

~~bearing the Cap of Maintenance. On the King's left stand other Officers of State, the Swordbearer and Garter King of Arms, all standing on the cloth of state. The group in the extreme corner includes the sons of peers, foremost of whom are the two half-brothers of the King, Edmund and Jasper, who were created Earls at this Parliament.~~

Puritan Ministers at Wokingham.

By ARTHUR T. HEELAS.

THE seventeenth century was a period of ecclesiastical strife. On the one side was Puritanism, on the other what we should call to-day Anglo-Catholicism, of which Archbishop Laud was the leading exponent. In Wokingham Puritanism was predominant, if we may judge from what is known of some of its ministers. Among them was William Benn, 'preacher for some time at Okingham in Berks,' says Calamy. This must have been in the earlier years of the century, for in 1629, Benn became rector of 'All Hallows,' Dorchester, where he remained until he was ejected in 1662. He was 'an eminent divine, famous in all the West of England.' 'He was bred up in Queen's College, Oxon.' Calamy also mentions two other Puritan ministers who preached at Wokingham for a short time. These were the inseparable friends, John Whitlock and William Reynolds, afterwards ministers at Nottingham. About 1647, they were living at Leighton in Bedfordshire. 'Okingham in Berkshire being vacant, they undertook to supply both Leiton and that place, by turns. When Okingham was supply'd at the end of half a year, they afterwards did the same between Leiton and Ailesbury.' John Whitlock's writing of Reynolds'.

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¹ The son of Richard Whitlock, Merchant of London, Emmanuel College, Cambridge, B.A. 1646, M.A. 1647. Jointly with W. Reynolds, Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham, 1651-62. They were both ejected in 1662.

² W. Reynolds, joint Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham, 1651-62. Ejected 1662.

mentions this fact and the cause of the vacancy, and also throws some light on the character of the incumbent of Wokingham, John Bateman.³ He states that 'in spring 1647, the town of Okingham in Berkshire (where my mother and a brother of mine had a house and lived in the summer-time)⁴ was in present want of a minister on this occasion. Mr. John Bateman had been their pastor, a solid, learned, godly minister, and a very profitable practical teacher, whose labours God had wonderfully blessed in the conversion and edification of many souls (for there were many godly persons in that place, and several that were very eminent Christians both for gifts and graces): and I have special occasion to mention this faithful servant of Christ, Mr. Bateman, with honour and great thankfulness to God for him, God making him graciously his instrument, to work upon me and do me much good while I went to school there.'

'In the year 1642, there being then, or soon after, garrisons at Reading, Henley and Basing-House, he was driven with his family from Okingham, and soon after placed in a good living at Little Munden in Hertfordshire; yet at the end of the Wars as his former people at Okingham were earnest for his return to them, so he resolved it, but could not effect it till the latter end of the year 1647. Upon this account Okingham wanting a supply and my brother Reynolds and I being in spring 1647 invited to supply the place, till their former minister above-mentioned could return, we undertook between us the supplying of Leighton and Okingham too (though thirty miles distant) for half a year, taking our turns each of us two Lords days in one place and two in the other; there his (Reynolds) ministerial

³ J. Bateman signed Petition of Hertfordshire Ministers, 1646, at Little Munden. (Urnicke: *Nonconformity in Herts*, 124).

⁴ The family lived at the 'Beches,' Wokingham. An ancestor, John Whitlock, Lord of the Manor of Beches, Wokingham, by his marriage with an heiress of the De la Beches, near the end of the reign of Henry VI, became possessed of the Manor. He was an ancestor of Sir James Whitlock, a Judge of the Court of King's Bench in the reigns of James I and Charles I, and one of the signatories of the Ordinances granted to the town. Another member of the family was Sir Bulstrode Whitlock, Lord Keeper for the Commonwealth, who was appointed Constable of Windsor Castle and Custodian of the Forest in 1649. See *Memories of Bulstrode Whitlock*, by R. H. Whitlock.

labours, through God's blessing, were attended with good success. During that time, he had an invitation to a good living, Barnet, two miles from Okingham, but he did not accept the offer, as he and his wife were both unwilling to part, and indeed, being young, not willing to take upon us a pastoral charge."⁵

Our next information as to matters ecclesiastical in Wokingham dates from some years later, when episcopacy had been suppressed and the Church was under the management of the Parliamentary Committees and Commissioners of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Manuscripts preserved in the Archbishop's library at Lambeth give some light on what was happening at the parish church during the Interregnum.

