

NOTICES OF THE  
Early History of the Vicarage of Claxton  
IN NORFOLK.

COMMUNICATED BY

THE REV. G. MUNFORD, VICAR OF EAST WINCH.

---

THE Leiger Book of the Augustinian Priory of Bliburgh in Suffolk is a beautiful manuscript on vellum, written in a small and much contracted character, apparently about the close of the fifteenth century. It consists of 124 pages in quarto, and is in excellent preservation. Whether this be what Sir Richard Gipps referred to, in his Suffolk Collections, when he said the Register of the priory of Bliburgh was in Gresham College Library, we have no means of judging: Tanner, however, seems to have doubted Sir Richard's assertion; and we believe the present manuscript has been in the possession of the Blois family ever since they became owners of the site of the priory.

This Leiger Book, although of course chiefly relating to Suffolk, contains some few things which will probably be of interest to Norfolk Archaeologists, as serving to fill up certain *lacunæ* of our county historians.

In his account of the parish of Claxton, Blomefield, or rather Parkin, when mentioning the church, merely observes: "The church of St. Andrew at Claxton was appropriated

to the Priory of Bliburgh, to which it was probably given by William de Cheney, Lord of this town in the reign of Henry II."

From the following document, which is here given *in extenso*, it will be seen that the appropriation of the church of St. Andrew at Claxton to the Priory of Bliburgh was made by Roger de Claxton,—of the same family, probably, as the Walter de Claxton, who, Parkin says, "had an interest in Claxton in the 20th of Henry III." (1236.) Unfortunately, the grants copied into this Leiger Book are most of them without date, but *this*, from its being confirmed by John of Oxford, who was consecrated Bishop of Norwich in 1175, must have been prior to that period.

The earliest vicar of Claxton in Parkin's list, was John Fowas, who was instituted in 1334; but there must have been several before him, as the charter of John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich, to be given below, proves that provision for the sustentation of a vicar here, had been made more than a century previous to that event; their names, however, with two exceptions which we shall meet with by and bye, are now utterly lost.

*Grant of the Church of St. Andrew at Claxton to the  
Priory of Bliburgh, by Roger de Claxton.*

"Domino et venerabili patri spirituali Johanni Dei gratia Norwici Episcopo, Rogerus de Clackestune salutem. Noverit sancta discrecio vestra me quantum ad advocatum et ad personam laicam pertinet concessisse dedisse et carta mea confirmavisse ecclesiam sancti Andree de Clakestune cum omnibus pertinentiis suis ecclesie sancte Marie de Blyburgh et canonicis ibidem Deo servientibus in liberam et perpetuam elemosinam pro amore Dei et pro salute anime mee et uxoris mee Laurette et antecessorum meorum et pro salute anime

filii mei Willelmi et heredum meorum. Inde est quod vos benevolentiam quam vestram habetis imploro quatenus concessionis et donacionis mee elemosinam et autoritate vestra confirmare dignemini. Hiis testibus, Odone presbitero de Hassebi, Herveo sacreste de Blyburgh, Rogero sacreste de Stoia, Ricardo clero de Senges, Ermaldo de Blyburgh, Ricardo de Blyburgh." (n. d.)

This grant was accordingly confirmed by John of Oxford some time between the year 1175, when he was consecrated to the see of Norwich, and 1200, when he died. (A.) At a subsequent period he added a second charter, reserving the rights of the Archdeacon of Suffolk, and due obedience to the church at Norwich, as well as making provision for the appointment of a Vicar. (B.)

In the sixth year of his episcopacy (1206), John de Grey, successor to John of Oxford in the Bishoprick of Norwich, inspected the charter of his predecessor, and confirmed the same, as below. (C.)

(A.)

*Confirmation of the above Grant, by John of Oxford.*

"Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum per-  
venerit Johannes Dei gratia Norwici Episcopus salutem in  
Domino. Universitati vestre notum esse volumus nos confir-  
mavisse canonice ecclesie Sancte Marie de Blyburgh ecclesiam  
de Clackistone ex donacione Rogeri militis ejusdem ville.  
Et ut hec mea confirmacio perpetuam habeat firmitatem si-  
gilli nostri apposizione eam communuimus. Testibus, Thoma  
et Johanne Archidiaconis, Gaulfrido capellano, Magistro  
Rogero, Magistro Lamberto, Magistro Waltero de Calna,  
Roberto clero de Chipeh." (n. d.)

(B.)

