

Monastic Settlements in the Peak Forest.

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IN Writing a History of the Peak Forest I noted the strong hold that the Monasteries had gained in the Forest area, which was one of the last places in England to benefit by the teaching of Christianity. In Hope itself the preaching of the early Missionaries was followed by the erection of a church, for in Domesday Book we read "*In Hope there is a priest, and a church to which belongs one carucate of land.*"

At the time this church was built Religion was at a very low ebb in England. In his History of England William of Malmesbury (A.D. 1125.), writes "The desire after literature and religion had decayed for several years before the arrival of the Normans. The clergy, contented with a very slight degree of learning, could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments; a person who understood grammar was an object of wonder and astonishment. The monks mocked the rules of their order by fine vestments, and the use of all kinds of food. The nobility, given up to luxury and wantonness, went not to church in the morning after the manner of Christians, but merely in a careless manner heard matins and masses from a hurried priest in their chambers. They were accustomed to eat until they were surfeited and to drink till they were sick." But he continues, "The Normans revived by their arrival the observances of religion, which were everywhere grown lifeless in England. You might see churches rise in every village, and more especially in towns and cities, built after a style unknown before: you might behold the

country flourishing with renovated sites, so that each wealthy man accounted that day lost to him which he had neglected to signalize by some magnificent action."

The Norman nobles were building and endowing abbeys and priories all over England, where masses could be said for their own souls, and for the souls of their ancestors, and to afford them a safe retreat in case of distress or danger.

The first monastic establishment to find a footing in the Peak was the Abbey of Basingwerk in Flintshire. The Abbey itself was founded in 1131 and amidst conflicting statements the strongest evidence is in favour of Ranulf Earl of Chester as the original founder. The abbey was situated about a mile from Holywell on the banks of a river and was occupied by monks of the Cistercian order. Like other such buildings it fell into ruin after the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. A visitor in 1791 writes "The refectory seems almost entire, where are three windows with pointed arches, but the doors are circular. At one end of the church are two doors; adjoining the refectory are six windows of a circular form. At the extremity of the building are three arches almost circular, and supported by pillars which appear to be very solid. The architecture of the abbey is in part Norman, having round arches and short columns in some places."

A grant to this abbey was made by King Henry II. in the following terms:—

"Henricus rex Angliae et dux Normaniae et Aquitaniae, archiepiscopis et episcopis salutem. Sciatis me dedisse et concessisse et presenta carta confirmasse deo et sanctae Mariae et monachis de Basingwerk in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam decem libratas terrae in Longdendale (scilicet Glossop) cum ecclesia quae ibi est cum omnibus terris et rebus ad

eam pertinentibus sicut Willielmus Peveril eam plenius habuit tempore regis Henrici avi mei.”

The monks gradually extended their authority from Glossop to Charlesworth, Mellor and other places in the ancient parish of Glossop. These extensive possessions were to a large extent within the limits of Peak Forest so the monks were often brought into conflict with the Forest officials. In 1285 we find in the Forest Rolls that the woods in Longdendale had been injured by the abbot of Basingwerk, and he was called upon to account for the damage. No houses were allowed to be built in the forest without a license from the king, so the abbot was summoned because he had constructed a certain carpentered house 100 feet in length and 15 feet in width which his predecessor had raised with timber from the king's woods. The abbot answered to his summons and declared that he was within his rights. In consequence of this a survey was ordered of the lands granted to the abbey, and the surveyor reported that the abbots have held the lands from the time of Henry II. who enfeoffed them of the manor of Glossop; and the abbot exhibited a charter by the same king who gave him £10 in land in Longdendale alias Glossop with the church which is there and lands and all things pertaining to it, which he claimed to be outside the Forest.¹

In the fourth year of King Edward III. (1330) the abbot of Basingwerk being examined with regard to his title to the land, said the present king had inspected a charter of King Edward II., and within it was contained that the same Edward had examined a certain charter of King Henry II., in which the said king granted and confirmed to God and St. Mary and the monks of Basingwerk 10 librates of land worth £10 p.a. in Longdendale, i.e. Glossop, with the church and all land pertaining to it,

¹ *Journal* xv, 73, 74.

and confirmed to them all those tenements which Ranulf Earl of Chester and other barons gave and confirmed to them by their charter, and also the chapel of Basingwerk in which they first dwelt, with the mill and all appurtenances. He also said that the present king granted to the abbot and convent of Basingwerk that he and his successors should have a market every Wednesday at his manor of Charlesworth and a fair every year of three days duration, viz. on the vigil, the day and the morrow of the Blessed Mary Magdalene (July 22-24.), unless this market and fair should be injurious to others in the vicinity.¹ And that he had a pillory and tumbrel and other jurisdiction which was required for a market and fair; but the said abbot was said to punish those who broke the assize of bread and ale by a pecuniary fine.

