

SHERBORNE PRIORY.

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In early Anglo-Saxon time Sherborne must have been situated at the edge of the great northern forest of Hampshire, and the Scyrborun was probably the stream which marked off the forest land on the north from the cultivated area to the south.

This stream also for some way flows in the direction of the line of outcrop of the chalk. The chalk area to the south must have been practically free from wood when the Saxons first settled here, and the name Scyreborne, from A.-S. Scyr, a parting or division, was probably given to the stream here, at the place where the great Roman road from Winchester to Silchester crossed it from the shire or county into the forest which was under a separate administrator, the shire being in the jurisdiction of the sheriff, and the forest governed by forest law in the jurisdiction of the king's warden or bailiff. The chief traffic between the north and south of Hampshire passed at that time along the Roman road, and hence the origin of the name as a dividing name at this part of the edge of the northern forest. The name Panbere appears to have been given to that part of the northern forest of Hampshire which was situated in this immediate neighbourhood, afterwards modified into Pamber. Panbere was originally so named from being the hogs' wood, apparently a part of the forest without much pasture, but plenty of pannage, at the time it received this name.

The gradual inclosure of Pamber forest went on during the time of the priory. In the 52nd year of Henry III, Peter de Coudray, of Cufald, in Sherborne, was allowed to inclose that part of his estate which lay within the forest, and the Prior and Convent of Sherborne had an inclosed wood at Bramley, the next parish, called the "Park of the Prior and Convent of Sherborne." The St. John family obtained leave to inclose the park at Sherborne, from within the bounds of Pamber

forest in Henry III's reign, from which time the manor became known as that of Sherborne St. John. The grant of a park was a higher privilege than that of free warren.

In Edward I's time seventy acres of Pamber were assarted, and in Edward II's time 46 acres of newly assarted land were held by one John Wootton.

The proximity of the Priory of Sherborne to the forest of Pamber was a considerable benefit to the monks. The Priory tenants must have had in the forest the customary privileges of pasturage, pannage, and other common rights, and in the 13th century Henry III granted to the prior the privilege of cutting a certain quantity of dead wood. The forests of Hampshire were connected ecclesiastically with the Dean and Chapter of Sarum. Henry II granted to the Dean and Chapter all the tithes of the New Forest, and of Pancet, and of Buccolt, and of Andevera, and of Husseburne, and of "all my forests in Wiltshire, Berkshire, and Dorsetshire." Pancet must, I think, have been an alternative name for Pamber. In any case little doubt can be entertained that the tithes of Pamber forest went to Salisbury. Herbert, Dean of Sarum, witnessed Adam de Port's charter to Sherborne Priory, and until the time of its inclosure from the forest the church of the parish of Sherborne St. John was entered in ecclesiastical records such as the Taxation of Pope Nicholas as Sherborne Decani.

One of the most curious matters connected with Pamber was its Court Leet.

This Court was formerly held in the open air at a place called Lady Mede, a name derived from law day mede. Hazlitt, in his book on Tenures, describes how this ancient Court Leet for the manor of Pamber was opened in the open air, after which an adjournment was made to an inn, a survival of the ancient moots, all of which were originally open-air meetings. The proceedings of the Pamber Court were recorded on a piece of wood called a tally, about 3 feet long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square—somewhat like those used centuries ago in the Court of Exchequer. These wooden records were kept till they were worm eaten and decayed. Hazlitt states that he saw one for 1745, and that one of these records

was produced in a law suit at Winchester and received as evidence. At the Court the Pamber people had the privilege of annually electing a Bailiff or Lord of the Manor, who had the right to hunt and hawk as far as Windsor, and to whom all the stray cattle belonged, this being evidently a very ancient franchise.

