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Therfield.

BY THE REV. J. G. HALE, M.A., RECTOR OF THERFIELD.

The Manor of Therfield, or, as it is called in Domesday Book, Furrevelde, was before the Conquest, 980, given by Ethelric, Bishop of Shirburn, to the Abbot and

Convent of S. Benedict, at Ramsay, in the county of Huntingdon. A grant, confirmed by Edward the Confessor. William I., Henry I., John and Henry III., granted other privileges—the view of franc pledge—correction of assize of bread and ale—free warren—and the right of executing felons. It was held by the Abbots till the dissolution, when it was given to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, and has now passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

An account of the Manor will be found in the Domesday Book, quoted in the histories of Hertfordshire. There were other Manors, the Manor of West Reed, or Mardley Bury; the Manor of Gledshew, or Gledseys. There is also a small Manor belonging to the Rectory. This Rectory Manor probably contains the lands which the Abbot, when he erected the church, gave for the support of the priest whom he appointed to it with power to hold a Court Baron. I was fortunate in obtaining, a few months ago, some Manor rolls belonging to the Manor of Gledshew, between the years 1590 and 1687, which will be seen on one of the tables together with a transcript made by Mr. Cussans.

The parish contains 4,277 acres, and like most of the parishes in this neighbourhood is a long and comparatively narrow strip running to the border of the county.

For some reason which does not appear, Therfield has been from ancient days designated as a town. The book which contains the minutes of the Vestry and the parochial accounts is called the "Town Book." In old Terriers, a house is described as situated in the town—land as lying near the town—and to this day people living in the further portions of the parish talk of coming up into the town.

The parish of Therfield reaches into the town of Royston, part of the High Street being within it, and at the other end takes in one side of the street in Buckland, within a few yards of Buckland Church.

You may have observed on your way from Royston, the extent of the fields, the straightness of the roads and hedges. Fifty years ago the land lay in a very different manner, as will be seen in the two old maps, one made in the year 1724, and the other in the year following. The northern half of the parish was divided

into three fields, as they were called, and these subdivided again into "shots," subdivided again into narrow strips about an acre in extent, and separated by a raised mound called a "balk." A farmer who held say 300 acres, might have 300 strips of land, lying in different parts of three fields. All had to farm according to custom, one field growing corn, another green crops, and the third lying fallow. This was manifestly so inconvenient, that the Enclosure Act was passed, and being taken advantage of in this parish, an arbitrator was appointed, the owners furnished a schedule of the lands they claimed, and then the land was apportioned to them under what is called the Award, and which, properly stamped throughout, forms the title deeds to the greater portion of the property in this parish. Two Terriers are in my possession, one made in 1724 by direction of the then rector, Thos. Sherlock, Bishop of Sarum, and a second corrected in 1802 by the rector, Charles Moss, who was also Bishop of Oxford. These Terriers give an accurate description of each of the narrow strips seen in the map.

The question naturally occurs, how came the land to be laid out in so inconvenient a manner? This has been a mystery, but it seems to have received an explanation in Mr. Seebohm's book, the "English Village Community." I can only give it very briefly in general terms. The Manor or Villa belonged to the Lord of the Manor. He held part in his own hands in demesne, and let out other portions to the Villains, who generally held 30 acres, 10 in each field. These Villains gave so many days' work in the year on the land held by the lord, instead of money payment for rent. They were not rich enough to possess a team of oxen, nor would they require one with these small holdings; each had one ox, and these were brought together to form teams. They would plough one day's work, which would be about an acre, which seems to have been a conventional measure before it became a Statute measure, and was a narrow strip, one furlong in length, and the length ten times its breadth. The word "furlong" is said to mean "furrow-long," and the length seems to have been adopted originally from convenience. An acre was originally a long narrow strip of land containing the four narrow roods, and I

may mention that to this day such is the general idea of an acre; I asked some of the labourers here what an acre was, and I was at once answered, "Ten chain by one." The acre ploughed on the first day was allotted to the owner of the first ox, that ploughed on the second to the owner of the second ox, and so on till all claims were satisfied, and they began the rotation again with the owner of the first ox, until each Villain had his 30 acres. It was a clumsy way of dividing land, but at any rate an equal division of the land as regards its productive value was secured.

