

The Church during the Commonwealth in the Abingdon Deanery.

By WILLIAM BRADBROOKE.

THE period 1640-1660, when the kingdom was disordered by Civil War and subject to the Puritan domination of the Commonwealth, was one of trouble and persecution for the Church of England. The amount and intensity of persecution varied with local conditions; parishes not in the main battle areas show slighter signs of trouble than those within regions where fighting was more general; these latter show evidence of disturbance and demoralised social routine. In 1640 the attack on the church began by Parliament making itself the judge in church affairs; Convocation was assailed and Canon Law declared not binding. In 1641, commissions were appointed in each county to govern church matters, ritual and decency in the conduct of worship were proscribed and church furniture plundered. In 1642, the government of the church by the Archbishops and Bishops was abolished, as were Deans and Chapters. The churchwardens ceased to 'present' to the Archdeacons forthwith, as may be seen by the absence of returns in the Archdeaconry Papers. Hundreds of clergymen were then deprived and imprisoned and dubbed 'scandalous.' In 1644, there were general confiscation and destruction, and of course mis-appropriation, of organs, stained glass windows, surplices, fonts, roods, crosses, etc. The Book of Common Prayer was forbidden, and its use made penal, even in private. About 8,000 clergymen were evicted, of whom only about 800 were restored to their livings in 1662. The list of authorities at the end of this paper provides evidence of a great deal of the above, but not for every parish. The eviction of the clergy from their livings caused the breakdown or cessation of parochial registration. The government, when they recognised the evil, did at least one good thing by legislating for its correction. The Act of 1653 ordered the election in every parish of a lay 'register,'

who when sworn and approved by a magistrate had his appointment entered in the register, that is if the act was obeyed. The act does not mention baptisms ; births only were to be registered. The ' register ' was to receive 12d. for each wedding and 4d. for each entry of birth or burial. Such an official is now called a ' registrar ' ; this is a modern solecism ; no such word is found in the older statutes nor in Johnson's Dictionary. There was no evading marriage by a justice-of-the-peace, but in other respects the act was very generally not observed, as will be shown in the following account of the Abingdon rural deanery.

At the present time there are twenty parishes in the deanery ; of these four are modern formations out of larger parishes. Of the sixteen old parishes, three, viz. Drayton, Fyfield and Besselsleigh have lost their oldest registers. The thirteen ' old registers ' (two in Abingdon) indicate signs of local trouble and disturbance. Only one, St. Nicholas, Abingdon, appears to have been continuously kept. In four others the record appears to have been regularly kept, but the regularity of the writing, in one hand, and the same inking, warrant the conclusion that the record was written up after 1660 from the collected information and memoranda of the incumbent. In some registers, e.g. Milton, there is a note saying that information was collected after 1660. In 1653 the order to elect a lay ' register ' and record it in the parish register was not obeyed in any of the parishes in the deanery. There is no record in any register of such an appointment ; a ' register ' may have been appointed in some of the parishes but he functioned in very few ; for in five registers there is no registration during 1653-60 as was probably the case in the four previously mentioned as written up. The injunction to register ' births ' was ignored in seven parishes and only rigidly obeyed in the united parishes of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford where no baptisms are entered. Infant baptism was not wholly neglected but took place privately ; this custom (necessary during the Commonwealth) became frequent after all necessity had ceased, because ' of the pride of women.' Some register entries run ' born and baptised.' Though all marriages

THE CHURCH DURING THE COMMONWEALTH IN THE
ABINGDON DEANERY.

May 1643 53

1 m Walter a man

2 A Paulson

3 Robert from a man

16 from a man

20 John, married

21 A Paulson from the log

24 widow may

24 of Henry, father

25 man, wife of the widow

26 m Paulson A man

28 Thomas of the wife of William, father

28 John, father

30 married the wife of Richard, father

31 A Paulson child kept from a man

31 A Paulson that was, father

31 Robert, father

31 of John, father

June 1643

2 widow, father

2 Humphrey, father

2 the wife of Arthur, father

4 widow, father

4 m John, father

Page from the Parish Register of St. Helen's,
Abingdon, 1643.

