

## The Alien Priory of Stoke Courcy.

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THE history of an alien priory is generally extremely chequered and diversified, forming a little chapter by itself in the midst of the more important ecclesiastical annals of our country, and, by its very presence, an *imperium in imperio*. Originally, the appropriation of English churches, tithes, and manors to foreign abbeys and religious houses sprang from the natural loyalty of the first conquerors of this country, in 1066, to their old homes. The whole number of alien priories in England was about one hundred, according to Dugdale, and one hundred-and-twenty according to another account. As time went on, and as the links between England and Normandy became weaker and weaker, the appropriation of English property for charity and other services abroad was felt to be a grievance. Men of Norman descent are the first to object to "corrodies" and the various *hospitia* that the foreign and imported monk took as his due. Whilst war was actually going on between England and France the revenues of the alien priories fell at once into the hands of the Kings of England, who suspended their use and farmed them out for their own benefit. Edward I laid hands upon them first of all, in 1285, on the occasion of war; and it appears from a Roll that Edward II also seized them, and to this the account of the restitution of 1 Edward III seems to apply.<sup>1</sup> In 1337, Edward III confiscated their

(1). *Rymer's Foedera*, tom. iv, p. 246.

estates and let out the priories, with all their lands, at his pleasure for twenty-three years,<sup>2</sup> at the end of which time, peace being concluded between the two nations, he restored their estates in 1361. In an *Abbreviatio Rot. Orig.* (Rot. 28), in Edward III's reign, a "Johannes Bakeler et Sibilla uxor ejus" acquire in this way the estates of Stoke Courcy Priory and Church. In Kirby's *Quest*, c. 1286, the name of Bakeler is amongst the "Burgenses" of Stoke Courcy Borough; and in 34 Edward III, John Bakeler appears as a member of Parliament for Stoke Courcy. In Nether Stowey, an adjoining parish, the church was appropriated by Robert de Candos, who held the Barony of Nether Stowey, to the alien priory of Goldcliff, in Monmouth. This was a cell of the abbey of Bec-Hellouin, in Normandy. But here, also, as in the case of Stoke Courcy, there is a sequestration and diversion of patronage. In the Calendar of Patent Rolls, July 23, 1378, there is an account of the presentation of John Smert, keeper of the "Chantry of Wynterbourne, to the Vicarage of Nether Stowey, in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, in the King's gift by reason of the temporalities of the Priory of Goldcliff being in the King's hands on account of the war with France." Long before this, in May, 1317-18, we read that Bishop Drokenford granted to John de Lanton, Prior, the guardianship of the sequestered churches of Nether Stowey, Puriton, and Woolavington, which had been uncanonically farmed to a layman by the Prior of Goldcliff, Rector.<sup>3</sup> In September, 1317, there is a sterner order: "The Bishop to Rural Dean of Poulet. The custody of the sequestered Rectories of Puriton and Woolavington we committed to W. de Osgodby, Clerk. He has been turned out of the Rectory by violence of some unknown. Therefore, denounce excommunication in churches of the Deanery, with full ceremony, and cite any known offenders to Wells Consistory." Here, indeed, was a pretty quarrel of

(2). *Ibidem.*

(3). S.R.S., vol. i, p. 130.

jurisdiction! Sequestration went on in the reign of Richard II, as we gather from Rym. *Foedera*. tom., vii, p. 697; also from Dugdale's *Warwickshire*, 2nd ed., vol. i, p. 37; and much land and property of these alien priories disappeared, no doubt into laymen's hands. Henry IV showed some favour to them (1399-1412), restoring all the Conventual ones, only reserving to himself in time of war what they paid in time of peace to the foreign abbeys. Their chequered career may partly be gathered from a glance at the patronage given in such a work as Weaver's *Somerset Incumbents*. There, for example, the right of presentation to Nether Stowey and to Stoke Courcy Vicarages is constantly shifting from the Alien Priory to the Crown and back again. However, the end came in 1414-15 (2 Henry V), when they were all dissolved by Act of Parliament. Henry VI endowed his foundations at Eton and Cambridge with the lands of the alien priories, although his father wished to appropriate them all to a noble college at Oxford. Thus we may now understand how Stoke Courcy and, with it, as original appropriations to the Priory of Stoke Courcy, the churches of Holford and Wootton Courtney are, at this present moment, all in the gift of Eton College; also why Nether Stowey is in the gift of the Dean and Chapter of Windsor. The historical association stretches far back, in the case of Stoke Courcy, to the pious wish of William de Falaise, at the time of the Norman Conquest. About fifty years ago, a pluralist—the Rev. J. Barnwell—united in his own person the Rectory of Holford and the Vicarage of Stoke Courcy, together with Lilstock, and so far represented, perhaps unconsciously, a large part of the original endowment.

There is one very important point in the history of alien priories, which certainly is especially illustrated in the annals of the Stoke Courcy foundation, and it is this, that their very existence was an eyesore to English bishops who wished to maintain ecclesiastical discipline within their dioceses. It was

galling to think that there was a nominating power *outside* the country which could send over priors and dump down unruly and licentious monks of a foreign nationality and compel the country to keep them. Bishop Drokensford is brought in conflict with the anomaly, and, as a disciplinarian, fights against it. The same bishop does not hesitate to attack such a powerful and thoroughly indigenous institution as the Abbey of Glastonbury, at a Visitation in March, 1312-13, and pronounces excommunication (reserving Absolution to ourselves), against those who, "owing to the illicit oathe of secrecy made to defeat correction," had combined together. However, he has no patience with the alien priory of Stoke Courcy, and takes strong measures to right matters there. It was not, therefore, a long step forward to object to all alien ecclesiastical influences, and in this way the abolition of alien priories in Henry V's reign paved the way for greater reforms and a wider programme.

