

OTHAM RECTORS.

BY REV. J. CAVE-BROWNE, M.A.

IN tracing out the succession of Rectors of Otham, the earliest name we have been able to discover is in the "Sede Vacante" Records at Canterbury, when, in the interval between the death of Archbishop Peckham and the appointment of Archbishop Winchelsey, the duty of Institution lay with the Prior of Christ Church, the energetic Henry de Estria, and in 1293 RADULPHUS DE MALLING was presented to him for the vacant Rectory by Robertus de Valoignes.* The next name is that of RICARDUS DE SANDWICO (SANDWICH) by the same patron in 1315.† Three years after, the Rectory becoming vacant, Robert de Valoignes appoints a member of his own family, HAIMO DE VALOIGNES;‡ and again, in 1322, appears the name of GULLIELMUS DE LA LEGH.§ Four years after an exchange was effected between him and ROBERTUS DE HEMINGBURGH, from Pirton in Worcestershire. He seems to have held the Otham Rectory some five and twenty years, for no appointment appears to have taken place again till 1349, when, there being a vacancy in the See of Canterbury on the death of Archbishop Bradwardine, Prior Richard de Oxenden, Estria's successor, instituted THOMAS DE WOTTON, on the presentation of Sir Thomas de Aldon (*alias* Aldelyn) of Crundall,|| to whom the Advowson had come through his marriage with Matilda, daughter and heiress of Waresius de Valoignes. In 1355 Sir Thomas Aldon presented ROGER DE ARDELE;¶ then, in 1374, when Robert Hathbrand was Prior, during the interval between Archbishops Whittelsey and Simon de Sudbury, he presented ROBERT FYNHCOTE to the vacant Rectory.**

In 1385 Sir Thomas Aldon's widow Matilda presented GUYDO

* Cant. MSS., Q., fo. 21.

† *Ibid.*, fo. 23^b.

|| Cant. MSS., I., fo. 18.

** Cant. Chapt. MSS., G., fo. 171.

† Archbishop Reynold's Register, fo. 16.

§ *Ibid.*, fo. 30^b.

¶ Archbishop Islip's Register, fo. 269^a.

HERFELD,* who retained it till 1413, when, on his death, the Manor and with it the Advowson, having passed into the hands of the Pympe family, John Pympe, Esq., of Pympe Hall, Farleigh, presented JOHANNES LAYBORNE, a member of a neighbouring family. The next appointment was in 1435, when JOHANNES KNOLLYS † (or KNOLLES) was presented by the same patron, who again, in 1441, on Knollys' death, presented WILLIELMUS KENE § (not Keme, as Hasted gives it), whose name occurs in the will of William Colyn || as one of the witnesses, and again two years after in that of Robert Betynhem ¶ as "*olim* Rector." After him occurs the name of JOHANNES RAMSEY, but no date or mention of his appointment, only of that of THOMAS DANYEL on Ramsey's death in 1504,** when the right of presentation was exercised by the widow of John Pimp, as was also the case twenty years after, in 1525, when she presented LUDOVICUS (LOUIS) AP RES on Danyel's resignation. †† His successor was THOMAS CAYLEY apparently, †‡ according to the Church Register of an Otham family, but no date of his appointment appears either at Canterbury or Lambeth. The Parish Church Register records his burial in 1567, when PETER HENDLE (or HENDLEY as it is afterwards written) was appointed by his relation Thomas Hendle, to whom the Manor and Advowson had passed by the grant of the Crown. §§ Among the many signs of the Reformation which were now becoming apparent, the Baptismal Register shews that both Cayley and Hendley had been released from obligatory celibacy. Between the years 1585 and 1590 are several entries of the baptisms of children of "Thomas Crompe, Clerk," while that of "Peter Hendle, Parson" also appears. Was Crompe Curate?

The next name on the list is that of one who in many ways left his mark in the parish. In the Register at Lambeth ||| it is written JOHN BROME, S.T.P. So it is originally in the Church Register in all the earlier entries; but a second "o" appears in a later hand, and in the course of time he signs himself BROOME. To him the

* Archbishop Courtenay's Register, fo. 258.

† Archbishop Chichele's Register, fo. 206.

‡ Archdeacon's Court, Canterbury, vol. iii. fo. 25.

