

## Historical Notes on Priddy and its Lead Mines.

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PRIDDY, a place-name, perhaps derived from the Welsh ‘y Pryd yr Hâf’ = Summer tide (*see Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Proceedings*, vol. XVI, part 2, 73) on the summit of the Mendip Hills, five miles from Wells, has not received all the attention which it deserves from our local writers. The volumes of the “Somerset Record Society,” reveal some items of interest, but these have been issued only in recent years. From the documents belonging to the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Wells, some information may be gathered, whilst the long standing connection of the Bishops of the diocese with the “Liberty” of Priddy, and the Lead-Mines within it, opens a page of local history, and local industry, hitherto unpublished.

A.D.  
1164

These “Historical Notes” commence towards the end of the twelfth Century. In the year 1164 Bishop Robert (1135-1166) added to the endowments of the Priory of Bruton the impropriate rectory of ‘Westbury-cum-Priddy.’ For this the Augustinian Canons of Bruton were bound to pay a sum of forty *solidi* yearly, to supply a wax-taper to burn continually before the High altar of the Cathedral Church of Wells, the Dean of Wells, Richard, being a signatory to the Deed of agreement.\*

\* Liber Albus I, fo. 45d dors. III, f. 288.

The Charter of King Henry II, by which he granted a portion of his royal manor of Cheddar on the Mendip Hills to the Prior and Brethren of the Carthusian House which he had founded at Witham contains early mention of Priddy. One of the boundaries of these lands is described as “de Kingdoneswestende per vallem versus orientem usque ad viam que vadit de Pridia usque ad Chederford.”\* A.D. 1180

In 3 Henry III a suit was tried at Ilchester, at that date the County town, between Roger de Sancto Laudo (St. Lo) claimant, and Sibilla de Umframivill, tenent, for a virgate of land in Pridie. Sibilla quitclaimed her right in the land to Roger, which land she held in dower; for this Roger gave her three mares.† 1218-19

A rough piece of work took place at Priddy more than six hundred and eighty years ago on the person of “Richard the shepherd by a certain individual, who bore the peculiar name of ‘John Swete-bi-the-bone.’ The account of the outrage runs thus: “John Swete-bi-the-bone killed Richard the shepherd and fled. He was of the mainpast of the Abbot of Bruere in his sheepcote of Bridie (Priddy). Therefore he (the Abbot) is in mercy, and he (John) is suspected and no one else. Therefore let him be exacted and outlawed. He had no chattels.” Such was the verdict at the Assizes held at Ilchester A.D. 1225.‡ 1225

This account of the murder of a shepherd at Priddy, and of the sentence pronounced on the murderer, as well as on the Abbot affords a glimpse of the system of Frank-pledge in medieval times. Every Englishman above the age of twelve years, whether a freeman or a bondman, was required to give security for his good conduct in the community in which he resided, and for his fidelity to the King; and when it is said that John Swete-bi-the-bone was of the *mainpast* of the

\* Dugdale's “Monasticon.”

† Somerset Fines, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, vi, 34.

‡ Somerset Pleas, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xi, 39.

Abbot of Bruere it is as though it were said that the Abbot was John's surety for his proper behaviour, and could be called to account for a crime committed by his protégé. After the murder John "fled;" that is to say he became a 'fugitive' in the eye of the law; hence, sentence was pronounced on both John and the Abbot. On John, the sentence was 'Let him be exacted and outlawed,' that is to say, let him be proclaimed as a fugitive at five successive County courts, and if he does not appear, let him be declared an outlaw. Then, if he could be caught and brought before the Justices of the Peace he would be hanged, without further trial. The Abbot was "in mercy," that is to say, he was at the mercy of the Court. John had no chattels; if he had had any they would have been forfeited to the Crown.\*

It may seem strange to read that Priddy was in any way connected with the Abbey or Abbot of Bruere.† But among the endowments of this abbey, founded in 1147, by one Nicholas Basset, were lands and pastures at Harptre and Priddy, given to it by William, the son of William, and grandson of John, in all probability, a man of Harptre. In a charter which recites and confirms this endowment (A.D. 1205) it is interesting to note that it was 'Given at Oxford by the hand of Jocelin de Welles,' acting as Justiciar for King John. In the following year Jocelin was elected both by the Canons of Wells and the Monks of Bath, as Bishop of the diocese. Tradition has it that there formerly stood in the "Priory Field," south of the church at Priddy, a building which belonged to the Abbot, a tradition which is supported by the fact that the grounds, No. 84 and No. 85 on the Tithe Apportionment are named "Prior's Hay" and "Brewer's Hill."‡

\* Somerset Pleas, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xi, Introduction, liv.

† A Cistercian Monastery, near Burford, Oxfordshire.

‡ Pipe Roll XXV, 158, 159. "Monasticon" I, 835.