The abbot was summoned later for keeping twenty mares with foals feeding in the forest and was ordered to remove them and pay the damage.

Basingwerk seems also to have had some property in Chinley. There is a small farm there which is still called "Monks Meadow." There are frequent references to the encroachments made by the abbots on the king's demesne; they made assarts of three acres in a place called "Redeboc": Germanus when abbot assarted 88 acres in Charlesworth, 42 in Glossop, 32 in Simmondley, 45 in "Arncaregle," six in Gamesley, 12 in Bagshaw, and six in "Leleigh." He also assarted one acre in "Exdale," 13 in Padfield, 40 in Hayfield and three in Whitfield.

In the Rent-Roll of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1471, appears the name of the abbot of Basingwerk as Tenant of land at Courses, Chapel-en-le-Frith, rent 4s.

In the taxation of Pope Nicholas A.D. 1291, is the following entry:—

¹ This charter is dated 21st. Feb. 2 Edw. III. St. Mary Magdalene was the patron saint of the ancient chapel at Charlesworth, some account of which is given in Cox, *Derbyshire Churches*.

“Taxatio bonorum temporal: abbatis de
Basingwerk, Dioc: Coventr: et Lich:
in Archidiac: Salop.

Abbas de Basingwerk habet apud Glossop in dec: Alto Pecco . . . unam	£	s.	d.
caruc: terr: assis: p.a.	-	16	-
Ibidem unum molendinum qui val: p. a.	1	-	-
De profit: stauri ibidem p.a.	-	6	8
Ibidem de redd: assis: p.a.	3	-	-
De venditione bosci	-	6	8
	<hr/>		
Summa.	<u>£5</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>

The abbey also possessed 53 cows and 2000 sheep. In the 26th year of King Henry VIII., the gross income of this monastery was £157 15s. 2d., and the rents of the lands in Glossop were reckoned as worth £50 p.a.

The Memory of the long tenure of the manors of Longdendale by the abbey is preserved in the names of the “Monks Road,” which runs South-Westwards from Charlesworth to join the main road from Hayfield to Glossop about three miles from the latter place; and the “Abbot’s Chair,” the base of an ancient boundary-cross near to the Western extremity of the same road.

How the Abbey of Merivale in Warwickshire came to have interests in the Peak Forest is to the writer unknown. The Abbey was founded by Robert Earl Ferrers who had already endowed his foundation with land at Hardwick in Derbyshire, so possibly some monks from thence had penetrated into the forest. Merivale Abbey was founded in the 13th year of King Stephen (1147) and was populated by monks from Bordesley in Worcester-shire.

There are not many entries relating to this abbey in the Forest Rolls. The Abbot of Merivale was summoned for that he had maintained for six years 16 mares with their

young feeding in the Peak Forest: also for erecting a house at Fairfield without a license, and another at Maystonfield (Chinley) and he had another place for feeding to the injury of the forest to the amount of £8. "He was accustomed to give 10 marks p.a. to the king for the barn that he might be able to hold it and have his other things there."¹ There is no record of any monastic building in the Peak Forest connected with this abbey, no farms, no grange, no church.

The Premonstratensian order of monks obtained a considerable position in N. Derbyshire. The Abbey of Welbeck was the head house of this order, which came to England about 1140 and settled first at Newhouse in Lincolnshire, from which place sprang numerous other abbeys, amongst them Welbeck and Beauchief, near Norton, which latter was founded in 1176. The abbey of Welbeck was founded in the 16th year of King Stephen, 1153 and the buildings completed in the reign of Henry II.

The monastery of Welbeck acquired possessions in the Peak Forest by the gift of John Earl of Mortain, afterwards King John in terms of the following charter:—

"Johannes comes Moretanensis omnibus hominibus et amicis suis francigenis et Anglis presentibus et futuris salutem Noveritis me divino pietatis intuitu et pro salute anime mee et pro animabus antecessorum meorum necnon et successorum meorum concessisse et hac mea carta confirmasse Deo et ecclesie sancti Jacobi de Wellebek et canonicis ibidem Deo serventibus pasturam de Cruchill per oram nemoris de Essope usque Lokebroc et a Lokebroc usque ad vallem de Derwent et sic ascendendo usque ad Derwentheid. Tenendam ipsis canonicis imperpetuum de me et heredibus meis per servitium xxv solidorum per annum nobis inde solvendorum

¹ *Journal* xv, 87.

