

The Accounts of St. John's Church, Glastonbury.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY DANIEL.

“THE Wardens of St. John's Church, Glastonbury, hold an almost unique position amongst churchwardens in England.” So wrote the late Mr. Bulleid in a valuable paper read before the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society. For more than six hundred years they have been a corporate body with a common seal. Mr. Bulleid was of opinion that the latten seal now in use is probably the one already in use in 1412, mentioned in the Inventory of 1421—if not, it is an exact reproduction. It represents St. John Baptist under a canopy, and bears the legend “Signum Commune Baptiste Glastoniensis.” The wardens, two in number, received a fee of 6s. 8d. annually. On one occasion (about 1484) this was increased by a gift of 10s., “pro eorum diligencia per tres annos, cuilibet vs.” Of their yearly accounts an imperfect series exists, the earliest being of 1366.¹ They have been printed in *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* as far as 1625. They are dated from Christmas to Christmas, or from the Feast of St. Lucy, December 13th—sometimes from All Souls' day—and from the very first shew an income arising from house property amounting to £5 12s. 9d. By 1439, this was increased to £6 8s., arising from four houses in High Street, two in Chilkwell, one in New Street, and lastly Georgysynne, let that year for 1s. On this first mention of the

(1). This first of the series, however, is not with the rest among the Church Papers, but is in private hands.

George Inn it is said to be "late of John Nevwe and afterwards of N. Kyng." Now John le Nevev was party, in 1347, with William Hardyng and John de Luccombe on the one hand, and the Abbot on the other, to an indenture in my possession, "Super approwiacone de Hertymore." His seal attached is a very beautifully cut design of a lion curled up asleep within a quatrefoil. Some of these houses stood on the South side of the churchyard skirting the High Street, and were destroyed in 1820 to open up the church to the street. Mr. Bulleid reckoned up as many as twenty-six houses then yielding rent to the wardens besides several detached pieces of land in Glastonbury and West Pennard. Some stood in Maidelode, now Benedict Street, some in Northilode, some in Edgarlegh, some in New Street and Gropecomb Lane. Rents were sometimes in arrears, especially if the cottages fell out of repair. Shortly before 1405 a fire had devastated much house property, and the tenements were let for a term of years on lives at a very low rate, on condition of the necessary repairs being effected by the tenant. This was the main source of revenue. Legacies often brought in something, occasionally of money, *e.g.*, 1428, 5s. 6d. received of Nicholas Pepur, left by his wife; 1407, 6s. 8d. legacy of Robert Drake; more often of articles, which were sold for the benefit of the church: 1405, a ring for 9d.; 1407, a veil for 15d.; 1418, a brazen pitcher weighing 9lbs.; 4d. for the half of an old jar; and another sum for silk left by Thomasine Dorlet. A cow was let out for 2s.; 1407, "de xiid. de medietate locagii unius vacce sancti Johannis reddente capellano parochialis ecclesia." 1439: a basilard, left by a legacy, which had been repaired with silver was sold for 15s. To wear such daggers decorated with silver was forbidden it is said to any not having a yearly income of £20. So this must have come from some well to do person. Other sources of income were from letting out torches at funerals, for which from 1s. to 4s. was paid.

Seats in the church were sold for various sums, the earliest of such entries is in 1439, when 3s. 4d. was received for divers

seats. Also occasionally graves *putei* were bought in the church for 4s. or even 6s. 8d. each.

At Easter time a collection was made, usually described as "pro la Trendell:" this varied in amount from 10s. to 12s. The Easter taper for the font is mentioned separately. The trendell seems to have been a hanging hoop for lights. The tapers for it cost sometimes as much as 18s. Hoglingsilver is mentioned in 1428 and 1439. It was collected at Epiphany. No fresh light is thrown on the position or nature of the Hoglers. They are said to be the lowest grade of labourers, and at Glastonbury, as at Pilton, they appear to have formed a guild. To hogle is still used in some mining districts of picking over the refuse of ore.

From a church-ale in 1428 as much as 53s. 5d. was received. Now and then an old book was sold, as an old psalter, for 2s. For special expenses special gifts were made, as in 1428, three people handed over £4 1s. 10d., "ad opus ecclesie:" it would seem they had made a collection through the parish. In 1439, 3s. 4d. came "de diversis exeniis ad fabricam novi Rodeloft." The High cross, presumably on the rood beam, is already mentioned in 1406. For its repair ten estrugbord, *i.e.*, for wainscot, were bought at Wells for 8s. 8d., including the cost of their carriage to Glastonbury. Oak timber for posts, etc., cost 6s. 8d. An oaken plank 8d., and nails 1s. The "kervyng work" of the Rodeloft was done by Robert Hull, who contracted for it for £12. In 1428 as much as £10 16s. 5d. was spent on repairs "nove ecclesie cum porchia." This included hewing and carrying what is called free-stone from Doultling, wall-stone from Street, and lime and iron-work for a new door, together with wages of stonecutters and masons. In 1500 the maidens of Glastonbury offered as much as 33s. 4d. to gild the image of St. George, the women offering 13s. 4d. for the same purpose. That was a year of great effort. It was determined to reseat the church in a splendid manner. The town was divided into districts (Chilkwel, Bove-town, are mentioned), visited by 14 collectors, who each gathered in what is called a croke either money or goods which could be