On January, 11th, 1654-5, the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers 'being informed that the rectory of Wokingham is out of lease the Trustees do appoint to let the same on the 18th instant, unless Mr. Barker, the present possessor of the said tithes, shall offer good cause to the contrary on the same day.' There is nothing further to show what happened in the matter.⁶ The next entry is dated February 10th, 1656-7. It shows that on October 11th, 1655, the Trustees made a grant of £23 13s. 4d. out of the tithes of Wokingham, to the then incumbent, John Bateman. He had since died and his 'relict' Ellinor had been bearing the expenses of supplying the cure, the Trustees therefore ordered the arrears of the grant they had made to be paid to the Executors and Administrators of the late Mr. Bateman. This was not the first augmentation of his salary which Mr. Bateman had received. In 1649, his name appears among sundry ministers and lecturers upon whom augmentations were settled out of the proceeds of the sale of the Dean and Chapter lands. His allowance was £13 6s. 8d. paid every six months.⁷

⁵ *Life of Rev. William Reynolds*, by Rev. John Whitlock, 1698.

⁶ The lease was granted to Thos. Barker of Chiswick in 1650, his heirs and assigns, etc., for the annual rental of £26. 'If the sayde Rent be unpaid by the Space of two monthes being lawfully required then a Re-entry and the grant to be voyde.' See copy of Rectory Deed in the possession of the Rector, the Rev. B. Long.

⁷ Shaws' *Hist. of the English Church*, II, 524.

Bateman's successor was Samuel Stancliffe. He was the son of John Stancliffe, a draper of South Owtam, Yorks, had been admitted a sizar at St. John's, Camb., April 7th, 1648, when he was 17 years old. After taking his degrees at Cambridge, he was incorporated at Oxford, July 10th, 1655. The Triers approved him as minister of Wokingham, March 20th, 1656-7. A few days later the Trustees voted him an augmentation of £30 per an. (1604-47). A year later they increased the amount by £20, but by that time Stancliffe was leaving Wokingham, and on April 2nd, 1658, was admitted rector of Stanmore, Middlesex, whence he was ejected in 1662.

The minister who took his place at Wokingham came from the county to which Stancliffe had gone, he was Rowland Stedman, minister of Hanwell since July, 1654, if not before. (997-2-58.) Calamy gives him among his silenced ministers as being turned out in 1660, to make room for the episcopal minister ejected by Parliament. This is an error for on July 18th, 1659, the Committee for Plundered Ministers ordered that the sum of £50 per an. should be paid to him as minister of Wokingham.

On September 22nd, 1659, the Trustees for the Maintenance of Ministers made an order that of this £50, the sum of £23.13s. 4d. should be paid out of the rents and profits of the tithes of Wokingham, and the remainder from those of the tithes of Steventon, Berks. (x.) Possibly Rowland was the Mr. Stedman, whom in a letter of August 22nd, 1659, the parishioners of St. Lawrence's Reading, invited to become their Vicar.⁸ If so he did not yield to their persuasions but remained at Wokingham until in 1662 he was forced to resign by the Act of Uniformity. He therefore left Wokingham and became chaplain to Philip, Lord Wharton, the friend and patron of many of those who refused to conform.⁹

The Act of Uniformity. On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, a great reaction against Puritanism set in, followed two years later by the passing of the Act of Uniformity. This new Act ushered in an era of persecution for all who could not, or

⁸ Coates' *Reading*, p. 195.

⁹ For further information see *Dic. of Nat. Biog.*