*Second Confirmation, by John of Oxford.*

“Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum per  
venerit Johannes Dei gratia Norwici Episcopus salutem in  
Domino. Ad universorum volumus pervenire noticiam nos  
divine miserationis intuitu religionis et favore concessisse  
dilectis filiis nostris canonicis de Blyburgh ecclesiam de  
Clacstone in usus proprios cum omnibus ad ipsam perti-  
nentibus ad sui sustentacionem perpetuo possedendam ex  
donacione Rogeri de Clacstone ejusdem ecclesie patroni,  
salva possessione Galfridi Archidiaconi Suffolcie quamdui  
vixerit, salvis et honore et reverencia et obediencia et de-  
bitis consuetudinibus sancte Norwici ecclesie, et honesta vi-  
carii sustentacione qui in memorata ecclesia ministrabit, et  
ut hec nostra concessio perpetuam obtineat firmitatem eam  
presenti scripto sigilli nostri patrocinio confirmamus. Tes-  
tibus, Godfrido Archidiacono, Eustachio capellano, Roberto  
de Clepeham, Magistris Roberto de Waytone, Lamberto,  
Wilhelmo.” (*n. d.*)

---

(C.)

*Insperimus Charter of John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich.*

“Omnibus sancte Matris ecclesie filiis ad quos presens  
scriptum pervenerit Johannes Dei gratia Norwici Episcopus  
salutem in Domino. Noverit universitas vestra nos cartam  
bone memorie Johannis quandam Norwici Episcopi prede-  
cessoris nostri in hac forma verborum inspexisse:” [Here  
follows the recital of the foregoing charter.] . . “Cum legitur  
ligari non debeat os bovis triturantis, sed pius est attencius  
providere ut qui lueris spiritualibus incessanter inhiant  
bonorum temporalium sustentacionem gratulentur, ut ipsius  
predecessoris nostri concessio per nostram confirmationem

firmior existat et validior dictorum inopie canonicorum pio  
conpacientes intuitu concessionem supradictam sicut raciona-  
biliter facta est presenti scripto et sigilli nostri apposizione  
confirmamus et communuimus. Hiis testibus, Magistro Ro-  
gero de Tywa, Humfrido capellano, &c. Datum apud Stains  
per manum Roberti Dunelmensis, decimo kal. Aprilis pon-  
tificatus nostri Anno VI."

---

In the following document we meet with the name of a  
very early vicar of Claxton, perhaps the earliest,—John de  
Redenreff.

*The Taxation of the Church of Claxton.*

"Omnibus hoc scriptum visuris Ranulfus divina misera-  
cione Cyestrie ecclesie minister humilis salutem in domino.  
Ad omnium volumus noticiam pervenire vicariam ecclesie de  
Clacstone nobis presentibus eo tempore quo curiam episcopatus  
Norwici gerebamus nomine bone memorie Domini Johannis  
de Gray tune episcopi Norwici de mandato et autoritate  
ipsius episcopi in hunc modum fore taxatam, videlicet quod  
vicarius qui pro tempore fuerit percipiet nomine vicarie per-  
petue omnia ad dictam ecclesiam pertinentia exceptis decimis  
bladorum et pisarum et fabarum et excepta decima marisci  
qui vocatur Dunrewiesholm et exceptis duabus acris terre que  
jacent juxta cimiterium versus borealem. Hanc autem vica-  
riam ita taxatam deditus autoritate predicti episcopi Johanni  
de Redenreff capellano et ipsum in eadem vicarium institui-  
mus perpetuum et fecimus in corporalem possessionem induci  
ita quod omnia onera episcopalicia debita et consueta sustinebit;  
facta autem fuit hec taxacio per consensum prioris et conven-  
tus de Blyburgh predicte ecclesie patronorum. Testibus,  
Roberto capellano de Roclunde et aliis. Datum apud Cacham  
per manum Godefridi die sancti Barnabe apostoli, pontificatus  
nostri anno tercio."

Upon the death of Roger de Clakestone, Ada, his daughter, who seems to have been his heir, renewed, not only the grant of the church of St. Andrew, but many other donations which her father, and others of her ancestors, had made to the priory of Bliburgh.

*Renewal of the Grant, by Ada de Clakestone.*

“Omnibus Christi fidelibus Ada filia Rogeri de Clakestone salutem. Noverint universi me concessisse et hac presenti carta mea confirmavisse Deo et ecclesie sancte Marie de Blyburgh et canonicis ibidem Deo servientibus omnes donaciones et libertates et tenuras quas Rogerus de Clakistone pater meus et ceteri predecessores mei fecerunt predicte ecclesie et canonicis scilicet ecclesiam sancti Andree de Clakistone cum pertinentiis suis, et in villa de Bulcamp totum alnetum, &c. &c. Tenendum et habendum in perpetuum libere et quiete absque omni terreno servicio,” &c. &c. (n. d.)