were before a justice-of-the-peace, mention of this is only made in the registers of Sutton Courtenay and St. Nicholas, Abingdon. In several parishes there were no weddings during this time; possibly the couples resorted to Abingdon, as the town afforded facilities for the publication of banns on three successive market days, as the law then required. Not one of the livings in the deanery was undisturbed during the war and Commonwealth. There is evidence of sequestration or eviction of the incumbent in six parishes, and probably in some others. At Cumnor it looks as if Mr. Langford either managed to retain his vicarage or if evicted, returned at the Restoration. The same may be said of Mr. Reade at Marcham. At Radley, where a royalist family, Stonehouse, owned the manor, the vicar, Mr. John Herbert held the living all through the disturbed time and, if we may judge by the register, continued the church practice of baptismal and wedding services. The Churchwardens' Presentments to the Archdeacon show something of the religious, irreligious, and moral life of the times. The 'moral' condition is perhaps well described by one presentation which runs, "the morales of the people tho not so good as they ought to be are not worse than usual." Inquisition into private misconduct and religious opinion was a feature of the Puritan domination, an influence which continued years after it was politically overthrown. Non-conformists were numerous in the deanery, especially in Abingdon, where long lists of named absentees from church were compiled by the churchwardens. The conclusion is that neither of the two parties was quite able permanently to suppress the other. Though the church suffered severely, its enemies were more successful in robbing, than in governing. Though the church recovered supremacy in the deanery at the Restoration its power was far from absolute. In one church only are the Royal Arms, viz. in Sutton Courtenay, where over the chancel arch are the Arms of Charles II.

ABINGDON. ST. HELEN'S CHURCH.

The register begins in 1538 and is contained in several books; the third of these books contains entries from 1640 to 1655; then there is a gap to 1665. From 1640 to 1653 there were five or six

marriages in each year. In 1654 the number greatly increased, there being 57 marriages, and in 1655, 77. This sudden increase in weddings at Abingdon coincides with a decrease in the surrounding parishes. The Act of 1653, which forbade marriages by the clergy and ordered marriage by a justice-of-the-peace, must have caused couples from the villages to seek legal union at Abingdon. An instance follows, "1657. June 26, William Thatcher late of Blewbury was married to Mary Fisher of Great (F)alow, they having been married three years before by the minister was forced by the Law to be married by the Justice Mr. Bolton." Though no justice is mentioned in the register, it is certain that justices officiated in Abingdon during 1653-60. Baptisms are recorded in much diminished number after 1642 and cease entirely after 1655. The first 'borne' is entered in 1644 and then 'bornes' predominate in the few entries. Among the burials in these years there are many 'crysom' children, showing that though public baptism was in abeyance the rite was administered privately.

Burials were very numerous during 1640-44, as during the greater part of this time the King's forces held Abingdon and garrisoned it. There were 115 burials in 1642 and 184 burials in 1643, the last includes 66 soldiers, killed in action. This is never mentioned, though a good deal of fighting took place round the town which was evacuated by the royal forces early in 1644. During this period the register is badly kept, badly written and very defective. There is no signature of a minister, nor justice of the peace, nor record of the appointment of a 'register.' At the end of 1653 is a semi-illegible note, "... Bodington did take these accounts"; he may have been the elected register. "1656. July 27. Clericus noster idoneus, nuptiarum parscriptor fidelis, et conscius meus amantissimus, Thomas Tomkins, sepultus erat vigesimo nono (sic) die mensis Julii Anno a partu virginis 1656." Apparently Mr. Tomkins was the 'register' of St. Helen's, as no mention is made of him in the Report on Plundered Ministers. Christopher Newstead paid first fruits on 17 October, 5 Charles; there is no mention of him in the register. He may have been deprived of the living.

The Report on Plundered Ministers records, 10 June, 1646, that the yearly sum of £50 is be paid out of the impropriate tithes within the parish of St. Helen sequestered from Humphrey Hyde and other delinquents, towards the increase of the maintenance of the minister of Abingdon; the vicarage being worth but £20 per ann. The above grant was reported fruitless in 1647. In lieu thereof the yearly rent £22 9s. 2½d. out of the impropriate rectory of Buckland was paid for the increase of the minister's maintenance. Both the above grants proving ineffectual, on 14 Jan. 1647-8, it was ordered that £50 be paid from the rents of the Dean and Chapter of Windsor out of their possessions in Newbury, Emburne and Greenham.

