

STAPLEHURST REGISTER.

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AMONGST the documents which throw light on parish history three hundred and fifty years ago not the least important are the Registers. Especially valuable are the registers which Cromwell ordered to be kept in 1538, in which the entries were not as formal as they became later, and remarks and notes of special events were often added. In most cases these old paper books were destroyed or allowed to disappear when an order was issued, in 1597, that a fair copy of them from the date of Elizabeth's accession should be made on parchment; and with them vanished not only the entries for the first twenty years, but also many of the notes and remarks. But a few of the old books remain, and Staplehurst is fortunate enough to possess its original register as well as the parchment copy.

This old book, 13 in. by 9 in., was originally composed of fifteen sheaves of paper of five sheets each, each sheaf folded in the middle, and all securely bound together by string onto three blocks of leather at the back; and has a cover of strong parchment, the edges folded in at the top and bottom. The end cover has within it another leaf of parchment, a page from a Latin book with MS. notes in the margin. Of the original one hundred and fifty leaves, one hundred and fourteen (or parts of them) remain; the rest having been torn or cut out, most of them apparently blank. Into the end twenty additional leaves of rather smaller size have been sewn. The entries are continuous from Sept. 26, 1538, to Oct. 30, 1596, and are mixed, except from 1555 to 1558, when the baptisms are entered separately in the regular order, the marriages and burials being entered later

1538

29 of VIII

- The xxijth day
of September. This was buried Thomas the son of Thomas
peterson and Joan Barber whose wife was buried
to be witnessed in doctrine. Thomas the son of
in Lambeth ward of Southwark.
- The first day
of October. This was baptized a daughter of Thomas
Edbert the younger whose wife name is Elizabeth.
- The eleventh
day of October. This was christened a daughter of William
mudge whose name is Jane.
- The xxijth day
of October. This was baptized a son of William Purse
whose name is Thomas.
- The xxijth day
of October. This was baptized a daughter of John Corie
whose name is Agnes.
- The xxijth day
of October. This was buried on a young son of most widow.
- The xxijth day
of October. This was christened a daughter of Edward
Emge whose name is Beatrix.
- The same day.
This was also baptized the same day the son
of John Smith alias Cusker latter deceased
whose name is George.
- The tenth day
of November. This was baptized the daughter of John
Capman whose name is Agnes.
- The xxijth day
of November. This was christened a daughter of John
Dunstons whose name is Helen.
- The xxijth day
of November. This was buried on

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STAPLEHURST REGISTER.

I.

in the book at different places; also in 1587 the baptisms, burials, and marriages are entered separately on three consecutive pages. These entries end on the last leaf but one of the original book. On the last page but one the entries begin again on April 3, 1622; the next page, the last of the original book, is written reversely and contains a list of preachers from the Feast of S. Michael, 1577, to Sept. 21, 1579. The entries are then continued on the additional leaves to Sept. 21, 1639. They, like the earlier ones, are copied into the parchment book.

The first page* is headed "1538. 29th of H. viii." in a later hand, and the first entry is—

The xxix day of Septenbr^e Ther was buried Thomas the sone of Thomas petyman and Joan Walker which was brought to be norished w^t dorithie Smythe of this parishe by benchkyns wydowe of Cranbrooke.†

On the annual recurrence of the day up to 1547 there is some such entry as the following—

Seynt mychaell the Archangell beyng the xxix daye off September the xxxix yere off the incarnation of o^r Lord godd & the xxxi yere off the Raigne of o^r Soveraine Lorde Kynge henrye the viii.

Or more fully—

The Regester of alle the Namys as is Afore saide that is from the feast &c.

The first point that attracts attention as we look through the register is the early date of burial, usually on the day of death, and the curious custom of giving the name of "Creature" to a child baptized at home by the midwife as not likely to live: and we cannot but notice how often a mother's death followed the birth of a child.

The xxvj daye off July (1542). Ther was baptized the dowghter of thomas symon whose name was Jone and buried the same daye.

The xiiij daye off february (154 $\frac{2}{3}$). Ther was baptized the

* See the first of three colotype illustrations made from photographs taken by the Rev. W. Gardner-Waterman.—ED.

† Italics represent contraction marks throughout this Paper.

sonne off thomas wynewaye whose name was John whyche was buried the same daye of the sayed moneth.

