




Hurley.

(No. III.)

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NTERESTING and essential as Charters are, as the formation of a basis for compiling the history of our parishes, yet these are merely the skeletons or frameworks upon which to build the yearly epitome of parochial life. And in many cases the registers are amongst the few means that exist for keeping up a continuous thread of a parish's existence, at any rate until the middle of the present century, since which date log books and magazines have become pretty common. Our own registers date back to 1560. The first volume is a long narrow parchment book, inside and out, and is in very good preservation. Its last entry is in 1686, the consecutiveness being apparently uninterrupted during the time of the Commonwealth. The handwriting in some parts of it is clear; but in others it is almost illegible, owing no doubt to bad ink. No Vicar's signature is found until 1660, when Nathaniel Cannon appears once in the marriage entries, as Vicar. This is, in fact, the only clergyman's signature that occurs in the whole volume. The next signature is that of Daniel Ashford, Vicar, in 1683, whose name is written on the cover of volume II., together with the date of his institution to the Vicarage of Hurley on November 23rd, 1683. "Baptismes, Marriagees, and Burialls" find place, one after another, in volume I. In the case of baptisms and burials—as a rule—merely the Christian and surnames are entered, no place of abode being given. In the case of marriagees, the names of the man and woman are given, with date; no place of abode: whilst, in one instance, the bridegroom, one Nicholas Gregory, finds no bride at all after his name (1566). In 1606, the following tragical entry appears under "Burialls":—"Febru. 15—Beether, a servant of the Bishop of Oxfoord, was slaine one the White hill betweene Hurley and Maidenhead with a coche." In 1618, amongst the baptisms is "Mrs. Sara Louelace, daughter of Sir

Richard Louelace, Knight, was baptized the 5th of July in the night being weake." Amongst burials in 1626 we find "May 24 Mr. Welby Alurney who dyed travelinge," and in 1642 "Goodman freebody buried 19th of August." Such entries as "Good wife Newton" and "Mother Tame" occur, too, in the first half of the seventeenth century.

A large number of the Lovelace family find place in volume I. On the cover of volume II. we read "Since Michaelmas 1683. Begining the yeare at Lady-day." In this register there are a large number of Briefs accounted for (from 1689 to 1724), amongst others being French Huguenots, April 16th, 1699, £1 5s. 8d.; Refugees (principality of Orange), January 20th, 1703, 14s.; Episcopal Churches (Great Poland), January 22nd, 1716, 15s. 6d. As many as 274 briefs occur between 1689 and 1724, when they appear to have discontinued until 1804, and they disappear from the registers altogether in 1823. In volume III. some of the entries are beautifully written. There are many peculiarities in this volume; for instance, "Burials—Dec. 5th, 1802—Sarah Williams, a poor old widow (of a soldier slain in Germany)—she was supposed to be 100 years of age—having been maintained by the parish, and known only as an old woman, during the life of persons now more than 59 years old." Confirmation lists, which find place in this volume, are interesting, one entry of these (in 1804) relating how 70 persons from Hurley were confirmed by the Bishop of Norwich at S. Mary's, Reading, that prelate officiating for the Bishop of Sarum—the females being conveyed in a waggon by Mr. George Dancer, who refreshed them with bread, cheese, cold meat and beer, and received from the Parish as full compensation two pounds two shillings: and in 1808 we learn that 44 persons were confirmed from this Parish at Reading at 8.30 a.m., on July 27th. But the most interesting item in this Register Book (No. 3) is found on one of the fly leaves, as follows:—"Mrs. Sarah Stevens having prosecuted Elizabeth Britton, for defamation of character, in the Spiritual Court of this Diocese, did —on Elizabeth Britton making the following acknowledgment in Hurley Church on Sunday, February 18th, 1798, immediately before sermon and in the presence of William Stevens and Nathanael Micklem, churchwardens, and Robert Baker, overseer—humanely agree to stay the prosecution:—'I, Elizabeth Britton, do confess my extreme sorrow for the insult and abuse I offered to Mrs. Stevens, which ill-usage was the result of passion, and without truth or foundation; I also confess my contrition for the contempt shown to

the Spiritual Court of this Diocese, in not paying due attendance to their citation: and I faithfully promise, for the future, never to do or say—either publicly, privately, or by insinuation—anything that may tend to the injury of Mrs. Stevens' character or peace of mind; and that I will hereafter pay that implicit reverence which is due to the Courts of Justice of this Kingdom.—Richard Hunt, M.A., Curate.. N.B.—Elizabeth Britton was absolved from the excommunication issued against her in November 1797, on March 11th, 1798."

On another fly-leaf in this volume, too, is an interesting Terrier recounting "ye glebe land, tithes and other endowments and profits of ye Vicarage of Hurley, in the Deanery of Reading," &c. It is dated November 29th, 1704, and amongst other tithes in this list is "white of *cows."—*Apropos* of this, in a note by Gerard Langbain the following occurs:—"et certe quod de Lacte Vaccarum refert illud percognitum habeo in agro Hamtonensi (an et alibi nescio) decimas Lactiniorum venire vulgo sub hoc nomine 'The whites of kine;' apud Leicestrenses etiam Lactinia vulgariter dicuntur 'white-meat'."