" April 14th, 1649. Mr. Pendarvis minister of ' Hellens in Abingdon ' having received little benefit there being more than a years arrears. This committee taking into consideration the great consequence of maintaining an able and constant minister in the town of Abingdon, and very considerable and very much impoverished by the late warres," payment was ordered from other sources forthwith to Mr. Pendarvis or his wife, or to Mr. William Stanbridge.

" 1650 October 2. Mr. Tickle a godly and painefull minister is now minister of ' Hellens ' ever since 25 Dec. last, having succeeded Mr. John Pendarvis."

The Abingdon Council Records contain this: " 19 Dec. 1660. It is ordered that Dr. Langley and Mr. Cornish the nowe pretended lecturers be from henceforth dismissed from preaching the lecture within this Borough, and that their exhibition forth of the chamber doe cease upon S. Thomas day next."

CHURCHWARDENS' PRESENTMENTS TO THE ARCHDEACON.

William Clemson and Richard Blesset were churchwardens for Abingdon in 1640. They presented four recusants, eight excommunicated persons and three for immorality; also those that had not communicated " this Easter are to be presented the next munday." They further reported, " Drummers stooke up in the churchyard of St. Helen's on May day in the fore noon and afterwards in tyme of Divine service; the sonne of Jo. Coles beate by the drum(mers) in the afternoone." In 1665

James Eglesfield was vicar. The vicarage house and all its out-houses etc. were demolished in the war. In 1668 " Timothy Crake and Jno. Wright misbehave during sermon." The vicar presents the churchwardens for not presenting about 800 parishioners for not attending church and receiving the sacrament for four years ; and women refused to be churched because they have not their right pew. 1669. Church and accessories in good order. Timothy Crake and others are habitual drunkards and immoral. Presented Consolation Fox and many others as non-communicants ; and a list of 60 named absentees from church service. During the next ten years many presentments for refusing to pay easter dues, church rates etc. In 1684 the seats in the north and south aisles are out of repair and have been for several years. More than 200 names of absentees from church presented.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, ABINGDON.

The register dates from 1538. Book no. 2 contains entries from 1622 to 1703 ; the record is continuous, the writing varies in quality but is good for the most part. There is no mention of the appointment of a ' register ' in 1653, and the register is nowhere signed. The baptisms averaged about a dozen a year up to 1643 when the average dropped to three or four ; after the Act of 1653 the number of entries rose to about a dozen, but the record is ' borne and bapt.' In 1653 is the note " Since the new Act of Parliament came forth for registering the birth of children." Marriages were from four to seven annually ; burials were from eight to ten annually.

The continuity of the record and the baptismal entries show that church practice was not extinguished in Abingdon. John Stone paid first fruits 1 June, 11 Charles. On 2 August 1643 " Mr. John Stone parson of this parish was buried." In 1641 the churchwardens presented Alexander Fisher a recusant. In 1673 " we know of no papists." In 1676 there were two reputed papists.

APPLETON.

The register begins in 1569. The entries fall off in 1641. For two years there is no entry and then from 1644 baptisms are

continuous, about five annually until 1654 when 'born' occurs mixed with baptism. Burials are few, only 12 between 1644 and 1660; the only marriage entries during that period are four in 1651. There is no record of the appointment of a 'register.'

"Willm Dickenson" who signed the register from 1619, signs for the last time in 1641. In 1644, Mr. Forman, Rector, signs; and in 1647, Mr. Martyn, Rector, signs. The last two were probably intruders, as perhaps were the following:

1656. Anthony the sonne of Anthony Stephens, Min(str) of Appleton was borne the 11th of february. 1657. Exit Mr. Stevens March 1. 1658. Mr. Maine, Rector. 1661. Edw. Rogers, Rector. Jo. Edwardes, Cura. Peter Yate compounded for first fruits 7 July 18 Eliz. (1576); he was buried 2 January 1619.

William Dickenson compounded 13 Febr. 17 James (1620). He was Rector of Appleton and Besilsleigh; was sent for into custody by the House as a delinquent, and perhaps afterwards sequestrated. He may have been the William, son of Thomas Dickenson, a servant of Eton College, who had been chaplain to William, Earl of Pembroke; was admitted B.D. of Merton Coll. 24 Nov. 1619, and "hath a sermon and perhaps other things extant." (Walker). 1665-1672. The churchwardens presented about 50 non-church goers; and two people for not providing for the Rogation perambulation.