The xxvijth off november (1545) there was christened the dowther off Symon gunnyng called Johan. The same day. ther was buried *Margaret gunnyng* mother off the seyd Johan & the seyd Johan w^t her in one cheste.

The xxvth of Apryle (1547). there were borne ii children of alexander Beerye the one christned at home and so deceased called Creature the other christned at churche called Johan.

The vjth daye of June (1548) there was baptized by the mydwyffe & here buried the childe of Andrew partridge called creature.

The xiiijth day of the same moneth (March 154 $\frac{2}{3}$). There was Christined Marione the dawghter of John Osborne and that at home by the report of honest women. The same Marion was also buried the said xiiijth day of Marche.

The ixth of the same (Ap. 1550). There was baptised and that at home by the testimonye of good women Thomas the sone of Gregorie Rutting & after presented in the temple Receiving other Ritus accordingle. And was buried the next day before none.

The viijth day of november (1564) Ther was borne baptised and buried Jhonne the daughter of hew Conce.

The third day of the same (March 156 $\frac{2}{3}$). Ther was buried the sonne of John hopper which dyed immediately as he was borne being named Creature.

The xvith day of february (156 $\frac{2}{3}$) There was borne baptised & buried Creature the daughter of Steven ffuller.

There are altogether twenty-three instances of the name "Creature" being given. The little "Creature," however, did not always die soon after birth, for

The xixth day (July 1579) There was maryed John haffynden & Creature cheseman yong folke.

Whether it was that servants were numerous or that the servant's lot was a hard one, there are frequent entries of their burial.

Prayers for the dead are common in the earlier years, but there are none after Elizabeth's accession to the throne.

The xiiij daye of Marche (154 $\frac{2}{3}$). Ther was buried William buckherst thelder whose sowle Jesu pardon Amen,

The ixth daye off June (1545) There was buryed the sonn off thomas Roberth the yongar called henry uppon whose soule I pray god have mercy.

The xviii of february (154 $\frac{6}{7}$) there was buryed Richard the son off henry Malym which begon to lerne rede whose soll Jhu pardon.

The xith daye of September (1548) there was buryed Jamis Bragelond an honest man & a goode householder whose soule Jhu pardon & bring to eternal rest.

To which is added in a later hand—

Noat yet the popish superstition in those dayes.

The seconde daye of September (1553) Was buryed Tymothe Stockton the sonne of Robert Stockton mynyster of Stapleherst *per me R. S.* In the yeres above sayd.

The sevonth daye of Septembre (do) Was Buryed Kateryn the daughter of Jamys Buckherst in the yeres above said *quæ erat quatuor annorum sicut et filius meus thymotheus quorum animabus propitiatur deus. Amen. R. S.*

The xviith daye of septembre Was Buryed John meryell my lovinge ffrynd upon whose soule I praye god y^e ffather for christes sake & through hys bloude to be mercyfull in y^e yeres aforesaid *per me Robertum Stockton tunc et ibidem pastorem.*

The first mention of the clergy, and one that exemplifies the use of the title "Sir" as then designating a priest, is in 1544.

The xxvth daye of August Ther was buryyd Sr Robert Woodkocke pryst.

Who he was and what connexion he had with the parish it is impossible to say; for Richard Beseley had been rector from 1535. The first entries in the register are in his hand-writing; and he was resident, as an entry in 154 $\frac{7}{8}$ shews, recording his marriage—

Vicesimo quarto die Martii. *Magister Richardus Beseley sacre Theologie professor, ac serenissimi & illustrissimi felicis memorie Principis Henrici Octavi nuper Regis strenuissimi et metuendissimi sacellanus**; *neon Rector hujus*

* A title peculiar to the chaplains of Henry VIII., in place of the ordinary *capellanus*. Cf. Migne, *Lexicon manuale*: "SACRELLANUS—Capellanus, *sacello præfectus; chapelain*. (Ch. H. VIII. reg. Angl.)"

The xxij day of May This was married Thomas Yapper and Maren
of Maye & the same day of this year

The xxvij day of June This was buried George Baker, mother of
of the same bene buried also the fift day of this same
month

The first day of June This was married mycell women and Joane
of June & James Wadde

The xxij day of June This day being Rogation's day in the hall
of the Common prayer and administration of the
Sacrament and other rites and ceremonies of
the Church after the use of the Church of
Englande began to be observed. This was
first baptised Maren the daughter of
Thomas Baker of the parish of St. Andrew's
Bourne the last the wife of John Wadde
June. These were married the next before
and in the first day that the folks comen
in the English tongue after good that now
is used here amongst the people to utter
most quibbles & ventricul comicalities the
same. The same day there was also

The xxij day of June This was buried Joane a nunne
of June & the same day

The xxij day of June This was baptised Thomas the son
of Joane & John Wadde

The xxij day of June This was baptised Maren the daughter of
of Joane & John Wadde which was buried the first
day of July the next day

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[W. G. W.]