§ *Ibid.*

¶ *Ibid.*

** Archbishop Warham's Register, fo. 323. In his will (Archdeacon's Court, Cant., vol. xvii., fo. 2) he expresses a wish to be "buried in the Chancel of Otham Church," and bequeaths to it "one surplice and a mattens Robe," and to his neighbour Parson at Langley "a Sarsenett Typpett, my best Cappe, a shirt, & a portusse (a breviary)."

†† Archbishop Warham's Register, fo. 384.

‡‡ In the "Hendle MSS." mention is made under date 1547 of " (Sir) Thomas Bayley, Parson of Otham," probably a mistake for Thomas Cayley.

§§ Archbishop Parker's Register, fo. 380^b.

||| Archbishop Whitgift's Register, fo. 335.

parish is indebted for the earliest Register now extant there. Henry VIII. had, at the persuasion of Thomas (afterwards Lord) Cromwell in 1538, issued an order that every parish should possess a Register Book, into which should be made the entry of every baptism, marriage, and burial solemnized in the Church. Prior to that time, apparently, no system of registering these domestic events had existed, and if any record at all was made it was on waste paper books or loose scraps of paper. Now they were to be duly and carefully entered in a book supplied by each parish for that purpose, and a chest also provided for keeping this book. However, this system would seem to have been very imperfectly carried out; and to insure greater care, Elizabeth, in the "Constitutions" of 1597, required that in future such books should be of parchment, not of paper, and the entries methodically made. Happily at this time the Clergy began to realize the importance of carrying out this plan, and in very many parishes set themselves to collect and transcribe all previously existing records into such parchment books.* To the zeal and industry of this new Rector, John Broome, Otham is indebted for having an admirable Church Register, not only from the date of his own appointment, but going back to the earlier date of Henry VIII.'s Injunction of 1538. He duly recorded on the fly-leaf of the oldest extant Register that he had strictly complied with the Canon, and had copied out, and given a permanent form to, *all* the entries he could collect for the preceding sixty years, which he carried on till his death, and hoped to secure its perpetuity by the following entry:—

"The Register booke of the Parish Church of Ottham in the Countie of Kent, according to the Canon in that behalfe published in the fortieth yere of the most happie reigne of our most gracious Sovereigne Ladie Elizabeth, by the excellent grace of God Queen of England, ffrance, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc., and in the yere of our Lord and onely Saviour Jesus Christ 1598. Thus written out by me, John Broome, Bacchelaour of Divinitie, and Parson of the said Otham.

"OBSERVATIONS.

"1. In the lower end of everie page, or syde of a leafe, a convenient space must be left, wherein the names of the Minister, Churchwardens, and Sydesmen are to bee subscribed.

* Extract from the Clause "De Registris in Ecclesiis (Constitutiones Ecclesiasticæ, Anno 1597)":—"Ut libri ad hunc usum destinati, quo tutius reservari et ad posteritatis memoriam propagari possint, ex pergameno . . . conficiantur: iisque . . . ex veteribus libris cartaceis transcripta sint."

"2. Everie yere Certificate must bee made of all Baptismes, Mariadges, and Buryalls wh. shall happen to bee in the said Parish, from Easter to Easter, or from the Annun'tian to the Annun'tian, to the ArchD'n, & from Mich. to Mich. to the Commissarie.

"3. This booke must bee kept in a Chest with three locks and three keyes by the Officers above named."

John Broome seems to have more than followed the example of Cayley and Peter Hendley, for having lost his first wife Priscilla in August 1612, on the 24th of the following November he married Mary Delahay, probably one of his own parishioners, the daughter of Katherine Delahay, whose burial is entered by Broome on February 11, 1620, as the "widow of Neville Delahay, sometyme of Wateringbury, Esq., having many yeares before given all her goods by guift (*sic*) to her children."

The vacancy in the Otham Parsonage caused by the death of John Broome brought the little quiet Kentish village within the vortex of the political maelstrom which was at the time sweeping over the country at the end of 1605 and the beginning of the following year. In the height of the panic which the discovery of the "Gunpowder Plot" had caused, the House of Commons on January 21 resolved that a Committee be formed "To consider of some course for the timely and severe proceeding against Jesuits, Seminaries, and all other Popish Agents and Practisers, and for the Preventing and Suppressing their Plots and Practises."

The rapid development of this alarm is well depicted in the Journals, for extracts from which the writer is indebted to the kindness of L. Helbert, Esq., of the Library of the House of Commons.

"January 21, 1605-6.