Of the various sources of information about Stoke (or, as it was named when the De Courcy family inherited it from the Falaise family, Stoke Courcy) Priory, which Tanner gives us in his *Notitia Monastica*, that of the "Cartae et Rentalia in archivis Eton. Coll. juxta Windsor" is certainly the most interesting and, perhaps, the least explored. Allusion was made to them in vol. xviii p. 15, of the *Proceedings* of the Som. Arch. Soc., by the late Dr. Goodford, Provost of Eton; and Thomas Martin de Palgrave many years ago made extracts from them.<sup>4</sup> Through the courtesy of the Rev. W. A. Carter, Bursar of Eton College, the writer was enabled, last May, to have a look at the old documents themselves, and to make use of a private list of them belonging to the College authorities. They are contained in two boxes in the library (one of them labelled 19 B) and are very numerous, many of them, with fine seals attached, dating back to A.D. 1100-1200. For the information of archæologists, it may be said that there exists here

(4). See Catalogue of his Library, Bodleian, Oxford.

a large amount of valuable material still to be deciphered. In Collinson's *History of Somerset*, neither Stoke Courcy Castle nor the Priory are treated so fully as the Manor of Fairfield, originally a place of comparatively small importance, lying, curiously enough, in the Hundred of Williton, not Cannington, in which Stoke Courcy itself lies, and held formerly under the Chief Barony of Nether Stowey, where the baronial families of the de Candos, Columbers, and Audley reigned supreme.

There is no doubt that the original grant of St. Andrew's Church to the Church of St. Mary at Lonley, in Normandy, was made by William de Falaise and Geva his wife, and the fact of the original grant is mentioned in a Cartulary of Stoke Courcy Priory now at Eton College. Although this actual grant is not among the MSS. there, still there are confirmations of it, one by Robert, Bishop of Bath (1135-1165), and another by William, son of William de Curci, by consent of Gundrea, his wife, of the grants of his ancestors, viz. William de Falaise his great-grandfather, and William the son of Humphrey, who appears to have given with Emma his wife the advowson of Utton (Wootton Courtney). This document is instructive as it shows the relationship between William de Falaise and the de Courcy family, as successors to the Manor and Castle of Stoke (Courcy). With regard to Wootton it will be remembered that William de Falaise held at the Domesday Survey both Wootton (Courtney) and Stoke (Courcy), and thus the Wootton endowment is accounted for by family and territorial influence. From the Eton College Cartulary it appears that the object of the first endowment was "for the benefit of the soul of King Henry and others." Collinson simply says "for the soul of William de Falaise and his wife." Another grant by "Anketill the son of Herbert and Bercellina his wife," by consent of William de Eston (Idson, near Stoke Courcy) and his heirs, makes mention of a demesne called Hunesberegeland. This is the Hederneberia

of which Anshetill Parcarius was Domesday tenant *in capite*, who also held Edeveston or Idson under Roger de Corcelle.<sup>5</sup> It is now Honibere and a point about which Mr. Eyton was naturally in ignorance is cleared up. The above grant went to the Church of St. Andrew and the monks and to the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist adjoining the said Church of St. Andrew. This is the only mention I can find of their chapel. In another charter Honeberegeland is exchanged for "certain lands at Stayning." Honeberegeland or Honibere was a very old manor and gave a name to the tithing of Honibere. It lies to the north of Fairfield House, and was once the residence of a branch of the Luttrell family, whose monuments are still to be seen in the mortuary chapel at Lilstock.<sup>6</sup> Tradition has it that the site of Honibere Court is exactly that of a pond close to the road and almost facing the back entrance to Fairfield. Two ancient tracks, now marked on the Ordnance Survey as foot-paths, converge upon the old site of Honibere, one leading down from Kilton Hill head, known as Harborough or Harford Lane, a terminus still known to road contractors; the other, now only a field track, from the ancient farm of Plud, and in connection thus with "Portway" Lane, a suggestive route-name. With regard to Stayning, the other property, it has a most interesting old manor house, with oak staircase and panels, well worth a visit.

The earliest grants, however, to Lonley would be the church and tithes of St. Andrew, two parts of the tithes of Wiletun (Williton), Wootton (Courtney), two parts of the tithes of Lilstock. Lonley is described by John Nicholls, in his work on alien Priors,<sup>7</sup> as "a Benedictine Abbey in a town of that name in the Diocese of Seez, founded A.D. 1026, by William Talvast, Earl of Bellesme." As a natural sequel of this

(5). *Eyton's Domesday*, vol. i, p. 122, and vol. ii, p. 17.

(6). See also *Brown's Somerset Wills*, series 6, p. 16. Nicolas Luttrell, of Honibere, in Lilstock. Will dated July 5th, 1588.

(7). Vol. i, p. 104.

Somerset endowment there must have been constant communication between West Somerset and Normandy and Caen, a fact not to be lost sight of when we want to detect direct architectural and other influences. All alien Priories, as cells to the Mother Church, were links between this country and the Continent and sometimes had an educational value.

Subsequently, there are two very interesting confirmations of the original grant, one by Robert Fitz-urse, with the signatures of John Bret, Richard Fitz-urse, and Reginald Fitz-urse, with the seal attached and device of a bear (Fitz-urse), the other by Reginald Fitz-urse, both, apparently, belonging to the 12th century. Both of these refer to the Williton endowment, and the latter has the signatures of William de Curci and William Brito. In the first-named confirmation William de Falaise and his successors are termed the "ancestors" of the Fitz-urse family, and the relationship is shown, therefore, between the Falaise, de Courcy, and Fitz-urse families. It may be conjectured that it was through the de Falaise family that the Fitz-urse and de Bret families came to Williton and Sampford Bret, a point about which Collinson expresses himself as unable to form an opinion.

After the de Courcy and Fitz-urse grants and confirmations the deed of Hugo de Nevile excites our interest. His name, which in Dugdale's *Baronage* (vol. i, p. 288) is given erroneously as that of the original founder of Stoke Courcy Priory, signifies simply a change of ownership of the castle and manor. Hugo de Nevile married Joan, one of the two daughters of Alice de Curci, sister and heiress of John de Curci, Earl of Ulster, in Ireland, and son and heir of William de Curci.<sup>8</sup> Henceforth the de Courcys disappear from the place and are represented only in the female line.

