

The Chapel in the Forest.

By HENRY KIRKE, M.A., B.C.L.

THE foresters and keepers of the deer in the Peak Forest became so numerous about 1220, that they purchased a portion of the Crown lands held by William de Ferrars and built themselves a Chapel for Divine worship, which they called the Chapel in the Forest, and appointed their own chaplain. The King, the Priory of Lenton and the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield at different times tried to dispossess them of their right of nomination, but the sturdy foresters successfully withstood them. The Chapel had been consecrated by Alexander de Savensby, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, about 1227, and he conferred upon it the right of baptism and burial, thus making it a parish church.

The following document relates to one of the last attempts to interfere with the popular rights, which have been upheld to the present day :—

To the right Worshipful Mr. Doctor Tooker
or to whom these presents shall come,
greeting.

These are to Certifie yo^r worship that in the year of our Lo. God 1571 or thereabouts one W^m Smallwood, Clerk was nominated (by the right Worshipful Doctor Nowell then being Dean of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield) to be the minister of the parish Church of the Chappell in le Frith contrary to the antient custome & Consent of the Inhabitants thereof. Whereupon the s^d Inhabitants taking dislike of the said W^m Smallwood, Clerk, did then with full consent elect & choose one George Yeveley, clerk, to be in his place at the s^d Chappell le Frith. In regard whereof I the s^d George Yeveley, clerk, did then immediately repair to

Lychfield & was also preferred to the aforesaid place by the Dean & Chapter house in his room & steed.

In witness whereof I the s^d George Yeveley clerk, have put to my hand the vth of Januarie Ann. Do. 1617.

George Yeveley, Cl.

Item. That this letter & paper was shewed to the s^d George Yeveley at the time of his examination at Chappel le Frith in the county of Derby the xxvth day of March in the year of the reign of our Sovereigne Lord James by the Grace of God King of England xviith at the execucon of a Commission in a cause depending on His Maj^{tie} High Court of Chancery between George Thornhill & others p^{lts} & Thomas Barney clerk & others d^{fts}.

P. M. Ashenhurst

Edw. Regge

This statement is somewhat puzzling. From a list of the Chaplains of Chapel-in-le-Frith which I possess it appears that Thomas Barney was minister in 1617, so George Yeaveley, who, as he states was elected in 1571, must have been promoted to some other benefice, as his immediate successor was elected in 1579. The following is a list of the ministers to the church as far as they can be ascertained :—

- 1434.—Thomas Armitage.
William Hyde.
Edward Bagshawe.
Christopher Beard.
Harry Wylde.
William Smallwood.
- 1521.—Sir Stephen Bagshawe.
- 1571.—George Yeaveley.
- 1579.—George Mellor.
Henry Brownell.
Francis Barney.
- 1617.—Thomas Barney.
- 1619.—Edward Creswell.
- 1621.—William Bray.
- 1624.—Richard Eaton.
- 1625.—Edmund Nickson, B.A.
- 1644.—Robert Gee, M.A.

- 1648.—“Noe Minister nor Churchwardens.”
1649.—William Oliver.
1652.—Thomas Clayton, M.A.
1660.—James Hulme.
1662.—William Higginbotham.
1668.—John Morewood.
1669.—Nathan Kinsey.
1690.—William White, M.A.
1697.—Caleb Cooke, B.A.
1717.—John Byron.
1727.—Benjamin Bardsley.
1748.—John Byron.
1790.—William Bagshawe, M.A.
1792.—Samuel Grundy.
1836.—George Hall, B.A.
1885.—Samuel Pink.
1891.—James Given, LL.D.
1901.—Josiah Clifton Stredder, M.A.
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