

BOUGHTON UNDER THE BLEAN.*

BY REV. J. A. BOODLE.

THE Parish of Boughton under the Blean (Bocton subtus le Bleyne, as by a curious admixture of Latin and French it is styled in the old Church Book of Boughton, dating from 1534) is the chief of the four Boughtons in the county of Kent. *Bleyne* as it is spelt in the old book referred to, *Blean* as it is now spelt, being, as I understand, the same word as *blain*, and signifying a protuberance, a swelling, and referring therefore to the wooded hill lying to our north.

The Parish Register contains "Some account of the Antient State of this Parish, written in ye year 1691 & 2," by the Rev. John Johnson, who was Vicar of Boughton 1687—97.

In reference to the name Bocton, he says, "It may signify Freehold-town, for Boc-land in ye Saxon tongue signifies Fee-simple-land, as Somner says in his Dictionar. Saxonie."

Boughton was on the Pilgrims' Road to Canterbury; but although the present road through Boughton Street to Canterbury was in existence, being the old Roman Watling Street, it is generally supposed that that was not the road travelled by the pilgrims, but that they went by way of Boughton Church and South Street, or by Holy Lane and Hickman's Green, passing the Chapel of St. Nicholas.

Boughton is alluded to in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in the Chanones Yemannes Prologue, being lines 16022—6 of the *Canterbury Tales*, in these words :

"Whan that tolde was the lif of Seinte Cecile,
Er we had ridden fully five mile,
At Boughton under blee us gan atake
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,
And undernethe he wered a white surplis."

There is another passage, a little further on, lines 16950—2, with which the Manciple's Prologue begins, which has sometimes been supposed to refer to Boughton :

"Wete ye not wher stondesth a litel toun,
Which that ycleped is Bob up and down,
Under the blee, in Canterbury way?"

* Read at the Annual Meeting of the Kent Archæological Society at Boughton, August 1st, 1894.

Indeed, in reference to this passage, the Rev. John Johnson mentioned above says, "If he means not our street, twill be hard to say wt he means. I suppose Chaucer was jocose or waggish when he called Boughton by yt name." But it is I think now generally supposed that by *Bob up and down* Chaucer wishes to describe Harbledown.

The principal Manor and Church of Boughton are among the most ancient possessions of the See of Canterbury, the Archbishop being mentioned in the Domesday record (which it may be here stated according to Hasted called the place Boltune) as holding the lands himself.

The *Parsonage* of Boughton, *i.e.* the Rectorial Tithes and the Rectory House, were exchanged by Archbishop Stratford, in 1340, with the Abbey of Faversham for other lands, the Archbishop receiving the manor of Tring in Hertfordshire, in exchange for Boughton and Preston.

At the dissolution of the Religious Houses in 1538, it came with the other revenues of Faversham Abbey into the hands of King Henry VIII., who, by his dotation charter in 1541, settled it upon his newly appointed Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, from whom it has in recent times passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners,* the advowson of the Vicarage all along remaining with the Archbishop.

The Church, which is dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, is built of flints, many of which doubtless were dug out of the chalk on which it stands, and it consists of nave and two aisles (the south aisle having been partly extended into a transept), and chancel with two side chapels, one on the north side, the other on the south side.

There are not anywhere in the present Church any evident traces of Norman work, but there are Early English windows in the chancel, in the north chapel, and in the transept. The pointed arches of the nave, some of which are supported by circular and some by octagonal columns, and also some of the windows, belong to the Decorated period, while in other windows and in the screens is Perpendicular work.

The fifteenth-century screens are a very interesting feature in the church. There was no doubt originally a rood-loft also, for we still have the stone stairs enclosed in a small turret which led up to it, and the passage through the walls on the north and south sides of the screen.

* This ancient heritage of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury came into their possession again at Michaelmas, 1894, in exchange for other property.