A John de Curci and a Jordan de Curci subscribe to a grant of William de Curci the third, by which a mill at Norham, known as "Mervines Mill," is made over to the

(8). *Collins's Peerage*, vol. ii, p. 152.

monks of Stoke Courcy, and this John may be the warrior of Ulster fame.<sup>9</sup> There are two Pohers (Poers), William and Durand, who appear amongst the signatories also, and these may be of the family who went to Ireland. In the Rawlinson MSS., after speaking of the prowess of John de Curci, the writer says "though many were that in this fight that boldly did, natheles Roher le Power, that thereafter was of great myght in Ossory and in the county of Leghlin, was the other that best did." In the grant of Holford Church (1175), Roger Poher, Durand Power, and William Poher appear. It is curious that Collinson says nothing under his account of Stoke Courcy of the Irish exploits of the de Courcys. Nor can I discover that he says anything of the Poher, Power, or Poer family.

In the Eton deeds there are several grants and confirmations by the Poher family, who gave rent and money from Cnapeloc (Knaplock, in Cannington).

The importance of Stoke Courcy as a starting point for both Welsh and Irish expeditions must not be lost sight of by the antiquary. Growing up round the spring of St. Andrew, perhaps the "Fons et origo" of the whole settlement, and clustering round the Church of St. Andrew with its appanage of Little Stoke, or Lilstock, here was probably a very ancient station. The "Stoke" lay close to, if not upon, the main line of communication between the West of England and the Severn Valley and Caerleon. The river Parret was a notable boundary, the bailiwick or serjeantry of East and West Parret being well-known territorial definitions. The Normans, being skilful sailors, used the Parret and Bridgwater Bay as a base for further conquests. No sooner is Robert de Candos established at Nether Stowey Castle than he attacks Owen, the "dominus de Karlyon," and founds Goldclive, in Monmouth, to which he attached, as we have seen, Nether Stowey

(9). See "The English Conquest of Ireland." Early English Text Society. Rawlinson MSS.

Church. The Cogans of Huntspill, Reymond of Canteton (Cannington), and others cross over to Ireland (1100-1200) with Strongbow and the Welsh barons. It was a curious and doubtless an historical claim of Henry II that King Arthur, whose traditions are so well known along the valley of the Parret, should have had "truage out of Ireland." The royal associations of this part of England must not be forgotten. Cannington was an ancient demesne of the Crown, being part of the possessions of Edward the Confessor. After the battle of Hastings the mother of Harold flies to the Steep Holmes, just opposite Stoke Courcy and the mouth of the Parret. Tradition says that Beer manor, lying close under Cannington Park, was a royal hunting lodge. In Kirby's *Quest*, taken before 1286, the Queen of England held as a gift from the king the Vill of Wick, or Week, and the Hundred of Cannington, and with Wick tithing may have been associated the smaller properties of Burton, Knighton, and Stolford, in the tithing itself. Of these, Stolford, from its proximity to the sea and the Parret mouth, would be the most important, becoming the sea-port of Stoke Courcy rather than the rougher roadstead of Lilstock, comparatively a new landing-place. The ships of ancient times were of shallow draught and would lie better in the estuary and side overflows of the Parret, with their soft and muddy beds and with their advantages as natural dry docks, than on the rocky foreshore of Lilstock and the bays further west. Curiously enough, it is in the neighbourhood of Stolford that we find the oldest sites, so it would seem, of farm houses. In the Preface to the Tithe Commutation of Stoke Courcy (1840), a certain "modus decimandi" was said to be due to the Vicar of Stoke Courcy from what are expressly termed "the ancient farms" of Whitwick, Charleton, and Bartletts, all of which would appear to be close to Stolford. The name of "Bartletts" at Stolford, a small property now belonging to Mr. R. R. Rawlings, seems almost forgotten and is confused with "Bartletts," at Lil-

stock. Charleton farm has a field with the suggestive name of "Welsh Field," pointing, perhaps, to some over-sea connection. If, as the Stoke Courcy Priory deeds show, there was a Welsh endowment of Tyenton and Tregnu to the monks of Stoke Courcy, there was probably some ready means of communication kept up between Stolford and some point on the opposite coast. In the 14th century the Stoke Courcy monks had a chapel at Stolford. It must not be forgotten that the endowment of "Tienton and a church in Wales" was the gift of William de Falaise and Geva, his wife; so the Norman baron did not waste much time in stretching out his long and powerful arms to Wales, and we get a little light upon the first conquest of South Wales. With regard to the Church of Lilstock it would appear, from the Eton College deeds, that in the first grant of William de Falaise's, *two parts of the tithes* were given, together with St. Andrew's Church, Lilstock, being an appanage of Stoke, or Estocha, as it appears in Domesday. Subsequently, there is the further gift of the *advowson* of the church itself, and it appears from a Confirmation of Philip de Columbariis the Third, of the barony of Nether Stowey, that the original donor was his *grandfather*, Hugh Butler. There is a Hugh Butler, who appears as a signatory in the grant of Holford Church (*c.* 1175), who may be the same, as the dates coincide. If so, the *advowson* of Lilstock would have been given to Stoke (Courcy) Priory in the 12th century. Since then, Lilstock became, ecclesiastically, part of Stoke Courcy, until, by order of Her Majesty in Council (April 1st, 1881), the chapelry, as it was called, of Lilstock, was separated from the vicarage and parish church of Stoke Courcy and united with the parish of Kilton. The Incumbent is termed the Rector, Vicar and perpetual Curate of Kilton-cum-Lilstock. The nave, tower, and porch of Lilstock Church have been pulled down and the chancel alone remains, having been converted into a Mortuary Chapel. The old Norman font still remains there. The

patronage of the church has passed into the hands of the Bishop by an exchange with Over Stowey.

