

THE EARLIEST MENTION OF BOW CHURCH

By B. W. KISSAN, B.A. (Cantab. & Lond.)

IN a Cotton MS. there are four folios containing some early obituaries belonging to the Cathedral Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury. The earliest of all is in commemoration of William I¹ and is in a twelfth-century hand. All that is recorded of the King in this obituary is that he restored to Christ Church all the lands which had in both ancient and recent times been taken away from that church. A list of the lands is given and contains some 28 names of places in Kent and elsewhere. Interspersed among these 28 are a certain four prebends and two *monasteria*. Of the latter, one is *Lundonie monasterium sancte Marie cum terris et domibus quas Liuingus presbyter et uxor illius Lundonie habuerunt*.

This list is to be found, with slight variations, in Gervase of Canterbury's *Gesta Regum*,² which was written about 1200. Instead of the words quoted above, Gervase has *ecclesiam sanctae Marie quae est in Lundonia*.

The list also occurs in one extant version of the report of the Pennenden Heath trial of 1072, when Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, was called to account before the County of Kent for his encroachments on Church property. Lanfranc, according to that version, recovered property which, again with only slight variations, is the property listed in the obituary. The reference to St. Mary's of London is in almost identically the same words as in the obituary. If we can rely on this record, the church was restored to Christ Church in 1072.

This version of the trial is printed by John Selden.³ He says he found it in a MS. belonging to Rochester Cathedral. His source is now in a Cotton MS.⁴ which, according to Dr. W. Levison, is no doubt of Rochester origin.⁵ Selden's original was written in the early part of the thirteenth century.

However, Dr. Levison shows⁶ that this version is not the earliest account of the trial. He found an earlier one copied on a thirteenth-century roll in the Chapter Library at Canterbury,⁷ and by means of it confirmed the date 1072. This early account contains much less detail than the other and has a very much shorter list of lands recovered by Lanfranc and omits everything outside Kent. St. Mary's of London is not there.

It may be as well to mention here a third version of the account of the trial. This is in the *Textus Roffensis*.⁸ It agrees closely with the Selden version, except for the list of lands, which is the same as on the Canterbury roll.

This version, like Selden's and unlike the Canterbury one, purports to be written after the death of the Conqueror and records the presence of Ernstus, Bishop of Rochester, at the trial, although Ernstus did not become Bishop of Rochester until 1076. A further difficulty with the Selden version is that Lanfranc is made to recover in a suit before the County of Kent property in various counties. It would appear that both Selden's version and the one in *Textus Roffensis* are subsequent enlargements of the earlier account.

Therefore, in spite of John Selden, St. Mary's of London cannot be safely taken back so early in the Conqueror's reign as the Pennenden Heath trial. We have, however, the mention in the obituary, which may quite well have been compiled shortly after the King's death.

The earliest mention of St. Mary le Bow hitherto accepted is in 1091.⁹ It has been generally assumed,¹⁰ for reasons which are not very clear, that the London church of St. Mary in the obituary of William I was

St. Mary Aldermary. It is proposed here to identify it rather with St. Mary le Bow. Four arguments will be put forward, numbered I-IV.

I. In a MS. at Lambeth Palace,¹¹ in a hand of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, there is a list of farms (*firme*) of the monks of Christ Church according to Lanfranc's constitution. In the course of a long list of manors, against each of which its annual value is stated, there occur the words *De ecclesia sancte Marie Lundon' xxx' li'* and *De Hede Lundon' x' li.* This church of St. Mary in London is the only church in this list of farms.

Among the Cotton MSS. is a document¹² which was first drawn up between 1098 and 1108, and which, if not the original, is a twelfth-century copy. It is a list of the London property of Christ Church, Canterbury. It begins with 8 churches, and the first of them is described thus, *Ecclesia beate Marie cum terris et domibus et ecclesiis ad eandem pertinentibus quam Livingus presbyter dedit suscepto religionis indumento in ecclesia cantuariensi. Eius ecclesie debitus per singulos annos census est xl libre.*

That a man who had a wife should become a monk need not deter us from identifying this Livingus with the Livingus of the obituary. Another Livingus, a monk of Westminster, is, at about the same period, said to have had a wife who became a nun.¹³

After the churches there come some 14 lands and houses, and the highest annual payment from them which is mentioned is 16s. There is in addition a wharf which paid £10 and is evidently the *Hede*, i.e., hithe, of the Lambeth document.