"Sir George Moore (M.P. for Guildford) maketh a Motion out of a sense of the late Conspiracy, the like whereof never came upon the Stage of the world. No hour too soon for such a Motion. Encouragement to Papists. (*Homines qui ex fraude, fallacia, mendiciis, consistere videbantur. Tantumne Religio potuit movisse malorum?*)"

Sir Francis Hastings, M.P. for Somerset, followed:

"3 Duties: to God, to the King, to God & ourselves. Offered to Consideration, four (points): The Plot, the Carriage of the Plot, the Discovery, and the Deliverance. Plot, Popish, dangerous and desperate."

Mr. Solicitor (Sir Thomas Fleminge, M.P. for Southampton) :

“A word in time like Apples of gold furnished with Pictures of Silver.”

Then followed the Motion to form a Committee.

The immediate result was the passing of an Act (3 James I., cap. 5) by which it was enacted (Clause xviii) “that all recusants shall be utterly disabled from and after the end of this present Parliament to present to any benefice, with cure or without cure, etc. ;” and then Clause xix enacts that “the Chancellor and Scholars of the University of Oxford so often as any of them shall be void shall have the presentation, etc., of & to every such benefice (in some twenty-five specified counties, of which Kent was one*) as shall happen to be void during such time, as the patron thereof shall be and remain a Recusant convict as aforesaid.” The inference, then, is that the Hendleys, in whom the patronage had for some years lain, were either recusants or suspects. For the next presentation was made by the Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of Oxford, and they chose for the vacant Parsonage WILLIAM HYDE, M.A., of Exeter College, whose selection also marks an era in the history of Oxford. The preceding year had seen him nominated by the body of the University Masters, in whom the right then lay, to the important office of Proctor.† Hyde had entered on his duties in April 1628; but by the following June a new “Constitution” had been imposed on them by the King, transferring the nomination from the general body of the Masters of Arts to those of each particular College, from which, according to a Cycle then prepared, the election was to be made. It is probable that the University, to compensate him for the loss of the coveted appointment, conferred on him the first piece of Church patronage which fell to them. And so he became Rector of Otham in 1628.‡

The vacancy caused by the death of William Hyde was filled by the appointment of THOMAS WILSON, M.A.,§ a man of considerable learning and force of character, but of very strong Presbyterian tendencies. His appointment to Otham was effected by an influential Jurat of Maidstone, who purchased the Advowson for the express purpose of placing there a man whose preaching

* It was arranged that all the southern counties of England should be assigned to Oxford and the northern ones to Cambridge, a division which holds good to the present day in the case of all benefices in the hands of Romanist patrons.

† A. A. Wood's *Hist. University of Oxon*, p. 435; Boase's *Registrum Ewoniense*, p. 63.

‡ Archbishop Abbot's Register, fo. 245.

§ *Ibid.*, vol. ii., fo. 193.

accorded with his own views, and where he and his fellow-townsmen of Maidstone "might go with little trouble or travail to hear the Word of God."* Some years after Swinnocke was able to introduce him to Maidstone itself as Curate. But it was in connection with Otham that Wilson attained to some public celebrity. The introduction of *The Book of Sports* and the order that it should be proclaimed in all Churches was the stumbling block in Wilson's course at Otham. He had here a sympathizing parishioner of some position, Henry Tooke,† a medical man, who made common cause with him. Their obduracy came to the notice of the High Commissioner, and three times in the course of 1635 and 1636 they were both summoned to appear before the Court, but refused. The charge against Wilson was that "divers of the (Maidstone) Parishioners, being schismatically affected, had in great troops left the Parish Church, and gone from thence to Otham to hear him preach and expound." He was first "monished," and then as "an inconformable Minister" suspended.‡ This led to a memorable scene in the House of Commons: Sir Edward Dering, who was at the time one of the Knights of the Shire for Kent, presented a Petition from Wilson to the House, complaining that he had been suspended and was being "persecuted by a Pursuivant." Sir Edward said he had personally appealed to the Archbishop, undertaking that Wilson should appear in any of the King's Courts to answer his accusers; but Laud had refused to shew any clemency, and had treated him with a sneer—"I am sure he will not absent himself a twelvemonth together, and I doubt not but once in a year we shall have him."§ Smarting under the recollection of his scornful reception at Lambeth Palace, Dering exclaimed, "I hope, by the help of this House, before this year of threatening be run out, his Grace will either have more grace or no grace at all"—an anathema of sad fulfilment, for not long after the Archbishop's head was brought to the block. Bearing testimony on the other hand to Wilson's worth, Dering described him as "orthodox in doctrine and laborious in preaching as any we have, and of unblemished life."|| Such was the spirit in which Sir Edward was persuaded to cast in his lot with his temporary Puritan allies, then led by Hampden, and bring in the Bill for "the utter eradication of

* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, vol. xxxix., pp. 200, 208.*

† A younger brother of Sir Nicholas Tooke of Godington in Great Chart.