From the Abbot and the Priddy shepherd we pass to the connection of Priddy with the Prior of S. Swithun's, Winchester, and Robert de Gournay "one of the chief Lords of Mendepe."\* Robert was the son of Eva de Gournay, the wife of Thomas the son of William de Harptre. In 1235-36 Walter, the Prior of S. Swithun's, complained that Robert did not permit his men of Bleadon to have Common of pasture in Pridie and Harpetre, according to custom. Some two hundred years before this, Gytha, the wife of Earl Godwine, and mother of Harold II, king of the English, had granted the Manor of Bleadon to the Prior, with rights on Mendip, as may be presumed. And the result of the present Prior's complaint was this: Robert conceded that the Prior and his men of Bleadon should have Common for all their beasts in the pasture of Robert on Mendip belonging to Priddy as far as Harpetre, saving to Robert his corn and meadows on Mendip where the Prior and his men of Bleadon might have Common after the corn and hay were carried. "And Robert shall enclose the said corn and meadow so that no danger can be incurred by the men of Bleadon, and if their pigs or other beasts enter the said corn or meadow by escape, they shall be recaptured but not impounded. For this concord the Prior gave Robert 100 shillings sterling." This agreement was made at Sherborne, on the morrow of the Sunday after Easter, 1236.†

A.D.  
1235

In the year 1243, a certain Henry of Priddy comes before us, on an important occasion in the history of the diocese. He was valet of Thomas, huntsman to Bishop Jocelyn. The Bishop died in November, 1242. When he himself had been elected in 1206, the Chapter of Wells, and the Chapter of Bath, to whom the joint right of election belonged, were unanimous in their choice. But now the two bodies were no longer in agreement. The monks of Bath were jealous of the love

1243

\* Leland.

† St. Swithun's Cartulary, III, No. 545b; and Somerset Fines, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, vi, 82.

and devotion which Jocelin had shewn to Wells for so many years; and besides, they were annoyed and angry, that his body had not been brought for burial to Bath but had been laid within the Cathedral Church of Wells, so that they were in no mind to consult the Canons of Wells as to the succession. The Canons, for their part, were willing that the election should be a joint one, but the monks were hostile and determined that they would have the man of their choice as Bishop. Schemes and counter-schemes followed one another. It was at length proposed to hold a meeting of the two bodies at "Ferenton," that is, Farrington Gurnay, midway between Bath and Wells, for consultation, and with the hope of effecting joint action. But no! Although the Canons duly arrived at the appointed time, at the place of meeting, with a large retinue, *in which came Henry of Priddy*, the monks did not appear.\*

A.D.  
1290

Robert Burnell, who ruled the diocese as Bishop from 1275 to 1292, (the ruins of whose lordly banqueting hall are still standing) was concerned with the affairs of Priddy. More than a hundred years before, *viz.*, in 1164, Robert of Lewes, as has been noted, granted the inappropriate *rectory* of Westbury-cum-Priddy to the Priory of Bruton. Since that date a chapel of considerable size, a *capella dependens* had been built at Priddy. And now two years before his death, Bishop Burnell made arrangements as to the *Vicarage*. His orders have no slight interest for us in the ecclesiastical history, both of Westbury and Priddy, especially that which made provision for a Chaplain to be always resident at Priddy. The orders were as follows:—

"Firstly, that the vicar shall take all obventions and small tithes pertaining to the mother church and its chapel of Prydie, together with the mortuaries and chirkset due and accustomed at Westbury and Prydie.

\* Canon Church's "Early History of the Church of Wells;" 240-248, and R. i. f. 78 d.

Secondly, That the vicar shall have the herbage of the cemeteries of Westbury and Prydie, and the whole tithe of hay, pertaining to the chapel of Prydie.

Thirdly, That the vicar shall appoint to the office of carrying the holy water of Westbury and Prydie, and shall provide a fit "priest to celebrate divine services in the chapel of Prydie, *who shall dwell continually in the same parish*, having a dwelling-house and curtillage there."\*

Relating to the allowances made by the Dean and Chapter on S. Martin's day, Nov. 11, there is this entry in Reg I. f. 214. "At Pridie nine men shall take nine white loaves each of them one white, and one black for collecting the tithe." It has no date, but apparently, belongs to the end of the XIII century.

Bishop William de Marchia succeeded Bishop Burnell in 1293, and two years afterwards he was engaged, as Lord of the Liberty of Priddy, in a settlement with the Lady Johanna de Vyvonie, Lady of Chiweton, as to the boundaries of their respective royalties on Mendip. When all preliminaries had been arranged, the Dean and Chapter of Wells, four Knights, and several influential persons "allowed" the proceedings. The deed of assent is interesting, inasmuch as it specifies the boundaries, and gives the names of the Knights, Canons, and other notable men of the day, assenting and witnessing to it. It runs thus :—

A.D.  
1293

"Inspeximus and Assent by the Dean and Chapter of Wells, dated in full chapter, Wednesday after Michaelmas, 1296, to an agreement concerning the metes and bounds of their lands upon Menedep hill made between William, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and Joan de Vivonia, lady of Chyweton, on Sunday after the Nativity of the Virgin, 1295, in presence of Master Peter de Insula, Canon of Wells, official of the bishopric, and Andrew de Grymstede, steward on the bishop's part, Sir Henry de Somery her steward, and Walter Tonere,

\* Bruton Cartulary, fo. 58, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, viii.

of her household, on the lady's part, with full powers, namely from a place called Sourappledorestok to Seluerputte, thence to the gallows which serve for the liberty both of the bishop and of the lady : from Sourappledorestok westward to Fayrewell, thence to Boefolde Nighberewes thence to Stondenestones, Gretehole weberewes, thence to Scholdeputtes, thence to Olde-dyche by the Croft of Ralph de la Pole of Pridie, saving to the bishop and his men common of pasture on either side, as of old time." Witnesses : Sir Geoffrey de Stawell, Sir Richard de Enmebergh, Sir Richard de Rypario, Sir Bartholomew Peytevyne, Knights, William de Welington, Henry de Ponte, Canons of Wells, John de Fraxino of Stonyeston, Adam Canon, Richard de Kynemersdon.\*