sold. As much as £24 8s. 3d. was in this manner contributed. The expressions used show that the "croke" was not a *crook* or cross-staff heading the procession, as explained by Bishop Hobhouse in editing the "Croscombe Churchwardens' Accounts," p. 1, but some sort of vessel, or crock, called at Croscombe, p. 31, the "croke-box."

Once we find plays enacted at Christmas and at Midsummer, viz., 1428, which brought in 8s. and 26s. 8d. respectively. Such plays in 1500 were arranged to be enacted in the "Bellhay." The same year money appears to have been raised by Robin Hood sports; Robin Hood's tunic cost 14s. His boots cost 8d., lining and all. Amongst the money collected were a good many clipped groats, which had to be sold by weight; they brought in 23s. 4d. In 1498 a fraternity of the Name of Jesus is mentioned for the first time, with its own wardens and funds, who paid their chaplain and ministers. So much for revenue.

The church consisted of nave and two aisles with altars of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas, and a chapel of St. George. Besides the parochial chaplain, these altars had their chaplains. The rectory had been made over to the abbey about 1200, whilst one Ralph held it. His seal, found about fifty years ago, is in the Museum. The revenues were appropriated to the sacristan just after the great fire, when all the country was appealed to for funds to rebuild the monastery. Bishop Savaric confirmed the appropriation of "the church of St. John in Northbin" and the chapel of Pennard, *i.e.*, West Pennard church, to the use of the sacristan. The revenues were thus assigned to the use of the abbey, without any risk of falling into the King's hands, during a vacancy on the death or removal of the abbot. The chaplain received a yearly stipend from the sacristan. In 1404 we find the chaplain of Blessed Virgin Mary received £4 as annual salary from the church funds. There were lights before the High cross and the images of St. John and Blessed Virgin Mary, evidently on the rood beam. The Virgin's light had a candelabrum of iron. One of St. Nicholas, another of St.

Katherine in 1418. Perhaps one of these is intended, in 1405, by the "Yeldis-lyght," for the candles of which two pounds of wax were bought, costing 13d. In 1418, the ile of St. George is mentioned—or chapel, as it is called in 1484—and a new altar in his name was erected in 1418. Two new altars to Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas were erected the same year, and the suffragan Bishop who consecrated them received 20s. A great feast was provided on the occasion, at which the suite of the Bishop suffragan, and the priests and parishioners assisting, were entertained. Beside bread and beer and wine, three young pigs were served, given by the sacristan, the archdeacon of Glastonbury, and the chaplain respectively. Of course, the suffragan's horses were not forgotten. Unfortunately the parchment is torn and we cannot tell what the "panis equinus" cost.

In 1428 occur divers expenses, "circa reparationem nove ecclesie cum porchia;" also making a new door to the church, with staples and nails, and the wages of masons and stone hewers, in all amounting to £10 16s. 5d. This it has been assumed marks the date of the present structure. If so, only a small part of the cost appears here. Expressions used in the accounts for 1418 suggest that at no time was a new church constructed, notwithstanding the term *nova ecclesia* above, but rather alterations and repairs of the old effected, which have given us the church of the present day. For instance, the plumber repairs defects in the roof; twenty-six pounds of solder are bought with rosyn; a tiler works twice for five days at a time, and lime and sand are bought, as though much mortar was used. All proportionate rather to repairs than a new church. Great damage had recently been done by the fall of the pinnacles of the tower. This is stated in an imperfect roll. Its probable date will be about 1425. Labourers were employed in numbers to clear away the rubbish, *circa rudacionem*. Timber was bought at Witham Charterhouse, some of it in exchange for fish to stock the fishponds. The carriage of eleven wagon loads cost 33s. 10d. Two casks,

dolia, of lead were bought for £8 6s. 8d., besides half-a-cask and one hundred pounds given by benefactors. Four-and-a-half loads, *semys*, of oak were bought for new seating the church. All this belongs to the time when the central tower fell, and was replaced by the new Western tower.