This note of Langbain's occurs in connection with an account he gives of the origin of the words 'Whitsun Day,' and which he says that he found in a Bodleian MS. From thence he observes that it was a custom amongst our ancestors upon this day to give all the milk of their ewes and kine to the poor for the love of God, in order to qualify themselves to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; which milk being then (as it is still, he says) in some counties called white-meat, &c., therefore this day from that custom took the name of Whit Sunday (see Wheatley on the Book of Common Prayer, c.v. sec. 23).

Volume No. 4 of our Registers is mainly remarkable for the extreme difficulty which is evinced in it by the bridegrooms and brides at weddings in signing their own names. In fact, none of the later Registers contain anything of very special interest.

The Churchwardens' Book, still in use, dates from June 8th, 1698, and contains some curious entries. At one end of the volume an item "low dubble rate made for the poore of the Parish of Hurley, in the County of Berks, at foure shillings in the yard lande, this being the first rate for the year 1698, and made on 24 of July," sounds quaint. A good many expenses occur in this old book connected with the repair of the Church Bells, and charges for ringing on

* "Whight" is used alone, to express *Milk*, in the Hurley Terrier of 1608.

King George's Birthday, Proclamation, and Coronation, and on the anniversary of King Charles II.'s Restoration; "for ye Gunpowder Treason," &c. In 1759, the charges 7/-, 7/6, 7/- and 7/9 for Communion Wine on Whit Sunday, at Mixmas, Christmas and Easter, are striking. And in 1805, the items "Mr. Guy, 56 dozen sparrow heads 14/-," and in 1807—"66 dozen of sparrows 16/6" occur. These seem hardly ecclesiastical charges! Nothing at all, be it noted, appears as laid out at that time for warming the Church.

Before closing this paper on Hurley, I should like to mention that Madox in his *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. 250, gives the inscription on the (oval) seal of Hurley Priory in the time of Prior Ralf de Arundel, as follows:—SIGILLUM ECCLIE SCE DEI GENETRICIS DE HURLEIE. On another impression of similar form was the head of the Blessed Virgin with + AVE MARIA GRĀ PLENA: the whole circumscribed + SIGILL. RAD. DE ARUNDEL PRIORIS HERI. On the reverse, a counter seal impressed with a lion, inscribed + ECCLE VICIT LEO DE TRIBU JUDA.

The value of Hurley Monastery in the 26th year of Henry VIII. was assessed by certain valuers sent expressly for the purpose, at £121 18s. 5d. Decima inde £12 3s. 10¼d. From Pope Nicholas' valuation it appears that the Vicar of Hurley had no endowment at the time that was made (1291-92): [*Ecclesia de Hurle cū vicar. indec~abili, prior rector. Taxatio £10. Decima £1.*] In the Sarum archives (1608) occurs "A true note and Terrier of all the commodities appertaining to the Vicarage of Hurley in the County of Berks," which recites "a dwelling house with a barn and a stable. Item, a Backside which in times past hath been orchard," and goes on to mention the Vicarial Tithes. (Copies of two other Hurley Terriers, from the Sarum papers, dated 1635 and 1677, are also amongst papers now at Hurley.) An old parchment Terrier amongst our archives at Hurley, dated Oct. 1st, 1634, states that the value of the Vicarial Tithes amounted to "near £40 per annum," and further recites and describes the Vicarage House and its premises. (The House and premises were then situated between the present Hurley Manor House and the present Vicarage grounds.) It also includes "a quarter of an acre of land adjoining to the orchard of Richard Butterfield," which is mentioned in the Terrier of 1704 on a fly leaf in No. 3 of our Parish Registers as follows: "Item. He (the Vicar) hath near ¼ of an acre by ye Town Pound planted with hops," the town pound being situated at that time on the greensward

immediately in front of the present Vicarage House. The 1634 Terrier also recites "two acres of meadow ground lying in the common meadow of the same Parish." These two acres have since been converted into a strip of ground in the Parish meadow, which now measures less than an acre, situated almost exactly opposite "the Ferry" Inn at Medmenham. The last time any mention is made as to the $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre is in an old Tithe account book still at the Vicarage, when 10/- rent was paid for it by Mr. E. Micklem. What became of it? The said two (single) acres appear so far back as in the Terrier of 1608. In 1625 Sir Richard (afterwards first Lord) Lovelace granted an annuity of £6 13s. 4d. to the Vicar, still paid. A paper dated Michaelmas, 1730, gives the Vicarial Tithe, rents, &c., including rent of Vicarage House and stables, as £84 10s. 10d., due or paid. In 1782 the Vicarage is described in Bacon's Liber Regis as "a Discharged Living—£6 13s. 6½d. in King's Book, clear yearly value £43: £80 in 1786." In 1802 the dues and profits of the Vicarage were £150; in 1817 £200, though less than that amount in 1837. In 1838 they were £234 13s. 10d.; and in 1843 the Vicarial Tithes were commuted at £250 2s. 0d., which, together with the Lovelace annuity and £2 rent of glebe land, make up the total income secured to the Living, along with the Vicarage House and grounds which by exchange and an arrangement in money became the Parsonage in 1844, and has since that date been doubled in size so far as the house is concerned. The Great Tithes were commuted in 1843, at £289, in addition to those merged in rent. These are owned by the Lay Impropriator.

