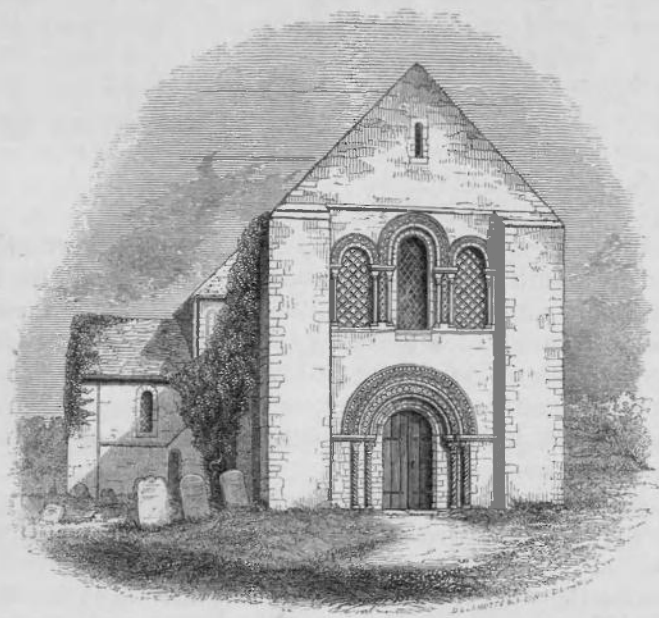


NOTICES OF THE PRIORY OF SOUTHWICK, IN
THE COUNTY OF SOUTHAMPTON.

COMMUNICATED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ARCHÆOLOGICAL
INSTITUTE AT WINCHESTER, SEPTEMBER, 1845.



West Front of St. Mary's Church, Portchester. A.D. 1133—1138

THE stores of valuable information, connected with the history of monastic, and other ancient establishments, in these kingdoms, preserved in the muniment chambers of the chief landed proprietors of the country, are of considerable extent, and, in many instances, almost unknown, even to their possessors. It may be hoped that the periodical visits of the members of the Archæological Institute to various localities chosen as the place of their annual assembly, must tend to stimulate enquiry, as well as the disposition to preserve these, or similar memorials of every kind, and to draw forth such concealed treasures, important in a high degree to the Archæologist, as affording evidences, not merely of local or personal history, but of the customs, the habitual feelings, and earnest

piety of our forefathers. In the majority of cases, documentary evidences, connected with abbey lands, did not accompany the grants to private individuals, after the dissolution. They were either reserved by the crown, or, too frequently, perished in the fearful crisis of rapine and confusion, in which the religious establishments of this country were extinguished. The apprehension lest possessions, to which a curse often seemed to be attached, should at some subsequent time be reclaimed, led doubtless to the wilful destruction of a large number of documents; some were preserved by the crown, and, in a few cases, the entire series of records and grants, connected with the history of a monastery, passed with the lands alienated, and have been preserved to the present time. A remarkable instance may be cited, in the Battle Abbey muniments, forming upwards of three hundred volumes, purchased from Sir Godfrey Webster, Bart., and now in the collection of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart., at Middle Hill. The voluminous evidences connected with the royal foundation of Southwick Priory^a, by like fortunate circumstances, not having been dispersed, have remained in the custody of the possessors of Southwick park. The praiseworthy care of Thomas Thistlethwayte, Esq., has recently caused them to be arranged in a most judicious and complete manner; transcripts of the more interesting documents have been made, abstracts and indexes compiled; and from these materials, by his kind permission, the following brief notices have been extracted.

The priory was originally founded, within the castle of Portchester, by King Henry I., for canons regular of the order of St. Augustine. By his charter of foundation he granted to God, and to the church of the Blessed Mary of Portcestre, the same church of St. Mary, there founded by him, with the lands and tithes, and all things pertaining to the church; also certain rights in his wood of Kynges-dene, and in his forest; and confirmed to them the manor of Candevra (Candover), with certain lands in Suwika and Appelstede, which William de Ponte-archarum had given them; for the benefit of the souls of his father and mother, of William his brother, his ancestors and successors, and for the state and safety of his kingdom. This charter is dated, "at Burnham, on my passing over the sea." Tanner, in his *Notitia Monastica*,

^a The name is variously spelt in the deeds and charters. Suwika, or Suwic. Suthwyk, Suthwick, or Suthweek; now written Southwick.

fixes the date of this charter in 1133, because among the names of the witnesses occur those of Nigel, bishop elect^b of Ely, and Geoffrey, elect of Durham, who, according to Matthew of Westminster, and other chroniclers, were appointed to those sees in that year. This was the year in which Henry took his departure from England, never to return alive. It is remarkable also as being the year in which the bishopric of Carlisle was founded, and Athelwulph, prior of St. Oswald's, consecrated the first bishop^c.