SHERBORNE PRIORY AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

The Priory of Sherborne was of the Benedictine order, and is connected with English history in several ways, especially with the history of our own county. Its founder, Henry de Port, was a Baron of the Exchequer, who lived in the time of Henry I. He was the son of Hugh de Port, the greatest of Hampshire barons at the time of the Domesday Survey—Hugh de Port is mentioned in that Survey as having in his lordship 55 manors or estates in Hampshire, which he held directly of the King, and 12 which he held of Odo Bishop of Bayeux. His chief place in Hampshire was Basing, which appears to have been the seat of his baronial Court and the head of his great barony. We have no direct evidence that Hugh de Port was buried within this Priory, but I think it probable that his body was removed here on its foundation by his son Henry, for in the charter of its foundation he says that he gives the land and tithes at Sherborne to God and to St. Vigor of Cerisy "for the soul of my lord King Henry, for the soul of William the king's son, for the souls of my father and mother, also for the souls of myself and my wife and of my children and friends and all the people of Shireburn." The immediate cause of its foundation thus appears to have been the establishment of a religious house specially for the spiritual benefit of the whole family of the de Ports, and it would be the most natural thing that the body of the founder of that family should find its last resting place here, where daily masses were to be said for him and his descendants.

Henry de Port's foundation must be considered a wide charity, for he included all the people of Sherborne among those for whom the monks were to sing their masses; a foundation which would find its parallel in these days in those who would establish in Hampshire a provincial college for the benefit of the people. In his day it was quite in accordance

with the spirit of the age for great men to found a priory of this kind and for similiar purposes, and of this we have a considerable number of examples in Hampshire. Two or three centuries later it was the fashion of the age for distinguished families to build chantries and attach them to the parish churches, such as we may see to-day in the case of the Brocas chantry in Sherborne St. John church. The chantries in the 14th and 15th centuries were established for similiar purposes to the nobler foundations of priories such as this, the outcome of the religious feeling of an earlier age.

The Norman nobles settled in England appear for several generations to have looked on the land of their forefathers in very much the same way as wealthy English settlers in distant lands look on their mother country now.

Henry de Port dedicated his priory to St. Vigor of Cerisy, *i.e.*, he attached it to the great monastery of Cerisy, as a branch of it. This circumstance brings before us at once some interesting considerations. At the time of the Doomsday Survey, these lands which now form the ancient possessions of the priory were held by Hugh de Port of the Bishop of Bayeux, Odo, the half-brother of the Conqueror, the turbulent bishop, more a soldier than an ecclesiastic, who fought beside the Conqueror at Hastings, armed with a mace, and who afterwards gave his half-brother much trouble to keep him in order. We must, however, give credit I think to Odo for his support to one great artistic work which has survived to modern times, the celebrated Bayeux tapestry, depicting the scenes of the Norman Conquest, and from which we derive our knowledge of the arms and dress of the period.

Odo's predecessor in the Bishopric of Bayeux, St. Vigor, had founded in A.D. 590 the Abbey of Cerisy, and the Dukes of Normandy had restored it when destroyed, and enlarged this monastery.

In view of these circumstances, we can see how natural it was that Henry de Port should dedicate some of the lands of Sherborne, which his family had held of the Bishops of Bayeux, to found a priory, which should be attached to the Bishop's great monastery of St. Vigor of Cerisy.

Henry de Port gave to the priory "a mill at the other Sherborne," the tithes of Woodgarston, of Basing, Upton, the church and tithes of Bramley, and other endowments, and he says in the charter that he desires to be buried in this place. His charter, which is not dated, was witnessed by Hadvia, his wife, and William and John, his sons, among other persons.

William de Port appears to have died early, for the next charter is that of John de Port, who confirmed and enlarged his father's grant, and says that he has given this to the place in which he desires to be buried. Among the witnesses to his charter are Matilda, his wife, and Adam de Port and Hugh de Port, his sons.