In the history of Stoke Courcy Priory the evils of an alien institution show themselves at various stages. In 1270, William, Bishop of Bath and Wells, sent a citation to Robert, Abbot of Lonley, lately Prior of Stoke Courcy, requesting him to answer for his maladministration of the affairs of the Priory by sending its property over the sea and burdening it with "corrodies."<sup>10</sup> The Bishop sends three of the Stoke Courcy monks to remain with the Abbot in France until an improvement in the condition of the Priory should allow of their return to England.

In 1316, there was an Inquisition or Commission issued by the active Bishop Drokensford,<sup>11</sup> to summon the chapter of Bridgwater Deanery and to ascertain how and when the vacancy in Stoke Courcy took place, what churches were appropriated and what were the means; also about the morals of the presentee.

In August, 1316, therefore, the Chapter held in Bridgwater Church, furnished the following statements for the information of the Bishop, who appears to have been greatly in ignorance of the affairs of this alien institution and to have determined to sift them. (1) That Lonley Abbey was the patron. (2) That the Priory was endowed with the churches of Stoke Courcy, Lillingstoke (Lilstock), and the sinecure chapel of Durberwe (Durborough), with all their tithes and oblations and two carucates of land, five acres of meadow, the whole worth forty-five marks, applicable to the use of the Priory, *i.e.*, therefore, with no vicarage endowment; the "complement" depending on the will of the Abbey. The Presentee was Giles Roussée, a Frenchman.

With regard to the above it does not appear that the sinecure chapel of Durborough (a manor, now a farm house, lying

(10). MSS. *penes Eton: Coll:*

(11). S.R.S., vol. i, 8.

about one-and-a-half miles to the south-west of Stoke Courcy) is elsewhere mentioned, as far as the writer can discover. At one time it belonged to Glastonbury, being the gift of Elflem, in pre-Norman times. Within the memory of man an offshoot of the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury used to grow there close to the lane, being visited on Twelfth Night by the country folk to see it burst out into blossom. The late Sir Peregrine Acland is said to have protected the last decaying branches with a wall. At the present time there is an early thorn, perhaps a slip from this, in Fairfield shrubbery. However, at Durborough the chapel and thorn are both gone. There is a field called Chapel Hayes which marks the site of the former, and an old wall indicates where the latter grew.

In 1326, the Priory came under the more severe scrutiny of Bishop Drokensford.<sup>12</sup> "The Bishop to the Abbot of Lonley, the Norman mother-house of Stoke Courcy Priory. Having found, on visitation, your Priory impoverished and neglected, containing the Prior and one Monk (the witness of his own innocence), some servants and useless folks sojourning there by your leave, the other monks living lecherously abroad, and being moved by Sir Robert Fitz-payne, patron, we decree that the sinning monks be sent to Lonley for correction, and that no more be sent to the Priory until it be reinstated through the Prior and our help."

In 1328, the Prior, Giles Roussée, who seems to have been a very worthless Frenchman, was superseded by the Abbot of Lonley,<sup>13</sup> as "alienator bonorum" (thus accounting perhaps for the disappearance of some Priory property), and Godfrey de Duc appointed. Bishop Drokensford institutes him to the Priory and to the Church of Stoke Courcy, and the Prior swore to maintain continuous residence and ritual, and the three resident monks swore obedience to the Prior (18th June, 1328); an oath which points to previous breaches of discipline.

(12). S.R.S., vol. i, 261.

(13). S.R.S., vol. i, 287.

The Rural Dean of Bridgwater is ordered to release the sequestration of the Priory. Curiously enough, it appears from the Bishop's Register that all this process was undone by the Prior's resignation, recited at full but no reason given.

Things, however, at Stoke Courcy, go on from bad to worse, and between the Castle and the Priory there is a good deal of friction and violence, Sir Robert Fitz-payne being at open war with the Prior. In the Calendar of Patent Rolls, March 8th, 1332, there is a "Commission of oyer and terminer to Philip de Columbariis of Stowey Castle, John Inge, and John de Fosse, on complaint of the Prior of Stoke Courcy that Robert Fitz-payne, Ela his wife, Robert le Chapleyne, John de Forde, parson of the Church of Okeford Fitz-payne, etc., at Stoke Courcy, co. Somerset, broke his houses, chest, and goods; took away a horse, a colt, and a boar, worth £10, felled his trees, dug in his quarry and carried away the stone and the trees, that they unyoked 10 oxen from the plough, drove them to the Castle, and that the said Robert Fitz-payne then impounded them and kept them in pound against law and custom of the realm, impounded 8 oxen, 120 sheep, 60 lambs, and 30 swine of his, and detained them until he made fine with the said Robert and Ela by 37 marks at divers times, and demised his tithe of sheaves and hay belonging to Stolford Chapel to the said John (de Forde?) for a term of years."

Sir Robert Fitz-payne turns to Cannington, of which the de Courcy family were patrons, to found a chantry for himself and his family, rather than to Stoke Courcy, and on January 28th, 1333, we discover in the Calendar of Patent Rolls a licence for the alienation in mortmain by Robert Fitz-payne, to the Prioress and Nuns of Cannington of eighty acres of land in Cannington and Radeweyes (Rodway Fitz-payne), held in chief, towards the support of a chaplain to celebrate divine service daily in Cannington Church for the soul of the said Robert, his ancestors and heirs.