An interesting document appears as the *compotus* of Thomas Colbrook, the supervisor of the fabric. Unfortunately it is undated, but probably belongs early in the fifteenth century, as T. Colbrook was warden one year between 1428 and 1438. It accounts for £107 6s. 7d. received by gifts and sale of old material, including two *vlac*, *i.e.*, hurdles. The gifts come from *extranei* as well as parishioners. The outlay is on scaffold and *syntornes* for the arches, reed for roofing, quarrying and hewing and sawing stones. The arches for the windows cost £16 10s. 8d. Two stone-cutters' green smocks of eight yards of stuff cost 6s. 8d. each. Thirteen pise of *carbo terrestris* cost £4 3s. 11d., an iron rake 3d., a shovel 6s., a sieve 2½d., four nails for the durn 2s. 8d.

Timber was brought from Witham, here called Selwood. The free-stone for the windows was worked at Bruton and elsewhere. The iron work came from Somerton. A "logge" or temporary shed was built for the carpenter's shop—and gloves were given to the carpenter and stone-mason costing 1s. 6d. Altogether we are afforded an excellent glimpse into the work and the manner of doing it.

About 1470, George, the organ maker, set up new organs, and Stephen, the carver, helped him, and also made a canopy out of *wenscott* over the altar. Ink is first mentioned in this account. The Browder, too, had the making and lining of a pall of satin.

In 1484 a new *domus* was erected on the church porch, and the making of a triangle is recorded with oaken bases and *weather dores* of oak in the *vyce*; *i.e.*, shutters in the winding stair. A vane and cross were set on the top. The *copern* or pinnacle was covered with seven-and-a-half hundredweight of lead, which was cast in the sacristaria.

The arrangements made about 1500 for reseating the church are extremely interesting. No craftsmen equal to the undertaking were to be had nearer than Bristol. David Carver contracted to supply the work for £41. This was paid in two instalments; but a fee of £10 extra and expenses of carriage brought up the cost to about £65. David and six men accompanied the carved work, which was shipped in two great "boots," from the Back near the Temple Friars, at Bristol. The boats were brought up the Brue river to Rooks Mill, in South Brent parish. Thirteen boats hired at Meare brought part of the work by water from Rooks Mill to the Bridge at Maydelode, *i.e.*, in the low land below the town near the Station. Other part was brought by land in thirteen wagons. John Pederam with one carriage and horse brought the carved work from the bridge to the church. The transit took a week. The stays and braces for putting up the "skreens and enterclothes" cost 23s. The old seats had to be broken up and carted away with the rubble; and a "putte" was hired for 22d. to carry the mud out of the church.

The same year the image of St. George was restored and beautified, at a cost of £6 13s. 4d. The horse had to be supplied with a new tail for 2d. This image was apparently to be used in processions.

The earliest Inventory appears in 1418. It is highly interesting as shewing the implements used in a parish church.

Five silver chalices, three gilt, with cases de virgis or de virgatis; two silver crewetts with cases; two silver pixes; one ivory pix; six pewter crewetts; two latten pixes; one bucket for holy water; one aspersionium cum manicla; one lucerna. To these in 1421 is added one eelfat (oil vessel).

VESTMENTS.

One suit of blue with cope; one suit of white with cope; one suit of blue without cope; one cope of yellow; six chesipul; four albs, besides suits above; ten cloths for altar. To these,

in 1421, are added six amices, one frontal, another with Lenten veil, four cloths with two canvacez, eight towels ; and in 1428, one Lenten veil, two houseling towels, seven yards long.

BOOKS.

One psalter, one portifory, two manuals, three antiphoners, one legenda, two books of collects, one processional, one old grail, one ordinal, two small books of sermons. To these, in 1421, are added three missals, three grails, one psalter called alba, four smaller psalters ; and in 1428, three processionals, one hymnary.

VARIOUS INSTRUMENTS.

Three new lich bells, five ringing bells ; one chest for documents, six other chests ; five iron candlesticks, one latten candlestick ; one iron clogge, value 18d. ; five banners, three of silk, two coloured ; one black banner ; two white banners ; one banner of St. George, coloured ; one pennon ; three clokes of silk ; one bag of red velvet ; one seal of St. John in latten, still existing ; one iron clepur ; three desks ; three wooden cases ; one bushel bound with iron, and two iron manicles ; silver rings with one faros ; one cross ; one silver jug ; three rings ; three towels of brabant ; one bed of worsted, with broided testar for the Sepulchre ; two banner poles ; two biers with cover ; one part of golden plate, given by Rose Bernard ; seven silver rings, given to the altar of St. Katherine ; three silver rings, given for mending a broken chalice of the altar of St. Mary ; two cloths, dyed, Thomas Hooper's gift to the altar of St. Mary.