A photograph of the interior of the church, taken before the restoration in 1871, shews that, the rood-loft having been destroyed as in most places, nothing had been erected in its stead, but in 1871 the present top of the screen was put up.

The tower contains an excellent clock with Cambridge chimes, by Benson, the gift in 1890 of a parishioner, Mr. Serjeant Spinks of Brenley. A tablet recording the gift is placed in the tower beneath the monument of Sir John Routh, a former resident at Brenley. On the occasion of the gift of this clock, the peal of six bells was increased by public subscription to eight. A full account of the bells of Boughton, as far as it can be gathered from the Church Books, from 1565 to the present time, was published in the *Boughton Magazine* for January, 1891,* a short account, with an engraving of Boughton Church, having previously appeared in *Church Bells* for August 8, 1890.

The north chapel is dedicated to St. James, the south chapel to St. John the Baptist. John Best—who possessed the estate of Fairbrook in this parish, dying on July 20, 1508, and whose brass effigy (with that of his wife) lies in the south aisle, but is now covered by the stove—desired in his will to be buried before the chapel door of St. John the Baptist.

The Rev. John Johnson, in the account of the parish to which we have already referred, says, “There was formerly in this church great store of Altars. In ye old Booke, I read of these following, viz., St. Peter’s, St. James’, St. Stevyn’s, St. Christopher’s, St. Katherine’s, and St. Margaret’s. There is also mention of St. John’s Altar, & of our Lady’s in St. John’s Chancell. I suppose St. Katherine’s Altar was placed in yt part of ye Church wch we now call Yeoman’s Corner. I’or in ye great south window of yt Isle toward ye Westend you may plainly read Scta Katharina.” A later note says, “This inscription is lately taken away, either by ye wind or glazier.” “These Altars were maintained wth lights & other Necessaries by ye Rent (wch in ye old Booke is called ye Mole) of cows and sheep wch were bequeathed to this use by ye will of Devout Persons.” [We may here remark that Skeat in his *Concise English Dictionary* gives this word *mole*, connecting it with *emolument*, or profit.] “I find yt in 1536 they had not less than 20 Cows & 120 Sheep at one time. They let these out to ye Parishioners & others at twelvecence by ye year each cow, sometimes for five groats, especially if they were lively (as ye Booke calls them, *i.e.*

* And has since been published in *Church Bells* for April 19, 1895. See Appendix to this Paper.

(I suppose) with calfe). If the cow dyed, ye person who had it was to pay to ye church sometimes ten, sometimes fifteen shillings, for ye payment of wch they were obliged to find sureties. For every sheep they paid threepence by ye year & for every one yt dyed 2 shillings . . . I find that there was five pounds for keeping ye Cross or Rood light and ye heyrse-light (so it is spelt) by wch they mean (I suppose) the lights used at People's Funerals. They that had ye five pounds were obliged instead of use or Interest to provide candles for ye aforesaid uses."

The old Church Book of Boughton mentions that after the Reformation the *mole* of the cows and sheep, and the interest of the stock (of money), was received by the churchwardens, and was applied by them to the purposes for which a church rate was also made. The last mention of this subject seems to be in 1634 and 1636. In the former of these two years the churchwardens received the *mole* of eight cows, and in the latter year interest "for the use of 40s. belonging to the Parish." There is no record of what became of the cows and sheep and "stock" of money, and the Parish Accounts for some years after 1656 are lost.

The following objects of interest inside the church may be noticed: two benaturas, or holy water stoups, one just inside the north door of the church, the other just inside the south door; two aumbryes, or cupboards for keeping the holy vessels or other property of the church, in the east wall of the chancel—the one north of the altar still bears traces of the hinges, while two round holes above the aumbrye south of the altar seem to point to its having had a covering in front arranged in some other way; and three piscinas, one in the south wall of the chancel, one in the east wall of the north chapel, one in the south wall of the south chapel.