By the time this list of about 1100 was drawn up, the church of St. Mary le Bow, of which the existing Norman crypt is a survival, had been built. For the contemporary chronicler Florence of Worcester¹⁴ records that the roof of the church *S. Mariae quae dicitur ad Arcum* was blown off in 1091. According to the Inventory of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments¹⁵ the crypt dates from the latter part of the

eleventh century. It is very probable¹⁶ that the street level at the time of the building of the crypt was about the same as the present floor level of the crypt. This church must have been a prominent object in Norman London. It seems unlikely that, with this outstanding newly built St. Mary's in existence, our list of 1100 would refer to some other church as plain St. Mary's without any specifying description.

II. The next earliest known list of Christ Church property in London is among the MSS. in the Chapter Library at Canterbury¹⁷ and was written about 1200.¹⁸ It is headed *Redditus in Lund'*. It contains some 112 amounts, totalling about £45 and arranged according to the festivals at which the payments were made. The number of payers involved is not so large as 112, because some of them paid in instalments at more than one festival. Included among these payers are 12 churches. With certain exceptions, for which there are special known reasons, the 1200 *redditus* of these churches are the same as the respective pensions which they paid to Christ Church at the time of the Taxation of Pope Nicholas according to the list, dated 1292, which is preserved among fourteenth-century records of the Priory now at the British Museum.¹⁹ The amounts of the 12 church *redditus* range from 1s. to 12s. St. Mary Aldermary is in the list and paid 8s. 4d. St. Mary le Bow is not in the list, although there is plenty of evidence that in the latter part of the twelfth century that church belonged to Canterbury.²⁰

These 12 churches, if St. Mary le Bow is added, become very nearly the same 13 churches as those which by 1292²¹ constituted the Deanery of the Arches in London, the Archbishop's peculiar as it survived into the nineteenth century. All the 13 churches of the Deanery in 1292 paid a pension to Christ Church except St. Mary le Bow.²²

Now the 7 churches, none of them dedicated to St. Mary, which follow St. Mary's in our 1100 list are all

shown there as making an annual payment to Christ Church. Two of the 7 pay each an ounce of gold, which was equivalent to 15s.²³ Two others together pay 35s., and this includes lands and houses. The remaining 3 pay 2s., 5s., and 7s. respectively.

These 7 churches can be nearly all identified among the 12 of the 1200 list, and in two instances the amounts paid agree.

It is evident that these 7 payments are of the nature of pensions. But they are quite incommensurate with the very large lump sum of £40 paid by St. Mary's and its associated properties. That was a holding of a special nature, classed by Lanfranc among manors. St. Mary le Bow was also of a special nature, in that it is not in the later lists of pensions.

We therefore have another indication that the St. Mary's of the 1100 is St. Mary le Bow.

III. It is impossible to suggest what were the churches (which, be it remarked, are not mentioned in the obituary) and lands and houses which, with the church of St. Mary, paid, according to the 1100 list, £40 per annum. The 1200 list of *redditus* gives no clue to the lands and houses because it does not state from which parishes its payments came.

Out of the £45 in the 1200 list, £9 12s. od. is *De domo lapidea in Westcheap*. There is, however, some difficulty in including income from this stone house in the £40 of 1100. Among the fourteenth century MSS. at Canterbury is a record in French,²⁴ being instructions intended for the Cathedral Priory's representatives in London in about 1321 in relation to a dispute regarding an alleged encroachment made on the churchyard of St. Mary le Bow in the re-building of a stone house *in Chepe* (according to the Latin heading) belonging to the Priory. According to this record, the site of the stone house once belonged to the father and mother of St. Thomas and was never glebe of Bow Church, but came to the Priory as *burgage diuisable* 160 years previously, i.e., in about

1160.²⁵ (It may be remarked that the dates of birth of the father and mother of St. Thomas are not known and that St. Thomas was born about 1118). If the site did not come to the Priory until 1160 it cannot be included in the list of about 1100.