It is important to be able to fix thus accurately the date of the foundation of the priory, because it enables us to settle with a greater degree of precision the date of the building of the very interesting Norman church, which still exists within the castle of Portchester, and retains much of its original character. The plan was originally cruciform, with the tower at the intersection, but the south arm of the cross has been destroyed. The west front is remarkably good, and affords a very interesting and valuable example, as very few Norman fronts have been preserved entire and unaltered. In the interior, along the walls on both sides of the chancel, and on the remaining transept, is a stone bench-table, and over it a range of rude canopies, or an arcade, evidently unfinished.



The Font, Portchester.

^b There is a slight discrepancy between the charter as given in Ellis and Bandinel's edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, and that in the possession of Mr. Thistlethwayte; in the former Nigel is styled

"bishop," in the latter, "elect" of Ely.

^c In the chronicle of John Brompton, the first bishop of Carlisle is said to have been Arnulph, abbot of St. Botolph's.

The font is a very fine Norman example, with an intersecting arcade all round, and on one side a curious and valuable sculpture of the Baptism of Christ.

The priory does not appear to have been a foundation of much importance at first; for although many of the monkish historians give an enumeration of religious houses founded by Henry, the priory of Portchester, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is not mentioned. Probably it was intended only as a small religious fraternity, sufficient to supply the spiritual wants of the garrison and retainers of the castle.



Sculpture on the Font, Portchesuer

The holy brotherhood, however, did not remain long in their original abode. Whether it was that they found the interior of a strong hold, in the turbulent and warlike times of Stephen, too little adapted for a religious life, or that they were tempted by the quiet seclusion of the spot which they selected for their new settlement^d, it is certain that they had quitted Portchester, and settled at Suthwyk, within twenty years from the time of the foundation.

There is nothing to enable us to fix precisely the exact date at which this removal took place. But there are extant among the records of the priory two bulls of Eugenius III., by one of which he received the church and convent of Portchester under the protection of the apostolic see; by the second he received them again under the same protection, and decreed that the rule of the blessed Augustine should be inviolably observed by the prior and convent, and granted them the privilege of free sepulture, saving the rights and customs of the mother church. But this second bull is addressed to the prior of St. Mary, and the brethren of Suthwyk. Now the pontificate of Eugenius III. began in 1145, and ended, with his life, in

^d The canons seem to have found the new settlement not altogether comfortable in some respects, for there is extant a letter from Pope Nicholas, permitting them to wear caps or amuces, during

divine service, on account of the coldness of the situation, provided that due reverence were observed on the reading of the Gospel, and at the elevation of the host.

1153; so that it would appear that the removal from Portchester to Suthwyk must have taken place within that period. It seems not unlikely that this removal of the convent so soon after its foundation may account for the unfinished condition of some of the details of the church of Portchester, such as the arcade at the sides of the chancel, and the north transept.

After the removal the priory grew rapidly in importance and affluence^e, and enjoyed no ordinary share of royal bounty and favour. Almost all the kings from Henry II. to Henry VIII., including even that great spoliator of religious houses, granted to the canons charters of protection, or very frequently the more substantial benefits of immunities, gifts of lands, manors, and churches. In the reign of Henry II. they possessed the churches of Portchester, Wymering, Portsea, Shalden, Nutley, and Wanstead; with the chapels of Widley, Wallesworth, and Candever Scudland^f; and of Ymbeschet (Empshot); of St. James, without the priory gate; and of the blessed Thomas the Martyr, in the parish of Portsea. To these were afterwards added the churches of Swindon, Burhunt, and St. Nicholas, West Burhunt.