It is not probable that these 'metes and bounds' can now be accurately identified, but there is sufficient clue in some of the names—The Fairwell, Greathole, Old Ditch—to induce a local expert to attempt the task. " 'Seluerputte' = Silver Pitt, where there formerly was a Boundary Stone. 'Fairwell' in Priddy Minery, where was a Boundary Stone. 'Boefolde' = 'Buckfield Pound.' "†

There is extant, however, a copy of the old Perambulation of the Lord Bishop's Bounds on Mendip for the Royalty belonging to the Bishopric, which was probably compiled, as Bishop Hobhouse conjectures, by a Steward of the Manor Court of Westbury after the Rebellion. It embraces the whole of the Bishop's Minery from above Croscombe through Gurney Slade, and the Fairplace of Binegar to Newland's Corner between Greenore and Chewton till it comes to Foord Barrow, in the young plantation to the north-west of Greenore Crossways. Thence it proceeds to a Stone at *Silver Pitt* where the Priddy boundary is reached. No mention is made of "The Gallows," but the next point is "Morse's Stone at Cuckoo Cleaves," thence to a place called "Hobb in the

\* R.I, fo. 121.

† *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxxvii, pt. ii, 90.

Morse," thence to "Morgan's Stone," thence to "a Stone under Stock Hill," thence to a stone in Harptreeway, thence to Cold Ovens, thence to a stone in Fairwell in Priddy Minery, thence to Sage's Stone in Buckfield Pound (is this the Manor Pound?) thence to Warburrow Holes, thence to Cloven Barrow, thence to Burge Lane, thence to Durne Hill, thence to Horler's Bridge, *alias* Horne Bridge, thence to a Stone in Ashen Lane, thence to a Stone called Long Man, thence to Stoney Hill, and thence to a Stone on the west side of Westbury Beacon above Stoke Wood.\*

The first item of interest in the story of Priddy in the XIV Century is the list of the Priddy men who were assessed for payment to the Exchequer Lay Subsidy of the year 1327. This was a tax levied by the Crown of one twentieth of all moveables in the possession of every man owning not less than ten shillings. There were eleven men in Priddy liable to this payment, which varied from sixpence to four shillings, the whole amount being twenty shillings. The names of the men were these:—

A.D.  
1327

William Martin	Henry Estwade
Richard Atte Creyte	Roger in the Combe
Osbert Atte Nasch	Roger le Palmer
Adam Constable	Richard Dawe
John Estwade	Roger Atte Mere.
William Gocelyn	

Of them all William Gocelyn and Henry Estwade were the most wealthy.†

The ancient *capella* of Priddy was dedicated to God in honour of St. Laurence,—his Festival occurring on the 10th of August. Eleven days afterwards, *viz.* on the 21st of August, a fair famous throughout the district, has been held annually during the last 550 years, and more. There is, indeed, a tradition that owing to the ravages made by the Black

1352

\* *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxxvii, ii, 90.

† *Som. Rec. Soc.*, III, 135.

Death in 1349-50 at Wells, the Fair held in the City was removed to the higher land of Mendip. Be this as it may, Priddy Fair was celebrated far and wide in 1352. In that year a royal writ was issued to the Sheriff of Somerset concerning it. In the previous year, an Act of Parliament had been passed, which enacted that "all cloths put up for sale, which were sold in England for entire cloths should be measured by the King's Alnager or his deputies." This Officer, whose title is derived from 'Alna,' or "Ulna," the standard Ell measure kept in the Exchequer, was appointed to look to the assize of woollen cloth at fairs and markets, and other places for the sale of it. At this time it had been reported to the King that Bailiffs of Liberties, and Keepers of Fairs were in the habit of taking with them rods of their own for measuring cloths in fairs, so that an Order was issued to the Sheriff of Somerset *in the instant fair of Prydie* to cause it to be proclaimed that no one carry rods to the fair to measure cloths, but only the Alnager. The Order is given at Westminster, August 3rd.\* Every one knows the local proverb "The first rain after Priddy Fair is the first rain of winter," but not every one is aware that it finds a place in a Parliamentary Report.†

In "Kenilworth," among the company at the Black Bear at Cumnor, was a lively, bustling arch fellow who had a pack and *oaken ell-wand studded duly with brass points.*

A.D. 1449 There is only one 'Institution' given in "Somerset Incumbents" of a chaplain of Priddy, but as is stated in that volume it was not customary to institute to *capellæ annexæ*. However Bishop Beckington determined to institute all the chaplains of such chapelries, in the year 1449. In the Archdeaconries of Wells and Bath twenty-three such institutions occur besides others in the Archdeaconry of Taunton. The Priddy chaplain's name was "John More," and he is styled 'Capel-

\* Reg. Ralph de Salopia, f. 407. *Som. Rec. Soc.*, x, 698.