However, we are not left entirely without a clue. We have a statement of the income derived by Christ Church from rents in London in 1292. This is in the Priory's own record of the Taxation of Pope Nicholas.²⁶ The statement gives the total amount for each parish from which rents were received. The parish with far the highest total is St. Mary le Bow with £26 2s. 2d. The amounts for the other parishes range from 2s. to £3 1s. 4d. St. Mary Aldermary is one of the parishes and its amount is a mere 5s.

The significance of this large total for Bow Church may be judged by a comparison with the property held by other religious corporations in the City parishes. In the Record Commission's edition of the said Taxation (in which for some unexplained reason Christ Church, Canterbury, does not appear) there are, on pp. 8 to 13, some 530 entries giving the totals of the *bona* of each such body in each of the parishes. In only 6 of these entries is the amount above £10, and the largest amount is £16 1s. 1d.

Although it is a far cry from 1100 to 1292, and many changes will have taken place in the Priory's possessions in the interval, it may be not without significance that the parish of St. Mary le Bow holds in 1292 the supremacy which St. Mary's held in 1100, and that St. Mary Aldermary is nowhere.

IV. St. Mary le Bow had one of the few schools existing in Norman London.²⁷ This, according to Mr. William Page, "tends to show that it was . . . a minster with a small community of priests."²⁸ It will be remembered that in some of the documents in which our obituary list of places occurs St. Mary's is called a *monasterium*. The use of this word might imply that it

was something more than an ordinary church served by one priest. The other schools were at religious houses.²⁹

At the same time, the word *monasterium* may be merely the equivalent of "church."³⁰ But at any rate there is no specific evidence that St. Mary Aldermary had a school.

Such are the four arguments. They cannot be considered to constitute rigid proof. But, such as they are, they all point to St. Mary le Bow rather than St. Mary Aldermary as the church which existed in William I's reign, and their cumulative effect is considerable, if not convincing.

Although the obituary tells us that St. Mary's was taken away, it does not say when this happened, or even that it occurred during the Conqueror's reign. We cannot tell whether, at the time of the taking away, the existing Norman crypt had been built or whether some church which preceded it was in existence. There is indeed no corroboration of this taking away. However, Bow Church seems to have been peculiarly liable to seizure in those remote days. In 1178, the Pope ordered³¹ an enquiry into a report that the church had been unlawfully seized, and again in 1182 his successor ordered another enquiry³² on the Priory's complaint that a certain *clericus* had kept back a payment alleged to be due from the church. Also there survives at Canterbury an original letter³³ from Pope Adrian IV ordering the Archbishop of Canterbury to remove two houses which *laici quidam* had had the effrontery to build in Bow Churchyard.

St. Mary Aldermary is specifically mentioned as early as 1179. In that year, the Pope confirmed *inter alia* to Christ Church *ecclesiam sancte Marie veterem in London*.³⁴ Which of the London churches of St. Mary was the one than which this one was older?

The early history of the City churches is very obscure,³⁵ and it is impossible to answer this question. If we regard only its name, St. Mary Newchurch, which was

only about 260 yards away, has a strong claim to be the junior church involved. This claim would fail if a theory of Mr. J. H. Round's is accepted. He thought³⁶ the name St. Mary Newchurch fitted the circumstances under which an alternative name of the church, viz., St. Mary of Woolchurchhaw, arose, for he interprets the latter name as implying the church built in the churchyard of St. Mary Woolnoth as a daughter church. Mr. C. L. Kingsford, however, has described³⁷ Mr. Round's argument as conjectural.

Another possible junior church is St. Mary Bothaw, which was within 160 yards of St. Mary Aldermary and was one of the 13 Canterbury churches.

Nearer still is St. Mary le Bow, whose parish actually adjoins St. Mary Aldermary's.

(The writer wishes to acknowledge the privilege of access to the MSS. in the Libraries of Lambeth Palace and of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury.)

NOTES.