1677. "Wee present Henry Cowdry our pretended parish clerke and that he doth retain divers of the church ornaments and goods in his possession and converts them to his own use and refuses to deliver them to the churchwardens. He can neither read nor write and is not sufficient to supply the place of a clarke." Also three people presented for abusing the churchwardens in church.

BESSELSLEIGH.

There is no register before 1689. As the parish was mostly the property of the Speaker of the House of Commons, William Lenthall, it may be supposed that the Puritan influence prevailed. The Speaker restored the little church and his son, Sir John

Lenthall, (knighted by Cromwell) is buried in the chancel. In 1660, and for a few years, the churchwardens presented annually several people for not attending church, or not taking the sacrament at Easter.

CUMNOR.

The old register extends from 1559 to 1682. There is no hiatus; from 1635 to 1679 the record is well kept in the good hand writing of Mr. John Langford. During the disturbed period the regularity of writing and inking warrants the supposition that it was written up in 1660 from private notes. There is no mention of an elected 'register,' no wedding by a J.P., baptisms only are recorded with the names of both parents. Thomas Drope compounded for first fruits on 28 Nov. 9 Charles (1634); he died 27 Feb. and was buried 1 March 1644. John Langford compounded for first fruits 18 May 23 Charles (1647); he must have died about 1680; there is no record of his burial as the register was not kept for three or four years, (the only imperfection) perhaps due to illness of the vicar. In 1641, the churchwardens presented '*omnia bene*'; in 1665 they report a bell broken; and in 1666 some lead stolen from the church, and a few absentees from public worship.

DRAYTON.

There is no old register here. In 1641 the churchwardens presented, "the church is in good repair, windows well glazed, pavement good, the beles c frame in good order." There were 10 quakers and one papist, all excommunicate. In 1665 there were several presentments for being absent from church and not paying tithes and dues.

FYFIELD.

The old register was destroyed when the church was burned in 1893. In 1641 the churchwardens presented '*omnia bene*.' In 1665 the churchwardens presented, "we haue a sufficient parrish clerke that is of honest life and conversation; able to performe his duty; as of reading writing and singing and he was chosen by the minister." There is a register book. "We have no settled minister but are supplied from S. John's Coll. until someone accepts the cure."

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE.

The old register contains entries from 1539 to 1666 with many gaps. There are no weddings recorded from 1638 to 1663; and neither are the baptisms and burials regularly entered. From 1645 to 1657 there are 21 baptismal entries evidently recorded irregularly after an interval from notes. 'Born' is not used, except after 1662, when on a page apart from the baptisms, four 'borns' are written, one for each of the years 1662, 5, 7 and 8. No burial entries from 1644 to 1663. No mention of a parish 'register' nor signature of an incumbent. Henry Warner compounded for first fruits 26 May 18 Charles (1643). 1661. Churchwardens presented that "there is wanting a surplice." 1665. There was one recusant and some absentees.

MILTON.

The oldest register contains entries from 1650 to 1723. On the first leaf is written, "George Hinde ye present incumbent"; and lower down "Elizabeth Hinde." On the next four pages are written with large intervals, fifteen baptismal entries between 1650 and 1660; six being the children of Thomas and Ann Scarlett. The first burial entry is in 1662, as is the first marriage. The handwriting is evidently that of the rector, George Hinde, as it ceases at his death in 1672. It looks as if Mr. Hinde started the register in 1662, but collected such baptisms as he was able which had taken place during the Commonwealth, the spaces between each entry show that he hoped to fill them with others. The date of baptism and names of both parents are recorded. There is no mention of a parish 'register,' nor any evidence of an intruder; the absence of any record may be regarded as indicating local disturbance. Francis Sayer compounded for first fruits on 10 Febru. 1 Charles. (1625). No evidence as to his future. In 1640 and 1641 the churchwardens presented to the Archdeacon, "Sisly King for refraining the church, and Francis Yeatman for refusing the church. Our great bell is at fault, the third bell is recast." 1641. "we promise from henceforth no man shall teach school nor any parents shall fail in sending their children to catechism nor any of ye parishioners absent themselves from church as formally by the approbation of

our minister you shall have information." 1665. " I doe present myself for not having my chancell in due repair "; also presents Robert Keat, the churchwarden, for not doing his duty in seeing after absentees from church etc. and for not coming to church himself. Geo. Hinde. Rector. Mr. Hinde's appearance and activities in 1662, seem to show that an intruder was evicted. His wife died in 1665. He married again and had three sons born, the first baptised in 1669. His widow died in 1699.