While the prior and canons of Suthwyk were themselves the objects of such pious liberality, they were, at the same time, engaged on a work, of which the beneficial effects are felt to this day. We learn from the Suthwyk records that the inhabitants of Portsmouth are indebted to the liberality of the prior and canons of Suthwyk for the structure which is now the parish church of Portsmouth. There is a charter of privilege granted by Richard Toelive, bishop of Winchester, to the prior and canons, concerning the chapel of the blessed Thomas the Martyr, in the parish of Portsea, which they had begun to build with the advice and consent of the bishop. It is well known that this prelate took an active part in the persecution of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and was even excommunicated on that account. After Becket's murder he repented, and is supposed by Milner to

^e In the "Taxatio Ecclesiastica," made by order of Pope Nicholas IV., in 1291, 19 Edward I., the possessions of the priory are rated at £32. 15s. 8d. per annum. In the Suthwyk records there is an inquisition on the true value of Portchester castle, 32 Edward I., when its value was declared to be £10. 8s. 7d.

^f There was formerly a manor called Candever Scudland, probably a corruption of the family name of Jordan Escotland, who granted his chapel, and the tithes of his manor there, with a virgate of land for the sustentation of the chapel, to the prior of Suthwyk.

have founded the hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, near Winchester, in token of his penitence. The building of the church of Portsmouth, by Toclive's advice and co-operation, and the dedication of it to the memory of the martyred archbishop, may be taken as another proof of his sincere penitence. This record enables us to fix with some precision the date of the building, for Toclive's episcopate began in 1174, and ended in 1188. Amidst much alteration and addition, there are many portions of the present edifice which may be assigned to that date. It was built on a site given by John de Gisors, in a place then called Sudmede. In 1196, Bishop Godfrey de Lucy consecrated a burial ground at this church, on account of the great distance from the parish church of Portsea.

But to return to the priory of Suthwyk: from King John the prior and canons obtained Colmere and Dene, in the county of Hants; this latter place no doubt derived the name of Prior's Dene, by which it is known at the present time, from having been the possession of the prior of Suthwyk. From Henry III. they obtained the privilege of holding a market every Friday, and of having every year a fair of two days continuance in their town of Suthwyk, on the eve and day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; this fair was afterwards transferred to the feast of St. Philip and St. James, and two following days, by charter, in the fifth year of Henry VIII., 1514. From the two first Edwards they obtained grants of free warren in all their demesne lands of Suthwyk, West Burhunt, Baseville, Hyppelye, Crofton, Stebyngton near Portsea, Newland, Avedemere, Mundesmere, Candover, Elsefield, Colmere, and Dene, in the county of Southampton, Fissebourne in Sussex, and Clenefield in Oxfordshire.

Edward III. was a considerable benefactor to the priory. From the terms of his grant, dated at "Wyndesore, the 10th day of July, in the year of our reign, of England the 20th, but of France the 8th," A.D. 1346, it appears that the lands of the priory of Suthwyk, almost under the very walls of the castle of Portchester, had suffered considerably from the attacks and reprisals of the enemy. This probably happened in the 13th year of his reign, soon after the breaking out of the war with France. In that year a powerful French fleet committed dreadful ravages along the south coast of England;

on Sunday, the 5th of October, 1339, the invaders seized the town of Southampton, while the inhabitants were at church, plundered, and almost totally destroyed it by fire. "In consideration of the damages and grievances," thus states the grant, "which the prior and convent have sustained by burnings and destructions committed in their manors, possessions, and benefices near the sea, by his foreign enemies hostilely invading those places; and, in consideration also of the heavy charges which they have sustained, and do daily sustain, by the resort of himself, his nobles, and others, to the priory, on their passage towards parts beyond the sea," Edward granted to them the lands of Crowker and Farlyngton, with right of free warren, and the advowson of the church of Farlyngton, which had come into his hands, as an escheat, by the forfeiture of the celebrated Hugh le Despencer, his father's unhappy favourite, and were then held for life by John de Montgomery.

In this reign also the priory was enriched by the bounty of that greatest of founders and benefactors, William of Wykeham; he founded in it five chantries, for the prosperous state of King Edward III., for the souls of John and Sibil, the founder's father and mother, for the soul of the same king, and for his own after death, and for all the faithful departed. To perform the service of these chantries, he constituted five canonries, in addition to the number already existing in the priory. He endowed them with the manors of Burhunt, Herberd, and Herbelyn, which he had purchased for £400, of Luke de Ponynges and Isabel his wife; having obtained the king's licence for their alienation.