Coming now to the Church, which we were compelled from the absence of foundations to take down and rebuild, I am glad to be able to show some photographs taken after the work had commenced. The church is dedicated to S. Mary the Virgin, as appears from our oldest registers, though Chauncey calls it St. Swithun, apparently led into that mistake by the fact that the village fair was held about the time of St. Swithun's Day, from which he jumped to the conclusion that St. Swithun must be the Patron Saint. It was a 14th century church, and its perilous condition may be judged of by the buttresses built up to prevent the south aisle from falling. The tower was cracked from top to bottom, the mullion in the west window was quite two inches out of its place, and the bells had not been rung for many years, it being considered dangerous to ring them. The chancel ceiling very nearly came down with a run, and had to be shored up.

The earliest notice we have is from Parker's History of Cambridge, 1622, a fact also recorded in the parish register of that date, that "the North Ile of the Parish Church of Therfield was founded by Sir Wm. Paston and Agnes his wife, in the year of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1418,—as appears by an inscription upon the East Window of the North Ile of the said Church, in which is this that followeth:—Orate pro animabus Domini Willielmi Paston, et Agnetis uxoris ejus, Benefactorum hujus ecclesie, Anno Domini, 1418."

It has been thought that Sir Wm. Paston founded a Chantry on the north side of the chancel, access to which was through a door, west of the stone coffin in which probably he was buried. The corbels on which the roof of this chapel rested remained till the church

was taken down. The tomb was an elaborate affair, adorned with pinnacles, though we have only been able to restore the moulding over it. The door and coffin will be seen in the photograph, and the remains of the latter will be seen *in situ*. There was an opening above the coffin between the chancel and chauntry.

From the like sources we learn that "Edward Shouldham, of Norfolk, LL.D., Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Prebendary of Exeter," was rector of Kelshall and Therfield, at the latter of which he new built a fine casting roof to the church, where he was honourably buried, 1503, as is still to be seen." This roof was adorned by figures, which have been replaced, together with the bosses, in the present roof. Elizabeth Shouldham, Abbess of Barking, was also a benefactress of the church, and her effigy appeared in one of the windows. In the year 1677, Francis Turner, the then rector, afterwards Bishop Turner, one of the Seven Bishops who were sent to the Tower, and tried at Westminster, and subsequently one of the non-juring Bishops, and in consequence deprived of his see, lost his wife at an early age, and in her memory rebuilt the chancel. He shortened the length of the chancel, put up the ceiling, on which was a large oval wreath of oak leaves and roses, executed roughly in plaster, further ornamented with smaller wreaths and scrolls, and which came below the point of the chancel arch. Mr. Turner, in his zeal for his wife's memory, seems not to have had much regard for the antiquities of the church, for in order to place the panelling round the east end, when, as it said in the register, at great expense, "he did repair and beautify the Chancell as it now stands," (1691), he seems to have demolished the side chapel, cut off the projecting ornaments of the tomb, cut off the projecting mouldings of a fine Early English double piscina flush with the wall (the remains of which will be seen on the north side of the present chancel, a piscina from the south aisle having been placed on the south side), and blocked out three sedilia. (These sedilia will be seen *in situ*, but are waiting the coming of the stone mason to complete their restoration.) I may mention that the existence of the relics was not known until we came to remove the panelling.

In the year 1689, Dr. Holden, the rector, blocked up

the tower. It is recorded that at that time he at his own charge built a new loft or gallery for the ringers to stand on, to which gallery Ralph Freeman, of Aspen-den, Esquire, gave an oak tree for the main summer beam of the floor—he perpetuated his name in connection with the gallery by an inscription, which may be seen, placed on the wall. He also added a panel of wainscot on both sides of the chancel, between the seats and the rails of the Communion table, and gave a cloth for the Communion table of purple cloth, lined with yellow buckram and fringed. He also gave two very fair Common Prayer Books, one for the desk and the other for the Communion table. The gallery placed by Dr. Holden was brought more forward by my predecessor, and the organ placed in it.

We have no other records of any Church work, though Mr. Twining went to some expense in plastering up defects, which were thus hidden, but unfortunately not cured. There is an old font in the church, which it will be seen has been cut about to accommodate it to the various positions in which it has been placed.

There are six bells remaining, five of which will be seen in a shed outside, the sixth being hung up in the tree to do duty for service. The dates and inscriptions are as follows:—

- 1597. John Dear made me.
- 1608. Praies the Lord.
- 1626. Miles Graye made me.
- 1656. Miles Graye.
- 1689. William and Philip Wightman  
made me Dom. Gul. Holden, D.D.
- 1707. I. Waylitt, fecit, Ralph Fordham,  
Edw. Peppercorn, C.W.

