

PRE-REFORMATION VICARS OF CUCKFIELD.

BY THE REV. CANON J. H. COOPER, VICAR OF CUCKFIELD.

ON page 183 of Volume XL. of our "Collections" is the deed for "the erection of the Vicarage of Cuckfield," *i.e.*, the agreement made by St. Richard with the Priory of Lewes for the endowment of a resident vicar. It is taken from a copy made by Thomas Vicars, vicar from 1622 to 1638, and entered by him in a rough kind of common-place book of matters relating to Cuckfield, from which several extracts were taken by Sir W. Burrell in 1774 (Add. MSS., 5705, f. 242). The original was probably in the Bishop's Registry, from which, sad to say, all documents previous to Bishop William Rede's collections made *circa* 1370 have disappeared. This Bishop, by-the-by, was the first of Sussex archæologists and collected and transcribed the charters, registers, &c., of our Sussex See in three volumes which (marked A, B, E) still remain in the Bishop's Registry at Chichester. A similar agreement was made in 1247 with the Priory of Ruser for the Vicarage of Warnham ("S.A.C.," Vol. V.), and in 1252 with Lewes Priory for that of Brighton ("S.A.C.," Vol. XXIX., p. 185). Probably many other vicarages were "erected" during Richard's Episcopate. It appears from the "Taxatio" of Pope Nicholas IV. that by 1290 out of the 286 parishes in Sussex 112 had their vicarages already founded, and that the incomes of 81 of these vicarages were below 10 marks (taking every source of income into account) and therefore exempted from the tax of a tenth. Cuckfield was to be worth 10 marks, or £6. 13s. 4d. The first Vicar, *Walter de Warmtape*, was the good Bishop's chaplain and, like him, we may well suppose, an earnest, devout man. The second vicar was appointed by "the patriotic Bishop," Stephen de Burghstede, who took a conspicuous

part on the side of Simon de Montfort against Henry III. The troubles in which his unrestrained love of sport led *William de Staynes*, or *Straynes*, are faithfully recorded more than once in our "Collections" ("S.A.C.," Vol. XVII., p. 119; Vol. XL., p. 186). His name occurs in the "Calendar of the Treasury," made by Walter Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter and Lord Treasurer in 1323, containing a description of the documents then preserved in the Treasury; there is this entry (Vol. I., p. 78), "Obligacio (*i.e.*, Bond) Will. Vicar. de Cukefeld Cicestr. Dioc. facta sub dat. a^o Dni MCCLXXXV^{to}."

The next Vicar whose name is known was *Robert Longe*, of Seaford, who resigned in 1349 to make way for a nominee of Pope Clement VI., *William of Chinting* (a manor at the east end of Seaford then belonging to the Priory of Michelham). The grant runs thus: "To William de Chyntyng Provision of the perpetual Vicarage of Cokefeud in the diocese of Chichester void by the resignation of Robert Longe of Sefford" (Calendar of Papal Registers, Petitions to the Pope, Vol. XIX., 8, Clement VI., f. 57d; Calendar of Papal Letters, Vol. CXCIIL., 8, Clement VI., 1349). This grant is dated from Avignon, 11 Kal. July.

Of another Vicar we only know the Christian name, *John*, and that he so neglected his parish that the Cuckfield people complained of him to the Archbishop, as our Bishop William de Lenne (or Lynn) was then on a long visit to Rome. The Lambeth Register, Langham ff. 54-5, thus records the proceedings: A complaint of the parishioners of "Cukefeld Cyc. Dioc.," against "dom. Johanem Vicar." of that church for non-residence, 2 Id. April, 1366. A commission of the Lord Archbishop was directed to Master John de Appleby, Dean of St. Paul's, London, to proceed and enquire into the cause of the complaint, "Apud Magefeld" (Mayfield). Vicar John seems to have retired at once, for later in the same year a new Vicar, *William of Northwold* had an action brought against him in the King's Bench by the Earl of Arundel for the payment of the large sum of £40 (seven times the income of the living), which he says the Vicar owed

him. The record is in the De Banco Roll of 40 Edw. III. (1366), m. 357. "Rīcus Comes Arundell et Surria per attorn. suum optulit se versus Willm de Northwolde, vicar. ecclīæ de Cukefeld de p̄lito quod reddat ei quadraginta libr. quas ei debet et injuste detinet. Et ipse non venit et præcept. fuit vicecomiti quod sum. eum; et vicecomes modo mand. quod nihil habet. Ideo præcept. fuit vic. quod capiat eum." From this it appears that the Vicar did not appear and that when the sheriff went after him he found that he had nothing with which payment could be made and so the final order of the Court was to arrest him. More we do not know.