Some of the monuments also claim attention. The two earliest, both probably dating from the thirteenth century, are the stone coffin-lid bearing a cross, which now lies close to the west door, and the slab in the chancel, which once bore a brass cross. The inscription round this slab, which would seem to be Norman French, is in Lombardic characters, but although many of the letters are plain enough, no one has yet been able to read the inscription. A well-known antiquary, Sir Henry Dryden, has written a short Paper on the slab in Vol. XVIII. of *Archæologia Cantiana*, and the slab is engraved there. But though he makes some suggestions as to deciphering the inscription he says, "I am unable to make sense of it, and send this notice chiefly in the hope that some one else may be able to do so."

In point of antiquity the next monumental memorial to be noticed is the brass inscription to John de Colkins, 1405, in the south aisle.

In the north chapel there are a number of memorials to the Hawkins family, who formerly lived at Nash Court in this parish, the most noteworthy being the brass effigy and inscription to Thomas Hawkins, who died March 15, 1588, aged 101, and the recumbent figures of Sir Thomas Hawkins, Kt., his son, who died April 10, 1617, and his wife Ann, who died October 5, 1616. The brass inscription to the former of these two is as follows :

“I now that lye within this marble stone
 was called Thomas Hawkins by my name
 My terme of life an hundred yeares and one
 King Henry theight I served which won me fame
 Who was to me a gracious prince always
 And made me well to spend mine aged days.

 My stature high my bodye bigge and strong
 Excelling all that lived in myne age
 But nature spent, death would not tarry longe
 To fetch the pledge which life had layed to gage
 My fatall daye if thow desyer to knowe
 Behold the figures written here belowe
 15 Martii 1587.”

The other monument referred to above has the four following inscriptions : an inscription in English recording the dates of the deaths of Sir Thomas Hawkins and his wife, a panegyric in Latin, the two following Latin lines—

Vita est Oceanus, Spes undæ, Gaudia venti,
 Omnia Tempestas, Mors pia Sola quies.

And the six following English lines—

Frayle nature heere reposeth Dust and stone
 Attyres our weakenese thus when we are gone.
 To shew Mortallity would fayne transcend
 And seeme a Thing which never should have end,
 But vague is all Tis onely vertue can
 Lengthen our Date And make a happy man.

With the above inscription may be compared the inscription on the marble tablet against the pillar in the south chapel :

Marble shall fade, George Farwell's
 name shall not
 Such in the book of life by God
 are wrot
 He left us December 16, 1747
 in his 79th year.

Besides the brasses which have been already referred to, there is an inscription to Cyriac Petit of Colkins who died 1591, and his wife who had died in 1568, and under the stove an inscription to Elizabeth, wife of John Driland, 1591, with a male and female effigy, and four daughters. There is reason to believe that when the church was restored the brasses were misplaced, and that the figures which, as now laid, would purport to be John Driland and wife and four daughters, are really Cyriac Petit and wife and their daughters.

There is little to say in reference to the other monuments in the church; the canting arms of Elianor Sea, who married the Thomas Hawkins whose brass effigy is mentioned above, were referred to by the Rev. C. V. Collier in his Paper on the Heraldry in the Churches visited in the Society's excursion this year. These arms are to be blazoned thus: Argent, a *fish* haurient in pale between two flaunches barry *wavy*, for *Sea*.

The tower of the church is of the usual Kentish type, embattled, and with a turret staircase. Hasted, writing in 1790, says that the tower was formerly surmounted by a spire, but that it fell down at the beginning of the century. And *A Tour through the Isle of Thanet and some other parts of East Kent*, published in London by J. Nichols, 1793, gives as the exact date of the fall of the spire the terrible storm of wind on November 26 and 27, 1703. The parapet to the north aisle and north porch may be noticed as not being usual in Kentish churches; and there is a little turret for the rood staircase.