The next charter relating to this priory is that of Adam de Port, a prominent baron in the time of Henry II. In this charter he confirmed the grants of his father and grandfather, and gave the priory the tithes of all the mills on his manor, Sherborne—"omnem decimam omnium molendinorum meorum Sireburnæ meæ." He also doubtless intended that his bones should lie here with those of his forefathers, but his life was unfortunate. The case of Adam de Port is one in which Hampshire people may hope that further historical research will be able to discover more about him. He may have been a strong sympathiser with Becket in that long struggle between the King and the Archbishop. England was much divided in opinion on that quarrel, and Adam de Port, who enlarged the grant of this priory, and, moreover, built the church of Warnford in this county, which still remains, could not have been disaffected to the church, or perhaps as disloyal as he appears. It is recorded of him that in 1172 he was outlawed for an attempt on the life Henry II. I need scarcely remind you that forfeiture of his estates would follow outlawry, and at this time all the de Port lands were probably seized, except such as remained to his wife, the Countess Sybill, who witnessed the charter he granted to this priory—her name not being Muriel, as stated by Professor Burrows in his History of the family of Brocas, but Sybill, for her name occurs on the the charter which Adam de Port gave to this priory as "Sibilla Comitissa uxore mea." When he became an outlaw Adam appears to have made his way to

Scotland, and was received favourably there by William the Lion, the Scottish king. Shortly afterwards he joined the army of that king in an invasion of the north of England. A band of 400 English knights and men-at-arms, hearing of this invasion, pushed north-wards in misty weather into Northumberland, which was being plundered by William the Lion. The king began to besiege the castle of Alnwick, with several thousand troops, and, not expecting any sudden opposition, sent off his forces to plunder the country, keeping only 60 knights with him. As the English band of 400 advanced through the mist they saw the friendly castle of Alnwick stand out before them, and as the mist passed away they were as greatly surprised as the Scots in finding only 60 knights with the king besieging the castle. The Scottish king and all his small band saw that they were in a fix, and after a fight they were all captured except two persons, viz., Roger de Mowbray, an English baron whose castles Henry II had seized, and Adam de Port, who, probably guessing what fate would await them if captured, forced their way out through the English lines and escaped to Scotland. Adam de Port died many years after this event, in 1213. Some years after his outlawry, his estates, or some of them, are said to have been restored to him, and he was probably buried here with his fathers.

Another charter relating to the endowments of the priory is that of William de St John, son and heir of Adam de Port, who acquired his father's estates in 1213. He assumed his mother's name of St. John, and dropped that of de Port. This has been explained as being brought about by his inheritance of the St. John estates, but it is certain that he inherited also the forfeited estates of his father, Adam de Port, as well as those he had through his mother, the Countess, and I think it is probable that this restoration of the de Port estates, and the removal of the forfeiture may have been partly the reason for the change of the family name. He confirmed this priory in its possessions, and was a man trusted by King John, for whom he acted in matters relating to the priory of Southwick and other concerns for the king in this county.

Then came the loss of Normandy, and the monastery of St. Vigor of Cerisy, which had no doubt hitherto received the surplus revenue or produce of the lands of this priory, thus became a foreign monastery, and this priory became known to the English people as one of the alien priories. For about 200 years the foreign monasteries were allowed to receive what they could get from these alien priories in England, a system under which the produce of English lands were used to swell the revenues of foreign monastic houses, which were doubtless taxed when necessary for the French king's English wars, a system under which John Bull's forefathers paid for their own fighting, and also helped occasionally to find the sinews of war for their adversary. During actual war with France, Sherborne and other priories were seized by the king. A writ relating to the alien priories of Hampshire was addressed in the 18 Edward II to Ralph de Bereford and Richard de Westcote, "keepers of the alien religious houses, of the power and dominion of the King of France in the county of Southampton." One of the last gifts which this priory received from the de Port or St. John family appears to have been the wood in Bramley, called the Park of the Prior and Convent of Sherborne, which was granted by John de St. John, a grandson of William de St. John. John died in 1301, and his grant was probably made just before the passing of the Statutes of Mortmain, which put an end to all such gifts, and which, by preventing the monasteries and priories from acquiring more land, no doubt tended to the increase of chantries attached to the parish churches, the chantry priests being commonly paid by stipend.