In 1421 are added : one green chasuble with alb ; one amice ; one stole ; one fanel, *i.e.*, maniple, with three green parures for altar of St. Mary ; one pewter ship for incense ; one jar weighing forty pounds ; one houseling towel of Dinant, measuring seven yards by six ; four corporases ; six hundred pounds of lead ; one brazen jar, weighing twenty pounds ; one patella, worth 18d. ; one napkin and one towel, left by Alice Foranour ; two towels,

left by Isabel Seley ; thirty pounds lead ; one small bell ; one small cross of latten ; one hundred and sixteen pounds of lead ; one cloke of silk ; one brazen jar ; one silver ring, gilt.

In 1428 are added : one ship of pewter for frankincense ; five corporases ; one pall of green felewet, three yards long ; one copper cross, gilt ; two leaden buckets ; one pickaxe ; surplices for boys ; one mappa, four yards long, by legacy ; two towels of two and two-and-a-half yards long, by legacy ; two latten candlesticks ; one yard of brabant cloth ; one canopy, with two foletts of pleasance for Corpus Christi. This year, too, a new Lenten veil was made of ten ells of linen at 8d. the ell, and a calf's skin was bought for binding five of the church books, leather and all costing 1s. 6d., and a new fringe of silk was bought for the banner of the cross.

Among the books for church use it is interesting to find that the *Legenda aurea* was purchased from Bristol. It was in eleven new quires and cost 40/-. , twopence being paid to get it to Glastonbury. This was in 1484, one year after the publication of Caxton's edition. May we not presume that this was a copy from Caxton's press ? In 1499, twenty-one chains were bought for fastening the books in the church.

The relations with the abbey were but slight. The sacristan received his dues, and paid the parish chaplain. A tenement of his was rented at 3d., together with a quartern of pepper and a quartern of cumin. The abbot's provost received the rent of a tenement, 2s. yearly. A crowbar, borrowed from the abbot for quarrying on Sandown, was stolen, and a new one, weighing twenty-two-and-a-half pounds, was bought in its place for 1s. 10d. Occasionally articles were sent to the abbey to be consecrated by some suffragan bishop. In 1428 the sacristan had given surplices for the boys. A house was rented of the abbot at one time, and we have recorded, c. 1484, the payments for a new *clavey* of stone with jambs for its mantelpiece, and 13s. 4d. for a new *pignown* (gable) on the western end of the roof.

Master John Muddisley, monk of Glaston, was buried in 1498; also Thomas Wason, the prior; and in 1499, Sibyl Camel, the widow of John the treasurer, gave a *pipa* of iron; and Prior Wason's brother was buried.

The officers of the church, besides the wardens, were the chaplain, who was the nominee of the sacristan; the clerk—whose surplice occasionally wanted renewing—he got 20d. for writing the *comptus*, but bought his own parchment, and received occasional fees of 2d. for obits. In 1484, he received a reward of 10s. And thirdly, the bedman, who prepared the graves and got his name from having charge of the *bederoll*. Once only in the extant accounts, viz., in 1485, the date is given by the year of the abbot.

It is interesting to find Master Portman and Master Fitzjames already acting as men of law for the church about 1425.

No points of general history are touched on. All that concerned the country at large connected itself with the abbey, not with the town or parish church. But we have here ample materials for reconstructing a good deal of the life of the town-folk of Glastonbury.

CHURCHWARDENS OF ST. JOHN'S, GLASTONBURY.

1336	William de Wrington	Richard de Norweye
1365	Henry Tanner	John Fairhorn
1366	Robert at Lavendrie	William Murye
—	John Scaloun	Thomas Boxwell
1377	Richard Murymouth	John Aldenham, ostler
1378	William Kyng	John Sherper
1404-6	Laurence Davy	William Coumbe
1417	Thomas Porter	John Bourton
1418	Thomas Dunster	Matthew Stokwodd
1421	John Morthfeld	John Smert
1428	Walter Prise	Walter Wilcokes
—	Thomas Colbrok	John Hull

1438	John Hull	Bartholomew Martyn
1439	Thomas Burton	Walter Poole
—	Alexander Chauncelar	John Bougent
—	John Modeford	Thomas Greynton
1484-5	William Tyke	John Flemmyng
1489	Richard Cote	John Costrell
1498	John Costrell	William Basse
1553	William Cloutyng	William Harreis
1563	John Hale	Robert Wake
1564	Nicholas Roo	William Harreis
1574	Thomas Somer	Richard Hoskyns
1579	Edward Cowper	Thomas Netthole
1584	John Hopkines, the elder	Thomas Roo
1587	William Nurs (or Mors)	Fabian Rainsbury
1588-9	William Bull	Richard Rogers
1610	Edward Perker	
1611	John Roode	Thomas Greene

PARISH CHAPLAINS.

1353	Alexander	1428	John Swell
1377	Nicholas	1484	Peter Motyn
1418	John Scalon	1498	John Hardyberd
—	Thomas Webbe	1499	John Androwe

CHAPLAINS OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

1404-6	Thomas Hopere
1418	John Westbury
1484	William Morfyle, John Palle