „ 1756. Joseph Catkutt.

1756 „ 1774. John Williams

1772 „ 1793. Richard Davies.

1793 „ 1802. William Sutton. From Hackney.

¹⁸ The Presbyterian Fund Board Minutes are kept at Dr. William's Library. The Fund Board was founded in 1690, for the assistance of ministers, and the names of the Wokingham ministers appear in its Minutes as they were in receipt of a small yearly grant. The conventicle particulars are printed in Lyon Turner's *Original Records*, vol. i, 125.

Notes and Queries.

NOTES.

BOWSEY HILL, WARGRAVE.

The new broad highway which the Berkshire County Council propose to make from a point near Charvil Lane, Sonning, to the Rest and be Thankful seat in the parish of Wargrave, will bring the traveller a little view of that interesting wooded eminence, shaped like a gigantic molehill, known as 'Bowsey Hill,' geologically a high outlier of the Reading beds with a capping of London clay. An excellent view of it may be obtained from Charvil Lane coming out of the village of Sonning. In these days it is not very well known, owing to its comparative inaccessibility. No roads go over it and it remains a delightful summer retreat, far removed from the noise and dust of the London highway, in whose leafy fastnesses an hour or two may be spent by the seeker after rural quiet. In the winter time