scilicet xii sol. et vi den. ad Paska et xii sol. et vi. den. ad festum sancti Michaelis. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod iidem canonici habeant et teneant prenominatim pasturam per prescriptas divisas per predictum servicium bene et in pace plenarie et integre libere et quiete ab omni servicio et consuetudine. Ita tamen quod a medio Aprilis usque ad festum Sancti Jacobi Apostoli predicti canonici elongabunt averia sua ab (aieria¹) spervariorum meorum si que forsitan ibi fuerit. Hiis Testibus, Stephano Ridell, Cancellario”

Afterwards on the 7th May, 1215 he confirmed this grant but reserved the wood and venison for himself and his heirs. This gift was again confirmed by Henry III., 29th Dec., 1251, when he also granted to this monastery “quinque acras et unam rodam terrae de essarto in foresta nostra de Cruchill cum aedificiis ibidem constructis.” William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby granted to the church of St. James, Welbeck “totidem pasturas de Essopp (Ashop) a predicta divisa usque ad aquam de Essopp et sic ascendendo ad caput ipsius aquae de Essopp et usque ad Derwentheid,” as mentioned in the charter of King John. Further grants were made by the Lords of Hathersage as follows:—

Oliver son and heir of Nigel de Longford gave in free alms for the good of his soul “unam placeam prati in foresta mea de Haversage que vocatur Onmanfeld (*one-man-field*) per illas divisas metas fossatas et sepes quas dominus Matheus de Haversage et ego predictus Oliverus plenarie predictam placeam prati quondem tenuimus sine aliquo retinimento.”

“Mattheus de Haversage dedit domui de Wellebec

¹ Professor Hamilton Thompson suggests this (meaning an aery) as the missing word. The sense seems to be that from the middle of April to 24 July the canons were to keep their cattle away from the nesting-place of the earl's sparrow-hawks. (Ed.)

per cartam suam communem pasturam ad quater viginti averia in foresta mea (? sua) de eadem in liberam elimosinam imperpetuum, quam communem pasturam et cartam eadem domus sursum reddidit Olivero de Langford et Simone de Goushill heredibus dicti Matthei, propter quod placea prati inclusi in dicta foresta que vocatur Onemansfeld, quam predicti Oliverus et Simon dederunt dicte domui per cartas suas sicut premittitur pro relaxatione dicte pasture in liberam puram (et) perpetuam elimosinam ut predictum est sine cuiusquam aliquo retinimento, liberius dari vel possideri potest escambium videlicet pasture quater viginti averiorum quam dicti canonici habuerunt quondam de dono Matthei domini de Haversage.”¹

Translation:—

Matthew of Hathersage gave to the house of Welbeck by his charter pasture for fourscore beasts in his forest of Hathersage in free alms for ever, the which common pasture and charter the same house surrendered to Oliver of Longford and Simon of Goxhill the heirs of the said Matthew; by reason whereof the plot of the meadow enclosed in the same forest, which is called Onemansfeld, which the aforesaid Oliver and Simon gave to the said house by their charter, as is premised, in return for the release of the said pasture, in free pure and perpetual alms, as is aforesaid, without any reservation on the part of anyone, may be given or held in possession with full freedom, in exchange, to wit, for the pasture for fourscore beasts which the said canons had of the gift of Matthew lord of Hathersage.

¹ Prof. Hamilton Thompson has kindly furnished the translation of this charter the meaning of which is not easy to grasp. He has also made several valuable suggestions as to the way in which the charters in this article should be read. (Ed.).

The value of Cruchill in Hope was stated to be £7 17s. 4d. in 1299.

In the reign of Edward III the grange "in Pecco" commonly called Cruchill in Hope parish claimed an exemption by the authority of the Pope from the payment of tithes of the newly tilled lands which the monks had planted with vegetables with their own hands, of the increase of the animals, of the gardens and of the orchards. It is also specially mentioned that the grange was not subject to the jurisdiction of the dean of Lichfield. (*Harl. MS.* 3640).

There were at one time no less than four chapels on this extensive monastic estate. It is not necessary to suppose that regular daily service was celebrated in all of them. According to the change of the season labour would be most in demand now in one part now in another of their domain; and doubtless the monks were anxious to have a chapel for their devotions and those of their labourers near, those good works of fertilizing the soil to which the Premonstratensians were specially addicted. The chapels were thus situated:—

- (1). At Derwent, near the site of the present church. This was probably the most important, as it was by the old water-mill where a small colony would be in permanent residence.
- (2). At the Abbey Grange three miles up the stream on the same side: a portion of the ancient grange is still standing and inhabited as a farm-house. The foundations of the more extensive establishment can be readily traced. The chapel seems to have stood immediately to the South of the present building.
- (3). On the opposite side of the river, communicating with the grange by a bridge, the semi-artificial piers of which can still be seen, on each side of the banks. This chapel was near the present farm

buildings between Birchin Lee and Marebottom, which are now approached by a road called Chapel Lane.