There seem to have been frequent exchanges of the living, as we learn from the Patent Rolls. Perhaps the beneficed clergy were not very comfortable in those days; between the King and the Pope they were sorely taxed, and moreover their houses were the hotels in which travellers expected to find entertainment. So we find now and then in the Patent Rolls a licence to exchange granted by the King, for the King interfered in such matters, and there were fees for the officers of his Courts. In the 40 years (1393-1430) the Vicarage of Cuckfield was exchanged seven times.

In 1388 *John Forester* sued a brother clerk named John Pomfret for a debt of 50 marks (£33 odd). The Pat. Roll, 12 Rich. II., 1, m. 31, Nov. 16, records that "John Forester, vicar of the church of Cokefeld, has lately impleaded in our Court before the Justices of the King's Bench John Pomfret clerk respecting a debt of 50 marks which he demands." Then in September, 1393, the Patent Roll of 17 Rich. II., 1, m. 27, No. 339, has the following: "The King to the venerable father in Christ W[illiam Bottlesham] Bishop of Rochester, greeting: Whereas John Forester, Vicar of Cokefeld, & John Stoke parson of the church of Swannescomb intend canonically to exchange their benefices, We present the aforesaid John Forester to the Church of Swannescomb, which is now in our gift by reason of the minority of Roger, son & heir of Edmund Earl of March deceased, & beg you to admit the said John Forester to the said

Church, and institute him as parson thereof. At Westminster 29 Sept. By Writ under the Privy Seal." This Roger was the son of Edmund, Earl of March, and Philippa, daughter of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, and was declared by Parliament in 1385 to be heir to the Crown.

In 1400 *John Storeton* exchanges with *Richard Peere*, whose name occurs in one of the Magdalen College Deeds (Macray's Muniments of Magd. Coll., Ox., Brackley A., 91). In 1402 Peere with *Thomas Seward* (Bp. R. Rede's Register). In 1406 *William Malpas* was presented by Henry IV. (Pat. Roll, 8 Henry V., 1, m. 28, "Will^s Malpas capellanus habet literas regias pro præsentatione ad vicariam ecclie de Cokefeld vacantem, &c."); he too exchanged in 1410 with *Will. Tabbard*, Rector of West Wickham (Denne's Regist., Roff., Add. MS., 11819), and became Treasurer of Chichester Cathedral in 1414. In 1412 "*John Port*" exchanged with *Robert Browe*, or *Brown*, warden of the Hospital of St. Thomas, Birmingham (Hayley's MS.). During the vacancy of the See in Nov., 1415, the Dean and Chapter presented *John Schyreborne* on Brown's resignation, and he was admitted by Archbishop Chichele in London (Lambeth Registers, Chichele, 2, f. 199), but exchanged the next year with *John*, son of *Robert de Spurston*, the Vicar of Great Tey, the patrons being Canon William Petteworth (*locum tenens* of Richard Talbot, the Dean), and the Chapter of Chichester (Chichele f. 203b). In an action brought by Thomas Glade, citizen and goldsmith of London, before Richard Norton and the other judges of the King's Bench against Robert Browe for payment of a debt of 40 marks, he is described as late Vicar of Cookfield (Pat. Roll, 9 Henry V., 1, m. 21, at West., xxii. Jun.). The See being still vacant, Archbishop Chichele in August, 1417, admitted *Richard Lynde*, presbyter, to the Vicarage of Cuckfield on the presentation of the Dean and Chapter (Lamb. Reg., Chichele, 1, f. 88). In Dec., 1430, the same Archbishop admitted "*dominus Thomas Symond capellanus*" to the perpetual Vicarage of Cuckfield, vacant by the resignation of *Thomas Wotton* "in causâ permutationis" (Lamb. Reg., Chichele, 2, f. 245b). Symond had been