‡ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, vol. xlii., p. 509.*

§ *Ibid.*, vol. xlvi., p. 254.

|| Neal's *History of the Puritans*, vol. ii., p. 416.

Bishops, Deans, and Chapters, etc.," a step which even Neal condemns as being "a rash and inconsiderate attempt" (vol. i., p. 702).* Dering, however, lived to greatly modify his views, and to give play to his really loyalist instincts, redeeming the error of his vanity and feebleness as a politician by the fame he attained as a scholar and a man of letters, of which the Surrenden Library and MSS. were a lasting proof.

Wilson's suspension, however, was cancelled in 1639, and he was restored to Otham; but soon another difficulty confronted him. The Scots were advancing upon England, and a Special Prayer was ordered to be used in Church. To this Wilson objected on Canonical grounds, and was again suspended. However, by 1642 a great change had come over the political world of England: Parliament was supreme, a solemn fast was to be observed, Wilson—the victim of Laud's Inhibition—was selected to preach the sermon on the occasion before the House of Commons in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, besides having other honours bestowed on him by his friends, now in the ascendant—among them the post of Curate of Maidstone,† where he took up his abode, leaving the (as he thought) less important duties of Otham to be performed by a substitute. And he who, in the sermon already alluded to, had denounced non-residence as "an odious sin" became himself non-resident! How his substitute at Otham, Thomas Heron (or Herne), whose signature appears at every Vestry Meeting held

* Clarendon (*History of the Rebellion*, Book iii., A.D. 1641) thus describes the scene. Hampden and his party "prevailed with Sir Edward Dering," a man very opposite to all their designs (but a man of levity and vanity, easily flattered by being commended), who presented the Bill to the House from the gallery, with the two verses of Ovid, the application whereof was his greatest motive:

"Cunota prius tentata, sed immedicabile vulnus
Ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur."

They describe Jupiter's excuse and justification for annihilating the Titans; and Dering seems to have selected his exalted place in the gallery to give more dramatic effect to the words, as though an utterance from Heaven. Dryden has thus rendered the passage in English:

"I tried whatever in the Godhead lay,
But gangrened members must be lopped away
Before the nobler parts are tainted to decay."

† Wilson, though Presbyterian in doctrine, was, like the far-famed Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland, loyalist at heart, and these higher instincts proved fatal to his happiness at Maidstone, for, preaching on the Sunday after the King's execution, he openly in his sermon denounced the act as murder, when, according to Newton (*History of Maidstone*), an exciting scene was witnessed at the Church door between him and his infuriated parishioner, Andrew Broughton, who, as Clerk of the Council, had read the warrant for the King's execution.

during his stay there, performed his duties may be inferred from an entry in the Church Register made by the succeeding Rector, JOHN DAVIS, that "from 1647 to 1653" (the period of Heron's holding the Cure) "there was neither Mariage, Christening, or Buriall enter'd in the Otham Register."

Again, the appointment to the Rectory seems to have been in the hands of a Maidstone magnate, for THOMAS WHITE, who was appointed by that new body "The Commissioners for the approval of Publique Preachers,"* was presented by Walter Francklyn, Esq., a name of frequent occurrence among the Maidstone Jurats. He held the Rectory for only a few months, and was succeeded by JOHN DAVIS, under the same presentation,† who, though not formally appointed till 1655, had evidently a promise or an anticipation of the preferment, for in the fly-leaf of the Church Register is the entry "John Davis, who is to be Rector of Otham, 1654." His connection with the parish was, however, of more substantial benefit to Otham than that of Wilson had been, for it would seem that at the time there was no Parsonage House, or it had fallen into uninhabitable disrepair, for an entry in the Church Rate Accounts of the year 1651 mentions the payment of "a year's rent to Mr. Hendle for a house," and there still remains a massive beam running across the kitchen of the present Parsonage bearing the inscription "THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT BY JOHN DAVIS, RECTOR OF OTHAM, 1664." He too, like Wilson, became Curate of Maidstone, where he died and was buried, a laudatory monument in All Saints' Church recording his merits and the esteem in which he was there held.