MARCHAM.

The register begins 1658 and goes on to 1804. It is well kept and as it is in one hand-writing to 1677 and has the appearance of having been written at one time, it may have been written up from notes or a private record ; baptisms only are recorded, no ' borns.' There is no wedding before a J.P. nor record of the election of a ' register ' ; and no signature of a vicar. Thomas Hall compounded for first fruits on 19 Nov. 1634. There is no other mention of him. John Reade compounded for first fruits on 14 Feb. 1652. It seems that Reade held the living through the disturbed time, but he was re-appointed in 1660. William Broade became vicar 14 January 1669 and held the living to 1692. He presented to the Archdeacon, " church in good repair, font with cover, silver communion cup, pewter flagon, a surplice, etc. and all in decent order according to the C of E." In 1669 the vicar presents " wee have generally a full congregation and comparatively very good order."

In 1692 Mr. Broade was succeeded in the vicarage by the Rev. David Jones, who is immortalised in the D.N.B. Mr. Jones apparently remained vicar until 1724 and carried on continual warfare with his churchwardens who, in 1699, presented him as not being resident. In 1702 " wee present David Jones vicar for the publicke fame of never haveing bowed at ye name of JESUS, also for taking money out of the chest that is kept for the poor, also for leaving his sermon and reading scurrilous letters, railing at his parishioners and using filthy discourse. He said the women of the parish took dogs to bed with them, not little dogs but great dogs . . . (record here torn and defaced)." The

vicar retorted with a very long presentment of absentees and brawlers in church. The presentments go on year after year from each side, giving instances of gross speech and behaviour.

RADLEY.

The old register contains entries from 1599 to 1740. There is no interval nor cessation in the record. From 1647 to 1664 the record is so well kept, well written and regular that it may be the register was written up from private memoranda after the Restoration. There is no mention of an elected 'register,' nor signature of an incumbent. Both parents are named in the baptisms and none is entered 'born.' The population of the parish was small, about 300, the annual baptisms averaged ten, and the burials six or seven, and the weddings averaged three or four. During the three years 1657-9, there were 36 marriages. This sudden increase seems to show that the church was secure enough in Radley to attract couples from elsewhere who desired the church service. There is no mention of the ceremony before a J.P. In 1653-4 four infants unbaptised were buried. The mention of this shows that church custom and discipline were observed if not enforced. Radley church was fortified, and attacked by the Parliamentary troops in 1643; it was taken and lay ruined and roofless for many years. In 1643 there are 42 burials entered in the register, 20 of these are in July and 12 in August. In July a dot is placed against 13 of the burials which is said to indicate they were killed in fight. In 1624, John Herbert became vicar; in 1668, October 13, Mr. John Herbert, Minister of Radley was buried. His first wife, Joan, died in 1628. He married again and three of his children were baptised here. His widow, Mrs. Judith Herbert, must have attained a great age as she survived to 1706. In 1641 the churchwardens presented '*omnia bene.*' In 1666, two parishioners were presented for not paying the tax towards repair of the church. In 1674, the church was reported 'in good Repair.'

SUTTON COURTENAY.

The oldest register book contains entries from 1538 to 1670; it is well kept and continuous except during the period 1643 to