Shortly after this the patronage both of Stoke Courcy and of Wootton (Courtney) lapsed into the hands of the Crown. In 1347, Edward III appoints William Jurdan as incumbent of Stoke Courcy and Wm. Boulton, in 1342, as incumbent of Wootton (Courtney), and in the Crown they both appear to remain until they both came into the hands of the "Praepositus Collegii beatæ Mariæ de Eton et idem Collegium."<sup>14</sup> The first Eton nomination to Stoke Courcy was in 1453. Just ten years previous to this there was an exciting episode in the annals of Stoke Courcy parish. John Vernay, of Fairfield, was cited in 1442 to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury, to answer a complaint of Robert Vyse (the last Prior of Stoke Courcy), because all the time of High Mass in the Parish Church of Stoke Courcy he had preached to the people in English, using opprobrious words and calling on the people to obey him rather than the Prior and his Vicar.<sup>15</sup> It was evident that matters had reached a climax as between "the Squire and Parson" of Stoke Courcy. It was just about this date (1442) that the possessions of Stoke Courcy Priory passed, by the will of the king, into the possession of Eton College. About a century afterwards the larger monasteries were dissolved.

It took, therefore, more than one hundred years to break up the Monastic System in England, and perhaps in English history we do not assign sufficient importance to the first step, viz: the occasional appropriation of alien Priors to educational purposes. The Annals of Stoke Courcy point at an early stage to the revolt against foreign and papal domination. John Vernay, of Fairfield, might or might not have felt the indignation of soul which hardened into being the Cromwellian type many generations afterwards. But the protesting spirit had surely shown itself already in West Somerset.

As showing the ancient connection of Stoke Courcy with

(14). *Weaver's* "Somerset Incumbents."

(15). MSS. penes Eton. Coll.

Over Stowey, the grant which gives the "wood and pasture on Cantok" (Quantock) is very interesting. From it we learn the dedication of Over Stowey Church, viz. to St. Peter. Part of Over Stowey was an *additamentum* to W. de Falaise's property of Stoke (Courcy),<sup>16</sup> and up to the present day this part of Over Stowey pays land tax in the tything of Week or Wick Fitz-payne, in Stoke Courcy. The land tax levied on the vicarage of Over Stowey also used to be paid into Stoke Courcy; a certain portion been levied on Plainsfield, and a certain portion on Adscombe tything, and a certain portion on Bincombe tything. It was in December, 1806, that a part of this tax was redeemed. The manor of Week has a great prominence in Stoke Courcy Records. In 12 Henry VI, Elizabeth, the wife of Thomas Trivet, held amongst other lands the manor of Chilton, of Sir Robert Poynings, Knt., *as of his manor of Wyhe*. In 1286, as already noted, the "*Domina Regina Anglic. consors Regis tenet villam de Wyge et Hundred. predictum (i.e. Cannington) pro v hidis terre de dono Domini Regis*". Therefore it was in the gift of Edward I.<sup>17</sup> It was handed on to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, by his marriage with Eleanor, the heiress of the Poynings, Fitz-paynes, and Bryans. From this date it would appear to be known as Week Fitz-payne, just as Staple Fitz-payne, Cheddon Fitz-payne, and Cary Fitz-payne, etc., were named from this family. John II, Earl of Egmont (born February 24th, 1711), appears as "Lord of Duhallow, Burton Liscarrol, Kanturk, Lohort in Ireland, and of Enmore, Anderfeld, Spaxton, Tuxwell and Radlet, Currypole and Charlinch, Asholt, Eley (or Aley Green), Plainsfield, Over Stowey and Friron (Friarn), Quantock, *Week Fitz-payne and Windiates*, the Borough and Honour of Stoke Courcy, and the Hundreds of Anderfeld, Williton, and Freemanors." With regard to Windiates, it would appear to have been the name of the

(16). *Eyton's Domesday Survey*, vol. i, p. 123.

(17). S.R.S., vol. iii, p. 17.

manor on which the old Castle of Stoke Courcy was built. Close by there is a "Wyndeates Lane," and under "Week Tything" two closes of ground are called parts of Wynnards or Windyates. "Windyates and Dorlea" are now in the possession of Colonel Rawlings, and the fields are close up to the very site of the old Castle. On the east side of the Castle are the demesne lands of the Stoke Courcy Priory with a field called "War Meadow"; a very euphonious name, considering the stormy fortunes of the old Castle.

The same grant is very interesting from a topographical point of view, as throwing a side light upon the old routes and trackways from the east to the west of the Quantocks. Allusion is made to the great road of Solmere on the lower part, and the great road called "Staw Herepat" on the upper part, to the head of Ramescuba (Ramscombe). It is interesting to trace where the Stoke Courcy monks had their privileges, for Ramscombe is a very definite point on the Quantocks, known to every sportsman, and it must have been up Seven Wells Combe. There is a "Friarn Wood" and a "Friarn Ball" there still. Along the Seven Wells stream is a very ancient boundary separating what is known locally as "Lords Customs" and "Ramscombe Customs." The higher Stowey Road is still a well-known feature, and the lower must have had its entrance at Seven Wells, where, not long ago, the "Squirrel Inn" existed, together with the little location, up the valley, of "Higher Old Cottages" and "Lower Old Cottages." At the entrance of "Seven Wells" there was more than one ancient communication. To this point Mr. Phelps, in his *History of Somerset* (vol. ii, p. 113), traces the trackway of British times leading from "Gaunts Farm" and Combwich passage to Cannington Park. From this park the route went from Horn Hill close to the park, in almost a straight line westwards past the famous Oakley Oak, one of the oldest trees in Somerset, but now, alas, a wreck of its former self. Within its bole, hollowed by age, it is said that

fifteen men dined not twenty years ago. From Keenethorne to the "Pear Tree Inn," Marsh Mills, Aley Green, the site fifty years ago of the old "Dial Inn," and up the ridge of Quantock, straight to Triscombe Stone, here is the line as clear as possible. The old routes between the valley of the Parret and the Quantocks are interesting in many ways, not the least because they furnish a link between the ancient Manors of Stoke Courcy, Wick, Rodway Fitz-payne in the valley, and the Domesday *additamentum* of Over Stowey on the Quantocks above. Along these roads, favoured by the Baron's charter, the Stoke Courcy monks drove their flocks to feed on the breezy uplands of the Quantocks, or fetched their wood and fuel.