1. Claudius C. VI, f. 170 (165 b according to old numbering), printed by Dugdale, *Mon. Angl.* (1846), I, 109; Dugdale's heading is not in the MS. The obituary appears, under *V Id. Sept.*, in the well-thumbed Christ Church necrology, begun in the fourteenth century, which survives in Arundel MS. 68, f. 41; among the words relating to the London *monasterium*, *ceteris* is inserted before *terris*.

2. (R. S.) ii, 64.

3. In the Notes to his edition of Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*, p. 197. Also printed, from Selden, in M. M. Bigelow, *Placita Anglo-Normannica*, p. 4, with the omission of the heading and the last sentence. Also in L. B. Larking, *The Domesday Book of Kent*, Appendix, pp. 16*, 17*. The statement in the *Victoria County History of Kent*, III, 189, that the list is given by Eadmer is incorrect.

4. Vespasian A. xxii, f. 120.

5. *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XXVII, 718.

6. *Loc. cit.*

7. Cart. Ant. A. 42.

8. Fol. 109. Printed in Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, I, 334. Thos. Hearne, in his *Textus Roffensis*, p. 140, printed only the heading, and for the text gives a reference to the pages mentioned *supra* in Selden and Wharton, apparently not noticing that these two editors were not both printing from the same document.

9. F. M. Stenton, *Norman London* (1934), notes on map.
10. E.g., R. E. M. Wheeler, *London and the Saxons* (London Museum Catalogue, 1935), p. 108, footnote 2, where the authority is wrongly given as Florence of Worcester, Miss Davis having evidently been misquoted; C. L. Kingsford, *Additional Notes to Stow's Survey of London* (1927), p. 16; William Page, *London* (1923), p. 160.
11. MS. 1212, pp. 344, 345.
12. Faustina B. vi, f. 100. There is a copy, of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, among the MSS. in the Chapter Library at Canterbury, in Reg. B, f. 263, a few lines being omitted, apparently through inadvertence.
13. *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, IV, 333.
14. *Chronicle*, Eng. Hist. Soc. (1849), II, 29.
15. *London*, IV, 76b.
16. *Journal of the British Archæological Association* (N.S.), XII (1915), p. 319. See also *Journal of The London Society* for April, 1932, p. 62.
17. MS. B. 7, f. 15 v, sqq.
18. C. E. Woodruff, *Catalogue of the MS. Books in the Library of Christ Church, Canterbury*, p. 31. See also MS. D. 4, f. 24.
19. Addl. MS. 6159, f. 82; Galba E. iv, f. 4 v.
20. Holtzmann, *Papststorkunden in England*, 2, II, p. 374 (1179), p. 416 (1182), p. 442 (1187), p. 456 (1191). Ralph de Diceto (R.S.) II, 143 (1196).
21. Galba E. IV, f. 11 v.
22. *Ibid.*
23. At any rate in the reign of William I, vide James H. Ramsay, *History of the Revenues of the Kings of England, 1066-1399*, I, 3.
24. Reg. I, f. 368.
25. *La place la ou nostre nouele meson de pyere est ore pres de la dite eglise des arches feut aucun temps a pyere e a la myere seint thomas e unke ne feut glebe del eglise des arches sicom nus auoms entendu par aunciene gent Et feut deuse a nostre eglise de Canterberie come burgage diuisable en Londres passe CLx aunz.* This does not bear out the claim made in the *Journal of the Brit. Arch. Ass.* (N.S.), XXI, 298, that this French record states that the advowson of the Church had been in the possession of the Priory for over 160 years.
26. Galba E. IV, f. 4 v.
27. F. M. Stenton, *Norman London* (1934), p. 23.
28. *London*, p. 160.
29. F. M. Stenton, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 27.
30. Ducange, *Glossarium* (1845), IV, 481, col. 3. Cp. also *Arch. Cant.*, XLV, 69.
31. Holtzmann, *Papststorkunden in England*, 2, II, 365.
32. *Ibid.*, 416.
33. *Ibid.*, 290. Holtzmann dates this 1157-9.
34. *Ibid.*, 374.
35. D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, p. 184.
36. *Athenæum*, Aug., 1889, p. 223.
37. In his *Stow's Survey of London*, II, 317.