STAPLEHURST REGISTER.

ecclesie et ecclesiastes: Janam Lenarde orphanam, virginem, pauperulam, pudicam, et honestam, matrimonio solemnizato, sibi accepit in conjugem.

He evidently lost no time in availing himself of an act of Convocation asserting the right of the clergy to marry, even though the bill legalizing such marriage had not yet been passed in parliament. Possibly the words "his lawfull wif" in the entry of the baptism of his first child the following year refer to the fact that the marriage of the clergy had then been legalized. The entry is interesting also as a record of the first use of the English Prayer Book.*

The ninthe day of June (1549). This day being whitsunday (wherin the booke of the Common prayer and Administration of the Sacramentes and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, after the use of the Church of Englonde, begon to be executed) there was first baptised Marie the dawghter of Richard beseley *parson* of this *parishe* Church borne the last thursday (hora fere quinta ante meridiem) of his lawfull wif Jane. Who were married the yere before and in the firste day that the holly *communion* in the Englishe tonge (after thorder that now is) was here mynystred thei bothe, w^t others most humblye & devoutlie communicating the same. The *parson* Christined his owne childe.

This is an instance of early baptism—on the third day after birth. The latter part of the entry seems to mean that the Communion Service in English was used for the first time in the church on the occasion of the parson's marriage the year before. The 24th of March, 1547, was the Saturday before Palm Sunday; the service had been issued earlier in the month, and the bishops had ordered that it should be used for the first time on Easter Day, April 1st. Beseley apparently anticipated the order, as he did the law legalizing his marriage. He evidently saw no objection to a marriage in Lent. The entry is an interesting record of a nuptial mass, at which the guests communicated as well as the newly married pair. In the prayer book of 1549 there was a rubric at the end of the Marriage Service

* See the second illustration.

—“The newe married persones (the same daye of their marriage) must receiue the holy communion.”

In 1550 the baptism of his second child is registered, and again he harps upon the lawfulness of his marriage.

The seconde of Nouember There was baptised Benet the dawghter of Richard beseley parson of this parishe by his lawfull wif Jane. nat. i novenbris ad horam ferme octavam pomeridianam.

In 1552 there is an entry by Robert Stockton—

July ab anno dni m^{mo} iiiii^{mo} lii^{to} annoque r. rs (*regni regis*)
Edwardi sexti sexto (1552) R. S.

The x^{te} daye of July in the yeres abovesayd Ther was Baptysyd Mary beseley the dawghter of Mr Richard beseley parson of stapleherst—cui compater sum—borne y^e viiith day of y^e same hora 5^{ta} ante meridiem.

This is the last reference in the register to Beseley, who seems to have become non-resident, and to have left the parish in charge of Robert Stockton.

The ornamented pages and frequent signature of name or initials shew that the entries were made by Robert Stockton from May, 1552, to the beginning of 1554. Like the rector, he was a married priest.

The ffyfft daye of June (1552) in the yeres of oure lord god and of oure soueraign lorde the Kynge as ys here above prescribyd w^h is Wittsondaye Susana stockton the daughter of Robarde stockton clerke and Curatt then of stapleherste Was Chrystenye the daye and yeres above sayd *propria manu scriptum*.

He celebrates with many flourishes* the accession of Mary—

Anno Regni Regyne Nostre Marye Primo Incipiens sexto die Julii *per me* Robertum Stockton tunc mynystrum de Stapleherst *prædicto*.

In primis, decimo sexto die mensis Julii Ther Was maryed *etc.*

Amongst his entries are—

The fourthe daye of octobre y^e yeres aforesaid (1558) Was Buryed John nepeker smythe And also y^t same Daye was

* See the third illustration.

Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Die xviij^{ta} Julij
Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Die xxv^{ta} Julij
Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Anno Regni Regine nostre
Primo Idibus Sexto Die Julij
p. me Robertum Episcopus Cantuarie
Mynisterium de Staplehurst p. d. c.