† Royal Commission on Market Rights, 1889.

lanus Parochus ;' " A.D. 1449, Joh : More Capellanus Parochus Priddy S. Laurentii."\*

There resided at Priddy, in the middle of the fifteenth century, a 'husbondman' named John King, with Alice his wife. Among the arrears of 'Rent in Villenage' entered in the Wells Manor Roll of 1458 are payments due from John and Alice in respect of one messuage, and one fardell of land at Priddy, granted to them by charter as appeared by the Court roll. There were also due other payments such as Peter's pence, and five shillings from a piece of pasture called *Horewalls*, alias *Whorewalls*. But they appear to have been impecunious, and unable to pay their way ; for, twelve years later, the following summons was issued dated "1470, Jan. 28, Westminster ;" "John Kyng of Prydy Co. Somerset, husbondman, for not appearing before John Prysot and his fellows, justices of the Bench of the late King, to answer William Bonvyle, Knight, touching a debt of £6 9s. 1d."† For what purpose the debt had been incurred we know not ; nor do we know whether it was ever paid. But in the case of John's debt to the Bishop it appears that in 1478 he paid six shillings, or rather, a cow ! the value of which was estimated at that sum. This entry in the Wells Manor Rolls is of considerable interest. It runs thus :—"6/- price of 1 cow de heriott Johis Kyng per curiam Sancti Michaelis vendita." John was a tenant in Villenage, and the heriott due to the lord from a villanus was one ox or cow on a holding of one virgate or thirty acres, or the money payment of six shillings. Thus we see the extent of John Kyng's holding under the lord at Priddy.

This value of a cow as currency, *viz.*, six shillings, may be traced back to very early times,‡ and it held good in other countries besides in England. Another survival of the Feudal

\* Register of Bp. Bekington, f. 105.

† Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edw. IV.

‡ "Tribal Custom in Anglo-Saxon Law," Fredoric Seebohm, 1902.

A.D.  
1458

1470

System in the person of this John Kynge is to be found in a subsequent entry, “£6 13s. 4d. de fine terre Johanne nuper uxoris Johis Kynge pro licencia habenda se maritandi et pro statu habendo prox. marito suo ad idm.”

But our interest in Priddy must now be centred in its Lead Mines and miners. The year 1470 is a memorable year in the annals of Mendip. For one of the most important events in the history of Mendip lead-mining, of which Priddy was the centre and headquarters, took place in that year.

[Notes on the Roman Mines on Mendip may be found in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, vols. I, ii, 131 ; VIII, ii, 10 ; XI, ii, 129 ; XIII, i, 15.]

[Papers on the Geology of the Mendips may be found in the same publication, vols. I, i, 10 ; VII, ii, 32, etc. ; XV, ii, 35 ; XIX, ii, 51, etc.]

Lead Mining on the Mendips dates back to a very early period in the history of Britain. Lead was found by the Romans as early as A.D. 44. Two pigs of lead, dated A.D. 70, have been discovered at Charterhouse. Lead-mines had therefore been worked in the neighbourhood of Priddy for more than 1400 years, when an event took place which necessitated the interference of the Crown. This was in the latter half of the XV Century. Previously, the laws and customs of the Mendip miners had been orally handed down from generation to generation. But in the year 1470 they were codified, and reduced to writing. Sir William Bonvyle, as Lord of Chewton, was one of the four Lords Royal of the Mendip mineries. Within the boundaries of Chewton, at Greenore, where the Roman *via ad Axium* crosses the road from Wells to Bristol, was a cell of Carthusian monks, an offshoot of the monastery of Hinton. Much ill-feeling had grown up between the monks and the tenants of Sir William Bonvyle. It ended in the Prior of Hinton complaining to the King of the great injuries and wrongs he had upon Mendip, being the King's Forest. The King, therefore, commanded

the Lord Chief Justice Choke, a man well known in Somerset, to convene a meeting of the Lords Royal and Commoners to enquire into the matter, and in conjunction with them, to draw up a Code of laws for the future good government of the mineries. A vast assemblage, said to have numbered ten thousand persons, was gathered together on an appointed day, when the Chief Justice "sat upon Mendip on a place of my Lord of Bath called 'The Forge.'" All the parties concerned agreed to submit to the laws then drawn up. The laws were ten in number but a summary of them will suffice for our purpose.

*Imprimis* : Any man, desiring to work at a mine must obtain license of the Lord of the soil, which license being once given, he need never ask leave again, but he may pitch, and break ground where he will.

Item, If any man that doth begin to pitch or groof, *i.e.*, make a shaft or pit, he shall leave his hackes, *i.e.*, his hewing tool, through two wayes after the rake, *i.e.*, the vein contained within boundaries, and he that throwe his hacke must stand to the girdle or waist in the same groof, and then no man may worke within his hacke-throwe, provided always that no man shall keep but his wet and dry groof and his mark.

Item, A man may carry his ore to whatever minery it pleases him for cleansing and blowing, but he must truly pay the lord of the soil, where the ore was landed, his tenth part.

Item, A man who once had license to build or set up any hearth or washing house for washing ore, shall keep it for ever or give it to whomsoever he likes, provided he pays his lott-lead, which is the tenth pound which shall be blown on the hearth, and keep his hearth tenantable, as the custom required.

Item, A man found guilty of stealing lead or ore to the value of thirteen-pence-halfpenny may be arrested together with all his lead and ore, house or hearths, with all his grooves and works, and being placed in his house, with his tools and instruments all about him, should be set on fire, and he should be banished from the occupation for ever.

Item, For a second offence he shall be tried by the Common Law, for the Miners' Custom and Law had no more to do with him.