The yew-trees are interesting because the exact age of both is known. A note in the Register in the handwriting of the Rev. John Johnson says, "The little yew-tree near the Altar Tomb which is opposite to the south doore of this church was sett there by Ano Dni 1695"—the name of the person by whom it was "sett" being erased. And a record in the Register in more recent times states that the yew at the east side of the church was planted in 1840 by Miss Frances Wrighte, daughter of the then Vicar of Boughton. The dimensions of the former tree are as follows: Height, about 50 feet; the girth, 3 feet from the ground, 9 feet 9 inches; the branches begin about 4 feet 3 inches from the ground, and here the girth is 11 feet; the branches spread to a distance of 22 to 23 feet from the trunk in different directions. The tree presents a thoroughly healthy appearance, and is remarkable for its perfect contour. Dr. John Lowe, who is an eminent authority

on the subject, says: "This is an instance of most rapid growth in a young tree, only exceeded in two recorded instances. And as one of these two trees, the yew at Westfelton in Shropshire, referred to by Loudon and Christison, was planted under very exceptional circumstances, it affords no basis of comparison. The Boughton tree shews an increase of diameter in its 200 years of growth at the rate of *twelve* inches in 61·5 years, whereas the ordinary rate, as calculated by Sir R. Christison, is twelve inches in 75 years. The other yew-tree, planted in 1840, which is now 16 feet high, and 3 feet 10 inches in girth at 2 feet 2 inches from the ground where the branches begin, shews a still more remarkable growth than the preceding, the increase of diameter being at the rate of *twenty* inches in 75 years."

APPENDIX.

THE CHURCH BELLS OF BOUGHTON-UNDER-BLEAN, KENT.

THE first mention of anything connected with the bells is in 1565, when xiii^d were paid for a *bawedrycke*, xiiii^d for a bell-rope, and v^d for mending the *bell wheill*. It may be mentioned here that at this time scarcely any year passed without a charge being made for making or mending a *bawdrick*. The word is spelt in several different ways, the latest appearance of the word being perhaps in 1765 under the form *Batterick*, and the definition of this word in Murray's *New English Dictionary* is as follows:—"The leather-gear with its appurtenances by which the clapper of a church-bell was suspended"—obsolete. New bell-ropes also were an annual charge in the accounts; it is not, however, to be supposed that the ropes were worn out so much more quickly than at present, but they were the perquisite of the Churchwardens at the end of their year of office. In 1577 there are the following items in the accounts relating to the bells:—

The Churchwardens charge themselves with xx^s received of William Ruck, by him gathered of the parishioners towards the bells.

"Paid to old Skelton for mending the tymber work of the bells & for making of one newe bell wheill xx^s."

“Paid for mendying and newe making the iron work of the bells xv^s i^d.”

“Paid for newe making of the grete bell clapp vii^s ij^d.”

“Paid to Rob^t Maxsted for a bellstock xviii^d.”

In 1621 we read, “Itē paid to Harrice the Carpenter trimminge of the bells xlv^s vi^d.” Again in 1622: “It. paid to Harris for the bells xxx^s.” In 1624 we read, “Paid by Sir Humphrey Tufton for recasting of the great bell and other charges xxx^s.” A memorandum in the Register states that he lived in the Parsonage house (*i.e.* the old house belonging to Mrs. Lade which was pulled down in 1889), and that his name was on the tenor bell.

We learn from the number of bell-ropes paid for that there were (at least) three bells in 1566, (at least) four bells in 1589, and viii^s vi^d paid for five bell-ropes on the 8th of May 1625 shews that there were at that date five bells.

It is stated in *A Tour through the Isle of Thanet and some other parts of East Kent*, published by J. Nichols, London, in 1793, that there was for many years a ring of five bells here, and that in 1729 a treble bell was added by subscription to make up six, and that in 1766, when the old bells of Selling were recast, an exchange was made of the fourth bell for the second of the Selling peal, which made that of Boughton more tunable. It seems that the money raised by subscription in 1729 was not sufficient, for in the Church-rate accounts passed Easter 1731 there is this entry: “To make up the full for the new bell £8 8s. 6d.”