In primo decimo sexto die mensis Julij
John p. d. c. Episcopus Cantuarie
Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Die xxv^{ta} Julij
Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Die xxv^{ta} Julij
Anno Regni Regi Edwardi secundo
Armigero Ono Martini Episcopi Cantuarie

Anno Regni

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buried martyn the *servant* of goodman daye w^{ch} *servant* dyed sodenlye & unknowen to any man In the hey streytt of Stapleherst as some saye of y^e palsey.

The thride daye of decembre Was baptysed Symon the sonne of that noble warryoure Wyllyam pytt. R. S.

The baptism of another child of Stockton is entered in Oct., 1554, and on the top of the page is a note which is partly illegible, but of which the drift seems to be that "master parson" had been ordered to separate from his wife.* He was probably soon afterwards inhibited; at any rate he disappears from the register.

In the early part of 1555 several churchings are entered, *e.g.*—

The xx day of Aprylis was churched one sperlyng's wyff.

At the end of December in that year there is the heading—

Anno dni mvlvj yn the second & thyrde yere of the Reyng off our souerayng lord & ladye Kyng phylp & queene marye.

From June, 1555, to March, 1558, the christenings, burials, and marriages are separated, the burials and marriages being entered in separate places further on in the book.

From June, 1556, the names of the godparents as well as of the father of a child baptized are given, in obedience to Cardinal Pole's injunction of the previous year, *e.g.*—

The iiijth daye of July was christenyd Rob^t Rumney sonne of Jhon Rumney: godfathrs Rob^t Bresland & Raulf Wytt, godmothr Kateryn Smyth wydow.

From June, 1557, to Nov., 1558, the entries are in Latin, and are so irregular that it is difficult in many cases to say to what year they belong.

In 1557 Beseley was deprived of the benefice as being a married priest, and in May of that year Thomas Henden was appointed to the benefice, and the Latin entries are no doubt by him. His name appears once in the register—

13^o Septembris (1558?) baptizabatur Agnes filia Johannis Rumney compatre Thoma henden presbutero commatribus Agnete meyny et Katheryna Scotte.

* "Master parsonne begone to have all maner ublacyons w^t hys wffe."

It seems to have been his aim to express the simple fact of baptism, burial, or marriage in as many ways as possible: and if the date was a festival, the name is always given. One leaf containing entries has been cut out, as a note at the bottom of the following page shews—

In Memorie . . . Steven Meriam of Staplhurst in Sumoto Pagio.

The following are specimens of his entries—

Vigilia And(reæ?) baptizabatur humfridus filius Ric^d grumpridy godfaths humfrey Borne Thomas hudzole Alice medherst godmothr. purificabatur f^o Edmundi regis mater humfridi.

F^o Johis Baptiste tingeatur sacro fonte Agnes filia Alexandri Berye *compatre* Johe Austen *matrinis* Agnete Vyny et Katharina Gararde.

ultimo Januarii baptizata est mercy filia &c.

19 ffeb. Tinctus est aqua lustrali Alicia filia &c.

20 ejusdem (Marcii) sacra tingeatur lauachro Matheus &c.

f^o hugonis *episcopi* baptizabatur . . . *compatrinis* &c.

f^o sancte luce baptizatus est Henricus &c.

14 Novembr junctus est matrimonio Thomas Stacy Alicie hardwikk.

24^o Januarii *matrimonium* celebratum est de Edwardu Benden et Agnete hayes.

Ultimo Januarii Alicia Durtnall nupsit Roberto Draner.

4^o eiusdem owen lewes nupsit Janianæ Coele.

5^o Junii celebretur *matrimonium* inter . . .

26^o Junii Thomas Alyn accepit Joanne Sare viduam in uxorem.

18^o Marcii was buried by greate favor Katheryne Vyny.

16^o Junii tumulabatur Johannes Dyrtnall.

30 Junii The chylde of god filius Ricd. Stacey.

8 August sepeliebatur Adam wodier obiit in domo Tollerst *peregrinus*.

17 Nov^r humatum corpus Stephani Aston.

. . . sepulta est millier *peregrina* pauper.

5^o Septembr. sepeliebatur corpus . . .

6^o Sept mandabatur terræ corpus Eleonere bylles vidua.

senis domini Sepulture tradebatur corpus Johannis Gierson *serui* Thomæ Batterst,

The later entries are all "obiit . . ." e.g.—

17^o Januarii (155^o₃) obiit Stephanus wynborne phidicina.