Item, Every lord of the soil must keep two Miners' Courts annually, and must swear twelve Miners as a Jury for redress of misdemeanours touching the Mineries.

Item, The lord may make three manner of arrests, (1st) for strife between man and man for their works under the earth, (2nd) for his own duty for lead or ore, (3rd) for the Felons' goods of the occupation.

Item, If a Miner meet his death by misfortune 'as by falling in of the earth upon him, by drowning, by Stifeling with Fire or otherwise' his mates were bound to fetch the body out of the Earth, though it were sixty fathoms down and give him Christian burial at their own cost, according to the custom.

The four Lords Royal, were bound to observe these Laws of 1470, but they were at liberty to frame bye-laws and to enforce them through their Courts. James Montague, bishop of Bath and Wells 1608-1616 in conjunction with his Grand Jury formulated and issued some sixty Orders for the regulation of the Mines and Miners within his lordship. These are extant, with the signatures of himself and his Jurymen. In the forefront of them is an Order as to the miners' observance of Sundays and Holy days. A breach of this rule involved the workman in a fine of five pounds "yt being founde by verdict." Next came regulations as to the maintenance of peace and quiet. Unruly miners who were found guilty of fighting or striking were fined thirteen shillings and fourpence, or, if blood were drawn, twenty shillings. The use of weapons on the hill was strictly forbidden. "No man shall bring to the hill anie gunne or other peece or anie pykes, swords, rapiers, daggers, poynards, long staves, or any other weapon and thearewith strike or threaten upon paine of £5."

There were stringent rules laid down as to the use and waste of water for washing the ore. Thus, a fine of £10 was in-

curred if a man "lett out the water out of the Minorie Pond." A man might have one 'buddle,' and no more. "Buddles" at *Whorewalls* were to cease working on or before the third day of May and the first of November. The breach of this rule was punished by a fine of £5. A similar penalty was inflicted if the water course was not "sufficiëntlie kepte and scoured to the swallet for supplie of the cattell." In 1650 and 1651, serious complaints were made by the owners of cattle concerning the turning of water out of its proper and accustomed channel. These complaints werè made 'by the borderers and and workemen belonginge unto the hill.' They alleged that the diverting of the water from its usual course had been the means of poisoning their cattle, "whereby they are much impoverished in their estates." On receipt of the complaint, the Jury ordered that all workmen in Priddy Minory, drawing water out of the ponds to cleanse their ore, turn the water into its right channel again "the which it hath run in continuously beyond the memory of man living."

Everyone offending against this Order forfeited ten pounds, "to bee leavied of his Oare Lead or Minerall goods." However, notwithstanding this penalty, the Order proved insufficient to stop the mischief. A second Order was therefore issued that "anyone having a 'buddle' in Priddy Minory shall make a sufficient Pitt to take the Slime in within fourty foote of his buddle and shall keep the said Pitt soficiëntly scoured and from thence shall make a streeme, to carry the water into the common Sowr (Sewer)." And, "if any p'son shall turn the water out of the anchient water courses called the Coñon Sowr into any Swallet *before the sayd water runn to Trowingbridge*, he shall forfeit for every time soe turned 20s."

The Lords Royal, as before mentioned, were bound to hold two 'Miners' Courts annually and to swear a Jury of twelve Miners who formed the Petty Jury, and whose Acts might be revised by the grand jury of twenty-four. This 'Curia

Mineralis Libertatis Predi' has left on record the results of some of its investigations in the beginning of the XVII Century, and a register was kept of those miners who had been "burned and banished" within the Liberty. Two instances may be given :—"N. Rawlence was convicted of carrying and steling of certain oare from Stoine Rake of Barnard Lukins to the value of twenty shillings, and for his offence he shall be burned from the hill and never to be taken as a workman uppō the forrest of Mendipp and to loose all his goods whatsoever to the Lord of this Libertie."

The most frequent offence committed on the hill was that of stealing; that of a false oath was also a common one. A certain William Hilberd was convicted of this latter offence and the verdict of the Jury in his case was that the testimony of the said Hilberd should never be admitted in any case before any jury, but should be disabled; his goods should be forfeited, and he himself be banished "the occupation" for ever.

The two chief Officers of the Court\* were 'the Lead-Reeve' and 'the Crier,' who were bound by Oath to serve the lord faithfully. "The Lead-Reeve was chosen by the Miners but appointed by the Lord. It was his duty to execute the orders of the Court, to report offences against the Minery Laws, and to weigh the ore, and collect the Lord's free share." The Oath administered to the Lead-Reeve was as follows :—

"You shall all the time you continewe Lead-reeve justlie and trulie to your uttermost endeavour looke to the now Lord Bushoppe's Lott, and to the Lotting thereof, that his Lordshipp be not wronged therein, and to your uttermost endeavour execute justlie and trulie such warrants as shall be directed, and delivered unto you, concerning any Mendipp, or Minorie Cause within his Lordshipp's Royaltie, and justlie and trulie to your uttermost endeavour execute and doe everything that belongeth to the office of a Lead-reeve as long as you shall continewe in the said office. Soe help you God."

\* *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxxvii, ii, 87-88.

The oath administered to the Crier shows that his duty was to attend on the Juries, and to make all proclamations to the Miners.