We have the following record in the register:—“ Dr. Turner, then Lord Bishop of Ely, did in the year 1689, give the hanging of one Bell at his charge of 6 pounds. Dr. Edw. Stillingfleet, then Dean of St. Pauls, and now Lord Bishop of Worcester, and Dr. John Tillotson, then Residentary of St. Pauls, now Archbishop of Canterbury, did each give the new hanging of a Bell at a like expense. Dr. Wm. Holden, Rector of this Church, at the same time gave the new hanging of two Bells which remained of the five old ones. Dr. Holden also gave a

treble Bell to compleat the Ring, and hanged it at his own charge, and likewise a new Saints Bell and hung it." Chauncey mentions this Saints Bell as in 1700 hanging in a turret on the tower, but when it was taken away, or what became of it, does not appear.

The registers date from 1538. In one of them are two receipts for the cure of a bite from a mad dog, which were hung up in the church, and from which it would seem that mad dogs were common in olden times.

Among other matters of interest there is the record of the deaths of 28 persons who died in a plague in 1545, and the register of the burial of Bishop Turner—who is entered as the Deprived Bishop of Ely—who is buried with his wife in a vault in the chancel, and of the brass on whose coffin a rubbing may be seen exhibited. There is also the register of the burial of Sir Bernard Turner in 1784, who was a remarkable man in his day. He was Alderman of the City of London, a Sheriff of London and Middlesex, Member of Parliament for Southwark. In 1778 he originated the Foot Association Establishment, which was a company of citizen volunteers, whose object was to resist any French invasion, and took an active part as commander in repressing the Lord Gordon Riots. He died at an early age from a fall from a horse, and was buried here with military honours, a detachment of the Hon. Artillery Company accompanying the funeral from London. In Burns' "Ecclesiastical Law" we read that on the way, notwithstanding the presence of the military, his body was seized by his creditors, and detained until arrangements were made with his relatives for the payment of his debts.

When we came to take down the church the mortar had in many places so completely perished that the stones rather rained down than were pulled down. The chancel arch, which was known to be in a very dangerous condition, fell with a crash before the workmen reached it. The north aisle wall had been built partly over an old ditch, which had not even been cleansed from its mud, and partly over existing graves. In two of these we found the remains of uncoffined corpses—the body apparently dressed (we also found the man's walking stick in one case lying by the bones) was laid in the grave, and a piece of board, not of the shape of a coffin, laid over it, two mortise holes remaining, through which, apparently, a strap had been

passed round the body. In the middle of this wall, which must have existed 400 years, was found a stone, to be seen in the vestry. It must have belonged to a tomb, at that time I presume in ruins. The head of the figure on it is placed at right angles to the body, and the legs are crossed. From this latter point it has been inferred that the man was a Crusader, and certainly the shield at the end might serve for a Crusader's shield, though it might do as well for the Arms of the City of London. The man's wife and daughter appear in the opposite corners. As, however, nothing for certain is known, each member of this learned Society will be at liberty to form any theory or opinion he likes on the subject.

The flagon with the communion plate was given by John Barwick, who was rector after the Commonwealth. He was an ardent Royalist, and suffered imprisonment in the cause. By Charles II. he was made Dean of Durham, and afterwards Dean of St. Paul's.

With regard to the new church little need be said. The east window is a new one, but the other windows in the chancel are the identical windows which were in the former one. The style of the chancel has been followed in the design for the rest of the church. The arcade is the same as in the former church—there being, however, four arches instead of three. For its unfinished condition, its want of belfry and of porch, for the imperfections in the internal fittings and floor, want of money is the only apology. The seats in the nave are those we had in this room, which we built as a temporary church eleven years ago. We have spent altogether about £5,000, and having got the church floored and warmed, we re-opened it for service, hoping that at some time funds might be found for its completion. What has been done has been, I trust, done in a substantial manner, a good bed of concrete was laid below the foundations and invert arches three bricks thick are laid throughout the building. If I could not finish it myself, I was anxious that my successor should have a substantial foundation to build on and complete the work.

After seeing the church, you will visit the Rectory, which has been held by many distinguished men. Time would fail me to enumerate the dignities of my predecessors. Bishops holding the living with their Sees, Deans, Archdeacons, Canons Residentiary of Cathedrals, from Durham to Exeter, Masters of the Temple, Heads



of Colleges, grace the list—in fact, it seems almost an act of condescension on the part of the parish to put up with one who is *only* Rector of Therfield.