The number of "peregrini" who died and were buried about this time is noticeable.

During Mary's reign the years seem to have dated from Jan. 1st, and not from Lady Day. The registers bear ample testimony to the revolt against Mary's revival of the old forms and ceremonies, which began as soon as she was dead—

The 5th of febr. was christenyd Samuel filius Johis Gyles *compatribus* Jacobo Bucherst Symone Gunningy *commatre* Margareta Batterst *vituperante sputi ceremoniam*.

octavo febr. obiit Joanna Taylor sine *sacramentorum* et crucis signo *super* corpus vel sarcophagum quo deportabatur *inter* duodecimam et primam horam nulla satisfactione facta.

9^o febr. obiit Thomas fuller filius Willi sine crucis signo *super* sarcophagum.

On the other hand—

12^o febr obiit Laurence Austrey more ecclesiastico in sepulchrum deportatus.

eodem obiit Jamis lede deportatus sine crucis signo et introductus in templum non admissus lege Divina nuper Regia hoc est a more ecclesiastico.

14^o febr. obiit Henricus Rede cuius pater noluit eum in ecclesiam introduci.

20^o obiit Robt willerd shomaker sine crucis nihil.

eodem obiit Isbell Bery sine crucis signo.

eadem obiit Stevyn Austrey nihil soluto ne denario quidem missali sepultus est hora prima in qua hora minister expectabat.

ultimo febr. obiit Margaret Byshop obstetrix nihil soluto.

They were troublous times indeed, and one is not surprised to read—

The vijth day of Aprell (1560) There was baptised Willm sone of William fant whiche childe was borne in troublous days & therefore not christined tyll it was a yere old.

Thomas Henden seems to have left the parish soon after the previous entries were made and Richard Beseley to have recovered his benefice, though he did not again become

resident, living either at his other benefice of Sandhurst or at Canterbury, where he was a Six-preacher at the cathedral.

In 1562 John Stephen was curate-in-charge and continued to be so to the end of 1579—

The same day (May 3, 1562) ther was baptysed Anne the daughter of John Stephyn clarke who baptised his owne childe.

In other entries he styles himself “curate,” and records the baptism of his children, Mary, Martha, Repentaunce, and Faith; and

The last day of y^e same (March, 1576) There was buryed Marion the wife of John Stephen (Curate of this *paryshe*) who was a *very* honest & quiet Woman, Sober, *Virtuous* & *much*e geeven to Almes Deedes, & *mercyfulnes* towards the poore & needy.

The following is interesting as shewing how these curates got their stipend, viz., by farming the tithe, paying no doubt a certain proportion or a fixed sum to the rector—

Memorandum y^t y^e xixth Day of October A^o dni 1579 the nether barne of the *parsonage* adioyning to y^e Streat was Erected by John Stephen ffarmer of y^e same *parsonage*.

He was succeeded by Robert Twisden, 1580 to 1586:

Octobris 16 (1580) Baptizatus erat Guilielmus filius Roberti Twisdeni ministri istius ecclesie.

Other children of his were Samuel, Sara, and Susanna, their baptism being entered in Latin, all other entries being in English.

Richard Beseley died in 1585, and Edmund Culpeper became rector, resigning in 1591; but his name does not occur in the register and it does not appear that he was resident, William Eddy being the curate-in-charge.

The xxx day (March, 1589) was baptysed nathanaell y^e sonne of Wylyyam Eddy mynyster & preacher of y^e gospell of o^r lord Jesus cryst.

Robert Newman was appointed to the benefice in 1591, and records his induction and reading himself in; but parts

of the entries are lost through the edges of the pages being worn—

. . . . march 1591 M^r Robert Newman parson of this parish was Inducted by

The ixth day (May, 1591) being sonday M^r Rt. Newman parson redd in the churche of faith appointed.

From May 4, 1592, to Sept. 8 the entries are in his small neat handwriting: as are the copies in the parchment book from Nov. 22, 1558, to Sept. 11, 1569.

In 1595 James Boxer was curate—as an entry quoted later shews.

On the reverse of the last page of the original register are a list of preachers from the Feast “of Saynt mychaell tharchangell,” 1577, to Sept. 21, 1579—

The fyrst that *preached* in our church was Robert Spencer the of ffryttenten who was w^t us the first day of December preached one *sermon*. He preached again July 13, 1579.