The manor of Herbelyn was held of the king in capite, on condition of finding a man armed with an haketon, hauberk, bacinet, iron gloves, and lance, to keep guard at the east gate of the castle of Portchester in time of war, for fifteen days.

William of Wykeham was consecrated bishop of Winchester October 10, 1367. His statutes for these chantries are dated October 2, 1369. The priory of Suthwyk was therefore, in all probability, the first place in his diocese which partook of the liberality of that munificent prelate. There must have been some reason why he should have selected this church so early in his episcopate for such a mark of favour. From the records of the priory we learn a fact, which I believe has hitherto escaped notice, and which becomes highly

interesting when we remember how ignorant we are of every thing connected with the family and parentage of William of Wykeham. His father, mother, and sister, were buried in the church of Suthwyk priory. This appears from an acknowledgment of a payment, by Thomas Ayleward, one of the executors of William of Wykeham, to Prior Thomas, of £50, in part payment of 100 marks, for the works of the church at Suthwyk, and especially for the roof over the vault in which the bishop's father, mother, and sister were buried. This document is dated April 8, Henry IV. 1407^s. As there is no special provision left for this purpose in Wykeham's will, as given by Lowth, this money must have been paid out of the residuary estate, left to be disposed of at the discretion of his executors.

Of the ancestors of William of Wykeham we know only that his father was called John, his mother Sibil, and that they were buried at Suthwyk. Every fact connected with the name of Wykeham deserves to be sought out and recorded. It is pleasing to find him, immediately upon his elevation, mindful of the place which contained his parents' remains, and so anxious to make provision for that which he believed to be conducive to the eternal peace of their souls.

Notwithstanding his liberal benefaction to the priory, a few years later he seems to have had reason to be displeased with the state of discipline and order in the house; for he held a visitation of the convent, "*tam in capite, quam in membris,*" and issued some severe injunctions against divers breaches of the conventual rule, and even against some more serious offences. These injunctions are dated at South-Waltham, August 22, 1397.

An event of considerable historical importance took place in the priory of Suthwyk, in the reign of Henry VI. According to Fabyan and Holinshed, the nuptials of Henry with Margaret of Anjou were celebrated there in the year 1445, being the 23rd of his reign. There is no direct confirmation of this, indeed, in the records of the priory; but there is a charter of Henry VI. to the prior and convent, dated March 10, in the 24th year of his reign, A.D. 1446; and a second

^s The receipt for the remainder, dated May 3, 8 Hen. IV., (1407) is interesting, as shewing the value of silver at the time.

^t It states that it was paid by one pair of silver candlesticks, of the weight of five

pounds ten ounces, price of the pound 28s.; and by one pair of silver gilt basons, of the weight of five pounds, price of the pound 30s.

dated July 16, in the same year, which may be taken as corroborative evidence of the statements of Fabyan and Holinshed: the privileges and immunities granted in these charters are so ample as to shew that the king had some special reason for bestowing on the priory an extraordinary measure of his royal bounty and favour.

From this period to the time of Bishop Fox the annals of the priory are entirely destitute of interest. During his episcopate, in the 10th year of Henry VIII., 1519, the priory church was struck by lightning, and during the repairs it fell in. It was restored by public contributions. The sum raised for this purpose was £530. The name of Bishop Fox occurs among the contributors.

This was an ominous foreboding of that more fatal storm which was soon to burst over the priory, and to scatter its inmates for ever. At its dissolution the site was granted to John White, Esq., of Southwick, in consideration of £251. 13s. 4d., from whom it has descended, through the Nortons, to Thomas Thistlethwayte, Esq., its present possessor. Its revenues at the dissolution were valued at £324. 17s. 10½d. in the gross; £257. 4s. 4d. net. The present remains of its buildings consist of little more than foundations of a few walls.

Amongst the "Chartæ Antiquæ," preserved in the Augmentation Office, there is a document, dated A.D. 1189, to which an impression of the common seal of the priory is appended. It bears no legend, and exhibits a church, with its porch, nave, and tower. The counter-seal was an intaglio, bearing the device of an eagle, with the legend SPIRAT . VERVM . VICTVS . SPIRAT. Of the ancient matrix of the Southwick seal, now preserved in the British Museum, a representation is submitted to our readers, as an interesting addition to these notices of the priory.

W. H. GUNNER.



Seal of the Priory of Southwick
or Portsea.