On the death of John Davis the Advowson had apparently passed into the hands of MATHIAS RUTTON, a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who was already Dean of Battle in Sussex, for he presented himself to the Rectory,‡ and held it for nearly a quarter of a century, dying in 1700. The next patron, according to Ecton,§ was John Cook, Esq., who early in 1701 presented WILLIAM SIMMONDS to the vacant Parsonage.|| He resigned it in 1727, by which time the patronage had returned to the Hendley family in the person of its representative, Bowyer Hendley, the grandson of Sir Thomas Hendley of Coreshorne in Cranbrook, who had been Sheriff for the County in 1702. His father John Hendley had married Priscilla, the daughter of Thomas Fludd of Gore Court,

* Augmentation of Church Lands, Lambeth MSS., fo. 997.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Archbishop Sheldon's Register, fo. 375^b.

§ *Thesaurus*, p. 18.

|| Archbishop Tenison, I., fo. 207^b.

which estate he purchased from her brother Alabaster Fludd, thus uniting again the two Manors, and made his future home there. On the resignation of William Simmonds in 1727, Bowyer Hendley presented his son-in-law SAMUEL HORNE, of Pembroke College, Oxford, who had married his daughter Anne. Though little known beyond the bounds of his small country parish, here he lived for above forty years, earning the reputation, according to his biographer William Jones of Nayland, of being "a most learned and excellent man," while the name seems to have lived rather in the fame of his more distinguished son George Horne, who was born in the Parsonage at Otham in 1730, and whose brilliant career at Oxford as a Scholar of University, a Fellow of Magdalen (of which he was afterwards President), a Chaplain in Ordinary to the King, and then Dean of Canterbury, culminated in his becoming Bishop of Norwich in 1791. His name is especially associated with the *Commentary on the Psalms* and also the *Letters on Infidelity*, in which he refuted and exposed the theories of David Hume.

The Advowson of Otham being still in the Hendley family, on the death of Samuel Horne, his youngest son WILLIAM HORNE, already Rector of Brede in Sussex and Chaplain to the Earl of Falkland, was presented to the Rectory, which he held from 1769 to 1821.

Of him, as of his father Samuel Horne, little seems to be recorded. On his death in 1821, his widow, to whom the patronage had passed as the representative of the Hendleys, presented her son, also WILLIAM HORNE, whose ministerial career had commenced in 1799 as "Archbishop's Curate" in the adjacent parish of Leeds. He only retained the Rectory for ten years, resigning it in 1831. At that time the minds of many English Churchmen were being disturbed by the grave political changes which were passing over the country. The "Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829" and the threatened "Reform Bill" (which was passed in 1832) alarmed him, and he resigned the Rectory and retired to Gore Court, which he had inherited, living there till his death in 1841.

On resigning in 1831 (the right of patronage having come to him on his mother's death), he presented his neighbour JOHN ASHBURNER, Vicar of Linton, to the benefice, who, under a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury, held the two Cures, residing at Linton, and placing a succession of Curates in the Otham Parsonage. Ashburner died in 1847, having held the joint livings for sixteen years. During that interval William Horne, the

previous Rector, had also died, and bequeathed the Advowson to his widow, who, dying in 1846, had willed the next presentation to her niece's husband TATTON BROCKMAN, who had been appointed to the Vicarage of Rottingdean in Sussex in 1839, and had subsequently succeeded to the Gore Court property, where he lived; but if he should decline to present himself or resign, she further willed that on the next vacancy (in recognition of the close connection which had so long existed between the Horne family and Magdalen College, Oxford,* of which three generations had been Fellows, and an uncle a distinguished President) the reversion of the Advowson should pass to the "President and Scholars" of that College, to hold it in perpetuity "in trust that they present thereto such pious and worthy Clergymen of the Church of England who may have been educated at either of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, as they shall select and approve." Mr. Brockman did present himself, and held the Rectory for twenty years, residing at Gore Court and also at Beachborough, the family seat, to which he had succeeded. He resigned it in 1869, when Magdalen College exercised the right which then fell to it, and presented one of their own Fellows, the Rev. FREDERICK MAULE MILLARD, the present Rector, to whom the writer is indebted for much valuable information and help.

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* See "Acts and Institutions" in Lambeth Palace Library, and her Will (Somerset House).