Josias nyckols somtym of leaneham preached too sermons Dec. 16.

M^r anthony Carryer the vicar of bocton monchellsee preached once March 16, 1578; and again Dec. 14, and May 17, 1579.

Mr. Storer the precher of the Towne of Maydestone preached April 20 & Aug. 31, 1578.

Mr. Alexander mascall vicar of marden preached Aug. 4, 1578, and May 15 and 16, 1579.

The others were Mr. Walsoll, July 5, 1579; — Wood, July 13 and Sept. 21; Mr. Mericke, July 26.

The following are the only references to church services and discipline in Elizabeth's reign—

The viij day of the same (Feb. 156 $\frac{3}{4}$) Ther were borne too twynnes being menchylidren (y^c sonnes of Wyllm symon) w^h chylidren beyng wekke were named (& baptised by y^c mydwif) thomas & wyllm the which thomas was buryed y^c xiiijth day of y^c same moneth beyng sonday the other childe was brott to y^c church that day & receyved into the congregation accordyng to the order apoynted in Baptisme and was buried the xvith day of the month abovesayd.

Octobris 30 (1582) Thomas Cheseman drowned himself & was buried in y^e churchyard out of Xpian buryall.

Septembris 28 (1583) Weare maryed by lycence graunted from the deane & chapter of Canterbury John Stephens & An Swineston widow both of the parishe of marden ther licence bearing date the xxth of September 1583.

Baptised the same day (April 23, 1587) at afternoone Frauncis y^e daughter of John Fonte—eodem die post merid.

Baptism apparently was administered as a rule in the morning.

The iiij day (April, 1592) was buried a woman childe of James Came unchristened notw^tstanding she gave thanks.

The xxviii day of Januarye (159 $\frac{2}{3}$) was baptysed at spyllsell Mystres marye wynsor dowghter of master Androwe wynsor.

There are two instances of burial in the church—

The xvij day of Julye was buried yn o^r churche Jamys bucherst an awncyent yeman of stapleherst.

The same day (May 31, 1592) was buried M^{ris} Alice Rogers widdowe & lyeth somewhat beneath y^e chancel.

In Elizabeth's reign several dispensations bear witness to the strict enforcement of fasting in Lent. But it must be remembered that the civil law enforced it with a view to encouraging sailors and fishermen. It was apparently in recognition of this that these dispensations were granted.

(157 $\frac{2}{3}$). Memorandum that Xpopher vynye mary Bouckerst Thomas newman & his wyf & Denys hamnell beinge Sycke theys lenten season are lycensed duryng the tyme of theyre sicknes to Eate & feede upon suche fleshe as they best lyke for the Recoveringe of ther healte accordinge to the Statute in that case made & provided. By me John Stephen.

eodem die (March 3, 158 $\frac{1}{2}$) W^m Bassocke beinge very sycke is lycenced this tyme of lent by the space of xiiii days to eate flesh for the restorynge of his healte.

per me Robertum Twisden ministrum.

eodem die (Feb. 17, 158 $\frac{2}{3}$) Thomas Osborn the elder M^{rs} Purefey & the wyfe of Jeames Buchurst are licenced by me to eate fleshe for the recouery of their health this lent by

the space of eyght days & yf they shall not be recovered by the same then duringe the whole time of lent.

per me *Robertum Twisden ministrum istius eccle de Staplehurst.*

Beyt knowen unto all men by thes presents That I James Boxer clarke & curat of y^e parishe church of Stapleherst in the county of Kent Have licensed & by thes P(resents) doe license W^m Turner of Stapleherst aforesayd yoman beinge at this tyme . . . & visited by y^e mighty hande of God To eate fleshe & to use suche meates as shall seem best to him for y^e recoveringe of his health & untyll yt shall please God to restore him to his former health againe: Accordinge to y^e Lawe yn y^t case made & provyded (yn) Wytnesse wherof I have herewith sett my hande Dated the 23th day of (Marche) in the 37th yere of the reigne of o^r soveraigne Lady Elizabeth by y^e . . . God, of Englande, ffrance & Irelande Queen defender . . . Per me Ja^s B(oxer), Curat de . . .

Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign there was evidently a growing carelessness about the rites of religion, and there are frequent entries of children buried unbaptized; whether with or without a service is not stated, *e.g.* :—

The second day of maye (1590) was buryed iii dowghters unbaptysed borne of y^e wyffe of Androwe hammon.