In reference to the second transaction alluded to above, it appears by the accounts that on December 6th, 1766, a sum of 3s. was paid for “carrying weights to the church to weigh the bell and bringing them back,” and on June 2nd, 1767: “W. Potter, on account of the bells, as by his bill appears,” received £20 6s. 6d.

At a vestry meeting held December 11th, 1774, it was agreed to allow Mr. Thomas Sweetlove the sum of £65 to new frame the bells, new hang them, and make complete all works thereto belonging, together with the two new girders below the floor, exclusive of the old materials. And on March 19th, 1775, a Church cess at 9d. in the £ full rents was granted towards defraying the expense of new hanging the bells, etc. But, instead of rehanging the old bells, it was agreed at a vestry meeting on June 18th, 1775, to send them to London immediately to be recast. The work was promptly done, for there is a charge of 12s. on September 5th for the carriage of the new bells to church, and the payment of 6s. to the ringers on September 22nd probably gives the date when these new bells were

first rung. A Church cess at 5*d.* in the £ was granted on August 6th, 1775, towards defraying the expenses of recasting the bells. There is no memorandum of agreement with the bellfounders, but the following sums were paid to Pack and Chapman:—December 18th, 1775, £40; July 10th, 1776, £38 19*s.* The tenor bell which was recast, as stated above, in 1624 and again in 1775, was again recast, in consequence of being cracked, in 1886, and all the bells were rehung at a cost of £90, raised by subscription.

And in 1890 two new bells were added, completing a peal of eight, the cost (£83 12*s.* 6*d.*, exclusive of £10 incidental expenses) being defrayed by subscription.

The inscriptions on the bells are as follows:—

1 and 2. Mears and Stainbank, Whitechapel Foundry, London, 1890.

3. Although I am but light and small,
I will be heard above you all.

Pack and Chapman, of London, fecit 1775.

4. If you have a judicious ear,
You'll own my voice is sweet and clear.

Pack and Chapman, of London, fecit 1775.

5. To honour both of God and King,
Our voices shall in concert ring.

Pack and Chapman, of London, fecit 1775.

6. Whilst thus we join in cheerful sound,
Let love and loyalty abound.

Pack and Chapman, of London, fecit 1775.

7. Ye ringers all that prize your health and happiness,
Be sober, merry, wise, and you'll the same possess.

Pack and Chapman, of London, fecit 1775.

8. Warner and Sons, London, 1886.

H. M. Spooner, Vicar.

J. Bunt }
E. File } Churchwardens.

The parish of Boughton has always been ready to shew its loyalty and patriotism by ringing its church bells—*e.g.* payments were made to the ringers “when the King went by;” *i.e.* when King Charles I. went to Canterbury to consummate his marriage with the Princess Henrietta of France at the Abbey of St. Augustine on June 13th, 1625; *cf.* Hasted's *Kent*, 2nd ed., xii., 643; and again “at the Kynges returne from Canterburie.” We have no reference to any events in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the accounts from 1655 to 1707 being lost. At Easter 1709 6*s.* appears

as "paid to the ringers when we beat the French"—*i.e.* probably to commemorate the Duke of Marlborough's victory at Oudenarde June 1708.

Again, September 4th, 1710, "for the reioycing of the second vicktory in Spain"—*i.e.* probably the battle of Saragossa.

On March 22nd, 1714, 12s. was paid to the ringers when peace was proclaimed, and 6s. more when peace was concluded.

On November 18th, 1715, "ye victory obtained over the Rebels at Preston"—*i.e.* the Scotch and Northumbrian rebels who had risen on behalf of the Pretender, son of James II.—was commemorated by a peal.

The Battle of the Nile, on August 1st, 1798, was similarly commemorated at Boughton on September 22nd in that year.