It does not appear that there ever was a Monastery here. The house belonged to the Abbots of Ramsay, and in Cussans' "History of Herts" will be found the account of the expenses of the Abbot's visit, which he made on his way to London, in the year 1338.

One old portion of the house remains on the east side with a gable end. Originally there was a gable end on the west side corresponding to it, the foundations of which I have been able to trace. In front was a square court-yard, with a wall round it, parallel to which the lime trees at present seen were planted, with the stables on the east side, removed by Mr. Wellesley to their present position. John Mountford, D.D., Prebendary of St. Paul's, who was rector from 1640 to 1650, is said to have rebuilt a great part of the Rectory house. In 1769 it is stated in one of the registers that the greater part of the Rectory being in a ruinous condition, was rebuilt by Charles Weston. The library was added by Charles Moss, Bishop of Oxford, 1800, who turned one of the sitting rooms into a hall, the entrance having been previously through what is now a small room to the east. The bay window to the library was added by myself, the room being very dark. You will enter through the side door into what is now the kitchen, in the corner of which may be seen the site of the old winding staircase. In the corridor, which is new, will be seen an old peep hole, and the out-buildings now used as a coal shed, &c., were originally a two-storied dwelling place, the floor being three feet below the level of the ground. At the end is the old brewhouse of the establishment, in the yard is a well 276 feet deep, deepened at one time by order of the celebrated Bishop Sherlock, and deepened again in 1779 by Charles Weston, and lowered to its present depth in 1859 by Archdeacon Robinson.

Coming into the house through a door which you will see has been cut through a four-light window, corresponding to that on the north side of the kitchen, you will proceed up a staircase, through a room over the kitchen, through the aperture of the old winding staircase, to a small room in which is some curious old panelling, evidently bought from some other place. The room at

the east side has also some panels and some quaint cupboards round the fireplace. Descending you will pass through Bishop Moss' library, Canon Weston's drawing-room, to the dining-room, from whence you can enter the garden, at the bottom of which is a pond, the remains of the old moat which used to surround that part of the Rectory grounds.

The following are the receipts for the cure of a bite of of a mad dog, referred to in the first part of this paper:—

FOR THE BITE OF A MAD DOG.

Take the Leaves of Rue, pick'd from the Stalks and bruis'd, 6 ounces: Garlick pick'd from the Stalks and bruis'd, Venice Treacle or Mithridate, and the Scrapings of Pewter or Tin, of each 4 ounces; boil all these over a Slow Fire in 2 quarts of strong Ale till one Pint is consumed, then keep it in a Bottle close stop'd, and give of it 9 Spoonfuls to a Man or Woman, and 6 to a Dog, warm, 7 Mornings together fasting.

This will not fail, if it be given within 9 Days after the Biting of the Dog. Apply some of y<sup>e</sup> ingredients, from w<sup>h</sup> the liqu<sup>or</sup> was strained to the Bitten Place.

The Rec<sup>t</sup> was taken out of Calthrope Church, in Lincolnshire, where many in y<sup>e</sup> town were bitten with a Mad Dog, and all that took this Medicine did well, and all y<sup>e</sup> rest dyed mad. The same Rec<sup>t</sup> is hung up in Bradford Church, Wiltshire, where its efficacy had been approved on the like occasion.

The same Receipt, except as to the quantity to be given, I have, as used by Dr. Fortescue, late an eminent Physician at Bampton, Oxfordshire, who in his Practise never knew it fail if given in time. He prescribes 7 or 8 spoonfuls 9 mornings, and renews the Ingredients upon the wound once in 24 hours. CHAS. WESTON, Rec.  
1779.

FOR THE BITE OF A MAD DOG  
BY DR. MEADE.

Take 60 grains of Grey ground Liverwort in Powder, and 20 grains of Black Pepper. This Dose taken 4 Times a Day till y<sup>e</sup> next Change of y<sup>e</sup> Moon will do.

Dr. Hollings adds Bathing twice a Day in cold water whilst you are taking the Medicine.

Subsequent Practice has shown that This Prescription of Dr. Meade's is by no means to be depended upon. C. W.  
1785.

These 2 Rec<sup>ts</sup> were hung up publickly in Therfield Church in the year 1734.