The other Quantock document containing a letter or concession from Robert, Lord of Poynings, authorising, in 24 Henry VI, the Prior of Stoke Courcy and the Prioress of Cannington to fell a certain amount of wood on the Quantocks, is interesting also. The fact of this deed of gift seems still to be remembered amongst the country folk of Cannington and Stowey. The Cannington poor are said to have had privileges of gathering and cutting wood on the Quantocks, especially along Five Lords Customs to the east of Danesborough and along Bincombe.

The Eton College documents are useful also in the notices they afford of various influential families in the neighbourhood who subscribe their names to them as witnesses. Among them are Sir W. Malet, of Enmore; Sir W. Fichet, of Stringston, a branch of the Malet family, known also at Meridge, in Spaxton; Walter Russell, of Sydenham, connected also with Fairfield; many signatures of the Regny or Reigni family, this family being lords of Asholt on the Quantocks, as we learn from a charter of Barlinch Priory,<sup>18</sup> also the owners of Doniford, near Williton, granted to them in the reign of Henry II, by Richard Fitz-urse.<sup>19</sup>

(18). Som. Arch. *Proceedings*, vol. xxix, p. 76.

(19). *Collinson*, vol. iii, p. 491.

A Richard Fitz-urse appears in one of the Eton College Confirmations, viz., that of Robert Fitz-urse, where Reginald Fitz-urse is also a signatory. In this same charter is Roger de Raleigh, and in the Confirmation of William de Sancto Stephano, Simon de Raalee (Raleigh)—both, presumably, of Nettlecombe. There are several other names, *e.g.*, of the Chaudel, Poher, Labule, de Aura, and other families about which we might desire to know more.

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II.

DOCUMENTS relating to property at Stoke Courcy (Stogursey), Wootton Courtney, Lilstock, Holford, Williton, etc., in the possession of Eton College, which throw light upon the foundation of the Alien Priory at Stoke Courcy and the Church of St. Andrew there.

A Cartulary of Stoke Courcy written on three membranes reciting several of the deeds already noticed. Among those of which the originals are not now to be found among the MSS. of Eton College, are the two following :

Grant by William de Faleisia and Geva his wife to the Church of S. Mary of Lonley of the Church of S. Andrew of Sutinstock (Stoke) with the tithes of the Parish and two parts of the tithes of Wiletune, two parts of the tithes of Lilstock (Lulinstocke) for Raunulf and the monks for ever for the benefit of the soul of King Henry and others. They also grant the whole tithe of Tientone and a Church in Wales with the tithe of a parish called Treigru given by Robert the son. This grant appears to have been issued under the great seal of King Henry I.

A grant by Anketill the son of Herbert and Bencellina his wife by consent of William de Eston their son and heir and of his heirs, for the benefit of their respective souls, of the soul of Roger son of the said William to the Churches of S. Mary and Lonley and S. Andrew of Stoke and the monks thereof and the Chapel of S. John the Evangelist adjoining the said Church of St. Andrew of certain lands at Monketon and of part of their demesne called Hunesberge lande (Honibere, near Stogursey.)

The others are—

Confirmation by Robert Bishop of Bath of the grants made by William de Faleisia and Gena or Geva his wife, to the Church of S. Mary of Lonlay, to wit, the Church of S. Andrew at Stoke, two parts of the tithe of Williton, two parts of the tithe of Lilstock, and the whole tithe of Tieton (in Wales) and of the grant of William the son of Humphrey and Emma his wife of the advowson of Wotton. Witnesses, Ivo, Dean of Wells; Martin, Archdeacon of Bath; Eustace, archdeacon of Wells; Hugh de Turnay, Archdeacon of beyond Perret; Hugh, Dean of Spakeston and others. Date 1135-1160.

N.B.—Robert of Bath died in 1165. Ivo was his Dean.

Confirmation by William son of William de Curci by consent of Gundrea his wife and his heirs to the Church of S. Mary of Lonlay and the monks thereof, of the grants of his ancestors, viz., William de Faleisia, his great grandfather, and William the son of Humphrey (filius Umfredi), William de Curci his grandfather and William his father, including a hide of land and of the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke and the advowson of the Churches of Uttona (Wootton Courtney) and Lullingstoke (Lilstock), etc. Witnesses. William his nephew, William de Reigni, Hugh Butler, William de Bainville, William Chaudel, Seward the priest, William de Staininges.

(12th Century.)

Confirmation by William de Curci, Steward of the King of England, of all the gifts of his predecessors to the Church of S. Andrew de Stockiis and the monks thereof. Witnesses, Simon Fitz-Simon, Hugh Golafre, William the son of Ralph.

Grant by William de Curci, Steward of the King, for the souls of his grandfather, William de Curci and his father William and all his relations and ancestors to the monks of S. Andrew of Stoke of the mill at Norham, which is called "Mervine's Mill," which he bought of Hugh Gulaferre. Witnesses, Geoffry the Prior, William the Monk, William Pantol, Seward the Priests, John de Curci, Jordan de Curci, Simon the son of P. William de Regni, William his nephew, William Poher, Durand Poher, Hubert Butler, Osbert de Estona, William Chaudel, Clement, Bernard, and Reginald. Fragment of fine equestrian seal attached.

Grant by Robert the son of Alfred to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke of the Church of Holford. Witnesses, Sir Geoffry, Abbot of Lonlay, Hugerus, Gerin de Alenconis, Prior of Stoke, and fourteen others named, amongst whom are Durand Poher, Hugh Butler, William Poher, Roger Poher. This grant was made by consent of the grantor's wife Rosa and his son and heir Henry, A. D., 1175. Fragment of equestrian seal attached.

Grant by William the son of Reginald to the monastery of Stoke of the house of Legga and a rent of ten sticks (250) of eels and one great eel. Witnesses, Gilbert de Sartilli, Bernard de Crauthorne, Richard his son, and ten others named.

(12th Century ?)