---

The next deed we meet with, relating to this parish, is that of Robert de Vals. The family of de Vallibus, or de Vaux, was very early enfeoffed of lands in Claxton, but whether this Robert was in any way related to Ada de Clakestone, or how he came to have the right of confirming the gift of the Church of St. Andrew to the priory of Bliburgh, we know not, but so it was.

*Renewal of the Grant, by Robert de Vals.*

“Omnibus sancte matris ecclesie filiis tam clericis quam laicis Robertus de Vals salutem. Notum sit omnibus vobis quod ego Robertus de Vals concedo et hac carta mea confirmo donacionem ecclesie Sancte Andree de Clakestune ecclesie

Sancte Marie de Blyburgh et Rogero priori et canonicis ibidem  
Deo servientibus in perpetuam elemosinam libere et quiete  
absque omni calumpnia quantum ad me pertinet, et hanc  
donacionem confirmo pro anima patris mei Willelmi de Vals  
et omnium parentum meorum. Hiis testibus, Odone pres-  
bitero, Herveo capellano de Blyburgh, Olivero de Vals,  
Galfrido de Turford." (n. d.)

---

Sir William de Kerdestone, lord of Claxton, Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in the 25th and 26th Edward I. (1297-1298) married Margaret de Gaunt, by whom he had Sir Roger, his son and heir, who was Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in the 5th Edward III. (1331), and who died in 1337, seized of Claxton and many other manors in Norfolk and Suffolk. Sir William, the father, again renewed the grant of the church of St. Andrew at Claxton to the priory of Bliburgh (A.); and in the 18th Edward II. (1325), Sir Roger, the son, by a deed of agreement, restored to the said priory an acre of land in Claxton, which had of right belonged to the church, but which his late father, Sir William, had unknowingly retained in his own hands. (B.)

---

(A.)

*Renewal of the Grant, by Sir William de Kerdestone.*

"Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos, &c. Willelmus de Kerdistone salutem. Noveritis me pro salute anime mee, &c., dedisse et concessisse et hac, &c., ecclesie sancte Marie de Blyburgh et canonicis regularibus ibidem, &c. omnes donaciones quas antecessores mei dictis canonicis fecerunt, sicut ecclesiam de Claxtone cum omnibus ad eam pertinen-

tibus : et in villa de Bulcamp totum alnetum, &c., &c. . . . .  
 Tenendum et habendum, &c., &c. Hiis testibus, Domino  
 Falcone, Baynard, et aliis.” (n. d.)

---

(B.)

*Agreement between the Prior and Convent of St. Mary's  
 at Bliburgh and Roger de Kerdestone.*

“ In festo exaltationis Sancte Crucis anno Regni Regis Edwardi filii Regis Edwardi 18. Convenitur inter religiosos viros fratrem Alexandrum priorem et conventum de Blyburgh ex una parte et dominum Rogerum de Kerdistone militem dominum de Bulcampe ex altera, videlicet, &c., &c. . . . . Idem dominus Rogerus mera voluntate reddit eisdem priori et conventui unam acram terre cum pertinentiis in villa de Claxtone que vocatur Mellerisland de dote ecclesie ejusdem ville quam pater suus ignoranter detenuit. Warantizat et dictus dominus Rogerus pro se et heredibus suis quod si ipsum contingat seu heredes suos in aquietacione seu defencione religiosorum predictorum deficere extunc dicti religiosi et eorum successores in predictis, &c. in quorumque manibus devenirent possunt distingere.” (n. d.)

---

In 1265 an agreement was made between the prior and convent of Bliburgh and the Vicar of Claxton, respecting the Archdeacon's procurations ; and here occurs the name of another early incumbent in the church of St. Andrew, long prior to John Fowas, the first vicar named by Parkin,—that is, Robert de Schotisnelle.

*Of the Archdeacon's Procurations.*

“ Notum sit omnibus quod cum prior de Blyburgh et ejusdem loci conventus rectores ecclesie de Clacstone Robertum

