

ST. MICHAEL'S, CANTERBURY.

BY DOROTHY GARDINER.

EARLY NOTICES.

This is one of the fourteen Saxon Churches in the city. Somner says (p. 164): "Three Churches, to wit St. George, St. Mary Bredman and St. Peter, anciently were, as they still are (1640) of the patronage of Christchurch; as were likewise, whilst they stood, two other, viz. *St. Michael of Burgate* and St. Mary of Queningate; all which five, together with St. Sepulchre's, were confirmed to it by bulls of Pope Alexander III and divers succeeding Popes, and every one of them anciently paid to it a several annual Pension, as St. George 5s., St. Mary Bredman 6d., St. Peter 6s. 8d., St. Michael 2s. and St. Sepulchre 12d."

A RECTOR.

A Rector of St. Michael's, "Dominus Johannes", is mentioned amongst those city incumbents who in 1321 adjudicated in the case of St. Martin's School and its Master, Robert de Henney, as against Master Ralph de Waltham, of the School of the City of Canterbury. (Somner, Appendix, p. 34.)

QUENINGATE LANE.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century the Convent boundary south of Queningate did not march with the City Wall. The military lane within the walls, which the Priory controlled as far as Queningate—was still city property beyond it to the south; along "Queningate Lane", under and within the city wall, houses were built, of which many leases remain among the civic muniments. From 1409 onwards the Convent took leases from the City Bailiffs of various sections of this property, including "the new tower, the new wall and the postern gate" (i.e. Queningate), all of which were to be kept in repair by the lessees.

THE VACANT LAND.

Approaching Burgate, where there is an earthen ramp on the inner side of the wall, lay a vacant piece of land more or less corresponding to the present area of Dr. Shirley's garden.

LEASE FROM THE CITY.

Among the city muniments is a lease of 1429 (8 Henry VI) which refers to this vacant piece, lying in the parish of St. Michael; it is between Robert Bertelot and William Osborn, Bailiffs, and the Venerable William (Molash), Prior of the Church of Christ of Canterbury and his convent; (City Records, Bundle IV). In this document exact measurements and boundaries are given, so that the dimensions of the piece in question can probably be exactly identified.

CONDITIONS OF THE LEASE.

The lease which is dated in the Chapter House "on the morrow of the Feast of St. Michael", was for twelve years, at a rent of 6s. 8d., and it included permission to erect "*a wooden gate between St. Michael's Church and the house of Alice, widow of Henry Baker*"; the Bailiffs reserved to themselves and their successors the keys of the said gate, which opened into Burgate. The Convent were to allow no accumulation of rubbish ("*foetores sordida vel alia inhonesta*") near this gate. They were further permitted to erect a wall of stone or make a ditch to enclose the "vacant piece" on the south side, between the stone wall of the city towards the east and the Convent garden wall towards the west. The Convent was at liberty when their lease of the vacant piece expired, to carry off the material of this boundary wall, where and as they pleased, provided it was without annoyance or disturbance to the Bailiffs. Possibly a ditch was first made; Somner says the existing wall of Tudor brickwork was built by Prior William Sellynge.¹

¹ Somner, Part III, p. 89. His map (p. 85) shows the gate on to Burgate.

THE GRAND COMPOSITION.

During Sellynge's Priorate, came the grand composition of all outstanding differences, when by Royal Licence, June 4th, 1492, the Mayor and Commonalty were allowed, in comprehensive terms, which covered all concessions, new and old, "to grant to the Prior and Convent of Christ Church in free alms, a piece of land, parcel of the City within the walls, extending from the Church of St. Michael to the Church of Northgate, and the whole of the wall and turrets there between the said Churches. . . ."

LATER HISTORY OF ST. MICHAEL'S.

St. Michael's Church was at this date (1492) still standing. There is mention of it in fifteenth and early sixteenth century wills :—For example, William Billingley, the curate, desires to be buried before the image of St. Mary in the church (1501). To the same statue of "Our Lady in the Church", Denyce Twesnott in 1508 left a pair of beads of silver, besides two crystal stones bequeathed to St. Michael's image, "for to be set in his foot". Thomas Sparowe left 3s. 4d. for repairing the Church door in 1516, and Agnes Sheldwich the same amount for the reparation of the stalls in the Quire in 1517.¹

UNION OF BENEFICES.

After this there are no further bequests, the reason no doubt being that in 1516 the benefices of St. George the Martyr and St. Michael were united,² and "the Church of St. Michael, standing on the covered way within the city wall, being at the date included within the precinct of the monastery and therefore useless, was dismantled."³

THE TOWER LEFT STANDING.

The Church tower, however, which stood over part of Queningate Lane, the military way within the walls, appears to have remained for at least another century and a half.

¹ *Testamenta Cantiana*, p. 59.

² D. and C. Register T., f. 133.

³ Historical MSS. Commission, Report IX, App. I, p. 120.

In 1684 the Dean and Chapter leased to John Knell certain property adjoining Burgate, "reserving to the Lessors the late Steeple belonging [i.e. lately belonging] to the said Church of St. Michael, the soil and ground under the same steeple and the way at the west end as it is now used."¹

PRESENT CONDITIONS.

Nos. 2 and 4 Burgate Street (the houses adjacent to the city wall) probably occupy the site of the nave of St. Michael's Church, while the opening between them and No. 5, now considerably narrowed, marks the south end of Queningate Lane; this, the mediaeval lane under the city wall, continues on across the street (Burgate Lane).

CHARACTER OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH AND PARISH.

St. Michael's Church was probably much of the same size and plan as St. Mary's Queningate, recently excavated, and, like it, had the city wall for its eastern end; and a north aisle where the gardens of Nos. 2 and 4 extend. It apparently had no churchyard, but the parishioners were buried (as their wills indicate) at St. Augustine's.

The north side of Burgate Street was probably in St. Michael's parish. In a will of about 1250, Felicia, daughter of William Gech, gave to Henry de Bedistun all her messuages with appurtenances *in the parish of St. Michael* situated between the gate of Christchurch in Burgate on the one side and a house of Reginald Sutton's of "Borgate" on the other side.

¹ D. and C. Register 29 (1680-90), f. 200v.