Confirmation by Robert Fitz-urse by consent of John his heir to the Church of S. Andrew and the monks thereof of the gifts which his ancestors, that is to say, William de Faleisia and his successors, gave to the said Church, that is, of two parts of the tithe of Williton and grant of two parts of the clearing (assarti) which the grantor and his heir shall make. Witnesses, Adam de Bera, John Bret, Richard Fitz-urse, Reginald Fitz-urse, Brother William de Maleville, then Preceptor of the Knights Templar, Brother Roger de Ralegh, Brother Bernard, Ralph the clerk of Burge (Bridgwater), Ralph the clerk of Stoke who wrote this deed. Large seal attached, device a bear.

Confirmation by Reginald Fitz-urse of the grant of William de Faleisia to the Church of S. Andrew of Sutinstoke and the monks thereof of two parts of the tithe of the sheaves (garbarum) of the demesne of Williton (Weleton). Witnesses, William de Curci, Roger de Regni, William his son, William Breto, Ralph Denis (Daco), Simon Breto, Ralph de Careville, Hugh Walensis, William the son of Aco, Robert brother of the lord (Domini fratris), Ralph Poher, William the Clerk, who made the Charter, and Seward the Chaplain. Fragment of large seal with device of bear.

(12th Century.)

Grant by Hugh de Bonville (de Bona Villa) to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke Courcy for the sustentation of the monks and in augmentation of former gifts, of part of his wood and pasture on Quantock (in Cantok) on the west side of the wood which he had given to the Church of S. Peter of Over Stowey (de Superiori Staw) extending from the bounds

which John Chaulnel had placed in the said wood between the great road of Solmere on the lower part and the great road called "Staw Herepat" on the upper part, to the head of Ramescuba (Ramscombe). Witnesses, William de Columbers, Henry de Modiford, Alexander the parson of Otterhampton, Hugh the Chaplain of Edstock (Ichestoke), Geoffrey Chaudel, William Russell, Adam de Bere, William Flecher, Ranulf Harefot, Roger Albus, and others. Equestrian seal attached. (12th Century.)

Petition of Hugh de Bonville to Robert Bishop of Bath, for the maintenance and defence of the gifts made by him to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke (A. D. 1135-1166).

Confirmation by Sibilla de Aura, relict of William de Sancto Stephano, for the souls of her deceased husband and her son, Robert de Sancto Stephano, and her parents and friends, of the grants of her ancestors to the Church of S. Mary of Lonley and the Church of St. Andrew of Stoke for the sustenance of the monks, to wit, a furlong of the land of Aura which a rustic named Midewinter held, and the tithe of the said demesne of Aura. Witnesses, Ralph the son of William, John le Bret, Adam de Weckford, and five others named. Seal attached.

Confirmation by William de Sancto Stephano of the gifts of his ancestors to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke and the monks thereof and grant of the tithe of nine acres of land in his demesne of Aura which he was not wont to pay. He declares that, by consent of the monks he will maintain a chaplain to minister in his chapel at Aura. Witnesses John de Regni, William de Columbers, William the chaplain of S. Decumans, William de Grindesham, Richard Labule, John Bretesche, Simon de Raalee (Ralegh?) William Fletcher, and others. Seal attached.

Confirmation by Philip de Columbariis the Third, of the deeds of his late father Philip son of Philip de Columbariis, and of his grandfather Hugh Butler, and his other predecessors, showing that the said Hugh granted the advowson of the Church of Lilstock to the Church of S. Andrew and the monks. Witnesses, Sir W. Malet, Sir W. Fichet, of Stringeston, Master John of Ivelcester (Ilchester), Master Daniel, parson of Wembdon, Thomas Trivett, William vicar of Stoke Curci, Walter Russell, of Sidenham. Fine seal attached. Device, a dove on a sprig of foliage.

Grant by Hugh de Neville by consent of his son and heir John to the monks of Stoke Courcy of the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke Courcy, the whole tithe of the parish, two parts of the tithe of Williton, two parts of the tithe of Lilstock, the whole tithe of Tienton, and certain rights of pasture in the wood called 'Cantoc,' and the chaplaincy of his household. Witnesses, Sir W. de Neville, Sir John de Regny, Sir Walter de la Grave, Sir Philip de Bartur, Geoffrey Chaudel, Adam le Bere, and four others.

Confirmation by William le Poher of the gift of his father Ralph le Poher of ten shillings from his rent of Cnapeloc (Knaplock in Cannington) to S. Andrew and the monks of Stoke. Witnesses, William de Estun, Hugh Fossard, William Chaudel, Robert de Estun, Osmund Lavel and others. Seal attached. Device, an eagle, somewhat in form of a fleur-de-lys.

Confirmation by John Poher of the gift of his father of a rent of 10s. to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke and the monks thereof and grant of a rent of eight pence in augmentation of the same. Witnesses, Geoffrey de Derlega, William de Baugetripa (Bawdrip?), Geoffrey Chaudel, Hugh de Mara, Roger the chaplain of Stoke, Walter Chaudel, Geoffrey Fichet, and others. Seal attached. A fleur-de-lys.

Grant by Nicolas Poher to S. Andrew of Stoke and the monks thereof of land at Middleton. Witnesses, William Poher, Joan the mother of Nicolas, William de Reigni, Philip Poher, Fulk the son of Richard French, Hugh Fichet, Henry de Windesham, William de Fitinton, Richard Taillefer, Ralph the clerk who wrote this charter and others. Seal attached. Device, a fleur-de-lys.