de Schotisnelle ejusdem ecclesie vicarium super annua procuracione loci archidiacono que pro tempore esset debita coram Magistro G. le Bigot officario Domini Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi in episcopatu Norwici, sede vacante,\* autoritate ordinaria cognoscente traxissent in eadem, ac idem officarius ad dicte vicarie taxacionem legitime faciendam ex suo processit officio, demum inter partes predictas amicabiliter convenit super premisis ita quod predictus vicarius concessit dictis priori et conventui omnia homagia tam libera quam servilia ad dictam ecclesiam spectantia quecunque fuerint illa cum eorum tenementis et exactionibus omnibus et singulis habenda absque omni calumpnia; et quod procuraciones et sinodalia ad eorum exoneracionem eo ibidem existente vicario exsolvet ad plenum; cui quidem vicario dicti prior et conventus decimas marisci dicti Thurvardisholm et molendinorum tam aquaticorum quam adventorum in Clacston sitorum cum omnibus terris arabilibus et minutis decimis ad dicte ecclesie altarium spectantibus exceptis decimis pullorum et porcellorum et precipue decimis fructuum de prefata terra provenientium de mera gratia concesserunt ejus perpetuo percipiendas; unde dictus vicarius ad sanctam Dei Evangeliam corporale prestitit sacramentum quod ab hac die in posterum predicta ecclesia nunquam ad ampliorem aut pinguorem spirabit porcorum sub pena centum solidorum dictis priori et conventui infra quindenam a tempore quo contraveniretur nomine interesse solvendorum, et quod dicti prior et conventus dictum vicarium super dicta portione taxanda vel abbrevianda seu minuenda sub pena consimili dicto vicario solvenda nullatenus impetent de cetero vel inquietabunt. Preterea idem vicarius presenti tenore se obligat virtute sacramenti prestiti sub pena prescripta quod vicariam suam vel res ad eam spectantes preter

\* Simon de Waltone, Bishop of Norwich, died in 1265, the date of this deed; but although his successor, Roger de Skerning, was immediately after chosen Bishop, he was not consecrated till the latter end of the following year.

consensum dictorum prioris et conventuum nulli ad firmam dimittet per quem eis durior constituatur adversarius. In ejus rei testimonium dictus vicarius sigillum suum una cum sigillo dicti officiarii huic parti penes dictos priorem et conventum residenti duxit apponendum. Actum apud Wangeford in crastino die beati Petri ad Cathedram anno gratie M.CC.LXV. coram magistro Henrico de Nouwerk rectore ecclesie de Wrentham, presentibus Magistro Rogero de Welles, Johanne capellano de Blyburgh, magistro Thoma de Bramtone, Johanne Bomund, et aliis. Ista concordia indentata."

---

In 1276 the prior and convent of Bliburgh procured the bull of Pope Innocent the Fifth, confirming to them all their possessions; it is dated from St. Peter's at Rome, the second of the calends of May, in the first year of his pontificate; and, five years after this, the same prior and convent had a like confirmation of all the churches of which they were then in possession, by Archbishop Peckham: this deed is dated at Claxton, the fourteenth of the calends of July, 1281, the third year of his consecration. Both these documents are copied into the Leiger Book; but as they are in the usual form, and contain nothing material to our purpose, beyond the fact that the church of St. Andrew at Claxton appears in them both, they are here omitted.

---

John Fowas, who was presented to the Vicarage of St. Andrew at Claxton by the prior and convent of Bliburgh in 1334, appears to have been a man of some consideration, if we may judge by his dealings in houses and lands. He was also a benefactor to the priory of Bliburgh, and to his own church. With one of the deeds relating to this vicar

of Claxton, illustrative of the wretched state of the peasantry in the fourteenth century, we will conclude our extracts from the Leiger Book of the Priory of Bliburgh.

*Grant of a Native, and of Lands, to John Fowas and others.*

“ Sciant presentes et futuri quod ego Ricardus Gorge dedi concessi et hac, &c. Henrico de Harupult chevaler, Johanni Fouas vicario ecclesie de Claxtone, et Henrico Bred, Arnulphum Bethefen nativum meum cum tota sequela sua procreata et procreanda et cum omnibus terris et tenementis, bonis et catallis suis perquisitis et perquirendis cum pertinentiis sine ullo retenemento, dedi etiam et concessi eisdem totum illum mesuagium meum cum omnibus terris et tenementis cum omnibus suis pertinentiis que Rogerus Daniel quondam tenuit in Thoritone de Thoma Gorge patre meo habendum et tenendum predictis Henrico, Johanni, et Henrico, et heredibus et assignatis suis de capitalibus dominis feodi pro serviciis inde debitiss, &c., et ego predictus Ricardus et heredes mei totum predictum Arnulphum cum tota sequela sua procreata et procreanda et cum omnibus terris et tenementis, bonis et catallis suis perquisitis et perquirendis cum pertinentiis ac etiam totum predictum mesuagium cum omnibus terris et tenementis cum pertenentiis que predictus Rogerus Daniel quondam tenuit de Thoma Gorgis patre meo in villa de Thoritone ut predictum est, predictis Henrico de Haruhult, Johanni Fouas vicario de Claxtone et Henrico Bred et heredibus et assignatis suis contra gentes omnes warantizabo in perpetuum. In cuius, &c. Datum die dominica proxima festo sancti Ambrosii Anno Regni Regis Edwardii tercii a conquestu xviii.”