Vicar of Brighton. Another Vicar's name, *John Fitz-roberd*, occurs in the De Banco Roll (Trin., 10 Hen. V., m. 76), as his executors had to sue the executors of the will of one Robert Glade for money they alleged was unjustly kept back. In Nov., 1458, the presentation of *John Tewkesbury* (rector of St. Margaret Pattens from 1446 to 1450 and then of Puttenham, Herts), was "ratified" by Henry VI. (Pat. Roll, 37 Hen. VI., 1, m. 17). The name of *John Bullok* appears as a witness to a grant of lands in 1472, and Bishop Storey's Register (A) records his citation to the Visitation of 1478. In this year the Bishop went from Ruser to Cuckfield on July 7, "the feast of the Translation of S. Thomas the Martyr," and the next day visited the church at Cuckfield and went on to East Grinstead. The Sussex roads could not have been so very bad in his days.

Enough has been said in the Paper on the Burrell Family respecting its two Vicars, *Gerard* and *Ninian Burrell*, uncle and nephew, in all probability. The latter lived on into "a crisis" in the history of the Church. He saw Convocation willingly reject the supremacy of the Pope and unwillingly accept the supremacy of the King. He saw the sudden fall of Wolsey and the gradual rise of Thomas Cromwell in his place. His patron, Bishop Sherborne, an octogenarian, unable to cope with the repeated interferences of his "singular goode lorde Cromwell," resigned the See in June, 1536, and died the following August. Probably the Vicar of Cuckfield died about the same time; the last mention of his name is in the "Valor Ecclesiasticus" in 1535, and his successor, *John Savage*, was acting as Trustee of the School in the 29th Henry VIII., 1537-8. The new Vicar must at once have entered on a new order of things. The Priory of Lewes, which had for four and a half centuries received the great tithes as Rector of Cuckfield, disappeared. On Feb. 16th, 1538, Henry VIII. gave it and all its possessions to "Sir Thomas Crumwell Lord Crumwell in consideration of good, true, & faithful service." Copies of this Grant, the original of which is in the Record Office, were made by Rev. W. Hayley (MS. 6351, f. 9),

and by Sir W. Burrell (5702, f. 164), and extracts by Dugdale (Mon., Ed. 1825, Vol. V., p. 5). The statement of the lands of the Priory has not been printed in our "Collections," and is interesting as showing the proportion of cultivated and barren land on a large Sussex estate in the first half of the sixteenth century. It mentions 1,000 messuages, 600 cottages, 1,500 gardens, 20 dovecots, 10 watermills, 8 windmills, 4,000 acres of arable land, 2,000 of meadow, 5,000 of pasture, 1,500 of wood, 2,000 of marsh, 3,000 of broom (*Jampnorum*, from Jan, the Breton name for broom, *genista*, Du Cange) and gorse (*bruerum*, *bruyere*), 500 of alders (probably grown for charcoal), 500 of butchers-broom (*rustariæ*), 2,000 of land covered with water—in all 20,500 acres in 86 parishes and hamlets, which are enumerated, also 16 manors and 19 vicarages, of which "Cookfield" is one. Of all this Cromwell was to pay as a tenth £77. 14s. 5¼d. yearly to the King. The Priory buildings, the finest in all Sussex, were at once pulled down, not by any Sussex men, but by callous creatures brought down from London for the purpose—all save the Prior's house, which was preserved to make a residence for Cromwell's son Gregory. On going there for his honeymoon the young man writes: "It doth much please me and my wife, & is unto her so commodious that she thinketh herself to be here right well settled." But not for long; in June, 1540, Cromwell was sent to the Tower, and in a month's time the fate which had through his means been that of many innocent victims at last overtook him, and the estates and rectories of the Priory were given to Anne of Cleves, as a consolation, or reward, for quietly resigning her husband.