“You shall during the time that you continewe Crier uppon the Hill of Mendip within the Lord Bushoppe’s Royaltie there behave yourself honestlie and justlie in your place, and give your attendance to the Grand Juries and Pettie Juries to be impannelled within the said Royaltie, and justlie and trewlie do your uttermost endeavour to execute and doe everything that belongeth to the office of Crier, as long as you shall continewe in the said office of Cryer. Soe help you GOD!”

The Grand Jury was also bound by oath to be true and just in the orders it made.

“All and everie Triall and Trialles which you together with your Fellowes, or the greater part of you shall make between the Lord Bushoppe and anie other, or between partie and partie for or concerninge anie controversy or matter in variance which shall arise within the Lord Bishop’s Libertie on Mendip during the time you shall be of this Graund Jurie, and between the Lord Bishop and anie other, or anie order that you shall make shall be according to the evidence true and juste, and according to your best skill, and the custome and orders of the said your occupation. Soe help you GOD.”

These Orders are signed by the Bishop thus:—

JA. BATH ET WELL :

and by the following miners:—John Sage, William Mylls, Johannes Edgell, William Bradden, Jo. Brown, Richard Tucker, Johannes Drie, John Horler, Augustin Bailie, Josias Mattocke, Richard Shepard, Jo. Crane, Daniell Tuthill.

Bishop Montague left this diocese for that of Winchester in 1616, and was succeeded by Arthur Lake, 1616-1626. There is no record of his tenure of the Royalty of Priddy Minery, as far as is known. But at this date the troubles of the Civil War were beginning, and the mining industry on Mendip was seriously affected by them. There is distinct evidence that the

mines, although worked, did not produce lead ore in sufficient quantities to make it profitable. The case of the deserted minery of Sir Bevis Bulmer in Rowpitts and Greenacre within the lordship of Chewton, at a short distance from Priddy, tells of much loss and expense from flooding. This mine was deserted because it was to all appearance hopelessly flooded. But in their extremity the Mineral Court and Miners, having heard of an expert, who was a farmer of royal mines in Wales and Cornwall, resolved to call him to their assistance. This was Thomas Bushell, a man whose career was not a little remarkable. Born in 1594, and dying in 1674, he lived in the reigns of Elizabeth, James the First, Charles the First, through the Commonwealth, and during fourteen years of the Restoration. At the age of fifteen, he entered the service of Sir Francis Bacon, who became his friend, teacher, and patron for the rest of his life. Owing to his attendance on Bacon at Court, he became known to James I, and was personally acquainted with Charles I, who appointed him Governor of Lundy Island. This office he held until 1647, when he surrendered it to Sir Thomas Fairfax. Notwithstanding the emoluments which he derived from mining operations, he was always in financial difficulties. On his departure from Lundy Island, in spite of his having safe conduct from Fairfax, he was arrested, and underwent a series of imprisonments and adventures until he appeared on Mendip. An affidavit made by a co-adventurer named Christopher White describes his difficulties at this time. Wright thought that Bushell's plan to recover the Rowpits mine from inundation was likely to be successful, and if it were, that it would be the greatest work done by any mineralist "these hundred years." An evil spirit, however, was at work. Some malicious person at midnight turned a great lake of muddy water into the swallow (*sic*) choked it, and imperilled the lives of the men who were at work. At another time so much under-timber of Bushell's shaft was pulled out that the whole groove

of earth fell into the drift, when the men were at work. Bushell evidently had enemies. He appealed for protection from them to the Grand Jury of the Chewton Court, and in reply the following Order was issued :— “If any misdemeanour is done against Bushell, the offenders shall not only be banished from Mendip, but His Highness shall be implored to banish them to the copper-mines of ‘Jammeca’ that they may not infect others, or bring scandal on the whole profession of miners.” The threat was treated by the offenders with contempt. Bushell’s next move was to appeal to the Protector himself, and after his death, to his son, Richard Cromwell, but it seems to have been *to no purpose*. In 1660, he complains that in contempt of the honour of Parliament he is detained a prisoner “out of a malicious plot to extirpate his mineral design,” and he prays the House that he may receive satisfaction for his long suffering, and the utmost countenance for this public affair of discovering minerals : and if the House think him fit for patronage, that he may be protected from arrest for seven years, to enable him to pay his debts,” naively adding, “as most of his creditors desire !”

The House did nothing for him. Nevertheless, Bushell seized the opportunity of Charles II’s return to England to pose as “master workman of the *royal* mines,” and to petition the King for a royal protection from arrests for two years. He bases his petition on the ground that he had contracted great debts in the service of the late King, which he hopes to repay *in time*, from his mineral proceeds. He died in 1674 aged 80 years, and his body was interred in the Cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

An interesting point in connection with the Priddy mines is the value to the Bishops of Bath and Wells of the Royalty. Happily the Wells Manor Rolls of the XV Century throw some light upon it. The amount of Lott lead coming to Bishop Beckington in bulk and value is given in the Roll for 1458.

Among manorial receipts is this : *Plumbum* "Et de CCC lib plumbi receptis de Mineria dñi per curiam S̄ci Mīchis. Et de C libris plumbi receptis de eadem per curiam Purificationis Beate Marie. Et de C libris plumbi receptis de eadem per curiam Hock" : that is, at Hocktide the second week after Easter.

"Et de DC libris plumbi receptis de eadem per curiam Nativitatis S̄ci Johis Baptiste.

Summa M<sup>C</sup> lib plumbi.

Et computat in venditis infra dñi M<sup>C</sup> lib plumbi."