There was also growing immorality, if one may judge by the number of illegitimate children buried, *e.g.* :—

The xv day of november (1587) was buryed a base borne chylde named Jone y^t margaret fosid the hoare brought from London as shee dyd saye.

The ix day of Awegost (1590) was baptised Jamys a basse borne chyld: y^e mother's name ys Elyzabathe smythe & she saythe y^t Jamys thonder ys father to yt.

And even—

The vi of Apryll (1591) was baptysed Anys y^e dowghter of an harlott whose name is Elyzabathe dason & her father to be y^e father of y^e chylde.

The Christian names during this period seem to indicate an advancing tide of Puritanism, *e.g.*, Israell, Tymothe, Melchisedeche, Tobias, Calebbe, Adam, Josyas, Jonas,

Elisha, Sylas, Elyas, Moyses; Rhoda, Tabitha, Repentaunce, Clemance—none of which are found in the earlier years. In 1592 there are three entries of the burial of “a poore solldyer.” Some light is thrown on the provision made for the poor by the following:—

The xviith day of the same (Dec. 1578) Ther was com- mytted to the earth the body of one Johan long . . . who died in the highway as she was carryed on horsback to have been conveyed from officer to officer tyll she should have com to the *parishe* of Rayershe.

The 22th daye of June (1592) Edward Finche gent. did seale a bonde of 12^{li} to the use of the *parishe* and namelie to Robt. Newman Parson and to Thomas Batherst gent. and John Batherst thelder clothier w^t condicon if he cheerelye acquit and discharge for ever the said parrish for ani further charge or bringing up of one Patience daughter to Margeret Parke deceased.

The 25 daye of June (1592) John Sharpe of the *parish* brodeweaver g(ave) worde to the *parish* to keepe and bring up one godlye beeching xii yeeres olde, & for the space of ten yeeres next follow(ing).

the *marke* of John Sharpe +.

The xv day (April 1594) was buryed Wylyyam a poore chylde kept by y^e *paryshe* of John leechynges.

Memorandum there was given awaye to the poore people of . . . w^{ch} the sayd nicolas did in his will bequeath to be distributed . . . executor William bassok the younger in the pr . . . of the . . .

The second day (Feb. 159⁵/₆) was buryed Jelyon hammon a poore olde maid paid by^e *parishe*.

In cases of accidental or sudden death particulars are given:—

The xxxi^{to} daye of Julye (1545) Ther was buriedd dorethe colyar *servant* w^t thomas Rede which by misfortune was suffocate in the water.

The xth of Julye (1548) there dyed one nicholas a childe suffocate in wat^r by misfortune who dwellid w^t Thomas peke.

The xth of June (1551) was buryd . . . whiche was kyllid w^t a tymbrelogg in A sawpyt.

The third of October There was buried Anthonie Robyns of Canterbury that dyed by the highway.

The xviith of the same (May 1567) There was buried Willyam wiles a housholder who was by misfortune kylled withe the whyle of his owne weyne.

The xiiith day of the same (Feb. 157⁶/₇) There was buried Willyam peerce *servaunt* to Josyas hore who was killed w^t the fall from a horse nygh unto his masters gate.

Aprilis 14 (1582) was buried Walter mayny a boy that was drowned sonn of widowe maynye.

Januarii 6 (158²/₃) was buried mary the daughter of widow Archer an infante of three quarters old that was scolded & w^h in x owres d^yed.

The vj day of Apryll (1590) was buried Ales y^e wyffe of Androw harnden & a chyld y^t was Ripped owt of her wombe a dowghter buried w^t her.

The fyrst day (Feb. 159⁴/₅) was buried Alyn german a strawnger whyche was kylled yn a sawepett w^t a tymberlogge whyche fell uppon hym.

The vi^t day (Nov. 1595) was buried John warne (?) a younge man y^t dyed of the ffallinge sicknes in the ffeyldes.

The following are instances of curious expression or information:—

The ix daye of marche (154¹/₂) Ther was buried thomas as y^e voyce goyth the sone of stevyn laurence.

The xiiith day of Apriell (1561) There was baptised Marye the daughter of John Bourman Friend of my foe.

The xijth day of the same (Nov. 1562) There was Buried Rychard Robert w^t the styfe leg.

The vjth day of december (1565) There was buried Alyce the wiff (of A naughtie felow whose name is) mathew manne.