1654. Before 1643 the baptisms averaged about 15 a year, during the next five years 13 baptisms in all are entered, then during the following seven years the baptisms average 10 each year. In 1655, the Act of 1653 was operative and 'births' only were registered; about 20 are recorded in each year up to 1660 when baptisms begin again and 'born' disappears. During 1644 to 1654 there are no entries of marriage and burial. Burials are recorded from 1655 onward. From 1655 to 1660 only five marriages are recorded; all being after publication on three several Lord's days; the ceremony being performed by Lt.-Col. Fra. Allen, "one of the Justices of the Peace for this county"; who signs the register. There is no mention of the appointment of a 'register' and no signature of minister or clerk. In 1650 the population was about 500, perhaps fewer, In 1658-9 the increase of burials entered shows that Sutton was afflicted like the rest of England. In 1636 the vicar, Thomas Charlton was buried. He was succeeded by Nicholas Sheppard who paid composition for first fruits "3 nov. 14 Charles." He had a daughter baptised in 1642 and one buried in 1643. There is no other mention of him. In 1661, on 30 June, "Mr. William Pounce, clerke and vicar, Publicly read the Articles of Faith and Religion," The burials of his wife Jane and daughter Helen, and the wedding of another daughter, Anne, are in the register; he himself was buried 25 Nov. 1681. Nicholas Sheppard was probably dispossessed. From the Report on Plundered Ministers we find that on 16th Jan. 1646, the Committee granted £50 annually out of the impropriate rectory of Sutton Courtenay belonging to the Dean and Chapter of Windsor, for the increase of the maintenance of Thomas Fitch, minister of Sutton Courtenay. This was in addition to £17 ordered in September last past, and in October 1648, a further augmentation was ordered.

Mr. Thomas Fitch was an intruder, as is shown by the support he received; this divine appears to have departed by 1658, as in that year John Frewen and William Bartlett (parish officers) paid 5/- 'for the p'sonage' to the overseers of the high-ways;

this looks as if the vicarage were empty ; it certainly was in 1659 when Mr. Sherwood was paid £2 for going to London " for to get a minister." It is evident that the Puritan party was in the ascendant in this parish. There is a tradition that the east window of the church was destroyed by a cannon ball in the Civil War ; this is most likely a distorted reminiscence of some real event, for the east window is not in accord with the other fine traceried windows. The churchwardens presented to the Archdeacon in 1675, " the church is in sufficient repair in respect of the roofes windowes and floors, but in respect of the seates etc. wee have a full intent to have it rectified, the parishe having beene formerly at greate charge and wee do humbly desire a longer time and in respect it was blowne up in the war with gunpowder." This helps to explain the order to the parish officers by the government in 1655 (document in the parish chest) " to levy by distresses and sale of the goods," of those parishioners who refuse to pay the assessment towards the necessary repair of the church and tower. The amounts were quite large, e.g. £7 10s., £5 5s., £8 5s. etc. and show that the damage was recent, extensive, and repair expensive. Perhaps the church was used to store munitions and an explosion occurred. For many years the parish accounts record considerable sums spent on lead, glass etc.

The presentments of the churchwardens to the Archdeacon show the religious divisions in Sutton. In 1640 the church is reported to be in " sufficient and handsome repair " in marked contrast to its condition twenty years later. Several ana-baptists and quakers are reported by name. In 1665 and following years many papists and dissenters are presented, and excommunicated persons. " Concerning the ana-baptists in the parish they have promised the Lord Bishop's apparitor that they will subscribe speedily before a justice."

APPLEFORD.

This small parish is adjacent to and served by the vicar of Sutton Courtenay, but has its own register. The register is continuous from 1563 to 1760 in the old book ; during the

Commonwealth 'born' is used in place of 'baptism,' and there is no marriage recorded, but weddings were few normally. There is no mention of a 'register' being appointed.

STEVENTON.

The parish register is fragmentary and chaotic; the original paper register is in the British Museum (Harleian MSS. No. 2395); the oldest register at Steventon, is a copy of the old paper book, 1558 to 1598, continued to 1629. Book No. 2 consists of six mutilated leaves containing entries from 1630 to 1671, with a void during the Commonwealth. Registration ceased between 1654 and 1660 for baptisms and burials. None is entered 'born.' There is no mention of the appointment of a 'register,' no marriage requiring the signature of a J.P. nor is there any signature nor mention of a minister or parish clerk. The condition of the parish during the decade or two previous to 1666 may be surmised from the presentment then made to the Archdeacon: "wee doe present Mr. Timothy Harwell, vicar of Steventon, for that he was overcome with drinck on the 29th of May past, that he was not able to give GOD thanks at the consecration of the indate when the weif of Wm. Trulock was then churched and for that he was divers other dayes and tymes overcome with drinke before and since to the greate disgrace of his ministerial function."

SUNNINGWELL.