Vicar Savage had no difficulty about his manor, as the first entry of the Courts held during his incumbency is: "Curia 1^{ma} Johis Savage, S. Theol. Baccal. 6^o Maii A^o. 30, Hen. 8" (1538). There were Manor Courts every year for the rest of Henry's reign. He had, however, some difficulty over the payment of the six marks assigned to the Vicar in St. Richard's deed. There is a Decree of the Court of Surveyors, 34 Henry VIII. (Misc. Books, Augmentation Office), 1542, in these words: "John

Savage, Clerk, Vicar of Cokefeld, alleges that he and his predecessors have always received an annuity of £4 from the rectory of this church formerly appropriated to the late monastery of Lewes. The Vicar was seised of the said annuity by the hands of Robert Peterson, Prior, & by the late Earl of Essex [Crumwell] but that after his attainder the rectory was granted to the Lady Anne of Cleves without reservation of the annuity—Obtained with £10 arrears." In the Subsidy Roll of 34 and 35 Henry VIII. (1543) is the entry :

"A stokke of goods belonging to the Broderhed of Cokefeld being in divers mennes' hands as foloweth,
iijs^s iiiij^d In thands of John Savage, clerk. v^{li}."

"John Savauge Vicar of Cokefeld" is a witness to the will of his parishioner, John Beckeley, in 1544, and also to that of John Becke, dated Oct., 1547, five months before King Henry's death. At the Visitation of Bishop Daye, who had been released from prison the year before, held at "Hendfield" on 28th Sept., 1554 (soon after Queen Mary's marriage), there were cited :

"Cowkfeld—M^r John Savage Vic. ibm.
D^{ns} Johnes Ferres,
D^{ns} Rogerus Barrow cur. ibm. comp.

Thomas Lynfield, als Symonds, Jo. Blake" [churchwardens]. Also "Hurstepoint. M^r Johes Savage, Rec ibm.

D^{ns} Jo. Laurentius plumpton cur."

The next Visitation was that of the Archbishop. It was held in Cranmer's name (although he was then confined at Oxford), 28 Jan., 1555, at the Church of St. Maria de Westout, Lewes. The entry in the register is :

"Cuckfelde. In possessione Dnæ Annæ de Cleva
Syr Johes Savage, Vicar ibm. comp^t et exh^t¹
Dns Rogerus, curatus ibm. non comp^t quia infirm
Johes Roberts, Thomas Symonds, Johes Starye."

At the Visitation of Bishop George [Daye] at Lewes, 1 June, 1556, the entry is :

"Cuckfelde. Ecclia est in possessione Dnæ Annæ de Cleva.
M^r. Jo. Savage, vicarius ibm. Dns Rogerus Barrow.

Dns Johannes Clifforde, ludimagister" (master of the Grammar School) "Thomas Byrkenshaw, Edward Hussey, Will Lynfylde, Will. Dombrell, Thomas Simonds, Jo. Anstey."

¹ "Comparuit et exhibituit," i.e., appeared and showed his Letters of Orders, &c.

Vicar Savage held manor courts in the 1st, 3rd, 6th and 7th of Edward VI. Then we find "Curia ten. in vigiliis Pasce. anno Phil & Marie 2^o & 3^o," and, lastly, "A^o Eliz. 1 & 2." So that he must have been Vicar from 1537 to 1559, and went through a series of crises. He could not have been married, or he would have been turned out on the accession of Queen Mary, when about one-sixth of the English clergy were deprived of their benefices—nearly all on account of their having wives. When the reformed English Prayer Book was enjoined in 1559 only 300 clergy refused to accept it. John Savage and Cuckfield were not peculiar. The same changes were made in every parish, and the clergy and people took them quietly and said little about them.

One curious memorial of the last of our Pre-Reformation Vicars remains in "The Vicar's Book." It is a declaration made by his nephew in August, 1616:

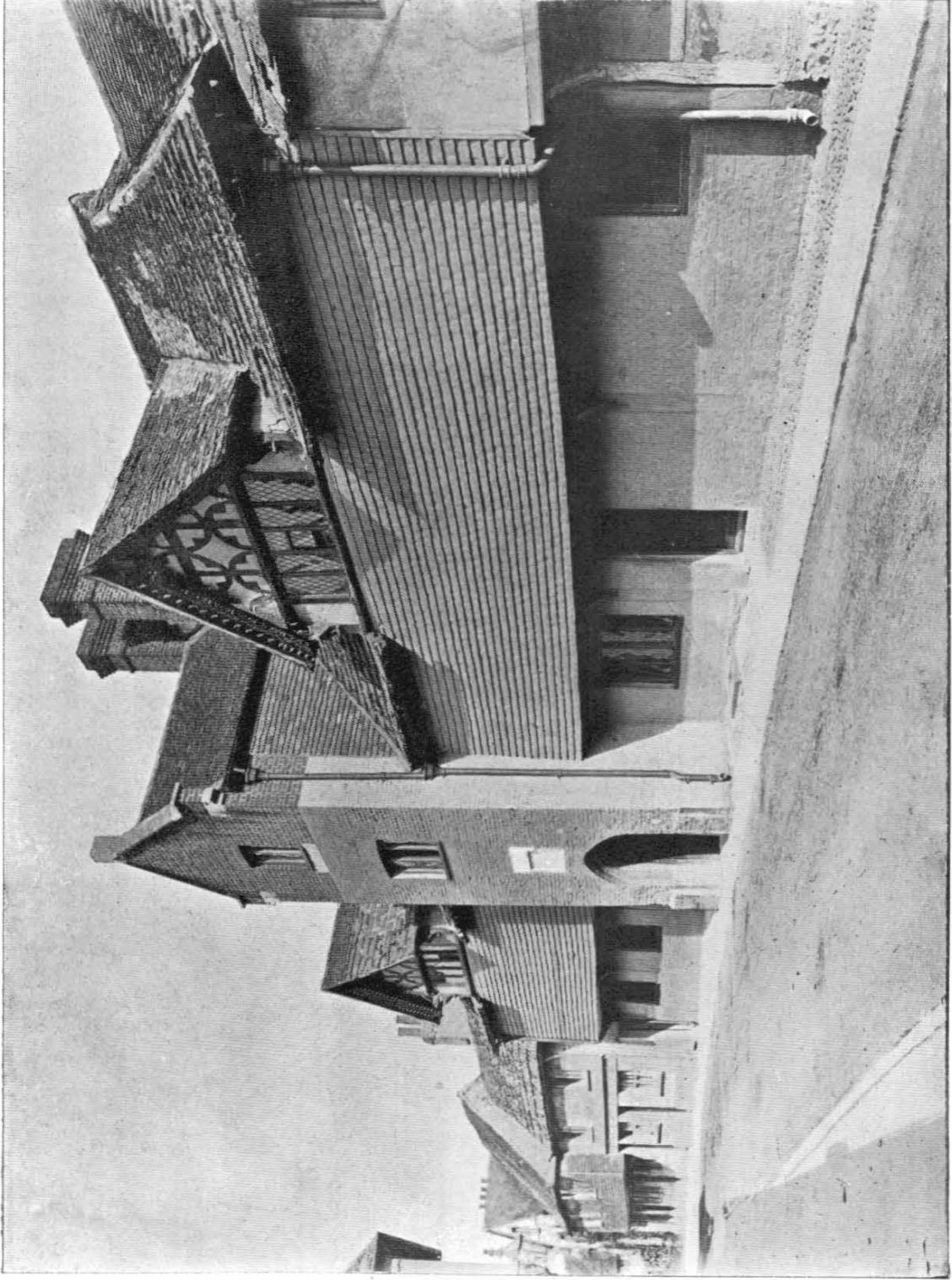
"I, William Savadge, Vicar of Rottingdene, do testify that in my youth I was brought up with an uncle of mine, one Joh. Savadge, Vicar of Cokefield, & he kept certain oxen & sett unto Munkton Court barne, & one other barne standing on the East side of the Vicarage House, Tithe corne as I suppose. I was then but a boy. That same Munkton Court barne did stand in a close at the back side of a row of houses & shoppes that leadeth to the church there, & he was covered with Horsham stones, & it was told me by my friends that my uncle did enjoy certain portions by a lease from the Abbey of Lewes which I heard more of after I came from the University of Cambridge than I did know before I went thither. I remember my uncle kept that time a court, & had certain copyholders under him. M^r Nin. Ward did keep it for my uncle as I do remember.

by mee Willi. Savadge

Postscript. That which I heard after I came from Cambridge was that my uncle would have given unto me some of those portions if he had not been prevented in it."

I must acknowledge my obligation to the Rev. G. Hennessy for some of the references in this Paper; he has with wonderful industry made out lists of the names of the Incumbents of Sussex Parishes since the thirteenth century.

Plate 7.



STEYNING GRAMMAR SCHOOL.