The tower arches of this Priory Church are of the age of the de Port and the early English portion of the building of the times of the St. Johns. Sherborne Priory had a considerable endowment of tithes, but the tithes of the mills at Sherborne given by Adam de Port were of a different kind from the ordinary great and small tithes of agricultural produce. The mill tithes were personal tithes, and unless some earlier grant relating to them existed, such as in this case, they were due only from mills erected after 1315. These mill tithes were the source of endless disputes in

the middle ages. If the season was a wet one and the corn inferior, the miller could declare his earnings were not equal to the assessment, and if a very dry season occurred the miller at such a place as Sherborne could confidently point to the Shirebourn and declare that it was impossible for him to grind without water in the brook. The millers' tithes were a 10 per cent. income tax on the mill earnings.

The alien priories in England were suppressed by the statute of 1414 and their revenues for the most part appropriated to other purposes. There were twelve of these in Hampshire. A chantry priest was, however, in many cases provided to live on the foundation and comply with the intention of the founder as regards masses for the dead. This appears to have been the case at this priory, and the appointment of the priest was commonly vested in the head of the family representing the founder. In this case, Thomas Poynings de St. John, Lord St. John of Basing, who died in 1428, held the advowson of the priory at that time.

The annual value of the priory at the time of its appropriation to other purposes was stated to be £58 7s. 4½d. Of this amount £6 was reserved for one priest to pray for the founders and benefactors, £1 3s. 4d. for the poor of the priory, and £1 14s. to the vicar at the priory. The revenues of this priory were given by Henry VI to Eton College, but this gift was cancelled by Edward IV, when the connection of the Priory of Sherborne with the Hospital of God's House, Southampton, began, and this is of much historical interest.

It is not necessary here to dwell on the origin or early medieval history of that hospital for the connection of Sherborne Priory with it only began in the latter part of the 15th century. The occurrence which led to the possessions of this priory being transferred to God's House Hospital, half-a-century after that event occurred, was probably the conspiracy against the life of Henry V, which took place at Southampton in the year 1415. Richard Earl of Cambridge, the King's cousin, was one of the three who were condemned to death. He was beheaded outside the Bargate at Southampton, and buried within the precincts of God's House, according to tradition, inside the hospital church. His son, Richard

Duke of York, was beheaded by the Lancastrians, and his head stuck on the bridge at Wakefield. The gift of this priory to the Hospital at Southampton is an example of the filial piety of Edward IV, for in his charter he says that he gives the alien priory of Sherborne to the hospital of *Domus Dei*, in order that commemorative masses may be sung for the soul of Prince Richard, the late Duke of York, his father, and for Richard late Earl of Cambridge, his grandfather, buried in the same hospital. The Earl of Cambridge was the 15th ancestor through the Yorkist line of our late Queen.

On the restoration of Henry VI, the priory again reverted to Eton, afterwards it returned to God's House, and this was confirmed by the Tudors.

The Wardenship of *Domus Dei* had more than a century earlier been conferred on Queen's College, Oxford, by Edward III, and so the connection of that College with this priory arose, but all legal matters of business relating to the ancient possessions of this priory still have to be transacted by the Provost of the College, not as head of the college, but as "*Custos Hospitalis Domus Dei in villa Southton*" (warden of the Hospital of God's House in the town of Southampton) to the present day.

The revenues of Sherborne Priory were used for chantry purposes in the church of God's House to a later date than probably elsewhere in England. Edward IV's endowment established three priests there, who were not extinguished by the Reformation, for in Queen Elizabeth's time one or more of their successors was still chanting the service there for the souls of the Queen's ancestors.