- (4). In the Woodlands, by the side of the old Roman road near where the present " Pillar " stands. A wood near Ashopton is still known as Friar's Walk.

These four chapels are all marked in the old maps of Derbyshire. At the dissolution they would naturally suffer from neglect and desuetude. The chapel at Derwent itself, which was dedicated to St. James, remained and the present church occupies practically the same site.¹

There is a volume in the Harleian Collection (no. 608.), containing an account of lands sold in the 4th and 5th year of Philip and Mary, and in it we find the following entry—
Com. Derby. P'cell possess. nuper Priorat. de Welbec
in com. Nott.

Derwent in le ffirm. unius teñti ibm vocat. One
Peak co. Derby. Manes-House cum terr. prat. and
pastur. eidem p'tinen. in tenura
val. in Thome Barber.

Reddend. inde p. annum x^s

When the grange lands were sold the lead, bells and advowson were excepted.

In a perambulation of the parish of Hathersage in 1656 the old grange is described as " One Mans House alias Abbey;" and the bridge crossing the Derwent near that point was designated as the Abbey Bridge.

Lenton Priory was founded before the year 1108, by William Peveril, who endowed it with the town of Lenton except four mills of which he held two in his own demesne, his wife Adeline one and Herbert his Knight the fourth. He endowed the priory also with many other properties,

¹ Cox, *Derbyshire Churches*.

amongst them Bakewell in the Peak, together with the tithes of the churches in Tideswell, Bradwell, Hucklow and Ashford, and two parts of the tithes of his demesne pastures in the Peak, namely Shallcross, Fernilee, Buxton, Chelmorton, Cowdale Sterndale and other places; also the whole tithes of colts and fillies wherever he had a stable in the Peak, and the whole tithes of lead and hunting,¹ as well in skins as flesh. The tithe of assarts in the Peak Forest was granted to the priory by William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby. King John had bestowed the churches of Bakewell, Hope and Tideswell on the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield, so a great contention arose between the Chapter and the prior of Lenton. The quarrel was referred to Rome, and Pope Innocent IV., appointed brother Walter, warden of the Friars Minor of Leicester, and Adam, archdeacon of Chester, to act as commissioners. The case was heard in the church of St. Mary at Leicester, and it was then agreed that the Priory should pay to the sacristan of Lichfield 100 marks as a fine; but all the greater and lesser tithes of Tideswell belonged to the Dean and Chapter excepting two-thirds of the tithes of lead on the demesne of William Peveril, of the mill of Richard Daniel and of the tithes of stables and hunting: and that two-thirds only of the great tithes should go to the Priory in other parts; and of pastures and places then cultivated at Bakewell, Nether Haddon, Ashford and Chapel-en-le-Frith.²

The contention between the chapter and the priory was very fierce and often led to regrettable results. At Tideswell there had been actual fighting between the two bodies when the monks of Lenton tried to seize some sheep. The church itself was invaded and its ministers were

¹ *Journal* iv, 61: Dugd. Mon. i., 648.

² For an extended account of this dispute see *Journal* v, 129, where many of the documents relating to it are printed in extenso. The Earls' property at Stanton near Haddon came to the priory by gift of William de Vernon. *Belvoir Charters*, quoted *Journal*, xxiv., 8. (Ed.).

savagely beaten and wounded: sheep and lambs were killed under the feet of the horses, and both the church and the church yard were polluted with blood. For a time all religious rites had to be suspended until the buildings could be reconsecrated by the bishop.

Within the parish of Tideswell in the valley still called Monks Dale, the monks of Lenton had an establishment where they no doubt gathered that portion of the tithes granted to them by William Peveril, and confirmed to them by the Pope's commissioners. The outlines of the chapel attached to this grange can still be seen. All that remains above ground are the beautifully carved stones of the low septum, a screen that divides the chancel from the nave.

In the reign of Richard II., the revenues of the Priory in Derbyshire were estimated to be of the value of £68 19s. 10d. In the year 1323 the dispute between the Prior and the Chapter was extended to Fairfield, two-thirds of the tithes being claimed by Lenton. The dispute was referred to Pope John XXII., who appointed the prior of Charley to hear the case, and the prior of Lenton was cited to appear before the prior of Charley in the church of St. Margaret, Leicester on the fourth legal day after the feast of St. Kenelm. This document is dated July, 1324. On the tenth of the following month he gave his decision in favour of Lichfield.

With the exception of the grange in Monks Dale the Priory of Lenton appears to have had no monastic buildings in the Peak Forest.