- Confirmation by Robert Poher of the gift of his father Robert Poher of a rent of 10s., and of the gift of his brother John Poher, a rent of eightpence to the church of S. Mary (?) of Stoke and the monks thereof. Witnesses, John de Reigni, William de Gridesham, William de Cnapeloc (Knaplock) and several others.
- Confirmation by Robert le Poher as before with a further grant of 4d., payable by William de Cnapeloc. Witnesses, William de Columbariis, Geoffrey Chaudel, Robert de Eston, Richard Lebule, knights; William Lebule, William Flecher, Ralph Hayward, John his son, William Brun and others.
- Confirmation by William de Cnapeloc of the gifts which Robert le Poer and his ancestors made to the Church of S. Andrew at Stoke Curci and the monks thereof. Attested by seal and by oath on the holy relics of the place. Witnesses, William de Draycot, William de Columbers, Robert de Eston, William Russell, William Lebule, Ralph le Hayward, John his son, Walter Brun, John de Otterhampton, and others. Seal attached. Device, a fleur-de-lys.
- Grant by William de Estona by consent of his wife Juliana and his heir to the Church of S. Andrew of Stoke and the monks of that place of certain lands at Stayning in exchange for lands at Hunesberigelond which had been given to the monks by his ancestors. Witnesses, Gs. Abbot of Lonlay, Walter Prior of Stoke and nine others.
- Grant by Claricia de Bere to the church of S. Andrew of Stoke of half-acre of land in Inmeda. Witnesses, Master William de Spacton, Geoffrey dean of Cannington, Alexander the parson of Otterhampton.
- Confirmation by Henry de Modiford of the grant made by his son Alexander to the church of S. Andrew of Stoke for the soul of his wife Helewis. Witnesses, Alexander Parson of Otterhampton, Hugh the Chaplain of Edstock, and ten others, among whom are William de Eston, Geoffrey Chaudel, Walter Chaudel, William de Mudiford. Seal attached. Device, a rose.
- Confirmation by Robert de London of the gift made by William son of Humphrey and confirmed by William de Curci to the Church of S. Mary of Lonley, and the Church of St. Andrew of Stoke Courcy, viz., the Church of Wotton with its appurtenances, and grant of the land of Hunelham and the mill at Wotton. Witnesses, Maurice de Regni, John de Abend. Ralph.
- Copy by John Vernay, of Fayrefield, Esq. (8 October, 34 Henry VI), of a letter from Robert, Lord of Poynings, Knight, dated 29 Nov., 24 Henry VI, authorising his woodward of Quantock (Cantocke), to allow the Prioress of Cannington and the Prior of Stoke Courcy to fell a certain quantity of wood. 'And if they goo any offer or any wother wyse (otherwise) jan (than) I have ywrite (written?) to them take and sette ham yn pound fast and make ham delyverance upon borrowes.' The woodward is to receive 3s. 4d. a year for his services.
- Citation from William, Bishop of Bath and Wells, to Robert, Abbot of Lonley, lately prior of Stoke Curci, to appear before him to answer for his maladministration of the affairs of the Priory by sending its property over the sea and burdening it with corrodies. The Bishop sends three of his monks to remain with the Abbot until an improvement in the condition of the Priory shall allow of their return. A.D. 1270.
- Notice of a citation of John Vernay, a layman, of the diocese of Bath and Wells, to appear before the Archbishop of Canterbury to answer a complaint of Robert Vise, Prior of Stoke Curci, that, at the time of high mass in the parish church of Stoke Curci, after the vicar's sermon, he had preached to the people in English, using opprobrious words, and calling on the people to obey him rather than the prior or the vicar. July 9, 1442. Seal of Archbishop attached.

Exchange of land between Vincent, Prior of Stoke Courcy. and the monks of that place, and Matilda the relict of Roger Rufus of Stoke Curci. Witnesses, Ralph Russell, of Fayrefield, William de Stennings, Walter de Dodeton, Thomas Alexander. Date 44 Henry III.

Grant by William de la Mora by consent of his heir to Robert the son of Ulwric of a field by the Parret in free marriage with Mabel his daughter. Witnesses, Sir Swar de Cantitune, Philip de Burci. William Testard, Geoffrey de Brunmore, Adam de Kettenore, Adam le Bere, Andrew de Bainville, Adam de Putterhill, Alexander the clerk and others. Seal attached. Device, a fleur-de-lys. Apparently this grant does not refer to the church.

The following are the authorities given by J. Tanner in his *Notitia Monastica*:

- (1) *The Monasticon Anglicanum*, and *Richard Prior's Information*.
- (2) *Dr. Archer's account*, p. 624.
- (3) *M. Rymer's Conventionum*, tom. viii, p. 104, de restitutione hujus prioratus alienig, 1 Henry IV.
- (4) *Cartae, Rentalia, etc.*, in archivis Coll. Eton. juxta Windsor.
- (5) *Collect. Thomae Martin de Palgrave*, mil. ex eisdem.
- (6) *Escaet. Somerset*, 1 Edward I, n. 6. Claus. 2 Edward I, m. i. de tertio denario in Wyke, Radeway et Stoke Courcy.
- (7) *Escaet. Somerset*, 49 Edward III, p. 2, n. 4, inquisitiones de omnibus terris.

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[1204, 3 Id. June. Confirmation to the prior and monks of St. Andrew Stokes of their possessions, especially the churches of Wotone, Lullinstoke, Hoilefort, Kichestoh [Idstock], two parts of the tithe of Corniton, the whole tithe of one enclosure of Cumba, two parts of the tithe of Wileton, two parts of the tithe of Lullinstoke, the right they have in the chapel of the castle of Stokes, one hide of land in the territory of the said castle, the land of Tinelande, one ferling of land, one acre of meadow, half a virgate of Breche, and a new mill; in Wales, the patronage of the church of Traigru; in Ireland, in Ulster, all the churches and benefices of the lordship of John de Curci, from the water of Dalnart to that of Kerlingfort, except the castle of Maincove, ten carucates of land in Ardes, that is, in the land of Maccolochan; in Dalboing, in Hailo, that is, the town and church of Arderashac, and ten carucates of land; in Kinelmolan, three carucates of land.

From Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers, relating to Great Britain and Ireland (edited by W. H. Bliss), vol. i, p. 17.—ED.]