

THE FREE CHAPELS OF MARESFIELD AND DUDENEY.

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MARESFIELD CHAPEL.

THIS Chapel, which is mentioned in some of the earlier deeds relating to the castle and lordship of Pevensey, was situated about half a mile to the westward of the village of Nutley, on an eminence, now part of a wood still called "the Chapel Wood." At what time, and by whom it was founded, I have been unable to discover, but imagine it to have been built by Richer de Aquila (who died A.D. 1176), grandson of Richer of the same honour, a benefactor to the priories of Wilmington and Michelham. (See *Sussex Arch. Collections*, vols. iv. p. 43, and vi. p. 130.) He also built the original church of Maresfield, portions of which may still be traced in the north and south walls of the chancel of the present church. During the reigns of Edward I. and II., and until 1372, the honour of Pevensey was held by the crown; but in that year Edward III. gave it to his third son, John à Gaunt, upon his becoming King of Castile and Leon, as a consideration for the earldom of Richmond. It is in the deed recording this gift that we have the first documentary notice of this chapel. The grant in Rymer's *Fœdera*, p. 499, mentions "the advowsons of the churches of Maresfield and of the free chapel there, of the free chapel within the castle of Pevenese, of the priory of Wylmyngdon, and of the priory of Whithiam—the castle and leucate of Pevenese, and the manors of Wylyndon and Marsfeld, and the bailiwick of Endelenewyk—and the free chace of Ashedon, with the rights and liberties belonging to free chaces.—Westm. June 25, 1372." Nicholas de Lovayne, constable of the castle of Pevensey, and Roger Dalyngrigg, the sheriff, were authorised to give seizin.

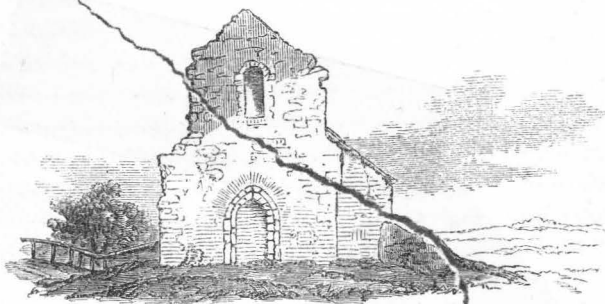
The records of the Duchy of Lancaster throw some light on

the endowment of this chapel. They state that Richer de Aquila, its probable founder, gave to it sixty acres of land on the forest of Ashdown, which land seems to be indicated by the name of Prest or Priest Ridge, by which a tract of forest land near Wychcross is still called. He also endowed it with other rights and privileges in the same forest, enumerated in an extent of the forest made in 1576, in which the separate rights of the parson and chaplain of Maresfield, as they were granted and confirmed by Edward III., are distinctly set forth. A copy of this, signed by many of the landowners of the district, is entered on a blank leaf of one of the older register books of the parish, and which is given in the Extracts from Parish Registers at Vol. IV. p. 247, *Arch. Collections*. This extent states, that the rights of the parson of Maresfield were to be exercised "where the prior of Michelham hath his kyne;" which plainly shows that this priory possessed property in Maresfield,—a fact which Mr. Cooper, in his history of it, was led to doubt, from his finding no mention of such property in his researches among its records. (See *Arch. Collections*, Vol. VI. p. 163. I have already stated, at p. 32 of volume viii., the probability that this chapel was appendant to the royal hunting-seat there alluded to. In it Wicliffe, the reformer, is said to have officiated during the time he was compelled to seek retirement and the protection of his patron, John à Gaunt, to escape popular indignation; which probably gave rise to the tradition, that he was once the incumbent of Mayfield, and which supposition led to a correspondence on the subject some years ago in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

When it was discontinued as a chapel, and suffered to go to decay, is involved in as much uncertainty as the date of its first foundation. But that it was no longer used for divine service in the year 1541, is shown by the churchwardens' accounts of that year, which are entered on a blank leaf of the same register-book, and which mention the transfer of the sacramental cup and vestments of this chapel to the church of Maresfield. The memorandum is as follows:—"And they (*guardiani ecclesie*) dyd ffurther accompt for iij*s.* iiij*d.*—a legacye gyven to the churche by Roger Atheral; and alsoe for a chalyce sometyme belonging to the chappelle of Notlye; the which sayd legacye and chalyce they haue receyved to the

use of the church of John Pettytt th' elder of Notlye; alsoe a new albe with an amysse; and soe thereby discharged the sayde John Pettytt from anye further payment of the sayde legacye and chalyce." This chalyce the church no longer possesses, it having been superseded probably by the present sacramental cup, the date of which, 1635, is marked upon it. The ancient font of the free chapel was found among its ruins, upwards of half a century ago, about two feet below the surface of the soil, and, having been again lost, was accidentally discovered by myself in a cowyard, where it had been used for some years as a drinking place for cattle, and is now in my possession. It is of the better kind of sandstone of the neighbourhood, circular in shape, and of rude construction. The under part of it shows that, when in use, it was supported by six pillars surrounding, and forming a part of, a central shaft, through which the drain-pipe passed. Although towards the close of the last century the walls of this chapel were standing more than six feet above the ground, but little trace of them now remains. They have shared the fate of many other interesting antiquarian relics in this county, having been despoiled by the neighbouring inhabitants, who, not having before their eyes the fear of the Manx curse, "May a stone of the church be found in the corner of your house," had recourse to these too ready materials for building and other purposes, until the whole was removed.

DUDENEY CHAPEL.



Hogg, in his Picturesque Views of the Antiquities of England and Wales, published in 1786, gives an ill-executed engraving of a chapel of this name, which, he says, was situated on the

forest of Ashdown; but of the precise locality of which the Rev. A. Hussey, when speaking of it, expresses his inability to obtain any information at the time he was preparing his work (*Notes on the Churches of Sussex*, p. 311) for publication. That such a chapel ever stood upon this forest at all is, I think, very questionable; for, besides other evidences of its not doing so, which the print itself affords, Hogg places in its background a castle, which no view taken on this forest would justify. Even assuming Hogg to be correct in his locality, it is very remarkable that such a building (or rather the ruins of such a building, for he represents it as in ruins), which, as he tells us, "had neither door nor window perfect, had an aisle on the south side, and was supported internally by massy pillars," should have stood on Ashdown Forest so lately as he describes it to have done, and that all remembrance of it should have entirely passed away. Possessing a somewhat long acquaintance with this forest myself, I have no recollection of such a ruin; nor had my inquiries among others whose knowledge of this forest extends much farther back than mine, been attended with any success. I was therefore disposed to consider Hogg as wrong in assigning this chapel to Ashdown Forest, or else that he had confounded his Dudeney chapel with the free chapel of Maresfield, of which an account is given in the preceding pages, and which stood upon ground once a part of this forest, though not so lately as 1786. In 1855, however, I was informed that the tenant of a small farm at Duddleswell, abutting on the forest, in grubbing up a shaw at the corner of one of his fields, had discovered, about sixteen inches below the surface, extensive remains of a very substantial building. From his account of it—for I did not see it myself, he having removed a considerable quantity of the materials, and the ground having been closed over the remainder, before I heard of the discovery—and from the character of one or two pieces of carved stone which were preserved, I am now led to consider these foundations as belonging to an ecclesiastical building. May they not, then, be the relics, and may not this be the site, of Hogg's Dudeney Chapel? And may not Duddleswell have taken its name from this chapel, and be a corruption of Dudeneyswell? Many coins have been found in the adjoining fields, all of them of the reign of Elizabeth.