From these entries it appears that the total amount of Lott lead, received by the Bishop in one year was eleven hundred pounds. From another entry we learn that the selling price was five shillings per hundred. Hence, the value of eleven hundred pounds was only 55s. It seems however, by this entry that an *extra* eleven hundred pounds was sold in that year for the Bishop's benefit ; "Et de lv<sup>s</sup> de mille C lib. plumbi extra venditis precio centen v<sup>s</sup>."

Lead was required for repair of the roofs of the Palace, the Granary, and other Manorial buildings ; hence a certain amount was kept in store at Wells. But there was a ready sale for it at Priddy, as many an entry in various Churchwardens' accounts bear witness. For instance, those of Yatton (1488) "For ledde for y<sup>e</sup> helyng of the Chyrche £v iij<sup>s</sup> iij<sup>d</sup>." Again in 1493-4 "for ij Tonne Ledde £viii xij<sup>d</sup>." And in 1497 "Payd for tonne and half of new led £vj xj<sup>s</sup>. In 1520, "Nearly ij Tons of lead are bought at per ton £iij x<sup>s</sup>" and a charge is made for "Three tymes rydyng to Mendip."

In the Pilton Churchwardens' Accounts is this entry in 1515, "Item for y<sup>e</sup> fetching xij hundyr ledde att Mendyppe."\*

Evidently the cost of lead varied from time to time, and the price in Bishop Beckington's day was higher than it was at a

\* *Som. Rec. Soc.*, iv, 116, 121, 138, 69.

later period, but notwithstanding this fact the Bishop's profit from Lead was only some £5 10s. 0d. of fifteenth century money, per annum.

Twenty years later, in Stillington's time, there was an enormous falling off, from whatever cause it may have arisen; The entries in the Manor Rolls for 1478-9 are these:

“Plumbum.

Et de DXV libris plumbi de remanente computi anni precedentis.

Et de j centena plumbi pro curia S̄cti Michael.

Et de j centena plumbi pro c. Purif S̄cte Marie.

Et de j centena plumbi pro c. Hockeday.

Et de j centena plumbi pro c. Nat: S̄cti Jōhis Bapt.

Summa DCCCCXV libr.

De quibus in expensis supra aulam capellam et claustrum dñi ibm hoc anno DC plumbi.

Et remanent CCCXV libre plumbi.”

The circumstances of Stillington's episcopate may in part explain this very considerable decrease, for he had become so deeply involved in the political troubles of his time that in this very year 1478 he was a prisoner in the Tower of London.

But the figures extracted from these two Manor rolls are entirely opposed to the statement that “the Bishops of Bath and Wells formerly derived almost fabulous wealth” from the mines.\*

The Valor of Henry VIII, 1537 records the revenue derived to the Bishop. “Exitus plumbi communibus annis £18” upon which was charged the fee of Thomas Clarke Bailiff of the Franchise £14 6s. 8d. (Som. Arch. and Nat. Hist., xxxvii, 91.)

Forty years after Lord Choke's Laws were issued there occurs in the Will of one John Harman made May 10th, 1509 a passing mention of the Church of Priddy. After desiring that his body shall be buried in the burying place of the

A.D.  
1509

\* Kelly's “Directory of Somerset,” 1902, page 365.

parishioners of Brewton, and making bequests to the churches of Wells and Brewton, he adds, "To the work of the Church of Pridy 20<sup>d</sup>."\* This incidental notice is interesting, for, firstly, it appears that the ancient connection between the Priory of Brewton and the Church of Priddy was still maintained in the XVI Century. Secondly, it points to the probability that a work of rebuilding or enlargement of the ancient XIII Century "capella" was now going on; and thirdly, the Fabric is no longer termed the 'Chapel' but the 'Church.' It probably presented the same features then as it does now, for the extensive repairs which were done in the XIX Century were of a very conservative character. These were carried out in 1881-83 under the superintendence of Mr. E. B. Ferrey, architect, through the exertions of the then vicar, the Rev. Joseph Palmer. The church was reopened on August 7th, 1883, amid much rejoicing by the Bishop of the diocese, who was surrounded by a goodly company of the clergy and laity of the neighbourhood. It was a memorable day in the annals of Priddy. It appears that the great storm of 1703, when Bishop Kidder and his lady were killed in the Palace, did much damage to the tower of this church, as it did to other churches in the diocese. A stone with the following inscription was built into the north wall of the tower: "This tower was mended, and to Pinikls and the greater part of the Battlements, 1705.

WILLIAM YOUNG, JOHN CHANDLER, C.W."

The Rev. W. Phelps gives a full description of the Church in his "History of Somerset," as he knew it.†

A.D.  
1539

Two men, father and son, by name William Saunders, the one of the parish of Chewstoke, the other of the parish of Yatton, and also of Priddy left legacies in 1539 and 1540 to Priddy Church. In the Will of the former there is this:—

\* *Som. Rec. Soc.*, xix, 129.

† Vol. II, pages 184-186; Date 1839.

“To the reparacion of the Church of Prydie 2 shepe,” and in that of the latter “To Prede Church 6s. 8d.” This man left to his daughters Margaret and Agnes, “all the stuff of my house at Prede.”\*

The interesting Will of John Rodney esquire of Blackwell in 1548 may be noticed here, for its curious provisions, one being in reference to the poor of Priddy. It runs thus:—“I will that the yerely profite of the hyre of six Kyne that William Reve of Stooke hath of myn shall be bestowed amongst the poure people in Stoke Draycote and Predye by the discretion of the said parson of Stook and John Cheseman of the same town and after the said yeres I will the said 6 Kyne be gevyn to the marriage of six yonge maides.”