The old register contains entries from 1543 to 1741. There is no hiatus in the baptismal and burial entries, but from 1648 to 1660 all the baptisms and burials are well written in the same hand. The ink is the same hue; this gives the impression that the record for these years was written up from notes in 1660. There are no wedding entries between 1652 to 1663. After 1652 is written "*Hiatus valde defendus.*" Baptisms only are recorded; 'born' is not used; the names of both parents are given; and burial entries contain more particulars than is usual. There is no mention of the appointment of a 'parish-register,' but it looks as if Puritan influence were strong enough to prevent open registering by the parson. Dr. Samuel Fell compounded

for first fruits on 2 March, 1 Charles (1625). After eviction from the deanery of Christ Church, Dr. Fell retired to his parsonage at Sunningwell, and there died of grief at the execution of King Charles. The entry in the register is, "*Reverendus Vir Samuel Fell, S.T.P. Vicecancellarius Universitatis Oxon; Ecclesiae Cathedralis Christi ibidem Decanus. Serenissimis Regibus Jacobo et Carolo a sacris; Ecclesiae Cathedralis Divi Pauli Lond. Praebendarius: Ecclesiae Parochialis de Longworth (nsi) non istius de Sunningwell Rector, mense Februarii scilicet die Purificationis Mariae mortalitatem deposuit. 1648.*" His widow Margaret Fell died in Hereford and was buried here 20 April 1653. Dr. Fell was born in London. In 1642, the Parliament ordered him into custody for sending money and plate to King Charles. In 1647 he became Vice-Chancellor of Oxford and acted with fidelity and courage, was deprived and taken into custody. Mrs. Fell refusing to leave the deanery was carried out by soldiers in her chair and set down in the quad. Dr. Reynolds, the intruder, was evicted in his turn, his wife imitated Mrs. Fell and was carried out in like manner. John Fell, son of Dr. Samuel Fell, was born at Sunningwell in 1625; he was a student of Christ Church and bore arms as an ensign in the garrison of Oxford. After the war he lived retired in Oxford and with others kept up the practice of the Church of England. In 1660 he became Dean of Christ Church. After the death of Dr. Fell, the Rev. Walter Jones became rector and paid first fruits on 18 Dec. 1649. He appears to have been able to hold the living till his death in 1672. He probably wrote up the register. In 1660, three of his children are recorded as baptised. Because of the plague in London in 1665, the King was at Oxford for a time; two of the foot soldiers of the 'Life Guards' were buried at Sunningwell; perhaps a company of the regiment was billeted in the parish. In 1680 the churchwardens presented, "we have no recusants neither papists fanaticks nor dissenters . . . all frequent the church."

LONG WITTENHAM.

The old register is 21 parchment leaves in a parchment wrapper and contains; marriages 1561 to 1629; then 7 or 8

leaves cut out ; baptisms 1577 to 1627 ; then about a dozen leaves cut out, which contained the burials.

The mutilation of this register appears to have been intentional ; all the baptisms before 1577 were on the missing leaves between the marriages and baptisms, and the burials on the others ; a portion of one leaf is left ; the clean cutting is evidence of purpose. The 21 leaves remaining are well preserved and show no sign of decay or ill usage. Composition for first fruits, " Henry Whistler. 23 June. 17 James. (1619). Edrus. West. March 1658."

For the purpose of the foregoing compilation, search has been made in the following sources of information.

The Parish Registers.

Calamy's Ejected Ministers.

Compositions for First Fruits. The Composition Books. P.R.O. Series III. (1536-1660).

Plundered Ministers. The MS. minutes of the Parliamentary Committee. (Bodleian Library).

Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy. Walker's own inter-leaved folio copy with MS. notes. (Bodleian Library).

Churchwardens Presentments. MSS. Oxford Archdeaconry Papers. (Bod. Lib.) The Berks papers are bound up in 46 folio volumes ; the first presentments are about 1638 ; there is none from 1641 to 1660, when they re-commence and continue to 1840. Though they tell us nothing during the Puritan ascendancy, they yield a good deal of information on the condition of the parishes immediately before and after.

Bargains and Sales : Church Lands : Commonwealth ; The Close Rolls. (P.R.O.)

Victoria County Histories. Contain very little about the period 1640-60.

The most fruitful source of information is the parish register ; most of the other sources are disappointingly scanty in allusion to the Abingdon deanery.