Note that from the feast of the purification of S^t mary the virgen tyll this present day (Nov. 20, 1575) there was not one Corpse buried in this *parishe*. notatu dignum (in a later hand.)

The xxij day of Julye (1587) was buried olde mother baker wydowe.

There are occasional notes of character, *e.g.* :—

The eleventh daye off novembre (1545) There was buried the honest wyffe off peter draner full of almes & good workes whose name was alyce.

The xxij daye of y^e same (Sept. 1587) was buried Annys pemyall (?) an old woman & of a good conversacyone.

Briefer notes of character are frequent, such as “an honest matrone,” “a good howsekeper,” “a verry honest & godlie man,” “an honest householder,” “a virtuous old matrone.”

A word by way of description of a person buried is often added, such as “virgyn” or “mayden,” “an olde man,” “householder,” “wydowe” (man or woman), “beinge but a childe,” “synglewoman,” “an olde poore mayden,” “beyng but a ladde,” “a lustie yong man,” “a symple wench,” “a very auneynt old woman,” “a poore man,” “a poore lame mayden,” “an owlde bacheller,” “an oulde blyndeman,” “a poore Innocently boye of xvj yeare,” “a poor housholder,” “a poore lame oulde man,” “a basterde,” “base,” “an honest & substantiall housholder,” “a poore olde wenche,” “an old innocent man,” “a pore lame fellow,” “a nurse chylde,” “a deade borne chylde,” “goodman.”

Those married were often “yonge folkes,” or “poor folkes,” or “syngle folkes.” In one case it is “yonge fooles.”

The trade or profession or rank is occasionally stated, *e.g.*, “The repyar” or “reperer,” “carpenter,” “tiler,” “esquyer,” “draper,” “shereman,” “odesetter,” “turner,” “hosbondman,” “drover,” “clothemaker,” “sourgener,” “tynker,” “wever,” “farmer,” “smythe,” “laborer,” “below maker,” “gentyllman,” “phidicina,” “sawyer,” “prentice wt,” “netmaker,” “servaunt unto,” “soldyer,” “brode weaver,” “mercier,” “paynter,” “whyler,” “trendell maker,” “colyer,” “scoolemaster,” “wheele wrighte,” “tanner,” “clothier,” “mason,” “taylor,” “shoomaker.”

At the end of one entry the word “tynben” is added.

The xiiijth day of the same (Dec. 1578) There was buried Steven the Sonne of willyam Browne tynben.

There are several unusual Christian names, *e.g.*, Poenall, Dunstan, Alane, Osbert, Udeley, Gervase, Egidius, Jillyon, Augustyne, Jasper, Harmon, Armell, Jervys, Reinold; Johan, Yden, Thonnsyn (Tomsen, Tomosyn), Julyan, Godleve (Godliffe), Thosen, Anys, Benett, Deonyce (Denys, Dynes), Ricardine, Bigitta, Lore, Juda, Pernell, Urselawe, Joyce, Hester, Avise, Wynnefryth, Robena, Audry, Persis, Tearsie.

In several places there is an entry "a Census made," but they are all in the same hand, and all apparently refer to "a Census made the 22th Day of December 1632," which for some reason is entered in various parts of this register.

From 1564 there is a yearly record of the "exhibition" of the register at the annual visitation, except in 1570 and 1587. Up to the year 1587 the visitation was held from February to July; after that date it was held in September or October, in which case there had probably been a previous one earlier in the year—

The copie of this Regester untyll this present day was exhibited at lenham the syxt day of the monethe of June 1564.

The cotype of this regester untyll this present was exhibyted at Ashford 3 of Maye (1580) beinge then y^c generall.

The Bill of this yeare was exhibited at the visitation holden at Ashforde the 6 of Octobar 1590.

The places at which the visitations were held, and years, are as follows—

Lenham—1564, 1566, 1569, 1578.

Maidstone—1565, 1568.

Charing—1567.

Ashford—1571, 1573, 1574, 1575, 1576, 1577, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1585, 1586, 1588, 1589, 1590.

Sittingbourne—1572, 1579, 1593, 1594, 1595, 1596.

Canterbury—158⁴.

Faversham—1591, 1592.

P.S.—In the early pages of the register the name John is always written with a contraction-mark, as though the transformation from Johannes was not yet complete. In one case it is written Johan. Was the name then so pronounced?