A.D.  
1548

“To John Sherborn a cow, left him by his mother my wife.”

In the 11th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth A.D. 1569, “musters” of all the able men in the country, horsemen as well as “foot” their armour, and their weapons were taken by command of the Queen, and the “muster roll” for every tithing in the County of Somerset is still in existence. Plots against the life of the Queen were rife, and invasion of England by the foreigner was imminent. There was no doubt as to the danger the country was in. Hence constant reviews of the Militia everywhere. At Priddy the names of four men have come down to us, selected as “able men” for the defence of England. This is the record:—

1569

“Tithing of Prydye

Ablemen.

Wm. Nobell, billman. Richard Coke, pekeman.

Xpofer Foxxe, billman. Thomas Strainge, pekeman.

Armor.

One tithing corslet. A pair of almain revits.

ij bills with swords, etc.”

\* Mediæval Wills, *Som. Rec. Soc.*, XXI.

## PRIDDY FIELD NAMES.

“Sher-  
borne,”  
see  
p. 37b,  
(No. 27.)

Many of the “Field Names” in Priddy are of interest; some are of great antiquity. Names of the families who once possessed the property still cling to some of them. Instances of these are Brock’s Paddock (no. 95), Burges’ Paddock (no. 29), Gill’s Croft (no. 82), Hopkins’ (119), Hyde’s Lot (no. 143), Newton’s Croft (no. 18), Pains’ (no. 25), Plumley’s (no. 57), Pointing’s (no. 24) Stone’s Paddock (no. 60), Teak’s Acre (no. 22), Tutton’s (no. 65), Beacham’s (no. 64), Sherborn’s (no. 27). Among the grounds whose names preserve the events of the dim and distant past, are Brewer’s Hill (no. 85), Combe (no. 87), Kingsdown (no. 175), Manor Pound (no. 103), Prior’s Hay (no. 84), Rowbarrow (no. 4), Stowberrow (no. 185), and Boncellos (no. 79), if at least that name should be “Bonviles” or “Bonvilles,” as is not improbable.

“Brewer’s Hill” and “Prior’s Hay” tell of a time when the Prior of Bruern in Oxfordshire had a charter of free-warren over all his lands in Priddy. “Combe” is mentioned in 1327. “Kingsdown” is found in Henry II’s Grant of lands on Mendip to Witham in the XII Century. “Stowberrow” is the ‘Stoburghe’ or ‘Stenbergh,’ where the Perambulation of the Forest of Mendip in the year 1298 began and ended. As to “Boncellos,” we can only conjecture that the ground may have been the property of Sir William Bonville, and that in the lapse of time the name was altered to Boncellos. Perhaps on the grounds Sugar Loaf Inn (no. 108), and White Horse (no. 101), there once stood Public Houses so named. Mill Mead (no. 31), may be the site of an old windmill. Cowpitt (no. 160), and Coney Pit (no. 189), Quar Close (no. 19), Quar Ground (no. 170), and Round Paddock (no. 114), need no explanation. But whether Reeve’s Lot (no. 142), Reeve’s Paddock (no. 52), owe their names to being allotted to the Lead-Reeve, or to the surname of an individual, we cannot say. Townsend (no. 152), reminds us of the locality in Priddy

which retains the title of "Town." Ashen Lane bears all the marks of great antiquity, as a thoroughfare. Pit Close (no. 35), may perhaps be identified with "1 parcella terre in Pryde vocata *Morter-pytte*" referred to in Wells Manor Rolls, A.D. 1458, and said to be in viâ Regia et in manu Domini.\*

In the same 'Roll' there occurs three other names of some interest, given to lands held in common. The first is "Horewalls" or "Whorewalls" as to which there was a mining law that Buddells were to cease working on or before May 3rd, and November 1st. John and Alice King paid rent in villenage for it. "V<sup>s</sup> pro pastura vocata Horewalles eisdem concessa per cartam." There were also forty-three acres and four roods of land "apud Hawdon vocat Rygges in communi super Myndep," and thirdly there was 1 forerdi (? headland), apud Prydy vocat Kyngsway in communi." Besides these there were ten acres called "Grymesnesse" occupied by the Prior of Bruton, so it was said; but no man knew where they were situated, and, therefore the lord had no chance of distraint for arrears of rent.

The grounds named "The Doles" Nos. 144, 147-9, and 159, would also be in common, and like the Dolemoors in Congresbury may have been distributed annually by lot among the Commoners (Collinson III, 586, and Rutter's "Delineations of Somerset" p. 36). But the name points to a very early designation of the meadow ground in the Common Open Fields. "There is," says Mr. Seebohm in his 'English Village Community' pp. 109, 110, most complete evidence that in the VII Century the fields of Wessex were Common open fields, the arable being divided into acres and the meadows into *doles*, hence dōl and gedāl land." The Bishop is the lord of all the Doles at Priddy. Charles Penruddocke was the Lessee of 144-6 under the Bishop, Alice Hunt of 147-9, John Sax of 159, at the time of the Tithe Commutation.

\* *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, xxxvii, ii, 82, 83.